

Is it Time to Rebrand? Some Do's and Don'ts

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KSHPRM 2019 Spring Conference
June 7, 2019*

COMMON REASONS TO RE-BRAND

Mergers and acquisitions

Make the brand more visible or create a new one

“Who bought you?” It’s the first thing people assume when they see a new name. In both of the cases we’re discussing today, I told leadership that they would hear this question from partners, clients and stakeholders. Every employee should be able to answer it.

In the case of Bluegrass Care Navigators, we proactively addressed that issue by adding a temporary tag line to the new name, “Same company, same great people, new name” or versions of that line. That tag line appeared under our new name on presentations, fliers, letterhead and the logo for several months until the “Who bought you?” question subsided.

It is critical that every employee understand brand ambassadorship and the reason(s) for the change. They need to be able to answer questions from outside the company others, using short, medium and longer “elevator speeches.” They need to support the change and actively promote it.

Repositioning

New brand promise, products or services

Both Georgia Medical Care Foundation and Hospice of the Bluegrass had expanded in several areas, adding new services.

Hospice still had an average daily census of 700 or so hospice patients, but they also had a large palliative care service, as well as private duty nursing. They even had a group that took care of patients’ pets while they were hospitalized.

They had recently moved into work with neonatal abstinence syndrome – babies born addicted to drugs – and dealing with homeless patients in the Emergency Department at UK, areas far removed from hospice care. With those new services, they needed to rebrand.

Create a master brand

New services under the master brand can have their own logo, look and feel.

<i>Alliant Health Solutions</i>	<i>Bluegrass Care Navigators</i>
<i>Alliant Quality</i>	<i>Bluegrass Extra Care</i>
<i>Alliant Quality ESRD</i>	<i>Bluegrass Transitional Care</i>
<i>Georgia Medicaid</i>	<i>Bluegrass Palliative Care</i>
	<i>Bluegrass Hospice Care</i>
	<i>Bluegrass Grief Care</i>

Changing markets

A new market situation

Obviously, a changing market situation can force a new name. Consider the advent of digital technology on Blockbuster: While Netflix started mailing out DVDs, Blockbuster insisted on staying with its brick-and-mortar stores. Kodak missed the digital revolution because it feared introducing its digital camera, the world's first consumer model, would hurt its own film business. Nokia kept focusing on voice and hardware because it feared that any big change would alienate current users, while its competitors moved to data and video.

New CEO

Example: Steve Jobs return to Apple in 1997. Apple was on the ropes and had to change in order to survive. Jobs helped design a new logo, killing the rainbow-colored version, and changed the look and feel of the company's website and marketing materials.

PREPARATION

Get Leadership buy-in

Not all re-branding is top-down. It's often the brainchild of the marketing department. Upper management will be playing a key role and C-Suite buy-in is critical.

Build a solid internal team

Re-branding is a collaborative effort that involves brainstorming with marketing, HR, sales and management. Team members will have to understand the new brand's positioning, personality and what the company wants to achieve.

Define goals, budgets and timeline

How much will a re-brand cost and how long will it take? Tip: It will take longer than you think. In the case of Hospice of the Bluegrass, it had been known by that name for 40 years. We estimated it would take 12-18 months before the new name, Bluegrass Care Navigators, would be widely accepted.

Tip: “Back time” as many pieces of the change as possible, so that they all roll out within an hour or two. Have the new website – which you have spent months quietly building, critiquing and tweaking – ready to launch at the click of a mouse. Within minutes, roll out the letterhead that you have hidden away in a closet, while the new outdoor signage is being unveiled. The goal is to make the transition as clean and abrupt as possible, minimizing any overlap between the old brand and new one in the public awareness. Pick a date and time, say 8 a.m. Monday, to make the change.

Perform an audit of the current brand

Bluegrass Care Navigators retained a national marketing firm to take an in-depth look at the current state of the brand and all of the collaterals – logos, letterheads, brochures, fliers, photography, signage, annual reports, etc. They held regional focus groups and learned how partners and stakeholders used and perceived the current brand.

For example, they learned that Hospice of the Bluegrass, the existing name, was often shortened to simply “Bluegrass” in many of their 32 service counties, so there was a recommendation that any new name would keep the name “Bluegrass.”

They would not have known that without the audit.

PATIENCE

Finally, be patient. The longer you have been known as the existing brand, the longer it will take for the new one to gain traction. It could be 1-2 years, even if everything is done perfectly!

For more tips and advice:

VIM Group – Top 10 reasons for rebranding

<https://vim-group.com/en/top-ten-reasons-for-rebranding/>

Ignite – Preparing for a rebrand: 5 steps to ensure success

<http://www.ignitebrands.com/preparing-for-a-rebrand/>

Brand Quarterly – Ten rebranding do’s and don’ts

<http://www.brandquarterly.com/ten-rebranding-dos-and-donts>

Valuer – 50 examples of corporations that failed to innovate

<https://valuer.ai/blog/50-examples-of-corporations-that-failed-to-innovate-and-missed-their-chance>