



**SESSION 1: ALIGNMENT BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE**  
**How Interlachen Created a Foundation for Transformation**





HIGHLINE PARTNERS

**Transformational Brand Strategy**



Founded by ad agency veterans, our team has deep experience across some of the best brands in the world.









## **Brand is powerful, but clubs are weird.**

We spent two years adapting our approach to fit the unique challenges faced by clubs. We are grateful to GMs who spent the time with us, giving us insights into the club industry.



If you think of brand as your logo, you're missing out on how you can use it as a tool to address so many more challenges.





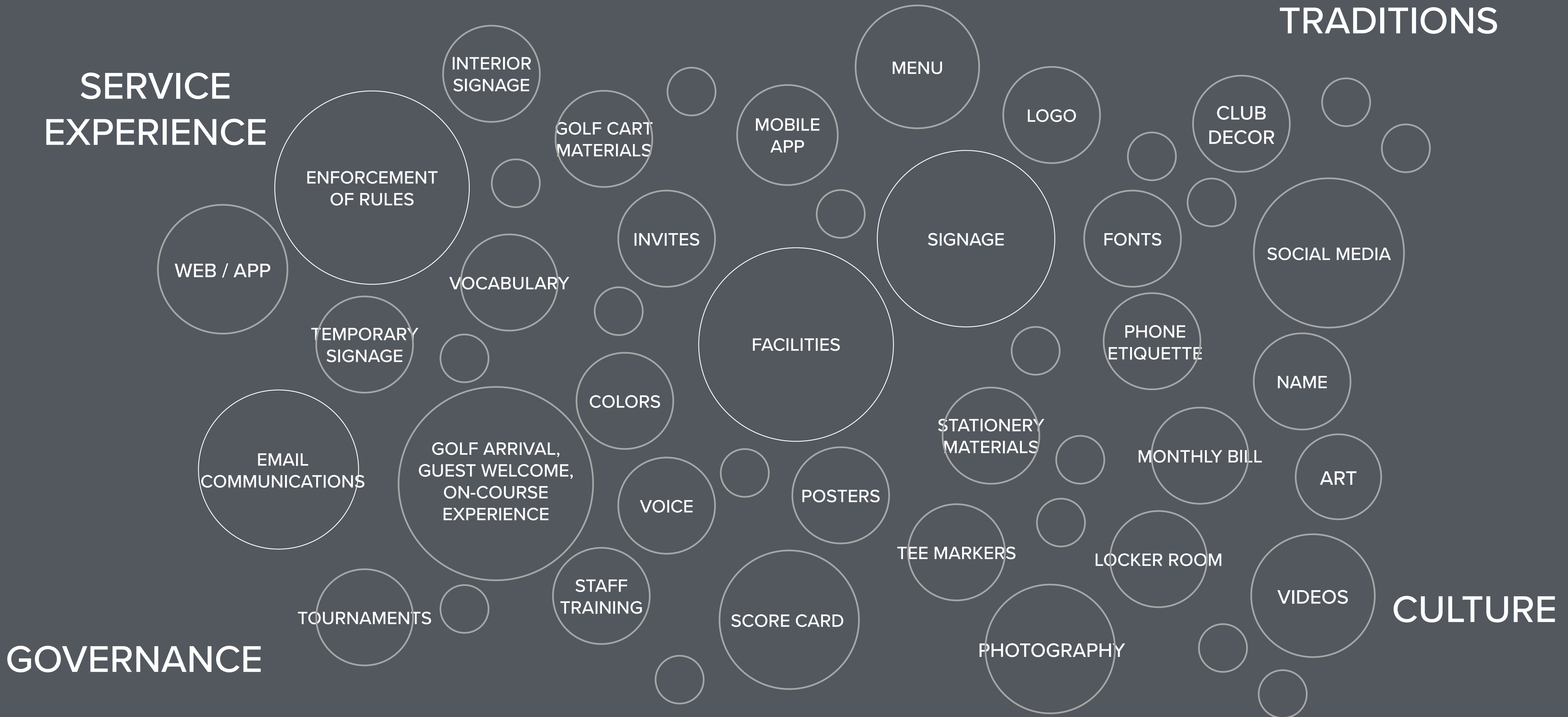


All Great Brand Experiences are Rooted in Identity



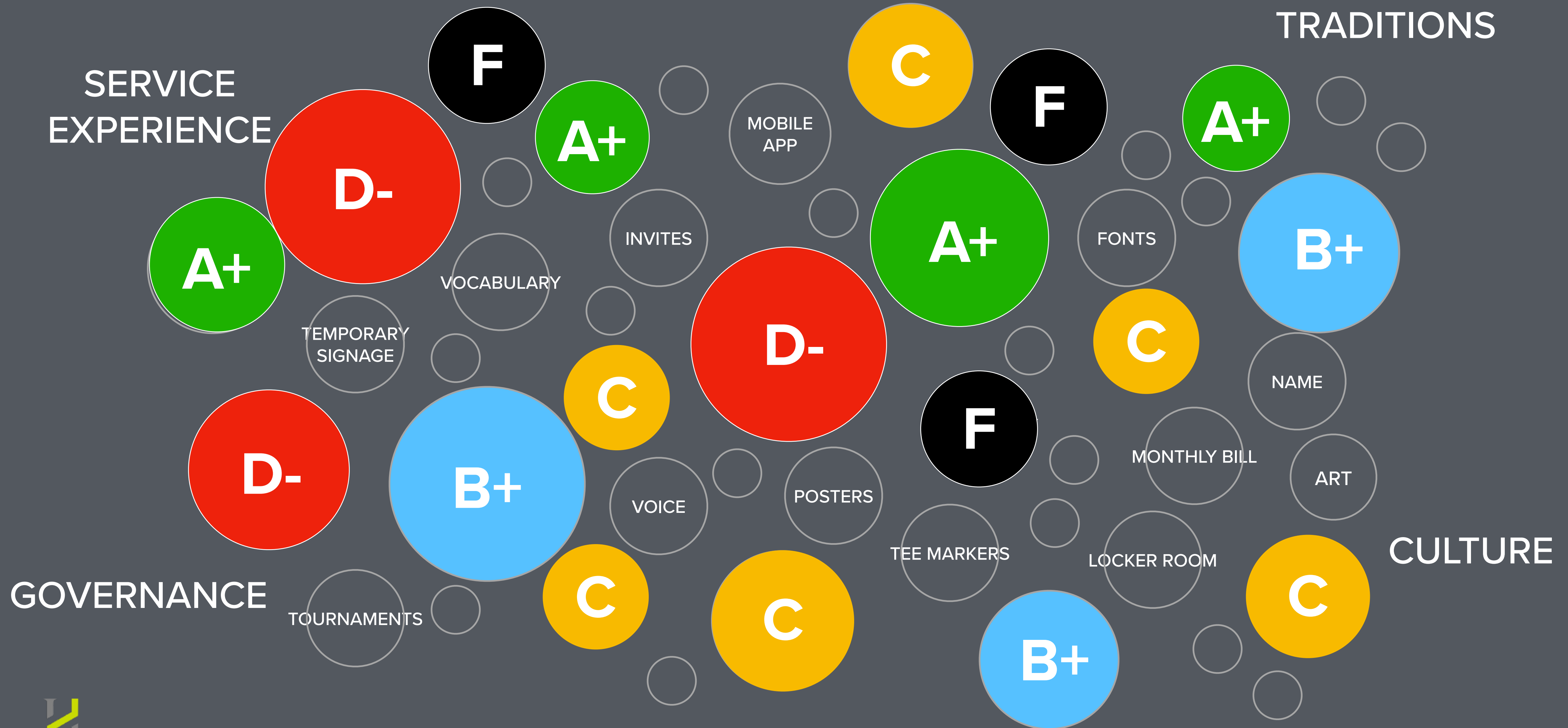


Your club's brand — *your identity* — is defined by a million touchpoints.





