



# Transformative rebranding

What great leaders know about the power of brand change  
and the proven tools that make it happen



**Where brands come true.**

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

# Proven tools for brand change

Wisdom, wherever found, should not be kept a secret. What we learn from each other's mistakes and successes can save time, expense and embarrassment. Useful data amassed by trained and dedicated researchers can fill in the Xs and Ys of our own equations. If the goal in business is to finish first, then nothing helps more than a head start.

## **Which brings us to a nifty tool called the Strategic Rebranding Worksheet.**

Put simply, the Strategic Rebranding Worksheet is a tool for planning, sourcing, budgeting and staffing institutional rebranding programs and to help clients, consultants and designers speak the same language.

By plotting the historic mix and importance of a rebranding's drivers, which are, in essence, the leadership intentions; against the tools actually used, with the benefit of hindsight, we can identify what usually works best and why. We can then better understand the strategic issues, creative opportunities and process requirements of a potential future rebranding.

We all look for patterns, cycles and intersections where businesses can learn from one another. Identifying a universal menu both of drivers and of tools for rebranding, as the worksheet has done, helps guide selection of the tools others have successfully used to achieve any given mix of purposes.

# Aligning the data

In physical form, the worksheet is a one-page checklist and data entry form. Its vertical axis lists all 17 potential drivers of a rebranding, whether structural (to accommodate merger, acquisition or spinout); strategic (to change direction, broaden or narrow a corporation's scope, change its internal culture, etc.) or functional (to deal with name weakness, design weaknesses, etc.).

**Across the horizontal axis, the 34 column headings list all potential tools that might help effect a rebranding:**

- **The first six, “Identifier Tactics,” specify four possible name strategies and two logo design strategies (either symbol-dominated or wordmark-dominated, design strategies which can differ significantly in their fit to strategic and structural drivers).**
- **Eleven “Identity System” tactics cover visual system tools, nomenclature and other verbal elements (such as the tagline) and the unit signature system.**
- **Then there are 14 “Situation Factors” to be considered — facts about the corporation often used by its various audiences to help identify it, facts which can sometimes be repositioned or even changed, with deliberate rebranding intent: A change, for example, of headquarters location or even a change of CEO.**
- **Finally, the worksheet recognizes that the audiences, scale and communicated importance of the brand launch event is also a strategic choice and identifies three levels of audience and media scope.**

By showing where these 17 drivers and 34 tools have actually intersected, in a database of significant corporate rebranding events, the worksheet can provide corporate leaders and their brand planners with “best practices” guidance, while expanding their thoughts on the potential scope and power of a rebranding, as well as on the tools at their command.



## Strategic Rebranding Worksheet

### STRUCTURAL drivers To accommodate structural change

<b>MERGER &amp; ACQUISITION</b>	merger of equals; best of both transformed survivor brand new vision, forget the past
<b>SPINOUT</b>	preserve existing equity express a new vision

### STRATEGIC drivers To effect strategic repositioning

<b>CHANGE DIRECTION</b>	redefine industry / core competence
<b>BROADEN SCOPE / SCALE / VISIBILITY</b>	remove limiting category association
	remove limiting geographic association
	enhance size perception
	elevate public profile
<b>NARROW THE SCOPE</b>	express a more specific focus
<b>CHANGE INTERNAL CULTURE</b>	enhance pride & confidence
	refresh & redirect competitive energy
	transfer affiliation from unit to parent
<b>CHANGE EXPRESSED PERSONALITY</b>	renew / refresh public image
<b>CHANGE PERCEIVED COMPOSITION</b>	redefine the defining units
	modify parental 'umbrella' presence

### FUNCTIONAL drivers To improve branding functionality

<b>NAME WEAKNESS</b>	Increase name impact & recall
<b>NAME CONFUSION</b>	Increase name differentiation
<b>DESIGN WEAKNESS</b>	Increase visual strength / quality
<b>ADVERTISING BREAKTHROUGH</b>	Incorporate the advertising element
<b>LEGAL REQUIREMENT</b>	retain or transfer brand equities

driving purposes

communication goals

	% importance out of 100	IDENTIFIER TACTICS		IDENTITY SYSTEM ELEMENTS							SITUATION FACTORS					CHANGE EVENT				
		name change	logo change	visual system	verbal elements	unit signature system	Corporate level factors			Subcorporate factors		low visibility	medium visibility	high visibility						
borrowed words																				
created words																				
abbreviations																				
brand																				
wordmark - dominant																				
symbol - dominant																				
typography																				
graphic devices																				
palette																				
formal / legal names																				
principal unit names / competence																				
tag lines																				
affiliation descriptions																				
monolithic																				
visual endorsement																				
verbal or no endorsement																				
mixed																				
industry definition																				
nationality & geography																				
size																				
ownership																				
management																				
HQ location																				
competitors																				
history																				
architecture																				
employee behaviour																				
competence list																				
defining units																				
subsidiaries																				
brands & products																				
low visibility																				
medium visibility																				
high visibility																				

# The big picture

In all 92 cases entered to date in the Strategic Rebranding Worksheet, CEOs, the chief communications officers or the lead consultants were interviewed.

