

The critical path of a rebrand

Envision a destination and watch what happens along the way



Where brands come true.

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

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Take two steps back

With a rebrand, the end is really a good place to start.

That may sound ambiguous, but it's true. Having a goal in mind is the easy part. Most leaders can say they want to update an aging corporate image, or stake a bigger market claim, or introduce their company to a new audience or any number of rebranding goals.

The trouble is, looking too far ahead ignores everything that must take place along the way: the process.

Try to think of the rebranding process as a version of the game show "Jeopardy." Beginning with the goal is like having the answer before you come up with the correct question.

There is a critical path that every successful rebrand must follow. There are steps to be taken and answers to be determined. As long as you ask the right questions.

Analyze

How well do you know yourself?

It isn't as simple as looking in a mirror. Even then, your view is limited. Nothing more than a one-dimensional reflection. To learn not only what motivates you but also why it motivates you, we need to look deeper. Beyond the surface and the obvious highlights and flaws. That's the stuff everyone sees. That's too easy.

Here are the first five steps to take:

Interview key leaders

You can't interpret a leader's vision if you don't know what it is. Thoughts that went into the writing of a mission statement years ago aren't the same thoughts on a CEO's mind today. Create a list of key questions that define where leadership thinks the company needs to be tomorrow and where they want it to be in 10 years. You will be enlightened by the ideas – and may be surprised.

Clarify vision, strategies, goals and values

Again, blow the dust off the mission statement. Then think of it in today's terms. A healthcare entity today is light years from where it was two decades ago. The challenges have changed and so have the people who face them every day. So talk to them. Ask them some of the same tough questions you gave the leadership. But don't forget to get their ideas as well as their answers. Their opinions matter. They are the people interacting directly with your customers, clients or patients, and listening to them helps pave the way for buy-in later.

Research customer perceptions

What do Joe and Jane Average think about your logo and tagline? Do they recognize it? Most importantly, do they connect with it? If either answer is no, you have much work to do. Find out why they don't connect with it, where the connection was lost and what it would take to bring them back. If their perception is not an accurate reflection of your business and what it stands for, that misperception is what stands in your way.

Conduct an existing brand(s) and brand architecture audit

Now is the time for the professionals to insert their opinion. It's akin to having a preliminary diagnosis and going straight to the specialist. Ideally, you've had professionals leading you up to this point. If so, they likely have formed their own list of questions that will help them gain a greater understanding of your brand and where it should be. Let them skillfully dissect your current brand to determine, piece by piece, what is working and what isn't.

Conduct an Archetype Discovery™

At Daake, we've embraced the idea that every person and every corporation, organization and service entity has a unique archetype. We have developed a method of discovering that archetype and what it means. It goes beyond determining likes and dislikes. It is the very soil where your values are planted. As with any garden, if the soil isn't right for the seeds you plant, all you'll grow are weeds.

Define & plan

There is a huge difference between knowing information and understanding it.

The second phase of the rebranding process takes the information gathered in the first phase, deciphers it and then organizes it in ways that emphasize the aspects most relevant and useful. Like separating the wheat from the chaff at harvest time.

Synthesize learnings

Just as an orchestra synthesizes musicians and their instruments, a rebrand takes many opinions and combines them. The CEO and leadership interviews serve as the conductor. This knowledge and direction is then merged with and compared to surveys and focus group findings, customer feedback, and employee questionnaires. When all parts and pieces are brought together, in-depth, transformative learning about your brand occurs.

Clarify brand strategy

Why does your brand exist? What is it you want your brand to accomplish? Defining your brand strategy and clarifying it by applying what you have learned to this point helps refine the direction of the rebrand. Your strategy has to be rooted in what you do best and nurtured by why you do it. Are you truly out to turn the world into a better place? Help people do more? Live healthier? Longer? Then your brand should have the power to make us see, feel and know it. Instantly. It won't without a clear strategy.

Develop a positioning platform

Like an arrow aimed at a target's center, brand positioning means that all brand activity produces a singular positive result. Positioning is the quality of a brand that makes it iconic. It is focus. What's your place in the marketplace? Your brand positioning platform will help mark your spot on the map and define what it will take to get there.

