

WHITE PAPER

Building Corporate Brands

THE BASICS OF BRAND COMMUNICATIONS



Why corporate brand-building makes sense.

THE COMPANY IS A BRAND

Corporate brand-building is the art and science of building awareness, loyalty, preference and value for companies directly, as opposed to the product brands they manage and market. It is founded on the premise that brand communications, experiences and initiatives benefit companies in important ways. Specifically, it aims to provide a broad range of financial and strategic benefits that align with the company vision, mission and business strategy.

For corporate brands, business customers, channel partners, financial analysts, employees and others take the place of consumers as primary audiences. (At the same time, consumers might remain a significant audience, too.)

BRAND VALUE IS REAL

A strong corporate brand might or might not directly help a company to charge a premium for its products or to command a premium on the trading floor. In principle, however, a strong corporate brand can help to build a differential of attraction and loyalty among customers and channel partners. Growing from that, a strong corporate brand should also be able to command a differential of margin that comes from economies of scale of being the market leader. Metrics can be developed around both of these differentials to assess how brand value is being created over time.

ONE BRAND, MANY USES

That said, most companies look to their corporate brands to provide value in other, more specific ways; from facilitating the introduction of new products, access to new markets, entry into new channels and expansion of existing channels to more clearly articulating the company's purpose and promise to the media and financial markets.

INTERNAL BRAND BUILDING

Corporate brands can also play an important role inside organizations as well as outside: A strong corporate brand, like a strong consumer brand, can help to make "believers" of a company's employees, helping to drive morale, performance, and a consistent, positive impression of the brand and the company behind it. These efforts, too, can be tracked and measured as "value on investment" (VOI)—a return on investment in a soft initiative—rather than "return on investment" (ROI), which is much harder to measure in most corporate brand-building scenarios, and not always the best indicator of "brand dollars well-spent" in any event.

Corporate brands can deliver many of the same benefits to companies as product brands.

Frequently asked questions about corporate brands.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

A brand is a story told in the marketplace. It's a story told to enhance people's awareness of, understanding of, preference for and—ultimately—loyalty to a product or service and its seller. It is a story told through a variety of media. Like any good story, a good brand must be inherently interesting, different from other stories, internally consistent, meaningful to its audience, and told well.

WHAT IS THE POWER OF A BRAND?

In product brand-building, the classic definition of brand value begins with measuring how much more people are willing to pay for your product than for your competition's. In building a corporate brand, this measure doesn't always make sense. Beyond it, however, a brand has the power to do many things, including facilitate the introduction of new products, entry into new markets, expansion into new channels, expansion of existing channels, and much more.

As brand marketers, we support the creation of brand value by making brand communications more clear, consistent and compelling. We do so by focusing on brand fundamentals: enhancing people's awareness, understanding, preference and, ultimately, loyalty as it relates to the brand. All of this can be tracked, measured and analyzed.

Inside a company, our work provides additional value. For marketers and other communicators, it can

- (1) expedite decision-making,
- (2) increase confidence,
- (3) enhance planning,
- (4) provide a framework for tracking and analysis, and
- (5) promote the cost-effective use of resources and assets.

In terms of a company's employees more generally, developing and telling the brand story can help to inspire a sense of purpose, excitement and loyalty that can boost morale, support the retention of talent, attract new talent, strengthen customer relationships, and more. Ultimately, these benefits can contribute to better competitive advantage and increased productivity.

HOW CAN YOU BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR BRAND'S FUNDAMENTALS?

From a communicator's standpoint, confidence in the brand comes from three sources: First, from the rigor that has gone into developing the brand story. Second, from the critical thinking used to evaluate the story and the communications that tell it. And third, from the ongoing process of tracking and analyzing results.

As brand marketers, Baker helps to build brand awareness, preference and loyalty by developing tools, assets and communications that are clear, consistent and compelling.

Frequently asked questions about corporate brands. CONT.

Rigor in story development comes from being sure you've addressed every consideration to arrive at an in-depth marketplace, competitive environment and products and services to be sold, as well as the company's own business strategy and marketing capabilities.

Critical thinking in brand story evaluation comes from reviewing whether your positioning is ownable, defensible, credible and relevant; whether your personality is fresh and engaging; and whether your messages address your audiences' priorities, as well as whether you can substantiate them.

The ongoing process of **tracking and benchmarking** helps you to understand what kinds of results you are achieving, and to adjust your strategy and planning accordingly.

Finally, of course, confidence comes from communicating to internal audiences that all of this has been competently addressed.

WHAT DOES BRAND-BUILDING MEAN INTERNALLY?

Internal brand-building means helping all members of an organization, not just its marketers and senior managers, to understand the purpose and value of the brand initiative, to believe in the brand story,

and to participate in supporting the brand—telling the story—in the course of their everyday activities.

This effort is helped by:

- (1) linking the brand-building initiative to specific goals,
- (2) securing the endorsement and involvement of senior management,
- (3) soliciting insight and involvement from across the organization,
- (4) beginning communications regarding the initiative early—and maintaining them throughout the process,
- (5) creating a meaningful, inclusive event at launch, and
- (6) maintaining ongoing involvement at all levels through providing tools, identifying mentors, and acknowledging and monitoring support.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "BRANDING" AND "POSITIONING"? ARE THEY THE SAME THING?

Positioning is one of three essential foundations to brand communications. Personality development and messaging are the other two.

Positioning is about defining a brand's unique value.

Personality development is about defining a brand's unique look and feel.

Messaging is about defining a brand's specific appeal to different audiences.

