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Corporate Identity and Corporate Reputation in Silicon Valley: Case Studies in Public Relations and Integrated Communications

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This two-case study of high-tech firms in Silicon Valley, near San Jose, California, explored how and why corporate identity principles were used in establishing a model campaign plan for these companies. In this process, it was necessary to establish a clearer relationship among the terms, corporate identity, corporate image, corporate branding, and corporate reputation from the organizational, advertising and public relations literature.

There were three preliminary foci of the study: (1) the rationale of initiating a corporate identity campaign, (2) the ideal campaign management model, and (3) the essential factors affecting campaign success.

Two key factors can be extracted from the study results: dominant coalition support and employee participation. Other indirect factors include a participatory culture, high-quality products, consistent messages, appropriate tactics, an understanding of customer needs, and the formation of an integrated marketing communications division.

Introduction

The purpose of this two-case study was to explore how and why high-tech companies use corporate identity principles in establishing an image. The two specific cases were a computer-server manufacturer and a consumer computer accessory firm located in the Silicon Valley near San Jose, California. The computer accessory company served mainly as a comparison for analytic purposes. In the process of developing a model campaign plan for corporate identity, it was necessary to establish a clearer relationship among the terms, *corporate identity, corporate image, corporate branding,* and *corporate reputation* from the organizational, advertising and public relations literature.

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Because many high-tech companies are engineer-founded, it was assumed that spending on marketing communications and corporate identity campaigns may be overlooked or under-funded. On the contrary, many high-tech Silicon Valley companies did invest heavily in marketing.

The past 20 years marked a rise in funding for corporate identity campaigns. In the early 1980s, the 100 Leading National Advertisers listing did not include a single technology company (Johnson, 1996). Yet by 1995, Johnson noted, “spending in the US consumer media by computer, software, and printer marketers topped one billion dollars” (p. 14). Among the big players were International Business Machine Corporation (IBM), Microsoft Corporation, Apple Computer Corporation, Hewlett-Packard , Compaq Computer Corporation and Motorola Incorporated.

In these corporate identity campaigns, business relied on consumer media advertising that focused on the corporation rather than the product. Lawler (1996) noted, “High tech advertisers today are increasingly focused on benefits to the end-user rather than a dry recitation of product features. The images and language are more human” (p. 30). This study examines the gradual acceptance of high-tech corporate identity campaigns.

An ideal model was developed based on three existing models: the Effective Corporate Identity Campaign model by Chris Gorman (1994); and the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) model by Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn (1993); and the Strategic Program Planning Matrix by Wilson and Ogden (2004).

This study also sought to understand *what* factors are essential to a successful corporate identity campaign. The literature review identified seven potential factors, which were used to compare similarities and differences between the high-tech and the consumer company.

Literature Review

The section focuses on the management of a corporate identity campaign, and is divided into a discussion of: corporate reputation, corporate image, corporate branding, and corporate identity; the foundational campaign models; the development of an ideal corporate identity campaign; and six influential factors affecting campaign success.

The concepts of *corporate branding*, *corporate image*, *corporate reputation* and *corporate identity* have been intermingled in the academic and professional literature to such a degree that there are no common definitions of how these concepts work together. Pruzan (2001) viewed corporate reputation as a combination of image and identity. Image is derived from an organization’s stakeholders and the purpose of corporate reputation is to protect and improve the corporate image. He said this approach "is promoted and marketed by eager hordes of consultants and PR experts" (p. 30). Corporate identity is more reflective of how the organization views itself and is more concerned with the character of the organization rather than its perceived appearance. Pruzan said this was evident in increasing interest in such concepts as corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship.

In a different approach, Dacin and Brown (2002) saw corporate branding as made up of corporate identity and *corporate associations*. Corporate identity uses the definition of Pruzan's (2001) corporate identity but without the ethical connotations. The term *corporate associations* refers to the stakeholders or receivers viewpoint of a corporation but reduces the stakeholder (without using that term) to the individual level. Within *identity scholarship*, in his AC²ID TEST™ Balmer (2001) derived what he calls *conceived identity* (the combination of image, reputation, and brand) where corporate branding includes how the organization thinks of itself, portrays itself vis-à-vis controlled communication, and what is expected by its key stakeholder groups.

