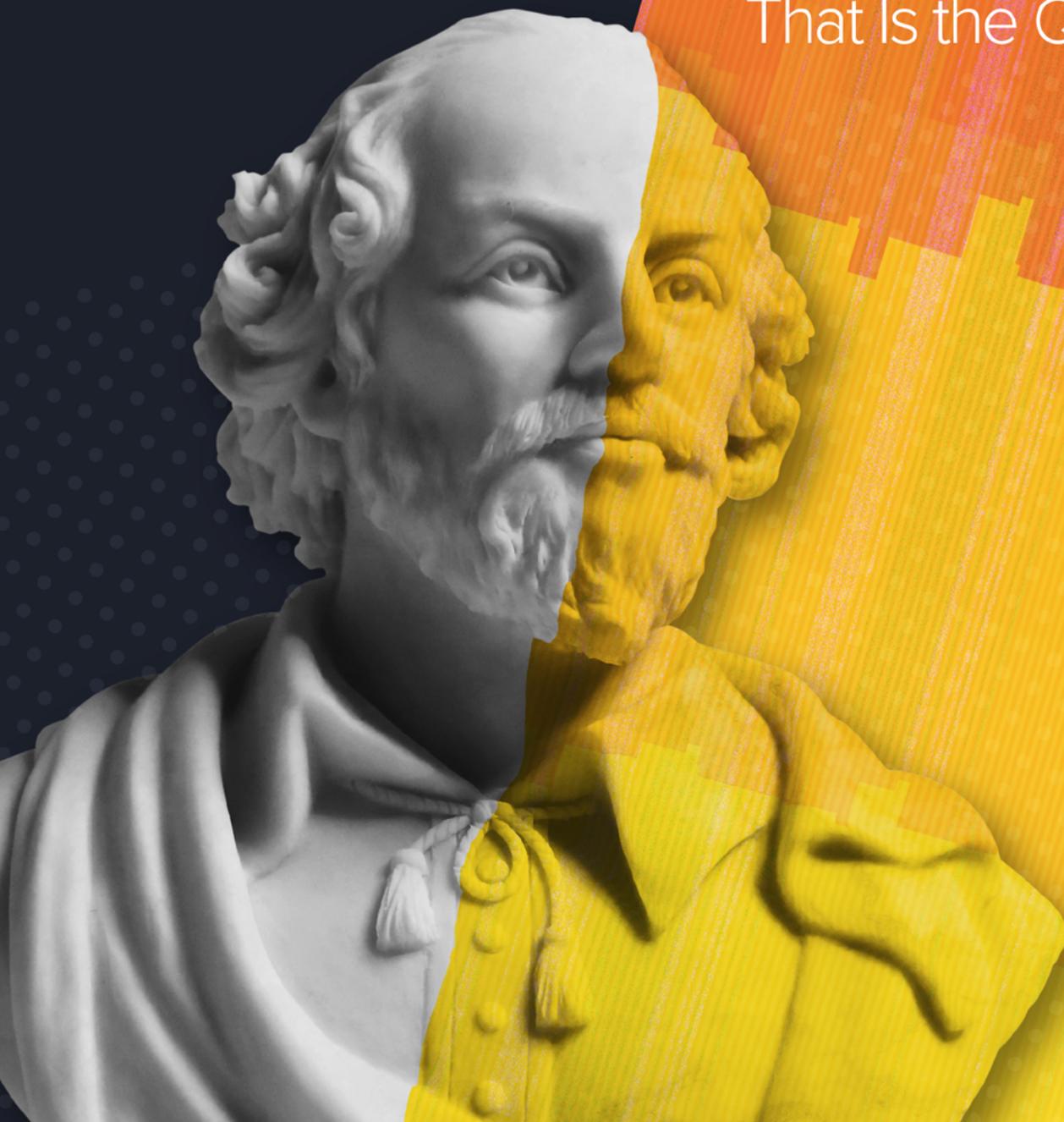


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To Refresh or Rebrand:

That Is the Question



**“ We know
what we are,
but not what
we may be. ”**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)



To Refresh or Rebrand: That Is the Question

The notion of *branding* has always fascinated me, as it is an art, wrapped in a science, shaped by consumer experience. Indeed, my favorite definition of brand is that it is, “a sum of experiences with your business, product, or service that influences their purchase decision.” A brand’s value, therefore, varies from person to person, based not only on the visual appeal of a logo, or quality of a product, but also on the quality of service they receive from every representative of that brand.

