Branding Your City

Contents

Introduction

Cities have always been brands in the truest sense of the word.

As international place branding authority Simon Anholt writes, "Unless you've lived in a particular city or have a good reason to know a lot about it, the chances are that you think about it in terms of a handful of qualities or attributes, a promise, some kind of story. That simple brand narrative can have a major impact on your decision to visit the city, to buy its products or services, to do business there, or even to relocate there.

"All of our decisions, whether they are as trivial as buying an everyday product or as important as relocating a company, are partly rational and partly emotional. No human activity is exempt from this rule, and the brand images of cities underpin the emotional part of every decision connected with those places, which in turn affects the rational part.

"Paris is romance, Milan is style, New York is energy, Washington is power, Tokyo is modernity, Lagos is corruption, Barcelona is culture, Rio is fun. These are the brands of cities, and they are inextricably tied to the histories and destinies of all these places.

"In today's globalized, networked world, every place has to compete with every other place for its share of the world's consumers, tourists, businesses, investment, capital, respect and attention. Cities, the economic and cultural powerhouses of nations, are increasingly the focus of this international competition for funds, talent and fame."

This competitive environment is a reality of our times, and how a city stakes out and communicates its distinctive place within it largely decides which cities succeed and which falter in the race for economic prosperity. To this end, places are just like companies: those with a strong brand find it much easier to sell their products and services and attract people and investment.

Whether a place is looking to rebuild, enhance or reinvigorate its image, a comprehensive brand strategy is the first step to achieving this goal.

Put simply, branding is a tool that can be used by cities to define themselves and attract positive attention in the midst of an international information glut. Unfortunately, there is the common misconception that branding is simply a communications strategy, a tagline, visual identity or logo. It is much, much more. It is a strategic process for developing a long-term vision for a place that is relevant and compelling to key audiences. Ultimately, it influences and shapes positive perceptions of a place.

Most of all, a branding project is anchored in a community's societal, political or economic objectives by focusing on its relevant differences, identifying the core promise that it makes to key audiences, and developing and consistently communicating the core, positive attributes of the place. Whether a place is looking to rebuild, enhance or reinvigorate its image, the first step is a comprehensive brand strategy.

Paul O'Connor, Executive Director of World Business Chicago, said it best: "The greatest piece of advice I can give to other cities is to accept taglines only as a last resort. A tagline passes for branding, but it is not the same thing. Taglines are fragile, limited or too broad. They do not represent who you really are. A brand is the DNA of a place, what it is made of, what it passes from generation to generation. It is authentic and indicates what makes a place different from others."

The purpose of this report is to help urban leaders increase their understanding of what it means to pursue a brand strategy for a place, to describe why place branding is necessary, and more importantly, to describe how to initiate a brand strategy with an ideal eight-step process. This report is drawn from the experience of recent place branding projects by Prophet, a leading brand consulting company, as well as secondary research from other cities with recent branding experience. ∎

The Importance of Place Branding

A brand — clear, compelling and unique — is the foundation that helps to make a place desirable as a business location, visitor destination or a place to call home. Development of a brand strategy for a city leverages the features of that place to provide a relevant and compelling promise to a target audience. It is not an ad campaign or a tagline. Rather, the branding strategy is a deeper, more emotionally shared vision that influences actions.

There are many reasons why it is critical for a place to have a brand strategy, but the most common is to stimulate economic growth. That's because a strong brand can:

- Shift the perception of a place that may be suffering from a poor image among external and internal constituents.

- Create a common vision for the future of the community and its potential.

- Provide a consistent representation of the place.

- Enhance its local, regional and/or global awareness and position.

- Shed unfavorable stereotypes associated with a place and make it more appealing. ∎

Initiating a Place Brand Strategy

Developing a brand strategy for a community should not be the task of a single organization. Including a variety of stakeholders assures that multiple perspectives and issues are weighed and makes buy-in and execution less complicated. (On the other hand, a city is unlikely to get a meaningful effort by staging public contests for taglines and ads, as many communities have done. More often, these turn disastrous.)

Getting the right people involved starts with a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished.

While a branding project can be initiated by any organization, it is common for it to be sponsored by the community's lead economic development organization. Based on the project's objectives, a variety of different organizations may be involved in the branding project. For example, if the objective is economic growth, strategies may focus on growth of talented residents, businesses or specific sectors, tourism or conventions. Each requires getting the attention of a different community partner. Therefore, getting the right people involved and connected starts with a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished. It begins with some basic questions. What does the brand strategy need to solve? Is there a critical business, citizen or political issue at hand that is tarnishing the reputation of the place? Or is it simply about taking a more proactive stance to invigorate the presence of the place to attract business?

Based on your answers, consider a subset of the following groups to participate in the project:

- □ Council for Economic Development
- □ Business Leaders
- □ Civic Leaders
- □ Elected Officials
- □ Community Representatives
- □ Board of Tourism
- □ Local Universities
- □ Cultural or Heritage Institutions
- □ Local Media
- □ Committee for Special Events

A Closer Look: Milwaukee

"Branding" often conjures images of expensive advertising campaigns and empty slogans. A more accurate reflection of the impact of branding is seen with the Spirit of Milwaukee, the organization that led **Milwaukee**'s brand development from a business opportunity to a regionalizing force.