Corporate reputation or *reputation management* has been the topic of increased interest directly in the public relations field as well (Hutton et al., 2001; Lee, 2004). It is driven by the corporate image discussion above, success in the crisis management field, the connection to financial growth (Bennett & Kottasz, 2000), and even the emphasis in journals such as *Corporate Reputation Review* and *Corporate Communications*. In 2002, J. Grunig and Hung defined organizational reputation as "the distribution of cognitive representations that members of a collectivity hold about an organization"… (p. 20), agreeing with the *image* and *associations* arguments above that views an organization from the stakeholder perspective. However, J. Grunig probably would take exception to reputation being equated with image. Rather, he would agree that corporate identity is what an organization thinks of itself and like Bromley in 2000 stated: "Identity is defined as the way key members conceptualize their organization; image is defined as the way an organization presents itself to its publics, especially visually; and reputation is defined as the way key external stakeholder groups or other interested parties actually conceptualize that organization" (p. 241). Van Riel (1995) in discussing corporate identity, would include the organization and its key stakeholders together but then there would be no purpose in differentiating among the terms of corporate identity, image, branding and reputation for the advertising and public relations fields. Identity, then, for purposes of this study, is the noun, how the organization describes itself and wishes to be perceived.

Image is not the perception of the organization by its strategic stakeholders – that is corporate reputation. Also, the portrayal of corporate identity does not preclude research into corporate reputation in a symmetrical or asymmetrical manner. It could be either, meaning that research could be done among strategic stakeholders either to portray an image that is asymmetrically not accurate. Or, it could convey an image that is symmetrically accurate. The point is that corporate identity in this paper includes feedback from strategic publics but in it essence is how the organization wants to be perceived by its stakeholders.

Image is the action verb or process of communicating identity to key publics. That was the original notion of identity, to communicate visual symbols of the organization. Now, however, image would include the mediums, products or tactics of communication, not just the symbols. Branding could be equated with image in that it connotes offering a message about the organization or even a specific product. It is a term more likely used by advertising while reputation would more likely be a term used by public relations. Like branding and these other terms under discussion, reputation is an overlapping concept (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Haedrich, 1993; Moffitt, 1992). For purposes of this study, then, corporate identity is how the dominant coalition or management core group of an organization views itself. This may be contrary to the broader theoretical concepts of corporate identity from the organizational literature in that van Riel (1995) and others view identify as a whole, encompassing both sender and receiver, how stakeholders both internal and external view the organization. But, for the purposes of operationalizing some of these terms for this study, and especially to draw in the advertising field, it was deemed appropriate to view corporate identity from the organizational point of view.

Corporate Identity Campaigns

A corporate identity campaign can establish an image and personality for an organization taking some of its attributes from integrated communications as well as public relations (Gray, 1986; Selame & Selame 1988; Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2000), thus narrowing the gap between public perception and reality. A corporate identity campaign conveys the image of the dominant coalition of the organization to key stakeholders. It is the campaign itself that can operationalize corporate identity and result in the perception of corporate reputation held by key stakeholders. The operational terms are image and branding. For this reason, many ads today are corporate rather than product-oriented, relying on a humanistic, friendly approach (Lawler, 1996). Many companies think that corporate identity activities give them an edge in the consumer market. For example, as the world's largest technology ad spender, Intel invested $700 million into PC co-op ads and corporate identity campaigns, creating public demand for their Pentium Chip.

A corporate identity campaign is a strategic communications activity (Goodman, 1994) as denoted in this paper's definition of image that helps manage relationships among key publics, which affect organizational missions, goals, and objectives (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig 1995). The organization's goal may be to establish a desired position, image, or personality in the eyes of its publics (Atkins, 1989; Chajet et al 1991; Newsom et al., 2000; and Selame et al., 1988), or to change the public's attitudes and behavior (Kotler, 1986). Often, the company uses its name to differentiate itself from its competitors in a branding sense (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996, Goodman, 1994; Newsom et al., 2000), by providing consistent, coherent, visual messages to both internal and external publics (Goodman, 1994; Gray, 1996). Again, a corporate identity campaign is a strategic activity designed to build corporate image and culture through coherent and consistent communications tactics.

A strong corporate identity enhances perceived quality, which Aaker (1991) defined as, "the customer's perception of overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to an alternative" (p. 85). For example, the "Intel Inside" corporate ad campaign has succeeded in suggesting all quality PC's feature the Intel chip. This perceived quality gives customers a reason to buy, establishes confidence for product carriers, differentiates itself from competitors, and sets a product price premium. A corporate identity campaign both informs publics and builds recognition (Aaker 1991). This, in turn, helps encourage consumers to buy the company's products.

The Foundational Campaign Models

As mentioned previously, an ideal model was developed from three existing models discussed in the literature: Gorman's Effective Corporate Identity Campaign model (1994), the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) model by Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn (1993), and The Strategic Program Planning Matrix by Wilson and Ogden (2004). The first model was selected because of Gorman's (of Chris Gorman Associates, Inc) expertise in the area of corporate branding, communicating the identity of an organization. The IMC model was chosen for its combination of marketing, public relations, advertising, sales promotion, employee communications, and so forth (Schultz et al., 1993). The Matrix was chosen because it is the only campaign planning model in public relations that is developed to the extent of almost 15 steps (Wilson & Ogden).

