



YOUR BRAND
marketing
creating your LIVING brand



Define Your Story!

Branding Step by Step

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Rebranding a company . . .

I want to start with a story of a brand that did not stand the test of time. . . mine.

More than a decade ago, my company was named CMYK Solutions, Inc. A brand name that I thought would allow me to morph and adapt because the colours Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black were part of everything. With these four colours anything was possible.

Boy was I wrong.

When I was contemplating the new brand in 2007, I had heard of Facebook but really did not truly understand what an enormous effect it would have on the world and marketing specifically, nor did anyone else. With Facebook and the social media platforms that came after it, marketing became digital. With that shift, CMYK and traditional print became passé and old school. Everyone was looking at social media as the wave of the future and everything tied to traditional marketing was obsolete.

As my current clients had embraced the name, I fought hard to market the value of my brand. In truth, I probably resisted way too much, as new and potential clients could not get beyond the name and associated my brand with being a printer and not the strategic marketing company that I was. Finally, in 2015 I could not ignore the obvious any longer. A rebrand needed to happen to ensure the future of the company, and Your Brand Marketing was born.

The reason I tell this story, is to illustrate that the branding process is as much about understanding where you are going as it is about where you are today.

I hope that this EBook will give you some insight into the process of developing a brand and the challenges that go along with it.

If I can give you one piece of advice, never brand yourself as a company. You are too close to the process and never as objective as you need to be.

Hire a professional you trust, that understands who you are, what you do, why you do It and your vision for the future.

It is a wonderful, exciting journey to be on, but never forget, it takes a lot of time and effort to do it correctly.

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Defining the Process. . . Step by Step

Let me take you on a journey. Together we explore how to Define Your Story. Here are the steps we will take:

What is a Brand?

Why Rebrand?

Before You Begin

Finding a Partner

Starting the Process

Defining and Naming the Brand

Telling the Brand Story

Creating the Brand Package

Ready for Liftoff

How It All Comes Together

I hope that you find this journey interesting, thought provoking and valuable.

To your success.. .

Ben

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What is a Brand? . . .

Let's create some context here. For the purpose of this EBook, when we are discussing branding, we are discussing corporate branding. That is either a business-to-business company or a business-to-consumer company. The process has similar components and thought structure for developing a personal brand, but as to not overcomplicate things, let's use branding companies as a point of reference.

Your brand says to the world who your company is at its very core. Its beliefs, wants, needs and desires. But it is also how people perceive your company and the value they see in it. If there is a disconnect between how you view your company and how others view it, you have either not defined your brand properly, or have not communicated it effectively!

Your Brand Marketing believes in creating a LIVING brand. A brand that morphs and changes over time, adapting to the world around it while continuing to tell a relevant and engaging story. It should allow your company to conform within a set of circumstances, while providing the framework to always know what is important to your company, what your value is to your customers, and what makes you unique in the market place.

The first thing to understand is that a brand is not a logo!

A logo is a placeholder that helps people recognize your brand. It is a visual that should stand as a representation of who your company is, what it stands for, and it should engage your preferred audience. In short, it is a visual symbol of your brand in the market place, but it is not the brand itself.

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Why Rebrand? . . .

Your company has been around for a while and everything seems to be doing well. Customers know who you are, what you do and the value you bring to the table...or do they?

After all, it is an arduous process. It is time consuming, expensive and if not done right, and it can lead to confusion and disassociation among your customers. However, if done properly, it communicates to your company's value to your preferred audience so that they want to do business with you.

The first reason to rebrand is when your current brand no longer tells the story that you want to tell. Perhaps the focus of the company has changed dramatically, product offerings have changed, or the name or brand of the company no longer accurately represents what you currently do.

The second reason is crisis of confidence in a brand. If for whatever reason your brand has lost the confidence of its preferred audience, you need a brand change to refocus the company and tell a new story.

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Before You Begin . . .

There are many internal decisions that need to be considered when rebranding a company. Take the time necessary at the beginning of the process to understand what the real issues are and what the motivations are to re-brand or else the process will ultimately fail.

The motto of any rebrand should always be "leave no person behind!"

Rebranding requires a lot of time, planning and ultimately will need buy in from all levels of the company. I am not saying that everyone needs to be part of the detailed decision making involved in the rebranding process. Far from it. Rebranding should be done by a select group that understand various facets of the company and can work with an experienced branding team to communicate what they do, who their customers are, their vision and direction of the company, what their value is to. Making sure that the right people are involved in the process in the beginning enables the process to be more successful. Not only will people understand what you are trying to achieve and feel part of the process, but in the end, they will be able to communicate the brand internally, through their departments so that **everyone** understands the new direction.

