

## GETTING YOUR ORGANISATION'S BRANDING RIGHT

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of a good brand!

A brand helps people recognise and respond positively to your organisation. It aids recollection. It builds ownership. It positions you, and differentiates you from other organisations in your field. It shapes and reflects your reputation. It can also develop pride and a sense of belonging for staff.

A brand is sometimes referred to as a 'corporate identity' or 'corporate personality'.

It is no longer just FTSE 500 companies like Tesco and Ford that take branding seriously, it has helped Oxfam and the Amnesty to achieve global recognition. Political parties use branding, so do football teams and individual footballers - David Beckham and Thierry Henri are brands!

However, branding is not about spin. A successful brand cannot be built on thin air. The link between the brand and the quality of services, the values of your work, the culture and ethos of your organisation, or, for example, the aims of a campaign needs to be strong. Successful branding needs the firm foundations of top quality service and well founded values.

Nor is a brand just a name or a logo. It is an amalgam of all the images, feelings, beliefs and experiences that people have about your organisation. You develop the brand, but it has to be owned by your stakeholders, to chime with their hopes and needs. Being associated with your organisation and your brand, will say something about them, it should enhance their identity. Your brand should feel like home! The mark of a successful brand is that it generates loyalty – far greater loyalty than can be explained by the service or product alone.

Brand recognition affects the workings of the brain.

A well-known label is so influential, say researchers, that it can alter consumers' perception of the product's taste.

The experiment, a laboratory-controlled version of the famous Pepsi Challenge, revealed that flavour seems to be the last thing that consumers rely on in their preference for Pepsi or Coca-Cola.

When asked to taste blind, they showed no preference. However, when the participants were shown company logos before they drank, the Coke label, the more famous of the two, had a dramatic impact: three-quarters of the tasters declared they preferred Coke.

At the same time the researchers found that the Coke label stimulated a huge increase in activity in parts of the brain associated with cultural knowledge, memory and self-image - so much that the scientists could use brain scans to predict which soft drink an individual was likely to prefer. The Pepsi label produced no such increase.

It is believed to be the first time that brand marketing has been shown to have a direct effect on the brain's capacity to make a choice.

..... it suggests that a handful of iconic brands have a particular hold on the public mind..... "Everybody's heard of Coke and Pepsi. They have messages and, in the case of Coke, those message have insinuated themselves in our nervous system," Dr P Read Montague, director of the Brown Human Neuroimaging Laboratory at Baylor College in Houston, Texas, said. "There's a huge effect of the Coke label on brain activity related to the control of actions, the dredging up of memories and self-image. There is a response in the brain which leads to a behavioural effect."

From The Independent, 17 October 2004

In developing the brand, you need to get to the heart of what makes your organisation tick – its values, its beliefs, its culture as well as its vision and mission. The brand must be sturdy enough to carry your aspirations. Your brand also needs to be clear and strong enough to position you and differentiate you from other players in your field.

The brand identity needs to be consistent, it should run through the organisation like writing through a stick of rock – wherever you cut it (customer care, website, media interviews, leaflets, annual reports, presentations, events, even in informal conversations between staff and their friends and family) the 'look and feel' of the organisation should be the same. The tone of voice of the organisation should be consistent. The brand can therefore be used to drive internal as well as external communication. It forms part of the foundations upon which to build the culture of your organisation. Brand values are often used as the focal point of a change management process.

"Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room." Jeff Bezos, Amazon.com

If you are thinking of rebranding your organization, you will find that some stakeholders will welcome the opportunities inherent in a new identity, but others may be concerned that they are losing something (history, their personal investment). They may fear that the organisation they have worked to build is somehow not 'theirs' any more. Typically, this is particularly true for staff and long term supporters. In building a brand identity that is going to work for the long term these stakeholders need to be brought on board, to see how a new brand can add value to their part of the organisation. This means that good internal communication (among staff, board, supporters etc) is a key part of a rebranding strategy. A new brand should empower an organisation and everyone within it.

### Developing or refreshing your brand

A new organisation should give considerable thought to its brand. Set out below are some approaches to developing a new brand.