Gorman's Effective Corporate Identity Campaign Model

According to Gorman (1994), the three elements of launching an effective corporate identity program are research, strategy, and implementation. The first step is to convince top management of the need for a corporate identity campaign and the importance of investing in the hard-to-imitate company "personality." Next, a committee comprised of relevant people is created to develop guidelines and gather information. At this point, it is wise to consider employing an external consulting firm for objectivity. This leads to the research stage, where the committee interviews people both inside and outside the company.

The fifth step, or strategy stage, calls for action on the information. Most campaigns are based on sound tactics and clear, powerful, visual, and verbal manifestations of those strategies (Gorman, 1994). The final stage is implementation, during which the logo becomes the most prominent visual feature of an identity program.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Management Model

The second model—the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) management model—is an eight-step circular model (Schultz et al., 1993), integrating marketing elements, such as product placement, distribution, and promotion into communications; and communications elements, such as the advertising, public relations, and events into marketing.

The IMC model gathers, organizes and stores stakeholder information in a database, then classifies stakeholders by behavior. For example, customers might be classified as loyal, competitive, or swing users. Once classified, the model creates specific steps to target each group.

The third step is identifying a time, place, or situation in which to target each group. Schultz et al., (1993) suggested the most critical variables in the process are *how* and *when* to contact each segment, rather than *what* message(s) are to be delivered. Next, a communications strategy is developed to determine what message (s) to deliver, followed by setting a measurable, quantitative marketing objective.

In the sixth step, or marketing mix, the company should formulate a consistent strategy for the product, price, distribution channel, and communications activities. Next, persuasive marketing communications tactics such as direct advertising, sales promotion, public relations and marketing, are employed to achieve objectives. In the final step, the responses to the campaign are measured and the program evaluated.

Wilson and Ogden's 's (2004) version for public relations broke down the tried and true RACE formula (research, action planning, communication, and evaluation) into 15 steps that included:

Research

· Background
· Situation analysis
· Central core of difficulty or problem statement
· Preliminary identification of publics and resources

Planning

· Campaign goal(s)
· Objectives
· Key publics
· Message design
· Strategies
· Tactics
· Calendar
· Budget

Communication

- Communication confirmation

Evaluation

- Evaluation criteria
- Evaluation tools

This Matrix, as Wilson and Ogden term it, is based on strategic management in public relations and her five characteristics of a strategic cooperative communities' model. Those five characteristics are *long-range vision*, viewing an organization's well-being in the long-term; *commitment to community*, not just profit; underlying this commitment is emphasizing the *importance of people*; next is involving employees in *cooperative problem-solving*; and finally, building *relationships with all of their publics*, based on mutual respect, trust and human dignity in a symmetrical manner.

Developing the Ideal Corporate Identity Campaign Model

Gorman's (1994) model emphasizes preliminary work, while the IMC (Schultz et al., 1993) model emphasizes campaign execution, and the Wilson and Ogden (2004) model focuses on research to accurately launch a campaign. Gorman's model focuses on interviews with stakeholders, while the IMC model demands a systematic collection of stakeholder behavioral information, and the Matrix builds relationships strategic to the organization. The ideal model, an integration of the three, consists of 11 steps:

1. Assign a leader and set up a committee of relevant people.

2. Gather information and develop guidelines for management approval.

3. Consider employing an external consulting firm.

4. Collect data on all stakeholders.

5. Classify stakeholders into categories (i.e. customers, suppliers, financial analysts).

6. Interviews both in- and outside the company for feedback purposes.

7. Identify a time and place to target each stakeholder.

8. Develop communications goals, objectives and strategies for each target stakeholder.

9. Determine the marketing mix for each target stakeholder.

10. Employ persuasive marketing communications tactics for each target stakeholder.

11. Measure and evaluate campaign success.

Influential Factors of Success

Seven factors affecting campaign implementation were identified in the literature. They include: (1) dominant coalition support, (2) participative corporate culture, (3) the formation of an integrated marketing communications division, (4) understanding the publics, (5) persuasive communications tactics, (6) support from channel members, and (7) high product quality.

Dominant Coalition Support

Expensive corporate identity campaigns are difficult to initiate without management support (Chajet et al., 1991; Gorman, 1994; Schultz et al., 1993). Chajet and Shachtman (1991) noted "the good corporate leader is one concerned with the corporation's basic health and who simultaneously assigns a high priority to the significance of its image" (p. 197). Yet, top management is sometimes unwilling to provide extensive resources, leaving corporate identity programs low on the priority list (Aaker, 1991; Gorman, 1994). To be successful, top management must understand the need for a corporate identity campaign.

