

COVER STORY

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# The Art and Science of Rebranding



YOUR STAR IS THE SAME,  
YOUR NEWS IS THE SAME,

JUST A NEW NAME



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By **Dhaleta Surender Kumar**

*Rebranding is at times mistaken and loosely used for a redesign, repackaging, and repositioning. While these can be the means for it, the process cannot be called rebranding alone. Rebranding is a change in thought process and ideology and the brand philosophy. While some rebranding is evident overnight, some take years to even activate and further more years to show results. And not to forget, it involves customers' and the employees' active support and green signal. For a change, **Pitch** took a back seat and let the experts speak this time. So while we bring some recent examples of rebranding processes, our experts - **KV Sridhar, Kiran Khalap, Ashwini Deshpande and Siddhartha Singh** tell you more, on the finest shades and colours of the molecules of the Art and Science of Rebranding*



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In May, Star News had a massive campaign that could not be missed. The hoardings across the Hindi heartland, the TVCs on GECs screamed and newspapers had ads with words of reassurance. That it were the same journalists, the attitude still is the same, it's just a mere name change – that from June 1, 2012, Star News would be ABP News. If we go a little back there are more such examples like that of Hero Honda becoming Hero Motocorp, or the SUV from Mahindra-Renault stable Logan becoming Verito (Mahindra). These are examples where there has been change of guard, after the partnerships haven't worked, or stakes have been bought or ownership has totally changed hands. As in case of a little older example – Hutch becoming Vodafone.

Rebranding is often inappropriately associated with a change in logo or a new name or a new design. While these are the tools of rebranding, largely it is the change or shift or evolution of a philosophy and attitude.

Nitin Pai, Vice President, Marketing – Tata Elxsi, puts it in better words, as he says, "Rebranding initiative for any organisation is very strategic in nature and not tactical. It is done to position your company in case of corporate branding from a long term perspective. It's done in order to take care of one's suppliers / vendors, customers, employees, stakeholders and the entire universe who get affected by the rebranding changes."

In most of the above cases, brands have gone aboard, as in case of ABP News reassuring consumers that their philosophy is the same. It is just a mere name change.

Vodafone, is another example, where it assured consumers, as it retained the pug as its mascot that the values of the old company remain the same and its just a mere name and logo change. Ashwini Deshpande, Founder Director & Head of Communication Design Practice at Elephant Strategy + Design, says, "What needs to change depends entirely on where the shoe is biting. There are many brands that have kept the same attitude over generations, but changed the look & feel and many others have changed even the attitude for staying relevant to the intended audience."

### The evolution

While much of the rebranding exercises are immediate, some are evolutionary in nature. Take for example the 'Rise' initiative from the Mahindra Group. The roughly about Rs



60,000 crore Indian company is no more just confined to Indian shores. It, today has a global footprint; and has forayed beyond automobiles. Hence the corporate brand concept of 'Rise' was distilled.

The new corporate branding exercise, spreads over a period of three years with investments of upto Rs 120 crore.

To further strengthen its corporate rebranding effort, Mahindra took the movement marketing path and hence was born – Spark the Rise, a multimedia campaign, which calls for action to empower people and bring about a change. Mahindra would play the role of an enabler in this change. The thought? Persuasion through advertising is passé. Conversation with consumers is in. And brands have to become a part of their lives. Instead of selling brand communication brands are trying to encompass consumer culture in their positioning and create channels of deep-rooted engagement with them.

### Employees as stake holders

The evolutionary rebranding exercise came in from conversations with employees, executives, customers, and the general public in seven different countries over a period of one and a half years. So what took Mahindra so long to chalk out its corporate rebranding strategy? According to Pai, "For any organisation, its employees are the key asset. They are the brand ambassadors as well as the manifestation of a brand."

It is ideal to involve as many internal stakeholders as possible in defining or articulating the brand. Also, the new identity must be launched internally first. Deshpande, says, "Everyone who represents the brand must understand the brand articulation, the reasons for new definitions, new look, new order. This way, they become ambassadors

**Rebranding is often inappropriately associated with a change in logo or a new name or a new design. Largely it is the change or shift or evolution of a philosophy and attitude**



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**KV Sridhar**  
National Creative Director,  
Leo Burnett

## Not just cosmetic change

When I was a kid I remember reading a story about sheep and wolves. In this story, one of the sheep, to escape from the wrath of wolves, disguised as a wolf and went along with the pack. However, on being attacked by another pack, the sheep's act was caught as it was the first one to run away from the battle. The moral of the story is simple – real transformation does not happen by changing on the outside, it only truly occurs when you transform from your inner core.

