

Branding Your Association

What is the one promise your staff and leadership makes to members every time they interact with your members?

At The Ritz-Carlton, the staff doesn't arbitrarily believe in great service. Their brand, *"Our Ladies & Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests,"* is the promise that every employee is measured against.

In an Association, every member wants to know what they can expect in return for their membership. Branding establishes the one unique take-away the member can count on in every interaction. Features are important – like governmental affairs and education offerings. Brands though put in plain words the one promise you will deliver. It may be an offering, a benefit, or even a behavior.

The brand is not arbitrary; it is developed from member feedback about their needs, what leadership aspires for the association, and what makes you different. It is a creative approach, yet follows an intentional process.

Association Executives are energized with a brand that is consistent with their philosophies. A strong brand effects member interactions, employee communications, and advertising/marketing efforts.

FIRST, identify members' biggest unanswered needs through a member survey

SECOND, discover what leaders aspire for the Association

THIRD, develop a brand promise to unify your staff and leaders

Does your association really need branding?

- *Brands give the member a reason to care.* When a member knows what they can expect from the association, and then get it, you build loyalty with them.
- *Brands give the staff a common focus.* Staffs are naturally divided into silos (or functions). Branding helps the change the culture of your staff from communicating about tactics to collaboration to deliver a promise.
- *Brands give your leadership a basis for decision-making.* In time, you will consider the brand in your decision-making about services and member-reaching activities. Your decisions will be more focused and consistent with your promise.
- *Brands help you communicate more successfully with your members.*

Delivering a brand promise is one intangible offering that can make the difference in attracting and keeping members.

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