

## Breathe New Life into a Stale Brand

Your brand is what sets your agency apart and makes it memorable to customers. If you think your brand is starting to get stale, it might be time to give it some new life.

The first step is to revisit the brand plan you developed when you first started building your brand (if you don't have one, write one). This document, as discussed in the July "On Branding," guides your branding efforts and helps you stay on track. It outlines your market, your target audience, your brand proposition and your budget.

Review your brand plan and make sure it's accurate. Make any necessary revisions to reflect how your business has changed since you wrote it. Then let this document be your guide as you make decisions about how to jump-start your stale brand.

**Advertise.** This is perhaps the most effective way to give a brand new life. It's also the most expensive. For advertising to work, it has to have the reach and frequency to enable people to remember it. The right creative message helps, too.

If you decide to advertise, choose your media wisely. Choose based on the media your target audience reads, sees or hears. If your budget is small, don't spread it too thin. In fact, do the opposite and concentrate on one magazine, one radio station or one TV program and own it. Your ads will be more effective if they are memorable to a small group of people than if they are not memorable to anyone.

**Target current customers.** By stepping up your communication to your current customers, you can realize more repeat business as well as referrals. Communicate to current customers by providing them with helpful information. Create a newsletter or e-newsletter that provides them with tips, advice and even entertaining facts. Overhaul your Web site to include dynamic information that entices people to come back. Even well-timed letters help keep you top of mind with customers.


Be sure that any communications you develop engage your customers with content that is interesting to them. People are bombarded with information today, so your communications should grab their attention and be interesting, insightful, even funny. Otherwise, they will dismiss it.

**Make a change.** Freshening up your identity is also a good way to jump-start a stagnant brand. Adding a new tagline, changing your logo, redesigning your Web site, even changing your company name are all good ways to get noticed.

However, do not make the decision lightly to make a major change. If you have any equity in your logo, tagline or name, be careful about making a change that's too drastic. You could do more harm than good.

Cosmetic changes like this provide only a short-term boost to your brand. If increased advertising or other marketing efforts accompany them, the effect can last longer.

**Stay consistent.** Whatever you do to jump-start your brand, make sure you stay consistent with your brand character. If you develop new ads or unveil a new logo that is out of sync with what the audience expects, you can cause confusion and weaken your brand.

But by making small adjustments to your strategy or increasing your marketing efforts, you can build excitement and momentum that will make your brand stronger. 

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## Carrier Branding Connection: Unitrin, Inc.

Unitrin, Inc., is in a unique branding position: The company, formed in 1990, is fairly new, but several of its operating companies are well-known, older brands. As such, the company is building awareness of the Unitrin name as it continues to leverage the benefits of the more-established brands, such as Kemper.



*Don Southwell, president and COO, Unitrin, Inc.*

"We approach branding from a pragmatic standpoint," says Don Southwell, Unitrin's president and COO. "Our agents told us that Kemper was a very important brand to them, and we by and large like to listen to our agents. We are placing an increasing emphasis on the Kemper brand, even while we're trying to build our own Unitrin brand."

Unitrin recently employed a branding firm to conduct some customer and agent research, and "the value of the Kemper brand really popped out at us," Southwell says. As a result, the company is upping its focus on Kemper—and simplifying it. The Kemper brand, formerly known as "Unitrin Kemper Auto & Home" is now known by the streamlined moniker "Kemper, a Unitrin business."

"We're trying to simplify it to maximize the emotional impact of the name...keep it short and simple," Southwell says. "Frankly, that's what our agents told us they wanted, that they could generate more business for us if we emphasized the Kemper brand rather than the longer 'Unitrin Kemper Auto & Home.'"

When it comes to its branding message, Unitrin and its companies want to evoke an image of national strength and local presence. And it focuses most of its branding and advertising activities on the agent community. "Certainly the ultimate customer is important, too, but we want to direct business to agents," Southwell explains.

As part of its relationship with agents, Unitrin is a staunch supporter of Trusted Choice®. In fact, it was one of the earlier carriers to become involved with the brand initiative. "We try to be partners with our agencies in everything we do, including branding," Southwell says. "We try to build on the partnership that the Trusted Choice® opportunity gave us to help build the agent brand alongside our brand."

—Jennifer Sikorski