The mechanics of rebranding in today's world operate in a somewhat similar fashion. Rebranding consists of a complete reengineering of the brand and not just on the surface. Now take the popular examples of rebranding that are quoted these days. When Vodafone changed its color from pink to red and when Airtel last year changed its logo, people took it to be re-

branding. Well, if you ask me it was just a case of changing graphics and nothing else. According to me, one of the finest instances of rebranding in India was Bajaj. When Bajaj reengineered itself from a scooter brand to a bike brand with remarkable introductions of Pulsar and DTSi technology, that was when real rebranding took place.

The Science and Art of rebranding imply changing at the core. Tomorrow an old person who has been wearing dull shirts and trousers throughout his life putting on flashy denims cannot claim to have become young. Unless he becomes mentally young he/she wouldn't be able to stake claim on having rebranded itself. Real rebranding consists of constantly reinventing itself. Two pertinent cases in point would be that of Canon and ITC. Canon reengineered itself from 'scanning' to 'digital imagery' unlike Kodak. Similarly, ITC

transformed itself from being a tobacco company to a foods one.

The mantra of rebranding involves reinventing yourself to rededicate yourself to a different set of people and consumers. In today's world superficial rebranding will not work. Just by changing graphics and logo you cannot rebrand yourself. In this age of social media and conversations just by wearing designer clothes you cannot become progressive.

Real rebranding has to come from within. Consumers today own the brand and have a much more say in their brands than they used to have before. For this you have to reengineer to your philosophy. Bajaj and Canon have the same brand names as before but have actually been pioneers of rebranding by changing their DNA. When new Bajaj was born with its new DNA then people embraced the new Bajaj and not the old one. That is rebranding in its absolute essence, in its full extent and supreme efficacy. ■

**An old person who has been wearing dull shirts and trousers throughout his life putting on flashy denims cannot claim to have become young**

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**Kiran Khalap**  
Co-Founder, Chlorophyll  
Brand & Communications  
Consultancy

# The sixth-gen breast implant

The first breast implant was done to repair symmetry of breasts (after the removal of tumour) in 1895. That was a case of restoring the original truth of a human body.

In 1961, though, the first silicone-based implant was introduced, and mainly used for augmentation. Let's say that these have been cases of enhancing rather than restoring the truth. In 2012, these implants have reached the fifth generation and have provided far greater medical safety.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of rebranding 😊

So let's start with the basics: let's begin with branding before we visit re-branding.

A brand is an idea. Marxism is an idea, Gandhism is an idea, James Bond is an idea, Apple is an idea (it's not a computer, or a phone).

One part of the idea must remain unchanged, some parts of the idea must change to adapt to the change in the social, competitive and market contexts.

Therefore, in corporate life (as different from political or social), branding must mean aligning all aspects of a business to the idea. QED.

What then does re-branding mean? Changing the very idea that drives business. Changing the idea. Not the logo, not the brand name, not the colours, not the employees.

What is critical is changing the idea, not its expression. You may choose to change or not change the expression (whether logo or advertising or PR).

**What does re-branding mean? Changing the very idea that drives business. Not the logo, not the brand name, not the colours, not the employees**

For example, when the type of business changed from "computing, tabulating, recording" to "creating business machines", the brand name and logo changed from the Computing Tabulating Recording Machine in 1911 to the International Business Machine in 1924.



IBM business idea changed from "technology and products" in 2004 to "technology and solutions", in 2005. Therefore "ThinkPad" was sold off and became Lenovo.

But the logo did not change.



On the other hand, there is a unique case of a brand in India not changing the brand idea, but changing its brand name and logo several times, without losing its particular profile of post-paid users!

From MaxTouch (whose logo I could not find 😊) to Orange to Hutch to Vodafone!



So once again, re-branding is not re-logo-ing.



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For instance, did you experience a change of brand idea in this change of logo?

Or this?



Can there be instances when the brand idea does not change, but the logo does?

When a brand of ball bearings came to chlorophyll, it was seemingly squeezed between cheap Chinese imports and expensive German imports. Amazingly enough, there was already a brand idea that was guiding the business; all that needed to be done was articulate it better for all stakeholders. So the brand idea did not change, the logo changed to express the idea!