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Interviewees confirmed which drivers were applicable and participated in weighting their relative importance.

**The overall picture to date:**

- **functional drivers such as name weakness or confusion or design weakness accounted for only nine percent of the overall driving purposes behind rebrands,**
- **structural drivers such as merger and acquisition accounted for 19 percent, and**
- **strategic drivers concerning direction, scope, culture, personality and composition accounted for 72 percent.**

**When that information is checked against the successful tools employed, we can see which tools worked well in specific situations.**

	Name change	Logo change	Visual system	Verbal elements	Unit signature system	Corporate level factors	Subcorporate factors	Low visibility	Medium visibility	High visibility
<b>Merger &amp; Acquisition</b>	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
<b>Spinout or de-acquisition</b>	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	White	Light Gray	Light Gray
<b>Change direction</b>	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
<b>Broaden scope/scale/visibility</b>	Dark Gray	Very Dark Gray	Very Dark Gray	Very Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray	Very Dark Gray
<b>Narrow the scope</b>	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
<b>Change internal culture</b>	Light Gray	Very Dark Gray	Very Dark Gray	Very Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray	Very Dark Gray
<b>Change expressed personality</b>	Light Gray	Very Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Very Dark Gray
<b>Change perceived composition</b>	Light Gray	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Dark Gray	Dark Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray
<b>Name weakness</b>	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	White	Light Gray	White	White	Light Gray
<b>Name confusion</b>	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
<b>Design weakness</b>	Light Gray	Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
<b>Advertising breakthrough</b>	White	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	White	White	White	White	Light Gray
<b>Legal requirement</b>	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White

The gray shading in the box is a rough indicator of the particular percentage that tool was used for that purpose in the 92 cases that comprise the Strategic Rebranding Worksheet.

Clearly, broadening scope/scale/visibility and changing internal culture are among the top drivers, while changing the logo is a tool that fits into the scenario with many drivers.

# How it works

Let's examine one of the cases studies.

American Building Maintenance was founded in 1909 in San Francisco by one man whose \$4.50 investment bought him a sponge, mop, bucket, a broom and his own company. By 2012, when it rebranded, American Building Maintenance had grown to more than 100,000 employees in 15 countries and a business worth more than \$4 billion.

Having outgrown the "American" portion of its name, in 1994 the company dropped American Building Maintenance in favor of the simpler, ABM. But its logo stayed the same.

ABM continued to acquire other brands and companies and add them to its expanding portfolio of diversely-branded services. By 2010, an idea that leadership had been considering for years was moved to the front burner — rebranding its various units into one defining brand.

Becoming "One ABM" was accomplished primarily through the design of a new logo, one that placed ABM's people at the heart of its identity, and by replacement of unrelated unit signatures with one ABM-dominated unit signature configuration. "Industries" was de-emphasized in favor of unity. A new tagline, "Building Value," was added and served to energize the launch event. The new identity was unveiled amid considerable celebration, keyed on a two-minute launch film emphasizing the repositioning of a 103-year-old company as "One ABM."



ABM’s rebranding was directed by Brett Knox, SVP Marketing, on behalf of CEO Henrik Slipsager. Knox confirmed and weighted these six strategic drivers:

Enhance employee pride and confidence	20
Refresh and redirect competitive energy	10
Transfer affiliation from unit(s) to parent	30
Increase parental ‘umbrella’ presence	20
Renew/refresh public image	10
Elevate public profile	10

Note that the first three drivers (and 60 percent of the weighting) focus on the employee audience — the priority audience, in the majority of corporate rebrandings.

Old logo



New logo



**Credits**

Logo: Joe Finocchiaro and Jerry Kuyper  
 Strategy: RiechesBaird  
 Submitted by: Tony Spaeth

# What it all means

Weighing options is more a search for balance than definite answers. With a rebrand, there will always be some risk. But having a historical perspective based in real data can help minimize that risk and maximize the effectiveness of the tools selected.

■ **At Daake, we consider it a head start.**

# Considering a rebrand?

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