15 examples of companies that have repositioned themselves

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written by Stewart Hodgson | 17 March 2023

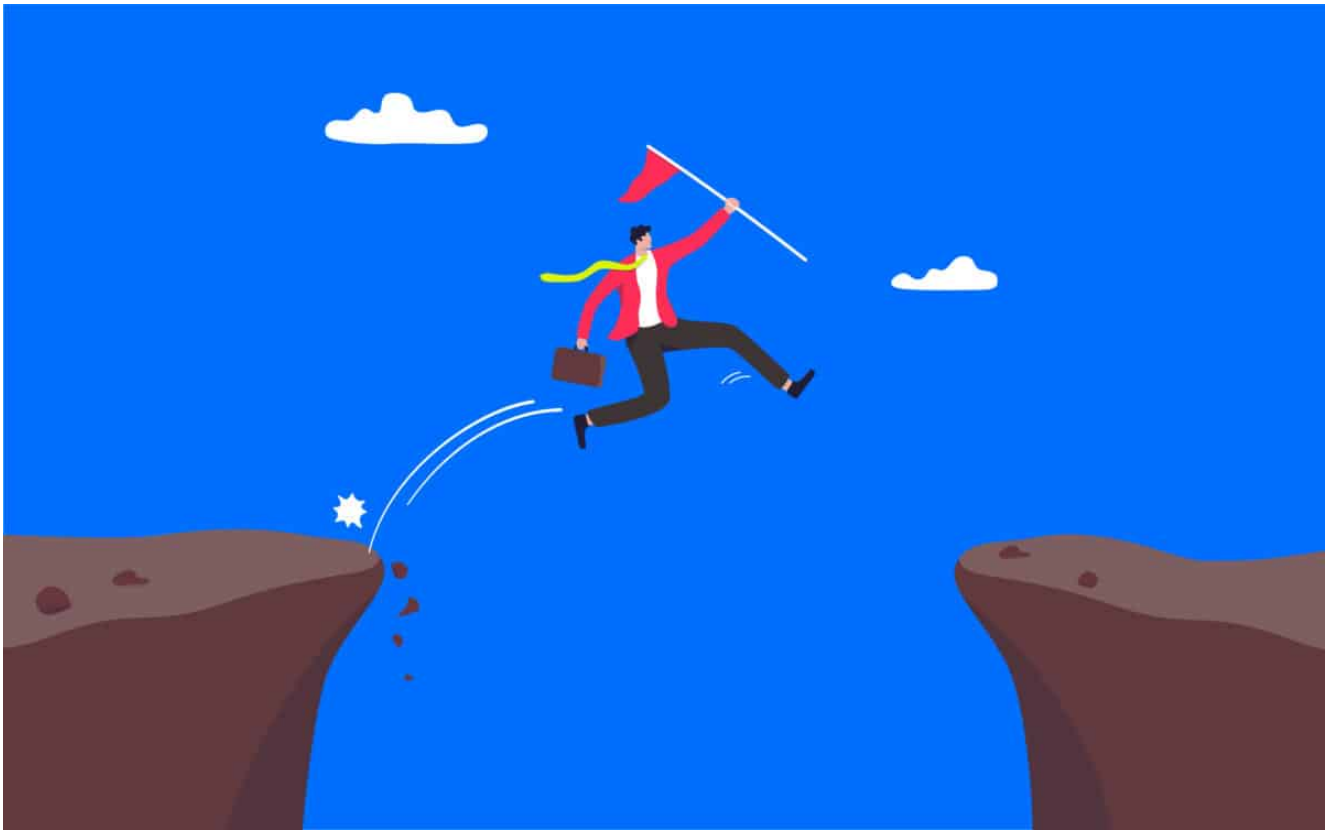
There are more examples of companies that have repositioned themselves around the world today than you might expect. Although a brand repositioning strategy is no small undertaking, it can be a valuable tool for a company looking to reconnect with its audience or reach new customers.

By repositioning their brand, products, or services, businesses can ensure they're evolving with the tastes and expectations of their target market. In many cases, a brand repositioning strategy is part of a comprehensive plan to stay one step ahead of the competition and avoid becoming obsolete.

