

BrandWizard Technologies

“Philanthropy, Meet Technology”

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The 20th century has witnessed a tremendous growth in the not-for-profit sector. Compared to 12,000 nonprofit organizations in 1940, today there are over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations globally. As part of this commercial approach, these not-for-profit organizations are looking for brand strategies to amplify their voice over that of their competitors.

Not that not-for-profits haven't applied good marketing techniques before. Holmes and Riecken were applying “the 4P's” in the 1980s in a nonprofit setting, stressing the importance of tailoring the marketing mix to the target constituency (e.g., donors, board of directors, staff, and consumers) of the organization's service. This led to changes in the traditional fundraising strategies, which were based on the “selling mentality,” toward “marketing mentality” and a focus more on consumer-oriented operations. Since then we have seen a rise in the commercialization of a not-for-profit organization's name or logo as a source of revenue. The Children's Television Workshop has licensing arrangements for over 1,600 Sesame street products ranging from toothbrushes to toy bulldozers to companies like J.C. Penny and Hasbro.

Another popular tactic being implemented today by not-for-profits is that of partnering with private sector companies. Though this often supplies a not-for-profit with a steady source of funding, the strategy can sometimes work against the organization. Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig (2001) found that consumers who thought they were contributing to a nonprofit organization were in fact rewarding the company that supports the organization via purchasing the company's product or stock rather than making donations directly to the nonprofit organization. This partnering strategy, or “uncontrolled branding,” is considerably more fraught with problems than that of “controlled branding” where a not-for-profit is in full control of its branding strategies and directives. The American Cancer Society's efforts to implement a universally consistent brand with the assistance of BrandWizard Technologies is a fine example of best practice “controlled branding.”

When BrandWizard Technologies began talking to the ACS, it was quickly apparent that its branding was inconsistent. Cynthia Currence, the National Vice President for Strategic Marketing & Branding was blunt in her analysis. “Visually and experientially, the ACS brand was represented in many different ways. Ultimately, this was damaging our ability to raise funds.” One critical survey showed that 34 percent of respondents thought they had contributed to the American Cancer Society when only 16 percent actually had. The trouble was rooted in the fact that there are over 100 organizations in the US with the word ‘cancer’ in the their name. The American Cancer Society was getting lost in the shuffle.

The ultimate project goal was to increase the value of the ACS brand by improving its consistency and integrity on a national basis. A particularly challenging aspect of the client's issue was the fact that brand execution was in the hands of many individuals. The American Cancer Society, Inc., consists of a National Society, with 17 Chartered Divisions throughout the country and over 3,400 Local Units with over 2 million volunteers. Ensuring correct and consistent brand execution across the organization was of paramount importance.

BrandWizard Technologies customized its Brand Identity Toolkit, which enables users to access guidelines on how to use the brand on stationery, signage and in co-branding applications. In addition, users can download all of the artwork and templates necessary to help them create the finished pieces. The brand Identity Toolkit paid for itself by saving the American Cancer Society the cost of printing, distributing and updating its brand guidelines. These savings are estimated at \$225,000 for the first year and \$50,000 for each subsequent year. Although lowering the Society's production costs was important, the greater financial benefit is being realized with the increase in the consistency and integrity of the ACS brand. An internal audit showed that the American Cancer Society achieved its brand consistency goals across 95 percent of their materials.

Nonprofit organizations are taking advantage of what the disciplines of branding can offer more than ever in an effort to successfully brand the organization, as well as its services and products. This in turn allows donors to see the unique value of their contributions and purchases. In doing so, the organizations are forming relationships and securing donations from their "customers" rather than relying purely on donations driven by individual campaigns.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Frumkin and Kim recently found that nonprofit organizations that spend more on developing and managing the brand of the organization for the donation public did better at raising contributed income. The message is clear: In order to ensure financial longevity in today's globally competitive economic market not-for-profits must develop, implement, execute and maintain a trusted, recognizable and relevant brand. As was evident with the American Cancer Society, the speed, reach and versatility of the Internet in concert with digital brand management firms such as BrandWizard Technologies allow for this financial longevity to be realized.

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