To put it another way, a brand is an intangible asset, valued subjectively by each consumer. This is why the decision to refresh or rebrand a company, product, or service is so intriguing and gutsy — especially when the brand has passionate advocates. In their eyes, you’re changing something they love. The outcome could be a stronger relationship, but it could also be an open revolt.

To Refresh or Rebrand: That Is the Question is our effort to help marketers understand how others have navigated these tricky waters, in hopes of making your own branding efforts a bit easier. There’s no simple roadmap, but we think the lessons surfaced here may just help you know when to make that bold decision, and go in a new direction with your brand.



Onward and upward,

Jeffrey K. Rohrs

Chief Marketing Officer, Yext

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The Value of Brand

The decision to rebrand, or even just refresh a brand, is arguably one of the biggest a marketer can make. It's no surprise, then, that it can feel like such a daunting task. After all, you're not just changing a name or a logo — you're changing the emotional focal point of interaction between you and your customer.

In the broadest sense, your brand is the sum of experiences that a consumer has with your audience, products, company, and services. Done right, these experiences increase affinity, loyalty, and the amount a consumer is willing to spend. In so doing, they create real value for your company, in the form of greater sales, better margins, and social advocacy. Admittedly, the true value of a brand is subjective and intangible; however, that hasn't stopped a variety of organizations from developing methodologies to quantify and track brand value.

Foremost among these organizations is Interbrand, which values brands based on three key metrics:

1. **The financial performance of the branded products or service**
2. **The role the brand plays in influencing consumer choice**
3. **The strength the brand has to command a premium price, or secure earnings for the company¹**

Interbrand also publishes an annual Best Global Brands ranking that tracks how valuations change from year to year.

Here are the top five most valuable brands according to the Interbrand Best Global Brands 2017 Report:



Apple: \$184 Billion USD



Google: \$142 Billion USD



Microsoft: \$80 Billion USD



Coca-Cola: \$70 Billion USD



Amazon: \$65 Billion USD²

With such incredible value at stake, imagine being the marketer behind the scenes that says, "We need to refresh our brand!" And yet, that's exactly what happened with each of these top five brands.

Over the years, the Apple logo went from a rainbow, to dimensional silver, to flat black, white, or silver depending on the application. Google's logo underwent a famous refresh 2015,³ and over the years, its product names have evolved significantly (remember Froogle?⁴). Coca-Cola even has an entire webpage devoted to tracing 130 years of changes to its logo.⁵



1976



1977-1998



1998



1998-2000



2001-2007



2007-2014



2014-Present

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So even with the most valuable brands in the world, the decision to refresh or rebrand is real, persistent, and pressing — be it for the company as a whole, a product, or service. It impacts every aspect of the business from signage to packaging, advertising to digital presence, employee relations to vendor relations, and navigation to distribution. Ostensibly, the decision is driven by the need to make the brand more valuable by helping it resonate better with consumers. But with all the risk and costs involved, we must ask one fundamental question:

When Do You Know It's the Right Time to Refresh or Rebrand?

“Brands come to this decision for so many different reasons,” explains Julie Cottineau, CEO of brand consultancy BrandTwist.



Julie Cottineau

CEO, BrandTwist

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“Let's use an example from the technology space. Often, a tech company starts out with one platform or offering, but over time, they're actually adding value in a different direction. Then they're constantly prospecting clients to say, ‘Well, I know we sound like a data streaming company, but we're not.’”