Some of the biggest brands in the world, from Amazon to Starbucks, have invested in their own repositioning efforts throughout the years with the help of brand strategists and experts.

While not all of these organizations have achieved instant success, as a result, many have benefitted from increased sales and new opportunities.

Today, we will take a closer look at the impact repositioning has had on some of the world's best-known companies.



Company repositioning: What is brand repositioning?

Before we dive into our list of brands that have repositioned themselves, it's worth defining what "repositioning" means. Company repositioning isn't the same as rebranding.

When a business "rebrands," it changes its entire identity, intending to start fresh and build a new entity for its chosen market. In rebranding, virtually every aspect of the brand essence changes, from the logo to the name, preferred colors, marketing strategy, and even the available products.

When companies reposition themselves, they maintain some of their existing identity but attempt to change the perception of their company in specific ways.

Many companies that have repositioned themselves have retained their name or logo but changed their USP, target audience, or go-to-market strategy.

The aim of brand repositioning is to adjust the characteristics of a brand to make it more appealing to a specific audience or increase sales. This often means that brand repositioning is less of a comprehensive undertaking than rebranding, but there can still be much work involved.

15 examples of brands that have repositioned themselves

As mentioned above, there's no shortage of examples of brands that have repositioned themselves. Many of the best repositioning examples come from long-standing organizations, which have been forced to update or evolve based on changing market conditions and customer preferences.

As you'll see in the company repositioning examples below, business leaders can set different goals for a repositioning strategy. While some focus on adjusting their target audience, others concentrate on building a new range of products or services.

Let's take a closer look.



1. LG

One of the top brand repositioning examples today, LG is a Korean company launched in 1947. Interestingly, the business started not as the tech giant we know today but as a chemical group known for manufacturing face creams in injection-molded plastic containers.

It wasn’t until 1958 that the business decided to restructure, focusing on the electronics landscape, with the introduction of radios under the name “GoldStar”.

Eventually, The Goldstar brand merged with the “Lucky” brand, which had previously sold toothpaste and beauty products, to form the “Lucky Goldstar Group.”

This name was then shortened to “LG.”

Today, LG consists of 19 holding companies operating under the same brand umbrella. The brand still produces chemicals and IT, engineering, and electronics products.



