

Five leadership traits needed in a complex rebrand

It takes a strong leader who possesses the attributes that will drive success during a comprehensive institutional rebrand



Where brands come true.

We're a national design company on a mission to help brands transform what is — to what could be.

The best impression.

A rebrand needs to leave your audience genuinely impressed. The words have to be meaningful; the designs enduring. The emblem, tagline, identity and all other elements of the rebrand have to be representative of your organization's past, present and future.

People within and outside the organization should like what they see so much that they become personal champions of the brand.

What they will not see is the work that went into that rebrand. The hours, days, weeks and months of meetings. The taglines that were accepted only to be rejected later. The designs that didn't quite hit the mark. The sweat, the debates, the defeat and the elation when ideas came together and began to mesh. The effort of committees and entire teams of committed, creative people responsible for the final rebrand.

They also won't see that behind the mountain of work was one person who served as a guide. One person who despite countless distractions and decisions kept the finish line in sight. One person who knew deep inside where this project needed to go, even if he or she could not articulate it. One person who realized that decisions had to be final and who was strong enough to make them.

This person brought a significant characteristic to the table and without it the project would have been doomed from day one. They brought leadership.

While leadership is an overarching quality, it incorporates several specific attributes that are essential to a successful institutional rebrand. To accomplish such a complex rebrand, we believe a leader must be Courageous, Tough, a Believer, Present and Decisive.

Courageous

The first meeting tells us a lot about a new client.

Some don't know where they fit in the marketplace. Some feel they are missing out and that their message is lost in a sea of noise. Some have a mission statement that is so outdated the dust has to be blown from it before it can be read. Some lack even a basic understanding of who they are or where they are going. Some want a fresh identity but when asked for examples, all they can provide are clues to what they don't like, not what they do. One of the most difficult things to hear is, "I'll know it when I see it."

But a select few are so in tune with themselves it sends a chill down our spines. They know their history. Their values and objectives represent a clear archetype and they want their brand identity to match. They have come to the conclusion that a rebrand is necessary to fully realize what they desire from the future. And they know that no matter how good their internal marketing department staff is, that it stands too close to the trees to be able to see the entire forest. Whether there are five people in the room or fifty, one person clearly speaks for them all. That person speaks with conviction.

That person is a leader.

They know the goal, they know their organization can't reach it on its own, and they are courageous enough to push forward rather than accept the status quo.

Rebranding an established institution such as a large corporation, university or a medical center is a complicated task that brings with it a great number of risks. But courageous leaders know that it would be a greater risk not to rebrand. They understand that every great journey has a destination in mind, and while there may be delays and detours along the way, that the destination will not change.

Courageous leaders have focus.

They understand the future and their place in it. They know a life without adventure is nothing. Like an explorer with a spyglass, he or she looks past the distractions to keep the ultimate goal in sight and be certain the course stays true.

Tough

Anyone who says a rebranding is easy probably hasn't been through one.

It is a formidable process that can bend friendships and emotions nearly to the breaking point. It requires hard work, patience and several revisits to square one. It is at times exhausting and exciting. There is the disappointment of rejection and the joy of acceptance. **Ultimately, there is the pride of a rebrand that succeeds on every level.**

To reach the desired destination requires a leader who is tough.

He or she must consider the rebranding process as a relationship. There are the individuals taking part, the groups they form and the inherent allegiances within. There are the creative teams who must collaborate with the institution's staff. And, they must all work together.

The rebranding process depends upon a relationship that requires a leader who is tenacious and resilient. When individuals in this crucial relationship push back, this leader will be tough enough to help the consultant pull everyone through.

Doubt can be a springboard to success. At times, it is the very reason for considering a rebrand. We think our current brand isn't working. It doesn't have the strength it needs to set our organization apart. It just doesn't seem right any more. All these statements are rooted in doubt. A rebrand is meant to replace that doubt with conviction.

Once a rebrand is underway, however, doubt can undermine it completely. We don't think this will work. We don't understand where it's going. We aren't sure this is the right way to go. We don't know why, but it just doesn't feel right.

A leader has to be a believer from start to finish.

Their belief has to come from within, from both heart and mind. There is no room for doubt; no time for skepticism. Believing in a goal and in the people chosen to help achieve it is a must-have virtue for a leader in a complex rebrand.

Because there is no "reverse" once the rocket's engines have fired.

Throughout the process, an open-minded leader is one who is willing to weigh every consideration and then make thoughtful decisions that will move the process forward.

Present

A rebrand is a hands-on process, and a complex rebrand requires a leader who is there when he or she is needed. Inevitably, the process will involve committees. But committees seldom make decisions. Committees make recommendations. They can be useful in sifting through options, but if the final decision is up to one person, that person needs to be engaged from Day One through the unveil.

He or she must be mindful. In every phase, they are right here, right now. Listening. Learning.

Because so much of a brand flows from within, leaders who are present are also great sources of inspiration in a rebrand. When they take part, no one has to guess what he or she was thinking. No one has to presume the vision.

They can express it themselves, without interpretation, immediately.

Leaders who are present during a rebrand greatly reduce the risk of miscommunication and misunderstanding. They save time and money by helping ensure the process keeps moving – and in the right direction.

Decisive

There are few factors that can delay and even derail the rebranding process more than indecision. Too many voices. Too many meetings.

After a time, even the smallest of details become insurmountable.

A decisive leader sifts through the opinions, egos and information and makes choices that are good for the entire institution. Of course, there will still be considerations and input from the board of directors and the legal staff.

But decisive leaders have influence.

They are able to explain the reasoning behind their decisions and justify them in relation to their experience and vision.

Being decisive does not mean being tyrannical. It means combining the first few traits we've mentioned into an act of authority.

**It is the power to make a final decision –
and the confidence to never, ever look back.**

In the end

Leaders who are committed to the betterment of the entire institution will remain dedicated to the rebrand goal. They will keep committees on task no matter the distractions. They will insist that deadlines be set and met in order to keep the process moving forward. They will assign responsibility and require accountability.

In the end, their courage, toughness, firm belief, presence and decisiveness will help make the incredible journey behind a complex rebrand look smooth.

**And they will take
immense pride
in the results.**

Considering a rebrand?

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