**Primary Goal**:

Strengthen B&H’s reputation as a global authority on photography/filmmaking—now and for years to come.

**Secondary Goals**:

Reinforce B&H’s value as an educational resource.

Identify B&H as a landmark within the photographic & film communities.

**Overview**

We’ve identified five key initiatives to achieve the above:

1. Experts
2. SuperStore
3. Education & Know-How
4. Community
5. Social Media

Viewed as the spokes of a wheel, these five elements will work together to bring tactics and goals full circle, with a stronger, more recognizable B&H brand at the center.

By adopting a consolidated, omnichannel approach to brand building, we aim to make “B&H” synonymous with knowledge, expertise, smart DIY solutions and cutting-edge tech.

**Initiative 1 – Experts**

More than ever, our product specialists are more than salespeople—they are contributors, liaisons, consultants… and in effect, represent the “face of B&H.” As part of the continuing effort to create an online shopping experience that more closely mimics the one-on-one interaction shoppers have in our SuperStore, we’ll reinforce the new Experts feature and expand to all business channels.

**Tactics**

* Reinforce idea that ALL of our product specialists are Experts
* Launch an awareness campaign for Experts encompassing social media, email, on-site and off-site banners
* Showcase select Experts with dedicated landing pages online, featuring their work, gear they recommend, etc.
* Incorporate Experts into packaging, email/print collateral, in-store signage & beyond (see Crutchfield shipping box example)
* Rename “Experts” with a branded term (similar to Crutchfield’s Helpers/Apple’s Geniuses/Best Buy’s Geek Squad)
* Revise dress code to ensure Experts wear identifiable, appropriate attire
* Empower customers to Follow B&H Experts on social media for information and curated content
* Empower Experts to contribute on other blogs, answering questions to reinforce their authority/reputations
* Enable customer-scheduled discussions/video chat/Skype sessions with select Experts (similar to Crutchfield)
* Enable free in-studio visits to assess customers’ computer needs, storage, backup, network, etc.
* Build a shopping experience wherein an Expert accompanies a customer through every phase of the purchasing cycle, from browse to buy and beyond

**EXPERTS - BLUE SKY SCENARIO:**

Yossi needs a new DSLR for his upcoming vacation to Yellowstone National Park. He goes to BandH.com and clicks on the Photography category’s “True Know-How” banner to meet an expert for advice.

Yossi makes an online appointment to Live Chat with Expert X; after five minutes, he knows that the best option for him is item Z. Expert X completes checkout for Yossi there and then, and also emails links to several articles B&H has published on photographing the natural wonders of locations like Yellowstone.

Yossi researches his trip and emails Expert X with a few follow-up questions, which Expert X goes above and beyond to research and answer fully.

Yossi receives his package, along with a personal note from Expert X. Moments later, he also gets an email from Expert X making sure everything arrived safely. Expert X also offers to reconnect if Yossi needs tips or technical help getting set up.

Yossi goes on vacation and takes amazing photos. When he gets home, he’s greeted by a follow-up email from Expert X, making sure the camera is to Yossi’s satisfaction (and possibly expressing solicitude for his sunburn).

Yossi remembers Expert X, and always asks for his aid on future visits. Expert X accrues a roster of loyal, first-name-basis clients.

**Initiative 2 – SuperStore**

Our NYC SuperStore is more than a flagship: it’s also a landmark that represents B&H’s longevity, solidity and trustworthiness. By hosting in-store “happenings” aimed at target audiences in key demographics—especially younger (< 25 years) customers, we’ll reinforce its iconic status as a destination for more than just sales.

As a physical location, our SuperStore can easily play host to tactical implementations that demonstrate every strategic initiative.

