



A PRESIDENT'S PRIMER ON BRANDING¹

This White Paper is designed as a companion to an earlier White Paper, "Brand as Relevance," produced in 2000. If you would like a copy of that paper, one can be downloaded from the Stamats Web site at www.stamats.com/whitepapers.

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INTRODUCTION

A year ago, we produced a simple White Paper titled "Brand as Relevance.

"While our White Papers are generally well-received, we were frankly surprised by the interest this topic generated among our readers. We think this interest in branding is occurring for one very important reason: Colleges are finally recognizing that **name recognition**, **image**, and **positioning** (all elements of a brand) exert strong influences on students as they decide which college to attend and on donors as they decide which college to support.

For years colleges and universities have described themselves as "best kept secrets." It seems now, all of a sudden, that they have figured out that being a secret—especially in today's marketplace—is a perilous position.

BRANDING: AN EMERGING IMPERATIVE

Now more than ever, branding has become an emerging imperative for colleges and universities. Here are some obvious and timely reasons for moving forward with a brand strategy.

- Many institutions are suffering from underperforming endowments. The days of double digit endowment

growth appears to be over—at least temporarily. The institutions that relied on those dollars to meet annual budget expenditures are finding themselves strapped

- While enrollments are up, overall tuition revenue is not. This is a double-whammy. More students mean more expense, and without a corresponding increase in tuition dollars there will be a pinch
- Enrollment of first-year students is generally up on many campuses, even as retention numbers are fluctuating widely. For some yet-unexplained reason, a lot of freshmen decided not to become sophomores
- Many colleges and universities are having a difficult time with their fundraising as they discover that their donors are evaluating their own giving goals in light of a tight economy

To this list we must add a final element: The uncertainty in our country and economy as a result of the events of Sept. 11. Of course, while no one knows how this will all play out and over what period of time, we do know that this has caused many students and parents to

¹ This White Paper draws heavily on an upcoming book by Bob Sevier, *Building a Brand that Matters*, to be published by Strategy Publishing in Spring 2002.

rethink issues of distance, going to school in large cities, and even the whole idea of safety.

A STRATEGIC RESPONSE

In response to these pressures from the marketplace, we have seen a renewed interest in image and positioning: two critical components of branding. Because of this interest, we are going to take the unusual step of revisiting our earlier discussion of branding. We will break this discussion into two sections. First, an enlarged discussion of branding. And second, a review of the *Stamats Branding Report Card*; a tool we have developed to help colleges and universities assess and build more effective brands.

SECTION ONE:

BRANDING 101: A NEW AND RENEWED INTEREST IN BRANDING

Over the past five years we have seen a phenomenal growth of interest in integrated marketing. And while integrated marketing will remain an extraordinarily useful tool, it never seems to capture the heart and soul of a campus. To many, especially faculty, it is just a bit clinical.

Branding, on the other hand, seeks to capture hearts and minds not only of students, donors, and other external audiences, but such internal audiences as faculty and staff as well. The reason for this is simple: Branding focuses on the juncture of an institution's core values and the needs and expectations of your target audiences. As a result, branding is dynamic and galvanizing.

Before we move on, let's take a minute to answer the basic question: *What is a brand?*

WHAT IS A BRAND?

More than a look, logo, or letterhead, a brand is a promise that you make—and strive to keep—to your most important audiences. It is a promise that is valued to the degree that:

- Students will pay for it with tuition dollars
- Donors will support it with donated dollars
- Faculty and staff will commit their careers to it

It is this idea of promises—made and kept—that is the heart and soul of branding.

Promises are important, and like many people I count on a couple of promises in my life. For example:

- My Volvo promises me safety
- Alibris.com promises to find me any book ever published
- Garrett-Wade not only promises the best hand and power tools, but it also promises to show me how to use them without hurting myself

These promises are important to me. I rely on them. And I am willing to pay more for them.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY BRAND PROMISES

Can colleges and universities make similar brand promises? I believe they can. Consider the following brand promises:

- MIT promises the best technological education in the world
- Wheaton College (Illinois) promises a world-class Christian education
- BYU promises to be the premier Mormon educational institution in the world
- The American Graduate School of International Management (known as The Thunderbird) promises one of the best business and management programs in the world

Keep in mind, however, that some brand promises and the colleges or universities that make them are more narrowly niched:

- Heritage University in Washington State promises to serve the educational and social needs of the Native Americans who live in the Yakima Valley
- Berea College promises to entwine education with work and service
- Appalachian State promises to serve the students and communities of Appalachia
- The University of Phoenix promises to help busy adults earn a degree
- Concord Law School promises to help students earn a law degree over the Net

All these promises are valued by both the institution and its target audiences and help differentiate the institution from its competitors.

