REBRANDING YOUR ORGANIZATION

A PRESENTATION BY

Advantage
COMMUNICATIONS INC.
Marketing • Advertising • Public Relations

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Situation Overview

Advantage Communications, Inc. has always been very concerned with inconsistency in communications and the generic utilization of an organization brand name across the companies' platform. We define ourselves as our client's "brand police".

Strategic Branding

We believe that there is a tremendous opportunity to fully develop brands for any organization. Our ultimate goal is to optimize all available resources to build brands—and brand equity.

Basic Branding Fundamentals

Brands communicate the attributes and functions of the products and/or services they represent. Therefore, Brand Differentiation is important to effective branding. Rather than referring to one single name for everything, we need to communicate the different attributes and functions of each brand—respectively.

The Benefits of Branding

A cohesive brand is among a company's most valuable marketing assets. For example, we won several Davey Awards for Integrated Campaigns—not for any one specific ad; but because all of our marketing activities were strategically aligned, all driving consistent brand messaging and communications.

Consistency of both image and message ensure stakeholders' familiarity with your organization stems beyond just recognizing a name and encompasses who you are, what you do, who you serve and what you stand for. With scarce and limited resources, we must ensure that all of our communications investments are optimized for greatest Return On Investment (ROI).

Brand Equity—The Value of Intangible Assets

Research has shown us for decades that intangible assets have enormous value to business, and companies that invest in building, protecting, and exploiting their intangible assets are reaping the rewards. Take Coca-Cola, Disney, or McDonald's logo and ask anyone to argue that each of those logos, which represent intangible assets—trademarked brands, do not have value.

For example, a study revealed that the brand value of Coca-Cola in 2002 was $69.6 billion, and the brand contribution to the market capitalization of the parent company was calculated at 51%! Disney's brand contribution was calculated at 68% and McDonald's was 71%! The study was conducted by Interbrand and J.P. Morgan to identify the top 100 brands of 2002 found that brands (an intangible asset) contributed significantly to shareholder value among public companies.

Companies that understand the importance and value of their intangible assets will fight to protect them. They'll invest time, money, and effort on identifying those assets, monitoring them, and making sure they're secure. Those intangible assets give the companies that own them significant competitive advantages, and those competitive advantages enable the companies to continually increase company value.

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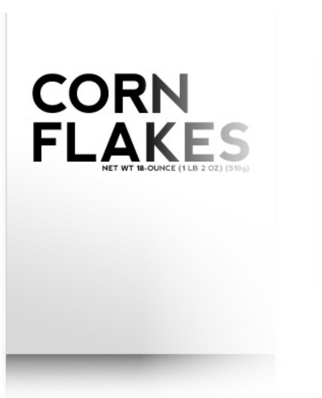

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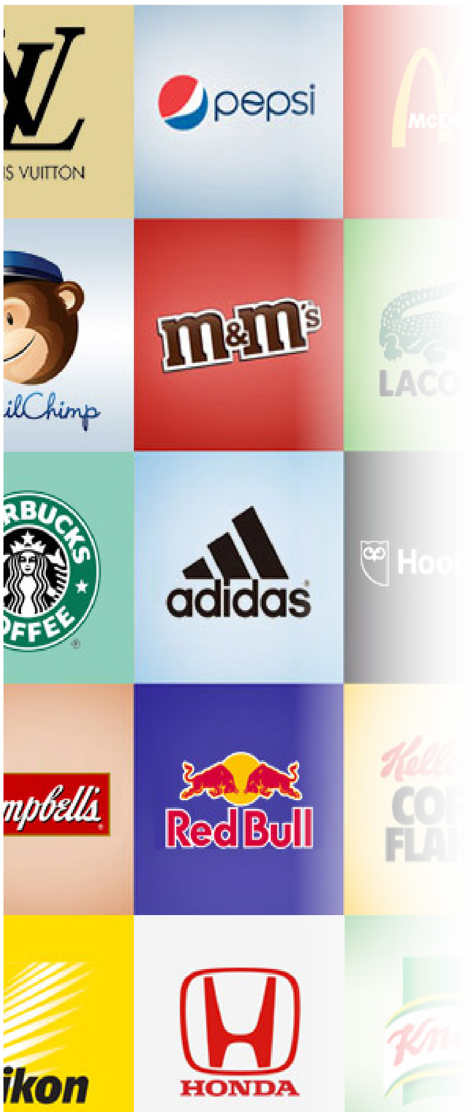
Branded vs. Generic

Generic terms result when product classes become commodities—and they enjoy no legal protection. For example, a "car" is a generic term; while a "Mercedes-Benz" is a brand that is protected by trademarks, and is a valuable company asset. Unfortunately, some companies have allowed their "brands" to lose legal / trademark protection because they have allowed their usage to become generic. Classic examples are "Kleenex" for tissue, "Xerox" for photo-copies or even "Windsurfer" for sail-boarding.