A rebrand will lead to some type of cultural shift within the company. Leaving no one behind means that shift needs to be nurtured and fostered. Everyone needs to understand why you are rebranding and what the new brand means to them, to your company and your clientele. That will require effective on-going communication **and** a budget. One of the two will not suffice.

Once the process is complete, but before you launch, everyone at your company needs to be on board. Branding is a team effort and unless everyone understands what you are doing and why, then the ultimate communication of your new brand externally will not be effective.

There are some obvious and not so obvious things that you need to consider when rebranding. This is not a process that should be undertaken without strategic advice, understanding of current corporate realities and a clear image of the direction of the company moving forward. An experienced branding partner will walk you through the process, but here are a couple of things to remember before you begin.

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Before You Begin . . .continued

The obvious.

Does your board and board level staff understand the need to rebrand and do they have the will to move forward with the process?

The will to move forward is as important to the equation as having people that understand that there is a need to rebrand in the first place. Without consensus that change is needed there will never be budget allocated and time dedicated to move the process forward. You must resolve this question before you begin or your efforts to rebrand will be in vain.

Do they understand that this process requires time, effort and money and without all three of these the process will not be successful?

Branding is not a hands-off process. Yes, you need to bring experts to the table, but the process will never succeed without the dedication and efforts of people internal to the process. A branding partner should work with you, not for you. It is a team effort to create a brand that will achieve the goals of your company moving forward.

Do they have a clear direction of where they want your company to be in the next five years? Articulated in great detail or not, it is important that they feel they have a direction.

Vision is key. If there is not a clear vision of where your company is headed and what management want to achieve, the process is doomed to failure. Most companies have done a strategic, long term plan. Make sure that is up to date before you begin.

Is there a willingness to develop a team to determine where you are as a company and help steer the process?

Having a dedicated team that understands the history of your company and what it does and does not do well is crucial for success. The team should be inter-departmental, small, dedicated and willing to work together constructively.

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Before You Begin . . .continued

The not so obvious.

There are many things that companies do not think about when they go through the branding process. This list is by no means exhaustive, but here are a couple of things you will need to address.

Know where you are before you know where you are going

Remember when it was stated, "leave no person behind"? In addition to making sure your employees aren't left behind, you also want to make sure that no customers are left behind either! That requires a complete audit of where your brand is today. Think of all the places your brand appears. Each and every one of those places needs to be updated and changed without losing anyone in the process. For example, all digital signatures of the company need to be forwarded towards the new brand so that no customer is lost in the rebrand. If you do not do this and simply let the old URL's, emails, social media feeds and the like cease to exist, people will not be able to find you and will look towards your competition. Seriously, leave no person behind!

Out with the old...

Before your brand shifts, all pieces of tangible evidence for the company, from building signage, to business cards, trade show displays, social media, web, brochures and promotional products (to name a few) must be destroyed and new pieces need to be designed and developed. WHY? To avoid brand confusion! You are re-branding for a reason, having the old materials around only leads people to think that the new brand and the old brand can co-exist. You do not want that!

Legal ramifications and incorporation

Note: I am a brand expert, but I am not a lawyer and I do not play one on TV. You will need to consult your lawyers and accountants regarding your current contracts with clients, suppliers, banks, etc. as they may be tied specifically to the old brand name. If you change the name properly, you could lose contracts, lines of credit or clients. You may also have patents in the old company name you need to deal with and you might need to incorporate all over again to register the new company and have legal and accounting charges that you will need to incur. Laws will change via state, province and country and it is important that all those details are addressed. I cannot stress this enough, bring in your legal professionals to advise on these key items. It will save you grief and money in the long run.

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Finding a Partner . . .

Branding is a team sport. Find and work with a strategic partner that you trust and that you feel understands you and your vision. If you are not comfortable working with someone at the beginning of the process and do not develop and open and honest rapport right away. . . find someone else.

Most companies do not have the resources to rebrand internally and even if they do, it is usually not a wise decision. A key component to rebranding a company is asking hard questions and getting truthful answers. It may mean making people feel uncomfortable, perhaps because you have asked them something that they had never thought of, or never felt they could honestly say. Hiring a professional means that the right questions are asked to the right people, at the right time, in the right way. It means people can give honest, insightful answers because they know they are in a safe, confidential space to do so. A professional who has done this before will guide the process and is not guessing as to what the next step should be.

With that said, finding a branding partner is a critical piece of the puzzle. It is about hiring someone you trust and you feel understands you as a company. Ask them for references and actually take the time to call them. Be interested in the process of how they rebranded the other company, what they liked about working with them, what they did not and what they would do different if they had to do it all over again.

If you are an international firm and need to rebrand in multiple countries, with all the complexities that go with that, you should work with a worldwide firm. However, for most companies, using a worldwide firm is more about ego than a good use of capital. There are many small, boutique firms that will service your needs far better than a large company and take the time to understand what you are about.

