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Perspectives on Brand Identity Design

Q4 2011 VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3

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Redesigning Your Brand's Identity: Knowing When It's Time

In the midst of the current economy's continued instability, the idea of making the investment to redesign your brand's visual identity may seem like it's the last thing you want to do. Yet many forge ahead and are glad they did. Why? A new image or updated identity system is often just the move that improves your performance and increases your relevance in the marketplace at a time when others are retreating. It helps you stand apart and lead.

How do you know when it's time? Here are six solid reasons to revitalize your brand or corporate identity:

1. **You want to signal change.** You have a new CEO or other key leader. The company's capabilities have expanded. Or, you've made a strategic change in how you do business.
2. **Your identity no longer reflects who you are or what you do.** A series of seismic shifts or incremental changes over the years may have made your current identity outdated. Perhaps a recent acquisition is complicating the brand structure or company culture and requires a reorganization. At some point you may realize you've reached "adult" status in your firm's lifecycle; you're no longer the newbie on the block. Any of these can happen at one time or another over the life of a brand, prompting the need to assess how well your current identity is serving the brand.
3. **You want to revitalize your brand's image.** The brand is successful, yet you feel it could say or do more. Maybe it's so well known it's reached iconic status. Apple, Nike, Target and now Starbucks use only a symbol, no words. Your identity may have been designed before you realized how large your business would be, which markets you might enter, or what products or services you could offer. If this is the case, a historical review and plan for the future will help you envision the best evolution of your brand.
4. **Your competitors are leap-frogging your brand and making you appear out of date, or worse…forgotten.** If everyone else has donned a new suit to land the job, you may stick out like a sore thumb in yesterday's threads. If the competition is speaking loudly, you might appear to be hiding in the wings. Audit the competitive landscape, define your niche, and redesign your brand to increase relevance.
5. **You are expanding geographically.** Companies expanding their markets on a national or global scale usually need to adapt their messaging and visual assets to address a multicultural customer base. As mentioned in the Summer 2011

identityWise, it is critical to be culturally astute.

6. **Emerging media is forcing you to play in spaces where your identity is too complex or appears weak.** Expressing your brand in the various social media platforms that exist today may require adaptation to work most effectively in the allotted digital space. You may choose instead to use simplified imagery, web-friendly colors, disruptive shapes, or even sound and animation to add personality to your brand.

In our 18 years of experience working with Fortune 1000s as well as smaller entities, we've learned that you will be most successful at redesigning your brand identity if:

- Senior management is engaged and ready to make it a priority.
- An audit validates the need and you obtain stakeholder feedback.
- Appropriate funding has been established and resources are dedicated to it.
- You have a well-defined brand strategy and know how to tell your story.
- An integration plan and migration strategy are in place for future brand acquisitions.

You will gain buy-in from senior management — and boost their confidence in the investment — if you involve them initially in the examination of where you are, and during the design process that leads you to your goal. Then celebrate together the publicly refreshed identity and make the leadership team your greatest group of brand ambassadors!

Recalibrating and setting a new direction for your brand identity can be just the inspiration needed to advance your company or brand to the next level — regardless of economic conditions.

identityWise® is published by
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