Separating brand wheat from brand chaff

Mining the truly relevant opinions to reveal your brand personality
We rebrand. DAAKE is one of the nation’s few rebranding specialty firms.
Make it personal

What attracted you to your significant other? Was it their sense of humor? Good looks? A similar job or shared interests? Now, what kept your initial attraction going?

Most likely, it was personality.

The same is true for a brand. You may be initially attracted to a place or a product by a stylish logo or vivid colors or a clever tagline or even convenience. What keeps you coming back for more is what you received through those initial encounters. Once you got past the initial attraction, you made a connection with the brand's personality — the values and qualities that bring you back for more.

**NOW THAT YOU'VE DECIDED ON A REBRAND AND AN IMPROVED IDENTITY, WHOSE OPINIONS SHOULD GO INTO THE PROCESS?**

In a way, everyone's — from the top decision makers through the organization's various levels and right on out the door to the average person on the street. So you gather opinions in meetings, interviews and focus groups, social media posts and as many ways as you can find. After you've collected them comes the important part: Sorting them according to relevance.

Obviously you can't conduct 50 hours of interviews and incorporate all of that into a new identity. What do you consider and what do you disregard? Here's our advice for separating the wheat from the chaff when it comes to accurately portraying and relating a brand personality.
Step 1

Take a good, close look at the answers people gave to your questions. What did the top decision-makers say they perceive the organization’s values to be? If you conducted an archetype discovery session, what did you identify as the strongest archetypes? When examining employee input, what do staff members feel are the organization’s strengths and weaknesses? How do they think the company is seen by the public? If you conducted public interviews and focus groups, what do people on the street think and feel?

Closely examining the data is the first step to identifying personality traits such as courage, reliability, vitality or leadership. Make a list of the top three or four.

You may identify many more traits and that’s fine, but for the purpose of creating an identity we want to focus on no more than three or four. Trying to incorporate more than four traits into a rebrand is like adding water to soup. It quickly loses its flavor.
Try “word mining” the comments you’ve received by crafting a Venn diagram of the themes you’re hearing. This will help you visually see all the possible logical relations between a finite collection of different sets.

You are looking for the words and phrases from your different subject groups that overlap so you can gather them into the smallest possible number of groups. That’s your wheat. Then examine the words and phrases that fall outside the overlaying areas. That’s your chaff.

Even if they fall outside the overlapping areas, there are some opinions you shouldn’t ignore. One is the opinion and intentions of the highest-ranking leadership. If your top leader’s intentions aren’t realized within the rebrand, it will fail. Buy-in from the bottom layer is desirable, but buy-in from the top is essential.

One way to ensure the key leader’s intentions are incorporated is to keep them involved. Not just updated, but actively involved. They must attend critical meetings. Include them in presentations. They need to see, believe and enthusiastically support the rebrand. That means they need to get their hands dirty. That’s how mining works.
What fonts, what colors, what shapes/symbols, what compositions evoke the personality traits you’ve identified?

Not literally, but figuratively. The goal is to be able to step back and have the majority of people think, “Yes, that looks like us; that looks like it came from here. I see what you’re doing.”

Remember, most of the people involved will be literal and not figurative. Objectifying the solution against what was heard is the most effective way to argue for your recommendations.

For example, if courage is one of the personality traits, find a symbol that makes a mental connection. Go for the subconscious. Sure, a sword evokes the thought of bravery, but so does a shield. And a shield also conjures thoughts of protection and safety. Those are pretty good traits to project.

That’s why Travelers Insurance has adopted an umbrella as its symbol. It’s a sign of protection from harm, not just the rain.
There has to be a story.

Logos are the most vulnerable of all branding elements. After it’s done, the first thing people search for when they see it is meaning. Why is there an arc? Why did you pick those colors? What does that shape mean? What are those four lines supposed to be? Is that an “L” hidden in there?

The construction of the visual identity has to flow along with the big idea, and that requires a story.

Your narrative needs to be fully developed — and approved by the leadership — before the new identity is unveiled. Your audience, whether it is internal or external, should never be left guessing. Show the design and then explain it immediately. Every line, every shape, every color has to represent something — and each representation must lead back to your brand personality.

That doesn't mean you have to write a book. One paragraph explaining the design will suffice. With succinct text, especially if it is a public unveiling, the more likely your audience (and the media) will not try to develop its own simplified interpretation. Keep your story energetic, understandable and reflective of your brand’s personality traits while underscoring the purpose of the organization.
If the objective is to evoke the current brand, you’ll need to identify a way to bring the most salient characteristic forward to the new identity.

Many brands build equity over time. The history of Ivory Soap, the reliability of Craftsman Tools, the dependability of John Deere tractors have value that should not be lost in a rebrand.

Like a woman’s wedding ring with a band that has worn thin over time, you don’t discard the diamond and the band and start completely new. You want to keep the jewels and strengthen the band — and in this case the bond you have worked so hard to build through the years.

Even if the characteristic you bring forward is a single color or a word or two from a tagline, it’s often enough to trigger and transfer positive equity in the viewer’s mind.

AND THOSE POSITIVE MEMORIES ARE THE SEEDS OF ACCEPTANCE FOR YOUR NEW IDENTITY.
It’s all in a name.

AND IN A LOGO.
AND A TAGLINE.
AND THAT’S WHERE IT SHOULD BE.

Each brand has a personality that is unique, tangible and valuable. Translating that personality into a successful rebrand requires more than assembling a list of “wants.”

It starts with assembling a list of “haves.”

To determine what your brand has that sets it apart requires research — lots of it — followed by a thoughtful process that separates worthwhile information from insignificant information.

It's like panning for gold. If you haven’t done it, you need to learn from someone who has. It’s a process that, if rushed, is a waste of time. The right amount of water in the pan will help gently wash away the grit and the sand and the dirt, leaving behind just a few tiny flakes of shiny gold. It’s amazing how that precious gold was there all the time. You just had to know how and where to look.

FIND THE GOLD IN YOUR BRAND.
Rebranding is the most effective way for leaders to signal significant change.
Considering a rebrand?

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