

and outdated. The gray silk decor was described as “the inside of a coffin.” With the new abundance of cubic zirconia, five-carat earrings became rather passé.

Could the House of Winston reclaim its Prestige Advantage? As part of the team charged with updating the brand, I focused on the emotional experience of wearing gemstones of excellence.

While diamonds might be billions of years old, as with every product, their cultural context changes over time. To survive amid new competitors and a changing economy, we summoned Prestige cues. First, we wooed the world’s most legendary portrait photographer, Richard Avedon. Next, we featured movie stars such as Anjelica Huston and Mena Suvari.

Then it was time to write the headlines for the ads, which ran in magazines such as *Vogue* and *Town & Country*. As the writer for the headlines, I had to fascinate with words. It wasn’t easy. How to express just how exceptional these diamonds actually are?

To understand this experience myself, I visited the flagship store. There in the vault, I tried on some of the world’s most iconic pieces of jewelry. A forty-carat ring once owned by Jackie O. A \$10 million necklace worn by an actress as she accepted her Academy Award. Pieces that are loaned only to A-level stars and brides in Dubai. Adorned with those weighty gems, I found out that there’s a thrill in wearing the Earth’s most precious offerings. At that point, the headlines almost wrote themselves:

*People will stare. Make it worth their while.*

*Watch the women watching the men watching you.*

*RSVP your regrets to the ordinary.*

In 1867, Karl Marx had commented in *Das Kapital* that “If we could succeed, at a small expenditure of labor, in converting

carbon into diamonds, their value might fall below that of bricks.” Quite fortunately, the House of Winston proved him wrong.

Within your company, in the office, you can fascinate with Prestige by setting a new standard.

What emblems elevate your brand? As Napoleon said, “Men will go to battle and die for a scrap of blue ribbon.” What blue ribbon could become your orange ticket?

### Develop Emblems

Long before the establishment of Dior and Gucci, societies were fascinated by Prestige. In ancient times, coveted badges included coats of arms, specific colors, modes of wearing hair, wreaths, shoes, lineage, burial practices, certain seats, and insignia of office. In certain African tribes, scars prove one’s bravery and valor. In Western societies, a fat, pale body once indicated wealth and success, because only outdoor manual laborers were tanned and thin; today, a tanned, thin body is a status symbol associated more with a spinning class than with spinning a combine harvester.

### What’s Your Emblem?

Just as they paid absurd prices for tulips 380 years ago, people today pay absurd prices for logos. Prestige emblems can cost a few billion dollars (a private island on the Palms of Dubai), or a few cents (a nifty new stamp), but they usually have little or no intrinsic value. Regardless of price tag or economy, these principles remain the same. Emblems themselves will change over time, but the human fascination with emblems will not.

Emblems fulfill a deep, instinctive need because they say something about us. The psychologist Abraham Maslow calls this “esteem”: the need to feel important, respected, and recognized as an achiever. We satisfy this need by communicating our value to the world around us.