Create a naming strategy

Words are among the most powerful tools as you build a rebrand. Whether it's a brand name or a tagline, every word should be chosen carefully to incorporate who you are, what your stand for and what you do best. A naming strategy takes into account what you want people to think – and how you want them to feel.

Present a brand brief

Again, this is another step in the organization of the thoughts and concepts that are helping to refine your rebrand. A report delivered to leadership and key individuals provides useful input regarding the rebrand. It promotes consistency, helping leaders tell the same story, share the same level of enthusiasm and speak intelligently about the new direction. It isn't the final product; it's the measure of progress to date. The information funnel continues to narrow.

Co-create Mood Board™ brand attributes

A Mood Board is a fantastic way to get inside the heads of everyone you've brought to the table. Selecting shapes, colors, fonts and styles you find appealing – and just as importantly, discarding those deemed unappealing – kick starts the design phase and gives the visual creatives something solid to work with. It's the kind of meaningful collaboration that helps eliminate surprises two months down the road.

Create

A brick and a vase
both start as clay.

You've listened, gathered, sorted and compiled information. That's your clay. Whether you start with the current brand or a blank slate, the time to craft something awesome is now.

Design the brand identity

Four words that represent so much. There will be hours of "What about this?" and "How about . . .?" Drawings on paper and screens and white boards. Lists of words and taglines that are whittled down to a select few. Meetings and late nights and emails and phone calls. All intended to bring an idea to life. What happens here is difficult to describe. It isn't magic and it isn't easy, but creating the perfect brand identity will make it look like it was both.

Test trademark availability

Great ideas can be dead in the water if someone else already had and trademarked them. And while the mere existence of a trademark on a potential brand doesn't preclude its use, it does throw a wrench into the machine.

Examine applicability

How clear is the new identity, does it truly reflect what you've learned and will it fit every intended use? Grab a microscope and don't leave anything off the checklist.

Finalize brand architecture

Peel back the layers of the brand to make certain the corporate brand and the sub-brands are supportive of one another. Do they reinforce the brand purpose? How will they be managed? The architecture is the foundation of the brand and all sub-brands. Build it strong.

Prioritize design applications

Rarely will one design fit every purpose and situation. Different uses call for tweaking and the tweaks have to be consistent. Prioritizing them designates their importance and supports the effectiveness and staying power of the rebrand.

Implement & launch

Start the countdown.

The final phase of the rebranding process is where the future begins. The idea of a rebrand has been building in intensity and excitement since Phase One. Talk has spread, likely both internally and externally. Tap into that adrenaline and use it to your advantage.

Finalize identity solution

From the top leadership through the rebranding committee and the board of directors, everyone should be apprised of the new brand identity and called on to speak now. This is the time for objections to be heard – not the day before the unveil.

Initiate trademark protection

Protect your ideas and your investment. Begin and follow the proper procedure because the wheels of government often move by the inch, not the mile.

Develop launch strategy and plan

A bold rebrand deserves a bold unveiling. Whether it's a gathering of all employees in one place or an online web event uniting offices around the world, treat it like the surprise party that it is. Celebrate the new identity and let your people be the first to tell their friends. Have a plan ready to share the news with the media and corporate peers. The better you manage the launch, the clearer your message will be.

Develop and launch Brand wise™ online brand standards

You need rules as to the use and abuse of your new brand identity. Protecting it is important to ensure consistency across all channels of communication. The only way for people to know they are using the logo and tagline correctly is to show them how it's done and make access to the guidelines readily available online.

Launch internally then externally

Like dropping a rock into a pond, start with your people at the center and let the excitement ripple outward. Listen to comments and feedback and track any public reaction. And keep listening.

Don't walk away

The work on a rebrand doesn't end with the launch.

A brand has a life of its own. It has energy. It has power and a physical presence. It sparks a feeling. But, because it has life, a brand needs to be nurtured and allowed to grow and evolve over time. If it's created and left alone, it risks stagnation, loss of identity – and loss of purpose. The lifeblood of your brand begins with leadership and flows through your audience.

Keep it moving forward and it will continue to gain traction and solidify its place in the hearts and minds of your team and your audience.

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Considering a rebrand?

Get a hold of us at:
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Stay in touch with our latest work, our thinking and rebranding news and trends.
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