Branding & Communications on a Budget

Angeline Schwab and Bill Graham

Buris Chalmers
CREATIVE

North Carolina Community Action Association
Annual Conference
May 9-12, 2023
Winston Salem, NC

Contents

Contact:
Angie: angie@burischalmers.org | 828.550.9336 ▪ Bill: bill@burischalmers.org | 828.734.0316

1 ⚙ What is a Brand?

Branding is more than just a logo. It represents the individual personality of your agency, organization or business, and is carried across the scope of what you do. Beyond being attractive and cohesive, your brand should tell your story and connect with your clients and donors. Brands are the "truth" of your agency or enterprise, and they provide clarity, reassurance, consistency and status. When managed well, a brand increases awareness, trust and loyalty among opinion leaders, clients, elected officials, and funders.
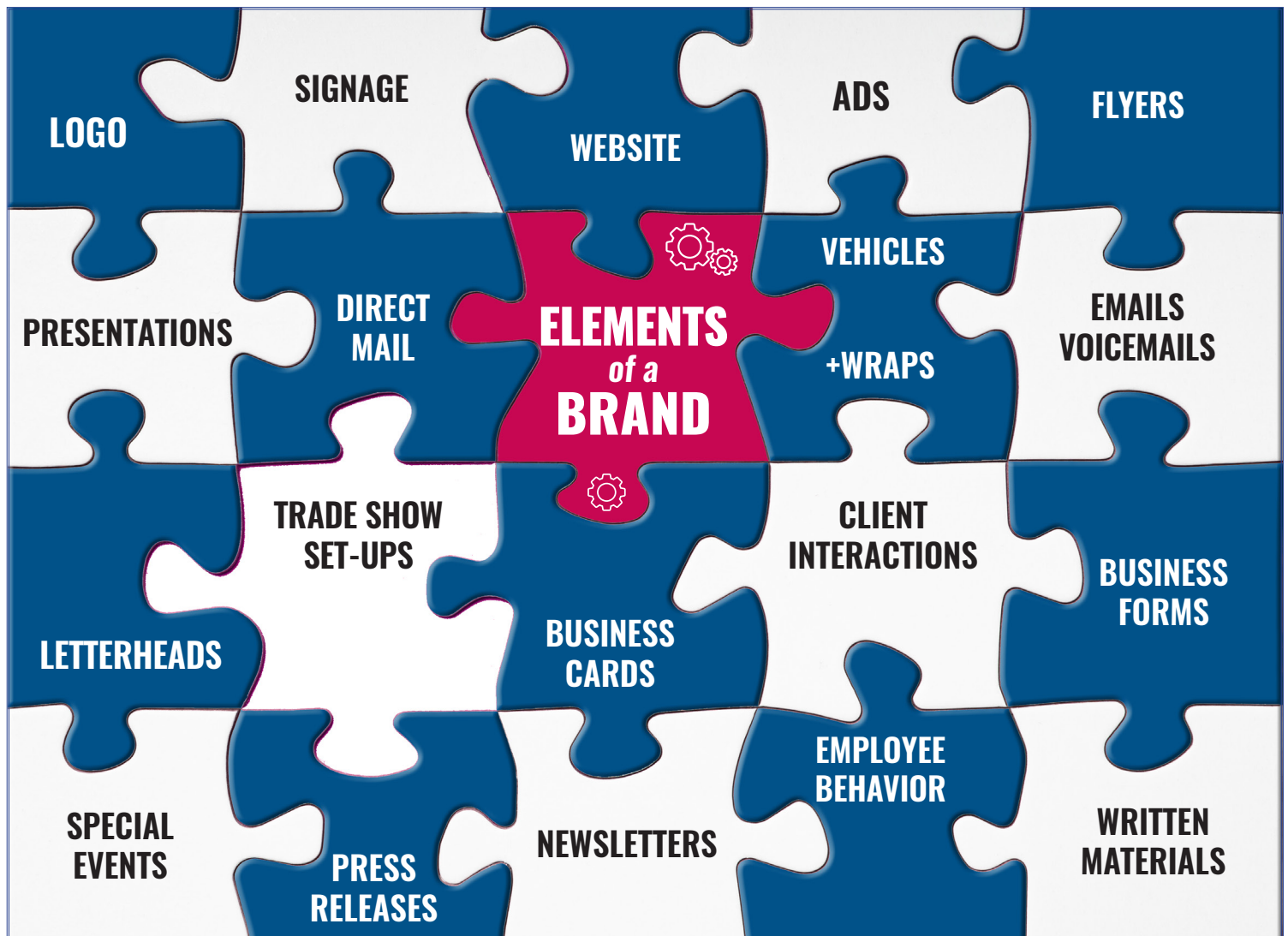
What's a Tagline?
A slogan, mantra, company statement or guiding principle that helps create interest or understanding of your work.