BEFORE YOU PLAN YOUR NEXT MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN, ASK YOURSELF WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE YOU SEEK.

- Do you seek an *emotional response*—a change of attitude or perception—that differentiates your institution from your competitors and leads to increased awareness? This is brand marketing.
- Or do you seek a *physical response*—a measurable action or behavior—that identifies prospective students by the action they take? This is direct marketing.
- The next Stamats White Paper will discuss how the proven techniques and tactics of brand marketers differ from those of direct marketers—and why one campaign that borrows from both disciplines is more likely to fail than one created to generate the specific response you seek.

FINDING THE BRAND SWEET SPOT

I mentioned earlier that brand promises are not conjured up out of the air. Rather, a brand promise lays at the juncture between your core institutional strengths—what you do well—and what your target audiences value.

It is important to recognize that branding is not about just what you want to do—or what your audiences want you to do—branding is about a melding of the two. It is this juncture that is your brand sweet spot—the point at which the power of branding begins to unfold. It involves issues of alignment, focus, commitment, and organizational inertia.

One tool that can help you discover your own brand sweet spot is a strategic brand audit.

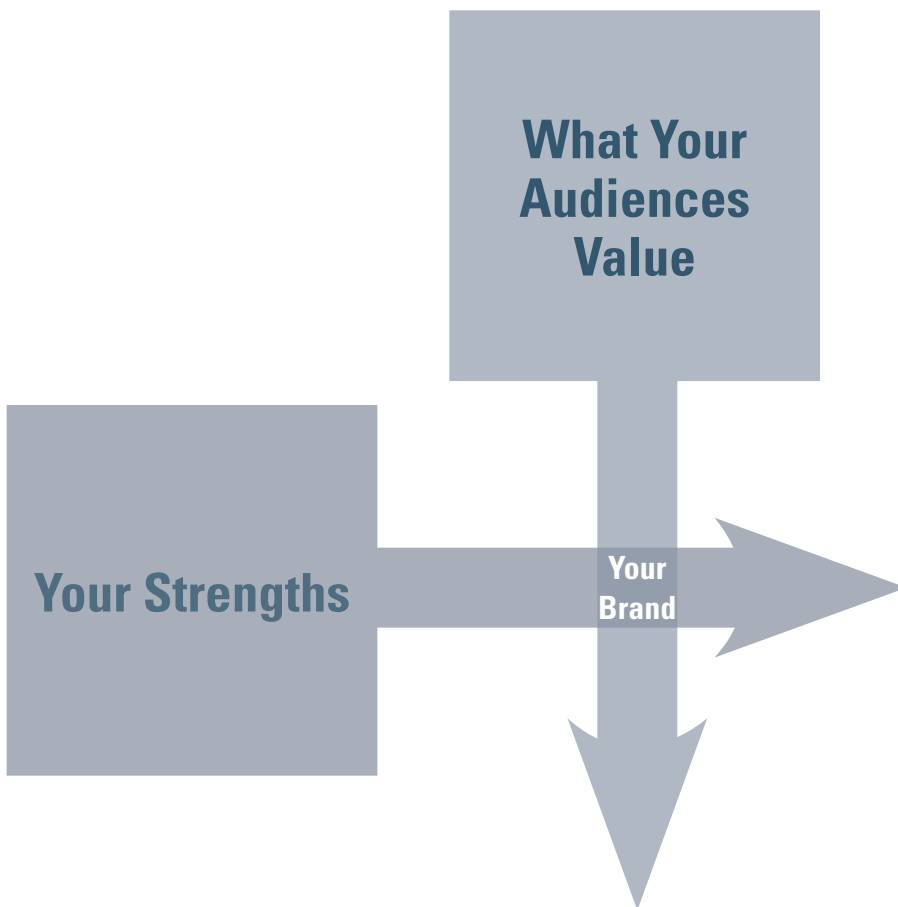
THE STRATEGIC BRAND AUDIT²

A successful brand audit has three domains:

- An evaluation of your institutional core values and the needs and expectations of your internal stakeholders such as faculty and staff
- An examination of the needs and expectations of such external target audiences (we might call these people “customers”) as students, donors, and alumni
- A review of your marketplace and your competitors

The audit will help you evaluate your mission, vision, and core values as

STRENGTHS/VALUES INTERSECTION



² If you are interested in more information on the components of a strategic brand audit, please let us know. We will be glad to forward you a copy of an audit outline..

well as the needs and expectations of your internal stakeholders. Your goal is to develop a brand promise your internal audiences will support.