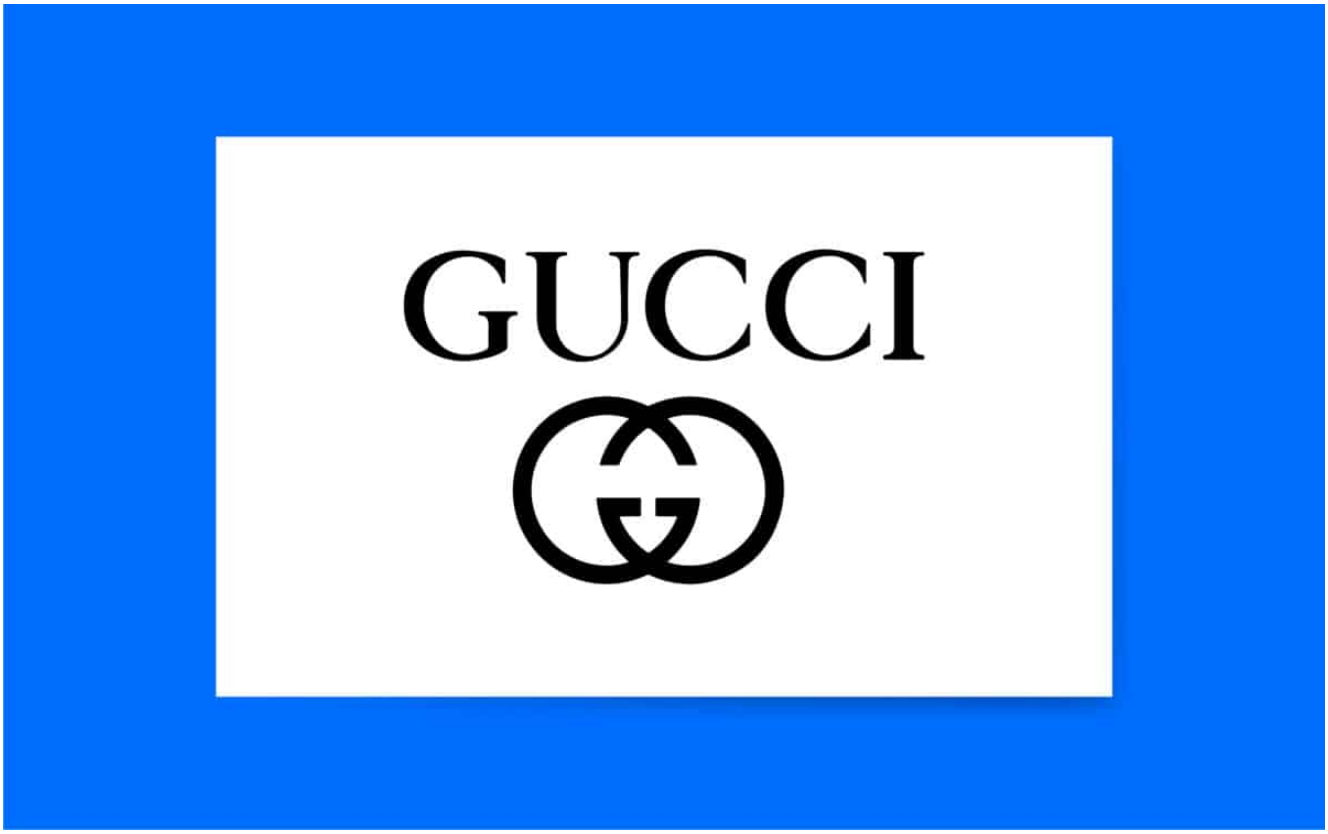
2. Taco Bell

Taco Bell is best known today as one of the top American fast-food chains. In 1948, the fast-food brand started life as a simple, low-cost taco vendor focused on selling cheap products to customers from quick-stop locations.

Over the years, the organization repositioned itself to avoid focusing on just “affordability.”

Upscale Cantina locations were introduced, with a focus on urban restaurant design, and shareable appetizers, as well as alcoholic beverages. Additionally, Taco Bell made some significant changes to its branding, adopting a more modernized, contemporary appearance.

Although the company’s core product remained the same over the years, the business has gradually emerged as more of an “experience” focused company rather than a cheap food source. The organization even embraced social media marketing to enhance its personality.



3. Gucci

Gucci is certainly one of the better-known brands in the fashion world. Launched in 1921, the organization quickly emerged as one of the top examples of companies that have repositioned themselves over the years. After all, they've had to adapt to a changing audience.

In the mid-2010s, Gucci struggled to appeal to a younger audience due to its bold, provocative aesthetic.

The introduction of a new CEO, Marco Bizzarri, led to an ambitious repositioning strategy. The company began producing more contemporary items and focused on youthful marketing strategies, based heavily on social media channels like Instagram.

Gucci also became a more ethical, value-focused brand, promoting ideas like gender fluidity and self-respect. Financially and socially, the repositioning strategy started to deliver exceptional results for Gucci, allowing them to

enter the new age of fashion.



4. Starbucks

Another of the most famous brands that repositioned itself over the years, Starbucks has made quite an impact as the world's leading coffee company. Launched in 1971, Starbucks was originally positioned as the "third place" for people to spend their time after home and work.

By 2008, the organization's rapid expansion made it difficult for Starbucks to maintain its existing branding approach. The company began dabbling in different non-coffee products to reach a wider audience.

However, they were struggling to provide consistent, friendly experiences to every customer. Eventually, Starbucks launched a new marketing campaign concentrating on customer service. The brand is committed to delivering exceptional, comfortable, and friendly interactions.

By 2014, the repositioning strategy had delivered amazing

results for the company, with around $16 billion in annual revenue. By returning to its previous image, the organization could reconnect with its audience and differentiate itself from other coffee franchises.



5. Old Spice

There are few repositioning strategies available to evaluate today that are quite as impactful as the one introduced by Old Spice. Launched in 1937, the company initially focused on promising customers a sophisticated, masculine smell intended to appeal to the professionals of the day.

