

Thought

CONCEPTUAL MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

IDENTITY / COMMUNICATIONS

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Identity is an essential business and marketing tool. It projects your institution's public image. It is a potential profit builder. Yet it remains a mystery to many of the schools that need it the most.

Institutions and organizations present intended and unintended identities to a wide range of very different internal and external audiences. For survival, and certainly for success, these identities must be understood and managed. A range of design disciplines provide a major resource to accomplish this.

In an increasingly competitive market, a growing number of schools are recognizing the importance of making a lasting, positive, and consistent impact on their various audiences. They have applied a wide range of design disciplines to the management of their identities and have benefited favorably as a result.

- All organizations have an Identity.
- Do you know what yours is?
- What is it doing for or to the school?
- What can be done about improving it?

I ALREADY HAVE A LOGO. WHY DO I NEED AN IDENTITY SYSTEM?

A logo or trademark, even a good one, is only one element of a school's identity system. An identity system is a planned way to unify and control the total meaning and appearance of everything that visually represents your school. From stationary to building appearance, to ensure an effective Identity, a school must plan how all visual elements should be used, then provide guidelines for their use by all employees and suppliers.

THE ROLE OF CORPORATE IDENTITY / COMMUNICATIONS

Identity is the integrating force in graphic form for any institution, large or small. It is used to clarify and unify a message. Every school has an image, good or bad. The image is what people think and feel about a school's academic programs, activities, personnel, and environment.

HOW DOES IDENTITY WORK?

Today, with increased speed of living, quicker and more accurate and effective communications, there is a tremendous need to develop a simpler and more direct communicative system and symbol for a school ... the trademark or logo.

With a good trademark or logo and integrated system, people more easily remember the school and its image. Identity helps make a school's operations more profitable and renders greater prestige. More advertising authorities agree that there is a strong relationship between high level design and revenue.

Therefore, an identity system and communications program is a tool which, when properly utilized, can assist management in achieving business objectives. A communications and identity plan is particularly valuable to those schools where management views the institution as the principal product to be marketed.

Schools spend a great deal of money each year to communicate through advertising, public relations, exhibits, brochures, annual reports, films, and much more. In many schools, management does not effectively control these expenditures because it lacks an overall communications plan that is aimed at making a unique and memorable impression in the minds of those people who are important to the institution's growth and survival.

An identity system and communications program is a systematically constructed plan of action based upon the marketing objectives, which isolates those communications strategies that can assist in achieving these objectives. The trademark or logo must tell something immediately about the purpose and activities of the school it represents. The trademark's function of clearly indicating the purpose of the school is an important aid in recruitment. And the trademark has a strong psychological effect upon the general public and the school's students and potential students.

With a planned and managed identity system, you are assured that your school will be recognized when it is seen and that people will perceive it the way you want them to. The result: the communications standards and controls you need to improve your school's business position.

WHY DEVELOP AN IDENTITY SYSTEM?

When you spend everyday thinking about your school, it's easy to assume that everyone is familiar with it, its programs and services. An outsider (consultant) can offer objectivity unavailable from the inside, along with the specialized capabilities required for developing an identity system. The first step is to evaluate your current identification practices and create a cohesive visual identity.

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHAT YOUR IDENTITY SHOULD BE AND WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS?

The first step is to find out what you want to be. What are your priorities: the markets you serve, the impression you need to create, and the audiences you consider most important. What is your audiences' awareness of you, what do they think of you, and why? How does your school look whenever and wherever it meets the public? Is your "look" consistent and appropriate to your school's needs?

HOW TO CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN YOUR IDEA OF YOUR SCHOOL AND THE PUBLIC'S

To close the gap, a school must develop a broad based communications strategy for the school. An important function of this strategy is to identify opportunities and show how to take advantage of them. To ensure that people will see you as you want to be seen, a school must develop rigorous design criteria based on the communications strategy.

HOW DO YOU CARRY OUT THIS STRATEGY?

Depending on your school's needs, you may have a new logo designed, signage or packaging system. You may even develop a new corporate name or new divisional names more appropriate than those currently used. Develop visual control standards and specifications, such as formats and grid systems for brochures, pamphlets, advertising and promotional materials. This will provide a consistent standard to follow for easy and rapid identification in the marketplace.

IS IT EXPENSIVE TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE IDENTITY SYSTEM?

The actual cost depends on the nature of your business, how it is communicated, and the extent of change required. Cost-effective methods can be implemented to develop your system. You may even save money by standardizing communications and reducing the number of your suppliers and or staff.

Considered as a long-term investment, an identity program can be relatively inexpensive, especially when compared to the cost of such short-term communications as advertising. Moreover, your advertising budget goes further when it's not spent to compensate for inappropriate and inconsistent communication materials.

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