**Tactics**

* Host a continuous rotation of on-site workshops and demonstrations related to DIY/how-to/new releases in each section of the store which are live streamed and recorded for media distribution.
* Build an in-store studio space/sound booth, available to select customers as a free perk
* Establish the Store as a place to create and broadcast Snapchat/Vine/Instagram stories
* Showcase educational B&H/user-generated videos by streaming onto screens in the SuperStore (floor and lounge).
* Install inward-facing screens on SuperStore windows to create a media-saturated environment, highlighting education/community, experts, etc.
* Launch a social media campaign around UGC photos/video “Here’s me blanking @ B&H” that underlines community while supporting Store as meeting place
* Encourage check-ins on geo-social Apps like Foursquare
* Feature a live feed from the store at BandH.com so users can see our Superstore LIVE, in action.
* Introduce in-store signage related to Experts; e.g. “Look for the Green Shirt”
* Install Courtesy Measures (possibly thru partners/3rd parties):
* Product assembly on-site post-purchase
* Camera cleaning service
* Camera & lens repair services
* Computer services
* Website-building concierge
* Lawyer available by appointment 2x/week to answer questions about business of photography
* Mobile charging stations
* Cash in your coins kiosk
* Exchange gift card for instant cash kiosk

**STORE - BLUE SKY SCENARIO:**

Shira visits the B&H SuperStore with her friends to buy a camera/case to match her new boots. While browsing, she notices a pop-up Sound Booth (every 2nd Tuesday at B&H). After purchasing her new camera with help from Expert Y, Shira shows her receipt to our Booth coordinator and sings a rousing cover of Sia’s “Chandelier,” with her friends on backup. Video and audio of her performance are live streamed to dedicated social media feeds, and the Booth coordinator snaps a few still photos for Shira’s/B&H Instagram account. Shira’s vocal stylings are noticed by long-time B&H customer and TV producer J, who taps her for a recording contract—but he wants to see more samples. Shira goes back to B&H on a Tuesday, buys item N, and records another “demo” track.

When making her first Grammy Award acceptance speech, Shira thanks B&H for her big break.

**Initiative 3 – Education/Knowledge**

To retain our competitive edge in the marketplace and stand out from mass retailers, we need our defining UVP to be exceptional knowledge and top-flight content. When everyone on earth is aware of us as not just a store, but a storehouse of superlative, impartial, spiel-free know-how, we’ll have carved out a niche that will serve us for posterity.

By providing useful, delightful content that’s evergreen, SEO-friendly and valuable, education/knowledge for its own sake will become a more conspicuous, common thread uniting every channel of customer communication.

**Tactics**

* Revise our content strategy: assess frequency, length, tone and style of our long-form communications
* Create segmented content streams to address different types of customers
* Nurture best-in-class writing to match the top-notch quality of our know-how
* Revise content to factor in SEO and syndication/distribution
* Diversify content via collateral/multimedia approach (marketing Expert-penned articles as white papers; content excerpts as package inserts and catalog blow-ins, etc.)
* Expand the Guided Shopping experiences we have in limited areas to every category

**EDUCATION - BLUE SKY SCENARIO:**

B&H Experts publish engaging, thought-provoking (photography) articles on a regular basis.

Customers begin following the articles via RSS, email and social media.

Press releases and affiliate exposure lead to many articles being picked up by outside media outlets and news sources.

After reading everything published by B&H Experts on landscape photography, Chloe gains the confidence to turn her hobby into a career. She lists B&H in the credits of her first book documenting natural wonders in the Galapagos Islands.

B&H publishes a biannual magazine that gains an avid following.

After winning numerous editorial and customer awards, B&H compiles the best articles into a book which lands at the top of several “Best Gifts for Photo Buffs” lists.

**Initiative 4 – Community**

By encouraging people to hang out at B&H, online and in-store, we’ll highlight our value as a source of ideas, creativity, knowledge and gear.

In the same way that a rotating calendar of in-store happenings will make our SuperStore a destination in and of itself, an online community with offline roots will turn B&H into a hub for all kinds of activity — from social sharing to educational fact-finding and beyond.