The Spirit of Milwaukee was created eight years ago by Midwest Airlines as a way to build business in Milwaukee, attract talent and ultimately, fill airplane seats. Dean Amhaus, President of Spirit of Milwaukee, saw the need to focus branding efforts taking place throughout the city and spend dollars more effectively. He wanted to find a common identifier for the community. Amhaus said, "Our biggest barrier was our low self-image and getting Milwaukee to believe in itself. People did not know what we have here in Milwaukee."

In 2004, the Milwaukee Art Museum completed a spectacular new addition by internationally-renowned architect Santiago Calatrava, which proved ideal as the city's symbol. Calatrava's creation is modern, makes the city's skyline distinct and gives the city's residents a sense of pride. A stylized view of the addition served as a simple and identifiable logo that anyone in the city could use, and it was symbolic of the kind of civic energy the city wanted to project.

As the branding initiative evolved, so did its frame of reference. Working with the Greater Milwaukee Committee and the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Amhaus realized that the strategy's eventual success would not be determined solely by enhancing perceptions of the city of Milwaukee. Instead, branding needed to move beyond the immediate city limits to include the seven-county region. This expanded geography anchored the brand identity, giving the region the economic and cultural weight that rivals that of many nations.

Julia Taylor, President of the Greater Milwaukee Committee, took the lead in generating enthusiasm from regional leaders. This strategy required a new level of cooperation — one of building relationships, maintaining identity and sharing a vision. As Taylor described, "By going on their turf and taking their advice seriously, county leaders knew it was not just a Milwaukee effort. It was a regional effort. You really need the ability to evangelize, and you need a burning platform from which to launch a regional effort. Ours was a more forward form of economic development."

Success does not hinge on a multi-million dollar advertising campaign. Instead, the Milwaukee region took advantage of guerilla marketing – personal experiences, word-of-mouth and grassroots networks. Milwaukee also offers its unique physical assets (the lake, the landscape, the art museum) as backdrops for the advertising of others (e.g. automotive companies), and Spirit of Milwaukee produces a location booklet with top quality photography that is distributed to businesses and ad agencies. In addition, the organization generates national media coverage about Milwaukee.

If your city wants to initiate a brand strategy as Milwaukee did, the following questions have to be answered honestly and completely:

▫ What does the place stand for today – both its strengths and weaknesses?

▫ What can and should the place stand for in the future, and how do we articulate that?

▫ What will make the place unique, valued and attractive to target businesses and consumer audiences?

▫ How will we make this new positioning a reality?

▫ What role do key stakeholders and community groups have in bringing the brand to life?

▫ How will we measure success of the brand strategy?

Armed with the answers to these questions, a city can follow an eight-step process to develop a place brand.

Figure A   **Eight–Step Process to Develop a Place Brand**

Step 1: Define Clear Objectives

Step 2: Understand the Target Audience

Step 3: Identify Current Brand Image

Step 4: Set the Aspirational Brand Identity

Step 5: Develop the Positioning

Step 6: Create Value Propositions

Step 7: Execute the Brand Strategy

Step 8: Measure Success

Step 1: Define clear objectives

□ What is the project trying to achieve?

□ What specific results are you seeking from the development of a brand strategy?

These questions should have been asked generally as the brand strategy organization was formed but are to be addressed in greater detail as it launches its work. It is imperative that decision makers understand the goals and objectives of the branding initiative. Is the primary objective to attract and retain residents? Drive commerce? Attract visitors? Change current perceptions? The answers to these questions (and the priorities among them) help define the scope of the project, the appropriate stakeholders with whom to speak and the key activities that form the approach to the initiative.

Creating a benchmark for success helps define your specific goals. For example, identify places that have faced similar challenges and have successfully overcome them by initiating a brand strategy. Analyze their successes. Where have shifts occurred? To what degree has the economic climate improved? What are the indicators of success – increase in residents, business growth, income, events, visitors, etc.? Which of these indicators are most appropriate for your project? What were the key components that enabled their transformation? What can you learn from their experience?

For example, Racine County in Wisconsin benchmarked three communities to help guide its brand strategy: Colorado Springs, Pittsburgh and Waukesha. All had sustained significant economic setbacks in critical sectors and were seeking to redefine their image and attract new business. Studying the changes in community and economic development of other places, as well as their positioning and image evolution, made it possible to identify key implications for Racine County in the development of its own brand strategy.

Step 2: Understand the audiences you are trying to attract

□ Who does the audience consist of?

□ What are their current perceptions and attitudes of the place?

□ What do they need that a city can provide? Can your city meet that need?
  If so, how?

To answer these questions, a series of in-depth interviews or focus groups
should be conducted with some of the key influencers such as:

□ Business Sector (e.g. cross section of industries, employees, leaders)

□ Residents (e.g. cross section of neighborhoods, household incomes, household
  sizes, new, long-term and past residents)

□ Visitors (e.g. sample of people who have visited and who may visit in the future)

□ Political Leaders (e.g. city and state)

□ Media (e.g. local, regional, national, international)

□ Student Groups

Selecting the right target audiences is one of the most difficult steps in place branding.
It is tempting to want to talk to everyone. As with overall project scope, audiences
need to be minimized in number and prioritized based on importance. World Business
Chicago, whose job it is to attract companies to that city, identified senior business
leaders and key media (both inside and outside Chicago) as the most important
targets for its branding effort. Such focus made it possible to conduct 80+ one-on-one
interviews within the target market, achieving a rich depth of opinion. Going deep on a
few audiences can uncover more detailed and specific insights, while going broad across
multiple audiences provides a variety of general insights.