At the same time, the audit will help you evaluate the needs and expectations of your external customers. Your goal at this point is to develop a brand promise that your external customers will pay for.

Finally, the audit will help you take an honest look at your competitors and the promises they make to their most important audiences. Your goal at this point is to determine what brand promises have already been made in your marketplace.

THE POWER TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

One of the most important qualities of a successful brand promise is its ability to change the behavior of such internal stakeholders as faculty and staff. In the same way that Volvo's brand promise of safety causes engineers and technicians to continually strive to make Volvos more safe, a college or university's brand promise should be a guide and motivator for administrators, faculty, and staff. Is this the best faculty member we can hire? Is there a better way to teach this class? Can we make it easier to register? Should we evaluate our fee structure? Asking and answering these and other questions help reveal the potency of a brand promise.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND PROMISES

As you think about the promises made by colleges, universities, and schools,

you should begin to notice some similar characteristics.

For example, we typically discover that a successful brand promise:

- Is singular; it is very difficult to promise more than one thing
- Is often very personal and emotional
- Is either focused on specific people, a specific thing, or a specific geography. Some of the best brands are focused on all three
- Generates genuine enthusiasm among internal stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and administrators
- Is competitive, distinctive, and price-worthy
- Is relevant and timely
- Creates an institution-wide commitment to its fulfillment
- Allows the institution to deliver value to the marketplace

In other words, a brand is not about being everything to everyone in your marketplace. Instead, a brand is all about being something special to a smaller number of people who are keenly interested in your special promise.

AWARENESS AND RELEVANCE

Before we go on, I want to reiterate a point made in the first White Paper on branding. The point is this: A successful brand strategy must have two critical components—awareness and relevance.

First, there is the awareness component. In other words, among

the 3,000 or so other messages they will receive this day, did your audience members notice yours? Did your message stand out from the background clutter? Did your target audience sense that it was important and did they know how and when to respond?

Second, there is the relevance component. After the message was noticed, did members of your audience begin to sense how the message—and you—might begin to fill a need they had? Was the message relevant to them? Did it build on previous messages? Did it lay the groundwork for future messages? Did it help create a relationship?

LIFE CYCLE OF AN EFFECTIVE BRAND PROMISE

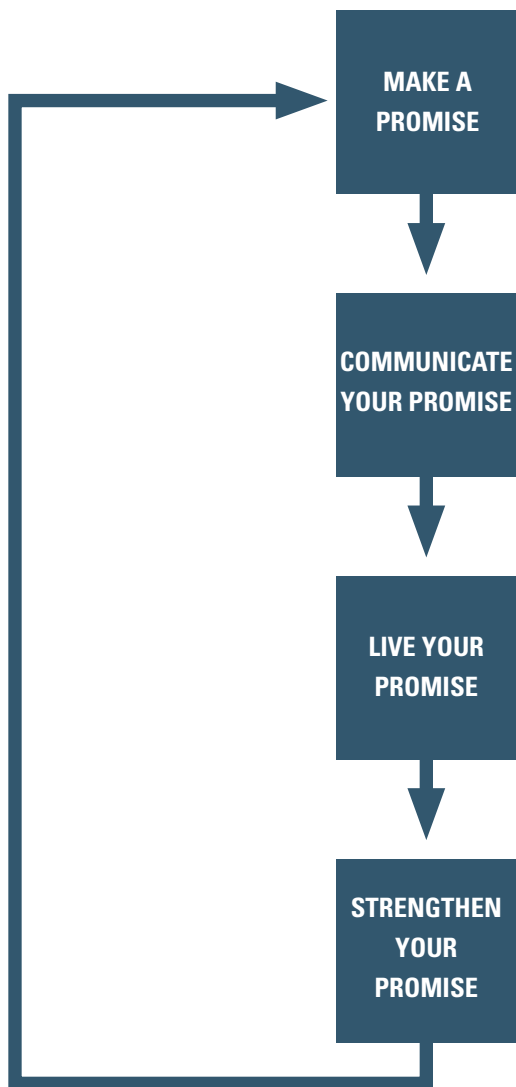
Now that we have firmly established the idea of brands as promises and reviewed the importance of awareness and relevance, I want to roll out the four elements of an effective brand promise. These elements, in sequential order, include:

- Make a promise of value
- Communicate your promise
- Live your promise
- Strengthen your promise

Let's work through the four essential elements of an effective brand promise.