When your touchpoints are not aligned, your identity suffers.







Alignment starts at Identity



**So, why is it so hard to create alignment at clubs?**



# Why is Alignment so Difficult?



**Board turnover creates shifting priorities**

For board members this is a pastime, for GMs this is your career



**Generations have different expectations**

For what they want and who they think should be in charge



**Capital projects reveal deeper challenges**

Money escalates emotions and reveals power dynamics



**Identity Alignment** is the deep keel below the waterline that helps you withstand choppy conditions that are inevitable and move quickly when wind is at your back





# THE BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM

PART 1:  
**Identity  
Alignment**  
Clarity before decisions

PART 2:  
**Standards**

Consistency Across  
Club Touchpoints

PART 3:  
**Execution**

Bringing the brand to  
life every day

*Future Sessions*



## Three Typical Scenarios:

A:

**Board recognizes the need** for alignment and has **empowered the GM** to lead it  
*(this is ideal but rare)*

B:

**GM and staff know there's a need** but must convince the board it was their idea  
*(this is the most common)*

C:

**Cracks are just starting to show** and a big project looms  
*(iceberg ahead!)*





# Interlachen Country Club

In 2016, the Board knew they faced challenges. This is their ten-year journey.





1909

CLICK [HERE](#) TO WATCH A VIDEO  
ABOUT SERVICE AT INTERLACHEN



**Over the past ten years, these are the steps Interlachen took to revitalize their club**



#1

**Admit there's problem and  
be willing to invest to fix it**







#2

**Decide who gets to be in the room**



#3

**Demonstrate misalignment  
by uncovering assumptions**







#4

**What is core?**

**What is fringe?**

**What is out of bounds?**



#5

**Directional feedback** vs.  
**Specific feedback** vs.  
**The Opinions Committee**





ESTD. 1909  BUILT 2023

To enrich the lives of our members by  
providing outstanding championship golf  
and family experiences.

TRADITION • EXCELLENCE • STEWARDSHIP • INNOVATION • ENJOYMENT • COMMUNITY

FOREVER:

**Measure**

**Refine**

**Reinforce**

**Reinforce** *again*







## **Not all of us are Interlachen.**

The challenge is that no single entity at clubs owns Identity Alignment.



Why Alignment Breaks Down:

# Role Ambiguity

Is leadership expected to lead—or to execute?

Are committees advisory—or operational?

Does strategy guide decisions—or personalities?



Why Alignment Breaks Down:

# Complexity exposes Gaps

Large capital projects

Overlapping committees

Increased financial risk

High visibility and emotions



Why Alignment Breaks Down:

# **GMs feel Responsible without the Authority**

How do I move this forward without overstepping?

How do I align people who don't report to me?

How do I do this when education and attention are uneven?



# Start by Assessing Your Situation

Which scenario am I in?

*Empowered*  
*Aware but without support*  
*Jointly concerned*

Is there a catalyst?

*Upcoming Project*  
*New Board, Strategic Planning*  
*or Visible Friction*

Do I have board allies?

*Current, future or even past*  
*board members who still have*  
*influence*



1. **Find** early wins to build trust & relationships
2. **Leverage** wins proactively to show how alignment improves experience
3. **Look** for the right moment (capital project, strategic planning, board transition)
4. **Identify** future board leaders who “get it”
5. **Frame** everything in what members care about the most (gain or loss)
6. **Consult** with colleagues (like Joel) to understand their processes
7. **Share** examples of peer club successes with your board and members
8. **Visit** peer clubs with board and key members to open up their eyes
9. **Reinforce** Mission, Vision and Value constantly
10. **Be Patient** and know it requires time
11. **Partner** with an independent party to mitigate emotions (*who could that be?*)



