

Branding & Marketing

A Strategic Initiative

by Sondra Kiss

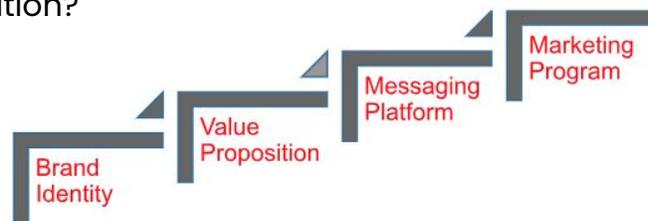
Borrow consumer branding and marketing principles to build excitement and drive change inside your organization.



Lessons from Madison Avenue

Leading a strategic initiative? You're going to need a lot of internal cooperation, so sharpen up those communication and persuasion skills!

The advertising industry excels in the art of influence, so why not adopt and apply some of its techniques to bring people along and drive behavioral change inside your organization?



We've consulted brand leadership expert and author Denise Lee Yohn, to help us leverage consumer strategies for internal branding and marketing with the following proven practices:

- Establish a brand identity
- Define a value proposition for your constituents
- Design a messaging platform
- Promote your initiative with continuous marketing

Ready to build a branding and marketing campaign for your transformation effort? Read on!

Meet The Author

Sondra Kiss is the Managing Partner of Kissinger Group, where she brings over 20 years of experience guiding Fortune 500 companies through their most critical change initiatives.

Known for her ability to frame complex challenges, define success metrics, and craft actionable, high-impact solutions, she has earned numerous accolades, including steering Kissinger Group to the Inc. 5000 list of Fastest Growing Private Companies for two consecutive years.

A dedicated mentor and advocate for female entrepreneurs, Sondra is committed to empowering the next generation of leaders.

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Create a Brand Identity for Your Initiative

Your brand identity will shape the narrative, energy, and sentiment surrounding your initiative. Just as corporations meticulously manage and protect their brands, your transformation initiative deserves the same level of attention.

Brand identity elements for a strategic initiative include:

1. **Brand Strategy:** Define the purpose, vision, and values of your initiative. Engage stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives.
2. **Name, Tagline, and Visual Identity:** Select a name that reflects the essence of your initiative and resonates with your audience. Develop a tagline and visual identity, including logos, colors, and typography, to communicate your strategy effectively.
3. **Brand Personality and Emotional Appeal:** Envision your initiative as a person and assign characteristics to guide your touchpoints. Consider the emotions you want to evoke, such as connectedness and pride.



A well-crafted brand identity not only clarifies the purpose and value of your initiative but also mobilizes stakeholders by tapping into the power of emotion. With this foundation, you're ready to drive behavioral change through a compelling value proposition.

Craft a Value Proposition

A clear value proposition provides stakeholders with a compelling reason to support and engage with your initiative and the changes it entails.

For example, Uber's value proposition, "The smartest way to get around," speaks to the customer's benefit in a memorable and concise way.

Your task is to clearly articulate the value proposition for the company, employees, and customers by answering the crucial question: "What's in it for me?"

Building a Messaging Platform

Craft a Strategic Narrative: Outline the journey from the current state to the desired future. Adopting a journalistic approach — addressing the what, why, when, how, and who — will help you clearly articulate the essential elements of your story.

Call to Action: Your audience wants to understand what this means to them and what actions they should take. We recommend a "full body" approach to encourage change and influence behavior.



Head: Appeal to them rationally (*inform*)

Heart: Appeal to them emotionally (*inspire*)

Hands & Feet: Appeal to them practically (*instruct*)

Note: Tailor your communications to address different audience segments while keeping the core message consistent. Consider variations in employee levels, departments, and geographic locations to ensure that your messaging resonates with each specific group.

Branding & Marketing “Operation Fusion”

By way of example, let’s see how a healthcare company might brand and market a strategic initiative, using the steps we just outlined.

Brand Identity:

Medical technology merger integration (AKA: Operation Fusion)

Brand Strategy:

Purpose: Combine technology to unlock value

Vision: Deliver innovative solutions to save lives

Values: Uphold quality and transparency

Brand Personality:

Connectedness and pride

Value Proposition:

Scaling our impact

Messaging Platform

Strategic Narrative:

With the acquisition of ABC Company underway, we are now entering the merger integration phase. This is the operational work that will bring together the best of both companies to unlock new value for customers, employees, and stakeholder. Every employee will be part of this integration and we will need your dedication to make this successful for us all.

Call to Action

- **Rational:** Unlock new value with combined technology
- **Emotional:** This innovation will improve and save lives
- **Practical:** You will be working side-by-side with your peers at ABC company to bring our technology platforms together.

Activate The Marketing Communications Program



You've built a strong brand and messaging platform. Now, think like a marketer: leverage reach, frequency, and a diverse marketing mix to engage your audience effectively. Here are a few tips to get started:

What to Do:

- **Build a Communication Plan:** Use a mix of formats and channels to reach your audience effectively.
- **Set Up Listening Posts:** Implement pulse checks and feedback loops to ensure you're hearing and addressing concerns. Remember, listening is a key part of communication!
- **Maintain Consistency:** Ensure that the message remains the same across all communications.
- **Phase Your Messaging:** Tailor your messaging to align with the transformation cycle—starting with excitement and inspiration, navigating through the messy and frustrating middle, and concluding with celebration at the end.
- **Monitor Effectiveness:** Continuously assess whether your audience understands, engages, and exhibits the desired behavioral changes.
- **Engage Ambassadors:** Enroll "Change Champions" to help spread the word and reinforce your message.

How to Do It:

- **Keep It Simple:** Avoid jargon and acronyms to ensure clarity.
- **Use Stories and Visuals:** Employ stories, analogies, and visual prompts to make the message more engaging and relatable.
- **Connect to the Big Picture:** Relate everything back to the company's mission, vision, and evolution.
- **Show Individual Impact:** Clearly illustrate how each person's role contributes to the overall success and why it matters.
- **Foster a Shared Purpose:** Cultivate a sense of collective purpose, emphasizing that everyone is working together towards a common goal.

Communication Checklist

Use these checklists to ensure you have everything you need to proceed.

Communication Assets

1	Town Halls	
2	Intranet Sites	
3	Meetings & Events	
4	Email and Email Signature Blocks	
5	Training	
6	Posters	
7	Lunch & Learn Sessions	
8	Instant Messaging (e.g., Slack)	
9	Celebrations & Ceremonies	
10	Newsletters	
11	Digiboards	
12	Posters	
13	Apps	
14	Collaboration Tools	
15	Promotional Materials	

Communication Channels

1	Videos	
2	Slides	
3	Webpages	
4	Key Messages	
5	Leader Toolkits	
6	Talking Points	
7	Q&As	
8	Stories	
9	Brochures & Collateral	
10	Logos, Taglines	

Tying It All Together

As an initiative leader, your role is to communicate a compelling purpose and vision that energizes the entire organization. Using proven brand and marketing techniques, you can foster alignment, drive change, and build engagement at all levels.

Start by crafting a strong brand identity for your initiative and let it guide every touchpoint. Next, develop a value proposition to articulate its importance and create a messaging platform to tell your story and drive behavioral change with a clear call to action. Finally, activate your strategy with a robust marketing program that leverages reach and frequency across multiple channels.

Congratulations, you are now in the influence business!



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