



The Real Truth About Branding

By Azriel Winnett

Branding, or brand marketing as some now call it, is one of the buzzwords of public relations and marketing. I searched several dictionaries in vain for a precise definition of this high profile concept as it is applied in the business world. The closest I got was the one that explained the verb "to brand" as "to impress firmly."

On the other hand, perhaps I wasn't so unlucky after all. Not the whole story, maybe, but this is, after all, the very essence of what branding in business is.

When you brand something - be it a company, an individual, a product, a service, a concept or a process - you impress strongly on people's minds whatever is special and distinctive about it. You make some kind of lasting impact that leaves them in no doubt that your special something stands apart from everything else in the same category.

It sounds simple enough. The problem is that even some marketing professionals, if they know this at all, have not yet internalized it. They think of brands in terms of trademarks. They apparently believe that branding is just a matter of well designed logos and striking, unforgettable visual images. Not that they're necessarily so far off the mark. We all know that the right visual symbols do help to create an impression of distinctiveness. The Coca-Cola people have exploited this principle to absolute perfection. Smash one of their familiar bottles, and you can still recognize that the fragments were once part of a Coca-Cola bottle.

Nor does it have to be confined to the sense of sight. Occasionally, you just have to hear a few strains of some melody to immediately associate it with a certain company or product. And then there's the famous Singapore Airlines smell. A few years ago, the flight attendant of that airline began distributing, before and after takeoff, hot towels that gave off a very distinctive aroma. Once experienced, it's not easily forgotten.

The truth is, though, that characteristic symbols and images, whether visual, aural or olfactory, important though they are, simply not enough. Even mighty Coca-Cola could not have captured the lion's share of the soft drink market with the design of its bottles alone.

And if you're just a small guy, well, it's a different ball game altogether.

The easiest way to understand this concept is to think of it like this: if you run a website, what would happen if you removed your logo and your company name?

Would I still be able to recognize your brand? Or, let's say you're the owner of a brick-and-

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WEBSITE: www.stc-sjvc.org

Presidency Corner

By Bethany Rusbasan, Chapter President

We need a president-elect. I will be the president for one more year and we do not have anyone to step up and take the president position after my tenure is over. It is easier for the person who will be the next president to have a year of experience before they are the president.

It really isn't difficult to be the president and it can take a very little time, to as much time as you want to put into it. The job consists of, writing the president's column, a quarterly report, starting each meeting, and running the planning meeting in the summer.

The president's column can be on any topic the person chooses and can be as long or as short as the person wants. There are about seven newsletters a year.

The quarterly report is basically a fill in the blank two-page questionnaire from the director-sponsor. I think it takes me maybe fifteen minutes to complete.

Starting each meeting is relatively easy and painless. We have been a very informal chapter, I get up say hello, say any chapter business, and when there are any new people there I have everyone say their own name and where they work. I normally say a little

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Coming Events

Next Chapter Meeting:

October 22, 2002

By: Perry Ballard

Topic: Branding

Time: 5:30 P.M. (Indiana Time)

Place: Tippecanoe Place, South Bend

(See page 4 for details.)

STC Mission Statement

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

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Editor's Corner

I hope you have a cozy chair, a warm drink and a little time on your hands. This issue has evolved into a whopper! My apologies to all e-mail recipients.

Part of the reason is explained below. But as it got later and later and I had yet to get the computer to agree with my commands, I decided to just wrap everything you should have had into one issue. This issue of Watermark spans from April until present.

There is a lot here, some a bit outdated, some not so. I decided to leave it all as is. Of course, I am now a little out of sync with our meeting schedule. However, if this works out, you will all have your newsletter several weeks before the next meeting (can't use the late newsletter excuse anymore.)

At the recommendation of the chapter officers, I will be returning to a dual mode operation. There are enough people in the chapter who do not use e-mail that they get left out if I am late on a publication date. However, I will continue to gear the newsletter for E-mail delivery. Eventually, I hope we can just post it to a website and send everyone a note. (I just need to figure out how I am going to mail these things. I think I have an idea - just need to see if it will work.

