

Brand Primer

Five Golden Rules for Re-Branding Your Company

Rachel Thomas
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A brand revitalization is a major strategic effort, with significant ramifications on the future of your business.

Before embarking on one, your team should take the time to develop specific goals and a clear roadmap for the initiative. Based on our experience, we also recommend you consider the following oft-overlooked fundamentals:

Build your brand from the inside out

Companies frequently make the mistake of looking only to the marketplace and their target audiences to define their brand. Of course, you need to understand your competitive landscape and your existing relationship with customers. Without this information, you stand little chance of building a brand that is differentiated and relevant. But your brand should be a reflection of your organization: what you do, how you do it and how you think. When there's a break between how your company operates and what it says about itself, you risk suffering a credibility gap. The most persuasive and successful brands are an honest reflection of a company and its culture.

Listen to an outside perspective

Over time you run the risk of losing sight of what makes your company unique and compelling. You may even fall into the trap of placing too much emphasis on things that don't resonate beyond your walls. Outsiders—whether an external partner, recent addition to your team or engaged customer—benefit from a fresh, unbiased perspective. They can identify important elements of your brand that you may take for granted or believe you've over-marketed in the past. Their insights and ideas warrant careful consideration; just remember to reality-test them against your understanding of the brand and company.

Amplify the brand's personality

A positioning statement (by definition, a single, defensible statement that defines your brand relative to the marketplace) is the keystone of the brand, but don't underestimate the importance of personality. **A well-defined personality helps communicate your company's distinct and memorable qualities. If you're in a particularly crowded or commoditized space, personality plays an even larger role in differentiating the brand.** Start by answering the questions: What are the hallmarks of your corporate culture? What personality traits are common across employees? What personality traits do target audiences use to describe the brand? Once you nail down your organization's key personality traits, develop a strategy to manifest them in marketing communications and during interaction with the brand.

Create consensus as you go

Internal education and consensus building are critical to your brand's success. Your employees can communicate your brand with more energy, insight and effectiveness than any other medium. When they're fully aligned around the brand, they become powerful brand ambassadors. Before you begin a brand revitalization, make sure your employees understand the impetus for the initiative and the basic principles of brand development. At key intervals, update your employees on the status of the

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effort and actively solicit their feedback. Once a new brand strategy is in place, take advantage of every opportunity to educate your staff, integrating examples of language, visuals and activities that are on- and off-brand.

Remember, brands live in the details

The strongest brands communicate with consistency over time, and at every point of contact with the public. When you're developing and rolling out your brand, don't forget often-overlooked touchpoints (e.g., hold music, price lists, invoices, user manuals and business correspondence). All of these elements bring your brand to life and need to track to its core message. For example, if your brand is positioned around ease of use, your organizations' user manuals should be clearly written and designed. **No matter how seemingly insignificant, all outbound communications should strengthen—and never dilute—your brand positioning.**