From

To



Similarly, when a company that had bought over five different brands from around the world needed to signify that it actually represented One Quality, One Price, One Philosophy around the world, the expression changed. An example of both brand idea and its expression changing!



Today, when stakeholders communicate with

other stakeholders more than the brand communicates to them (through Social Media and customer-response sites), there is very little to gain from changing a logo and imagine it to be re-branding.

That's why, in the post-Internet era, re-branding has to be like the sixth generation of breast implants.

You use it to reveal the brand truth, not to hide its falsehood. ■

of change. If all the touch-points of the brand are pre-identified, it becomes easier to draw lists like 'must change', 'should change' & 'will eventually change' of various applications of the brand.

The involvement level of participation of employees in a rebranding exercise, at the same time depends on the kind of industry they are associated. For instance, Pai says, "in a B2C kind of company, the most important stakeholders are the consumers. Whereas, in a B2B company which is essentially a knowledge driven economy, the employees are of prime importance. Therefore they should be very much aware of the rebranding initiatives undertaken within an organisation. Thus, active internal/ external communication should be done informing employees and stakeholders about all the rebranding initiatives."

BlackBerry recently launched a new Curve 9220, which has features such as longest battery for a curve model (seven hours of talktime), BBM only key; and for the first time ever in a BlackBerry handset an in-built FM was introduced. These features were derived after BlackBerry's research in Tier I & II cities and emerging towns. Also, the brand has been building its distribution in these towns over the last 18 months and has expanded its distribution by adding 100 such towns and cities like Jalandhar, Ajmer, Jaipur, Nagpur, Aurangabad, Nasik, Lucknow, Patna, Jamshedpur, Silliguri, and the others.

The brand seems to have been working on expansion in Tier II and emerging towns for quite some time. And BBM seems to be its best bait to

**In a B2C kind of company, the most important stakeholders are the consumers. Whereas, in a B2B company, the employees are of prime importance**

#### Subtlety

Meanwhile there is a brand – BlackBerry – that has evolved over the years subtly. The rebranding here is not 'in the face'. There is no logo change, no renaming. Yet it has evolved from just being a tool of communication for the CEOs to bring in a larger fold of audience – the youth, a segment that no one can ignore. 'We are the BlackBerry Boys campaign' was an announcement of its rethinking of its philosophy. But lately, it's gone a step ahead – reaching out to people in smaller towns.

lure the small town youth, like it did with its big town counterparts too! BlackBerry has made BBM service more pocket friendly for youth with its Rs 5 per day plan. It has also been working on its other data plans.

Reworking on its pricing strategy too, the brand has slashed prices of its key devices. While the price of entry-level model – Curve 8520 – was reduced by over 18 per cent to Rs 8,999 from Rs 10,990, the price of Torch 9860 has been reduced by over 26 per cent to Rs 21,990 from Rs 29,990 earlier.



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**Ashwini Deshpande**  
Founder Director & Head  
Communication Design  
Practice, Elephant Strategy  
+ Design

## Missed!

Everybody loves hits. But there are misses too! It is hard to believe that even global brands don't get rebranding right at times.

I know of two such examples that were widely discussed among consumer & designer communities that went so adverse that the brands went back to their earlier avatars.

Tropicana, the leading juice

brand & GAP, the fashion brand underwent these misses in 2009 & 2010 respectively.

While Tropicana pulled back the change within two months after seeing about 20% drop in sales, GAP is supposed to have retreated within a week because of huge online furor among GAP fans.

Tropicana team showed amazing confidence in ac-

cepting its mis-judged design expression and displayed respect to the consumer who simply did not like the new packaging and expressed it vehemently by switching to other brands.

So what went wrong with the design?

1.. The new design looked much like a store brand than the earlier design that showed more insights into the consumers' world. Too much text, nearly no imagery & vertical branding added to this feel.

2. "100% Orange"... well, a Tropicana consumer was most obviously aware of this. Such emphasis on it nearly made the consumer lose interest in the brand.

3. With the new hierarchy and absence of images, it became extremely cumbersome for a regular consumer to pick up his/her regular pack.

4. Deep saturated colours became pale versions thereby losing the "rich-taste" cues.

5. Earlier logotype was warmer, more like a cottage brand; the new one had nothing ownable in it. It was just a commonly used cold font.

