

MARKETING GUIDE

The BrandEquation™ How to Sum Up Your Nonprofit Brand

INTRODUCTION

Brand. It's what distinguishes your organization from the dozens, hundreds, or thousands of others the public might choose to support instead.

It's tempting to believe that no other nonprofit does the work you do. Don't fool yourself, though. In one form or another, you have competition out there. Your programs may differ from those of other nonprofits—but programmatic details aren't what motivate donors or volunteers. What engages and animates people is a distinctive brand positioning.

Your brand is of paramount importance to your success as a mission-driven organization. Some nonprofits think they don't need a brand at all (big mistake). But then, for many nonprofit leaders, brand remains a mysterious concept. What is a brand, anyway? And where to start?

What Is Brand?

Brand is another word for reputation. And, can you really afford to let your reputation go unintended? By default, your organization already has a brand...but is it one that will advance your mission most effectively?

At Mission Minded, we build brands in partnership with our clients. Our BrandEquation™ sessions unearth brands that are authentic and powerful and unique to each organization we serve. They are the perfect sum of internal wisdom, external insights and concerted soul searching.

Having a clear brand pays your nonprofit dividends that you can't afford to let pass.

The Benefits of Branding

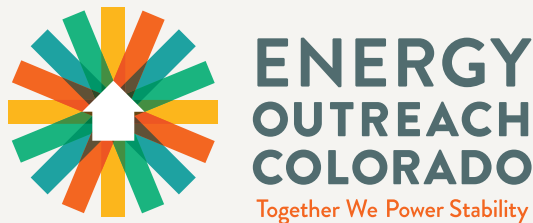
A strong brand:

- Minimizes competitive threats by making it clear to your constituents how you're different from similar organizations;
- Helps defend your organization against negative news, as a solidly built positive reputation will encourage your audiences to give you the benefit of the doubt;
- Makes people proud to align with your organization as they grow to truly understand why your work matters; and
- Provides staff and volunteers with clarity about what differentiates your organization, so that everyone associated can reinforce this idea at every touchpoint.

Clarity around your brand is the cornerstone of effective communications. It provides a guide for building the messages and activities for which your organization will be celebrated. Defining your brand will help you tell the story of your work in a way that makes that story clear and compelling.

The Power of Brand

A thoughtfully developed brand serves as an unshakable foundation. For example, Energy Outreach Colorado believes everyone deserves affordable access to the vital resources that power their homes—and they're able to communicate that so clearly because they took the time to distill the essence of their organization's purpose and personality and to understand their audiences. This brand work served as the strategic basis for their new tagline, "Together We Power Stability," as well as for their compelling visual identity, including a new logo. Energy Outreach Colorado has long had a worthy mission, but when brand helped them claim a big, bold, unique idea and communicate it consistently, then the organization deservedly took its place as an essential Colorado institution.



Audience

You can't make good decisions about your brand without first identifying your most important audiences. Too often, organizations feel they need to reach everyone in order to be effective. Savvy nonprofit leaders, however, know that focusing their limited resources on the audiences most important to their organization's success improves the chances of that success.

The hard truth is that not everyone will care about the work you do (even if they should!). And even if everyone did care, no nonprofit organization has the resources to reach the general public. You have to be selective and strategic. Take the time to understand your primary audiences by thinking deeply about who they really are, developing empathy for them, and their connection to your mission. This will help you build a brand that invites them into your work.

Prioritizing your organization's key audiences, and favoring what they need to hear over what you want to say, leads to brand engagement and mission success.



Your BrandEquation™

At Mission Minded, we define your BrandEquation as four elements, all springing from your mission.

The BrandEquation elements are:

Values

By their very nature, mission-driven organizations are values-oriented. Food banks, for example, care about those experiencing food insecurity in a given community, and uphold values of neighborliness, humanitarianism, and altruism. Arts organizations embody the values of creativity and civic responsibility in their work. But nonprofits often fail to articulate their values consistently and clearly. Define your organization's values and let them lead you to brand clarity and messages that resonate.

Brand Experience

This component of your BrandEquation answers the question, "What do you want your stakeholders to feel when they engage with you?" As a mission-driven organization, you likely have several sets of stakeholders in the work you do, from your donors to the people you serve. Each of these audiences needs a reason to feel connected to your work. Identifying and articulating those reasons is a key step in building your brand.

"Thank you so much for your time and brain power! I rest well at night knowing that I have Mission Minded in my corner."

Christine Maulhardt Vaughan
as Director of Communications
Blue Shield of California
Foundation



Brand Personality

Even organizations with very similar missions and program areas are likely to have different personalities. These distinguishing traits affect the kind of people who choose to engage.

Organizations can be more or less serious, more activist or more staid, more nurturing or more no-nonsense. These kinds of choices define your organization's personality.

When articulating your nonprofit's personality, remember that this component of your BrandEquation should strike a balance between being authentic and aspirational: You want to define your organization's ideal personality on its best day (which may not have happened yet!).

Brand Positioning

While many nonprofits aren't explicitly selling a product, that doesn't mean they don't have competition for donors, supporters, or recognition. Understanding what's unique about a given organization—its competitive advantage—is critical to a clear, strong brand. Your organization must emphasize its points of superiority and directly address areas where competition threatens mission success.

Your BrandEquation™

With your BrandEquation complete, it's time to bring your brand to life by aligning how you look, how you sound, and how you act.

Let your brand serve as an internal rallying cry for staff and board members. Make sure your BrandEquation is known and understood by everyone within your organization, from the president or CEO to the interns. Use your brand positioning as a shorthand way of talking about your organization's brand, and as a yardstick for measuring how well what you do and what you say.

Learn More

Mission Minded is a branding firm that works exclusively with nonprofit organizations.

We believe that a brand that sets you apart is essential to a nonprofit's success. Every day we guide nonprofits to uncover the big, bold idea that will attract more people to their work. Because in today's world, a worthy mission is not enough. You've got to communicate what makes you unique at every opportunity.

Our clients successfully raise more money and attract the support they need to achieve their goals. To find out how Mission Minded can help your organization, call us today at 415-990-9360.

How It All Comes Together



BRAND POSITIONING

A Force at the Policy and Personal Level

VALUES

Be Efficient.
Stand Up and Speak Out.
Give Everyone the Chance They Deserve.
Partner for Change.
Know No Limits.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

When I engage with Energy Outreach Colorado, I feel accomplished, because more is possible through the equitable use of our vital resources.

BRAND PERSONALITY

Compassionate
Collaborative
Dogged
Reliable

MISSION

The mission of Energy Outreach Colorado is to ensure that all low-income Coloradans can meet their home energy needs.