



# Brand and Marketing 360 Recommendations

## OBJECTIVE:

The Branding and Marketing 360 (BAM360) Framework and supporting documents help global health and development stakeholders improve branding and marketing in their projects so they can reach their goals.

## RECOMMENDATION 1:

**Project design: incorporate branding and marketing best practices into the design of demand generation and behavior change initiatives.**

**a) Funders and Implementers: Build time for laying essential groundwork for project design.** In the words of Airbnb co-founder Brian Chesky, “It’s really hard to get even 10 people to love anything. But it’s not hard if you spend a ton of time with them.”<sup>1</sup> Several projects we developed as case studies had a relatively long foundational learning period to immerse themselves in understanding the audience from the audience’s point of view. For example, Future Fab spent approximately 6 months understanding the audience and developing prototypes, NURHI spent 12 months in a foundational learning phase, and A360 spent 18 months. Well Told Story (WTS), the organization behind the Shujaaz media platform, has been immersed in studying Kenyan youth for the past 10 years and still spends approximately 3 months in foundational learning for each new campaign.<sup>2</sup>

**b) Implementers: From day 1 of project design, adopt a multi-disciplinary approach.** Many of the projects in our case study series benefited from a multi-disciplinary approach. For example, A360 used Human Centered Design, anthropology, youth engagement, etc. to understand adolescent girls’ realities and to design solutions from their perspectives. Adopting a multi-disciplinary approach often means engaging a multi-disciplinary team. When it came time to revisit the long-running Truth campaign’s strategy in 2013, the Truth Initiative deployed a multi-functional team made up of social scientists; marketing, communication, and media professionals; tobacco control practitioners; and media planners. Multidisciplinary teams strengthen projects in two ways: (1) a team that brings different skill sets, perspectives, and approaches is well positioned to uncover unarticulated needs, motivations, and desires among the target audience; and (2) a multifunctional design team establishes trust and shared understanding, ultimately strengthening project governance.

**c) Funders: Shift RFP success criteria from “speed to launch” to “depth of insight.”** The best projects are those that really “get” their audiences, and not those that are quick to launch campaigns and check off project deliverables. Audience understanding, for example, must get beyond the obvious (the spoken) to understand the unspoken drivers of behavior – a process that can take time, but that will deliver stronger results.

**d) Funders: Maintain brands over the long-term – beyond the typical two- to three-year project cycle.** It takes a significant investment to build a brand. Once built, a brand represents valuable intangible assets (brand awareness, recognition, and positive associations). And yet, brands are often abandoned or replaced at the end of a project lifecycle. While we encountered only one brand that had been abandoned in our case studies, this was an important insight that was expressed by public health and development practitioners during the stakeholder interview phase of this project.

1) “Airbnb’s Brian Chesky in Handcrafted” Masters of Scale Podcast with Reid Hoffman.

2) Based on conversations with Rob Burnet, Founder and CEO of Well Told Story (May 2019)

**e) Funders and Implementers: Seek ways to leverage existing brands to communicate new (but related) products, services, and behaviors.** Because it takes time and resources to build a brand, there is an opportunity to use the awareness, recognition and positive associations of existing brands, provided there is strong alignment between the audience and the brand vision (or that either the audience or brand vision can be broadened to accommodate the new initiative).

## **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

### **Branding and Marketing Mastery: Implement the best practices identified in the Branding and Marketing Framework.**

**a) Implementers: Employ empathetic approaches to audience understanding.** As explained by scholars Dorothy Leonard and Jeffrey Rayport, who introduced the concept of empathic design, “customers are so accustomed to current conditions that they don’t think to ask for a new solution – even if they have real needs that could be addressed.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the audience may not be aware of the motivations for their behaviors or may not be able to imagine a world different from the status quo. Empathetic approaches help implementing teams reveal the latent motivations, desires, and needs that ultimately unlock new ways of approaching problems.

**b) Implementers: Develop competency in identifying and distilling insights from the audience’s point of view.** We noticed that many implementers spoke of the insights that had made them think or feel differently about the audience, which is critically important. However, it is also critically important to have an insight that makes the audience *think or feel differently*. Using the four criteria for a strong insight will help teams understand when they have a good insight – and when to keep digging. Criteria for a strong insight: (1) it has tension, (2) it is true but not obvious, (3) it is emotional, and (4) it inspires the audience to think and / or feel differently. It is equally important to write insights that are concise and easy to remember (doing so makes the insights actionable and relevant for the entire organization) and to continuously mine for fresh insights that inspire the audience to think and feel differently.

