

The Top 20 Mistakes Marketers Make When Rebranding — And How to Avoid Them

Smart marketers evolve their brands over time to keep them relevant. Some do it well, while others become the target of cynical bloggers. To gear your next rebrand for success, sidestep these all-too-common mistakes:

1. Clinging to history.

Rebranding well means staying relevant. Assumptions made when the brand was established may no longer hold true. Analyze changes in target markets when exploring opportunities for brand expansion, repositioning and revitalization.

2. Thinking the brand is the logo, stationery or corporate colors.

Brands encompass everything from customer perception and experience to quality, look and feel, customer care, retail and web environments, the tone and voice of communications, and more.

3. Navigating without a plan.

Effective rebrands rely on a creative brief to keep everyone focused as the project progresses. Include sections for a situation analysis, objectives, target markets, budget and resources, time-frame, point person, known parameters, approval structure, stakeholders and metrics for assessing results.

4. Refusing to hire a branding consultant without industry experience.

It's ok to consider an agency that hasn't worked in your specific industry before. Sometimes it's ideal – especially if you're serious about a turnaround. Smart companies recognize the value of a fresh perspective.

5. Not leveraging existing brand equity and goodwill.

Dismissing brand equity when rebranding alienates established customers, while unnecessary overhauls can irreparably damage a brand's perception. Consider the needs and mindset of the target market carefully before digging into the process. Sometimes a small evolution – or a new coat of paint – is all that's needed to rejuvenate and make a brand relevant.

6. Not trying on your customer's shoes.

Simply calling your own 800-number or receptionist may reveal challenges customers face and inform your rebranding strategy. Take the time to navigate your own website, buy your products and return something. Better yet, ask a friend or family member to do so and learn from their experiences.

7. The rebrand lacks credibility or is a superficial facelift.

The rebrand's story must be believable given the existing brand experience and customer perception. It must also hold credibility internally. If employees who live the brand day-to-day don't believe, the target audience won't either.

8. Limiting the influence of branding partners.

Good branding consultants are more than graphic designers. The best ones help develop new products, expand demographic focuses and even streamline business operations. Rein them in when needed, but don't limit their areas of influence.

9. Believing rebranding costs too much.

Good thinking doesn't have to come with a multi-million dollar payout. You can get good thinking and solid strategy from small and talented branding agencies, consultants and in-house talent. Consider university students or small firms for cost-effective results.

10. Not planning ahead for adaptation.

It's tempting for team members to walk away after the final presentation, however this is just the beginning of the final stretch. The implementation process may require adaptation as the rebrand rolls out. Acknowledge the need to keep the team and consultants together throughout implementation.

11. Bypassing the basics.

The value of perfecting your physical environment, marketing materials, website, etc., is decreased if your customers languish on hold for inordinate amounts of time. If your invoices and contracts are written in 7-point legal jargon, the brand experience declines. Keep all customer touchpoints in mind when rebranding.

12. Not calling the call center.

Often ignored in brand strategy sessions, customer service and other front-line staff can yield valuable information. This is the proverbial buck – the place where customers are the most honest, no matter what research indicates.

13. Forgetting that people don't do what they say. (They do what they do.)

Use caution when basing rebranding strategies on focus group-type research. Unless you're physically in the customer's environment observing them using your product or service, you're not getting the full story. Actual observation, while not perfect, will get you a lot closer to the right solution.

14. Getting strong-armed or intimidated by consultants.

It's the client's responsibility to reel things in when necessary. You still know the most about your brand and organization, the value of a non-immersed, fresh perspective notwithstanding.

15. Putting the wrong person in charge.

Assuming you've hired capable-to-outstanding branding consultants, the quality of the work delivered depends on sound, knowledgeable project management. Make sure your internal point person has the skills, time and resources to drive the agency to its most effective work yet.

16. Strategy by committee.

Too many opinions delay the rebranding process and diffuse the focus needed to achieve ROI. Keep those with critical approval authority to an efficient shortlist, and assemble the smallest, most essential project team possible. Include a mix of levels – not just executive.

17. Rebranding without research.

There's a lot of lip service about customers, but in brand strategy sessions they're often forgotten. Current and prospective customers should be front and center when creating solutions. After all, the customer will be your ultimate test. Check sites like ReBrand.com for informative case studies.

18. Basing a rebrand on advertising.

An ad campaign and a slogan do not equal brand positioning. Brand strategy should lead advertising – not the other way around. Sometimes the most effective rebrands don't include traditional advertising.

19. Tunnel focus.

Focusing solely on your own industry can be limiting. When rebranding, cross-pollinate your thinking with what leaders in other industries are doing in regard to customer experience, retail experience and customer care. Pull in thinking from different industries and encourage your agency to do so.

20. Believing you're too small to rebrand.

Every brand needs refreshing to stay relevant as markets evolve. Smaller companies and non-profits are not immune. Like larger brands, they too have brand positions that need to be enhanced. Define your brand or be defined.

Contact us at evolve@rebrand.com to learn how we can help you keep your brands strong, vibrant, and positioned for the long haul.

About ReBrand™

ReBrand™ is the only source for case studies and programs focused on effective rebrands: the repositioning, revitalizing and redesign of existing brand assets to meet strategic goals. Founded in 2004, ReBrand recognizes the world's most effective rebrands in its annual ReBrand 100® Global Awards program. The 2007 ReBrand 100 entry deadline is September 27, 2006. For entry and sponsorship information, and to learn best practices from winning case studies, visit www.rebrand.com.

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