We are also going to try reaching out to more area employers. If you know of a company that uses Technical Writers, then drop me a line and I will add them to the mailing list. We may be able to add a few members that way and that would benefit everyone.

Also a reminder - we will start taking paid advertising on a limited basis. I'd like to get a feel for who wants to advertise and I really don't want to flood the newsletter with all kinds of ads that are of no interest to you. So, if some one asks about advertising in our newsletter, give them my name, phone number, e-mail address, whatever.

With all that said, on with the tale that led me to my current predicament.

The Editor

Every Computer User's Nightmare

CRASH! No sound, no noise, it just stopped working. Actually, that's not quite true.

I would like to apologize to everyone for the delays with this issue. On May 20, my computer died. Specifically my hard disk drive died, or at least it suffered a serious stroke.

I was nearing the completion of a download of a rather large program update when I noticed the Internet Security icon blinking. Being curious, I clicked on that insistent flashing icon. Apparently, the computer was not happy with me for this action - it immediately froze.

Okay. That happens. Power off. Wait. Power on and we reboot. **WRONG!**

I received a strange cryptic message:

NTLDR not found.

NTLDR? Why would an NT Loader be on my Windows 98 system? Oh, well, computers get confused so we'll try again.

Now I see:

Operating System Missing.

Uh, oh! I've been in computers since 1980 and I know enough to know that is not a good message. I say a prayer and power off and try again. Same thing.

Now, I am concerned. I have two projects in progress and I haven't been backing up as often as I should. Then I realize that I haven't prepared an Emergency boot disk set for this system. Arrrrgh!

I start rummaging through my office and eventually locate the correct manufacturers' disks for this computer. Ah, there is an Emergency Disk. I plug it into the A: drive and boot up.

I get an A: prompt. Okay, I've been here before, I can do DOS. I enter the command to change to the C: drive:

Drive not valid.

Okay. **Now** I am on the verge of panic. There seems to be only one thing to do, I call the support line.

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October Meeting

The October meeting will be held at the popular Tippecanoe Place in South Bend. Back by popular demand, Perry Ballard of Perry Ballard, Inc. will give a presentation on Branding.

Meeting Details

Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2002.

Time: 5:30 P.M. (Social Hour - cash bar)
6:00 P.M. Dinner (order off menu) and presentation

Presenter/Host: Perry Ballard

Place: Tippecanoe Place, South Bend (See map) 620 W. Washington St. (574) 234-9077

RSVP: Perry Ballard (800) 800-9547 or e-mail at pballard@perryballard.com NLT Friday, Oct. 18.

If you missed the last branding presentation, a comment from Bethany Rusbasan:

For those not able to attend the last presentation, I have to say you missed a very good one. Going into this meeting I was thinking, it will be interesting but not a lot of usable information for me. I was both right and wrong. I was right because it was a very interesting presentation; Perry is an excellent presenter and is able to give a lot of information in an upbeat, fun, and easily understandable way. I was wrong because I did come away with some very valuable and usable information.

I hadn't realized before how successful and influential some brands are; and how important brand statements are to people as a way of organizing the overload of information we all are inundated with everyday. After giving us the facts about brand statement, what and why, Perry went on to give us how. He went over the steps his company uses to come up with brand statements; they made a lot of sense, they are very understandable, and they are doable.





The STC Special Needs SIG Wants You!

...Visit us at www.stcsig.org/sn/



Do you have a disability of any kind?



Are you interested in making our communication products more accessible for users with disabilities?



Would you like to join an inspirational "can-do" team that is committed to taking the "dis" out of "disabilities"?

When You Renew Your Membership, Join Us!

Dear Fellow Communicator:

The Society for Technical Communication's new Special Needs SIG is dedicated to providing information that will assist technical communicators with disabilities in the practice of our profession; furnishing *all* technical communicators with information that will help them make our communication products more accessible for users with disabilities; and offering strategic leadership, both within the Society and through alliance with other professions, to help harness technology and methodology to assist people with disabilities in the general population.