What's a Logo?
A visual, graphic point of entry to a brand that helps the public understand who you are and recognize the work you do.

2   👥 *Branding Brief*   (Use this to create core language)

Our Mission/Vision/Purpose

What we do

How we work
     works in partnership with:
     advocates for:
     supports:
     provides:

Organizational objectives

Our programs will

Our organization is

**Services description
(One sentence per program)**

Guiding principles (or values)

Brand keywords and themes

Brand narrative

Brand personality

Consumer emotional connection

Consumer inspiration/Motivation

Preferred Digital platforms

Communication expansion strategy

Key organizational activities

Key perceptions that affect organizations

3   Branding Brief (Cont)

Long term outcomes

Major factors defining brand

Needs that we meet

Short term outcomes

Specific special event ideas

Tag lines

Target customers/clients/audience

Short Values Statements

**Vision for the community
as a result of our work**

Key Messages

Who are you in your community?	
What business are you in? Do you have competitors?	
What are your three most important organizational goals?	
What are your three most important communications goals?	
Who do you serve? Children? Seniors? Families? In your geographic area…	
Why should people care about what you do? Why does your organization matter?	
Who needs to know more about what you do?	
(Make a list) Why does their opinion matter?	
What are the Reasons to Believe in your agency	
Prioritize your "stakeholders" by importance of communications	
How do you measure success? Do you share your success stories with your stakeholders?	
Do you have a staff member who could gather success stories? If so, who?	
Is there a prevailing reputation or sentiment about your organization in your community?	
What are the potential barriers to the success of your work?	
Is there any need to "change the narrative" for your organization?	
If you could communicate a single message or story about your company what would it be?	
Based on your particular organizational positioning, what communications actions might you take to make improvements?	

5 👥 *Who is your* Audience? (Who are your Stakeholders?)

Audiences are paying attention to different media sources and knowing your audience and carefully choosing where to focus your marketing investment can make a big difference in the success of your program or agency.

There are many media options: Television? Newspaper? Flyers? Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok?) Press release? E-newsletter? Online ads? Brochures? Special events? Phone calls? Where do your stakeholders and clients get information?

AUDIENCE SEGMENTING
Sharing the same message with a group

Employees	Governmental entities	Industry experts
Partner organizations	Professional associations	Event participants
Clients/Customers	Volunteers	Political party
Foundations/ grantors	Vendors	Tribal communities
Churches	Sponsors	Spanish-speaking communities
Media	Board of Directors	
Other nonprofits	General Public	

Thinking through your communication goals, your message and the needs of your stakeholders will help to focus your communications investments. One common approach is to create a sample of members of each audience - a donor persona - to help fine tune needs.

Clients have different needs and consume information differently

Seniors	Veterans	Potential employees
Construction contractors	Disabled who need transportation	Teachers or School administrators
Youth who need jobs	Medical professionals	Donors
Young Mothers who need childcare	Land owners/Landlords	Food insecure individuals & families
Single fathers	Neighbors	Political leaders
Low-income, working families	Church leaders	Auditors
Formerly incarcerated	Homeless	Unemployed

ACTIVITY

Develop a donor persona of your customer or client

- **Persona Bio** - (include age, professional background, educational background, economic status, interests, family status)
- **Personal Goals & Objectives**
- **Biggest Challenges**
- **Information sources or best way to reach**

How do you reach this person?

If you wonder where one of your segments receives information, it's best to ask them!

6   What Are Marketing Channels?

Television	Online ads	Events
Radio	Media stories	Direct Mail
Social media	Websites	Streaming Service
Newspaper ads	Google ads	Print Ads

Choosing Communications Investments

1. **Consider the type of message you are sending** – formal or informal?

2. **Reflect on your Audience** – where do they consume media?

3. **Consider your Budget** – television is most expensive, then direct mail.

CHANNEL	EXAMPLE	GOOD WAY TO GO WHEN	PROS	CONS
Mass Communications *General Public*	Press release Email	Time sensitive Need to document One and done	Scalable Easy to reach multiple stakeholders	Difficult to know impact Limited opportunity to clarify One-way communication Market is changing
Social Media Updates *Interested Followers*	Facebook Twitter Instagram Web Blog YouTube TikTok Linkedin	Time sensitive information Need to humanize the organization *Great Investment!*	Easy to share if you have followers! Tracking is possible Low cost	It's a crowded space. Finding the right tone and voice for social media is challenging. Managing quality and volume can be challenging.
Social Media Seeking Engagement *Followers And Seekers Paid Social Media Ads*	Discussion forums Blogs YouTube Twitter	Creating dialog Engaging in debates Sharing viewpoints Encouraging discussion *Great Investment!* **Low-cost Entry**	Gives a human face to company Builds interaction and engagement with clients Low cost	Little control over the communication More communication skill required for some interactions