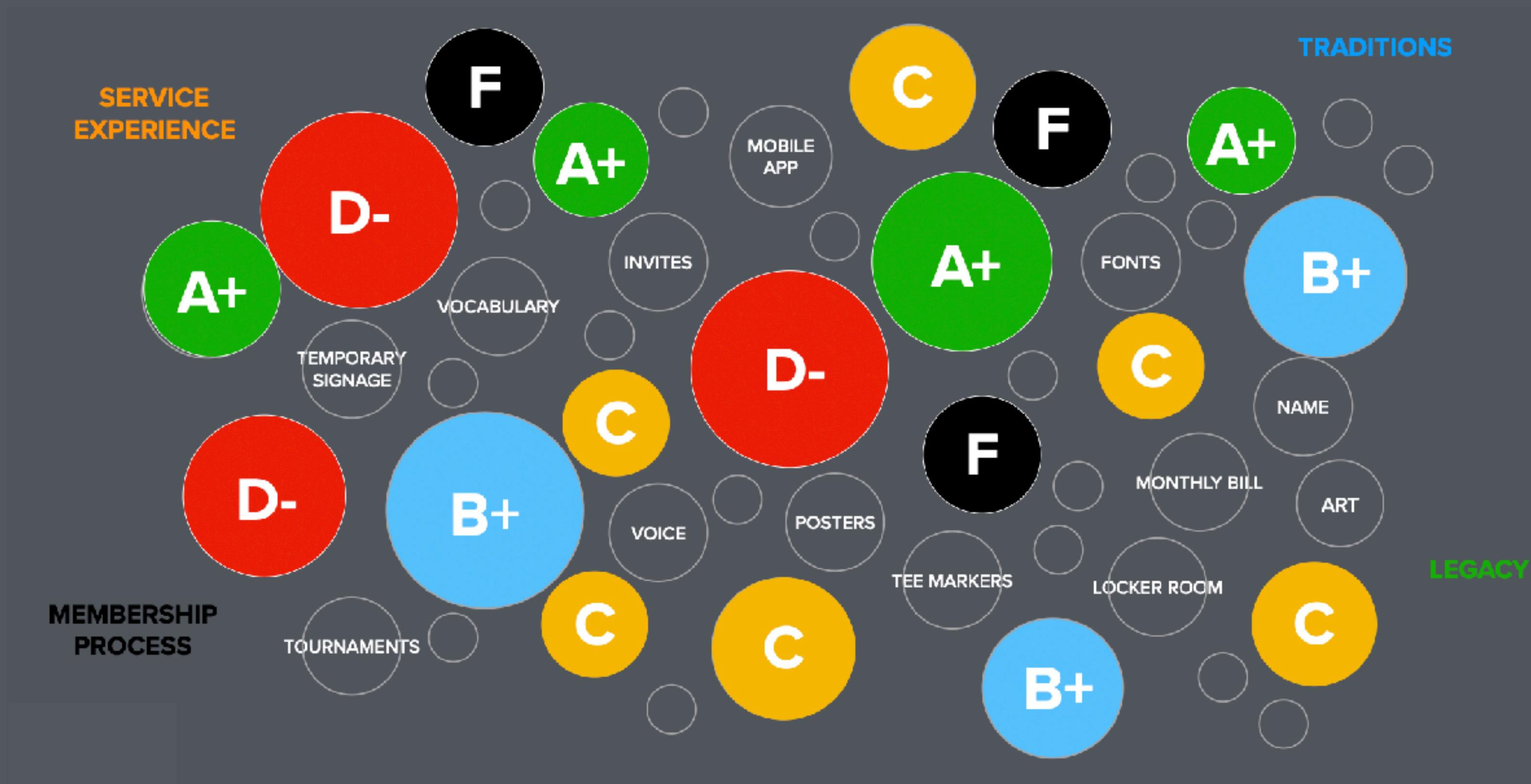
# We can help

1. **If you want to explore this yourself:** We have diagnostic tools and frameworks we're happy to share
2. **If you want to build the case internally:** We offer board education sessions and alignment assessments
3. **If you're interested in our approach:** We facilitate the full alignment process, from diagnosis through implementation.