Target audiences need to be minimized in number and prioritized based on importance.

Once target audiences are identified, it can be equally (if not more) challenging to figure out how to reach them for research and by which means. For ordinary citizens, focus groups work but can be expensive. Business leaders are more easily handled through individual interviews but are often busy and may not be willing to give their time without a clear motive or incentive. Political leaders need assurances that their candid observations will not be made public and require savvy researcher techniques in order to understand true perceptions and intentions. Regardless of target and approach, urban leaders undertaking a place branding initiative should make sure their research is first rate, as it is arguably the most critical information that will shape their eventual strategy.

A Closer Look: Chicago

Chicago is a city with a largely untold story. The city has many strong attributes and benefits, but they were expressed more as a laundry list than as a compelling, cohesive story. Boeing's search for a new headquarters location made that obvious. While Chicago landed Boeing, it became apparent to World Business Chicago (WBC), that led the recruitment effort, that the city lacked a focused approach to its marketing. WBC, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the Chicago region's global position as a business location, saw the need to develop a relevant and differentiating positioning awareness of Chicago to draw national and international business leaders.

WBC began its brand development by interviewing more than 80 international business leaders to understand current perceptions of the city. WBC found that although Chicago-based business leaders view the city in a very positive light, the city suffers from distinct stereotypes (e.g. Al Capone, bad weather) and lack of visibility on a more global scale. To overcome these barriers, WBC initiated a process to create a brand proposition for Chicago that resonates with the business community and distinguishes Chicago from other locations with which it competes. WBC wanted to define what Chicago will stand for in the future and what it will take to bring this vision to life. The result was a strategy that focused on the unique combination of three compelling components, distilled from its "laundry list": access to a skilled workforce, abundant business resources and an incomparable quality of life.

Step 3: Identify current brand image of the place

▢ What associations are linked to the place?

▢ Has the image of the place changed over time?

▢ What is the current personality of the place?

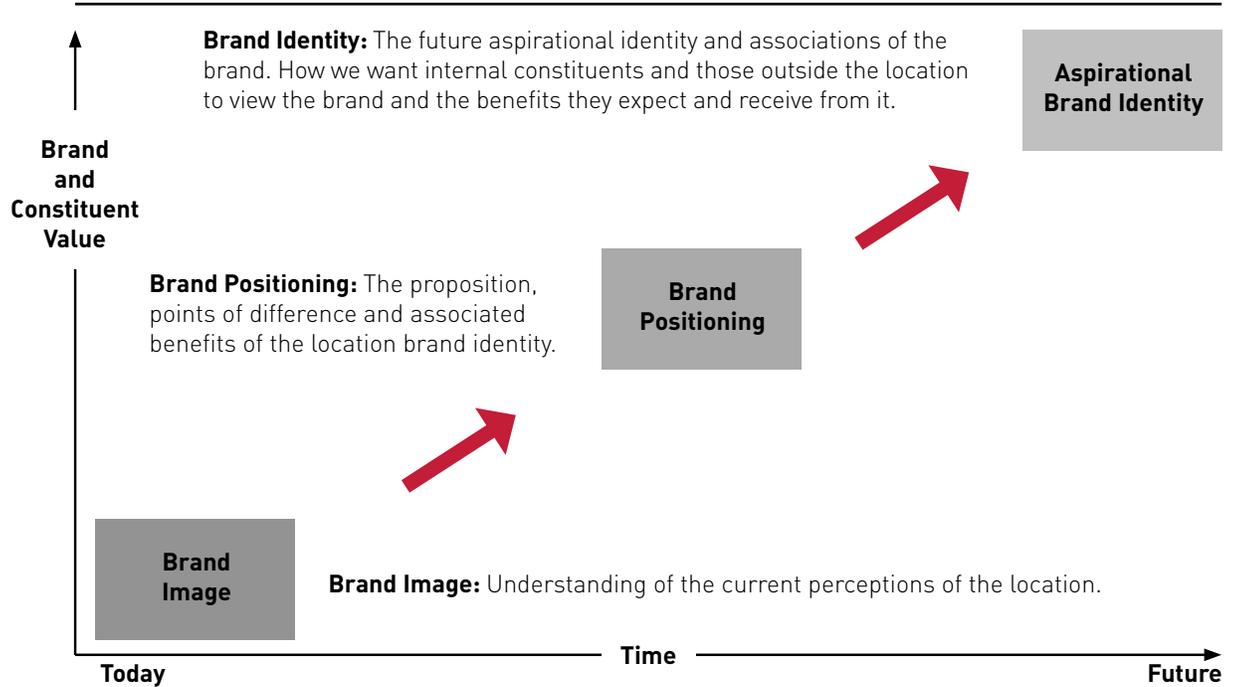▢ What visual imagery does the place evoke?

These research questions are designed to gain insight on the benefits and associations that target audiences have with the place. Examples of research questions include:

▢ When I say the name of the place, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Why?

▢ What are the strengths and weaknesses/pros and cons of the place?

▢ What benefits does the place provide for you?

▢ Describe the experience you have had, or expect to have, with the place?

The ultimate goal is to understand how the target audience perceives the place today so that the gap between the current state and the desired or aspirational state can be assessed. It is this gap that the positioning must close.