CHANNEL	EXAMPLE	GOOD WAY TO GO WHEN	PROS	CONS
Your Website *Well-informed clients & Media*	Self-selected organizational content shared online	**Keeping up with your website is a NO-BRAINER**	**You completely control this content**	Some organizations don't have technical capacity
Advertising Print *For niche audiences*	Recommended in special interest publications	Want association with a topic or an event	Guaranteed placement	Print ads are hard to see and quantify value
Digital Advertising *For niche audiences*	Narrowly targeted ads that meet clients where they are - Zappos!	Limited budget When you understand your audience When local "publications" have a good handle on digital marketing	Becoming more prominent Pay per click or views	Doesn't always resonate with older audience segments Requires courage to click!
Digital Interactive *For geographic & interest-based targeting*	Texting Push notifications QR codes	Audiences are engaged in phones	Good to engage young people Busy people like reminders	Requires opt-in
Radio *Socio-economic targeting*	Local and regional radio stations NPR Power98 WROQ	Identity/brand marketing Special events Live interviews	Pay per mention Good for reaching donors on NPR Busy people, passive listening	Drive-time placement is best
Enabling Advocates	Employees Board Members Clients/Customers Elected Officials	Helps with reputation management Reaches new audiences	Trusted sources High resonance when the advocate is authentic, sincere and an opinion leader	Requires management Need to be prepped as time sensitive

8 *External Communications Worksheet*

Program

Need

Message

Goal #1

Goal #2

Audience

**Relevant (Prioritized)
Communications Channels**

Timeline/Details

What are we promising?

Who needs to be thanked?

**What does the client need to do?
Who does the client need to talk to?**

Website? Phone Number? Email?

9 Choose Media Investments Wisely

What If You Need A Weatherization Or Affordable Housing Contractor?

- Do contractors read the newspaper?

- Are they on social media?

- Do they pay attention to your web page?

- Where do construction contractors "hang-out"?

- What kind of communication is convenient for a business-person who works in multiple places?

Do You Need To Recruit Children To Head Start?

- What kind of social media do Head Start Moms and Grandmas consume?

- Where might you find low-income families who need access to childcare?

- Might you have a different look, feel and tone in communication with mothers than you do with contractors?

- Do preschool choices require a conversation? An application?

Do You Need To Recruit Employees?

- Do you use Indeed or other online job boards?

- Does your website function well to share job postings?

- Do young people look at the newspaper to find jobs?

- Are there industry publications that would help you reach high-quality individuals with community action experience?

How Do You Reach The Spanish-Speaking Community? Tribal Communities? Individuals Without Internet?

- Are you reaching people in your community who may not have access to the Internet?

- Do you know of churches, nonprofits, community media that focus on minorities or marginalized populations in your community?

- Inclusivity should be a priority.

What's Your Budget?

- Have you priced television ads lately? Expensive!

- Is it a good investment to spend $500 on a print ad for affordable healthcare programs if your annual marketing budget is $1,500?

- Who do you think are the biggest consumers of social media?

10 Social Media Basics

Social media is a crucial element of the reflection of your brand. The "voice" of your social media outlets should match your brand, and the two should play off one another. Keep in mind you can save both time and money by using quality content in more than one spot. For example, a feature press release developed for local media can be used on your web page, then refined and used on your social media outlets and newsletters as well. (It's best to present the information as original content in each case. Rather than "sharing" a blog post on your Facebook page, for example, re-work it as an original post).

The creative aspect is of course crucial, but as with web development, the behind-the-scenes organization is key, as well:

ADMINISTRATIVE (ADMIN) ROLES
Be intentional, not casual, about administrative roles. We've struggled with restoring sanity for more than one client who invested responsibility for setting up a Facebook page with employees and volunteers who leave and disregard the transition process.

LIMIT SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES & SHARE BROADLY
Community action programs have multiple key programs, but try to avoid setting up too many social media channels. Pages are time-consuming to manage, and water-down your investments in content development. An example of when a separate channel is appropriate: we use a separate page for Mountain Projects' Head Start, because their centers submit lots of images of children to be published, and parents like the feature. That's a specific audience. Occasionally we pull an especially strong post over to the main Mountain Projects page, but a constant stream of kid posts would swamp the main page. On the other hand, the organization's health insurance counseling program does fine with the occasional post on the main page.

AUTHENTICITY
Quality social media content makes a big difference in engagement and response rates. A well-developed testimonial and feature photograph from a happy client is worth a thousand memes. Sincere content also attracts donors and funding agencies.

IT'S A RATIO
Because time is limited, you have to use "easy" content sometimes, so find good sources for that content filler and develop a rough ratio of quality vs filler.

COMMUNICATIONS TOOL
Hootsuite, Loomly and Sprout are among the software tools that help you manage social media flow. If you are sharing the same content among several different social media channels, these tools may be useful to your agency.