OUR WORK ALIGNS WITH

Business Objectives
Audience Priorities
Communications Resources
Competitive Insights
Market Trends

Elements of brand communications.

Baker Brand Communications is committed to best practices in the area of brand development. Best practices include clear, easy-to-understand communications that avoid jargon. At the same time, some of the terms and concepts we work with benefit from a brief definition, either because they are not generally understood or because our definition differs from that used by other brand communicators.

The “brand platform” is the name we give to the set of insights and messages that serve as the foundation for shaping the brand experience.

As such, it serves as a blueprint for guiding the brand’s visual and verbal identity, and for the sum of its communications.

While specific elements may vary from platform to platform, the following are typical elements in a Baker Brand Communications platform.

BACK STORY

What it is: A succinct, one- to two-page narrative that expresses the brand’s origins and reason for being, and that portrays the brand as a distinct player with a unique background and attributes in the marketplace.

Why it matters: The story provides a framework of understanding and an emotional tone that keeps all of the other deliverables in line. (Put another way, everything else we develop is basically a tool for telling this story.)

Often, we will also develop alternate, usually shorter, versions of the master back story for specific uses such as press releases and product packaging.

TARGET AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

What it is: A bullet-point summary of key points relating to the various audiences the brand addresses. We think of each audience as a distinctive opportunity for connecting with the

brand. This summary, which is usually based on some form of research, considers the primary audience or audiences, typically customers, as well as secondary audiences. Secondary audiences may include additional types of customers, distributors, the financial community and the media, as well as employees—a brand’s “internal audience.” At a minimum, the audience profile will define the segments and then detail their priorities with respect to the brand.

Why it matters: Provides a foundation of insight that helps to ensure communications directed to each audience are as specific and compelling as possible. “One size fits all” communications are ineffective, as are communications that fail to demonstrate a real knowledge of an audience’s needs and priorities.

Elements of brand communications. CONT.

POSITIONING

What it is: A tight, one-sentence statement that defines the brand relative to the marketplace. A good positioning is one that no other brand or company can legitimately claim with the same level of credibility and conviction.

Why it matters: A clear-cut positioning helps the brand to stand out—and stand above—the competition. It is the most succinct expression of what makes the brand different. It focuses what the brand has to say, and has to offer.

A positioning statement is accompanied by a rationale that details the credibility, defensibility, ownability and relevance of the position.

DESCRIPTION

What it is: The approved, single sentence “elevator” description of the brand. If the company already has such a description at the time of our engagement, we will incorporate it into the brand platform. If the description requires further development or refinement, we will provide it.

In addition to a master description, note that a brand may benefit from different descriptions tailored to different audiences.

Why it matters: A key ingredient of clear communications. Helps to ensure that everyone within an organization is speaking and writing “on the same page.” Especially important to businesses in emerging categories or with innovative products.

PERSONALITY OVERVIEW

What it is: A tight, one-paragraph statement that describes the “soul” of the brand—the qualities and values that live at its core, and that help to make the experience of interacting with it satisfying and memorable.

If the brand’s positioning has to do with its substance, then its personality has to do with its style.

Why it matters: Summarizes the distinct impression the brand should make—both visually and in written and spoken communications—on those who interact with it. Guides the development of a clear, well-integrated visual and written identity.

GETTING STARTED

1 What’s needed to begin

Since the corporate brand exists to express the company mission, vision and business strategy, the first step is to make sure that these foundational business tools are clear, compelling and up-to-date.

2 Roles and responsibilities

A good brand development initiative engages senior management for leadership and direction; employees from throughout the organization for perspective and buy-in; and outside audiences for a reality check.

3 Making the most of it

To derive the greatest value from your corporate brand, do not view it as the exclusive purview of marketing. The most successful brands deliver value in a variety of ways throughout an organization.

PERSONALITY KEY TRAITS

What it is: A list and summary description of the key traits comprising the brand personality, together with information that details the source of these traits in the brand's or parent company's heritage, operations and values.

Why it matters: Detailing the qualities woven into the personality overview, the breakdown of key brand traits provides a strong foundation for shaping the brand's visual identity and copy tone.

PROMISE

What it is: A one-sentence statement of the single most important value proposition a brand can credibly make to its primary audience.

Why it matters: Provides a clear instant read on the key benefit the brand delivers. Helps to organize and prioritize all other benefits.

TAGLINE AND DESCRIPTOR

What it is: The tagline is the most succinct expression of the brand's unique spirit. The descriptor is the most succinct thumbnail categorization of its business.

Why it matters: Provides an engaging "instant read" on who and what the brand is.

MESSAGING MATRIX

What it is: A complete set of basic messages for each audience the brand addresses. These messages include promises, supporting benefit statements, factual proof points, and desired beliefs and actions, organized by audience segment.

Why it matters: Greatly streamlines and simplifies the time and effort required to create consistent, targeted communications.

CORPORATE VALUES

A powerful brand-building asset.

An organization's employees can be the brand's greatest ambassadors as well as its living embodiment. That said, it makes sense to foster a cohesive culture to provide them with inspiration and guidance. Corporate values are one of the most powerful tools for accomplishing these goals. By defining and detailing the beliefs that direct company and employee priorities, corporate values set the stage for the way the corporate brand itself is expressed.



Baker | Brand Communications™

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ABOUT BAKER | BRAND COMMUNICATIONS

For 25 years, Baker has partnered with leading corporations to achieve their strategic imperatives and engage stakeholders – to win. We position and amplify a company's competitive advantage by creating meaningful brand experiences. Our multidisciplinary teams draw upon new media and proven methodologies while offering clients relevant insights, expertise and dedicated support.