Participative Corporate Culture

The dominant coalition usually determines company culture although there are exceptions (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992), and a participatory management culture, rather than an authoritarian one, would support carrying out a corporate identity campaign. Corporate culture must coincide with the desired corporate image to be successful. Dozier et al., (1995) defined corporate culture as, "the total sum of shared values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and exceptions that organize and integrate a group of people who work together" (p. 135). This culture affects employee relations both inside and outside the company, which in turn affects how the organization is perceived Newsom et al., 2000. Employee voices may be perceived as the most credible source of information (Caillouet & Allen, 1996; Newsom et al., 2000), and to gain support, the company should encourage employees to participate in the corporate identity campaign.

Formation of an Integrated Marketing Communications Division

Caywood (1994) said the integrated marketing communications approach is essential to produce and maintain an effective and consistent reputation. According to Gonring (1994), integrating the communications division creates accountability by maximizing resources and linking communications activities directly to organizational goals and the resulting bottom line. Thus the formation of an integrated marketing communications division, combining public relations and marketing, is important in a corporate identity campaign.

Understanding the Publics

A favorable reputation can be a powerful competitive advantage in keeping a company in the marketplace (Aaker, 1991; Newsom et al., 2000; Schultz et al., 1993). A successful corporate identity campaign demands an understanding of the company's publics in two realms; their self-interests or values, and how they become aware of the company. A poorly-focused corporate identity campaign may disillusion the public (Newsom et al 2000). To avoid this, all three models used a preliminary information-gathering stage investigating stakeholder perception.

Persuasive Communications

Wilcox, Ault, and Agee (2000) suggested there are nine factors for achieving persuasive communications: (1) audience analysis, (2) source of credibility, (3) appeal to self-interest, (4) clarity of message, (5) timing and context, (6) audience participation, (7) suggestions for action, (8) content and structure of message, and (9) persuasive speaking. Once goals and objectives are determined, these nine factors should influence the formulation of communications strategies and tactics.

Support from Channel Members

Gordon, Calantone and di Benedetto (1993) noted that distributors have an important role in building corporate reputation. They serve as gatekeepers between a company and its customers. Therefore, maintaining a good channel relationship is one factor in building a strong corporate reputation.

High quality products

High quality products and services crystallize positive perceptions in the customer's minds (Aaker, 1991). There is a strong empirical correlation between perceived product quality and customer satisfaction, which is achieved through positive customer experiences.

Summary

Corporations cannot neglect their publics. Public perception can affect the customer's purchasing decision, employee productivity (Newsom et al., 2000), stakeholder loyalty (Aaker, 1991), and perceived product quality. A positively perceived company fosters pride and loyalty in employees (Ackerman, 1993; Newsom et al., 2000); attracts top-notch personnel, customers, suppliers and investors; influences morale and investor attitude; and lends leverage when tackling crisis (Ackerman, 1993; Chajet et al., 1991; Gray, 1986). Corporations need an appropriate, persuasive communications strategy to sustain marketplace positions, and a corporate identity campaign could be one of the best supports available.

The seven criteria addressed in the literature helped define this study's questions. RQ (1): Building corporate identity has been practiced by consumer companies for a long time. Can the same concept be applied to a high-tech company? RQ (2): What is the rationale and motivation of a high-tech company to initiate and launch a corporate identity campaign? RQ (3): How does it launch the campaign? Does it follow Gorman's corporate identity model, the integrated marketing communications approach, the ideal model, or others? RQ (4): In the literature, there are seven possible factors that may affect the success and failure of a corporate identity campaign. Are these truly the essential criteria in implementing a corporate identity campaign?

Methodology

This study employed the case study research method, and addresses the following divisions: (1) rationale for using the case study method, (2) the rationale for conducting a multiple-case study, (3) the case selection criteria, (4) the data collection methods, (5) the data analysis method, and (6) the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

The Case Study

Yin (2003) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and the context are not clearly evident" (p. 13).

The purpose of using a case study is to understand the complexity of individual occurrences (Stake, 1995). The nature of this study was both exploratory and descriptive, which, according to Yin (2003) is suited for the case study method. The objective was to investigate the how and why of launching a corporate identity campaign in a high-tech company. These research questions demand an in-depth examination and collection of information regarding both the context and phenomenon.

The case study was chosen also for the following advantages: (1) It is good at interpretation, (2) it is a credible research method, and (3) it is an affordable research method in terms of time, money, and manpower.

Finally, quantitative methods were not considered due to their limited investigative and interpretive ability (Lindolf, 1995; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The quantitative method handles only a limited number of variables and is best used to generalize a phenomenon rather than interpret and understand it.

