

# Brand Development

There are only two things that count in a service business. Firstly, attracting and retaining the most profitable clients. Secondly, attracting and retaining the best talent. These are only achievable if clients, recruits and employees consistently prefer your brand to those of your competitors. However good you think you are, brand perceptions will determine choice. They are the reality.

You can either choose to manage your brand perceptions or leave them to manage themselves. Brand Development is a programme of activity designed to help you take control of your brand, to optimise brand value and ensure a perfect fit with the firm's business strategy.

## It's not plain sailing

Brand is much mistrusted in business generally and in professional services especially. Part of this, in the UK at least, is caused by the media obsession with high profile re-branding exercises. Part of it is that many people associate brand with logo and communications, rather than the deeper and wider interpretation of brand as the external face of the culture and values of an organisation.

With a lack of conviction for the corporate brand comes a tendency to brand locally and an inability to articulate what's special about the firm at the "point of sale". This results in an incoherent face to the outside world and confusion and lack of confidence internally.

And even when attention does turn to brand, many firms find it hard to face up to the tough questions that brand thinking poses. Often the creation of a strong brand position demands some hard choices that established businesses are unprepared to make.

So, far from being a "fluffy intangible", brand is often an organisation's most valuable financial asset and it presents some hard nosed commercial challenges.

## Our approach

### 1. Internal review

While brand is about the external perceptions of a firm, we believe that those perceptions are a reflection of the internal realities of the organisation. So we start inside. We examine the firm's mission and business strategy. And we ask leaders and others what they think of the firm, its culture and values, and how they would like it to be perceived.

While doing all this, we build a view of how the firm currently presents itself, how different parts of the brand relate to each other (brand architecture) and what are the main messages to the firm's various audiences.

### 2. External research

Then we go outside. We review all available research to form a picture of the firm's current competitive position. And, most importantly, we talk to clients, seeking their insights on what

makes the firm special. We may be searching for something small that is true of the firm and different from its competitors. Shining a light on this difference can allow the firm to stand **for** something and thereby stand **out** in its market place.

### **3. Brand definition**

The result of all this work is the “brand essence” – a highly focused description of the brand, current and future, with explanation covering brand positioning, promise and personality. The simplicity and rigour of thinking behind this statement lends clarity to the brand and enables the organisation to understand, remember and act on its words.

### **4. Brand engagement**

The next stage is engagement. Ensuring that everyone, both at the top of the organisation and throughout its ranks understands, believes in, supports and can articulate the brand and what it means to clients, staff and recruits. The process is continuous, but we have ways of accelerating the speed of acceptance at the start.

### **5. Brand alignment**

Part of acceptance comes from people seeing the brand applied across the business. Again, it is a continuous process, but we work hard with clients at the start to identify the main applications which will create and/or demonstrate change. Often we find that the most powerful changes are those which affect people daily, such as their working environment, pitch documents, internal communications, training or performance appraisal. Recruitment and development will also be included.

### **6. Brand tracking**

Finally, we help clients set up systems to monitor the health of the brand and track the impact of changes on its performance and/or value. Our approach to brand tracking involves measures that could cover clients, people and firm – a broad spectrum of indicators that encompass all the main brand drivers.

### **Does it really work?**

We have worked in-house and externally with clients - sometimes on all these areas, sometimes just on several. We bring specific experience of working with small and mid sized professional firms, as well as with several top ten law firms, the Big Four accountancy and consulting firms, and the insurance sector.

We are passionate about brands and about the positive value and increased trust created by well managed corporate brands. Through the Brand Development process, we can help firms give their clients and recruits a more coherent and consistent experience. We help them articulate what's special about their business. So that they can sell on value rather than price, and attract and retain the best clients and the brightest talent.

## Contact us

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