

# The five universal demands of rebranding

We have identified five universal demands of rebranding:  
Purposeful, Procedural, Purifying, Proven and Powerful



**Where brands come true.**

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

# 01 Purposeful

For a rebrand to be purposeful, it has to address one or more motivating factors, or drivers. It can only serve as a solution if the specific issue, need or problem has first been identified.

Drivers that can trigger a rebrand are:

- > Structural
- > Strategic
- > Functional

## Structural Drivers

**Two companies merge and the stronger, more recognizable name between the two becomes the dominant brand.** However, an element or two of the less dominant brand is included so not to lose the loyalty that company or organization brings to the merger. It becomes a sort of Frankenstein identity, with the parts being used to make one monster brand. For example, when United airlines merged with Continental airlines, the new identity took the stronger name, United, and linked it with Continental's logo.



**There can also be a merger where the stronger of the two brands becomes completely dominant.** American Airlines and U.S. Airways merged, but the only name we saw in the wake was American Airlines, and it was accompanied by a new symbol reminiscent of the American Airlines winged eagle (a fixture of its previous logo for 45 years) in red, white and blue. Gone was the old U.S. Airways identity; completely absorbed.



**A third structural driver is a merger where both brands are wiped clean, replaced by a "brand new" identity.** Remember Bell Atlantic? GTE? Why would you? Seems like they've been Verizon forever. It was born of a new vision, one that discards the past in favor of a distinct, original personality.



## STRATEGIC DRIVERS

**One strategy is to establish an identity that broadens the original company’s scope.** Take the classic boat shoe, the Sperry Top-Sider. But that isn’t all Sperry sells. Coats, jackets, shirts, socks and accessories – a boatload of stuff. So when Sperry changed its identity, the company dropped the term “Top-Sider,” played around a bit with the familiar sailing logo, and added the line, “Since 1935.” Sperry’s message: we are still the company you’ve known and trusted for decades, but our scope is much broader than just deck shoes.



**Removing a geographical limitation in order to broaden scope is another strategic driver.** Northeast Utilities is a good example. The first word limits its location to one area of something, but we can’t really be certain what. A state? The nation? The second word is somewhat archaic and also uncertain. All utilities, or just gas? Water? Electricity too? And what is that symbol? A parasol? Shuttlecock? Enter a new identity, Eversource Energy. A broader scope, and a more modern look.



**Perhaps the strategic driver is one that seeks to limit an existing scope to express a more specific focus.** Hawaiian Airlines flies well beyond the pineapple fields of the 50th state. It is the eighth largest commercial airline in the U.S. and operates daily flights to JFK in New York City. But it also wants to be known as the inter-island carrier of choice. Enter “Ohana by Hawaiian,” a regional subsidiary carrier fully integrated into the Hawaiian Airlines network. The company explained the change this way: “Ohana, the Hawaiian word for family, conveys the mission of our new operation: bringing people together.” A broad company, now with an element that has a very specific focus.



**A change in culture is another strategic driver.** When three prominent Omaha-area healthcare entities – The Nebraska Medical Center, Bellevue Medical Center and UNMC Physicians – formally joined forces as Nebraska Medicine, the rebrand and a dramatic, unifying emblem to be used by both Nebraska Medicine and its longstanding partner, the University of Nebraska Medical Center signified a new, unified culture that brought nearly 10,000 people together. Several elements of the new identity successfully built upon Nebraska Medicine’s legacy, while at the same time illustrating a Nebraska heritage and global mission shared by Nebraska Medicine and UNMC.



**A change in external personality to renew or refresh a public image can be a strategic driver.** One of our favorite examples is Old Spice. Not sure if it was ever the choice of fishing boat captains everywhere, but the tongue-in-cheek marketing of the “Smell like a man” campaign, coupled with the introduction of the bold, daring “spokesman,” and that old image of your great-grandfather’s cologne was washed away with the tide. Today, even teenagers use it. That’s about as big a change for the better a public image can take.



**Lastly, a perceived change in an organization’s composition is a strategic driver.** In other words, a restructuring that requires the positive reinforcement of the “protective umbrella” presence of management. Mint was already a popular web-based personal finance management service when in 2009 it was acquired by Intuit, makers of Quicken and TurboTax. To build upon the strength of its now parent company, Mint added Intuit to its identity and changed its font and symbol – but not so much that it wasn’t still recognizable.



