Implementix®

White Paper on Value Engineering

Engineering the rebranding process to increase brand awareness and lower costs

Introduction / Summary

Because corporate rebranding happens on an infrequent basis, employees often feel overwhelmed by the scope and complexity, especially those responsible for managing a nationwide rebranding project involving hundreds of locations and thousands of fleet vehicles, signs and other branded assets. For companies going through mergers and acquisitions, regulatory deadlines have to be met, so time is of the essence. Unregulated companies may choose to rollout the new brand slowly, but hurt brand equity and confuse customers and employees by leaving the old brand on assets.

Having a strategic brand implementation process in place saves time and money, increases brand awareness, and improves employee morale and customer satisfaction. This white paper focuses on one aspect of the process, and how Value Engineering ensures new signs and vehicle graphics meet a company's visibility and budget objectives.

Background / Problems

For those without prior experience in corporate rebranding, brand implementation can be a costly, never-ending process. For those with experience managing complex rebranding projects, they've understand the pitfalls and have been known to say, "Been there, done that, don't ever want to do it again." These individuals learned the hard way that a lack of in-house brand implementation expertise makes planning, budgeting and project management difficult. This is especially true for regional, national and international companies with hundreds of locations and thousands of corporate vehicles. The learning curve for a successful brand implementation is lengthy and expensive, and companies often have limited financial resources, employee bandwidth and time.

One brand implementation step where time and money are often wasted is moving from abstract brand standards guidelines to the actual production and installation of the new brand identity on physical brand touchpoints. When you think about all of the places a corporate brand appears in the digital and physical world, the scope of the challenge becomes clearer.

Where to start?

The first step in any brand implementation process is making sure the company has a comprehensive and up-do-date database of brand touchpoints. Often, corporate databases are missing touchpoints, lack specificity, or haven't been updated in years. While the marketing or IT department may track digital assets, like websites, databases of physical assets may be scattered around the organization or nonexistent.

What physical assets or touchpoints are involved?

To get a sense of the scope of physical assets in need of a brand change, a partial list follows:

Corporate signs	Uniforms	Window signs
Building signs	Facilities branding	Floor mats
Wayfinding	Branded materials	Employee materials
Fleet vehicles	Business forms	Name badges
Retail signage	Customer invoices	Tradeshow booths
Interior signage	Kiosks	Promotional items
Print materials	Automatic teller machines	
Apparel	Monument signs	

For each of these assets, there should be a database record listing, among other things, location, asset owner, age of asset, physical dimensions, usage, and asset-specific details (e.g., vehicle color and damage).

Who owns the physical asset?

For simplicity sake, let's focus on signage and vehicles from this point forward. "Ownership" of these assets is often spread across the organization, with fleet managers typically being responsible for fleet vehicles, while facilities or operations managers are responsible for signs.

For small branding projects, the managers typically hire local vendors for the manufacturing and installation of signs and vehicle graphics. While managers in larger cities may have a choice of vendors, in remote or rural communities, there may only be one vendor with limited skills and resources. This means hundreds of small vendors with varying skill sets and price points are part of the overall corporate supply chain. The lack of consistency in quality and pricing may not be noticeable when a few new signs or vehicle graphics are needed, but will be very apparent on a large-scale project.

Why is vendor selection so challenging during a rebranding?

During a corporate rebranding, the expertise of vendors selected to create and install branded materials impacts the overall quality of the branded touchpoints. Don't assume the existing supply chain of vendors can handle the size and scope of a large-scale rebranding. Problems will also arise if the company treats the RFP process as if it were buying branded products. In reality, a combination of services and products is required, similar to other outsourced specialty areas. For example, if the corporation needs a specialized intellectual property contract drawn up, the expertise of the lawyer creating the contract (service) impacts the quality of the contract (product).

Why aren't brand standards guidelines sufficient for rebranding?

When a branding agency or in-house branding team develops brand standards guidelines, mockups are often used instead of actual vehicle descriptions and signage options. If these generalized brand guidelines are provided to vehicle graphics manufacturers, when it comes time for installation, logos and company names may get cutoff by doors or hidden behind ladders on service vehicles. Alternatively, overly complicated brand guidelines requiring a different vehicle graphic for each make and model instead of designing a graphic that fits many models drives up the price and adds unnecessary complexity to the project.