11 Website Tips & Tricks

BASICS: Know the difference between web hosting, URL registration, content development, technical management and administration

FUNCTION: Site structure needs to reflect consumer interaction, not organizational structure.

PROCESS: Begin your site structure with content, not a screen design. Create a wireframe of your content and share with managers and staff for comments before giving it to your developer

PLAN FOR THE USER: Determine your navigation by considering user scenarios. Make navigation simple and clicks directly to content. Four to six menu headers. Use calls to action, but don't overuse them. People don't like to be bossed around.

BE MOBILE FRIENDLY: Responsive displays work on all sized screens

KEEP IT SIMPLE: Keep designs and information simple and clean. Our impulse is to over-include information, but that's ineffective. Refine your emphasis points and make the details accessible elsewhere. In addition, whitespace - or negative space - is necessary in helping the reader's eyes rest. Too many words will cause overwhelm and readers may disengage.

BRAND CONSISTENCY: Few visitors will give a website more than a few seconds to catch their attention. You can make sure your website conveys everything fast-moving visitors need to know by conducting the five second test on your homepage. The five second test is a method for gauging your website's ability to convey information in a quick and engaging way:
1. Recruit a willing volunteer who is unfamiliar with your website.
2. Set a timer and pull up your website.
3. After five seconds, ask them to tell you what your organization is about and how they can get involved.

If your volunteer doesn't have an answer, that's your cue to start brainstorming ways to make your website's design more effective. After the initial five-second viewing, you can also ask your volunteer more questions to get a deeper understanding of what is and is not coming across in your current design.

MULTIMEDIA: Allow for integration of video, but avoid auto-play video. Let users be in charge of that experience. Background, "textural" video is another matter.

MAKE IT EASIER ON USERS, DONORS, FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT STAFF: Donor software and upgraded credit card processing are common tools these days. A branded page (that feels like part of your website instead of external) is likely to lead to more donations. Automation provided by donor softwares and credit card processors give you more time for other work.

COMPLY WITH ADA AND USE A LANGUAGE TRANSLATOR: what ethnic communities reside in your community and use your services? Plug-ins can allow your users to read and hear the content of your site in their preferred language and you can provide viewer options on your site to support people with impairments.

GET EVERYONE ON THE SAME PAGE: Confront internal inconsistencies that may sabotage your website site goals – like multiple websites, several hosting contracts or unmanaged URL registrations being from multiple departments.

PLAN FOR GROWTH: Evaluate and change your site as needed. Invest in updated content, keeping in mind that this is the core of a vital website that brings in return visitors. Also, just as importantly, fresh content makes your site more viable in Google ratings.

FREE ADS: Figure out Google Ad Grants - this service pays off for nonprofits who benefit from being "top of mind" and top of search results.

PRICING: Make sure you get at least three bids on a redesign.

STAFFING: Assign a staff member the duty of updating your website. Multiple untrained users will break your site, every time.

USERNAMES & PASSWORDS: To ensure the security of your website, make sure your users login with their own email, user id and password. Keep a master username and password to maintain access when you have staff turnover.

12 Signage Basics
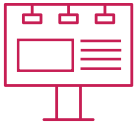
LOOK FOR EXAMPLES
When thinking about your signage and environmental graphics, consider how these things work for you in your daily life. Use "high dollar" examples, and think about how these lessons can be applied to your agency and its programs. For example, think about how prominent retailers at your local mall use imagery to guide you through your visit and your shopping experience.

STABILITY & TRUSTWORTHINESS
While the shopping center experience is more advanced than we might need in our agencies, some of the same rules apply. Consistency and quality of visual language help your clients trust you and understand that you know your business. The same is true of potential donors. That doesn't mean we emulate high-dollar retailers with our flyers and signage, but that does mean we should be consistent with the use of our brand, thoughtful when we develop sign content, and that we should keep our signage in good repair.

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS
Exterior signage must consider both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Legibility, visibility, durability and positioning should drive the design process. Distance, speed, light, color and contrast affect legibility.

REFLECTING YOUR IDENTITY IN LARGE SCALE
Billboards require a different set of considerations to some degree, but they should still be thoughtfully developed and conscious of brand presentation. After all, mistakes on a billboard are very large, very visible and often quite expensive!

CAREFUL
Developing drafts and prototypes minimizes risk by testing design prior to fabrication. Measure twice and cut once, as they say!

- **WINDOW STICKERS**
- **WAYFINDING INDOORS**
- **OUTSIDE SIGNAGE**
- **VEHICLE WRAPS**
- **T-SHIRTS**

ALL REFLECT YOUR BRAND
- **MAINTAIN COLOR PALETTES**
- **PROPER SIZING FOR USE**
- **CLEAN, CLEAR**

Thank you for your time and attention! Please keep up the good work and stay in touch!