How You Know It’s Time to Re-brand Your Company

How do you know it’s time to re-brand your company—and what does “re-branding” actually mean? This article will look at what a re-brand is (vs. a “refresh”) with B2B and B2C examples of both.

(A quick-read parathink briefing for really, really busy people)

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Paragraphs is an award-winning, strategic design firm specializing in branding and corporate communications across all media. Since 1984, we’ve helped leading companies around the world do one thing exceptionally well: build powerful brands that grow their business.
Executive Summary

In order to survive, companies must adapt to changes in the marketplace and customer needs. Sometimes this adaptation occurs in the form of a re-brand, which is a change in the visual identity and message platform, so that what a company is projecting in image and words best matches their intentions. Or, you may merely need to re-fresh your brand. The following article defines both and details the difference to help you consider what is best for your company.

In this parathink briefing, we’ll give you a quick overview of:
- When a re-brand is necessary
- A re-fresh versus a re-brand
- B2B and B2C examples of various levels of re-brands
What is a “Re-brand”?

A re-brand involves re-designing, re-writing and re-thinking some or all portions of a company’s brand. That could entail anything from updating your logo to a more modern, sleek look to creating a new company philosophy (which includes vision, value, and/or mission statements).

In some cases, a re-brand involves creating an entirely new brand identity, right down to the name. But how do you know if you need a “partial” re-brand or a “total” re-brand? We’ll get into that a bit later. First, we need to decide if a re-brand is even necessary.

Is a Re-brand Necessary for My Company?

Before undertaking an extensive re-branding initiative, you need to determine if one is warranted. Situations such as a company merger, a change in target audience, or having a new company direction and goals are all common—and necessary—reasons to re-brand. But even if none of those situations apply to your company, a re-brand may still be a good idea.

To determine if you need to re-brand your company, ask yourself one question: How healthy is my company’s brand?

Because there are a variety of factors that can influence and affect how your brand performs, it’s necessary to take a look at every facet of your business to determine its health—you need to perform a branding audit.
What to Audit

This audit will look at elements that you’ll consider obvious, such as your logo and style guide and whether you use your brand consistently. But, to truly understand your brand’s health, you need to also look at items such as trends in profits, customer perception, and attitudes towards your company versus competitors. The table below identifies items to audit regarding the brand and other areas that can affect it.

How to Audit

When you have the elements and areas to audit mapped out, you need to decide a threshold, or “acceptable” results, to determine whether an element or area is performing as it should or if it requires an adjustment. There are different ways to approach an audit. You can create a system from scratch that works best for your company or leave the hard lifting to an experienced marketing and branding company.

During the audit, you’re going to be looking for examples of overall brand health. One key observation to make is whether your brand is being used properly—it can’t do its job if there are conflicting messages being sent to customers or incorrect logo usage. You’ll want to evaluate how your audience reacts to and interacts with your brand. Are the feelings generally positive or has there been a downward trend over the years? Another part of the audit involves reviewing if your brand still reflects the mission and values to which your company adheres. If not, that’s a clue you need to re-brand.

Even if you don’t need to re-brand now, every company will reach a point at least once (but more commonly, several times) in its existence where it needs to update part of its brand. But whether you need a partial or total re-brand depends on the results of your audit.

### Company Brand Audit

| Graphic Guidelines (if existing) |
| Consistency of Brand Application |
| Messages: Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values |
| Tagline/Business Descriptor |
| Brand Voice |
| Logo |
| Color Palette |
| Typography |
| Graphics/Visuals/Infographics |

### Business Brand Audit

| Sales Trends |
| Current Customer Perception of Company |
| Current Customer Perception of Competitors |
| Potential Customer Perceptions of Company/Competitors |
| Customer and Employee Social Media Metrics |
| Market Share (and trends) |
| Company Culture (and diversity) |
| Brand Ambassador (success or lack thereof) |
| Motivational Drivers (do they exist?) |

*This table is not exhaustive to all brand elements or areas that should be examined during an audit. You may find that your company or industry has additional business areas not considered by the chart above but, are necessary to get the full picture of your brand’s health.*
Re-fresh versus Total Re-brand

A “partial” re-brand is often called a “re-fresh”. This focuses on updating one or a few parts of a brand (such as just updating the logo or revisiting the brand’s messages). A “total” re-brand means you create an entirely new brand for your company.