However, after a while, Old Spice found that most of its fans were becoming much older.

Younger customers had lost interest in the organization, forcing them to rethink their branding strategy. With new packaging, marketing materials, and a focus on humor, Old Spice began to regain its footing with the new generation.

Hundreds of social videos and commercials later, Old Spice

began building a reputation as a fun, modern entity.

Within 6 months of launching its repositioning strategy, the organization was able to boost sales by around 27%. People stopped thinking of Old Spice as an “old man” brand and started associating it with playful slogans like “If your grandfather hadn’t worn it, you wouldn’t exist.”



6. Spotify

While many top examples of companies that have repositioned themselves come from older brands, some newer companies have taken a similar approach.

Spotify’s repositioning strategy was implemented during the pandemic when customer tastes and requirements were changing. As advertiser budgets dwindled, Spotify began to lose revenue.

Eventually, the company decided to pivot towards a new business model, with an updated symbol, and a go-to-market strategy focused on innovation. The brand started increasing access to original content, like new music and podcasts. It

also introduced curated playlists from experts, celebrities, and AI bots.

The strategy helped to position Spotify as more than just a music provider. The company became a “tastemaker” known for introducing its audience to new sources of entertainment. Today, thousands of artists and consumers upload and share content through the platform.



7. Amazon

We can’t have a list of famous companies that repositioned themselves without talking about Amazon. Initially, the Amazon brand focused almost exclusively on books. In fact, Jeff Bezos launched Amazon (Cadabra) in 1994 to become the world’s biggest bookstore.

As the demand for books began to dwindle, Amazon adjusted its strategy to focus on selling a huge variety of different products.

The company became the “Everything store,” where consumers

could purchase everything from technology to homeware in one place. It also created various subsidiaries, such as Zoox for autonomous vehicles, and Amazon Web Services.

Amazon's repositioning strategy, updated logo, and unique approach to marketing turned out to be a massive success for the company. It paved the way for the company's future as the go-to online store for virtually every need.

Additionally, it meant Amazon could brand out more innovative products, such as AI and smart speakers.



8. General Motors

If you're familiar with car brands, you probably know about General Motors. The business was introduced in 1908, via the consolidation of various leading car companies. For over 70 years, "GM" has stood as the world's largest automaker.

However, increased competition from global producers began to impact the brand's profits.

Following a bankruptcy reorganization in 2009, the company discontinued several brands and started working on a new focus.

In 2021, GM announced its decision to end the production of vehicles using internal combustion products. They also began working on a strategy to become completely carbon-neutral by 2040.

Now, GM offers a broader range of flexible-fuel vehicles and eco-friendly products for the new age of the automotive world. Effectively, GM has transformed from a classic car maker, into a provider of some of the world's most innovative, carbon-friendly cars.



9. Nintendo

It isn't easy to find anyone who hasn't heard of the Nintendo brand today. In the 1880s, the company was founded as a Japanese playing card brand. It primarily focused on selling Hanafuda cards after Japan banned most of the primary forms of

gambling towards the beginning of the 1900s.

Even with a successful start, the company struggled to operate in a niche market.

Eventually, they branched out into new “Western” card decks and games.

The company even started working with a tobacco company to market cards to cigarette stores. It was in World War 2, when Japanese authorities began prohibiting the sale of various card games, that Nintendo started looking for a new strategy.

In 1969, the brand started experimenting with tabletop games, and in the 1970s, it moved into the world of early video games and TV games. The company started seeing significant sales from game consoles and video game titles as the years passed.

The first games console was introduced in the late 90s, and Nintendo became one of the top console providers of all time.



10. National Geographic

National Geographic, or National Geographic magazine, first began in 1888.

It was best known then for producing stunning photographs of wild animals, different cultures, and locations around the globe. The magazine became a staple for many American families over the years but started losing subscribers in the 1990s, thanks to changing generations.

CEO John Fahey wanted to retain access to a younger audience, so they spearheaded a company repositioning campaign. This new strategy focused on reinventing the brand across all media channels, including a new television channel and social media presence.

