
Corporate Image, Visual Identity and Branding

- **Considerations and definitions**

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Corporate identity, visual identity and branding are not synonymous.

Corporate Image

Like it or not, good, bad or indifferent, it is inevitable that an overall corporate image of your organisation already exists.

That image is 'the net result of the interaction of all experiences, impressions, beliefs and feelings that people have about the organisation concerned'.

IT COMES FROM:

Personal and impersonal contact experience.

Behaviour of staff

Nature of the organisation, success or lack of it

Industry sector and business press opinion

Degree of corporate visibility products or services.

Visual identity

This includes everything carrying the organisation's name:

Name and name style, emblem or symbol

House colour or colours and typography

Printed matter (stationery, advertising, promotional collateral, reports and proposals electronic media, e-mail, Web site, PowerPoint etc

Displays, exhibition stands

Co-ordination and consistency are critical to the success of visual identity.

Branding (Branded Identity)

CONSIDERATIONS

A series of products or services can be uniquely branded.

The identities may be unrelated either to each other or to the organisations that own them.

Good brands have the power to influence purchasing behaviour.

Typical brand identities have a compelling statement to appeal to specific target groups.

True brand identities are “portable” and not corporate.

Recent usage has caused “branding” to be dismissed as glib management jargon, often seen as an attempt to attribute false values.

Use the term ‘branding’ with care to external audiences.

If you think “branding” yourself, talk identity.

What defines a good brand? Here are some useful criteria

A brand is ...

Whatever makes one product different from another in the same category

A consistently identified, dynamic concept

A 'construct' which is more than the sum of its physical parts

Has emotional and cultural meaning

Is living and vulnerable

An important concept in modern marketing

The best brands:

Have a difference rooted in the truth

Have constant relevance

Have integrity

Are a storehouse of trust and make choices simpler

The best brands say something about the user

Many of the qualitative factors that contribute towards a good brand are valid for company identity.

Design Management

There should be a close relationship between identity design and the areas of activity directly relate to it.

Corporate identity design has four dimensions:

1. Communications
 2. Technology
 3. Art
 4. Business
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WHY DESIGN IS SEEN DIFFERENTLY

An individual takes a stand in any one of the four basic areas listed above.

This is the reason why different people see visual design differently.

When viewed from their own particular vantage point it is a sub-function of their own sphere of responsibility.

For example -

Communicators look at an identity design :

for its semantic and communications effect,

for clarity, uniqueness, simplicity,

for visibility, legibility and memorability

for its appropriateness to its particular target publics

for its adaptability to speech, print and electronic media.

Business Unit managers concentrate on:

the contribution of the design to business performance.

Business effectiveness depends on the intrinsic quality of overall design.

Not just the company name style, but how and where it appears.

Design is - and should be, emotional, that's why it needs the direction provided by a business-like approach.

The visual elements are the most continuously perceived aspect of corporate communications.

Top management has, at least, to manage visual identity as effectively as they would any other major aspect of the business.

Clear management decisions and controls are a first requirement.

The decision areas can be defined in the form of questions.

Answers will make it possible to formulate the management decisions.

Agreed managerial decisions allow the project co-ordinator to manage without too much interference.

Proposed design solutions and recommendations are presented as a joint effort by company managers and design consultants such as Blackfox Creative.

Objectives of the visual identity

- a. What contribution is the proposed identity expected to make to the overall image of the organisation?
 - b. Should there be entirely separate identities (branded identities) for:

individual services or
market sector business units
common identity?
 - c. What other, practical, technical, marketing, organisational, financial and legal requirements, if any?
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Review/Audit

- a. What information is needed before the objectives can be defined?

How much of this information may already exist,

Where can it be found?

How is it to be collected, analysed and creatively interpreted?

Who is to do this and in what timescale?

Project planning

- a. To what items, objects media and materials will be design be applied?
 - b. Should a new identity be introduced with deliberate impact or should it be phased-in gradually?
 - c. What is the estimate for design costs?
 - d. Who will produce the project plan?
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- e. Given a reasonable representative sample of potential clients, some subjective values of design proposals can be assessed in comparative terms.

Comparative scores together with other considerations, enable the most effective design solution to be selected. ”

Examples:

Large / Small

Traditional / Modern

High cost / Low cost

Friendly / Unfriendly

- f. Are tests and measurements to be attempted, and when?
- i. During the design development stage?
 - ii. As re-assurance before final adoption?

Design development

- a. What will be the supporting role, during the briefing phase and during the subsequent design development phase of various company executives/staff consultants.
- b. Who will be appointed as team leader for the design project?

Design application in practice

- a. Which basic design elements of any new visual identity will be mandatory?
- b. Which of these elements will be:
 - optional, ie completely free to be applied?
 - not be applied?
 - or to be modified?
- c. What manuals, master artworks,
 - colour sample cards
 - sample web pages

sample tender page-layouts
sample PowerPoint slides
or other guidance material will be needed?

Design organisation

- a. What will the subsequent permanent organisation and procedures be:
For initial implementation?
For day-to-day application of the design scheme?
For the longer term control of standards?
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Project communications

- a. What measures will have to be taken within to:
communicate the new project to all those directly concerned?
to ensure they understand its purpose?
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- b. Once a new design is accepted, what measures will have to be taken to communicate effectively this new identity and its role to:
- (i) All staff?
 - (ii) The company's clients?
 - (iii) Individual consultants and other suppliers?
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The role of the design consultant.

Design affects the whole company and its thinking and goes far beyond graphics.

The less introspective view of an outsider is often needed to resolve the internal issues.
It is usually advantageous to call in an unbiased and broadly experienced design consultancy.

Design is a concept of total communication for a company and it concerns everything which is seen and everything which is capable of being designed.

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