TREC COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCE

TREC TOGETHER RISING AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY

Rebranding 101

Foundational Information and Questions to Ask

Accompanying resource for Rebranding | Lessons From the Field interview

1. What is a brand?

Think of the products you see every day. The ones you remember all have clear brand identities. Those brands stand for something—Volvo (safety), Apple (artful, intuitive design), Doctors without Borders (global medical relief). They are immediately recognizable and distinctive from their competitors.

Branding gives you immediate currency in today's cluttered environment. It defines you and instills trust in your product, service, or cause. For nonprofit organizations, this trust results in greater credibility, influence, and fundraising power.

A brand is... the expression of your organization's core values that sums up what you do and why it matters. It articulates the unique benefit that only you can offer your constituencies, whether internal staff, current supporters or new funders, members, and opinion elites.

A brand is not just a campaign, a logo, or a color palette. It is the essence of who you are, communicated and reinforced over time through the consistent repetition of graphics, messages, and other elements. An effective branding campaign speaks with one voice in all your pieces of communication—from advertising and letterhead to signage and web presence.

Branding is especially valuable to nonprofits that must compete, often with limited resources, in a crowded marketplace where ever-more appeals for support are directed to a limited pool of donors.

(Retrieved from www.Fenton.com)

2. Why are you considering changing your brand?

What does your brand currently communicate about your scope of work? Mission? Values? Vision? Audience? What are the challenges with your current brand?

3. What is your competitive landscape?

a) What are the names of other groups similar to yours?

b) Are there commonalities to their names? Is there an opportunity to differentiate your organization, or do you want the same type of name as them?

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. | trec.org

c) Can we change the conversation? Do we want to?

d) Is there an underlying tone/theme in these names?

4. Often when rebranding, you are facing a problem that you need to solve.

What is the problem you're trying to solve? What are the values/feelings that you want to communicate?

For example, when deciding on a name, the company that eventually became Apple wanted to distance itself from the cold, unapproachable names of other computer companies like IBM, NEC, DEC, etc. They wanted to make computers approachable—something you'd invite into your home. (Laptops were not

common at the time.) They were looking for a name that was unlike the names of traditional computer companies, a name that also supported a brand positioning strategy that was to be perceived as simple, warm, human, approachable, and different. (2017).

Retrieved from https://igorinternational.com/process/igor-naming-guide_12.pdf)

5. What type of name will work for your organization?

There are a few different types of names—it can be helpful to get alignment within your core rebranding team about the type(s) of names you'd like to explore.

a) Functional/Descriptive – Descriptive names explain what you do. They are asked to perform only one task: explain to the world the business that you are in. (Think *Friends of Hyalite*.)

Pros:

- A descriptive name can do a lot of work for you. For example, "Friends of XX Forest" communicates a lot of information in just the name.

Cons:

- Descriptive names can bind you into a niche that you may eventually outgrow or may not allow for expanding your vision down the road. For example, 'Friends of XX forest' might eventually take on climate change, or another region, and then they would outgrow their name, or cause confusion.
- These names can be very hard to secure in terms of URLs and trademarks, which can make it difficult to find one you can own.

b) Names derived from Latin or other languages and made-up names (Think *Avaaz*.)

Pros:

- Can be much easier to secure URL and trademark
- Can be very memorable

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. | trec.org

- Don't usually come with baggage and negative connotations

Cons:

- These names don't give any information about your organization, so you will need to provide that
- These names can feel "fancy" and "branded," which may not sit well with your constituents who may prefer you to focus your time and money on the work at hand, not branding.

c) **Experiential Names –** Like descriptive names, these provide some context, but instead of context about the organization, they provide context about the experience of engaging with the organization. (Think *Move On.*)

Pros:

- Can be motivating and inspiring

Cons:

- You may find that your name is also used in other sectors. For example, Safari is the name of a web browser, a car, and likely many other things.

d) **Evocative names** – According to the Igor Naming Guide, these names "evoke the positioning of a company or product, rather than describing a function or a direct experience." (Think *Greenpeace.*)

Pros:

- Can be inspiring and aspirational
- Highly differentiating

Cons:

- Can be hard to persuade decisionmakers to go with experiential names

From Igor Naming Guide:

Examples of the different types of names in the airline sector:

- **Functional/descriptive:** Trans World Airlines
- **Experiential:** United
- **Evocative:** Virgin

Examples of the different types of names in the computer industry:

- **Functional/descriptive:** Digital Equipment
- **Experiential:** Gateway
- **Evocative:** Apple

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. | trec.org

Caution: NO name will satisfy everyone. Say this early and often with your team, and instead of looking for a name that people love or even like, make the test for your name: does it accomplish what we want it to accomplish?

Retrieved from https://igorinternational.com/process/igor-naming-guide_12.pdf)

6. What will be the decision-making process to approve a new name and brand?

Clarify this right from the start, create a terms of reference. See sample provided.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. | trec.org