

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.

Evolution vs. Revolution

In this insane over-communicated world, brands have become a necessity for buyers of goods and services. With commercial communications messages aimed at them now totaling 3,800 each and every day, having 'their brands' - ones that they use and are prepared to take in messages about - has become a form of self-defense. No buyer can digest this tremendous volume of information and still accomplish the increasing tasks in their daily lives. So, brands have become a filter that helps them cope.

From a marketer's perspective, brands are built with consistency, since it's this consistency that triggers the cues for buyers, cues that this is a message from one of 'their brands'. These cues include context (*you always see Dell on the back page of the business section*), a strong core idea (*the Maytag man*), tone and manner (*we recognize an Apple iPod billboard long before we are close enough to read it*), sounds (*the Intel rift*) and, the most powerful cue, the visual identity including colour (*orange for ING*) and graphics (*the Nike swoosh*).



Humans are visual dominant beings - we recognize a face before we remember that person's name, we think in pictures and we need to close our eyes to focus on listening. The power of this overriding human sense is one of the reasons that Logos alone are so often confused as the full definition of brand. So as marketers, using brand discipline to get our messages through to our constituents, visual consistency is the most powerful tool.

However, sometimes change is necessary - for example, your competition moves the goal posts and you need to change to stay in the game. Evolution not Revolution is the rule of the day. As the Canadian Post Office continued to have more and 'faster' competition - UPS, FedEx, and now DHL - for its delivery service, its all-important visual identity presented an opportunity to reposition their Brand. Canada Post graphics, that once were leading edge, had become staid - reinforcing our perception of slow mail service. Resisting the temptation for wholesale change, they opted to evolve their graphics to imply a faster service, thus retaining visual recognition and their Brand Equity, while shifting the 'speed' message forward.

Now they just need to actually deliver...but that's a different story.

What would brand coach suggest?

When a change to the Brand is necessary, resist the overwhelming temptation to change everything. Boardroom boredom is the leading killer of Brand Equity - we simply get tired of our own consistent message faster than anyone else. So often we are our own worst enemies.

At our own Brand practice, plans to take on additional Brand Coaches have necessitated evolving our Brand away from its singular TM - Ted Matthews emphasis to a broader corporate umbrella. An elegant solution was found by borrowing the name of our long running Newsletter - Instinct - and simply adapting our existing visual look and feel to the new name.