Set a New Standard

Setting a new standard doesn't just change people's perceptions of a company; it shifts its entire category. Once set apart, a prestigious brand will have no alternatives, merely inferior substitutes.

Grey Goose and Black Magic

When Grey Goose vodka was introduced, it threw down the ultraluxury vodka gauntlet. The price tag, literally double that of other vodkas on the shelf, was unthinkably high. Yet more incredibly, the price was established before the bottle was designed, before the distillery was named, and even before the vodka recipe itself was invented.

That might seem like putting the cart before the goose, but not only did Grey Goose define a new ultrapremium vodka category, it closed the largest-ever single brand sale when Bacardi bought the spirit for $2 billion after its first eight years. Instead of dogfighting with others to gain status, it simply forced the entire category to realign.

What Happens When the World's Most Dazzling Diamonds Lose Their Sparkle?

No royalty, dynasty, or government empire can surpass the House of Winston in its legacy of celebrated jewels. The brand's glorious past includes many of the most famous diamonds, and diamond wearers, in history.

As one fine example, the grande dame of gemstones, the Hope Diamond, began its dramatic life with Louis XIV. After peering down from its golden perch atop the crown jewels of France, it then spent time in the jewel boxes of Marie Antoinette and Countess du Barry before becoming the possession of the New York jeweler Harry Winston. Winston donated the forty-five carats of dark blue perfection to the Smithsonian, where it now sits on cushioned display as specimen 2177868. Diamonds from the Winston vault have commemorated some of the most renowned romances ever, from European royalty to Hollywood royalty. It was at Harry Winston that Richard Burton bought Elizabeth Taylor's engagement ring, and where Aristotle Onassis bought Jackie O's marquise.

And not without reason. The House of Winston was known for selecting only the rarest gems, with just 0.01% of the world's reserves deemed worthy to sell under its name. Yet what makes the Winston brand even more precious are the stories behind the stones themselves.

Mr. Winston once purchased a 726-carat stone in London, setting off a heated debate about the safest way to get it back to the States. A league of bodyguards? Chartered ship? Colossal insurance policy? Harry Winston wouldn't say which method he'd picked. Two weeks later, the priceless jewel arrived at his Fifth Avenue store, sent via standard registered mail, for 64 cents postage.

Shipping methods weren't Harry Winston's only nerve-racking decision. He cut many of his diamonds himself, often with tens of millions of dollars resting on a single mallet tap. Later in his career, when negotiating the largest-ever individual parcel sale of diamonds in history, Mr. Winston made one final request: "How about a little something to sweeten the deal?" His counterpart wordlessly took a 181-carat rough from his pocket, and rolled it across the table. The resulting D-flawless emerald-cut diamond has since been known as "The Deal Sweetener."

Harry Winston was Prestige incarnate, living and breathing in every single piece. Wearing jewelry from the House of Winston grants an absolute sense of excellence that nothing else possibly could. Yet after the passing of Mr. Winston himself, the House of Winston slipped into the realm of commodity.

"The Inside of a Coffin"

While the Harry Winston Fifth Avenue flagship store boasted exclusivity and discretion to older shoppers, for others, it was fussy