

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 114

THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT BRANDING

Hello, and welcome to Driving Participation. I'm Beth Brodovsky, and this week, I bring you part two of a discussion on branding. Last week I hosted a webinar on the Basics of Nonprofit Branding. I talked about what branding actually means because, despite the word being used all the time, it's never really clear.

Throughout the webinar I explained the difference between addressing your brand visually and strategically. We also talked about the difference between branding and marketing.

I was only able to get to a few questions last week so this week I am going to focus on the most common questions and misconceptions about branding.

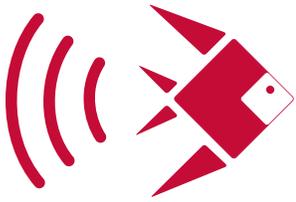
Last week I explained what brand is, so this week, let's tackle what brand isn't.

1. YOUR BRAND IS BASED ON HOW YOU LOOK— IT'S YOUR LOGO

The number one biggest misconception about branding is that it is a design project. I talked about the difference between visual branding and strategic branding. I want to go deeper into this because it is such a big issue.

I went to art school and have created and managed design forever.

I'm a deep believer in design being a valuable asset in communication. But it's important to know what role design plays in your brand. Design isn't about being pretty or even having you like the way you look.



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

Design exists to do three things:

- Encourage recall
- Make an impression
- Create access

I've been saying that brand is about what people experience, how they interact with your organization. And what you show them is part of how they connect with you.

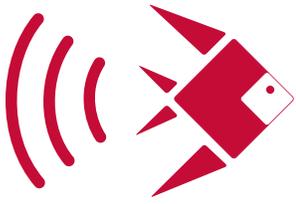
Visual information is much easier for people to absorb and remember than words. And the demands on our time are only making visual communication more important.

The purpose of developing a logo and creating a recognizable style is to get a shortcut into the minds and hearts of your perfect person. It's the delivery mechanism for your message.

Good design is design that works for you to support your goals.

- To encourage recall, you need design that is memorable to the right people.
- To create the impression you want, you need design that aligns your impact with your audience's values.
- To create access, you need your design to help viewers find and understand the information they want.

Let's look at an example from one of the largest brands in the world: Facebook. Have you ever looked at Facebook? Really looked at it? It's kind of ugly. Its doomed predecessor MySpace was cool. If you are old enough to remember, users could do their own thing and make their spaces just how they wanted. Facebook is always and perpetually blue. Their logo is all type. The only graphics or images are the ones you post. And their icon is just a lowercase f in a rounded corner box. It's not clever or conceptual like the FedEx logo with the hidden arrow in the middle.



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

Unlike MySpace, you can't completely take over your page and make it your own. Facebook is not fancy or creative but it does two key things. Its design is neutral enough to be a backdrop to your content, letting what you put on the site be the thing that is most present when you look at your page.

The other thing about Facebook is consistency. Now I know that that may seem crazy to say. Every time you open up the site they have changed some feature or functionality. But that blue color is always the same and the changes they have made to the logo over the years are so incremental you don't even notice the evolution.

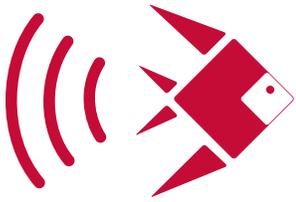
But Facebook's brand isn't about the color or the font style or the layout. When you think of Facebook, all those things remind you of how you feel about it. Is it the place where you connect with your friends or a time waster?

For design to represent your brand it needs to be more than colors, fonts and pictures that look nice to you. That is decoration, not design. Doing that will help you get your message out - but it probably won't reach far.

2. BRANDING IS CREATING AWARENESS

The second thing people think of when talking about brand is that reach. Most people want everyone to know about their work.

Of course it's good when lots of people have heard of you. But lots of things are well-known and not necessarily well-liked. I'd vote for the Kardashians here. I pick on them a lot, but they are such a perfect example. People watch them, read about them and buy their products. This makes them successful financially. But what is their brand? We could argue the specifics but I am sure you would all agree that it is rooted in the physical attractiveness, drama and chaos that brings them attention. I would say they have high awareness among most people— at least in the United States. But some people love the crazy and some people think it is the most utter nonsense around. They have been really smart and cultivated



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

their brand to appeal to people who like the drama.