In the TV programming world, Nat Geo began shifting away from more mundane nature documentaries to produce unique shows about survival, extra-terrestrial life, and more.

In 2019, National Geographic was acquired by Disney and has since evolved into one of the most recognizable and well-respected brands in the world.



11. American Express

Another excellent example of a company that has repositioned itself over the years, American Express started life in 1850 as an express mail dispatcher.

The company was best known for moving valuable goods throughout America, focusing heavily on a clientele of banks and financial institutions. Eventually, the brand began exploring new revenue opportunities.

The company introduced an express railroad business, though it didn’t achieve the same success as the organization’s later endeavors. In the 1980s, American Express embarked on a mission to become a leading financial services company, investing in various strategic acquisitions.

The organization began introducing credit and debit cards for the consumer and business landscape.

New ad campaigns were launched, highlighting the company’s commitment to delivering flexible funding to consumers around

the world. Today, American Express accounts for around 22.9% of the total dollar volume for domestic credit card transactions.



12. Apple

Long known as something of a “challenger” brand, Apple has had a unique history in the technology space. It’s currently the world’s largest tech brand by revenue and the world’s biggest company according to market capitalization.

However, when it was founded in 1976, it had a very different focus from the one we know today.

Apple initially focused on designing easy-to-access computer devices, intended to be an alternative to the bulky and complex products at the time.

While the computers produced by Apple were relatively successful, the organization only achieved its true potential once it began pivoting away from computers and looking at handheld devices.

Products like the iPhone and iPod changed how the world thought about communication, introducing robust new touchscreens, lightweight designs, and incredibly powerful processors.

Apple's focus on out-of-the-box thinking and innovation made it one of the world's most popular brands. It has even branched out further into streaming services and other innovative tools.



13. Netflix

One of the world's leading disruptive brands today, Netflix is another fantastic example of companies that has repositioned itself.

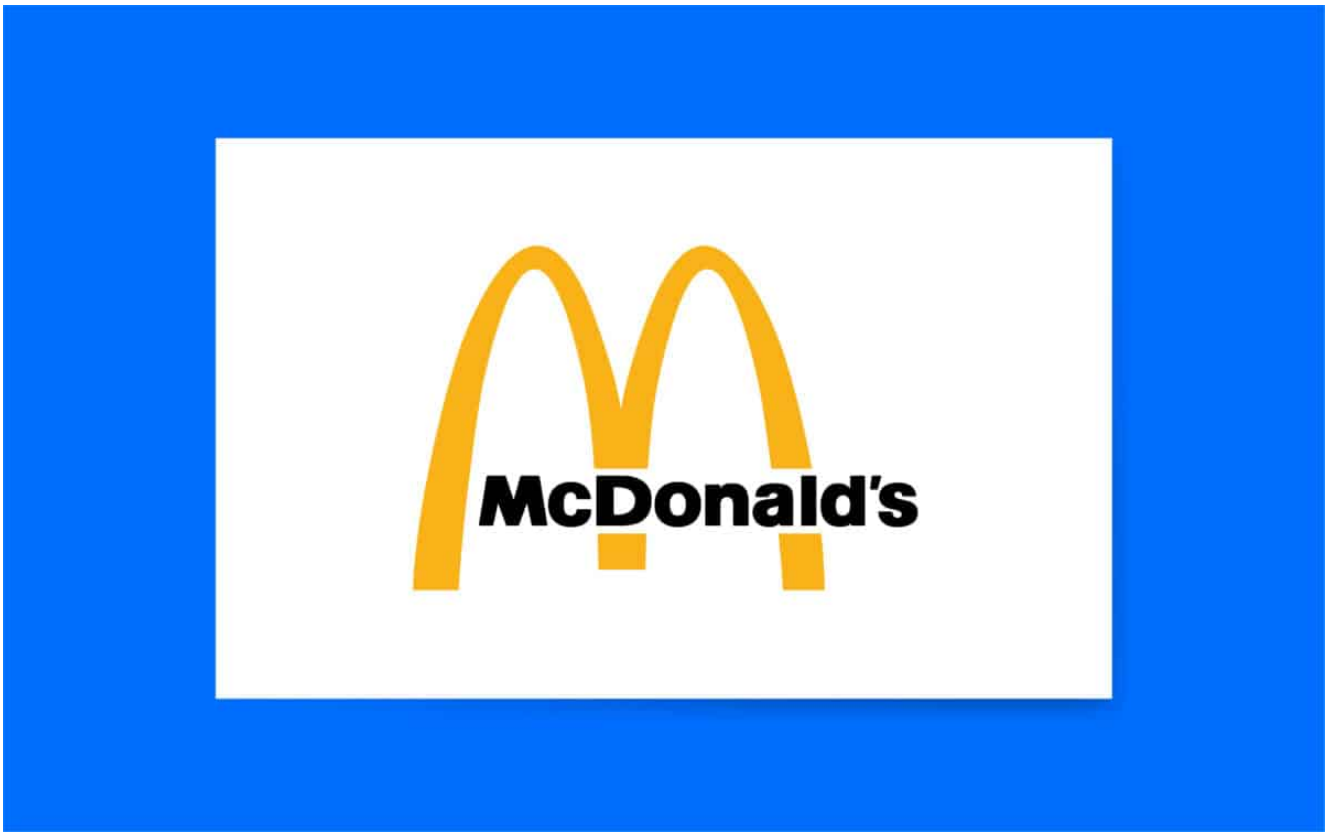
When the organization first launched in 1998, it was a DVD sales and rental site intended to offer customers a mail-order service for accessing entertainment. Users could rent and watch as many shows and DVDs as they liked for a set fee.