Family Brand

The marketing strategy of family branding, or umbrella branding, involves marketing and selling your product lines using a single brand name, according to David L. Kurtz, author of "Contemporary Marketing." When you use a family brand, you make it easy for your customers to find products produced by your company, even if the products have little in common. However, we should still strive to use the parent brand (and/or a non-generic term) to communicate the family brands. For example, The Coca-Cola Company, is the parent brand, Coca-Cola is the product brand—but there is no "coke" brand.



Consumer Brands (B2C) vs. Business Brands (B2B)

For companies that market primarily to consumers, the corporate brand may not work for investors. Investor Relations Officers (IROs) in these companies may want to develop an "investor relations" brand. Consider this example. A major national refrigerated food company's brand is built on freshness and nutrition—great attributes for consumers, but hardly of primary concern to investors. However, working with the company's IRO and senior management, you strive to develop an investor relations brand that tells a compelling story about the company's unique distribution network and the financial, marketing and logistics advantages it created.

The brand was deployed in an investor video, on the company's investor website and in the talking points of every presentation made by the company to investors. Now, when management meets with investors, they have an ingrained perspective on what the company stands for and what its long-term "value proposition" is for investors. Consumers see their brands in the supermarket and think "fresh." But investors see ticker symbol on their Bloomberg terminal and think "scalable distribution platform." Two different — and largely unrelated brands — for two different audiences.

The situation is typically quite different for B2B companies. Often, the corporate brand and investor brand are closely related. For example, the corporate customers of a major network hardware client of ours demand financial strength, management depth and full transparency before making multi-million dollar purchase decisions. These are precisely the qualities investors want to see when evaluating an investment in the company. In this situation, the corporate brand works for investors and customers — but it must be carefully adapted to align effectively with investor concerns.

Branding and Donor Cultivation

In today's complex and even hostile investor environment, a company can no longer rely on performance and strategy alone to connect with investors. Companies with an engaging investor relations brand have the advantage of delivering focused, consistent messages that lead to more powerful connections with investors.

IROs have always straddled the worlds of finance, marketing, and communications. Interactive annual reports and investor videos, are tools to deliver critical messages to the investor audience. But to work effectively, they must be deployed in the context of an overarching story, or brand. More and more, IROs need to understand the power of strategic branding if they want to get their story to the right people with the right messages.

Why Branding Matters in Investor Relations

In its simplest form, branding is the art and science of creating perceptions among an organization's key audiences—customers, prospects, investors, communities and employees. Traditionally, IROs had little to do with branding; they let a company's numbers do the talking, supported by presentations of management's strategy. But in a more complex and occasionally even hostile investor environment, a company's performance and strategy must be presented within the framework of an overall story: what does the company stand for? What is its core value proposition? In short, what is its brand?

The terms brand, product and business are often used interchangeably when they're referred to by name, but from a legal and marketing point of view, they're very different things. Your business name, brand name, and product or service name could all match, but they don't have to. They're different things and whether or not they match, they all need to be properly cleared for use and protected. Once you start using a product name in the marketplace, it becomes a brand name and should be cleared and protected as a valuable company asset.

Brand Confusion—The Opportunity Cost

Everything communicates. "email signatures, newsletters, press release, print ads, billboards, direct mail, promotions, signage, etc." everything communicates—and you should always communicate your organization brand. Every time you spend advertising dollars or devote promotional resources that do not build "brand equity" is waste and a lost opportunity.

This is a common problem in the non-profit arena. Sometimes a non-profit organization sponsors a community event that has great success. Often the event itself becomes "the brand" and the non-profit (the actual sponsor) is forgotten, or worse, confused with another organization. A strong brand and good branding makes it easier to sell additional products or services, and attract additional donors.

To eliminate these problems you need to establish clear "Brand Standards" for the use of the marks and also to provide staff / leadership training about branding, e.g., Brand Bootcamp, and audit the brand.

