

## **Communications Audit Recommendations: Discussion and Direction to the CEO**

**The board spent 2 hours on the communications audit findings and recommendations at the May meeting. The purpose of the July 10 discussion is to assure alignment between the board and the CEO on proceeding with the communications audit recommendations. In this regard, please consider the following three documents:**

- 1. BOD survey results on the major audit recommendations;**
- 2. WHAT IS BRANDING? This document helps the BOD to clearly understand the purpose of a potential CMS re-brand and how it would work; and,**
- 3. All Communication Strategy Group Audit Recommendations:**

### **WHAT IS BRANDING?**

Organizations often choose to rebrand when they want to change the way they are perceived by their audiences. Sometimes, this occurs when the organization makes a shift in its strategic direction. Other times, it happens when an organization's stakeholders have a misperception of the organization. And often times, organizations rebrand when their existing visual identity presents a dated image to its audiences.

In all of these circumstances, changing the way an organization talks about itself, as well as the way it presents itself visually, can spur a change in its audiences' perceptions of the brand.

The following document provides an outline of the branding process: what it is, and what is typically included in a rebrand.

### **Branding is NOT Marketing or Advertising**

Branding is often confused with marketing or advertising activities; in fact, it is the base upon which these activities can be built. The following two excerpts from a Bloomberg article give a good overview of this misperception:

"Talk to entrepreneurs about their marketing and communications efforts, and they'll often use the words 'branding,' 'marketing,' and 'advertising' interchangeably. That reflects the pervasive confusion about the terms," says Gail Guge, managing partner of Wilkin Guge Marketing in Ontario, Calif.

'About 15 years ago, 'branding' became a buzzword in the business vernacular, and people still get the words mixed up all the time,' she says."<sup>1</sup>

"Rob Frankel, a branding expert and author in Los Angeles, calls branding the most misunderstood concept in all of marketing, even among professionals. Branding, he says, 'is not advertising and it's not marketing or PR. Branding happens before all of those: First you create the brand, then you raise awareness of it.'"<sup>1</sup>

### **Branding = Personality and Promise**

A branding process defines the essential personality of your organization, as well as the promise it makes to its audiences. Again, these excerpts give a good overview of what branding is:

"Your product or service is not your company's brand and neither is your logo or your business card. Your brand is the genuine 'personality' of your company. 'It's what your customers think of you and say about you when they've left your company,' says Rodger Roeser, president of Cincinnati-based Eisen Management Group, a public-relations and brand-development firm."<sup>1</sup>

"Your brand is what your company stands for and what it is known for. 'Look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself what you stand for. Go around the room with your leadership and ask them what the company stands for. Settle on one or two brand pillars and build your brand around them. If you can't define your brand, your customers won't be able to, either. And the risk is that someone else will define it for you—probably your competitors,' Roeser says."<sup>1</sup>

"Steve Cecil, a copywriter and verbal-branding expert with Where Words in San Carlos, Calif., says a brand is a promise and branding is the act of devising the promise your company makes to the world. Marketing, he says, 'is the strategy that differentiates your brand promise from all the other brand promises in that increasingly crowded house called 'your category.'"<sup>1</sup>

### **What Does a Rebrand Include?**

While every branding agency takes a slightly different approach to rebranding an organization, the following elements are typically included.

#### ***Discovery/Immersion***

The agency will undergo a comprehensive process to understand the organization's challenges and opportunities, any perceptions (or misperceptions) of the current brand, and the wants and needs of the organization related to a new brand.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2008-06-09/a-practical-guide-to-brandingbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>

### ***Name Recommendation & Brand Architecture***

CMS will skip this step. In this step, the agency provides name recommendations, as well as recommendations for naming any sub-brands. For example, in the case of HealthONE, Swedish Medical Center would be a sub-brand.

### ***Brand Platform***

The brand platform defines the personality, values and value proposition of the brand. During this stage, the agency will develop documents that detail what the new brand stands for. While each agency's approach to this is slightly different, agencies typically outline a combination of the following elements:

- Brand values: What does the brand stand for? What does it value?
- Brand personality: Is the brand fun and quirky, solid and dignified, or does it have another personality?
- Brand value proposition: What is the value of CMS as a brand?
- Brand positioning: Who is CMS, particularly related to other similar organizations?
- Brand promise: What does the brand promise to its audiences? What does it deliver to its stakeholders?
- Brand messaging: How do we tell others what this organization is and what it stands for?

The purpose of the brand platform development is to fully define this “rebranded” organization, and present a platform upon which all future communications should be built. For example, when developing marketing materials or creating communications pieces for members, CMS staff should ask, “does this fit in with our brand platform?” Having a brand platform also ensures that all organizational stakeholders are on the same page when it comes to defining the organization.

### ***Creative Expression***

The creative expression is the actual visual delivery of the brand. The agency will develop a new logo for the organization, based on the brand platform. The agency will also create brand standards for the organization, which dictate what colors, fonts and types of imagery should be used in marketing and communications materials, to ensure all developed materials align with the brand.

In this stage, new tag line development may also take place.

### ***Website and Collateral Design & Development***

Once a new brand platform has been established and a visual identity has been developed, it must be integrated into the organization's materials. Over time, CMS will integrate the look, feel, and messaging of the new brand into its materials to ensure all materials consistently represent the new brand. Initial work will likely include:

- Templates such as letterhead, business cards and Power Point templates.
- Re-skin of the website to represent the new branding.