**c) Implementers: Create brands.** When we originally drafted the best practices framework, we included the brand strategy section as “optional,” with the understanding that social and behavior change campaigns are sometimes unbranded. However, as we continued to review our case studies and reflected on the above definition of a brand, we concluded that *a brand is always part of the initiative, whether an implementer has intentionally thought about creating a brand or not*. Said differently, an implementer may try to run a campaign without its being a brand, but if the campaign is successful, programmers will find that they ended up having created a decent brand after all, as there will be something (a de-facto brand) that has awareness, meaning, and resonance for the audience (e.g., the NURHI “Get It Together” campaign).

**d) Implementers: Evolve brands over time to maintain relevance as the audience and cultural norms shift.** We noted instances where some long-term brands had benefited from strong awareness built up over time, but had lost relevance with a new generation of users and changing cultural norms. For example, Trust benefited from strong awareness and perceptions of quality but had lost relevance with younger men. The team tried to reach this new generation with new packaging but was not able gain traction with younger men until they holistically addressed the overall brand strategy. Similarly, the Truth campaign had been historically one of the most successful behavior change campaigns, having helped reduced teenage smoking from 23% in 2000 to less than 10% in 2013. However, in order to further reduce tobacco consumption and prevent a new generation of youth from smoking, Truth needed to refresh the brand strategy and approach.

**e) Implementers: Develop communications that have a clear and meaningful benefit that resonates with the audience.** Among the best practices in campaign strategy, having a clear and meaningful benefit that resonates is arguably the most important. Without this, it is unlikely that the campaign can touch the heart and / or open the mind, and it doesn’t matter which marketing vehicles are selected, or whether the audience is engaged or delighted. Through our research for this project, we noted several campaigns that lacked a clear benefit, or that included a benefit that was clear but did not resonate with the audience (e.g., “know your HIV status”).

<sup>3</sup> [“Airbnb’s Brian Chesky in Handcrafted” Masters of Scale Podcast with Reid Hoffman.](#)

**f) Funders and Implementers: Give the audience what they want, not just what you think they need.**

Several projects in our series made otherwise irrelevant products or services relevant by framing them in a way that resonates with the audiences. For example, NURHI talked about family planning to “get it [your life] together.” A360 and Future Fab took a similar approach, framing contraception as a means for girls to achieve their hopes and dreams. Shujaaz talked about contraception to help youth focus on their “hustle” (i.e., income generation). The best projects – those that captivate and engage the audience – carry through on the benefit that is most relevant to the audience (e.g., Shujaaz promotes ideas, tools, and a forum for youth to discuss income generation and also creates storylines to encourage contraception).

**g) Funders and Implementers: Repeat the most important key messages consistently over time.** This enables the brand to reach new audiences, remind existing and lapsed users, and appeal to rejecters. “Even Coca-Cola’s marketers have to remind people that it’s a refreshing drink, especially when you are hot.”<sup>4</sup>

**h) Funders and Implementers: Embrace emotion – Successful campaigns touch the heart and open the mind.** As shared with us by a development sector stakeholder in the early stages of our research, “*We can actually change people’s behaviors by delighting them in the process. We don’t always give ourselves permission to delight people. Sometimes we are too earnest or think that education is important even though we know that emotions are what drive behavior.*” Similarly, the reaction from the African university students we engaged to provide feedback on our case study projects was telling. They expressed shock and surprise upon learning that MTV Shuga was a behavior change campaign. They identified with the show, had learned from it, and loved watching it. They contrasted it with, “those public health campaigns that tell you to get tested for HIV. You just ignore them because you know they’re just another government health message.” When we tap into emotions, we inspire the audience to think and feel differently; we also inspire the audience to engage with the brand and share the message with others.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

#### **Enabling Factors: Structure and measure projects in a way that ensures successful branding and marketing.**

**a) Implementers: Establish processes and enable a culture of learning and adaptation throughout the project.** This requires creating a culture that: rewards learning and improving vs. implementing as planned; allows for time to test, learn, and adapt throughout the project; and uses tools such as rapid prototyping, social listening, etc. Many of the campaigns we evaluated included some form of “learn and adapt.” For example, A360 used an “adaptive implementation” approach, whereby the team adapted content based on audience feedback. The Truth Initiative conducted a weekly survey of 140 teens and young adults and used these data to refine campaign exposure targets, optimize the media plan, and confirm message relevancy. Likewise, Shujaaz has processes built into their approach, including message pre-testing, script revisions, and follow-up social media conversations, to assess audience understanding and address points of confusion.