“Alternatively, this can also happen with mergers and acquisitions, as well as executive personnel changes,” Cottineau says. “But even when it's a case of trying to make the brand fresher, it's not about just changing to a new name or the new logo. It's about looking at your market and saying, ‘What is everybody else already doing, and how can we stand out from that?’”

Curious as to whether a refresh (or rebrand) could benefit your brand?

If the answer to one or more of these questions is yes, it's time to think seriously about the position of your brand going forward.

Has your **day-to-day business diverged significantly from the original brand identity?** (Example: “We sound like a data streaming company, but we’re not.”)

Has your **image or perceived brand become problematic**, leading to a decrease in sales or engagement for an identifiable reason? For example, for years, the Burberry brand was associated with gang attire across England — so much so that some pubs banned Burberry clothing.⁶ In response, Burberry rebranded as a luxury attire and accessories brand through revitalized messaging, ad campaigns, and celebrity endorsements — while keeping the equity of the brand name that had been built across other parts of the world.

Are you **expanding into a new market**, particularly internationally, where your current brand name or identity might not make sense — or cause problematic associations?

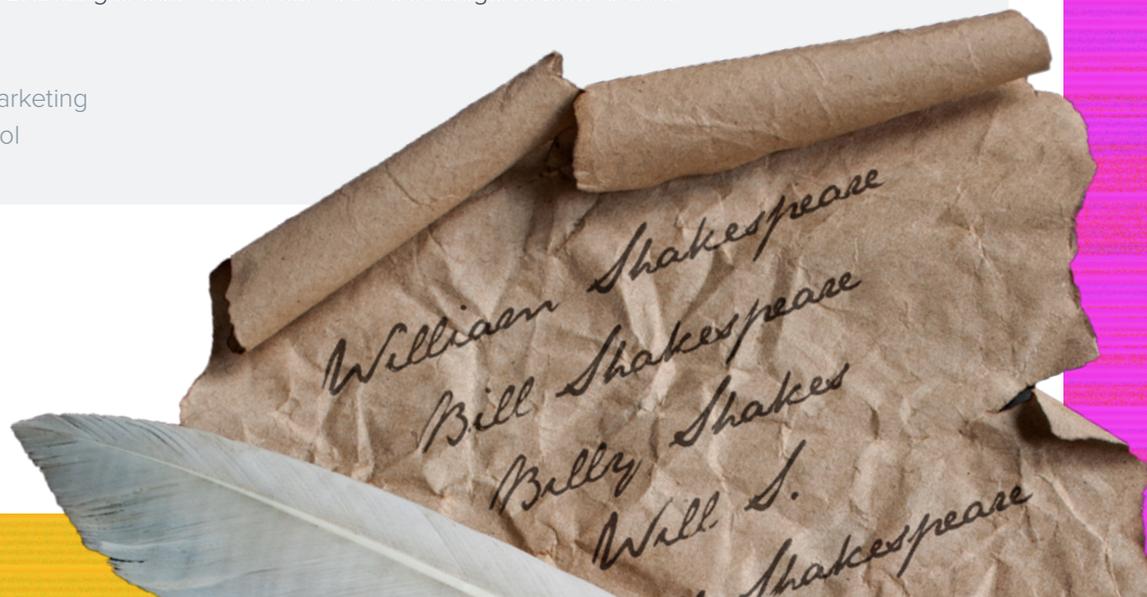
Is there a **compelling reason for a makeover in order to improve reputation — or stay relevant?** (Think Apple Computer Company dropping “Computer Company” from its name, concurrent with a logo redesign and renewed product offerings.)

Has your brand recently undergone a **merger or acquisition that changes brand identity, strategy, or market position?**

The reasons to consider a rebrand are numerous. But the bottom line is, **“the rebranding has to be anchored in some kind of strategic activity,”** says Deb Gabor, CEO of brand strategy consultancy Sol Marketing and author of *Branding is Sex*. “There has to be a strategic reason to do it.”



