

# Top five consultant attributes for a complex rebrand

The success of any complex rebrand depends on knowing what to look for in a brand consultant



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# Make the right choice.

“Let’s Make a Deal” is a television game show based upon risk. For more than 50 years, contestants have been answering what seems on the surface to be very simple questions. After winning a preliminary round that puts perhaps \$200 in their hands, the host asks, “Would you like to risk it all on what’s behind Door Number Two? Or would you rather have what’s inside this box?” The trick is, the contestants can’t see what is behind the door or inside the box until after they make a choice. They are given no information upon which to base a decision. So they take a guess and . . . more often than not, wind up losers.

That’s because playing eenie, meenie, miney, moe is no way to strike it rich. And it’s no way to select a consultant for a complex rebrand.

Before you sign a contract or shake a hand, there are questions to ask and factors to determine in order to know when you have found the right consultant for your project.

## **It is more than being comfortable.**

It is about gaining the confidence that your first decision in a complex rebrand is a very good one. It had better be. In essence, you are placing your livelihood, your employees, your assets and your entire future into the consultant’s hands.

## **A leap like that requires more than faith. You have far too much at stake.**

Here are five top attributes to seek when selecting a consultant for a complex rebrand.

# 1

# Personality

Even when a tag reads, “one size fits all,” it seldom fits everyone. It is going to be too big for some people and too small for others.

The same is true of branding consultants. The tendency is to think that the larger the firm, the more successful it is. But bigger isn’t always better. Whether you have a creative team of a hundred or a dozen, it all comes down to finding and building upon one great idea.

**Visualize the rebrand process as a wheel.**

The big idea is the focal point and becomes the hub. Around it, the small yet essential details such as color palette, tagline, designs, text, letterhead, website, etc. are the spokes. The strategy and creativity formulated by the consultant forms the wheel rim and makes certain it keeps rolling forward.

That is why you need to choose a consultant who understands the importance of each aspect – big idea, small details, strategy and creativity – and is able to deliver no matter the complexity of the project.

Smaller firms may be more selective in the clients they sign because they prefer to offer a more personal touch. Even large-scale organizations are coming to recognize that smaller consulting firms can provide more individual attention. Mark-Hans Richer, Harley-Davidson's chief marketing officer, told the Association of National Advertising conference in Orlando, Fla., that his company works with several agencies and takes a "boutique" approach. "We have not had a lead agency in about five years," he said.

As with a tailored suit, fit is far more important than size. Does this particular consultant align with your ideals? Are the principal and his or her staff genuinely concerned with your problem? Are they sincere? Are they fun?

**Could you go on a four-hour road trip with these people?**

The consultant you select has to do more than say the right things. They should feel right. Right for your organization – and for its future.

# 2

# Comprehension

The first time you meet with a prospective consultant, you should find that they know something about you. They should be familiar with your history, mission and values. They should have an idea who you are. And what they don't know, they need to be willing to ask.

As an outsider, your consultant should be able to discern and communicate what an organization's leadership does not realize already exists. A fresh perspective is extremely valuable when management is so ingrained it can't perceive the big picture.

**To solve your problem, a consultant has to dig beneath the surface.**

They need to ask tough questions and they need to listen to the answers. They need to be able to recognize when they've struck a nerve and to be willing to probe deeply enough to get to the root of the issue.

If you hire an architect to design your house, you'll want them to work with your ideas. If you tell them you prefer having fewer steps and they show you a blueprint that includes a spiral staircase, you'll know they didn't listen. But if you don't tell them you don't like stairs – and they don't ask – you are both to blame.

If a consultant doesn't comprehend the problem there is little chance that they will find a solution. They need to be willing to ask the right questions – and equally willing to listen closely to your answers.

## ③

# Experience

Would you take your car to a repair shop and request the newest mechanic? How about being rushed to an emergency room with a suspected heart attack and being assigned an orthopedic surgeon? Would you stay at a restaurant if you heard the chef just quit and the busboy was now doing the cooking?

Not likely. Because you recognize the value of experience.

**And not just any experience. Appropriate experience.**

Proper experience yields confidence on both sides of the table. It is the confidence a head chef has in the kitchen – and your confidence in who is preparing your dinner.

When selecting a consultant for a complex rebrand, you must ask this question:

**“Do you have experience with an organization of our size?”**

Having experience in your particular industry, be it healthcare, banking and finance or retail, is important, but having experience rebranding organizations of a similar size is vital. That is because the sheer scale of an organization brings with it certain expectations, needs and processes.

# 4

# Flexibility

## Regarding Scope

No two rebrands are the same.

Even within the same industry, each rebrand is unique. Because of this fact, the process that guides each rebrand must be structured yet remain adaptable to the needs of the organization.

Inherent in a rebrand is the discovery of elements that fall outside the original scope. These can be physical elements, such as the need to redesign a structure or expand a facility. They may be technological, for example, the need to establish new services like after-hours phone lines or a supplementary website. They can be financial elements, perhaps a capital campaign that is tied to the reasons prompting the rebrand. Or they could be human elements, such as the need for educational materials for employees, or designing and delivering special presentations to convince skeptical executives or board members.

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**The consultant should be flexible to these special circumstances, adept at reacting to them and able to share ideas and guidance on them with the client.**

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**The best consultants are constantly on the lookout for obstacles and surprises, and through their experience will know how to keep them to a minimum.**



## 5

# Commitment

Some organization leaders think having a hometown consultant is a must. Others may think that the older the firm, the better.

The reality is that technology has become the ultimate equalizer. The age of a firm doesn't really matter, nor does its location. If you expect your consultant to be a phone call away, that phone call can be made from halfway around the world. Instant messaging is just that – instant. With technology, everything is close by. Meetings can be held via Skype and data can be displayed in both offices simultaneously. Today, a consultant in New Orleans is able to work with a client in New York, New Zealand or New Delhi.

What does matter – more than the size, the location or the year the doors opened – is commitment.

A large firm may assign a team to the rebrand while a smaller firm may rally the entire house. Either way, you as the client should demand the consultant's "A team." You deserve the team's undivided attention from the first meeting to the final solution, the rebrand unveil – and beyond. Whether the consultant has five other clients or five hundred, you should feel as though you are always at the top of the list; that your priorities are their priorities.

**Your organization is the most important one on the planet.**

**Your consultant needs to be willing to do whatever it takes – long hours and weekends included – to show they understand what that means to you.**

# In the end

1. **Personality**
2. **Comprehension**
3. **Experience**
4. **Flexibility**
5. **Commitment**

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Relationships depend on many of these elements. And a relationship is exactly what you want with a consultant. A lasting relationship with a consultant who understands your needs and has a deep desire – along with the experience and commitment – to work to fulfill them. A consultant who you enjoy collaborating with and want to have as a partner. A consultant who appreciates how far you've come, sees where you want to go and can help take you there.

**Selecting the right consultant for your rebrand is one of the most important decisions you will ever make.**

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Why risk it all  
on a guess?

# Considering a rebrand?

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