



Ask the Expert

Q: What's the best way to communicate a new visual/corporate identity to employees?

(Our company has started the process to re-brand for launch early 2007. We have around 300 employees split mainly between two offices.)



A: To communicate a new corporate identity, I would define the values behind the identity, explain those values to employees and then, most importantly, align the new identity to employees' self interests.

Since your company is relatively small and split between two locations, I'm imaging it's feasible for most people to attend a presentation or two, at which the identity and its inherent values are introduced. This is an opportunity to be creative and to get people excited.

Provide opportunities for discussion

At the presentation, you can show off your new artwork, advertisements and collateral materials. This meeting also presents a chance for senior leaders to discuss the identity's importance to the business as well as the business's strategy and direction in general.

If possible, bring in the voice of your customers as well – either live or on video or audio tape – to capture their reactions to the new identity and the values that support it. There's nothing like hearing from customers first-hand to give an identity-campaign relevance.

Use all channels available

Following the initial launch, you'll want to reinforce the new identity through your company's formal communication channels. All of this should help generate high levels of awareness and, hopefully, a sense of excitement.

But here's the rub: Unless the values inherent in the new identity are relevant to employees' day-to-day lives, they'll quickly forget all the well-orchestrated messaging that occurred during the launch. This is simply human nature; we tend to forget what's irrelevant.

For employees to internalize the new identity, three things need to happen:

1. Senior leaders need to talk and act in ways that support the identity's values. This sends the message that these values are important.
2. Ongoing communication needs to reinforce and elucidate issues central to the new identity - e.g., production quality, customer service, market share and so on.
3. Employees need the competencies required by the new identity, and performance measures and rewards that align the identity to employees' self interests.

Once these three ingredients are in place, your employees will be most likely to act in ways that support the new identity and your company will be well positioned to fulfill its strategy.

Andy Szpekman is president of [AHS Communications, LLC](#), which provides human resource management and communication research, strategies and tools to improve business performance. His clients include Alpharma, Bank of America, BC Hydro, Cardinal Health, McKinsey & Co., Microsoft, News Corporation, Russell Investment Group, Scholastic and Wachovia. Earlier in his career, Andy held positions at Bank of America, Warner-Lambert and Brecker & Merryman, Inc. (an HR and communications consulting firm).