A Multiple-Case Study

According to Yin (2003), a single case study is appropriate under four circumstances. First, it represents a critical case in testing a well-formulated theory. Second, it is a unique case. Third, it is a revelatory case allowing one to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation. Fourth, it is a pilot test. In this study, none of the above circumstances were met. Therefore, a multiple-case study was employed to increase external validity and enhance the overall quality of the study.

Cases Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for the two case studies were as follows: (1) The organizations were practicing corporate identity activities, (2) they were willing to participate, and (3) one was a high-tech company (computer server manufacturer) and one a consumer-related company (computer accessory supplier).

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with two people from the corporate communications department of each company. They each were actively involved in corporate identity campaigns, and were referred to only by title and responsibilities.

High-tech Company

The first interviewee was the director of Integrated Corporate Marketing Communications. He was involved in all communications activities including working with communications consultants, employee communications, public relations, and trade shows. The second interviewee was the Brand and Creative Director. He was hired to create corporate messages and develop guidelines for the company’s creative work.

Consumer-related Company

The first interviewee was the Corporate Identity Consultant. He was the vice president of Corporate Marketing at the time of the campaign, responsible for the corporate identity strategy and positioning development. The second interviewee was the Creative Services Manager, responsible for developing the company's creative strategy in all communication pieces including product packaging, collateral, and promotional pieces. This study served as a frame of reference for comparison to the high-tech company.

Data Collection

The study was comprised of a triangulation of date collection methods: focused interviews, documentation, and archival records, with focused interviews serving as the key method of data collection. A two-hour interview was conducted with each interviewee. The questionnaire protocol was semi-constructed using mostly open-ended questions derived from research questions in the literature review. All interviews were audio tape-recorded and transcribed afterwards. Relevant documents and archives, collected from company Web sites and during field visits, were used to verify and supplement interview data.

Data Analysis

The pattern-matching method was used to analyze the data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). For each case, the evidence was grouped in the three foci of the study: (1) the rationale of initiating a corporate identity campaign, (2) the campaign management framework, and (3) the potential factors affecting the campaign success. In order to triangulate the evidence and find consistent patterns, all findings were evaluated with two or more levels of analysis using interview notes, collected documents, and archival records.

Strengths and Weakness of the Study

There are three possible weaknesses in the methodology. The first refers to the limited use of the result findings from a multiple-case study. Because a random sampling method was not used and there were too few case studies, the findings are not generalizable to similar cases (Yin, 2003). In both studies, the findings followed a replication logic instead of a sampling logic and could thus be generalized to other cases analytically but not statistically. The data was not representative of the entire population (Stake, 1995; Yin 2003). Even with such weaknesses, the multiple case study gains an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon.

The second weakness relates to the research method. The researcher was actively involved in collecting and analyzing data and therefore, the data collected may lack objectivity (Stake, 1995). This was minimized by interviewee review of the report draft (Yin, 2003). The final weakness stems from the use of personal interviews as the key data collection method. The degree of truthfulness from interviewees is difficult to access. To counter this, the researcher clarified all possible questions. In addition, Lindolf (1995) noted, “triangulation of interviews and other data sources could ease, but not eliminate the uncertainties” (p. 167).

Findings

The case study results were presented according to three preliminary study foci: (1) the corporate identity campaign rationale and motives, (2) the campaign process, and (3) the key success campaign factors. It concludes with the patterns found within the two cases.

Case Study of High-Tech Computer Server Company

The high-tech computer server company, a leading global supplier of on-line transaction processing, was in the midst of diversifying into two emerging markets. The company wished to adapt existing services to enter these new markets.

The two interviewees were actively involved in the company’s corporate identity campaign. The Integrated Corporate Marketing Communications (ICMC) Director was responsible for all company communications including employee communications, public relations, trade shows, and communication with outside consultants. The Brand and Creative Director reported to the ICMC director and was responsible for creating corporate messages and setting creative works guidelines.

Campaign Motives.

In order to thrive in the industry, the company sought to develop a lower-end, broader customer based market segment and to diversify their technology applications to the telecommunications industry.

An external research company conducted focus groups with server and application purchasers in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. The research found that respondents were brand-conscious, relying on popular brands perceived to be the “best” choice. Additionally, the research found low awareness of the company’s corporate identity, while corporate image or brand was perceived as high-end, expensive, and proprietary. This perception had negative ramifications as the market was a lower-end, broader, customer-based segment.

Consultants suggested that corporate image could differentiate the company from its competition, offering three reasons for a corporate identity campaign. First, the respondents were brand conscious. Second, they had a low awareness of the company. Third, they still perceived the company as high-end, expensive, and proprietary.