Deb Gabor
CEO, Sol Marketing
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To Refresh or Rebrand: That Is the Question

Once a brand makes the decision to reposition, there are two overarching strategic angles from which to pursue it — and the brand must decide whether 'tis nobler in the mind... to pursue a full *rebrand*, or a less exhaustive brand *refresh*.

A **brand refresh** is a comprehensive reimagining of how a brand looks, operates, and communicates its message — but it retains its brand name and core position within the market. Essentially, a refresh is for a brand that has strong customer loyalty and brand recognition, but that may need substantial adjustments to communicate its value to new consumers, or to stay current in a market that has significantly evolved over the lifetime of the brand.

“A brand refresh is all about invigoration,” explains Rob Lynch, President of Arby's.



Rob Lynch

President, Arby's

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“It’s about taking something that isn’t broken, but could use some excitement — some news. It’s critically important to maintain the core integrity of the brand, while adding interesting and newsworthy components that will create conversations amongst the media, and in turn, the target audience. These additions or changes can come in the form of new content, packaging, or retail executions.”

But that doesn’t mean a refresh is only about a verbal marketing message. The look of a product — even when slightly tweaked — can communicate a new image or view, without having to overhaul every aspect of a brand.



Refreshing! Diet Coke Gets a Brand Refresh

Coca-Cola is one of the most famous brands in the world, and that means people across the globe are intimately familiar with it — both a good thing and a bad thing when it comes to capturing new eyeballs and imaginations. The brand’s recent update — which made the Diet Coke can slimmer and sleeker — left the brand name and position intact while aiming to generate conversation and potentially appeal to new demographics.

“We are excited about the Diet Coke refresh because we believe that it will help create new excitement around one of the world’s most recognized brands,” Lynch says. “The new packaging design is consistent with, and reinforces the benefits of, a zero calorie product. And although we don’t sell the product in the newly designed cans at Arby’s, we believe that the brand halo and the renewed interest will benefit us in food service.”

Comprehensive **rebranding**, on the other hand, represents a definitive ending for the old brand. This means giving up brand equity in the established look and feel to start with a clean slate, reinventing your brand in a new market, and possibly changing your value proposition.

Sometimes this happens because of an acquisition. Other times it's the result of a market shift, or of a new market entrant. The key is that there is something fundamental about the brand identity that needs to change.

HomeAway®

Multiple Meanings: Rebranding For a More Diverse Market

When HomeAway, a vacation rental company, acquired EscapeHomes, a multi-listing service for vacation rentals, its marketing team faced an unexpected challenge as it expanded EscapeHomes' reach to the East Coast.

"When we tested EscapeHomes as a brand name on the East Coast, there were a lot of people who were first-generation born American or the descendants of first-generation born Americans — people who had to escape from other places overseas," Gabor, who worked with the brand, explains. "For Americans, the word 'escape' conjures up for us sitting on a beach with a Corona in the sun. For people from other cultures, the word 'escape' gives them PTSD. That had to change."

Regardless of circumstance, once the decision to rebrand has been made, there is one critical precept to keep in mind throughout the entire process: "Your brand exists everywhere. It extends through every single action you take, every touch point you have," says Gabor. "A brand exists in 360 degrees. It is not a single point in time, or a single thing. This informs every decision you make going forward."



Offline vs. Online Rebranding

A brand used to be a cohesive identity existing in a limited number of places (e.g. its physical flagship stores, and brand-controlled print or TV advertisements). But in today's world, a brand exists across an unprecedented number of physical and digital touch points. And the ways that consumers interact with that brand — on mobile, through voice-activated assistants, and more — have never been more complicated. Consistency across these online and offline channels is critical. A brand's voice, look, style of communication, and essential info (address, hours, etc.) must first be accurate, and second, deliver a cohesive identity and message in the physical and digital worlds.