The last drivers behind a rebrand are functional drivers. They include name weakness, name confusion, design weakness and the need to capitalize on an advertising breakthrough.

## FUNCTIONAL DRIVERS

Names weakened by a corporate relationship that has gone sour, or worse, been devastated by scandal, benefit from a new, distinctive identity. Accenture began as Andersen Consulting, the business and technology consulting division of accounting firm Arthur Andersen. But the two entities became involved in a dispute over profits and competition during the 1990s. In August 2000, Andersen Consulting broke all contractual ties with Arthur Andersen and, one year later, changed its name to Accenture. The change proved extremely fortunate when, in 2002, the Arthur Andersen firm was found guilty of criminal charges in regards to its auditing of energy corporation Enron. Accenture enjoyed the distance its fresh identity had provided.



### Name confusion can be another functional driver.

A rebrand can provide clarity, such as the case with Huluplus and Hulu. The confusing question, Hulu plus what? Or provide clarity when a well-established name can now be confused with another dominant player in a completely different market space. Think Dove soap – and Dove chocolates.



### Perhaps the time has come to repair a weakness in the brand design, or even satisfy a legal requirement to do so.

Green Mountain Coffee had been symbolized by a sort of seal, several ovals with the words inside. But what was that image in place of the “o” in the word Mountain? Is that a coffee bean, perhaps? Or a football? With the new design, the coffee bean is depicted visually above the company name, with the image of a mountain. The colors are sharp and the wording clear. So is the idea of mountain-grown coffee (without directly challenging Folgers).



### Maybe the functional driver isn't a problem at all, but a way of capitalizing on an advertising breakthrough that will greatly expand the audience.

Had anyone heard of Aflac supplemental insurance prior to the introduction of the Aflac duck? Four years after the first commercial debuted, the Aflac duck was inducted into the Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame. And that was before that duck was incorporated into the Aflac logo. Today, if you've heard that duck, you've heard of Aflac.



Structural, strategic or functional, each of these drivers gives a rebrand **PURPOSE**.

# 02 Procedural

**The rebranding process culminates in the launch: a uniquely powerful, one-time event. It is the moment when the curtain rises and the world is finally in on the big secret. Up to that moment, ensuring the details stay a secret is essential.**

Throughout the process, a rebrand has to follow strict procedures. These do not reign in the creative process; they protect it.

There will be threats that surface from likely and unlikely sources. There can be leaks of information that can undermine the project. There will be naysayers, possibly even those who are so opposed to the project that they will take shots at it every step of the way.

To be successful, a rebrand requires input from people at all levels – even people outside the organization. Your external audience can sometimes know more about you than you realize. They learn it from their family, their neighbors, friends and from social media – Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest and sources that didn't exist 10 years ago. Involving key stakeholders from all levels of the organization and beyond creates trust in the process and buy-in for the results. People will know that their voices were heard; their opinions matter.

Once the patterns in these voices emerge you begin to build understanding and consensus. The risks involved in rebranding give way to the courage to take a step forward. The greater the support, the clearer the blueprint for the new identity.

There will still be challenges. As the process continues, there must be set goals and deadlines. Confidence and determination wane without a structured plan that keeps the process moving forward. Deviations create doubt and delays that can undermine the success of a rebrand.

Follow the procedural steps, apportion the time deliberately and set limitations to ensure progress and privacy and your launch will be the grand event that takes everyone by pleasant, electrifying surprise.

# 03 Purifying

Ever watch a commercial and shake your head at the end because you just didn't get the point? Or worse, watch a commercial and enjoy the imagery, words and music and yet have no idea what the product or service was? That's because you didn't receive a signal. You got noise.

**Disjointed messages create disconnect. Often they are too complex. Rebranding forces an organization to refocus and simplify. Removing the static purifies the signal.**

Rebrands can purify visually, such as the Mack Truck rebrand that carried over the classic bulldog image into a clean, modern logo; or the redesign of the TGI Fridays logo, an updated version of the red-and-white striped nameplate that now looks less barbershop quartet and more sleek, to match what the restaurant chain touted as "a new vibe."