Campaign Process

The new CEO restructured the corporate communication division into the ICMC division, or image team, empowering them with responsibilities in supporting marketing activities. The ICMC was headed by the company vice president, with the director of ICMC directly underneath him. ICMC was further divided into six subdivisions, each responsible for a specific marketing function. One group worked horizontally across the division to ensure consistency in corporate identity. The ICMC image team worked closely with an external research company and corporate identity consultant firm.

The company immediately conducted an internal audit, confirming focus group findings. Research findings were reviewed by outside consultants, and a new corporate identity strategy was developed in which the original corporate name was kept, the corporate color and the logo's graphical presentation were altered, and a new tagline was created.

Campaign Launch

The CEO launched Challenge 2000, an internal campaign encouraging employee, partner, and customer participation. The objective of the campaign was to position the company as an "easy-to-do-business-with" company.

Employees. The company held a kick-off ceremony announcing the new corporate identity to US employees. A world-wide brand equity group for international employees was scheduled to meet five times a year to discuss new logo implementation, branding efforts, and future business directions.

Customers. The CEO sent letters and a CD-ROM to existing customers notifying them of the logo change. The president toured US cities, meeting with financial analysts regarding the campaign. The Brand and Creative Director noted the ad campaign, explaining how the company's system handles 90% of the world's stock transactions, 80% of all ATM transactions, and 66% of all credit card validations.

Evaluation. No evaluations had been conducted at the time of the interviews, but benchmark research is planned to test the effectiveness of the corporate identity campaign.

Key Success Factors

The ICMC director felt the CEO's support was one of the most influential factors in restructuring the company and empowering the ICMC division. His support was crucial to the tightly scheduled launch of 18 to 24 months, and his campaign budget approval was essential. Additionally, the CEO created a participatory atmosphere by creating his own Web page to communicate with employees, customers, and potential partners.

Case Study of Consumer Computer Accessories Company

The computer accessory company is a leading North American supplier designing marketing accessories, peripherals, and software. According to market analysts, it is a key player and fast-growing, $100-million-plus supplier in the market. The company marketed more than 500 computer accessory products in 28 different product categories.

The Corporate Identity Consultant (CID) developed the corporate identity strategy. Also working as vice president of Corporate Marketing, he headed the campaign. The Creative Service Manager developed the creative strategy for all communications pieces and reported directly to the CID consultant.

Campaign Motives

The company's goal was to become the global leader in the computer accessory market. When the CID consultant explained the present trend in consolidating computer accessories, he added "having size and breadth of product line" was the key to success. The company had recently obtained six to seven different products through aggressive company acquisitions,

These developments created a need for a corporate identity campaign under which all product brand names could be consolidated. With an eye to possible future acquisitions, the company wished to establish a corporate brand name that had elasticity for global markets. The CID consultant felt that corporations gain the most equity by using their own corporate name globally. After evaluating its benefits, they decided to use the existing corporate brand name for all product lines.

A single brand strategy saved the company and the customers both time and money. According to the CID consultant, "When you look at the economics, it just doesn't make sense to fragment marketing dollars with six to seven brands, when all are low-cost computer accessories products." In addition, customers could receive a bigger discount when they bought a variety of products from a single supplier. The company called this the <u>one order one invoice</u> strategy. The creative manager said she "wants the consumer to find one familiar brand that they can rely on" when they buy computer accessory products.

Campaign Process

First the company reorganized the structure to emphasize product-focused business units. Products were grouped into three categories, with each unit assigned its own sales and marketing people. A new vice president of corporate marketing was hired to review corporate names of both the parent company and newly acquired companies to determine which corporate name to be used. He conducted both internal and external interviews, as well as supervising 800 consumer interviews, 105 trade interviews, and an international survey of 100 United Kingdom consumers.

The results found that the parent company's corporate name had the most brand equity and elasticity. The company eliminated all other corporate names and focused on its own as the *master corporate brand name*, aimed at conservative, male, office computer users. Additionally, a computer accessory sub-brand was developed for females and others who prefer personalization.

Next, the attributes and positioning for both the master and sub-brand were tested in consumer focus groups. After receiving approval on the final positioning of *guarantee product quality* (master brand) and *fun meets function* (sub-brand), a public relations agency was hired to launch the campaign.

Campaign Launch

The campaign objective was to associate the parent company with "guaranteed quality." Activities were focused on employees, trade/retail segments, consumers, market analysts, and the media.

Employees. Upon campaign launch, a new mission statement was issued for employees, followed by monthly meetings and employee awards. Additionally, employees were provided multiple methods to communicate directly with top management.