For example, in the most basic sense, a brand can't promise to be something online, and then fail to deliver that promise offline. A hotel that advertises as newly pet-friendly, for example, needs to promote this amenity across channels — and then, of course, deliver on it in the physical space.

The need to clearly state the physical attributes or amenities of a brand digitally matters more than ever in the age of voice search.

“What I see as a challenge for some people is making sure that they have the content on the website that is answering the questions that customers are actually looking for,” says Melissa Walner, director of global SEO at Hilton.



Melissa Walner

Director of Global SEO, Hilton

[@MelissaWalner](#)

“If a customer wants to find that pet-friendly hotel, you have to make sure that you've got content on your website that is speaking to that. You can't just *be* a pet-friendly hotel; you have to say it clearly and explicitly.”

If you haven't rolled out a rebrand consistently and cohesively across online and offline, you haven't rebranded; you've just created confusion.



The Roadmap to Rebranding

There are several stops you'll have to make when you're on the road to rebranding. By planning your journey from the outset, you'll set your brand up for success as it undergoes its evolution.

1

Define your strategy.

2

Decide whether to use an in-house team or to work with an outside agency.

3

Set measurable goals.

4

Build out the new brand.

5

Rollout: Take an 'everything-first' approach.

1

Define your strategy.

The first stop on the road to rebranding is to **define your strategy** and **set an approximate budget**.

This sounds simple enough, but this stage may take significant time due to the volume of research necessary. This means taking stock of revenue, expenses, existing operating budgets and the like before executives can set a specific financial goal.

“Marketers are always trying to link marketing activities to financial outcomes. But in a rebranding exercise, what you really need to do is think about the value of the brand as a whole — and what the total benefit to the enterprise is going to be,” says Tony Pace, former CMO of Subway.



Tony Pace

Former CMO, Subway

 @cerebrlgraffiti

“Often, this is a very substantial number. It opens up a much larger conversation about how important rebranding is to the future of the enterprise.”

In other words, the total value of “branding” doesn’t appear on a balance sheet. But when it comes to a rebrand, setting a budget based on what percentage of topline revenue would usually be spent on marketing activities (in general, or by franchise in a franchise model) often isn’t thinking big enough. As best as possible, executives should aim to interrogate the overall value of the brand — and approximately how much ROI a rebranding initiative might have for an entire enterprise. That’s what should determine budget.

2

Decide whether to use an in-house team or to work with an outside agency.

There are advantages to both approaches. Especially for bigger organizations who have the bandwidth, relying on an in-house team means that they will:

1. Have a deep understanding of the brand from the outset
2. Be able to devote all of their energy to the one rebranding project alone

Outside agencies, on the other hand, have the depth of experience — they’ve executed countless rebrands and refreshes — as well as a fresh perspective from the outside. And they can always work together with an existing internal team in order to ensure a culture fit.

“With an agency, you’ll also be able to take advantage of the experience of a seasoned team of branding professionals. If you can’t afford to hire a large internal creative team, this gives you access to the part-time help from senior creative professionals that are experts in their areas,” says New Kind’s Chris Grams.⁷

“This can often be the key benefit of working with an agency — you can purchase the creative leadership for your internal team on a part-time basis. You have access to deep experience and established practice experts, but don’t have to pay the premium to have them as full-time employees.”

Cottineau seconds this. “It’s time-consuming, it’s research-consuming, and I always think that an outsider can give a fresher perspective than you get internally. It depends on the circumstance, but if a brand has made the decision to devote the time and money to a comprehensive rebrand, I would seek outside help to take advantage of the benefit of their experience.”

3

Set measurable goals.

After this decision is solidified, the agency (or the in-house team) should comprehensively research the market and the target audience in order to determine what differentiates the brand from its competitors — and then **set one to three overarching, concretely measurable goals that will guide the process** and be revisited later when it comes time to measure the success of the rebrand.