Those are lofty goals, but we have pulled together a highly committed and energetic team to pursue them. We have already made significant progress: a comprehensive Web site, a soon-to-be-released dynamic new on-line newsletter (*Achieve!*), the publication of *Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs* at the 49th annual conference, a highly successful progression at the same conference, and the publication of several articles.

But we have much yet to do, and we need more people. If you have a disability yourself, if you don't have a disability but prepare communication products for users who do, or if you meet neither of those two parameters but are committed to the concept of helping people take the "dis" out of "disabilities," then we urge you to join us.

By completing the attached sign-up sheet, you can be added immediately to the SNSIG, meaning you can (with your permission, of course) be added to our robust and spirited listserv, receive our on-line newsletter, and join our efforts to fulfill our mission. Even if you are not in a position to contribute time as an Active participant—at least, not immediately—we still ask for your support in joining us now as a Patron, thereby committing to include your SNSIG affiliation when you submit your STC membership renewal later this fall. Quite frankly, as a brand new SIG, we face not only a daunting list of tasks to pursue our objectives; we also must overcome a significant budget challenge in order to fund those tasks. So if you want to support us but

cannot at this time commit volunteer hours, please consider joining us as a Patron.

If you have a disability and are willing to share that information with us when you sign up, that would help us gather the data we need to focus our research and publishing initiatives in the areas that will benefit the most people. We urge you to join us and benefit from the information and resources we have already gathered, whether or not you are in a position to participate actively at this time in our undertakings.

Attached is a copy of our mission statement. We have asked your chapter president to circulate our sign-up sheet at your chapter's next meeting; if you have received this invitation via e-media rather than at the chapter meeting, simply sign up electronically (form attached), and reply directly to one of us.

Let us close by expressing our appreciation to your chapter president and your chapter in supporting our mission to help people overcome disabilities.

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Was Your Education Worth It?

How Much is a Degree Worth? Earning a professional or doctorate degree could be worth \$2.8 million in added income over 40 years.

Degree Income:

- Professional or doctorate degree: \$2.8 million
- Master's degree: \$2.3 million
- Bachelor's degree: \$2 million
- Two-year vocational degree: \$1.5 million
- High school diploma: \$369,818

Source: Employment Policy Foundation analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Current Population Survey.

President - continued from page 2

about what I do since a lot of people really don't know much about LECO (where I work). Then the presenter takes over.

The officer's meeting in the summer is where we plan the upcoming schedule. The officers brainstorm to come up with meeting topics. Then someone agrees to be the speaker at the meeting, or be a coordinator for the meeting. For example, Mark Stucky is our website guy, he was the speaker at the last meeting on E-commerce. Kirsten Klassen is our past president, she coordinated the meeting at the print shop and the speaker for that night, and this month's meeting Perry Ballard was asked to speak.

This does all take some time but really not that much. Could I do more and spend more time, of course; but that is an individual choice each president gets to make based on their schedules. Basically, it is good experience, it looks good on a resume, the other officers are all nice, the meetings are normally interesting, and it is enjoyable.

You Might Want to Consider

Are you looking for a challenging career field that is financially rewarding? According to a recent survey, the technical writing and editing field may fit the bill.

The average salary and benefits for technical writers and editors in the United States and Canada continues to increase, according to the 2001 salary survey conducted by the Society for Technical Communication. The average salary is \$55,360 in the United States, up 6.8 percent from \$51,850 shown in the 2000 survey, and \$54,140 in Canada (in Canadian dollars), up 8.5 percent from \$49,910 in 2000.

The survey covers the responses of more than 1,200 technical writers and editors working in entry through senior-level/supervisory jobs across the U.S. and Canada. Notably, the survey shows a narrowing gap in salaries between men and women. The average salary for U.S. men is \$56,310 while that for women is \$54,860. In Canada, the average salary of Canadian men is \$56,580 and that of women is \$52,730 (Canadian dollars).