Some organisations will want to rebrand or refresh their existing brand. We live in a period of major change, and many organisations are deciding that they need to rebrand – sometimes because of internal change (new mission, significant growth, new client base, stagnation) and sometimes because of external change (increased competition, demands from users or funders).

Whatever the purpose, the approach is similar. You need to get to the heart of your organisation, and clarify what you do, how you do it, and your corporate personality.

### Core proposition – the skeleton upon which to build the brand

Develop a core proposition (a 4 or 5 word phrase that sums up your organization and what it does) by answering the following questions:

**A Axis** - What is the axis on which your whole organisation turns (ie what is your big idea, your territory?)

**B Benefit** – How do you benefit your clients, what is the value of your work to your clients? How do you meet their needs and desires?

**C Character** – what is your organisation's character or personality? What is its tone of voice?

**D Different** – what makes you different from other organisations in your field? What do your competitors offer?

**E Excel** – what does your organisation excel at? What makes it special?

**F Feelings** – what feelings and emotions do you want to evoke? What do people say about you? What do you want people to say about you?

**G Going for gold** – where do you want to get to? What is your vision for the future?

### Positioning

Positioning and differentiation are important parts of branding. Having collected together all the responses to your stakeholder questionnaire, you will begin to understand how you are positioned now. This positioning may be wrong for the future and where you want to be. You may need to compare where you are now, to where you want to be. Here is a tool that may help.

Take a look at the following spectra. These are just sample questions, the idea is to prompt discussion. You may also want to use this tool at an earlier stage with stakeholders, in focus groups, staff meetings etc. You can substitute your own talking points, but some of the methods may be useful (eg the continuums).

In the public mind, where is our organisation along a continuum from:

Social Services Dept _____	Radical action group
Blue chip company _____	Good little business
The Times _____	The Sun
Lumbering giant _____	Purposeful colossus

Ask people to place the organisation on a continuum – discuss different perceptions, or explore the significance of everyone agreeing.

Look carefully at the gap between where you are at the moment and where you want to get to– what will you need to do to move from one to the other?

#### *Step 4: Draft your core proposition*

You are now in a position to draft your core proposition – a statement that defines the essence of your organization – what it does, why and what makes it unique.

Your core proposition should be:

- realistic (or realistically aspirational!)
- relevant to your audience
- unique

Your core proposition is essential for further work on:

- naming
- tone of voice
- visual identity

### **Naming**

The bottom line for a name is that it should be distinctive, memorable and easy to pronounce. It should also embody your values, tell a story, position you and carry your messages. Amnesty and Greenpeace are examples of names that meet these criteria.

### **The tone of voice**

Your tone of voice must be consistent with the values. You might want to be dynamic and professional, or warm and friendly, or innovative and creative – the possibilities are endless. They must be agreed and understood throughout the organisation.

Affable	Angry	Businesslike	Bold	Creative	Candid
Approachable	Commanding	Comfortable	Challenging	Canny	Calm
Direct	Dynamic	Daring	Dashing	Engaging	Empathetic
Energetic	Electrifying	Flirtatious	Formidable	Forceful	Gracious
Genial	Glamorous	Gutsy	Hearty	Happy	Inspiring
Innovative	Impressive	Influential	Jovial	Jaunty	Kind
Lively	Responsive	Provocative	Powerful	Passionate	Spirited
Suave	Sassy	Tough	Trustworthy	Vigorous	Wise
Warm	Friendly	Modern	Elegant	Plain speaking	Vibrant

### Mission statement

The mission statement is a statement of purpose. A mission statement should unify and motivate your organisation, Avoid mission statements that are too bland, too broad and uninformative.

### Visual identity

Although a brand is not just a name and a logo, renaming and developing a new logo etc could well be part of a rebranding exercise.

Your visual identity comprises - logo, colours, type faces, use of white space, type of pictures you use etc.

Having decided on your brand, you will need to issue clear style guidelines to ensure that it is used consistently. You will need to police the use of the brand identity and offer training and support to your key communicators).