### Examples of Purified Identities:



Rebrands can purify verbally to eliminate a mixed message, like transforming Lucky Cream and Goldstar into LG, or taking a murky term like BackRub and morphing it into what we know today as Google.

Lastly, rebrands can purify by refining a focus on positioning. Apple's trademark fruit with the bite mark, recognizable in almost every nation on the planet, didn't start out so simple. Picture instead a pencil image of Isaac Newton sitting beneath a tree, and a windswept banner reminiscent of something a Renaissance woman might be wearing in a painting. It was definitely not innovative and futuristic.

A great rebrand purifies by filtering the excesses and distilling a position, idea or a promise into something clear, meaningful and lasting.

# 04 Proven

Ever hear someone say, “The proof is in the pudding?” Well, that’s not how the old saying goes. The original proverb is: “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” It means you have to taste food to know if it is good. That’s why experienced chefs always have plenty of spoons. Whether it’s the first ingredient or the last, chefs taste their cooking many times throughout the process, adding this, tweaking that. Once it is served, they know what’s on the plate is the best it can be.

Being different isn’t enough. A rebrand must be proven.

Revealing a rebrand that, thanks to social media, is instantly criticized as ill-conceived, off course and unnecessary may generate headlines – but not the kind a company seeks. Just look at some of the major players who made similar mistakes: the Gap, JC Penney and “New” Coke.

Too many times, brands try to reinvent the wheel – then have to make a U-turn before speeding off a cliff. In January of 2009, Tropicana unveiled a drastic redesign of its orange juice container. The public voiced its disapproval in checkout lines everywhere. Sales of the Tropicana Pure Premium line plummeted 20 percent in less than two months, costing the brand millions. By the end of February that year, the company had tossed out the new packaging – and the money it had spent on its redesign.

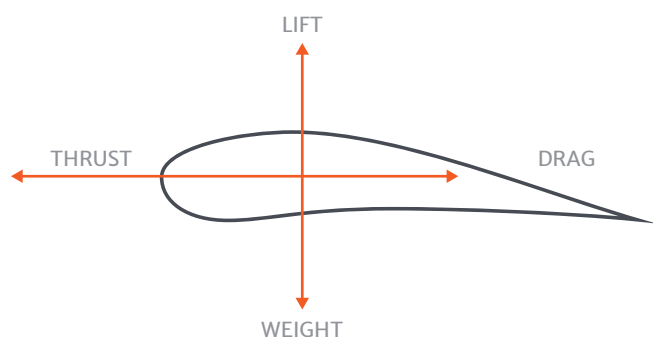
Throughout the rebranding process, a group of top management and select stakeholders has to be involved to ensure the deliverables match the vision. And, many times during the process, the elements of the new identity have to be demonstrated, explained, justified, substantiated, tested and verified.

**Only then will you have your proof.**



# 05 Powerful

It takes power to move mountains,  
**BUT THEY CAN BE MOVED.**



The physics of a big brand means the more massive it is, the more drag it has. Change our identity? Are you serious? There would be so much to change. Huge job. Costly. Decision makers start a list and the longer it gets, the less likely they are to choose rebranding. They become more afraid of what they might lose than they are confident of what they will gain. They forget that the bigger the brand, the more powerful it needs to be. The more power it has, the more energy it creates.

Today, brand energy is fueled by the consumer, the user. People power. Got a great product? People will tell their friends. Instantly. They'll put the word out on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, any and all of their personal broadcast channels and become your unpaid sales force.

They'll send out words and photos in an ovation of digital applause. Same thing if you don't meet their expectations. They'll let everyone know. Thumbs down.

Having brand energy distributed like it is today translates into a democratizing force that elevates your brand. It gives it honesty and believability that can't be bought. It shows that it is meaningful to the people who actually use it. One person endorses your brand to friends and followers, then others add their opinions and send it on to their friends and followers. It's like dropping a boulder into a still lake. Watch the ripples. That's energy.

Finally, a powerful rebrand moves an organization forward. If the goal is to underscore the new vision of a transitional leader, it should do it with an exclamation point. If it is to build upon the past while signaling a new direction, then people should follow it like a map. If it is designed to wow, the needle should jump all the way to red.

**That kind of power makes a difference in people's lives.**

Rebranding is the most effective way for leaders to signal significant change.

# Considering a rebrand?

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