As with any branding initiative, one critical component is determining the current and ideal persona. When attempting to describe the persona of a place, the natural tendency of interviewees is to play back what they believe are the qualities of the "typical resident." This is problematic for two reasons: 1) the purpose of the exercise is to personify the brand, not describe the residents, and 2) most people will struggle when trying to describe the persona of the "typical resident" because there really is no such thing as a typical resident. (Chicago has 3 million of them!) This is one activity that is much easier when the brand is a product or service; however, with the right stimulus, it can also be done effectively for a place.

Figure B   **Moving from Brand Image to Brand Identity**

Brand Identity: The future aspirational identity and associations of the brand. How we want internal constituents and those outside the location to view the brand and the benefits they expect and receive from it.

Aspirational Brand Identity

Brand and Constituent Value

Brand Positioning: The proposition, points of difference and associated benefits of the location brand identity.

Brand Positioning

Brand Image

Brand Image: Understanding of the current perceptions of the location.

Today   **Time** ——————————→ **Future**

Step 4: Set the aspirational identity for the place

□ What do you want the place to stand for?

□ What associations do you want people to think of when they think of the place?

□ What is the ideal personality or persona for the place?

□ What type of experience would you like to have there?

An aspirational brand identity consists of the associations you want people in the future to make when they think of your community. It is how you want target audiences to view the brand and the benefits they expect to receive from it. It should influence future business and community decisions.

It is important for the aspirational identity to be within reach and credible for the brand. Additionally, it should also be an identity that the place can sustain for a long period of time. Think of this as the North Star, something the place should always strive to achieve. Understanding the gap between the current image and the aspirational brand identity will influence the evolution of the positioning.

For narrow gaps, a single positioning may be effective, while a broader gap may require more time and multiple positionings that sequentially build off one another, evolving every few years to eventually reach the aspirational identity.

Step 5: Develop the positioning

□ What is the primary benefit the place is providing?

□ What are the elements of proof to support the benefit?

Brand positioning is the means for transitioning from a place's current brand image to its aspirational identity. Essentially, the positioning is a promise or a benefit that a place wants to own in the minds of the target audience. Positioning is different from brand identity in that it is:

□ Shorter and more immediate in terms of the timeframe

□ Less aspirational and more credible in the near-term

□ Focused on providing its audience a specific benefit

□ Necessary to drive communications, outlining the primary benefits and
   proof points

Figure C   **Chicago's Positioning**

Brand and Constituent Value

Bad Weather, Hard Working, Crime

Current Brand Image

Brand Positioning

For business leaders worldwide, Chicago provides unequaled opportunity for success because it is the only major metropolitan area that offers the unique combination of abundant business resources, incomparable quality of life and great people. Chicago truly lets you have it all.

Aspirational Brand Identity

Talented Workforce, Sports and Culture, Lakefront Views

Time

Today

Future

Figure D   **Chicago Brand Identity**

Extended Identity

Core Identity

Have It All

Worldly/Sophisticated
□ Professional
□ Educated

Livable

**Superb
Infrastructure**

**Talented and
Hardworking
Work Force**

Passion and Pride

**Supportive
Business
Community**
□ Globally minded
□ Networked and
   well-connected
□ Outgoing and collegial
□ Helps each
   other out