First, you must make a promise that people value. The key is to develop a promise that your internal stakeholders will support and external

A BRAND LEADERSHIP STRATEGY



target audiences recognize, value, and show a willingness to pay for. Establishing a brand promise typically begins with an evaluation of your own mission and vision, an understanding of the promises of your competitors, and an awareness of the needs and expectations of the target audiences that you value most.

Second, you must communicate your promise to your target audiences. This involves creating segmented

messages that your target audiences notice, find relevant, and respond to. In many cases, these messages are “projected” through an enriched media mix. Communicating your promise also involves issues related to look, logo, and a graphic identity system.

Third, you must live your promise. At its most basic, this means delivering on, or keeping, the promise you made and communicated. Issues related to

brand stewardship are of paramount concern at this point.

Finally, you must strengthen your promise. This involves asking both satisfied and unsatisfied customers, “How’d we do? Did we live up to our promises? Did our messages make sense?” Strengthening your promise involves using outcomes research to modify the original brand promise, thereby keeping it vibrant, current, and focused.

BRAND MANAGEMENT VS. BRAND LEADERSHIP

Because of the two different orientations toward brands, brands as looks and brands as promise, it is not surprising that there are two different approaches to brand development, as well. These two approaches, brand management and brand leadership, are classified by David Aaker and differ in the following ways:

- **Brand management** focuses on the short-term. Its primary tool is promotion
- **Brand leadership** is based on the premise that brand building not only creates brand equity, but is necessary for institutional success. With brand leadership, the institution’s most senior leaders recognize that building the brand will result in a competitive advantage that will pay off financially

Based on these two approaches, we can postulate that:

- Brand management is tactical while brand leadership is strategic

- Brand management is visual while brand leadership is visionary
- Brand management is icon-driven while brand leadership is promise-driven
- Brand management stresses what the institution does in the marketplace while brand leadership focuses on how students, donors, and others interact with the brand
- Brand management is interested in brand image while brand leadership is interested in brand equity

TACTICAL AND REACTIVE VS. STRATEGIC AND VISIONARY

Brand management has no long-term focus. Every new idea is a good idea and must be pursued. Projects are continually delayed, sidetracked, and changed.

Brand leadership, however, is visionary. As such, it is focused and

deliberate. And while it is always open to new opportunities, it stresses sticking to the plan.

LESS EXPERIENCED AND LESS POWER VS. HIGHER IN THE ORGANIZATION

Under brand management, the 20-something marketing director will seldom have the power or authority to provide true brand direction. Instead, she or he will be perceived as little more than a coordinator; someone who will spend all of their time trying to scrape together an ad budget.

The brand leader, however, is a senior player who sits on the president’s cabinet. Working well beyond issues of promotion, the brand leader is interested in the institution’s most strategic issues—issues often derived directly from the four Ps and four Cs.

BRAND IMAGE VS. BRAND EQUITY

Brand image, while not visionary, seems preoccupied with the visual.

Its domain is the three Ls of branding: Look, letterhead, and logo.

A brand leadership position, on the other hand, concentrates on building brand value—value that will translate into students and donated dollars. Metrics are in place to measure progress. The goal is brand equity.

SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM

Brand managers never have enough money and seldom have true control over the dollars they do have. A brand leader however, understands that building brand equity takes time, money, and talent. Brand leaders know a successful brand is not built in one budget year or in the week between Christmas and New Year’s.