Find a local company with a brand you like, call them up and find out who did their branding for them. Ask questions about timelines, deadlines and scope of the work. Ask them why they liked dealing with whoever branded them and what the process was like.

Take the time to interview firms. Be honest and open with your branding partner. If you need them to sign a non-disclosure agreement (so that you can give them an all access pass to your company) then do it. They cannot help you unless they know what is great about your company AND your failures.

In short, **find a partner.** Someone you can be comfortable working with for a long time and that you can trust. Open lines of communication that travel in both directions are critical for success.

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Starting the Process . . .

It is time to get invested and serious about the branding process. Key members of your company need to believe in the process and you, as a company need to be able to devote both time and resources to enable its success. Your strategic partners cannot do it alone, you must be an active partner in the process!

Now that you are ready to begin the process, take the time to work out a documented and detailed scope of work with your branding partner. This should include what you expect, what they expect, projected timelines, costs and objectives. The clearer this document is, the better chance that goals will be achieved and effective communication will be the norm. Build in a process for regular check-ins to make sure everyone is still on track, budgets are maintained and objectives continue to be met.

Getting to know you

This is the process where your branding partner and you get to know your company. It is amazing how many companies, large and small, do not realize the “disconnect” between what they think their company is about and what their employees and customers think.

Moving thru the getting to know process allows everyone involved to realize what your company **IS REALLY ABOUT**, including what your values are, what your vision is and how you are different from your competition in the marketplace. Without this critical information, rebranding becomes nearly impossible to do. Investing this time at the beginning of the process is key to getting a rebrand right.

Please Note

This process can take anywhere from a weekend retreat for a small company to several weeks and months for larger corporations. It can be arduous and frustrating at times; however it is necessary to move the process forward. By spending time and effort at this early stage, a brand will be created that reflects the true values of your company and sets it up for long term success.

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Defining and Naming the Brand . . .

Defining who you are and who you are not is critical to your success. Being able to clearly define your value and your niche is critical at this point in time. It helps solidify your brand and helps in developing the right name that tells your unique story.

Understand the Data

Once you finalize the getting to know you process, the next step is understanding the data. This is where a branding company earns their money. It is how well they can interpret the information given to them and they lay it out in small, simple chunks that become the footings that the brand will stand upon.

Defining the brand is about understanding and defining what the value of your company will be moving forward. It is your niche, your value in the market place and your culture. This is the basis of creating the new brand story that can be shared across mediums. It allows your intended audience to understand why they should engage with you and why they should tell your new story to others.

Naming the company can only be done after the defining of the brand has been signed off on. The name can be as straight forward as "Your Brand Marketing" or as cryptic as "Nike". No one knew what a "Nike" was until Nike told them what it was and defined their space in the market. However, the name was unique, got them noticed and drew people in to find out more about the story.

Your name needs to reflect who you are and the story you want to tell. Branding people are good at this; enable them to do their craft well.

Some other important things that will be considered when renaming a company will be: Are URLs available in .com and/or country specific; Is the name too close to anything your competitors use? Can it be word or trademarked and does it reflect your brand?

Play around with different names, buy a whole bunch of URLs and take the time to think about it for a while. This is the name that will be with you for a long time.

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Telling the Brand Story . . .

A brand story is critical in the process of getting people both inside and outside the company on board with the new brand. It gives people a way to identify you that is engaging, able to be internalized and repeated easily.

Too many companies focus on the precise words of their mission and vision statements.

Yes, words are important and have very specific meaning within different scenarios. The problem is, based upon cultural diversity, social status, educational upbringing, situational connotation and the like, the same words can be taken many ways by many different people.

So, instead of agonizing over the exact words, create the story that speaks to who you believe the brand is and where it is going. Make it resonate with both internal and external audiences and make it engaging enough that people hear it, understand it, internalize it, engage with it and then tell it to others.

In today's world of video and podcasts, people want to digest information in ways that are relevant to them and storytelling is it! Storytelling is not a fad, nor is it anything new. Storytelling has been an effective way to pass information for millennia.

Work on key phrases and help paint a vivid picture in people's minds of what you do, why you do it, who you do it for and why those people see value in you. People may not remember a five word vision or mission statement, but they will remember a story that is told to them in a compelling way.

They may not get it perfect the first time and that is what having great internal storytellers are for. Keepers of the brand story and creators of the placeholder in people's minds. These are the people in your company that are charged with telling and retelling the corporate brand story so that every employee understands, internalizes, believe in and is able to communicate that story to others.

They will remember the story because it will trigger other memories they have and they will think that this is story is like the one I already know . . . but with these differences. Creating those links are critical to help people remember the story and believe in it.

