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Mid-sized brands are stuck in the middle like the proverbial middle-child. They aren't shiny, new and compelling, and they aren't well known or well established with a solid performance history.

I constantly tell my startup clients, getting into the market isn't the hardest part (yes, it's hard). It's scaling, surviving and thriving that require massive amounts of time, energy, expertise, flexibility, vision and yes, money. The hurdles become higher. The competition is steeper and more plentiful. It's harder to stand out. If the brand hasn't built a solid community when it hits mid-level, it will cost much more to do so than as a small startup.

I don't have a hard fast script for addressing this stuck-in-the-middle syndrome. Sometimes, after reaching this point, brands become a bit complacent, thinking they've arrived. Surviving and thriving today requires constant reinvention, while remaining true to the brand's DNA. That's a tall order.

Brands often become impatient, branching out for growth's sake, losing sight of their focal point, clouding their marketing message. I advise them to continue to act like a startup. Remember what lean and mean felt like! Continue to tighten the brand focus and stay on track.

Don't try to please everyone. It's impossible. Listen to your consumer. Understand how far she/he will allow the brand to stretch. Don't go beyond that. This discipline is one of the most powerful lessons a brand can learn, and it will be one of the most difficult challenges a brand will face time and time again.

Conclusion: Think like a small brand. Be flexible, agile and ready to pivot. Stay focused. Don't overextend. When growth happens and you find you've become a mid-sized brand, don't veer off course. You have a long way to go on this journey.