

Building and Integrating E-Communication Vehicles

By Barbara S. Straczynski, New Jersey State Bar Association

Creating an impression is more potent than acting from one's center," said Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher. After opening with this quote, Gina Furia Rubel, esq., presented an overall scheme at the Friday morning plenary at the October Workshop for carrying an association's brand across all vehicles when designing e-communications. Rubel is president of Furia Rubel Communications.

E-communication opportunities—e-zines, e-newsletters, e-mail blasts, podcasts, Web sites, webinars, blogs, social networking sites and more—are growing in usage as quickly as new possibilities are invented. Rubel presented the following statistics:

- 50 million people a day under the age of 30 get their news from the Internet,
- YouTube has revolutionized the way people view video,
- MySpace is currently the most popular Web site in the U.S., and
- On average, there are 26 electronic devices in each American home.



With so much competition, and more change around every corner, the importance of a bar association's brand cannot be overemphasized.

The brand that is out there, or not out there, is how the organization is perceived by members, nonmembers, and the public-at-large. Good brand perception can deliver high attendance at programs and outstanding volunteers to lead the organization because great people want to be part of a vital, recognizable organization. Effective brand perception can bring the association financial support. Donors are more interested in working with an organization with an exceptional reputation. All the association's good works and other projects must be associated with the brand. Increased membership, high attendance at meetings, great leadership, and financial support are all results of effective and consistent branding.

All designs should be integrated with the elements of a brand, including logo or standards, color palette and its usage, typeface and typography, font size and style, and language. Consistency and repetition of these key components will make the association's e-vehicles instantly recognizable.

Rubel looked at brand memory, pointing out that 40 percent of brand memory is devoted to a logo or standard. Branding 101 tells us that the association's logo or standard should be on every communication sent by the organization. This means on every page of the Web site, e-zine, e-mail, etc. A 40 percent memory statistic successfully reinforces the obvious. The Tennessee Bar Association Web site at <http://www.tba.org> was the example Rubel used where the effective use of Tennessee Bar Association, TBA, and tbalink logos can be seen on the pages.

The importance of color choices and the usage of color take up 30 percent of brand memory, the next large chunk after the logo or standard. The District of Columbia Bar Association Web site at <http://www.dcbbar.org> was the star example here with their consistent usage of violet on the pages for lawyers, yellow on pages for the public, and green for bar services pages. By maintaining a consistent color scheme adapted to each of the three primary segments of the Web site—lawyers, the public, bar services—visitors can more easily navigate the Web site. The ease of use associated with color will sit well in the Web visitors' brand memory.

Taking up 15 percent of brand memory is typeface/typography, and that is matched by language for the remaining 15 percent. The Santa Clara County Bar Association, at <http://www.sccba.com>, was demonstrated as using typeface well by carrying through no more than three typefaces consistently and repeated usage of a slogan on their pages.

For a case study, Rubel used the Philadelphia Bar Association Web site as an example (<http://www.philadelphiabar.org>), showing effective branding throughout their Web site, e-zines, e-newsletters, podcasts, videocasts, and webcasts. Using standards, logos, color, and typeface, the various Web pages and e-products were all readily identifiable as the Philadelphia Bar. The brand was also well integrated in their print publications, direct mail pieces, directories and brochures.

Rubel left attendees with two short lists of Branding Dos and Don'ts:

- **Do** create a clear message, limit the number of fonts and color scheme used, design a banner and logo, be consistent and thorough, and create a brand standards book.
- **Don't** overuse graphics and color, switch images and logos, send out multiple messages, use flashy banners and ads, or fail to integrate everywhere.

She also provided some useful branding resources, including the following Web sites: <http://www.allaboutbranding.com>, <http://www.brandchannel.com>, <http://www.brandweek.com>, <http://www.buildingbrands.com>, and <http://www.marketingprofs.com> as well as the following books: Building Strong Brands by David Aaker, Emotional Branding by Marc Globe, Experiential Marketing by Bernd H. Schmitt, The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding by Al and Laura Reis, and Unleashing the Idea Virus by Seth Godin. ■