It wasn't until 2007 that Netflix repositioned itself to

become perhaps one of the most memorable companies of all time.

The organization understood that customers were searching for a more convenient, internet-based solution for entertainment. As a result, they introduced the first “streaming” service, which sparked the introduction of countless other competitors.

Netflix adjusted its go-to-market strategy, partnering with countless producers and content creators around the globe to offer users access to unlimited online entertainment. Since then, the brand has also invested in several original shows and movies for further differentiation.



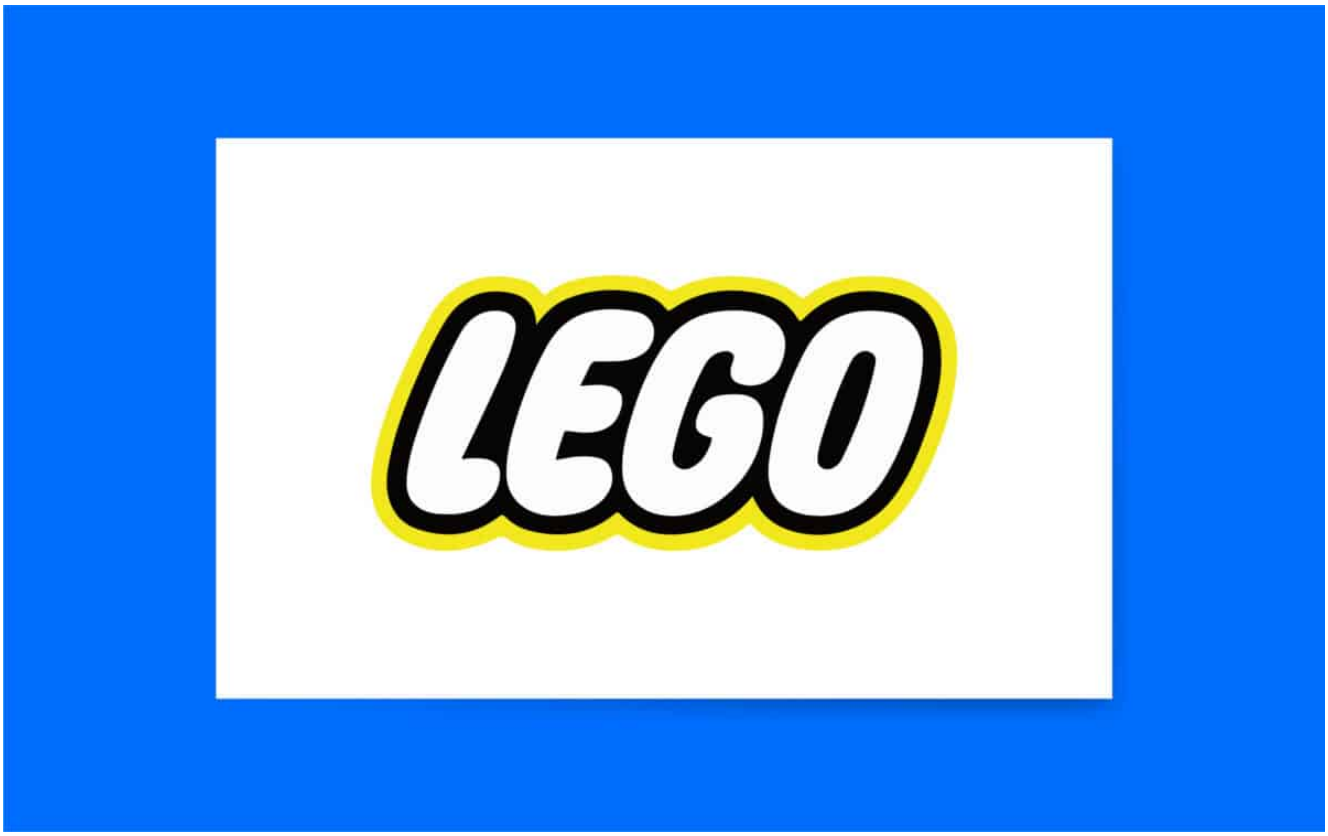
14. McDonald’s

First introduced in 1940, McDonald’s has gone through several changes over the years to become the world giant we know today. The brand started life as a simple hamburger stand before becoming a franchise. The golden arches logo wasn’t