**Tactics**

* Empower customers to maintain personal Profiles (similar to LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+, etc.)
* Enable members to contribute their creative work/project ideas, how-to questions,
* Design online dashboards and forums that offer users:
* Recognition
* Professional exposure
* Satisfaction
* Peer-to-peer ego support
* Reputation-building
* Incentivized participation
* Nominate key community members as B&H Ambassadors (who could also act as Beta-testers for new projects, products, & ideas)
* Build a tiered loyalty program to focus on pro, prosumer and hobbyist customer needs
* Build a new program enabling Community members to earn cash/Rewards based on purchases linked to their posted recommendations

**COMMUNITY - BLUE SKY SCENARIO:**

Until two years ago, Stan used to visit BandH.com once a month, but he stopped.

After receiving an email featuring pro wedding photos that his colleague, Shmuli, took with the same camera Stan uses, Stan signs up for a B&H Community Profile.

After posting a few examples of his photographic work, Stan received several portfolio requests from potential clients.

The next time Stan faced a tricky set-up at the studio, he posted his dilemma to B&H Community and got two great solutions that solved his problem on the fly.

Now every morning after Stan wakes up, he: he checks his email, then his B&H Community dashboard to see:

* How many Likes his last photo post received
* If any new gigs matching his skill set have been listed
* If his friends have posted anything new
* Whether anything on his Wish List is on sale
* How many members answered his DIY question
* How many members purchased gear he recommended
* Exciting, engaging experiences wherein he interacts with thousands of like-minded shutterbugs

Stan’s business blossoms, and he can’t imagine life without the support and energy of the B&H Community.

**Initiative 5 – Social Media Outreach**

B&H publishes robust streams of educational, inspirational content to social media—but we are not analyzing, measuring or optimizing based on the results.

Since social media can be leveraged to support all of our business goals (not just the ones outlined here), we wish to audit and refine our strategy.

**Tactics**

By performing a comprehensive audit of our social media efforts, we’ll ask:

* Exactly what are we posting, where and how often?
* How shareable is our content?
* How many people are we reaching?
* Is our voice consistent and our style recognizable?
* Does our content style reflect our brand? (see addendum)
* What kinds of customers engage with us, on which channel?
* Are we taking advantage of the thousands of makers in our native audience?
* Who are we Following—can we attract/partner with more influencers?
* Can we tweak existing strategies to support other key initiatives?

**SOCIAL - BLUE SKY SCENARIO:**

An optimized social media plan adds dimension and breadth to every business channel, supporting every goal, and reflects a forward-thinking B&H with its finger on the pulse.

**Addendum: B&H’s Unique Value Proposition**

**How is B&H different?**

We are the only retailer that will forgo a sale if we find that the customers can achieve their goals without a purchase…

*“Our job is to give as much meaningful information as possible; if necessary you can sell merchandise too”*

*- Sam Goldstein*

1) **Education for the Sake of *Helping*, Not Selling**
Our goal is to make sure that our customers become educated in their field. Example: we’ll educate them just to see them succeed in a relevant career.

2**) Honesty and Integrity**
Our zero-commissions policy and unique sales philosophy guarantees unbiased selling — we do not favor brands; rather, we adapt to the needs of the customer.

We gained popularity and trust when we did not sell Grey as USA in an era where many retailers violated their customers by not being clear with them.

We sell items as advertised. Some retailers will showcase very cheap prices and then aggressively promote unnecessary extras like warranties and accessories to make up the difference; if customers aren’t interested they’ll pretend that they just ran out of stock and cancel the order.

3**) Above-and-Beyond Service**
We scale any hurdle to make sure the customer gets what he/she needs. That’s why we stock most necessary items. When others don’t have it in stock, we’re there for the customer. We stock rare items as well for the same reason.

B&H legend has it that in the early years of B&H, Mr. Goldstein would buy retail from a local if he didn’t have it in stock.