(Full survey available at STC.ORG website.)

Editor (continued from page 3)

After a couple of tries I get a young lady who seems to know her stuff. Following her instructions I get the machine to boot up! But she warns me, "this may not be a permanent fix, so you need to backup anything important right now."

So I try. Five minutes later, the computer is dead again and I have nothing backed up. I call back.

I can't get the same lady. But the person I talk to tells me that my hard disk drive must be replaced. They are kind enough to give me the name of a Data Recovery Service. And the saga begins.

So for the next two weeks and thirty some phone calls and approximately 60 hours of my time, I struggle with getting things back in some semblance of order. I'm still not there; it sorta works normally. But it has been educational.

First. When you buy a computer for business, buy the three year maintenance plan for parts replacement. If you have to replace a major part, the price the manufacturer will charge you will probably equal the cost of the plan. This company wanted over \$200 for a 20G hard disk drive. (I wonder if they have been taking lessons from the auto makers.?)

Second. Make backups, often, in many forms. If you only loose a couple of day's work you can recover. A year or more will kill you.

Third. Keep all your system and application disks in an accessible easy to find location. That may sound trite, but in the midst of a major project in a small office you can accumulate a lot of clutter. Things can get lost very quickly. Oh, you'll find them eventually, but not when you need them.

Fourth. Don't put too much faith in the manufacturer's support, no matter what the advertising says. I'm sure they do just fine on little things, but if you have a major system problem - they have a problem. I don't think I dealt with the same person twice. I discovered that each call was going to the most available call center. I talked to people in the Phillipines, Arizona, West Virginia, and on and on. They have to rely on a vast network

to track your problem and if they are far away, it may not get there right away.

Then there is the issue of qualifications. I spoke with everyone from a seeming novice to a hands down expert - but never more than once. I eventually began to keep a log of everyone I talked to, where they were, etc. Amazing. But it didn't help to solve my problems.

Oh. How did it work out? Well, I quickly found out that Data Recovery is for the wealthy, or companies that have a lot more capital than mine. My manufacturer mounts the primary hard disk drive in a vertical position. So, after I installed the replacement drive, I decided to mount the original drive in the secondary (horizontal) position on a hunch and a prayer. When I rebooted both drives were recognized. So I copied my most important data to the new drive and deleted those files from the old drive. I've lost a lot of stuff, but the most important data is now safe. I back up every Friday and I installed a second drive as an on-line backup. As soon as I get my CD-burner operating, work files will go there as well. I still have to rebuild my e-mail and contact files, but I guess that will help to keep the lesson fresh.

Lessons? Yeah, I think I learned a few.

In the world of computers today, backup is an essential; not an option. While you can reinstall an application, data recovery is time consuming and costly. Not to mention that very few of us are capable of doing the job if we needed to.

Sadly, unless you do a complete backup on a regular basis, you are not going to get the same computer back. Each system seems to take on its own personality and quirks over time, due to repeated installs, uninstalls, updates and what have you. You get used to how it works and what it will and will not do.

Manufacturer restoration CD's (if you are lucky enough to get one) will never restore your system to the same configuration. The only way you can hope to come close is to maintain a log of every installation, update and uninstall you perform. Then, put everything back the same way.

Save yourself a large headache; **BACK UP!**

Director-Sponsor News

Remember your first meeting?

by Mike Bates, Region 4 Director-Sponsor

Hello,

I remember my first STC meeting as a professional. Sure, I had been an active member of the Bowling Green State University chapter while in school, but now I was out on my own and interested in finding out what the rest of the technical communication practitioners were up to. I walked into my first meeting in Northeast Ohio and didn't know anyone. I no sooner stuck my name badge to my shirt and someone was there to introduce themselves to me. From there, the person took me around the room and introduced me to others. I left that night feeling as though I had met 20 new professionals in my field. I couldn't wait to go to the next meeting.