introduced until 1953.

For a long time, McDonald’s positioned itself as an affordable, family-friendly location for fast food. However, as time passed and consumers became more concerned about the foods they were eating, the brand decided to reposition itself with a focus on more healthy products.

The company invested in significant transparency, sharing its production processes with its customers and providing insights into ingredients. McDonald’s also added a range of healthy options to their menu to provide consumers with more options.



15. Lego

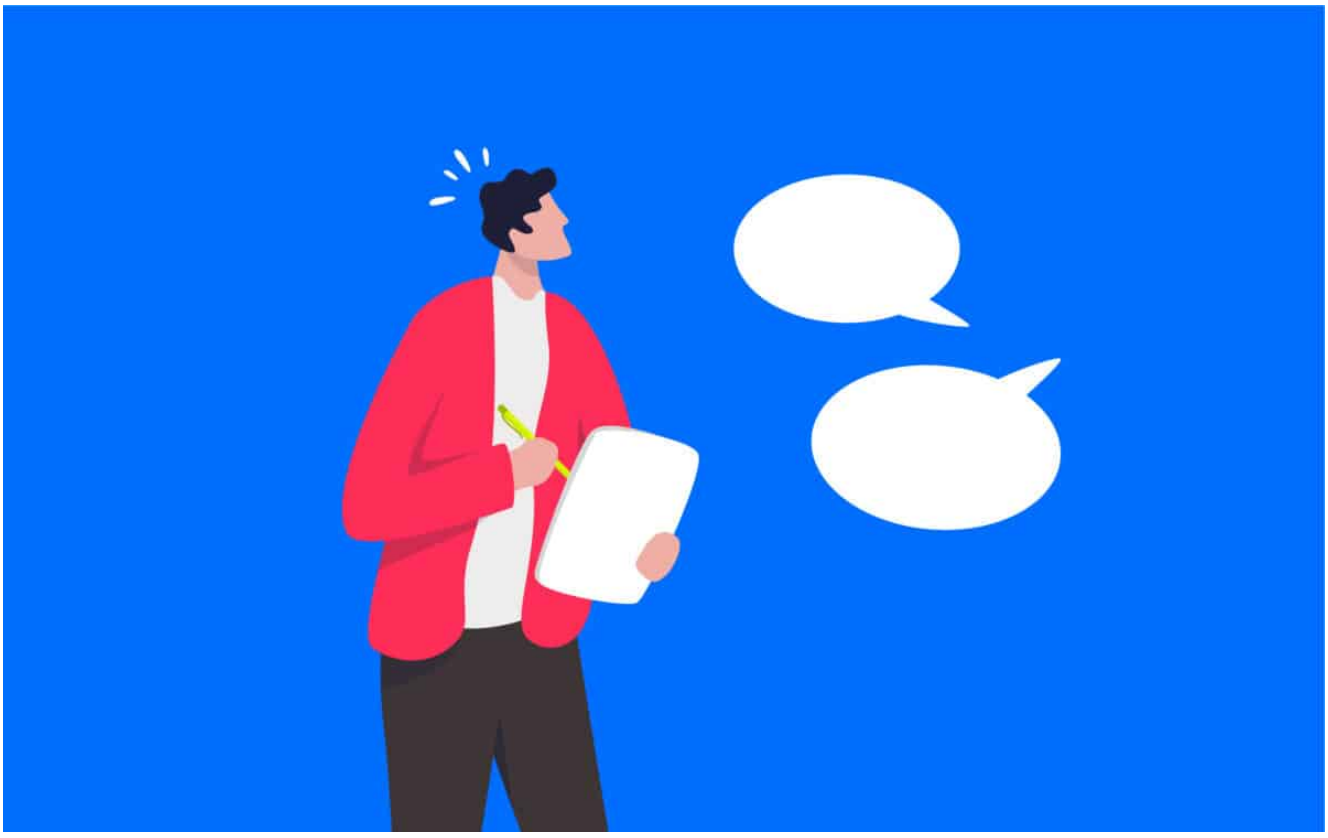
Back in 2003, Lego was already suffering from a major crisis. After years of success selling toys, the company was in millions of dollars of debt, suffering from increasingly dropping sales and a reduced brand presence. The organization knew it needed to reposition itself and innovate to regain traction.