**International
and Diversified
Business Hub**

Heartland Values
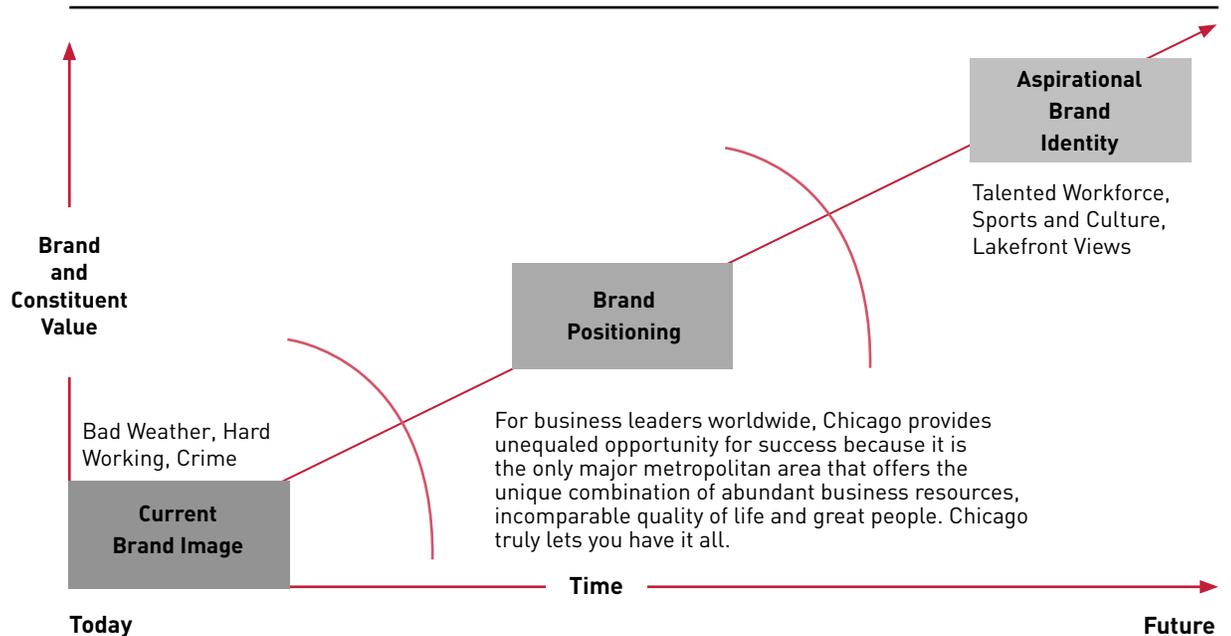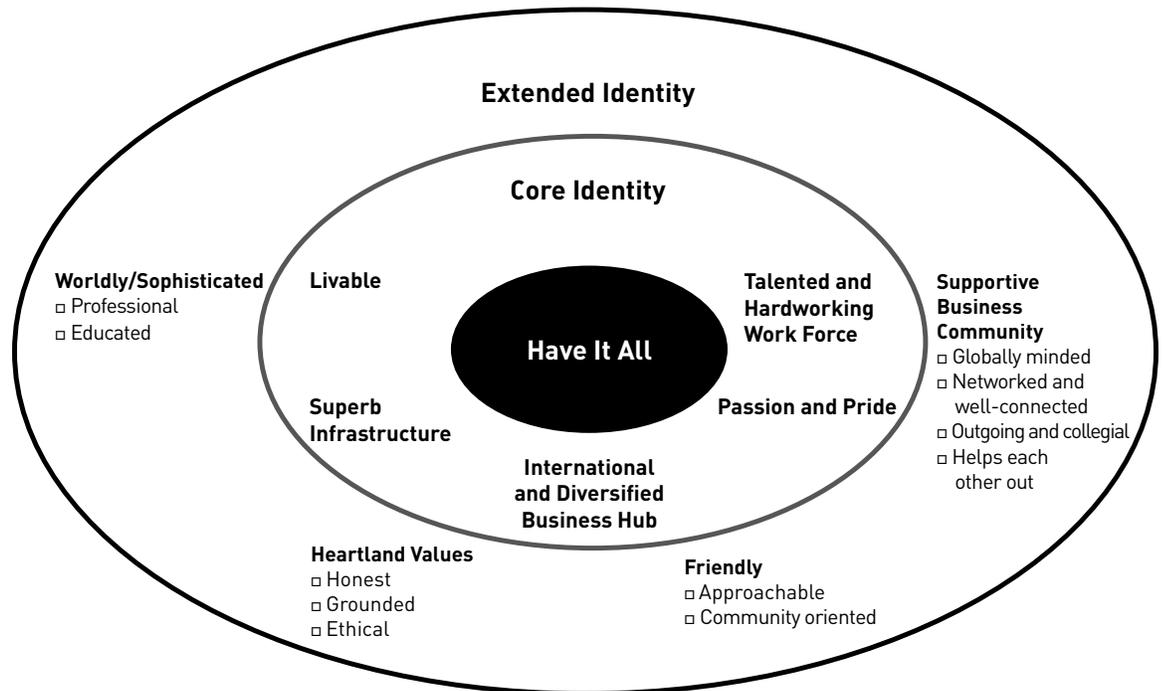□ Honest
□ Grounded
□ Ethical

Friendly
□ Approachable
□ Community oriented

Like any product brand positioning, positioning of a place should be relevant, credible, compelling, differentiated and sustainable. A positioning is not an ad campaign or a tagline. Rather, it is the core promise that shapes communications as well as influences any decisions on what a place may provide.
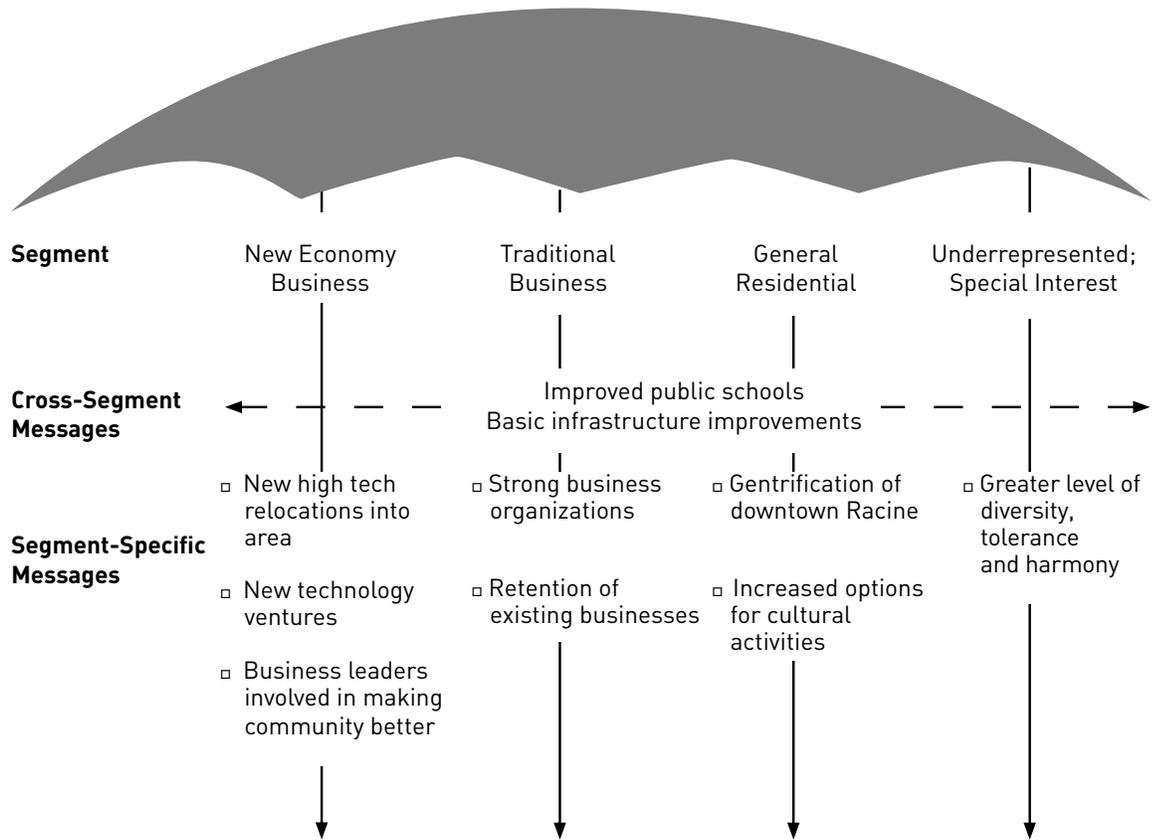
An aspirational brand identity and its associated positioning typically has a three-year horizon. However, with place branding the time horizon can be significantly longer. Perceptions of a community do not change overnight and often require significant changes to critical touchpoints — those places and experiences where target audience meets reality.

