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Where Strategy Meets Design

By Anaëzi Modu, ReBrand

Before



original packaging

After



new packaging



In May, the first annual ReBrand 100 Awards celebrated the best rebrands from around the world. With entries from global, regional and non-profit organizations representing 12 countries and 45 industries, ReBrand 100 presented awards in four categories: Best-of-Awards, Distinction, Merit, and Notable. As more businesses acknowledge the direct effect of brand experience on their earnings, many rebrand some or all of their brand assets to enter new markets, manage mergers and acquisitions, position non-profits for funding support, or rethink the information design of their contracts and applications to better connect with customers.

Winning rebrands from Assurant, Babolat, Gujarat Co-Op Milk Marketing Federation, L'Oreal, Procter & Gamble, Samsonite, The Scottish Enterprise, Shinsai Bank, Virgin Atlantic Airways and others will be featured in case studies at www.rebrand.com and published in the ReBrand 100 Annual, available from the website in July. The examples are to document various successful approaches and inspire future learning from the compelling transformations, with 100 to be added from each year's results.

Adobe Systems Inc. and its branding partner, San Francisco-based MetaDesign, won a 2005 ReBrand Distinction Award for redesigning the packaging of Adobe Creative Pro, a software suite that combined Adobe Photoshop with other applications. Throughout seven previous versions of Adobe Photoshop software, the packaging had retained a familiar look, using an eye motif with only slight modifications between upgrades. "The problem with things that remain so familiar is that people get blind to them," said Brett Wickens, Vice President and Executive Creative Director of MetaDesign. "They don't understand what's changed from version to version, and don't bother to upgrade."

When research showed that people were losing interest in upgrading their software, Adobe and MetaDesign applied a new strategy - one that used a radical departure to signal how the product had changed. To emotionally reconnect with Adobe's global audience of creative professionals, Wickens' team needed to resonate with culturally aware individuals who are in the business of creating future culture. The rebrand needed to reach out to the international creative community to entice customers with aesthetic expectations greater than those of the general public.

The new packaging leveraged a nature metaphor that speaks to the way creative professionals use Adobe Creative Pro software. The idea is that there's an underlying relationship between nature and mathematics, and that within those formulas no two things grow the same. "What you might do with Photoshop has different outcomes in different hands," Wickens commented, "It's entirely subconscious - mathematics at the base of beauty."

With the front of the box MetaDesign created a fresh aesthetic language using motifs of feathers, flowers, stars, butterflies, and leaves to evoke the attributes of precision, beauty, and aspiration. The challenge was to create instantly recognizable icons that engaged people at the shelf level. This aesthetic language was one of five critical success factors of the project that included:

- a client willing to start with a fresh canvas and create something new;
- design ideas with a strong basis, in this case a metaphor;
- a solid product that represented a new way to combine design and publishing;
- Adobe's strong marketing which included a comprehensive ad campaign, pieces sent to design schools, web marketing, and press interviews given by the designers.

"MetaDesign brought real power and clarity to this rebranding effort," said Lee Phenner, Vice President of Corporate and Brand Identity at Hill, Holliday, and a panelist on the 2005 ReBrand 100 international jury of industry experts. "It's a striking rejuvenation that we felt would strongly appeal to Adobe's target markets."

Launched in September, 2003, the rebrand was successful because it met one of Adobe's biggest objectives: to emotionally reconnect with their core audience of creative professionals and increase both upgrades and sales to new customers. According to Wickens, over the last five quarters, sales for the product have exceeded both Adobe's and analysts' expectations.

For MetaDesign, this project held some best practices in rebranding that they've been able to apply to other work, including evolving the design to Adobe Creative Professional 2. "We're at a point now where audiences should not be underestimated," said Wickens. "There is a tendency for software to all look the same. Design is one of the few differentiators left. There are opportunities for designers to create things that are not trivial or superficial."

As Adobe Systems and the 2005 ReBrand 100 Award winners demonstrate, successful rebranding requires both a plan and a business strategy. The ReBrand 100 jurors found that organizations need to assess and leverage existing brand equities, as well as the marketplace and state of the business in order to fulfill the strategy. This is key to allowing the brand to re-emerge in a way that helps meet organizational objectives.

ReBrand 100 is the first and only awards program to recognize the world's most effective rebrands: the repositioning, revitalizing, restructuring, or redesign of existing brand assets to meet strategic goals. The awards program is unique because it analyzes the before and after brand transformation, focuses on and documents case studies for future learning, and assesses the impact of rebrands on strategic business goals and target markets.

The 2006 ReBrand 100 entry deadline is September 28, 2005. Entry forms and sponsorship information will be online at www.rebrand.com in June.

About Rebrand

Anaëzi Modu is founder of ReBrand, a forum for case studies and programs focused on effective rebrands. The Center for Design & Business at Rhode Island School of Design is a founding sponsor of ReBrand 100, the first annual awards to recognize the world's most effective rebrands. Information on ReBrand and ReBrand 100 is available at <http://www.rebrand.com>