Trades/Retails. Most promotional activities were trade-focused in an effort to establish a healthy channel relationship through public relations and corporate advertising.

Consumers. In keeping with the new tagline, <u>the brand you can count on,</u> the company offered standing five-year warranties, 90-day risk-free trials, and a toll-free technical service hot line.

Market Analysts. Considered an external source of industry information for the media, market analysts met with the company president and the CID consultant. After being informed of a sales increase of 35 percent over the same period, last year, key market analysts named the company a *model of success* in the industry.

The Media. The company president conducted press tours throughout the United States at the beginning and six months after the launch. The company also reprinted the market report, mentioning the success of the company, and sent it to the press for reference.

Evaluation. The company conducted formal and informal evaluations of the campaign. The formal evaluation compared findings with pre-campaign data. Informal evaluations included positive feedback, higher product placement, and a 35 percent increase in sales volume.

Key Success Factors

According to the CID consultant, convincing administration of the economic advantages of creating a master corporate brand campaign to justify spending was a key factor to campaign success. The creative manager believed timing and consistent messages for all communication activities were the most important factors affecting the campaign. Other factors for success included appropriate tactics, employee participation, dominant coalition support, and understanding customer's needs.

Patterns between the Two Cases

There were both similarities and differences in launching a corporate identity campaign for a high-tech computer server company and a consumer computer accessories company.

Campaign Motives

Few differences in campaign motives were found in these two case studies, suggesting that strong corporate identity benefits both the high-tech and consumer industries. These similarities may stem from consumer brand-consciousness.

While the studies revealed that each company had unique motives for launching a campaign, in both cases the CEO or president initiated and supported the campaign. The high-tech server company launched a campaign to supply a new corporate identity and image. The computer accessories company launched the campaign to consolidate products under one name. Both companies, however, felt a corporate identity campaign could increase customer awareness and convey messages to their publics. Furthermore, both believed the campaign identities would be unique, longlasting, and economical in the long-run. This cost saving aspect was significant. As in most high-tech companies, changing technology renders short product life-cycles for the computer server company. Brand identity would increase consumer recognition and decrease possible damage to corporate image.

Campaign Process

The two companies followed a similar pattern when launching their campaign:

1. Each started with new business goals.

2. They restructured from functional-based to product-based units.

3. Dominant coalitions initiated the launch and assigned a campaign leader.

4. Each created campaign teams with members adept in creating corporate identities.

5. They conducted research on existing identities and tested new identity elements.

6. Each created campaign objectives.

7. Each made the campaign a company-wide event.

8. Each employed public relations activities.

9. Each conducted post-campaign evaluations.

Most differences in the campaign process arose from differing objectives: the server company redesigned its entire corporate identity while the computer accessory company expanded its current identity to apply to newly acquired products.

There were some phenomena to consider. The first was the active role of the dominant coalition in driving the campaign, which was undertaken without initial research. The dominant coalitions also prepared their companies for a campaign. The CEO of the computer server company established and empowered the ICMC division, while the president of the computer accessory company prepared the vice president of corporate marketing to head the campaign.

Key Success Factors

Two success factors noted by both companies was the support of dominant coalitions, as well as employee participation. Additional common factors are discussed as follows.

Dominant coalition support. Dominant coalitions played an active role in ordering the launch, delegating leader responsibilities, approving budget, creating an atmosphere for employee participation, and meeting with external analysts. They also restructured the companies and created integrated corporate communications departments.

Formation of an integrated marketing communications division. Both companies underwent restructuring to set up integrated marketing communications and corporate marketing divisions respectively before campaign launch.

Employee participation and participative culture. Each company made the campaign a company-wide event. Tactics were used to ensure employee understanding, and the participatory culture was vital to campaign success. Both companies established two-way communications channels to allow employee input.

Understanding the customer's needs. Both companies conducted extensive key public research before the campaign launch, thus focusing the campaign on meeting public's needs.

Consistent messages and right tactics. Each company aimed for consistency of message in all company divisions and advertising. In both cases, public relations activities, such as corporate advertising, press tours, and meeting with industry analysts were employed.

High quality product. Product quality exerted an indirect effect on campaign success, building employee pride and confidence.

Discussion and Conclusions

In the following section, pattern-matching is used to discuss results. The contents are divided into four sections: (1) patterns of the cases studied and the literature, (2) conclusions, (3) the limitations of the study, and (4) future research directions.

Patterns of the Cases Studied and the Literature

Comparing and contrasting patterns were based on the three preliminary foci of the study: the campaign motives, the campaign model, and key success factors.

