

Book

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Revealing the Brand

'Revealing the Brand', is the sixth in a series of e-Books from **Bill Baker** of **Total Destination Marketing**. It provides valuable insight for leaders who are considering launching a branding initiative for their community.

Revealing the Brand

How you go about defining your community's brand depends very much upon its size, the world in which it operates, its dynamics, past marketing efforts, and the available budget. How readily the community becomes engaged in activities like this will also influence the approach that you take. The process should uncover the current status of the city's market position and image, where it came from, and the competitive position that it needs to occupy in the future.



Revealing the brand relies on objective research, analysis, and a lot of creative thinking and collaboration. Michelangelo, one of the greatest sculptors of all time,

described his skill as the ability to remove marble, chip by chip, to reveal the shape that was already residing within the stone. You could consider your city's brand as also encased in "stone" in the form of features, attitudes, thoughts, benefits, personality, perceptions, experiences, and a lot of irrelevant pieces. To find the masterpiece inside, you must "chip away" at all of the information, issues, distractions and components until you expose the distinctive brand essence within.

Formulating a new brand is likely to take anywhere from five to more than twelve months, depending upon the size of the community, extent of the research, level of consultation, the decision-making process and the speed of decisions and approvals along the way.

Who Are We?

During first steps of your brand audit we have to gain consensus in regard to the community's vision and identity. This first step is the most important because it involves honestly reviewing and analyzing

the world in which the new brand must excel. It establishes the knowledge base and foundation for everything that follows. There are four fundamental questions that the city needs to answer:

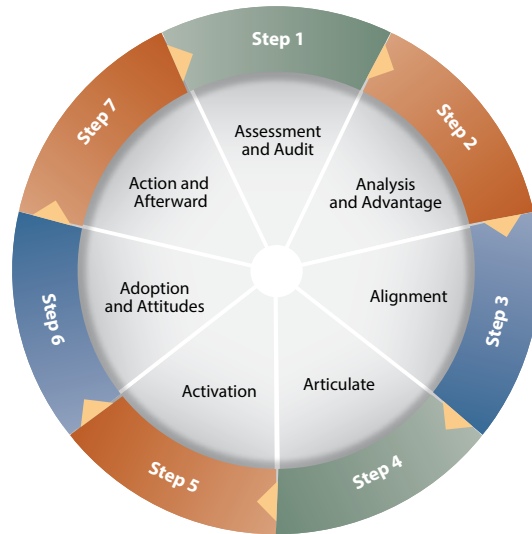
- Who do we think we are?
- Who do our customers think we are?
- Who do we want to become?
- Who are we most likely to become?

While it may be tempting, don't bypass or minimize the importance of this step. To set your foot in the wrong place at this early stage may cause you to be miles off course when you start designing the rest of the brand identity. Keep an open mind, look for unexpected gems, and don't allow local politics and parochialism to overshadow the preferences and needs of external customers.

Action Point:

The process should reveal your brand strengths and vision.

7A Destination Branding



Following decades of place branding, we have developed 7A Destination Branding which recognizes the special nature of community-based branding. It encourages an approach that harnesses stakeholder buy-in from the start. Years of community branding assignments have shown us that this is essential to generate understanding and enthusiasm for the new brand.

Importantly, it reinforces the need to build the brand from the inside out and ensures

that brand planners are exposed to the heart and soul of the community.

The steps in the 7A Destination Branding and the critical questions that must be answered are:

- 1. *Assessment and Audit***
What is the city's place in the world?
- 2. *Analysis and Advantage***
What makes the city distinctive and special?
- 3. *Alignment***
What are the brand's relationships?
- 4. *Articulate***
How will the brand be communicated visually and verbally?
- 5. *Activation***
How will customers experience the brand?
- 6. *Adoption and Attitudes***
How can stakeholders support and use the brand?
- 7. *Action and Afterward***
How will the brand be managed and kept fresh and relevant?

Action Point:

7As is the ideal framework for defining and bringing a brand to life.

