



BRAND AND MARKETING 360 RECOMMENDATIONS

July 2019

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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.** The brands and initiatives we found to have robust audience understanding – and therefore areas of strength in brand and marketing communications – had a relatively long foundational learning period to immerse themselves in understanding the world from the audience’s point of view. 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.”¹ Several projects we developed as case studies had a relatively long foundational learning period. 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.
- b) **Implementers: From day 1 of project design, adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to audience understanding.** In the projects with the strongest audience understanding, the teams took a multi-disciplinary approach. For example, A360 used Human Centered Design, anthropology, youth engagement, etc. to understand reality and to design solutions from the lens of the adolescent girls they sought to serve. 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.
- 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.

Recommendation 2 – Branding and Marketing Mastery: Implement the best practices identified in the Branding and Marketing Framework.

- a) **Implementers: Develop competency in identifying and distilling insights from the audience’s point of view.** The strongest projects we reviewed were grounded in an audience insight. We also 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.
- b) **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 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.
- c) **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, it doesn’t matter what marketing vehicles are selected, or whether the audience is engaged or delighted. Through our research for this project, we noted campaigns that often lacked a clear benefit; or, may have included a benefit that was clear, but does not resonate (e.g. “know your HIV status”).

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; allowing for time to test, learn, and adapt throughout the project; and using 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 “adaptative 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 this 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) **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) **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.
- d) **Foundation: 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 applying the concepts in the branding and marketing best practices framework.