“My first step is to think intelligently and deeply about the brand’s category — but then I actually walk away from the category,” Cottineau says. “Because I think that one of the biggest mistakes most companies make in branding and rebranding is that they look too closely to what everybody else is doing.”

4

Build out the new brand.

Once the goal of the rebrand and the strategy for pursuing it is pinned down, it’s time to **build out the new brand** — with special attention to **all of the touch points that matter** when it comes to how customers may see, hear of, ask for, or interact with your brand. This includes not only the brand’s proprietary website and storefronts, but mapping and navigation apps, social media channels, and any partner properties.

“If you’re going to invest a large amount of money in strategic rebranding, and recreating all new assets for the brand — from name and logos to signage and in-store displays — you don’t need one errant map location with the wrong information to pop up in someone’s Google search and totally undermine all of your efforts as a brand,” Gabor says.

Measurable goals are

1. Broadly defined
2. Observable

Common rebrand goals include:

- Increasing market share in X space or vertical [e.g. “logistics space”]
- Increasing revenue or profit
- Elevating or increasing brand awareness



5

Rollout: Take an ‘everything-first’ approach.

What may seem like the *big launch moment* is actually several moments, but analysts appear to agree on one thing: **Your first audience is your employees, and the internal launch for the rebrand is an important event.**

“I think internal aspects like the signage and headquarters should be prioritized before doing anything else,” Cottineau says. “Your employees are your brand ambassadors — they’re living the brand.”

“I’m not a big believer in the ‘ta-da’ launch,” she continues. “I think it should be almost a slow-release evolution — so that, by the time the brand is out there, people have started to get familiar with it, and they can give input. In my work at BrandTwist, I look at a launch that’s really a year to eighteen months.”

Employees should be in the know from the beginning. But it can pay dividends to “launch internally with a big splash type of event,” brand strategist Ida Cheinman writes in a blog post for Substance 151.⁸

“This not only makes your employees feel in the know, but also, when done well, it truly vests them in the new brand and turns them into effective brand ambassadors going forward.”

Externally, the first step should be to **identify your brand launch audiences** — and then determine the best ways to reach each one. Cheinman recommends that each audience have its own communications plan, and that this outreach — which will likely include formal letters, email announcements for subscribers, social media posts, and more — be carefully assigned to managers and rolled out concurrently. It’s also key to do a beta test of the web and mobile sites to both gradually boost brand familiarity as well as to ensure that everything is up and running in advance of the “official” launch.

“I don’t advocate for a digital-first approach — I advocate for an ‘everything-first’ approach, physical and digital together.”

Deb Gabor

CEO, Sol Marketing

And finally, the thought process throughout the rollout should be the same as that which drove the reimagining of the brand at the outset. “You have to think about all of the different ways people are going to come to this brand,” Gabor says. “They’re interacting with it not just on your website or at your store, but through other influencers on social media, through navigation apps, and more. Some of these means are digital, and some of them are not digital, but they are all related. So, I don’t advocate for a digital-first approach — I advocate for an ‘everything-first’ approach, physical and digital together.”

After all, customers no longer live their lives in silos — they research products on desktop, they use their mobile devices while shopping in stores, and they ask Alexa for recommendations.

If customers are everywhere, your brand should be too.

Measuring Rebrand Success

How do you actually determine the success of a rebrand? It all depends on your individual business — and that’s why the concrete goals set in step two matter. *Driving engagement or debuting a new logo* doesn’t cut it.

“Obviously, straight ROI is very difficult to measure,” Cottineau says. “But the goal is to break that down. There are several methods you look at depending on what your goal is. Is it an increase in traffic to the news website? Click-throughs? Is the rebrand increasing qualified leads?”

“Ideally, you made sure you had a baseline for all of the metrics that matter. Then you revisit them the next six months, a year, 18 months, 24 months, and course correct along the way.”