Step 6: Create value propositions for priority target segments

Once the positioning is defined, it is important to make it actionable for each of the target audiences. Specifically, what does the positioning mean for that audience and what are the key messages that should be communicated to influence their perceptions? There are some messages that will be applicable to all audiences. But it is also important to get specific on the detailed messages that are important to each individual audience. This process makes the strategy more tangible and helps various organizations deliver a cohesive story.

Figure E   **Place Positioning Strategy for Racine County**

Segment	New Economy Business	Traditional Business	General Residential	Underrepresented; Special Interest
Cross-Segment Messages		Improved public schools Basic infrastructure improvements		
Segment-Specific Messages	□ New high tech relocations into area □ New technology ventures □ Business leaders involved in making community better	□ Strong business organizations □ Retention of existing businesses	□ Gentrification of downtown Racine □ Increased options for cultural activities	□ Greater level of diversity, tolerance and harmony

Step 7: Execute the strategy

In developing your brand-based marketing plan, it is critical to think about every point at which the target audience may come into contact with your brand. Every interaction or point of contact with the target audience is an opportunity either to enhance or denigrate your brand. These points of contact, or touchpoints, may include a wide spectrum of elements such as the physical environment, the airport, street signage, advertising, brochures, web site, events, media and even the attitude of residents.

Prioritize touchpoints based on high impact and positive return on investment.

For structure, it is helpful to think of touchpoints in three categories: pre-visit/decision; during a visit/while making a decision; and post-visit/decision. Pre-visit touchpoints include elements that increase awareness and knowledge of the place and drive the target audience to include the place among its options for consideration. These touchpoints may include advertising, public relations, brochures, special events listings, web sites and comments from associates or word of mouth. The next stage focuses on all the interaction that can occur during a visit or while making a decision. These touchpoints, which the target audience will experience firsthand, are often more tangible (and non-verbal) efforts such as manicured parks, clean streets and bustling nightlife. And then there are the interactions that occur after a visit or a decision has been made, such as comments from colleagues, daily newspapers and other news media, photos and memorable experiences from the visit, direct mail, email marketing, etc.

When thinking about all the interactions between the brand and the target audiences, it is important to consider all three stages. However, the reality is that funds are usually limited, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to affect everything. It is important, therefore, to prioritize the touchpoints based on an assessment of their potential impact and return on investment. The touchpoints that score high on both will become the drivers of the new brand strategy. The following are criteria to help prioritize touchpoints:

□ Importance of the touchpoint in delivering on the positioning or value proposition

□ Ability to fill the gap between the actual experience and the ideal or desired experience