The Brand Audit and Assessment

An honest self-examination is essential and requires an objective appraisal of not only the strengths, but also areas where the place may be considered weak or uncompetitive. Examples of ways in which brand research can be used to inform your brand development decisions include:

- Assessing the strengths and opportunities
- Identifying priority customers and behavioral characteristics
- Gauging perceptions and attitudes toward the place
- Assessing competitors
- Identifying the city's ideal positioning



The smaller your budget, the smaller your margin for error and the more imperative it is to make absolutely certain that you are allocating valuable resources on the right priorities and messages.

Action Point:

A basic research program, irrespective of your budget, provides a wealth of valuable information.

Stake Your Claim

Defining your city's brand position is, without a doubt, the most important and trickiest part of the entire place branding process. The task of pinpointing or claiming the most competitive positioning should receive thorough consideration. If you don't get this part right,



everything else will miss its mark, since it is the positioning and its relevance to target audiences that informs and shapes all other elements of the brand.

Positioning requires careful consideration of three dynamic elements, for which you have already collated the relevant information. These are (1) the needs of target customers, (2) place strengths (both tangible and intangible), and (3) competitor strengths.

One of the most common points of failure in place branding is that communities don't figure out their relevant and competitive points of difference and instead settle for points of parity that are a cost of entry and common to most competitors. Conditions like this are guaranteed to result in a weak and anemic brand. If a city is not clearly differentiated it is often left to compete solely on price and weak propositions.

The most powerful positioning should place the city outside of the gravitational field of competitors, yet where it can

resonate with greatest clarity and relevance for key audiences. If it is not clearly differentiated or remains in the shadow of major competitors, the city will always be seen as a pale alternative, and proving its differences, relevance and added value will become increasingly difficult. Competing head to head with more formidable competitors with similar positioning and value proposition is never sustainable.

Action Point

Claim positioning that presents what makes the city special, meets customer needs, and can be readily defended against competitors.

The Criteria for Power Positioning

During the opportunity modeling phase, each positioning option should be evaluated against the following four criteria.

Distinctive: Strong brands stand out from the crowd and are different in ways that are valued and relevant to customers.

Compelling: If the difference is not

sufficiently compelling to stimulate or peak customer's interest it will not stimulate demand. The degree to which it is compelling will influence its drawing power.

Authentic: A sustainable brand must be true to itself and not attempt to present itself as something it's not.

Sustainable: Can it survive more than one electoral or budget cycle? Is it sustainable from a product delivery perspective?

Action Point:

Is the brand positioning distinctive, compelling, authentic and sustainable?

The Brand's Engine Room

The brand platform provides the footing on which the Destination Promise and all future brand actions and experiences will be based. It is the nucleus or engine of the brand.

The Brand Platform is the foundation to focus and prioritize communications, product development, investment and

partnership outreach. It's the beacon to guide for building a compelling and sustainable city brand. The Brand Platform comprises:

- Signature Experience Themes: the experiential pillars that underpin the brand
- Emotional Benefits: reflect how we want customers to feel through their contact with the city
- Personality: influence the feel and tone of voice used in brand communications
- Destination Promise: the beacon that will guide all brand actions
- Brand Essence: the basic building block, glue or DNA that holds the brand together
- Reasons to Believe : the evidence that the Destination Promise and benefit claims are credible

Action Point:

The Brand Platform is the engine room that drives the brand.

The Brand Strategy

The Destination Promise and Brand Platform provide the foundations for all future programs and should have an influence on every marketing, organizational, placemaking and development decision. They are summarized in the brand strategy document which may be called a manual, blueprint or guidelines.



A well-conceived brand strategy should provide the directions for addressing increased competitiveness, effectiveness and efficiency in how the city is presented. It sets the guidelines for how the city should be communicated and the delivery of experiences for target audiences.

No matter the city's size, this formalized brand strategy can define and manage its competitive identity and channel the energies and resources of staff and partners to orchestrate the best results from their combined investments, however limited.

