

FREE GUIDE

Integrate Your Brand and Strategic Plan to Create a Powerful Decision-Making Playbook

Why Integrate Your Strategic Plan & Brand?

Strategic planning and brand strategy are inextricably linked. And while you should have both, each is richer when connected. The elements of your strategic plan and the elements of your brand combine to make up a **powerful decision-making tool** and **culture driver** for leadership, board, and staff. Think of it as the playbook you need to succeed, helping you:

Easily assess new opportunities

Does the opportunity get you closer to your vision and help you make progress toward your strategic commitments and desired reputation.

Effectively communicate both internally and externally

Does each communication align with your unique brand positioning and lift up your organization's priorities?

Clarify your hiring and onboarding processes

Do candidates align with your organization's values? Do they have skills to make progress against your strategic commitments?

Manage through crisis

What must you prioritize and de-prioritize to stay true to your values? In a recent study, organizations with well-integrated strategic plans and brands were **three times more likely** to feel prepared to manage the disruption caused by the pandemic.*

*Springboard Partners and Edge Research, *Build on Brand: The case for using your core identity to shape your strategic plan*, October 2020, <https://springboard.partners/buildonbrand/>

Even with these advantages, a recent study of 310 nonprofit leaders shows only 19% understood the synergies between their plans and brand.*

In our own 20 years of experience working with nonprofit organizations and schools, we've often seen disconnected strategic plans and brands, leading to poor alignment. This is the result of one leadership structure being assigned strategic planning (the Board and executive leadership) and another to lead branding (the marketing and communication leadership). This misalignment results in missed opportunities, weakening the organization's ability to achieve its best.

If you're able to take on strategic planning and branding simultaneously, or if you already have a both but one didn't explicitly inform the other, use the four phases below to think about—and plan for—the points of intersection.

Phase 1: Sync The Discovery

Strategic planning and branding both begin with discovery. And while you may be learning about different things in your institutional vs. brand discovery, your findings will be richer if research is conducted in an integrated way.

Institutional Discovery



Brand Discovery

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (yours & peer organizations)
 - Demographics and value drivers
 - Sector trends and best practices
-
- Word on the street about your organization (and peer orgs)
 - What stakeholders can only find at your organization
 - How stakeholders feel when they engage with your organization
 - How your organization would be described if it was a person

Phase 2: Synergize Your Strategy

Strategic planning and branding both involve setting high-level organizational strategy. Articulating your vision and mission synergistically with your brand positioning and personality will make them all richer—because your values act as the glue that binds them.

Strategic Vision



Brand Strategy

- We envision a world where... (Vision)
 - Every day, we get closer to our vision by... (Mission)
 - Our deeply held beliefs and guiding principles (Values)
-
- Our stakeholders' deeply held beliefs (Values)
 - Our unique point of difference (Brand positioning)
 - How we want people to feel when they engage with our organization
 - How we “show up” when we engage stakeholders (Brand personality)

Phase 3: Intertwine the Elements

The way you express the elements of your strategic plan (in your priorities) and the elements of your brand (through messages, visual identity, and other signals) must be wholeheartedly intertwined, and will therefore benefit from being developed together.

Plan Elements



Brand Elements

- We will broaden our focus from _____ to _____
- We will narrow our focus from _____ to _____
- We will pivot away from _____ to _____
- We will double down on _____

- Who we are and what we believe
- The problem(s) we exist to solve
- Proof of our impact
- The programmatic details that enable us to achieve results
- The visual representation of the above

Phase 4: Align the Activation

How you socialize and communicate about your strategic plan must be “on brand” just as the brand you activate must be in service to the strategic plan commitments you set for your organization. Through a compelling case study for Marin Country Day School, you’ll see how a Strategic Plan, “Forge the Path Forward,” and a brand positioning, “The only school that empowers students from the inside to the outside,” do exactly that.

Communicate Strategic Plan



Activate Brand



Click on the image above to watch Marin Country Day School's on-brand strategic plan video

The MCDS brand shows up in what they say and how they look, among other things. The samples below were developed to solidify the reputation MCDS needs to bring about their vision for the future. Read more about the [Minute Message Model](#) that inspired the MCDS belief message on the following page.

Phase 4: Align the Activation Continued



“Having the strategic plan and brand strategy developed concurrently and integrated with each other gave me a very clear focus as a Head of School. Not only are our priorities laid out clearly for the next several years, I also know the most effective and efficient way to engage our community on that journey. That clear strategy for communicating is key to the success of any endeavor.”

Katherine Dinh
Marin Country Day School

Our Belief Message

At Marin Country Day School an excellent education starts with academics. And we believe our students deserve an outstanding education beyond the classroom as well.