□ Cost/benefit relationship

Figure F   **Touchpoints to Deliver on the Brand**
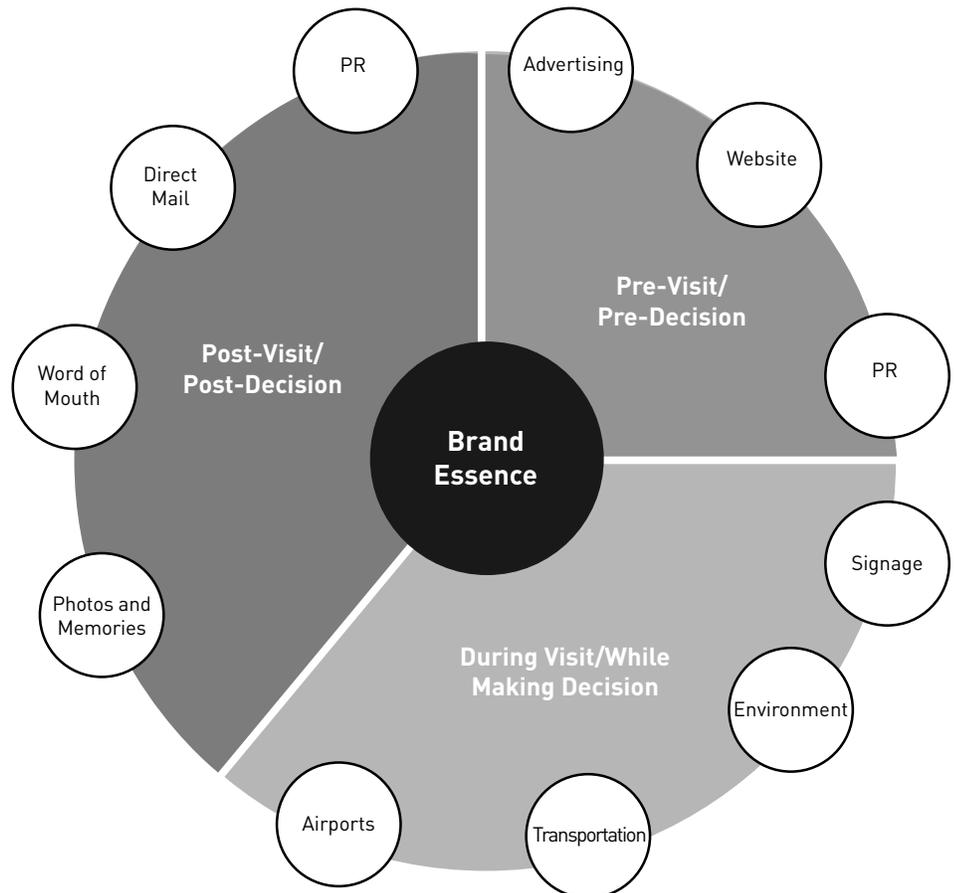
Execution of the brand strategy is particularly challenging when it deals with a place. First, much of the execution relies on improving the touchpoints mentioned above that are required to lend credibility to the new brand strategy. With a community, these touchpoints are often mammoth in nature, like schools, transportation, industry or government. That's why it is important for many organizations, including government, to "own" the branding strategy so that the commitment to improve touchpoints is broadly shared. Second, there is often little to no budget with which to execute the new strategy. Therefore, execution often relies on grassroots efforts, word of mouth and other activities to get the word out. Again, that's a good reason to have many organizations working with their existing budgets and programs of work to support the branding strategy.

Step 8: Measure success

The adage, "What is not measured is not managed," is true for all branding, whether product, service or place. The link between business and brand strategy becomes evident as return on investment and the positive economic, social and political impact are measured over time.

There are generally three principles for measuring success for a place brand strategy:

▫ Monitoring the success of branding efforts with key audiences

▫ Measuring the effectiveness of branding and marketing activities over time

▫ Showing the effect the brand has on the business by measuring the brand metrics in conjunction with the economic and community development metrics

Brand metrics are successful when:

▫ The leadership of a community agrees to the benefit of measuring the brand.

▫ Metrics are measured in a standard and consistent way over time.

▫ Metrics are measured in conjunction with the economic and community development metrics.

▫ Metrics allow political, economic development and civic organizations to take action based on the results.

In addition to tracking brand metrics, the branding team must also be aware of the brand building activities that are occurring, because they are the main influencers of the brand metrics. These activities can be chosen and modified based on where the brand economic development metrics are at any point in time.

Once awareness is at an optimal level, the media strategy should shift. Course corrections depend on the impact the brand activity has on the economic development. For example, the lead branding agency may learn that while the dollars spent on advertising to increase awareness among a specific target audience were effective, the dollars spent on other tactics helped increase understanding of the brand, having significantly more impact on economic growth overall. With this insight, it is easier to assess how to allocate your budget.

Below are six "broad buckets" of brand-related metrics that can be used to help measure performance. Most of these metrics can be measured annually with a consistent survey tool. While marketing firms can be used to conduct performance measurements, there are also low-cost options, such as soliciting pro bono services, using in-house survey methods or engaging students from a local university or college. The metrics include:

Brand Awareness:

Measures the percentage of stakeholders who know the location name in a target market. The key measure is aided awareness. Aided awareness is a measure of how recognizable a place is in a list when presented to a survey test sample. A significant level of awareness is a necessary precursor to seeding favorable benefits, imagery and associations for the location brand.

Brand Recognition:

Measures the percentage of stakeholders who know what the location represents and what it provides.

Brand Understanding:

Measures the percentage of stakeholders who can identify the brand promise that the location is communicating in the marketplace. This metric is a proxy for how well the benefits' messaging is resonating with the target audiences. Areas to measure include key benefits, brand personality and brand associations.

Brand Delivery:

Measures how well the location is delivering on the brand promise with its stakeholders. Whereas brand understanding measures communication effectiveness, brand delivery measures performance on how well the location is actually delivering on the benefits it promises.

Brand Value:

Measures whether the location brand is relevant, motivating and valuable to stakeholders. Benefits that are understood and delivered upon are meaningless if not valued by the target audience.

Brand Preference:

Measures where a customer is along the spectrum from being simply a user to someone who prefers the brand to someone who recommends and advocates the brand to others. An increase in preference will be required to ensure there is a 'net positive inflow' of the target audience (e.g. businesses, residents, visitors, etc.).

Brand Uniqueness:

Measures whether stakeholders believe the location's brand promise is relevant and distinct when compared to competing locations. Related to brand preference, brand uniqueness is an indicator of the location's ability to attract and retain its target audience.