Since then, I have moved four times and been a member of four different STC chapters. Each experience has been different. Each chapter has had something unique to offer me. From Bowling Green to Cleveland; Jacksonville, Florida to Raleigh, North Carolina, and back to Cleveland, one thing is certain. I have established an incredible network of friends and colleagues through STC that I will never forget.

What does this have to do with you? Consider the times. Think about the unfamiliar faces at your next STC meeting. Think about the people that you may not have seen in a while.

This fall, many of you and your chapter leaders will be running formal membership drives. You will be looking for new members and trying to identify ways to retain your current membership. You don't have to be the Membership Drive Chairperson or on the committee to help. Here are a few suggestions.

Meet one new person at your next meeting. Take an opportunity to seek out one person at a meeting who is new or who you have not met before. Make an effort to get to

know them. Consider what it was like when you first started in STC. You didn't know anyone and you weren't sure what value the Society could have for you. Listen to what the individual is looking for from the meeting and focus on how you can help them.

Contact a member that you haven't seen in a while. Many people just become busy with other parts of their lives or have moved into positions that are outside the field of technical communication. Ask your membership chairperson for the name of one person who is no longer an STC member or who you haven't seen in a while. Contact that person. Let them know what has happened lately at the chapter and Society levels. Invite them to the next meeting and, most importantly, find out why they stopped coming or are no longer members. It's important to listen to what our members want out of the Society, but it is equally as important to learn why folks have stopped participating.

Promote services at the chapter and Society levels. So many of you are involved in chapters that are very active. You have excellent programs which keep you coming back for more. Think about the services that your chapter and the Society have to offer. Consider the employment banks, mentoring opportunities, listservs, and other services that you use within your own chapter. Also, consider services like the Special Interest Groups (SIGs), employment bank, research opportunities, and award programs that the Society offers.

Take a proactive role in keeping your chapter and the Society alive and well. It is your responsibility. Even if you are not sure where to start, think back to your first meeting. Remember what kept you coming back. Then think about why you are still attending meetings today. You suddenly have two stories to get you started.

Mike is the Manager of Information Architecture at Rockwell Automation and Region 4 Director-Sponsor. He can be reached at mpbates@software.rockwell.com.

Chapter Officers Meeting

On June 29, your chapter officers met for the annual planning meeting. For those of you who are not familiar with the process, the chapter officers meet at least once a year to plan the activities for the next meeting year. Input from all chapter members is welcome, especially in the area of meeting topics. If you have an idea for a meeting topic, or would like to make a presentation, just contact one of the Chapter officers listed on page 2.

The following topics were discussed:

Moving the chapter web site to a paid host facility to lessen the impact of pop-ups and advertising. A couple of options were discussed and are being investigated. If anyone knows of an inexpensive hosting service, please contact Mark Stucky.

More should be done to encourage new chapter memberships. Two initiatives were discussed:

Newsletters will be distributed to area employers where technical writers are likely to be employed. If you know of any such businesses, please contact Ralph Rumpf with address information.

A new membership incentive will be offered periodically (See below).

The meeting schedule was discussed for the 2002 - 2003 calendar year. The following dates were selected as meeting dates:

Sept. 18, 2002

Oct. 22, 2002

Nov. 19, 2002

Feb. 5, 2003

Apr. 23, 2003

Topics for these dates will be announced as they are finalized.

ANNOUNCING

MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES!

Invite a visitor who might be interested in becoming a chapter member to a meeting and you **both** get dinner for **FREE!**

Since the strength of the STC resides in its' members, and since we all have a lot to offer, (and even more to do); it seems that if there were more members, there would be more to offer everyone. (How's that for convoluted?) This can produce a number of benefits:

- More Subject Matter Experts =
- A wider range of meeting topics =
- New ideas, new thoughts =
- A better STC Chapter for everyone!

So, the chapter officers recently decided to try something new to attract potential new chapter members.

If you know of someone who would benefit from membership in the STC (besides the good company), invite them to a meeting. If they decide to come, dinner is on the chapter for you both. We will kick this off with the October meeting so watch the next *Watermark* for additional details.