Action Point

The brand strategy is the long term playbook to keep the brand attractive, relevant and sustainable.

Success Stories

Oshkosh WI

Oshkosh, while well-known for Oshkosh B'Gosh had an unclear image and no definitive positioning as a tourism destination. The Convention & Visitors Bureau had been using the tagline "Oshkosh on the Water" for fifteen years. But this tagline no longer reflected what was attracting the majority of visitors to the city or the best prospects for economic development. Research also revealed that residents did not have a positive image of their own city.

Following extensive research that engaged hundreds of residents and sought the opinions and perceptions of prospective visitors it quickly became apparent that Oshkosh's extraordinary calendar of events and event venues were critical to defining the city's brand.



The competitive positioning for Oshkosh was defined as "Wisconsin's Event City" and this was also adopted as the city tagline. After several years the brand continues to resonate with visitors and stakeholders as the city attracts new events and is now establishing a major entertainment center.

How Can We Help?

When you're ready to start your brand planning and design, we can introduce you to techniques specifically designed to meet the special needs for branding and marketing cities and regions.

Free Consultation: Take advantage of a no-charge consultation with a destination branding expert to discuss your community branding challenges and needs.

To get started, send us an email at: billb@destinationbranding.com

TDM's One-Day Branding Retreat is the ideal way to kick-start your branding journey through an intensive day that features interactive presentations, brand workshops and discussions.

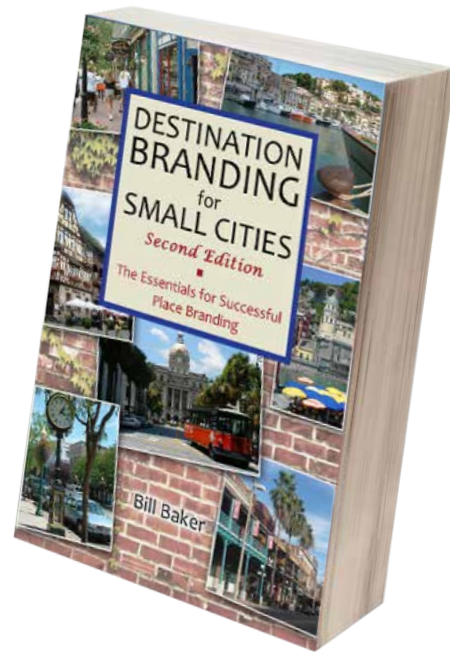
TDM's Brand Discovery Lab is an intensive 4- to 6-week program that is custom-designed for communities wanting to fast track their brand.

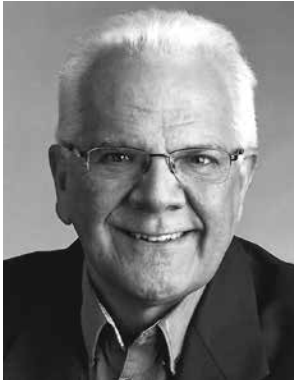
TDM's Destination Branding Strategy follows our proven 7A Destination Branding process. It involves extensive qualitative and quantitative research to enable solutions deeply grounded in thorough research in your operating and competitive environments.

Destination Branding for Small Cities

If you liked this e-Book, you'll love our comprehensive book, Destination Branding for Small Cities. This best-selling book cuts through the theory, advertising-speak and jargon to simplify and clarify the practice of branding places improved tourism, economic development, placemaking and urban design. It provides real world examples, as well as affordable, proven tools, templates and checklists to help breathe life into small city branding and marketing.

Available at
amazon.com





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Todd Mayfield is a Principal and the Group Creative Director for Axia Creative. Axia is an industry leader in the design of brand identity, wayfinding and visual communications for destinations throughout the US and Canada.



Both Bill and Todd serve on the international expert panel for the Place Brand Observer which is a library of research, case studies, lively expert interviews and reflections on latest trends, ideas and opportunities. We invite you to visit and explore placebrandobserver.com.





Total Destination Marketing
Leaders in Place Branding