**This is what a Brand Operating System can do:**





**When your world looks like this, everything becomes difficult**

Boards micromanage

Members blame staff

And capital projects barely stand a chance



# BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM

It all starts with alignment.





# BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM

WHO WE ARE

WHY WE EXIST

WHAT WE VALUE

WHAT MAKES US  
UNIQUE

HOW WE MAKE  
DECISIONS





# BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM

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WHY WE EXIST

WHAT WE VALUE

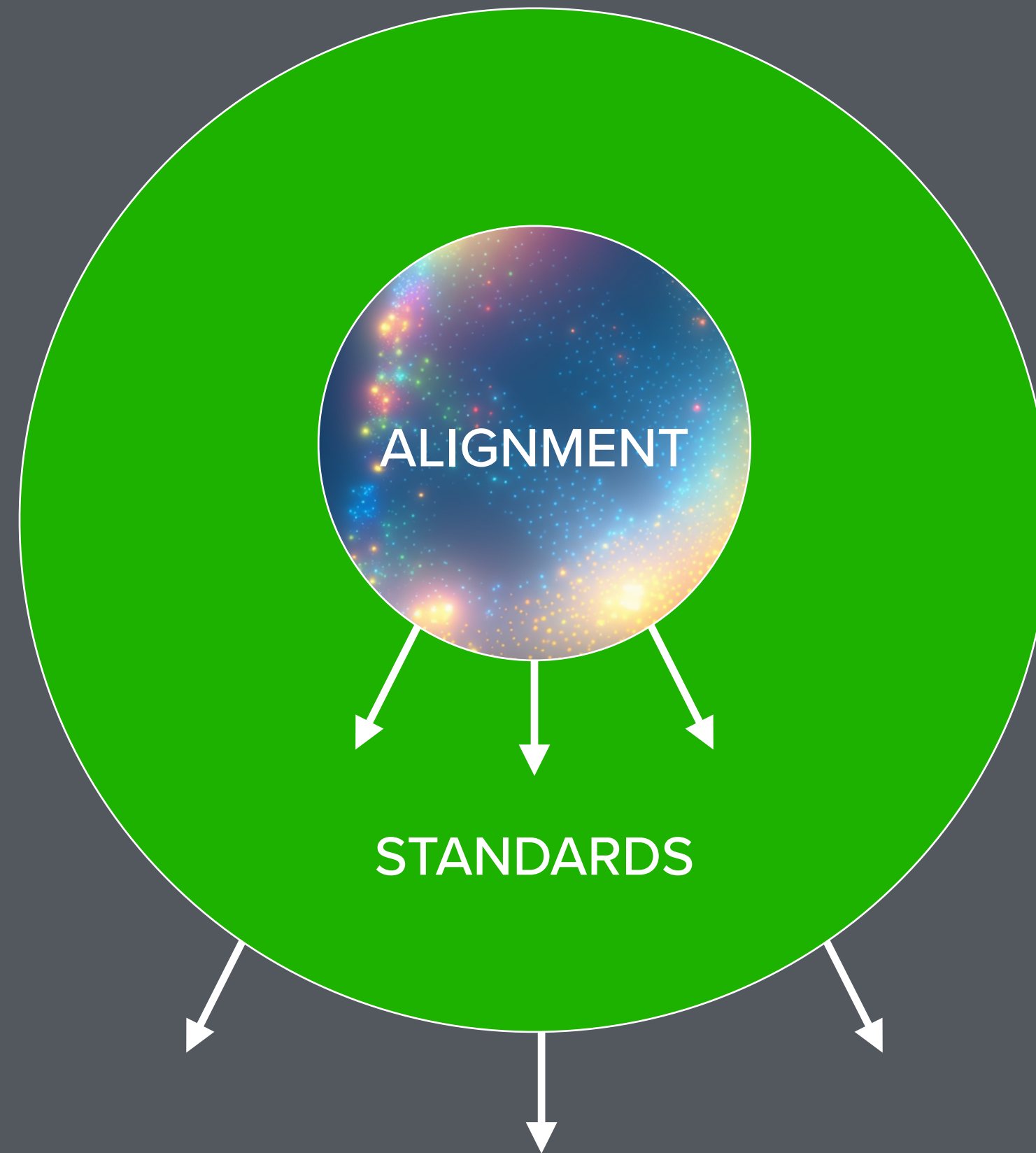
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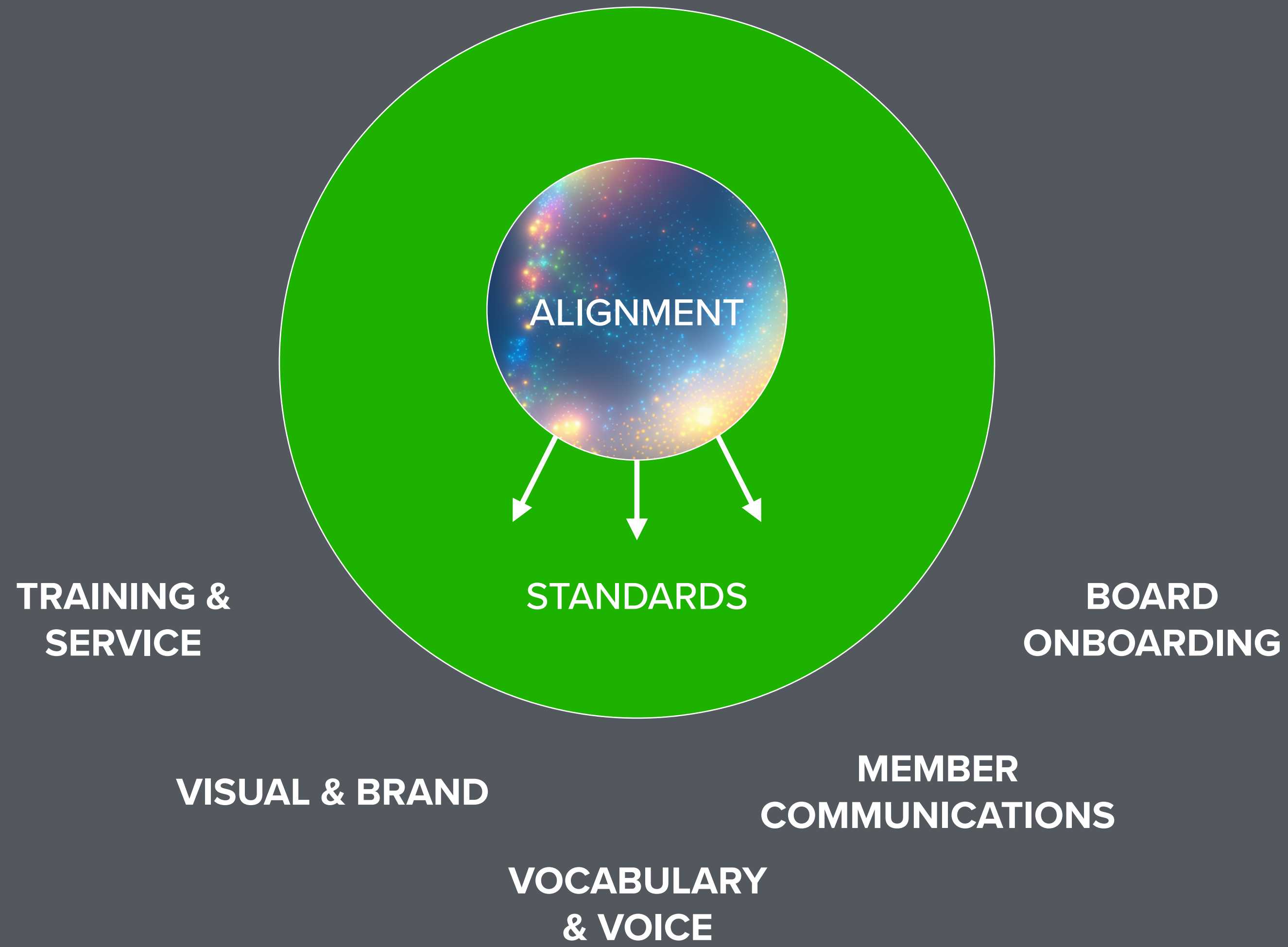


# BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM



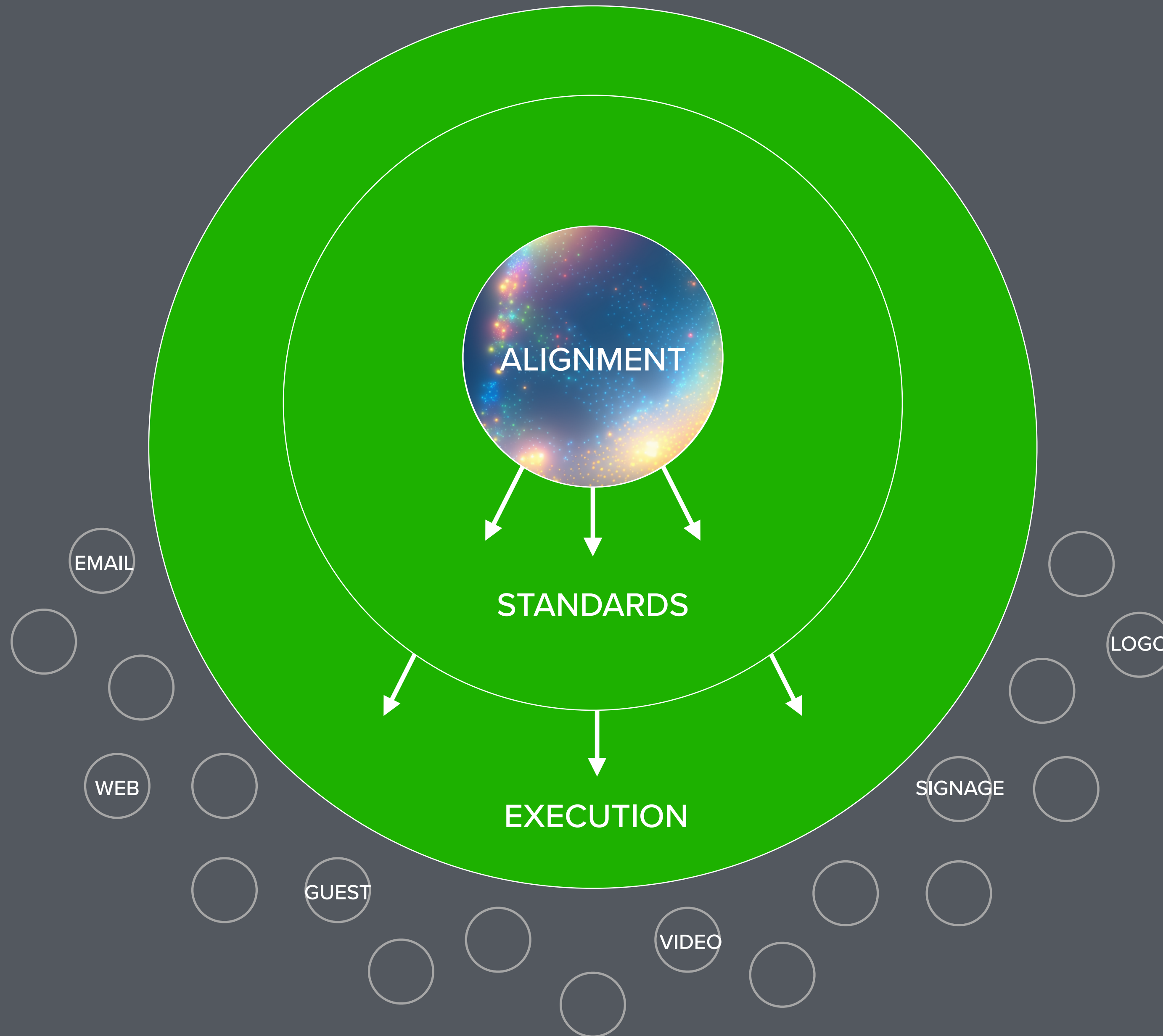


# BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM





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# BRAND OPERATING SYSTEM





MISSION