For signage, say brand guidelines call for lettering in a bronze color for an indoor sign. A sign manufacturer could create the sign using a number of materials (flat-cut metal, cast metal, stainless steel, laser cut acrylic, formed plastic, injection molded, and laminated) and lighting options. Money will be wasted if an expensive, backlit metal sign is manufactured when an unlit acrylic sign is more appropriate for the space.

How much will the brand implementation cost?

Due to the complexity and scope of a regional or national rebranding, the logistics and service elements cost as much if not more than the tangible materials. Consequently, coordinating the brand rollout with hundreds of local vendors leads to missed deadlines, brand inconsistencies and cost overruns.

Using standardization and economies of scale can speed up the rebranding process and lower costs. Instead of having hundreds of vendors manufacture vehicle graphics and signs, selecting a limited number of high quality vendors allows the company to negotiate lower costs.

The opportunity cost of having employees focus on the rebranding instead of customers is often overlooked. This disruption isn't limited to marketing, fleet, facilities and operations managers learning how to juggle sign and vehicle graphics ordering and installation scheduling with their normal job duties. The brand implementation can impact day-to-day operations for a broader range of employees and customers. The level of disruption varies by industry. If sign installations are scheduled for retail locations during the workday, sales are disrupted. When services vehicles are taken offline to receive new vehicle graphics during peak operating hours, telecommunications customers are left without service and travelers are left without airport shuttle vans.

Without a strategic process in place, employees and customers are frustrated while companies lose valuable time, money and brand equity.

Solution

The Value Engineering process integrates a company's objectives and priorities into the brand rollout to ensure the brand looks professional and uniform in the marketplace in accordance with brand guidelines. Among the factors considered during Value Engineering:

- **Visibility:** How, where and when is a branded asset used. Does a company vehicle drive through customer neighborhoods all day or stay on the company's property? Does a sign face a busy street or a small parking lot?
- **Performance:** The graphic should last as long as the touchpoint. If fleet vehicles will be replaced in a year, installing a vehicle graphic with a similar lifespan saves money. If facilities will be consolidated after a merger, temporary signage is a cost-effective choice for the transition period.

- **Installation Complexity and Speed:** Finding installation solutions before brand conversion begins keeps the project on time and on budget. If the installation of even a single type of sign or vehicle graphic is overly complicated, it can slow down the entire brand rollout.
- **Quality:** There are many options available in the materials used to construct a sign or vehicle graphic. Does the company need vibrant vehicle graphics for high traffic areas, while less expensive graphics are adequate for remote locations?
- **Budget:** Is the budget large enough for the entire project, including removal of the old brand on signs and vehicles? Can money be saved by outsourcing project management to brand implementation experts and allowing employees to stay focused on customers?
- **Timeline:** Working backwards from the deadline to create a brand implementation timeline allows for on-demand manufacturing of materials and scheduling installation times to minimally impact day-to-day operations.

How does Value Engineering work?

Let's say a bank acquisition assessment reveals that 2,000 signs in varying sizes exist at 350 branches in a six-state region. Using Value Engineering, the varying sign sizes can be organized and consolidated into a few specific sizes and types, which allows the acquiring bank to leverage economies of scale to negotiate favorable contracts with one or two high-quality sign companies to handle the project. Visibility goals also lead to better placement of higher impact signs.

Without Value Engineering, local branch managers end up ordering their own higher-priced, custom signs from local vendors and overseeing installation of signs in the exact same places. Not only is this more expensive, less impactful and time consuming, but it takes focus away from the branch managers' primary duties and makes it hard for customers trying to enter the bank or use the ATM.

Conclusion

Brand implementation can be a costly, never-ending process without the proper planning. This is especially true for regional, national and international companies with hundreds of locations and thousands of corporate vehicles. Having a strategic brand implementation process in place saves time and money, increases brand awareness, and improves employee morale and customer satisfaction. Value Engineering allows companies to set visibility and brand awareness goals, streamline the process, standardize brand treatments, select high quality vendors and negotiate more favorable rates, leading to a more cost-effective and manageable rebranding.

Implementix developed the Value Engineering process after years of handling complex brand implementation projects for corporations in a variety of industries, including banking, food and beverage, energy, healthcare, hospitality, and telecommunications. Its proprietary ix Value Engineering app uses "scenario planning" to interactively create solutions and estimate budgets for brand implementation.