SO AWARENESS COMES AS A RESULT OF MAKING CHOICES ABOUT THEIR BRAND.

I can use them as an example precisely because I know so many of you have heard of them. They chose to act in a specific way that brings a certain kind of attention knowing that it will attract some and repel others. Then they built products (TV programs, clothing, etc.) for people to engage with their brand. And last, they highlight the most extreme aspects of their brand through marketing and media. And they are making millions from it.

They can't control what you think of them but they are clear on who their audience is, what makes them happy and what they can uniquely deliver to attract them.

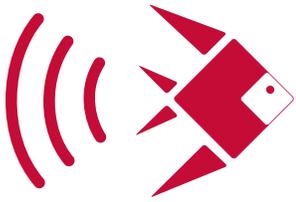
It's marketing that creates awareness. So let's talk about marketing.

When I say marketing I mean all the actions you take to get your brand out in front of people. Marketing is like gasoline. And gasoline can fuel or destroy. If you dump gasoline on a poorly built fire it will burn up and flame out in an instant taking the fuel and the foundation with it - leaving you nothing to show for it. If you pour gasoline on a well-built fire, it will grow stronger with each log you add.

This is exactly how marketing works.

3. HAVING A BRAND MEANS EVERYONE WANTS YOU

Have you heard of Apple? They have this thing called an iPhone. Perhaps you are watching this webinar on one right now. Everyone wants an iPhone, right? Well, no, actually. Everyone is aware of iPhones. But what is their brand? Cool, hip, fun, easy, creative. All really positive qualities - to some people. But not everyone identifies with those qualities. And Apple is fine with that. People who buy Apple products will buy them year after year without looking at the competition and



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

without any price sensitivity because they personally identify with the qualities that Apple has focused on. I know, I am one of them.

I went to art school in New York City and have had a career in the creative world for 26 years. My son, I am sad to say, is studying finance. I don't know how that happened.

A few years ago he decided to switch to an Android phone and is constantly bragging about how much better it is than my iPhone. This Christmas he asked for money to replace his two-year-old MacBook Pro with a PC. I couldn't believe it. Most kids would kill for their mom to buy them a fully loaded MacBook for college. Or so I thought.

(if you see a laptop on eBay with slight damage from mother's tears, snap it up!)

My son is building his identity as a business guy and he wants to fit in with his world. So Apple isn't desired by everyone. In fact, there are many who take pride in saying "I'm a PC. " That is not just OK. It's great. If you can cultivate this, it means you are on your way to making your perfect person want your service even more.

I have clearly totally failed as a Mac parent but hopefully I'll be fine with that when he funds my retirement.

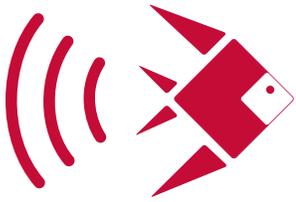
Now let's move on to some specific questions that come up.

Mandy asked:

"DO ALL MY LOGOS (MAIN BUSINESS AND INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM LOGOS) NEED TO HAVE A SIMILAR THEME? COLOR, SIZE, FONT, ETC.?"

Here are some guidelines to consider:

Ultimately you have to decide if you want to let your programs lead or your



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

organization lead. It's a business structure question before it's a design question. If your marketing effort is primarily on your services you can let your design lead. This is what companies like Procter and Gamble do. Think Tide and Pampers. They each are considered a brand in their own right.

On the other hand, look at what universities are doing. Most are reeling in the colleges that have their own names and looks and websites and making them all look like subsidiaries. This is a hierarchical brand structure. It is good to do it this way when the power of the main brand supports the sub-brands or when there isn't enough money to feed everything individually.

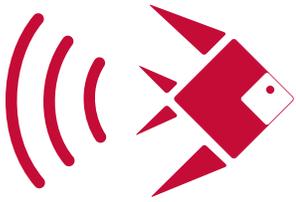
The middle path is to create what I call a familial look. It's where you make some brand-level decisions about color, fonts, graphics. You decide what are going to be your constants and what are going to be your changeables. The less variation, the more things are like siblings; more variation and they move to cousins.