COORDINATOR WITH LIMITED OPTIONS VS. TEAM LEADER WITH MULTIPLE COMMUNICATION OPTIONS

Brand coordinators measure effectiveness by how many column

BRAND MANAGEMENT VS. BRAND LEADERSHIP		
	BRAND MANAGEMENT	BRAND LEADERSHIP
PERSPECTIVE	Tactical & reactive	Strategic & visionary
BRAND MANAGER STATUS	Less experienced; less power	Higher in organization; more power
CONCEPTUAL MODEL	Brand image	Brand equity
FOCUS	Short-term	Long-term
BRAND MANAGER’S COMMUNICATION ROLE	Coordinator with limited options	Team leader of multiple communication options

inches they generated or how much media they purchased. In the mind of the brand leader, collaborations and sponsorships are more important than column inches. They understand that successful brands require a rich pallet of media options, not just print. Certainly not radio. And never just billboards.

BRAND EQUITY

One of the most important of all branding concepts is the idea of brand equity. And, while there are many definitions of brand equity, Lance Leuthesser uses a definition that is especially helpful for higher education. He says that “brand equity represents the value (to a customer) of a product (or service) above that which would result for an otherwise identical product without the brand’s name. In other words, brand equity represents the amount of value which a brand’s name alone contributes to the offering (again, from the perspective of the customer).”

Consider two bags of cashew nuts. The quality of the cashews in each bag is virtually identical.

One bag is labeled, “Planters.”

Another bag is labeled, “Sam’s Choice,” the house brand for Wal-Mart.

Which bag is able to charge a premium?

The idea of brand equity is critically important because it means that colleges and universities with stronger brands—like cashew producers—can charge more for their product.

ENVISIONING BRAND EQUITY FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

While there are accepted formulae for calculating the brand equity of corporations, there appears to be no comparable formulae for calculating the brand equity of colleges and universities.

However, while we may not be able to calculate brand equity for colleges and universities in exact dollars and cents, it might be helpful to consider the following.

Let’s assume we have two institutions with similar academic programs, academic quality, and academic facilities. For our discussion, the quality of the education a student will receive at either institution—by any reasonable measure and institutional ego aside—is largely identical.

One institution is a member of the Ivy League. The other is a regional liberal arts college. Both are located in the Boston-Cambridge area.

Tuition, room, and board at the Ivy League school total \$35,000.

Tuition, room, and board at the liberal arts college total \$18,000.

It is the Ivy League school’s ability to charge \$17,000 per year more for the same basic education that suggests the power of brand equity.

While the two institutions may offer largely identical programs with identical faculty and facilities, the Ivy League school is able to charge premium dollars because of the prestige factor. Charles Fombrun calls this prestige factor “reputational

capital.” Bruce Hammond calls it “the Chivas Regal effect.”

In this way, brand equity represents two important qualities:

- The premium price that the brand can support
- The impact of the brand on customer preferences

Successful brands can charge more.

Brands attract students and donors.

Brands can be more selective.

Brands can co-brand with another entity to create even greater real and perceived value.

Brands stand out in a cluttered marketplace.

Brands can leverage their reputational capital.

If you are not a brand, you are a commodity, and commodities are purchased for one of two reasons. Either they are low cost or they are convenient. Commodities have no ability to charge premium prices.

THE PRESIDENT’S ROLE IN BRAND LEADERSHIP

Because creating and consistently delivering a brand experience involves the entire organization, senior administrators—especially the president—must lead the effort. The inspiration and the vision must come from the top. Leadership cannot be delegated.

Let’s look at how the president and senior administrators must support brand building.

First, the president and senior administrators need to fully grasp the possibilities that branding has for their institution. At this early “what if” stage it is important to think broadly and boldly. At the same time, the president must factor in the mission, vision, and strategic plan.

Second, you must be honest. The bold thinking suggested in the above paragraph must be tempered by a dose of reality.

Third, the president must declare a direction. Center to this declaration must be the idea of “focus.” Strong brands are built around the idea of doing less, but doing what you decide to do exceptionally well.

Fourth, the president must be willing to deal with the political fallout. Declaring a direction is much like drawing a line in sand. Deciding to go one way means you are not going to go another, and those who want to go in that other direction will be riled.

Fifth, the president must commit the necessary resources. Without time, talent, and dollars, even the most appealing brand will languish.

And finally, the president must put his or her brand strategies in the hands of a single, seasoned administrator who has the experience, the money, the power, and the desire to serve as the brand champion. Having one person in charge of your brand, just as you have one person in charge of your finances or fundraising, gives your efforts focus, legitimacy, and accountability.