**b) Funders and Implementers: Measure brand metrics in addition to measuring impact.** Most projects that we assessed had built-in plans to measure various processes of behavior change efforts, though some – surprisingly – did not measure the overall impact or effectiveness of the work on changing behavior. However, with few exceptions, we noted an absence of brand-related measurement across all projects. For example, projects measure brand awareness so that they can correlate project outcomes with brand exposure, but the brand is not monitored the way other strategic assets are monitored (inventories are accounted for, physical assets are maintained, human resources are evaluated through performance reviews, etc.). This suggests a need to bring brand and marketing thinking to the rigor of measurement and evaluation, and to develop the framework to do so at the start of the project.

**c) Funders and Implementers: Program design should include and budget for program evaluation specialists at the outset of the campaign.** This ensures that evaluations are scientifically grounded and can be implemented in tandem with program activities. Programs such as Shujaaz that attempt to evaluate their efforts after

4) Sharp, Byron, “How Brands Grow: what marketers don’t know,” Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 207.

project launch will be limited in the conclusions that they can draw. Funders and implementers should remember that behavior change takes time, and evaluation designs should reflect this fact.

**d) Implementers: Staff projects with brand and marketing technical expertise at the decision-making level.** In projects where we identified strong brand and / or campaign strategy, we noted a depth of expertise in design, brand, or marketing among the project team leadership. For example, A360 Kuwa Mjanja benefited from a dedicated, local design team, complemented with support from IDEO. Truth is led by a former advertising executive, and edutainment initiatives such as MTV Shuga benefit from industry expertise (not to mention the strong brand support from MTV). In contrast, we noted, through our team's own experience and through stakeholder interviews, that marketing and behavior change expertise is often staffed at a junior level, with varying ability to execute, but lacking the authority to influence budgets and decision-making because they are not part of the senior management team or are not well-represented at that level.

**e) Implementers: Consider ways that everyone who is involved with the project – staff, partners, brand ambassadors - can be a passionately engaged contributor.** Several studies cite the importance of “employee” engagement.<sup>5</sup> Based on Gallup research, work units that score in the top half of Gallup's engagement measure “nearly doubled their odds of success compared with those in the bottom half.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, an MIT study that looks at employee experience (which takes into account the entire employee journey, from recruitment through departure) shows that those who are in the top 25% on employee experience enjoy 2x the number of innovations, 2x the customer satisfaction scores, and 25% higher profits compared to those in the bottom 25% on employee experience measures.<sup>7</sup> Among the projects we reviewed, MTN stands out for making a concerted effort to optimize the employee experience, creating a center of excellence, priority focus areas, and a national rewards day to kick off the program. Employee experience is important because it contributes to performance, enables strong governance, and affects how the audience interacts with service providers, brand ambassadors, customer service support, etc.

**f) BMGF: Continue to drive awareness of, appreciation for, and competency in branding and marketing as a discipline.** The intent of this recommendation is two-fold: (1) to continue to disseminate findings (e.g., publications, presentations) to drive awareness for branding and marketing best practices among the global health and development community; and (2) support the creation of content development and training to give practitioners greater exposure to and experience in applying the concepts in the branding and marketing best practices framework.

5) For the purpose of brand and marketing best practices, we use the term “employee” to refer to anyone who is associated with the project – staff, partners, clinic staff, community activators, etc.

6) Sorenson, Susan, “How Employee Engagement Drives Growth,” [Gallup.com/workplace](https://www.gallup.com/workplace), June 2013.

7) Kristine Dery and Ina Sebastian, “Building Business Value with Employee Experience,” MIT CISR Research Briefing, 2017.