Thinking about the relationship of the products to the parent and each other will help you decide what you want to vary and how much.

Another question that comes up is how often you should change or update your visual brand.

In general I recommend evaluating your logo every 3-5 years to see if it needs any adjustments to stay relevant in the market or with how your business has evolved. You are right, you don't want to change your logo more often than necessary, but sometimes small tweaks can make big improvements.

For your supporting graphics and images you need to be looking at them every year for the same kind of relevancy and currency. Most people get bored of their own materials way before their audiences do. Frequently evolution is better than revolution.



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

- If you picked your current look or images based on a limited budget, and now you have more to work with, it might be time to upgrade.
- If you have made significant changes to your offerings or audience, you might need to make changes.
- If you don't love your look and you are about to take a big leap in your business— having a meeting with a really high level prospect— it's a good time to review.
- And if you are about to make a big investment— a new website or a trade show booth— you want to be sure you are building it around a foundation that is still strong.

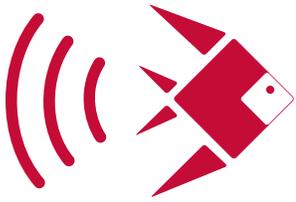
Don't just switch because you are bored, unless you have a good budget and a regular system of marketing to impress the new look on your audience, or you could lose your recognition factor with your audience.

You can however make small rolling adjustments that are unnoticeable but build up over time. Slowly upgrading to better photos or improving the spacing and typography in your layouts won't shock anyone overnight, but at the end of a year your pieces will have evolved. Just be careful that you are not so constantly changing that you have so many decisions to make each time you create something that you get stuck and can't move forward until you decide.

Since many people think branding is all about the logo, I often get asked if research— beyond talking to the leadership— is really necessary. I hear:

- You don't need to talk to other people; just ask the board, they know what people want.
- I know it's important, but we just need to do marketing now.
- This isn't about our programs, we just need you to get us more people.

ON MY TOMBSTONE I WANT IT TO SAY “‘JUST’ IS THE MOST EXPENSIVE WORD IN BUSINESS.”



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

When people say “Just” it usually means you are trying to tell someone that what you need is not a big deal. It often means that there is a difference in the value that the two parties place on the task.

The research part of branding is called “discovery.” That’s because there are things you don’t know. There always are. And that’s because no matter how much your people love you...there are things they won’t tell you. If you want to build your brand you need to find out what the opportunities and roadblocks are. And that takes asking questions of the people that are most valuable to your success— your staff, your donors, your volunteers and your service community.

How do you get started with branding?

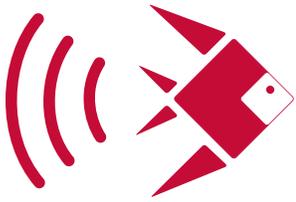
The first thing I recommend to get started is to figure out where you are now and make sure you really understand what problem you are trying to solve. Do a communication audit. Collect examples of all your communications and lay them out together. Look at them for consistency and appropriateness. And don’t just look. Read the copy. Do they represent who you are today? Are they technically accurate? Are you excited to share these pieces to get people engaged in your work? If not you may have a problem and I would then move on to running the Strategy Session we talked about last week.

To help you get started with a communication audit, I have a free checklist you can download by texting the word BRANDING to 33444.

NEXT STEPS

I hope this has been a good start to moving your brand forward. It will take a lot to get there but the lift you will receive from the effort will show up internally and externally.

If you are ready to focus on branding in your organization, I have two suggestions for you. First, you can call me. Iris Creative leads both strategic and visual



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

branding projects for organizations. I'd be happy to talk to you.

If you would rather learn to lead the project yourself, my six-week summer session of the Build Your Brand Course is starting on Monday, July 25. If you are listening live, you still have time to get into this session. For the same price as the self-paced course, I will be adding in live Q&A, group discussion and email support.

July is the start of a new year for many nonprofits. Set up a foundation for success by building a solid brand.

Thanks so much for joining me today. I hope to meet you this summer in class.