A new CEO was introduced, Vig Knudstorp, who decided to simplify the company's go-to-market strategy. He sold off some of the theme parks, which were losing the company money, and began focusing more heavily on interacting with the existing fan community.

Lego began crowdsourcing for new ideas and designs. They introduced sets specially designed based on the suggestions made by their community.

This meant customers started to feel valued and engaged, and Lego began branching into new territories, partnering with well-known entities like Ghostbusters, Minecraft, and Back to the Future.

The brand even introduced new video games and movies.



Learning from companies that have

repositioned themselves

As you can see from the examples above, plenty of famous companies have repositioned themselves over the years. However, just as there have been countless successful examples of repositioning, there have been some failures too. When reviving and repositioning brands, companies must be cautious to ensure they're targeting the right audience and market.

If you're thinking of repositioning your brand, there are a few things you should learn from the successful examples above:

Know your goal

Any company investing in a repositioning strategy should have a clear vision for what they hope to achieve. The best repositioning campaigns start with a good focus.

For instance, do you want to reach a new audience, engage your existing one, or simply draw attention to some unique aspects of your portfolio and personality?

Know your audience

Any effective brand repositioning strategy starts with a deep understanding of your target audience. Knowing your customers' values from day one ensures you can adapt your brand to suit their changing interests and expectations.

It's crucial to understand exactly what your customers are looking for.

Know your brand

Before repositioning, a business should take the time to assess and understand the brand they already have. It's important to audit your company's current position and determine what you want to keep and what you're going to change.

Repositioning isn’t rebranding, so some of your identity should remain consistent.

Know your competition

Great repositioning strategies are an excellent way for companies to separate themselves from the competition. However, achieving true differentiation is possible only when you know what you’re going up against. Ask yourself how you can set yourself apart from the existing options on the market.

Brand repositioning: Is it right for you?

The examples of companies that have repositioned themselves mentioned above offer a great insight into just how valuable the right strategy can be.

Used correctly, a repositioning strategy can help a company evolve to suit a changing target audience and address the needs of an evolving consumer base. However, fail to plan correctly, you could end up missing out on significant sales.

A brand repositioning strategy is a complex undertaking that requires significant care and planning. The best brand repositioning examples feature companies with a clear insight into their target audience, market, and competition.

If you’re planning a repositioning strategy, it’s worth taking the time to do your research, set clear goals, and ensure you’re working with the right professionals.

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