



Supporting the Solutions

The Name Is Just the Beginning of a Brand

Congratulations! You've selected a new name for your company or product. You've worked with your trademark counsel to ensure its registerability and you've conducted linguistic analyses to ensure that the name is appropriate in all your key international markets. Now you're good to go, and ready to watch that brand equity grow, right?

Of course not. Your new name certainly has the power to help you project a particular image and suggest specific, advantageous brand associations. It's a very good brand beginning. But because a brand is realized not as a word on a piece of paper but as a complete experience, there's still real work ahead.

To convert that word into a meaningful and valuable brand, you have to be willing to invest the time, money, and resources it takes to establish and sustain a coherent, compelling, and consistent brand experience.

You'll need to leverage all available media to communicate and complement, verbally and visually, the core brand attributes your name represents. Initially you'll need to get the word out, of course, but you'll also have to be prepared to update and refresh certain brand manifestations and communications in response to constantly changing market forces and "cultural moments," without ever compromising your brand's fundamental integrity. And you'll need to ensure that all behaviors emanating from your organization demonstrate and effectively reinforce the brand promise.

In other words, there's still a great deal of work that needs to be done to bring your brand to life and keep it breathing.

Invest in Good Design

A strong brand identity makes an unmistakable impression both verbally and visually. It makes good sense, therefore, to support your brand name solution by investing time and money in graphic design that captures your unique brand promise, visually illuminates distinguishing differences, and effectively expresses your unique brand personality.

Whether the name will be used in conjunction with a brand mark or simply rendered in logotype, you want to establish the best possible visual environment for your name. Graphic design creates an intentional visual context within which the name can be understood, appreciated, and valued, and can greatly enhance its communicative power.

Through design you can concretely express otherwise abstract brand attributes, balance the imagery suggested by the name, and provide the specific visual cues your audience requires to interpret the message you want to convey.



Consider the Nike “swoosh.” Few people may know that the Nike name is a reference to a winged goddess of victory from Greek mythology. Yet most people immediately and quite viscerally “get” the dynamic nature of the Nike brand, effectively captured as it has been by the dramatic “swoosh.” Bold, confident, and energetic, this familiar brand mark provides a vital and contemporary context for a name that, while it has real meaning and relevance, might not have been as well or as widely understood without such an evocative, ever-present, and effectively applied visual cue.

Invest in good graphic design, and the power behind it will carry your brand forward.

Create the Optimal Verbal Context

A brand name – corporate, product, or service – does not exist in isolation. It inhabits a language landscape that encompasses all internal and external verbal expressions of the brand, including taglines, slogans, descriptive terminology, website text, signage, advertising and promotional messages, CEO speeches, company white papers, and even jingles. Creating the optimal verbal context for your name is a brand-building opportunity you don’t want to miss.

To be effective brand-building tools, all verbal brand elements should be properly aligned with the brand’s strategic intent. They should reflect your desired brand image and personality. They should be consistent with the core brand attributes and the unique brand promise captured by your brand name. And they should be consistently communicated in an appropriate and distinctive tone of voice.

The Starbucks coffee brand is a good example of employing the power of language to support and further your branding endeavor. Wherever or however you encounter the Starbucks brand, its voice is unmistakable and its promise clear. Whether you are sipping a Caramel Macchiato in one of its myriad stores, shopping for Starbucks Coffee online, or buying frozen Frappuccino Bars at the local grocery store, your experience of the Starbucks brand will be verbally consistent, coherent, and compelling. All of Starbucks’ verbal expressions – its menu board items, product packaging, website, and brochures – support the brand’s core attributes: international yet community-based, socially and environmentally concerned, warm and inviting, contemporary and hip.

As the Starbucks example shows, dedicating time and resources to developing the most favorable verbal context for your brand is well worth the effort. Taking into account the entire language landscape of your brand can create a gestalt that is more memorable than that which could be achieved simply by a name alone. As inimitable brands like Starbucks, Martha Stewart, Apple Computer, Virgin, and McDonald’s prove, a distinctive brand voice and the deliberate and consistent use of all the language tools at your disposal will bolster your brand-building efforts.

Building Awareness, Sustaining Relevancy

Advertising and promotion will be key to making sure your brand is well known and well understood in the marketplace. Such efforts should all be closely tied to the same key messages and core brand attributes that have informed and inspired the naming activity. In conception and execution, take every available opportunity to speak to the target audience of the specific brand promise your name represents.



Over time, you will want to keep your advertising fresh and relevant to new as well as existing audiences. But in responding to changing market conditions and contemporary cultural moments, you needn't ever abandon your brand essence. Apple Computer, for instance, has a noteworthy tradition of producing effective advertising campaigns that consistently reinforce the continuing relevance of the unique brand promise that started it all.

Think Apple Computer, think simplicity and accessibility – and “Think Different.” The Apple name has always represented something different. At the time it was adopted it was a huge departure from naming conventions in the computer industry but perfectly appropriate for a company that was intent on making computing accessible to “the rest of us.”

The company's “Think Different” advertising campaign successfully ties the Apple brand to exceptional people involved in different fields of endeavor. This campaign makes a powerful statement about the brand's continuing relevance to its target market and is in keeping with its original essence. Today's Apple buyers are happy to be “different,” and its users have been incredibly loyal to a brand that delivers on its promise.

A Culture That Delivers on Your Brand Promise

Legend has it that in the early days of Apple Computer a pirate flag was proudly unfurled at corporate headquarters, and embraced from the top down as an appropriate emblem of the Apple “brand essence.” Such an extravagant gesture could only emanate from a culture completely in tune with its unique brand promise.

How a brand will be perceived externally has everything to do with how it is realized internally. All behaviors emanating from your organization will need to demonstrate a commitment to the promise inherent in the brand name you've selected.

If the name speaks to *being on the cutting edge*, then the company must enable constant innovation. If it speaks to *intelligence and expertise*, then the organization must make clear that it values knowledge and encourages learning. If the name says this is a warm and friendly company, then the internal culture, as well as its public face, ought to be approachable and supportive. If it promises a *personalized* experience, then the company must have mechanisms in place that permit employees to tailor responses and solutions to individual needs.

You've worked hard to arrive at a verbal branding solution that captures and communicates your unique brand promise. There's no better time than now to get all your ducks in a row to deliver on it. Whatever the specific attributes most central to your brand identity may be, let nothing in your organization contradict them and do everything you can to support the name solution.