We never saw the failed rebranding & packaging because



Often, when a large brand reinvents itself to align with the evolving audience, it tends to take risks and in the process loses its current equity consciously



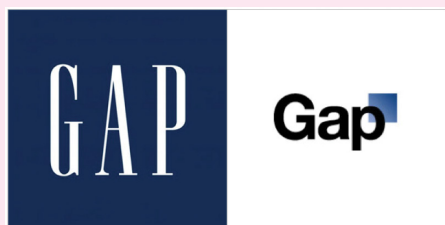
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India probably figured way later in the change introduction.

Similarly, we are yet to see rebranded Pepsi that is now 4 years old in the USA.

GAP had a different story altogether. They probably hadn't heard the saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".



In 2010, days before the pre-Christmas sales begin, GAP changed its fascia overnight from regal blue to a sterile white, its logo from tall, slender cap serifs to basic Helvetica and a strangely placed square. GAP fans all over the works went furious on Twitter & facebook. In just a couple of days, GAP marketing team started explaining how this is a part of reinvention & how they would really appreciate if GAP fans contributed their logo design suggestions. In next couple of days they got huge amount of logo suggestions done by amateurs. This made the designer community go mad & fans even madder. Finally on Day 6, GAP just went back to its old fascia.

Often, when a large brand reinvents itself to align with the evolving audience, it tends to take risks and in the process loses its current equity consciously. There is nothing wrong in this and there will be a miss such as Tropicana or GAP once in while. But does that mean we play safe? And then, how will there be innovation in the world of branding if we are risk averse? ! ■

### Overhauling

On the other hand is Kaya Skin Clinic, a brand that has done an entire overhauling, in an effort to shed its 'clinic' image. And with it came a new positioning: 'When I look into the mirror, I love what I see.' 'It's not just a mere cosmetic change of a logo redesign or repositioning. We have redesigned our clinics too with chairs, uniform and the like,' says Suvodeep Das, Head, Marketing, Kaya.

As a part of a consumer research, last year, Kaya got some interesting feedback. While all agreed that Kaya was "gold standard" as far as skincare is considered, and that when they had any skin related problem, Kaya was on top of mind. Yet there was a set of consumers who did not think of Kaya because they associated it with a "solution" for a skin problem. "We needed to change that as we wanted to attract a larger segment of audience," says Das.

**In today's world superficial rebranding will not work. Just by changing graphics and logo you cannot rebrand yourself**

Kaya realised that it was a nine-year-old brand, and consumer needs had changed since then. That was a time when there were only three to four premium brands in the skincare market. "Now there are 3X or 4X... India has become richer and younger... Kids born during the initial liberalisation phase are in their 20s today... we need to be in a position to target and attract them as well. That's why we went for rebranding," says Das.

Speaking in the context of change of audience, KV Sridhar, National Creative Director, Leo Burnett, says, "The mantra of

rebranding involves reinventing yourself to rededicate and make yourself relevant to a different set of people and consumers. In today's world superficial rebranding will not work. Just by changing graphics and logo you cannot rebrand yourself. In this age of social media and conversations just by wearing designer clothes you cannot become progressive," he says.

### Course correction

While Kaya found that its audience had changed, at times brands go in for a change, as they misunderstood the market. A simple logo change or design change can infuriate the loyalists. Examples like of GAP and Tropicana are talked in detail in her write-up by Deshpande of Elephant Strategy + Design. Sometimes, the audience rejects the product altogether, say for example - Musst Stix, Musst Chips and Monaco Smartchips,

all from the Parle Products' stable.

According to experts, the products failed because there was no product differentiation in the category. Musst Stix was an imitation of Kurkure. Consumers seek a difference in taste and Parle Products failed at that. The storyboard of the ad commercials for the products showed the company comparing it with other products in the market and offering 50 per cent extra on each pack. Meanwhile, Monaco Smartchips was positioned as a healthy snack, with Aamir Khan featuring in its TVCs. The product met the same fate like its predecessors.

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**Siddhartha Singh**  
Member, Salt Brand  
Solutions

## Let one opinion lead

The one place where democracy doesn't work – definitely, Re-Branding!

An anecdote to illustrate my point – picture this.

Big town Gujarat – second generation run pharmaceutical company calls us in for a brief from Mumbai. A fancy reception at the airport, stopped just short of a garland – had everything else in place. We finally get to the office – impressive. The board room door opens to reveal a whole set of suits – each with a mind of their own. The next five hours are spent with them talking to each other and clearing their heads to get to a solution rather than briefing us...

