

Five exercises and activities to help you and your organisation think about your brand.

Exercise 1 – Meet and greet each other.

The first exercise is very simple. Get everybody to introduce themselves to each other and explain simply and succinctly who the organisation is that they work for. The idea is to get across in two or three sentences about the organisation, its work and what makes it special. In other words they need to introduce themselves by putting across the brand very clearly. Once the group has spent 10 or so minutes doing this and has moved on two or three times, stop the exercise and ask people how they found it and what worked and what was hard.

- Allow 15-20 minutes

Exercise 2 – That don't impress me much.

Every non-profit organisation needs to be able to answer the 'so what' question. They need to be able to get across some facts and figures that will ram home their message about the brand. We call these 'pub facts': the kind of fact that can be used against somebody having a go down the pub. Again get everybody circulating and encourage them to deliver to each other a pub fact or two perhaps in response to the question 'How do I know you are doing a good job?' Once the group has had a go at two or three encounters stop the exercise and find out what pub facts people were using, which had the biggest punch and which fell flat.

Instead of key facts this exercise can be done with key messages. If the key messages are agreed then how can meetings with people be used to get those messages across? So get people practicing weaving key messages into conversations about their organisations.

- Allow 15-20 minutes

Exercise 3 – Which animal are we and which animal do we want to be?

Brands are a lot like personalities. So this exercise encourages people to think about their organisation as if it were an entity with lots of different character traits. In small groups get people to sit down and answer the question 'What animal or celebrity or pop group or breed of dog are we and what do we want to be in the future?' Give people about ten minutes - maybe more – and find out what people thought they were now and where they wanted to be. The purpose of this exercise is to get people to share their perceptions of the organisation and find out if those perceptions share much in common – or are a long way apart.

- Allow 15-20 minutes

Exercise 4 – In less than 12 words complete the following sentence.....

Straplines (like Tesco's 'every little helps') are designed to be the encapsulation of the brand. So this exercise gets the group to talk about what straplines for them would encapsulate or sum up their organisation most powerfully. Straplines can be about uniqueness (Britain's only dedicated mouse rescue charity), about style (delivering caring services to caring people), about scope (changing attitudes to disability in Hampshire) or about mission (tackling child poverty one child at a time). Straplines should add a dimension that the name doesn't and add richness and depth to the perception that people have of the organisation.

In small groups get people to brainstorm all and every strapline (even if you have one already) they can think of. The whole group can then talk about all the straplines that are suggested. People can vote for their favourite three and then see how the favourite straplines could be improved.

- Allow 30 minutes

Exercise five – What's stopping you getting a better brand?

Most organisations have their own politics which either helps or hinders getting a better brand. So what is that politics and how can it be made to work for a better brand and not against it? In small group discuss 'who or what is stopping you getting a better brand?' And 'who or what could help you make your image or brand work more powerfully for you?' Get the groups discussing the two questions and then see what answers everybody has come up with. From this create an action plan for moving the brand forward.

This exercise works best with a group who share a common interest in having a better brand (say a marketing, fundraising or communications team). In contrast the previous four (and particularly the first two) exercises can work effectively at a staff conference.

- Allow 30 minutes

Total time for all five exercises is around two hours.

For more information see the free nfpSynergy publications 'Polishing the Diamond', 'The Jeweller's Story' and 'A strong charity brand comes from strong beliefs and values'. These are available to download from the nfpSynergy website – www.nfpsynergy.net.

Joe Saxton, June 2009