Cicis: Beyond Pizza Increases Foot Traffic by Fixing Its Digital Knowledge

Family-friendly pizza buffet chain Cicis had been around since 1985. While those decades of history gave the restaurant its legacy, they also meant that the brand had lost some of its relevance. In 2015, Cicis (then known as Cici's Pizza) embarked on a comprehensive brand refresh.

The overarching goals were to launch a new, compelling brand identity, which would bring Cicis into the new millennium, and to engage previously underserved demographics (such as Cicis' significant and growing Hispanic customer base). As the company built out its new brand, it updated everything from its logo — officially changing its name to *Cicis: Beyond Pizza* — to its website and store concept design.

The company began by relaunching its revitalized digital properties across desktop and mobile. ***“During the rebrand, we discovered lots of issues with our digital knowledge across the entire web,”*** explains Douglas Kwong, Director of Digital.



Douglas Kwong

Director of Digital, Cicis

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“Even basic names, addresses, and phone numbers were inconsistent. Hours were wrong. Locations were marked as open that were actually closed.”

Cicis: Beyond Pizza worked with Yext to correct this discrepancy, discovering in the process that the success of a brand refresh is inherently compromised if customers can't seamlessly find and learn more about the rebranded business online in all of the intelligent services they use today.



The Three 'Must-Knows' on the Road to Rebranding

1. In building a strategy, seek to differentiate.

It's a common mistake to copy too much of what already exists in the market.

Market research is undoubtedly valuable, as the new (or refreshed) brand needs to resonate with the target audience. But no one wins by playing catch-up to their competitors. This is where either hiring new members for an internal team devoted to the rebrand — or working with an outside agency — can really help with a fresh perspective.

"It's about looking at *your* brand story," Gabor says. Of course, your brand story should automatically be different than anyone else's. "Ask, 'what's the story we want to tell in the future?'"

2. Establish ROI metrics first and know who's accountable.

It can be difficult to determine the success of a rebrand. Did a new customer stop into the store after the rebrand launch *because* of it, or would that have happened anyway?

This gets easier to pin down when a brand establishes the concrete metrics they care about from the start, and **then designs the rebrand strategy to address them.** If a brand wants to boost click-throughs, for example, it might be a smart idea to run a targeted mobile ad campaign to the intended audience — concurrent with the rebrand rollout and featuring all updated brand messaging and iconography. Then, the brand can attribute site visits and click-throughs, and compare to previous numbers. This action can be repeated again after another six months or a year, as Cottineau describes, to get an idea of how performance has truly been affected.

3. Make the customer the hero in their own story — everywhere.

Allowing the customer to be the hero in their own story means creating a journey that prioritizes *them* — their needs from a brand, and their preferred methods of discovery and communication. This matters during the rebranding process, certainly, but moreover, it matters for *every* brand. It means not assuming that all millennials want to interact with brands on Instagram, when nearly half of them actually prefer to use email.⁹ It means opening your brand up to communication on platforms like Facebook Messenger, because millions of consumers are contacting businesses there each month.

Both rebranding and branding in general require creating a seamless brand experience that puts the customer first.

“It’s like this — if someone goes to search for your business on Yelp because that’s their preferred discovery engine, and that listing has the incorrect hours on it, you have murdered your brand promise,” Gabor concludes. “Because whether you’re open or not, you have the perception that you’re open, because that information exists out there. Your brand is *everything* out there. So if you’re trying to make people a hero in their own story, but you’re not delivering on your promise by having incorrect information out there, you’re making a whole lot of promises that are designed to be broken.”

To Refresh or Rebrand: Decision Matrix

	A	B
Audience priorities Is your priority to	maintain or recapture an existing audience that is drifting away?	appeal to/add a current or younger audience?
Equity Does existing brand equity appear to	harm the brand/hinder entering a new market?	still help create positive associations?
Market Is the primary goal to	enter a new market OR revitalize within an existing one as a new player?	simply stand out in the existing market?
	Mostly A: Rebrand	Mostly B: Refresh

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Curious as to whether a refresh (or rebrand) could benefit your brand?

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