Partial Re-brand

If you find that the core of your brand works as it should, but your company has evolved and you want to let the market know—consider a refresh. Dunkin’ Donuts is more than Donuts. To compete more effectively with Starbucks, Dunkin’ Donuts needed to re-position itself. Keeping the iconic font and colors, Dunkin’ Donuts became just Dunkin’. More friendly and less limiting this new brand has enabled Dunkin’ to increase market share and its stock has tripled since the new brand was introduced.

Total Re-brand

A total re-brand is necessary when the original brand is no longer relevant and/or requires multiple changes that would significantly change the original brand (think changes of 40% or more from the core brand). You’ll often see total re-brands in companies that had several acquisitions or mergers: A re-brand is necessary so that all of these companies can function as a whole instead of several entities.
Re-branding Examples

These companies knew they had to make a change for the better, each for varying reasons. Doing so has allowed them continued financial success and the ability to stay competitive in their respective markets.

The Company:
Optimas

**TOTAL Re-brand:** Optimas is a “parts” manufacturer and distributor. They spun off from their parent company and invested in a completely new brand. While the logo “worked”, the visuals were highly conceptual and the copy was extremely heavy. It was very difficult for customers and prospects to understand what they did, what the benefits were and why their customers should care.

While they came to us for a “refresh” because they wanted to keep their logo, this was really a re-brand. Post research and audit, everything except the logo was changed. This included visuals, copy, website, sales presentations and more. We tested the creative before implementation, and the scores were over 90% that customers would “get it” quickly and that the brand now reflected who Optimas is and why customers should choose them as a primary partner.
The Company:
Böwe, Bell + Howell

The Re-fresh: A B2B scanner firm needed to drive culture change to increase synergy and cross functionalization. We helped them rewrite their vision, mission and values and upgraded the sales materials to reflect a new brand platform. Solidifying their position in the marketplace was evident by the brand recognition studies. But one of the strongest payoffs of the partnership was the internal, motivational programs that enhanced their employee work styles across departments and created a fun, inspirational work environment.

“Paragraphs was a great addition to our marketing team. We were already familiar with their award-winning creative work, but their record in building brands and motivating target audiences is just as exceptional. We’ve benefited enormously from incorporating their innovative thinking with our approach to new products, our customers and our channel partners...their help in our internal branding process went far beyond my expectations...to the delight of our board and our employees...”

— Russell Hunt, President, Böwe, Bell & Howell
The Company: Starbucks

The Re-fresh: An ongoing evolution, this B2C company has updated its logo several times (including an update in 2011) so the brand is always delivering an image consistent to its values and product offerings. Since their messaging and environmental graphics stay the same, this is considered a brand "re-fresh".

The Company: IBM

The Re-brand: If there is a company that knows about the necessity of re-inventing (and re-branding), it is IBM. In 1993, IBM changed its focus from hardware and software to IT and consulting. This re-invention included a brand extension for IBM Watson. The sales brochure (right) introduced population health to its key constituency—C-level executives.
Is it Time to Consider a Re-fresh or a Re-brand?

Do you feel your brand is underperforming? Is it time to inject new life into your company and pursue additional opportunities for growth? To thrive, companies must adapt to marketplace changes and consumer needs—and that includes assessing and updating the company brand to help meet growth and profitability goals.

Paragraphs has been in the branding and marketing space for the past 30 years and we’ve seen brands struggle to keep up and unfortunately go under. But we’ve also seen—and helped—many companies make the smart decision to re-fresh and re-brand to ensure success and longevity.

All companies will reach a point where, after a deep examination, realize the time has come to re-brand. But whether a partial or total re-brand is required is dependent upon the company’s and brand’s health. And if you’re at that point now, or think you might be, Paragraphs is ready to help.

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Paragraphs LLC is a women business enterprise (WBE).