Campaign Motives

The case study results were highly compatible to the literature. Both companies believed that a corporate identity campaign could enhance the equity of their corporate names. They defined this equity in much the same way as Aaker's (1991) definition. Additionally, each company felt a positive corporate image helps in case of crisis, which is similar to the writings given by Ackerman (1993); Chajet and Shachtman (1991); and Gray (1986).

In observing campaign goals, the server company's objective was to reposition the company as a market-relevant, strong, "easy-to-do-business-with" partner. The computer accessory company's objective was to associate the company with guaranteed quality. This supports the argument given by Atkins (1989); Chajet and Shachtman (1991); Newsom et al., 2000 and Selame and Selame (1988), that corporate identity could establish a desired position, an image, or personality to be perceived by its publics.

Campaign Model

In addition to similar campaign frameworks, common campaign models and steps were also identified. Both companies assigned a campaign leader and grouped relevant people together, as well as employing an external agency for the campaign. The server company employed a corporate identity consultant firm and a research house, while the computer accessory company hired a corporate identity consultant and a public relations agency.

Each company collected information about its publics and classified consumers. Both companies conducted research, imitating the initial data-gathering phase of the ideal model. The computer accessory company followed the ideal model exactly, while the server company conducted an internal audit and focus group study. Similarly, both companies planned to conduct evaluations. The server company planned a benchmark study and the computer accessories company planned both informal and formal evaluations.

In the ideal model only. Regarding differences, two steps from the ideal model were missing in both cases. First, gaining top management approval was unnecessary as the dominant coalitions ordered the launch. Secondly, before setting campaign objectives, contact management was not concerned with how and when each public could get in touch with the corporate identity. Also, unlike the ideal model, the two companies did not have specific marketing tools or objectives for each public. Instead, objectives were set for the entire campaign.

In the case studies only. It should be noted that three steps identified in the case studies were not present in the ideal model. First, both companies started with new business goals. Second, the dominant coalitions restructured the companies from a functional-based to product-units based organizations. Third, both companies conducted research before formally launching the campaigns.

The ideal model's application. While much of the ideal model was followed, questions were raised about the adaptability of the ideal model to the real world. While the ideal model is behavior-oriented, limited behavior-oriented activities occurred in the case studies. For instance, the contact management step was missing in both cases. Further, the ideal model emphasizes easily-evaluated quantitative campaign objectives although both cases were qualitative. Finally, the ideal model demands specific communication objectives, marketing objectives, and marketing tools for each public—all of which were lacking in the case studies. The cases demonstrate room for reality to catch up with the ideal model.

Key Success Factors

Two key factors can be extracted from the study results: dominant coalition support and employee participation. Other indirect factors include a participatory culture, high-quality products, consistent messages, appropriate tactics, an understanding of customer needs, and the formation of an integrated marketing communications division. In short, excepting channel member support, all the key success campaign factors mentioned in the literature were common to both cases.

Conclusions

The researches conducted two case studies to investigate *how* and *why* companies launch corporate identity campaigns, focusing on understanding key factors for campaign success.

Does corporate identity apply to high-tech? Research question two asked if corporate identity concepts really apply to high-tech companies. The high-tech company CEO launched the campaign to keep pace with his new business vision, empowering existing corporate communications personnel to support the campaign launch.

Besides dominant coalition support, the customer's brand conscious buying patterns were a factor in launching the campaigns. It should also be noted that staff from both the communications department and outside consultant firm were experts.

Why launch a campaign? Research question two asked why a high-tech company launches a corporate identity campaign. While the company CEO was the driving force in launching the campaign, focus group research showed the company had a low profile in new markets. Potential, brand-conscious customers incorrectly perceived the company's products. Other benefits to launching a campaign included differentiating the company from competitors, building a relationship with publics, creating customer expectation, fostering customer values and preferences, and safeguarding the company during hardships. Based on these results, the company launched the campaign to become more market relevant.

How to launch a campaign? Research question three asked how a high-tech company launches a corporate identity campaign. Research showed the company followed most steps in the ideal model. However, a gap between reality and the ideal does exist. The ideal model uses behavior-based tactics, none of which were found in the case studies. The studies also implied steps demanding specific communications and marketing objectives and marketing tools for each public are unreal. As an alternative, the campaign should allow flexibility by setting general objectives for all publics as was done in the case studies.

Finally, three steps should be added: (1) setting new business goals, (2) restructuring the company from functional-based to product-units based, and (3) forming an integrated corporate marketing communications division or similar department.

Key success factors? Research question four sought to determine key campaign factors for a high-tech company. The study showed, excepting channel member support, that all factors from the literature were present. These factors include dominant coalition support, participatory corporate culture, high-quality product, consistent messages, suitable tactics, understanding customer needs, and employee participation. It should also be noted that employee participation was not mentioned in the literature but was pertinent to the case study's success.

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