

instincts

Instincts is a monthly publication on branding for clients, associates and friends.

Leading and inspiring all those who touch the enterprise to understand, embrace and enhance the power of your brand.

Evolving Brands on the Fly

A brand is what people think of you. And with the multitude of messages bombarding your target market, the only thing tougher than establishing your target's thoughts is changing them.



Consider my client, Ontario's air ambulance services. After a long crusade that ended in victory this past January, Chris Mazza, a dynamic emergency medicine doctor, convinced the Ontario Ministry of Health to combine its disparate air ambulance services into a single coordinated unit.

The need to consolidate its fleet of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft was severe. In a jurisdiction over one million kilometers square, major hospitals had clustered themselves into "centres of excellence," making it more difficult to quickly - under the highest level of care - transport acute and trauma patients to the specialized treatment they required.

Although people think of the air ambulance brand as essentially a road ambulance with wings, the reality is extraordinary. They are virtual hospitals, staffed by Cracker Jack paramedics who give care and receive training and equipment unheard of - even in the medical and emergency services community itself.

Changing perception of the service in the world at large was thus a matter of positioning it:

- As a single, coordinated, elite service
- As a critical component of the centres of excellence approach
- As a brand that would carry its reputation at home and abroad - creating new and wider revenue streams from government, private donations, corporate sponsorship and consulting and training.

What did the Brand Coach coach?

Change the name. Change the vocabulary. Reframe the proposition.

In our hyper-messaged world, folks defend themselves from the onslaught by screening out data they think they already know. So we pulled the plug on the "air ambulance" vocabulary because people would simply avoid the new brand information that came along with it. A new term, "Transport Medicine," was introduced. Then we embraced and enhanced the strongest visual associated with the original service - the orange accents on the aircraft - and made it the new brand name: "ornge".

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Packaged with an identity that speaks to their caring hands and the speed of angel wings, people will cheer on ornge as they thunder overhead or land on downtown hospital roofs, busy expressways and the evening news.