# Making the case for branding consultancy

Category: Branding
written by Steve Harvey | 20 December 2016

## Is it time to call in the branding consultants?

As a director of an established branding consultancy in London, I've seen some great brands rise, and some promising brands fail. There's many reasons why some do well and some don't, but as a branding company I get to talk to lots of people about their brands and some of the challenges they face. And while each conversation is unique, I do often see some of the same mistakes being made. Here's a round up of some of the more common ones.

## Ignoring the strategy

Strategy is the backbone of your brand. It should hold everything together. Your brand strategy should reflect what you do, how you do it and most importantly, **why** you do it. The 'why' is important as it's often the most memorable or distinct element of a brand. Many successful brands have built themselves around a distinctive 'why'. This is where a brand consultancy like Fabrik can provide real added value.

Brand consultancies help organisations to connect with their audiences, by building on a solid brand strategy. Getting this right in the first place is the most challenging aspect of any brand strategy review. And if you aren't sure that your brand resonates, then it's time to ask the audience. While surveys can be useful, there's no substitute for connecting with people and getting face to face. Take time to look at your

brand strategy, discuss ideas with colleagues and see if you can define these three elements clearly. Having spoken to your target audience, you should be in a clearer position to do this. Again, experience brand companies can prove invaluable here.

There's northing wrong with the traditional brand pyramid, but make sure your brand strategy is tangible and not wrapped up in management speak. In our role as brand consultants we've advised many clients struggling to grapple with who they are and what they really stand for. While also helping to bridge the gap between brand strategy and design, tapping into the tangible qualities of an organisation, such as trust, loyalty and key emotional triggers.

## Getting lost in translation

Fabrik writes and designs brand guidelines that connect a company with its audience at every touchpoint. From the smallest piece of literature in a company's portfolio, to complex online installations of the brand identity. We make sure the 'look & feel' of a brand is consistent, and that its messaging is delivered to a consistently high standard. Whatever the medium.

## Sending out mixed messages

This is definitely one of the more common branding mistakes, and should be covered off as part of a brand strategy review. We're often guilty of sending out mixed messages and in larger organisations – with bigger brand marketing teams – it's even more common. With the rise of social media, we're usually engaging our audiences on a daily basis. Even niche branding companies like Fabrik need to say different things to different people. But should we be saying different things to the same group of people?

There really is no other substitute for keeping things simple and being consistent. It's not always easy to achieve, but it's a vital part of managing your brand strategy. If you haven't done it recently, it's worth gathering together all of your marketing comms and evaluating what you and your colleagues have been saying. Is there a consistent message? Have you established a tone of voice which is recognisable? How could you do things better? Regular sharing of recent materials and platforms for establishing consistently internally are all helpful. And are your messages in your latest brand guideline? Do people even look at the guideline internally anymore, or has it been filed away? And if an external perspective is required, your brand consultancy can again provide much needed expertise, along with an unbiased appraisal of your brand strategy and communication activities.

## Following the status quo

There's safety in numbers, or so they say. For brands though, it's usually not the case. You want yours to be distinctive and memorable…even unique. Following what others do isn't the ideal way to build a great brand. But why is it, for example, that accountants often choose a dark blue as their main colour? For one, the colour suggests intelligence and it's just 'corporate'. I can understand why a firm of accountants wouldn't choose a day-glow yellow, but you get the point. Stepping outside of your comfort zone may seem risky, but there are rewards and you can establish differentiation if you're the first. At this stage, marketers often rely on the support of their preferred branding company to drive through change and manage the internal consultation process.

## Anti-social behaviour

How well does your brand strategy and visual identity translate into social media? In a place where news travels

fast and everything is in soundbites, how visible are you? Do you have optimised versions of your logo design that will be recognisable at 50 pixels wide (or even smaller for a favicon?) Are you even measuring your minimum logo size in pixels rather than millimetres? I've seen plenty of examples of logos that don't work at smaller sizes. In these cases, a re-drawn version might be the best option. At Fabrik one of the first platforms we test at the creation stage are social media applications. And if you're interested in reading more about logo design, have a read of Stephen's excellent article here.

Don't forget to consider the header images too in social platforms, these are often afterthoughts or populated by 'house' images which do the trick, but never quite hit the spot. They're unique opportunities to engage with people so it's well worth giving them special treatment.

If you would like to know more about Fabrik's brand consultancy services, please drop me a line… Steve Harveysteve@fabrikbrands.com