

## LEADERSHIP TOOL

### THE "BRANDING" OF PROFESSIONALS

#### PROFESSIONAL "BRANDING" Critical Next Steps

For too long the concept of "Branding" has been associated in many (if not most) of the minds with "Advertising". In the new age of universal presence on the WWW, nothing could be further from the truth.

The result of "Branding" as a focused effort is NOT simply the selling of services and products, but a proactive positioning, deliberately established in the minds of targeted individuals.

An attorney, accountant, or advisor of any sort who has pushed back the concept of "Branding" as being germane only to either products or commercial services, has lost track of the new reality.

#### The fundamental TRG Planning Rules fully apply to the need for such focused efforts:

1. Plans are not in writing they do not exist
2. Plans are not reviewed, measured and adjusted on a calendar basis are dangerously weak.
3. Written plans not reviewed by at least two sets of (independent) eyes and then adjusted will be weak in the face of competition that is fully "Branded".

For those readers of The Agenda, and visitors to the TRG website who have heard these themes advanced in a variety of ways over time, we say "Yes! This steadily evolving subject is of critical nature." As the web continues to evolve for all of us, our active 'Branding' on the web must also evolve.

#### A simple set of opening questions:

1. Is your intended positioning in writing (NOW... not in eventual development), with the identity of the targeted recipient of the perception also in writing?
2. Is a review team in place and challenging the effectiveness of the message?
3. Are their standing dates for review and adjustment?

If the answer to any of these questions is less than clear, then making them so should be a high and immediate priority.

#### UNDERSTANDING LIKELY VIEWS

There is a most unusual phenomenon within the Professional Community.

While many highly experienced legal, accounting and financial management advisors understand and recommend the need to wrap desired Branding around their clients, too often the same leaders hold back from pro-active Branding efforts for their own groups.

At times it seems that "Branding" itself as a key function has been "Miss-Branded".

If this assumption is correct, then there are likely to be a number of those reading this message who are carrying preconceptions of Branding as synonymous with advertising, which may create a risk.

The best Branding is visited on a cyclical basis to assure that your team's value is constantly impressed on an array of stakeholders.

A simple branding audit activity is to ask the individual who delivers sandwiches at lunch hour (Yes! No kidding!) what their perception of the group might be.

"Why should we care what a disengaged driver thinks?" you might say. If you are inside 3M or Wells Fargo, you are probably saying, "Of course, we want everyone to understand the value of our Brand!" but if you are in a small to moderate professional enterprise you may be scratching your head as to why you should care.

Spending large sums of money on colorful logos, etc. is NOT an answer. Isolating a clear differentiation for you and your group with all who come in contact with you is the true starting point. Applying an answer throughout the enterprise in the common course of business is a critical step.

### **The Internet: A Branding Platform**

The internet is the new common universe for the development of business for both groups and individuals, regardless of their areas of effort, who are intent on affirmatively positioning themselves in the marketplace.

Any planning, whether called "Strategic", "Operational" or "Administrative", that does not accommodate the internet, places the planners at risk. This is particularly true in regards to the Branding of "Professionals".

There is no exception for this reality.

The size of a group is **NOT** a factor over-ruling the importance of this step.

A global corporation without a well considered **INTERNET PLAN** providing a strong emphasis on the Branding of the Enterprise places themselves at risk.

A solo entrepreneur and even a single individual within a group, but who does not have a written internet plan that clarifies the desired perception of their capabilities, reduces their prospect for the advancement they seek.<sup>2</sup>

### **OPENING SEQUENCE OF QUESTIONS**

**The following is a master set of questions leading to a Web-Based "Brand":**

- \* Who do you hope will be aware of your group or individual efforts?
- \* Which functions or platforms on the web are they most likely to turn to for understanding?
- \* What "Look and Feel" of your presence will help center ALL visitors sense of what you are?
- \* What concepts do you advocate that will advance your client's efforts and visitors' understanding?
- \* How can you place yourself in front of them as they search for concepts?
- \* Have you placed your thoughts on the internet in a way that others can find them easily?

The fact that you are reading this line at this time demonstrates the power of simple, low cost mechanisms under **YOUR IMMEDIATE CONTROL** that **WILL** reach thousands virtually instantaneously.

**FYI...** if you have a concept focused on ways to use the internet that is innovative, please bring this to our attention at **TRG Agenda**. We are actively searching for great concepts to share.

### **SPECIAL NOTES:**

1. A Full Tool focused on THE INTERNET is available
2. A full index the TRG developed Policies and Procedures, including those focused on Branding is available on the TRG WEBSITE.