

MARKETING GUIDE

Your New Name

10 Guidelines for a Powerful Launch

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! After a period of thoughtful brand strategy, creative brainstorming, and intense deliberation, your organization has chosen a powerful new name. It's time to share it with the world. Launching your new name successfully means premiering it in such a way that it creates more interest in your organization, re-engages your donors, and inspires renewed commitment to your mission.

When planned strategically, a name launch will create a big splash and make stakeholders excited about your bold new direction. By setting deadlines, preparing materials, and speaking to your constituencies directly, you can allay their concerns and generate excitement and interest.

1 Decide on your goals

What will your new name do for your organization? You may have enumerated your goals during the name-creation process; it will help to have those goals handy during the rollout process. Will the name help create awareness of what you do among your target audiences? Raise your organization's overall profile? Attract volunteers? By keeping your goals in mind, you can properly calibrate your approach during each step of the renaming process.

2 Pick a date to flip the switch, and stick to it

Both nonprofit and for-profit communications experts agree that a “flipped switch” approach is most effective for name rollouts. By “flipped switch,” we mean that the name will change on a set date, and the change will pervade every aspect of your organization. Pick a date on which your website, letterhead, email signatures, voicemail messages, and print materials will all refer to your organization by its new name.

The logo for OLE HEALTH features the word "OLE" in a bold, sans-serif font with each letter in a different color (O: green, L: blue, E: red), followed by "HEALTH" in a lighter blue, all-caps, sans-serif font.

As Clinic Ole began to articulate and solidify their brand, it was clear that the name had to evolve, while remaining firmly connected to its meaningful history. Clinic Ole Community Health transformed into OLE Health. “OLE” is celebratory and energetic, yet also smart, professional, and progressive.

Your staff, volunteers, partners, and other stakeholders should also use the new name from that day forward. If you use your new name inconsistently, you run the risk of looking sloppy.

3 Communicate with your most important stakeholders first

Don't leave major donors in the dark. When you announce that you plan to change your name, start by telling your most important stakeholders, and then work your way out. Your most important stakeholders might include sponsors, volunteers, and major donors. When you do communicate with these stakeholders, touch on the following points: why you're changing your name, some of the goals the new name will accomplish, and what your new name means. Limit this communication to one page in length.

4 Develop new stationery, email signatures, and newsletter templates (if applicable)

By the time your launch date rolls around, you'll need to set aside any communications materials that refer to your organization by its old name. In particular, your business cards and letterhead will establish your new name and make it official. In order to replace your old print materials, you'll need to devote sufficient time and resources to creating new ones that support your renaming goals. Plan to begin developing new materials at least three months before the launch of your new name.



When inMotion changed their name to Her Justice, they posted their FAQ list on their website.

5 Create an FAQ sheet

Frequently Asked Questions are “frequently asked” for a reason. Your audiences will want to know why you made such a meaningful change, and what that change signifies for your organization. You can distribute the FAQ sheet along with your announcements on the new name. You might also post it on your blog or social media accounts. We recommend including five questions; some examples are below.

- Why did we change our name?
- Does the name change mean we're in trouble as an organization?
- Whose decision was it to change the name?
- Why did we work with a branding firm? (if applicable)
- Did anything else about the organization change?

6 Make sure you've trained your team to talk about the new name

Tell your staff, board, volunteers, and other front-facing people everything you would tell an external audience, and also mention how they can steward the new name. Distribute the FAQ sheet so that internal stakeholders can familiarize themselves with it. Having staff practice with one another is a great way to prepare for these types of conversations. Use Mission Minded's Minute Message Model to connect your new name with your organization's overall brand goals.

7 On launch day, have an event

Mission Minded strongly recommends that you host a press conference, luncheon, or some other large gathering to celebrate your name change. Not only will the event allow your stakeholders to see you face-to-face, but it will also remind them why they care about your work. If your budget allows, hiring a publicist to promote the event can help attract positive press and new supporters.



San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance changed from a local organization that focused solely on school-grounds to a national organization that rethinks the way urban schools use their outdoor learning spaces. A provocative new name marked its transition into the second phase.

8 Make the announcement in multiple media

After you announce your upcoming name change to your key stakeholders, you'll want to announce it to your broader population of supporters. As for the medium through which you make this announcement, you might try combining email, news media, and direct mail.

9 Listen for feedback from your blog comments, social media presences, and email

In all the interactive media where your organization has a presence, keep an eye out for feedback about your new name. Thank your boosters for their praise, and reply thoughtfully and honestly to criticism. When you respond to your stakeholders' feedback, it keeps them from feeling excluded.

10 Include the phrase "formerly known as" (or some reference to your old name) on your printed materials, email footer, and website

Continue to do this for a period of 6 to 9 months.



Mission Minded helped WAGES evolve into Prospera: A vibrant community of immigrant-led worker-owned cooperative businesses that foster human development, social transformation, and economic security.

For professional guidance on rolling out a new name, or naming strategy more generally, contact Mission Minded at amplify@mission-minded.com.

Learn More

Mission Minded is a branding firm that works exclusively with nonprofits, independent schools, and foundations. We believe you only reach your highest potential if people understand the importance of your work—not just what you do, but why it matters.

Every day we partner with clients like San Francisco Opera, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, and the Denver Art Museum to help them determine the brand—or reputation—for which they want to be known. Then we help them bring that brand to life through key messages, logo design, web design, and more.

As a result, 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.