1. Set brand standards

Ensuring everyone is on the same page regarding who your company is, what you do and what you stand for starts inside the organization. If brand clarity internally is not specific then externally your brand is ambiguous. While brand standards manuals vary in length and depth depending on the organization and how/ where the brand is applied, the basics will always apply – includes parameters for logo usage, brand colors, key message points and associated imagery. It can also be helpful to provide not just guidelines for what is approved brand usage, but also a few examples of common missteps.

2. Conduct messaging workshops

Mixed messaging is a common cause of brand confusion. For businesses with multiple products/services/verticals, it can often stem from colleagues being more familiar with certain aspects of the business than others. Messaging workshops/training can be an effective tool for standardizing messaging and minimizing confusion.

Remember, while your company's brand standards manual includes a few of your core/key message points, you want to ensure your entire team is well-versed in articulating the brand. For example, when a sales person is at a networking event and asked to explain what the company does, you want to be sure their message is not only on-brand, but succinct and easily understood. Role playing and training exercises can help to demonstrate best practices, and missteps to avoid.

3. Audit the brand

Nobody knows a company better than the people who are at the core of the organization. However, this intimate knowledge of the organization sometimes requires the outside perspective of an unbiased third-party such as a branding agency to review the brand – from collateral, to messages, to sales materials and so on – to identify inconsistencies and gaps that need to be addressed. A brand audit can help to uncover both items that should be added to or clarified within your brand standards manual as well as opportunities to strengthen marketing assets by increased clarity of messaging.

Recommendation

Advantage Communications, Inc. understands branding for organizations and provided training for several companies and organizations. These have included "Boot Camp" training for clients such as Foundation for the Mid-South, Verizon, and Central Arkansas Water, all of which required revisiting brand standards and providing training to employees for consistency.

We would provide Boot Camp Training to your organization to assure key personnel could translate the necessity of brand standards. This would assure standards are upheld and all internal associates and communications are consistent with the approved messages and communications strategy... Training would begin after completion and approval of the brand standards.

Brand Bootcamp:

Smart marketers spend days or weeks and sometimes months developing their "marketing message." They examine and experiment with taglines and logos. Additionally, it's not unusual for them to spend hours and hours determining the "right" company colors before they set out to launch. However, there is one area that's almost always forgotten in the planning phase of a new company or the restructuring of an old one. That area involves training the staff to understand and to reflect the marketing message and brand. Your employees can be one of your greatest marketing assets. Don't overlook them.

Your employees meet, greet and assist your customers in many different ways; according to their own individual styles and personalities, all the time. They are the face of your brand. Therefore, you should engage staff members right from the start and encourage their input. You should use the staff as a focus group – after all, who knows your clientele better than they do? By doing this, you will not only get support from the staff but you might gain some additional insight and ideas that may not have been considered otherwise.

Internal Branding—Branding from the Inside Out

Marketing starts from the inside out. Do your employees believe in the products and services you offer? Are they standing 100 percent behind the mission of your brand(s)? Are they living your brand(s)? It's critical that your employees are informed and involved in the new initiatives and strategies that are taking place within the company. It can have detrimental and even serious results if the staff is unable or unwilling to fully support your marketing efforts.

Synchronize Your Brand Personality, Values, and Corporate Culture

So how can you begin the internal branding campaign within your organization? The marketing team should work closely with your human resources team to ensure that the common values of your company are in sync both internally and externally. It's not just how the staff approaches your target market, but how they work with each other as well.

Reinforce and Repeatedly Explain Brand Values and Behaviors

You must use your internal communications to reinforce and explain the values and behaviors that reflect the brand promise. You must continuously do this until they become second nature (but don't overdo it). You don't want your employees to roll their eyes and tune you out when they hear "the speech" coming. You can change it up a little or transform it into a gesture instead, such as a thumbs-up or okay. Use it under different circumstances, but don't trot it out in front of clients or customers.

Get Your Employees Behind Your Brand

Your Human Resources Department should align your criteria for recruiting and rewarding employees with the criteria of the brand value. Look for the right skills and aptitudes that will represent the brand promise effectively. Make them believers. When people believe in a product or service, they become more enthusiastic about selling it.

Action Steps:

A. Trademark the intellectual property of your organization
B. Establish clear Brand Standards for staff and employees.
C. Audit the existing use and/or misuse of the your Brand.
D. Cease using your brand name in the generic form—ASAP.
E. Schedule system wide branding training, i.e., Brand Boot Camp.

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