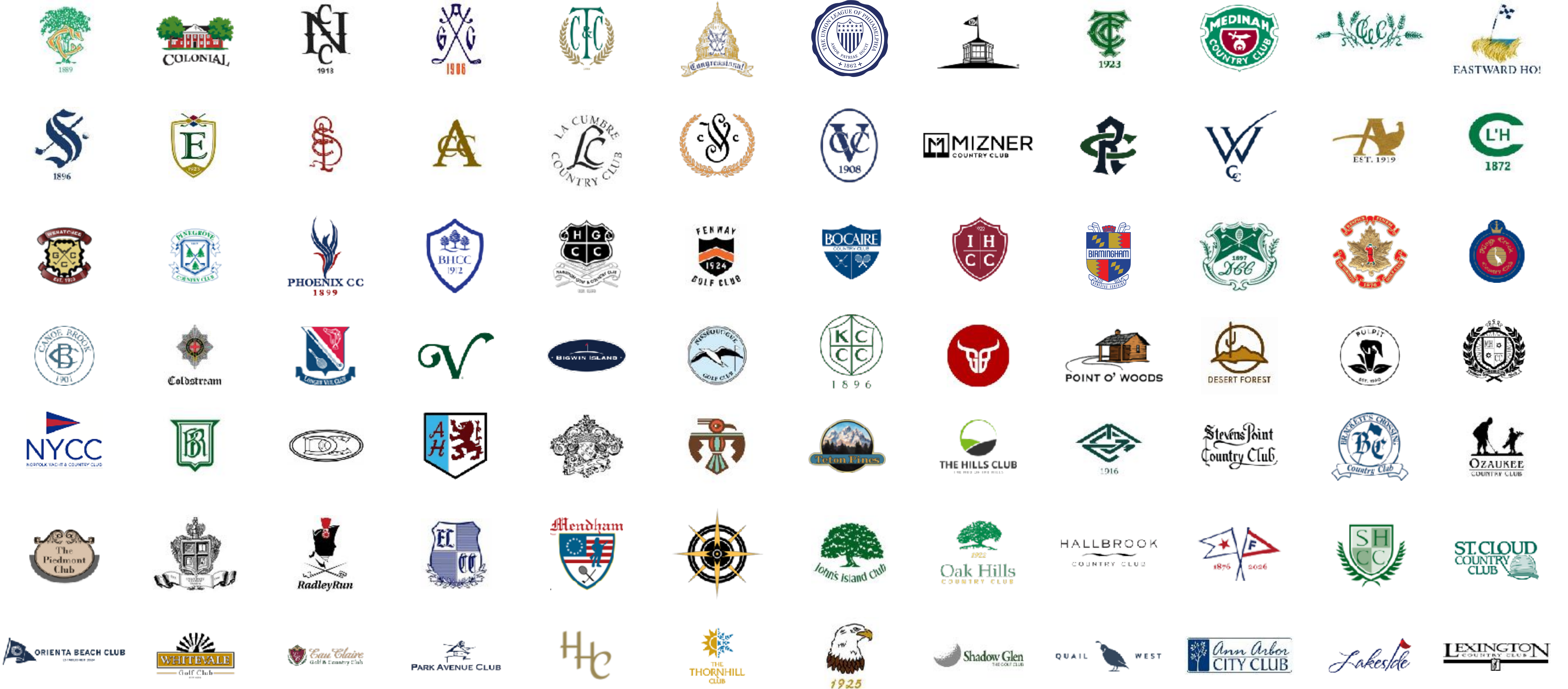
**BRAND  
CAN BE THE  
CONNECTIVE  
TISSUE**



MEMBER EXPERIENCE



# Thank you for joining us.





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February 17 - 20

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