

## How to Give Your Brand a Simple Tune Up

By Todd Von Deak, MBA, CAE

**B**efore we tune up your brand, we have to understand the meaning of the word. Here's the definition I use, regardless of whether I'm talking to high-level executives, industry colleagues or my undergrad students.

Branding is what a consumer thinks of your company when they are alone in a room without the direct influence of any marketing messages. It's how they think and feel about your company.

Note that this definition does not mention logos, fonts or color palettes – those are the tools we use to create a brand.

Scott Bedbury, who guided both Nike and Starbucks to brand dominance and authored the book *A New Brand World*, puts this concept in perspective when he calls brand building a process that, when it works well, leaves no facet of a company untouched and no business practice unexamined.

As marketing professionals, we need to understand how our audiences perceive our brand. The end-game is a brand that matches up on all points with the audience's perception. When we generate that type of alignment, opportunity generally follows. When the alignment is off, it feels like we're running in place, wasting time and resources.

Here's a simple exercise you can use to check your brand alignment. Create a 5 x 4 grid and label the columns as (see example on page 25):

- ▶ How we describe ourselves
- ▶ What our members think of us
- ▶ What our prospects think of us
- ▶ What the media thinks of us
- ▶ A description of the ideal association

Begin by filling out each column with three words or phrases yourself. Next, share a clean worksheet with 10 of your members (five active volunteers and five you consider more or less rank and file) and ask them to complete it. (A great place to do this is during a focus group at your annual meeting or another key

meeting. Just make sure you get participation from a diverse group of members.)

Armed with the responses, you can examine the commonalities and the disconnects to get a general sense of how your brand is perceived. The responses will also help you see how your audiences view your non-profit compared to their definition of the ideal organization. All are good data points to have.

### What Can You Do With This Analysis?

- ▶ Play up the commonalities in your marketing materials
- ▶ Reflect on the disconnects and consider strategies to bridge the gaps
- ▶ Take disturbing answers with a grain of salt and conduct additional research

Developing a brand that resonates with your community takes time and dedication. Going through a periodic check-up makes it easier to make a mid-course adjustment to maintain momentum, avoiding the need for a major correction to reverse a significant decline. ☘

*Note: If you would like an electronic copy of the worksheet, email [brandingworksheet@tvdassociates.com](mailto:brandingworksheet@tvdassociates.com).*

Todd Von Deak, MBA, CAE is President of TVD Associates. TVDA Associates works with associations and nonprofit organizations to tackle their pressing membership and marketing challenges. He is also a member of the adjunct faculty at Drexel University's LeBow College of Business where he has taught a number of courses including branding. He can be reached at [todd@tvdassociates.com](mailto:todd@tvdassociates.com)



### Checking Your Brand Alignment: A Simple Exercise

In each box, note a one to two word answer for the question in that column. Answers should be from your personal perspective (e.g. staff member, volunteer, potential member). Please limit yourself to three answers per column.

How would you describe us?	How would a member describe us?	How would a prospect describe us?	How would the media describe us?	How would you describe the ideal organization?
1)	1)	1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	3)	3)	3)

Your next great meeting is just steps away.  
Visit [NewBern.com](http://NewBern.com)

Everything comes together here

Winner of the Convention South Readers' Choice Award | Voted as one of the 10 most beautiful towns in NC | Birthplace of Pepsi Cola