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Telling the Brand Story . . . continued

Here are some things to think about:

- **What is the story you want to tell about who you are and what you do and why you do it?**
- **What is the vision you want people to have of you when they hear your story?**
- **Can your employees understand, internalize, believe and communicate your brand story?**

If you cannot answer those questions, do not move forward until you can!

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Creating the Brand Package . . .

You probably thought I forgot about the logo and the brand collateral. I certainly did not. However, until this stage, they are irrelevant. It is only after you have a clear picture of who you are, what you do, who you do it for, what your value is to them and why can you develop a logo and branded collateral that will tell your story effectively.

Now that you have gone through picking a branding partner, gone through “Getting to know you”, developed a brand name and culture, it is now time to create the logo and brand identity.

The logo is an important part of the brand, but in itself, it is not the brand. It is a place holder. Something that reminds people of what the brand is about and visually acts as a trigger to help people remember your story and your value.

A good logo gives hints about who you are and what you do. Through colour, shape, font and tag line, the logo lets people remember why they want to do business with you.

We suggest a couple of things when designing a logo.

- Have a logo that can be represented in one colour, two colours and four colour process. You never know where it is going to be displayed and you want options.
- Have both a vertical and horizontal version of the logo for the same reason.
- Do not use overly thin fonts. If you ever want to print on something small (like a pen) or embroider onto clothing, it will be nearly impossible to do with a thin or overly small font.
- Avoid halftones, or have a version that has no halftone. Not all imprinting you will do with your logo will be able to replicate a halftone.
- Simple designs are better than complex ones. A logo that is too busy can be distracting.
- Have your designer develop, .jpeg, .eps vector and .PDF versions of all logos for you to have in a library and if you do end up going with a custom or hard to find font, have them provide you with the font library as well.
- A Brand book is critical for moving forward. It will give all future users of the logos a set of rules as to how the logo can be used and how it cannot. This can also include how business cards, letterhead, etc., need to be set up. This will lead to your brand remaining consistent, no matter what the medium.

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Creating the Brand Package . . . continued

Once the logo has been approved, then it is time to move on to having the other parts of your collateral designed. This could include office stationary, trade show booths, websites that are mobile friendly, promotional marketing, new corporate videos and signage to name but a few.

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Ready for Liftoff

It's GO TIME! Time to create check lists and sign off on every last little detail to make sure that everything is ready for launch. Remember, the devil is in the details!

Ok. . . we are almost there.

We have decided to proceed, figured out what is important to us, found a partner, gone through "Getting to know you", defined the brand and named it, created the branding package and now... we are ready to plan the brand launch!

The brand launch is an exciting time. It is when all the pieces have been developed and are hidden behind the stage waiting for the curtains to open. It is the time for checklists, to make sure that all Tangible Evidence of the old brand has been destroyed or donated (tax receipts are always a good thing). That new brand materials are ready to be given out and that all electronic mediums are ready to be switched on and old ones pushed to the new sites.

This is the time of brand and culture training for staff at all levels. Clear communication of new brand is critical, so that people understand why they are moving forward and what the new story is that they need to tell. Invest the time and capital; not doing so can lead to brand confusion.

This is a time to celebrate with staff and clients and a launch party is never a bad idea. It allows you to bring everyone together to tell the new story and get everyone excited.

In short, get ready to have a new reason to talk to everyone you know about the changes and why they should be excited about them.

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How It All Comes Together . . .

AND WE ARE LIVE! Never underestimate the value of a strong and planned brand launch. Create a ruckus and get people excited. It is time to show people the new you!

Launching the brand with clear and strong messaging is critical for its success. The story needs to be shared consistently across channels and should communicate vision and values of the brand to both employees and customers alike. All the channels should flip over all at once to the new brand and you should start consistently and repeatedly telling your story across all mediums, demonstrating the value of the new brand. It is a time to go out and visit your clients with new promotional marketing pieces, attend trade shows and have a brand launch party. Let everyone know why you have rebranded and what the value of the new brand is to them.

Let people get excited for you and engage with you. Make the launch an event to remember so that people are drawn in and internalize the values of the new brand and want to engage with it. You did it! And the future is exciting!

. . . to your success!

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About Me . . .

Hello everyone and thanks for taking the time to read this all the way to the end.

My name is Ben Baker and I am the founder of Your Brand Marketing. I have been developing brand and strategy, and telling my clients stories, for well over 20 years. My clients are mid-sized and above and work in the world of business to business. What I want my clients to understand is that by focussing on your audience, your value and your vision, you will engage the right people in the right way and keep from being perceived as a commodity.

As a company, Your Brand Marketing does three things: We consult, we teach and we speak on brand, message, market, vision and value. We work with our clients to determine who they are and more importantly who they serve. We want to know what their goals for the future are and then we develop a strategic marketing plan to help them get there. How can we help you communicate your value to your audience in ways that they can understand and internalize and allow them to engage?

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