SECTION TWO: THE STAMATS BRAND REPORT CARD

As part of our branding work with colleges and universities, Stamats often conducts an evaluation of a college or university overall brand strategy. At the conclusion of this evaluation we summarize our findings in the *Stamats Brand Report Card*.

This evaluation is different than the strategic brand audit briefly outlined above. The purpose of that brand audit is to help you develop a more effective brand. The purpose of the *Brand Report Card* is to evaluate your current branding strategy.

While the *Brand Report Card* must be customized for specific institutions, it generally addresses 10 key areas or competencies:

Brand Competencies

1. The president, board, senior administrators, and faculty understand and agree on the role and function of branding at the institution
2. The institution demonstrates its commitment to building brand equity with a sufficient allocation of time, talent, and dollars
3. The most important target audiences and competitors have been clearly identified
4. Your most important external audiences find your brand promise relevant and demonstrate their commitment to your brand promise
5. Internal stakeholders understand and care about the brand promise

6. You consistently deliver on your brand promise
7. Your price is competitive and consistent with public perception of what people think you are worth. People believe you are a good value
8. Your brand promise properly positions you for the future
9. Your brand image is consistent and distinctive and supports messages that are relevant, remembered, and repeated
10. You consistently measure whether or not you are increasing brand equity

WHY A REPORT CARD?

We chose a report card as our evaluation mechanism for three reasons. First, colleges and universities intrinsically understand the idea of report cards and grades. Second, we recognize that while a college or university may do exceptionally well in one area and not so well in another, it is the cumulative grade that indicates overall performance. And finally, like mid-terms and then finals, the branding report card allows you to revisit each or some of these 10 areas at a later date to see if your performance has improved.

Let’s take a look at the individual components of the *Stamats Brand Report Card*.

1. The president, board, senior administrators, and faculty understand and agree on the role and function of branding at the institution.

Of the 10 “grades” on the *Stamats Brand Report Card*, this is the only one that is pass/fail. For your brand and branding efforts to succeed, you must align your institution—its mission and vision—with the expectations of your most important target audiences. The result must be a sense of institutional common purpose.

This understanding and commitment is evidenced in a number of ways. It is demonstrated by your ability as an institution to focus your energy and resources. In other words, the decision to do fewer things, but to do those remaining things exceptionally well. It is demonstrated by an alignment between your strategic plan and your marketplace. And finally, it is demonstrated by the continual and obvious commitment of your people to your brand promise.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Your key people understand the difference between image, position, and branding
- You have conducted extensive internal and external market research in support of a comprehensive and defensible SWOT and you recognize that this research will need to be repeated periodically to help you gauge the effectiveness of your brand strategies
- Your strategic plan is audience-oriented, not just institution-oriented

2. The institution demonstrates its commitment to building brand equity with a sufficient allocation of time, talent, and dollars.

The path between your branding plan and success runs through your budget. If you do not allocate sufficient dollars to hire the right people, organize them correctly, give those people the time and authority they need to do the job, and support them with adequate dollars, then your branding efforts will not achieve the success you hope for. Unfortunately, hope and desire are no substitute for dollars. You must be prepared to commit real and often significant resources. If you do not, or cannot, it is unreasonable to expect your branding initiatives to bear fruit.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Your branding and marketing budget is sufficient for your goals and your marketplace
- You have qualified, senior people in place and you have a unified organizational structure that supports their best work and creates synergy between departments. Your goal is brand leadership, not brand management
- You are working from a comprehensive, institutionwide brand plan that draws upon and coordinates all institutional resources and offices and you make an institutional commitment to stick to the plan

3. The most important target audiences and competitors have been clearly identified.

Branding is not about developing a little something (a program here, a major there) for everyone. Instead, branding is all about focusing on the needs and expectations of a handful of truly important target audiences.

As you think of your handful of audiences, define them carefully. Take the time to conduct research to determine who is a best fit for you and your programs. Look at their demographic and attitudinal profiles. Make sure potential target audiences are sufficiently large so that you can develop a longterm, sustainable relationship. And, then focus on these audiences and the people who influence them.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- You have identified three to four key audiences who, based on your research, are most interested in your brand promise
- You have clearly identified your competitor set for your overall brand promise and for your most important programs
- You have determined that the needs and expectations of your most important target audiences are not being met by a competitor
- You have determined that your target audiences have the financial resources to support you and your programs

4. Your most important external audiences find your brand promise relevant and demonstrate their commitment to your brand promise.