So every day we go outside: outside our classrooms, outside our community, and outside our comfort zone to become empathetic and confident students of the world.

The inclusive and sustainable future we envision needs young people with the self-knowledge, fortitude, conviction, and optimism, to solve problems creatively.

Color Palette

Our colors come from nature and are a strategic signal of the Marin Country Day School brand. The palette evokes energy, enthusiasm, warmth, diversity, and connection. Similar to our logo, our color palette has been predetermined. There are no exceptions to these specifications.

Primary Colors

Blues

Blue is one of the primary colors used in our logo and logotype. It is bold and confident and represents the sky and waters that surround us.



Dark Blue
Pantone 2384 c
CMYK 87-59-10-0
RGB 43-104-164
HEX #2b68a4



Blue
Pantone 2171 c
CMYK 68-51-0-0
RGB 71-149-218
HEX #4795da



Light Blue
Pantone 2915 c
CMYK 54-7-0-0
RGB 102-192-236
HEX #66c9dc

Blue Gradient



Greens

Green is another primary color in our logo. It is a natural color that represents the trees, hills, and grasses that surround our campus. It represents life and growth and is one of our official school colors.



Dark Green
Pantone 555 c
CMYK 79-33-79-16
RGB 57-122-83
HEX #397a53



Green
Pantone 7739 c
CMYK 68-9-81-0
RGB 91-172-99
HEX #5bac63



Light Green
Pantone 360 c
CMYK 48-0-91-0
RGB 144-207-74
HEX #90d14a

Green Gradient



Accent Colors

Oranges

Accent colors are used to complement the primary colors. The oranges add warmth and vibrancy to the cool blues and greens.



Dark Orange
Pantone 7579 c
CMYK 18-79-100-6
RGB 195-82-21
HEX #c5e215



Orange
Pantone 151 c
CMYK 0-58-94-0
RGB 244-135-45
HEX #f4872d



Light Orange
Pantone 130 c
CMYK 0-32-100-0
RGB 255-182-19
HEX #f0613

Orange Gradient



Logo

Rooted in our school's history and conjuring visions of our beautiful campus, our logo demonstrates Marin Country Day School's Brand Positioning, "An outstanding education that empowers students from the inside to the outside."

Our logo serves as a lead visual signal that sets the stage for what people can expect from Marin Country Day School. A consistently applied logo ensures that our communications are instantly recognizable.

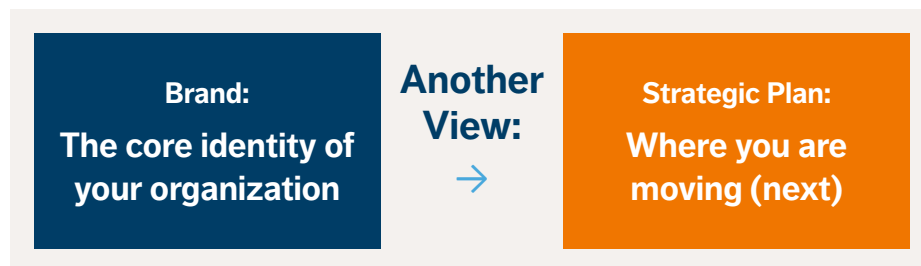


Where Do We Start?

Conventional wisdom is that while both elements are important, the strategic plan should drive the brand. Mission Minded has taught this model for years and 90% of clients we surveyed agree with it; your strategic plan is where you are going, and your brand strategy is the reputation you need to get there.



Another view is that brand is everlasting — **the core identity of your organization** — and creates the framework for your multi-year strategies. Brand work, therefore, is upstream and the strategic plan is a short-term guide for **where you are moving next**.



No matter how you see it, the result is the same; your strategic plan is inextricably linked to your brand and your brand is likewise linked to your strategic plan. You shouldn't have one without the other; each will be made richer by being connected.

We're Here to Help

If your current strategic plan and brand strategy were not developed together, it's not too late to create more alignment so they become a more powerful whole. Start with the phases above to see if you can reverse-engineer the alignment that makes sense for your organization.

And if you've recognized your organization would benefit from setting institutional and brand strategies in a connected engagement that doubles your impact and efficiency, Mission Minded's team will be happy to develop a customized proposal based on your needs, budget, and timeline.

Learn More

Mission Minded is a branding & strategy firm that works exclusively with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and schools.

We believe strategic planning and brand strategy development should catapult your organization to its next version of greatness, not inch it forward incrementally or operationally. Every day, we guide our clients to commit to the big bold opportunities that will amplify their impact and truly advance their mission. Because when your community of stakeholders is invited into the why of your work, they won't let anything stand in their way of getting it done.

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