Development and execution of a place brand can take a number of months, depending on the scope of the initiative, the level of research and the organizations involved. However, it is possible to develop the strategy in a shorter timeframe with access to the right information and when a high level of collaboration is present.

Execution of the brand strategy requires resourcefulness. World Business Chicago forged partnerships with media companies, seeded key messages with newsletters and websites and created "cheat sheets" for local business leaders to use in speeches.

In addition to timing, finding the money and talent to lead the process can be challenging. Both Racine County and World Business Chicago had to be creative in how they identified talent and available resources to conduct their brand strategy projects. Racine County formed a large cross-sector committee made up of residential, government and community leaders. Additionally, the county hired Prophet to lead the project. World Business Chicago was highly resourceful in using Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management students and faculty to help conduct the research and using Prophet to provide frameworks and guidance along the way.

Execution of the brand strategy also requires resourcefulness. World Business Chicago has forged partnerships with media companies, leveraged brochures, newsletters and its website for seeding key messages, and created "cheat sheets" for local business leaders to use in speeches, essentially encouraging them to be ambassadors for the city of Chicago, much the way they are for their respective companies. Such efforts produce frequent reinforcement of the brand. ∎

Ten Guiding Principles for Branding a City

Have a Purpose

Without a clearly defined objective and plan, the project is likely to go off in many directions, given the multitude of perceptions that a project is often trying to represent. With a clearly defined purpose, process, roles and responsibilities, the project is likely to run more smoothly.

Credibility Is Key

It is easy to have high aspirations for a place, but they must be grounded in reality. Use research to validate that the positioning is credible, relevant and motivating. Additionally, it is important to confirm the credibility of the aspirational brand identity. While brand identity does have license to be more aspirational given its long-term horizon, the positioning needs to be credible in the short-term to be effective.

Be Specific

A natural inclination for place branding is to try to be all things to all people. However, in doing so, you diminish the meaning of what the place really stands for. In effect, it becomes too generic to stand out and get attention. It is challenging but critical to decide which elements should take priority in the brand strategy. Disciplined focus will ultimately make the strategy stronger.

Be Resourceful

Developing a brand strategy does not require a big budget. Rather, there are creative ways to get the project accomplished by using local resources, such as World Business Chicago working with students from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management to help conduct WBC's project.

Grassroots Drive Word of Mouth

While an advertising campaign is helpful in building awareness, it is often too costly to sustain. Instead, consider integrating grassroots tactics such as events, city tours and PR success stories as ways to build awareness and word of mouth. Often these tactics are more powerful than advertising in creating brand preference.

Make It More than a Tagline

Paul O'Connor, Executive Director of World Business Chicago said in an interview with CEOs for Cities, "The greatest piece of advice I can give to other cities is to accept taglines only as a last resort. A tagline passes for branding, but it is not the same thing. Taglines are fragile, limited or too broad. They do not represent who you really are. A brand is the DNA of a place, what it is made of, what it passes from generation to generation. It is authentic and indicates what makes a place different from others."

Look beyond Words

When developing brand positioning, think beyond the words that describe the promise that the place is making. There is a chance that language barriers could influence the way a positioning is perceived. Use of supporting visuals and sounds are powerful additions to help motivate a target audience.

Make It Emotional

"It is important to find the magic to stir men's souls," Paul O'Connor told us. The positioning needs to be more than a functional promise that is easy for other places to emulate; it must be place-driven. The core promise should be more heartfelt to strike an emotional connection with the audience.

It Takes Time

Branding is a long-term undertaking. The results take time, patience and commitment. Set realistic criteria for success, and make a plan for measuring success annually. Assume it will take three to five years to see its economic benefits.

Make It Consistent

Branding takes time, but it also takes consistency. In developing the brand strategy, take the time to be diligent with the upfront work and research to avoid frantic shifts in the strategy on the back end. Stick to your strategy for a set period of time before you change it. Put the energy toward delivering a consistent message, look and feel across all the communication media. Consistency and frequency are a powerful combination.

Ensure Stakeholders Are Involved

Stakeholders involved in the process of branding must have strong commitment and conviction to support the brand. They need to be aware of it, believe in it and live it. This personal engagement will ensure that the strategy becomes the foundation of all activities that stakeholders pursue from marketing to decision making.

Keep Stakeholders Informed of Success

Given the long-term nature of developing and executing a place brand strategy, it is important to keep stakeholders involved in the progress. Promote successes along the way evidenced by news clips, ads and actual results. Keeping stakeholders engaged will ensure commitment and involvement over the long haul. ■

About Prophet

Prophet is a leading consultancy that helps clients achieve competitive advantage by creating and implementing integrated business, brand and marketing strategies. Prophet works with companies from strategy to execution to develop, operationalize, grow and protect one of their most valuable assets: their brand. Prophet has offices in Chicago, Hamburg, Houston, London, New York, San Francisco, Tokyo and Zurich. For more information, please visit www.prophet.com.

About CEOs for Cities

That's why CEOs for Cities was founded. It's a network of mayors, corporate CEOs, university presidents, foundation officials and business and civic leaders from the nation's leading cities. With twice-yearly meetings, its Innovation Consortium and its research, CEOs for Cities provides its members with special insight into the challenges that matter to the success of cities and the new partnerships and new thinking required to find innovative responses. Generous support comes from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and our business, civic, government and philanthropic partners.

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