Creating awareness in the minds of your target audiences is one thing; having them demonstrate their commitment to your brand promise is another. For colleges and universities, this commitment is measured in tuition dollars and donated dollars, and word-of-mouth support.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Your costs for recruiting a student or raising a dollar are less than those of your peer institutions
- Your tuition discount rate is going down
- Your annual fund participation rate and average annual fund gift size are increasing
- You are showing an increase in major gifts and capital fund support

5. Internal stakeholders understand and care about the brand promise.

Brand promises are kept by people. If your internal stakeholders—faculty, staff, and administrators—do not believe in your brand promise, or understand how the brand promise impacts how they do their job, then your promise does not have the ability to guide behavior and improve performance.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Your employees can recite the brand promise and discuss its importance to both the institution in general and to them and their jobs in particular
- The brand promise has been operationalized for individuals and work groups so they understand how it can be applied to their work
- Your hiring practices acquaint potential hires with the important elements of your brand promise and how well an employee “lives out” the brand promise is considered as part of the promotion process
- When students do not matriculate, or withdraw, it is not because of a disconnect between what was promised and what was delivered

6. You consistently deliver on your brand promise.

The brand promise you make to your internal and external audiences is important. How well you deliver on that promise is even more so. Not keeping, ignoring, or even breaking your promise can have disastrous consequences.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Morale is high
- Your retention rates are increasing
- Your best faculty and staff make lifelong commitments

- Your alumni verbally support the institution, give and give often
- Students and donors seek you out

7. Your price is competitive and consistent with public perception of what people think you are worth. People believe you are a good value.

Value is the relationship between perceived costs and perceived benefits. With this in mind, your most important target audiences must believe, and act on that belief, that you are a good deal and that your price is competitive.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- General pricing data and pricing elasticity studies consistently place you in the middle of your cohort group
- When students opt not to attend, or withdraw, the primary issue is not cost
- Students consistently compare you with institutions that are more expensive than you
- Donors consistently describe you as “well managed”

8. Your brand promise properly positions you for the future.

Brands, like colleges or universities, are organic. They must grow and respond to challenges...and opportunities in the marketplace. Recognizing this, a successful brand

promise provides both immediate and long-term direction and guidance.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Leading-edge feasibility studies of donors suggest an interest in long-term relationships
- Demographic and attitudinal studies indicate that the number of students, parents, and others that value your brand promise is sufficiently large to sustain your institution
- Your brand promise continues to resonate with key societal, economic, employment, political, and/or religious trends

9. Your brand image is consistent and distinctive and supports messages that are relevant, remembered, and repeated.

If students, donors, and other audiences are not aware of your messages, you will never be on their minds or in their hearts. In other words, when they think of attending—or donating—they will not think of you. Creating this top-of-mind awareness requires a consistent brand image and the creation of messages that are compelling.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK:

- Your brand image is coordinated via a campaign that is consistent, comprehensive, and long-term
- Your brand messages consistently generate responses from your most important audiences

- External target audiences can articulate your basic brand promise and can differentiate you from your competitors
- External target audiences have correctly positioned you in their minds
- Competitors with similar promises seem reluctant to enter your marketplace

10. You consistently measure whether or not you are increasing brand equity.

The ability to increase brand equity means that more and more people are becoming aware of your brand and find that it is relevant to them. In addition, they are overcoming economic, geographic, and even psychological barriers to partake of your brand promise. Your most important audiences believe that your brand promise and their personal goals are linked.

HOW TO EVALUATE THIS YARDSTICK

- Research of better students and influencers reveals that more students have positioned you as a “first choice” institution
- Your tuition discount rate is low or declining
- Donors and foundations seek you out
- You are generating buzz in the marketplace

CONCLUSION

Branding offers significant opportunity for colleges and universities; especially for those institutions that understand that a brand is a promise that you make to your most important audiences. It must be a promise that prospective students and donors value to the degree that they will support it with tuition dollars and donated dollars. And it must be a promise of such value to faculty, staff, and administrators that they are willing to let it guide their actions.

The decision to create a branding strategy requires an institution adroitly align itself with, and commit itself to meeting, the needs and expectations of its most important target audiences. In doing so, it will create brand equity and reposition the institution for success.

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Promises kept.

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