One simple question asked of them – Who do you personify your brand as had answers that ranged from Mr. Bachchan to SRK and any and everybody in between – some saw their strength as production so it was the hard working Deol, some saw Marketing as their strength so it was the suave Saif – the ones that wanted to play safe chose the ones mentioned earlier – the all-rounder's.

Just aside - why was it important for us to know how they personified the brand, we believe that Brands are People. Also, brand personifications open up a more intimate world with users. It enables a first person narrative which is the most personal form of communication. Therefore the attempt from our side has been and will be to shift Brand Identity from the inanimate to the animate and be able to change the conversation from, Which/What Brand to, Who is the Brand?

We stay back the night, to ensure that the next day we get a window with just the man who is going to take a call on this – the Entrepreneur himself, minus the coterie. We understand the real reasons for change – one of them being, that here's someone who wanted to be known for who he is rather than the surname he wears – and the only thing reflecting that was the Company – his Company – and thus the need to change and Re-Brand!

Two days later, having met some wonderful people and a motive from the man himself

had us return satisfied and with a direction to get into execution mode – moral of the story – you need to know the real client and real motive for change, the rest will follow.

Therefore, re-branding to me is like a Dictatorship, of the benevolent kind though.

To quote from a website – The Myndset, "Brand management must know how to listen and adapt with the times. Yet, brands must also take responsibility for their vision and mission and this requires a sense of purpose and singleness of mind, which will inevitably mean taking some tough decisions and not pleasing everyone. Steve Jobs was the reigning champion (of a benevolent despot), but I believe marketers are going to need to refine their own form of dictatorship to help them prioritize their actions, refine their budget allocations and to rally the organization behind their vision. As much as brands must listen to their customers, they must also know when to draw the line. Clearly, this is a difficult balancing trick."

So when it comes to the employee and his stake in re-branding – he needs to play the role of a follower and let one opinion lead! ■

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## 5 POINTS TO REMEMBER WHILE REBRANDING



**Ashwini Deshpande** | Founder Director, Elephant Strategy + Design

**1** Branding is an important business component. CEO must recognise this & give due importance to the exercise

A logo refresh is not a quick-fix solution to bad balance sheets. It takes a 360 degree sustained effort to build/ rebuild brands

**3** Don't discard the positives just to bring in the new. Build on positives

Brand is multi-dimensional, multi-sensorial. Aim at creating experiential repositioning through rebranding.

**5** Be sensitive to culture, geography, ecology & economy



**Nitin Pai** | Vice President, Marketing – Tata Elxsi

**1** Organisations should have a clear understanding of who's going to be impacted and whom they want to impact

Companies need to meticulously define the new brand core essence and attributes

**3** Organisations should strategise their objectives & define their subjectives. They should define and decide who, how and in what way will they be affected by rebranding

A clear planning & thought along with importance to detailing should be done. Also companies should validate through dipsticks surveys conducted on employees, key customers etc

**5** Companies should ensure all kinds of communication are done like direct communication, so that communication is consistent across all forums

While some blame the ads that there was too much focus on Aamir Khan and the product went into the background, others think that the ad was too preachy.

Taking a corrective measure, Parle Products relaunched its two brands – Musst Chips and Musst Stix last year. Musst Chips morphed into called Parle Wafers and Musst Stix became Full Toss. The brand also decided to use its Parle logo in the name, so that consumers have an affinity towards the product.

The company also admits that consumers were averse to the brand name 'Musst' as it sounded derogatory. "The word Musst (sounded like the Hindi word – mast) in these cases was not accepted in the market. According to our research, our target group didn't want to be seen with Musst Chips or Musst Stix," B Krishnarao, Group Product Manager at Parle Products had told Pitch, in one of an interviews earlier.

### Consumers: The real brand managers

In all the above cases, all brands are wooing the end consumer, be it Star News reassuring the consumer or Kaya overhauling itself to embrace the new consumers or be it Parle Products accepting that it misunderstood the target audience. In words of Pai of Tata Elxsi, "As far as our experience goes, we strongly feel that rebranding takes into confidence its key customers. Therefore, customer insights play a key role as they can be used to validate and make necessary changes in the rebranding exercise."

He suggests initiatives like conducting dipstick surveys etc. from customers to understand their sentiments better.

Therefore, any rebranding exercise must be undertaken keeping the customer in mind. ■

-surender@pitchonnet.com



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