

Anatomy of a Rebrand

So You Think Your Company Needs a Makeover? Here's How to Decide and To Do It Right.



About the Author



Joe Staples Chief Marketing Officer, Workfront



Joe Staples is the Chief Marketing Officer for Workfront, where ne leads a best-in-class marketing organization focused on pranding, thought-leadership, and demand generation.

Joe has been a CMO/Executive Vice President of Marketing for the past 20 years. His entire career has been in the tech sector where he has held management positions at several market-leading companies. He is a frequent presenter at events, has been published in a number of leading business and tech publications, and has developed several award-winning creative campaigns. Additionally, Joe has extensive international experience, having built marketing organizations from scratch in EMEA, APAC and Latin America.



What's in a Name?

If not for one critical decision made in 1997, we'd all be checking our "bmail" accounts and saying creepy things like,

"Hang on, let me backrub that and get back to you."

Thankfully, it took less than a year for Larry Page and Sergey Brin to realize they needed to scrap their original name, BackRub¹, and create the brand we know today: Google.

Sure, you might be thinking, it's easy to change your company's identity when it's still in its infancy, but pulling off a complete corporate reinvention for a more established brand is a different story. And you'd be right.

But if the change is necessary—and this guide will show you how to determine if it is—then it's important to act sooner than later, regardless of how daunting the process appears.

If you're seriously considering a rebrand, you have two broad options:

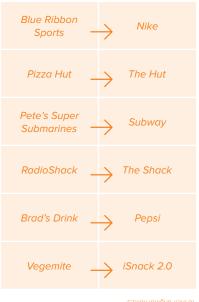
- You can either take the cattle rustler's approach to rebranding (quick, searingly painful, executed under the cover of darkness)
- You can break it down into three essential stages, make sure you're asking all the right questions, and follow the prescription to success you'll find in the pages that follow.

If you're still reading, I'm guessing you chose door number two. Good call. Let's jump right in to the first stage: Deciding to Rebrand.



Good Idea or Bad Idea?

See if you can identify which of these six famous makeovers took hold and which failed miserably.



Parkers: Nike, Subway, and Pepsi were the makeovers that insted. Pisza Hut, RadioShack, and Vegemite reverted back to their original near



STAGE ONE:

Deciding to Rebrand

So you're sick and tired of looking at that same old logo day after day, not to mention correcting constant mispronunciations of your company name, and you're wondering if it's time to shake things up.

If your target audience recognizes you, knows who you are, and understands what you do—and your reputation is still intact—that's a great case for leaving well enough alone.

If you're falling into a trap that many marketers fall into—tackling a big project like this just for the thrill of doing it—again, not reason enough for a change.

But if more than one of the following six rebranding reasons apply to your company, it might be worth sacrificing some brand equity (temporarily) for a new name and identity.



Six Reasons for Deciding to Rebrand

1 You've Outgrown Your Name

Is your organization still doing the thing it was founded to do? A company's mission can change significantly over time or maybe even in the first year or two, as is true for both Pinterest (originally Tote) and Instagram (originally Burbn). Sometimes, the original name no longer fits.

In my career, I've led two rebranding initiatives that demonstrate this idea. First, Applied Voice Technology, founded in 1982, evolved to the point that the majority of the business had nothing to do with voice. In 2002, we successfully rebranded to Captaris. (The firm was later acquired by Open Text.)

Second, the SaaS software firm AtTask, founded in 2001, had expanded to encompass the complete lifecycle of enterprise work—far more than tasks alone. We rebranded to Workfront in 2015.

2 Your Name Has a Negative Association

Had a major scandal or public relations problem lately? In such cases, all that brand recognition you've worked so hard to establish can start working against you.

Here are a few examples of efforts to hide a bad reputation behind a new name:

- cigarette manufacturer Phillip Morris rebranding to Altria
- ValuJet becoming AirTran Airways after a 1996 plane crash
- 2008 bailout recipient AIG temporarily masquerading as Chartis Inc.

Sometimes your company doesn't change; the world around you does. Years ago, as the adverse health effects of fried foods gained increasing media exposure, Kentucky Fried Chicken decided to lose the "fried" (in name only) and rebrand to KFC.



C-T-R to IBM

In 1911, three businesses merged and became the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (C-T-R). The company rebranded to International Business Machines Corporation in 1924 and quickly adopted the acronym we know today, because "the company's business had expanded both geographically and functionally," according to IBM history².



From Bad to Worse

Belgian chocolate maker Italo Suisse³ has been around since 1923, but after 90 years in business, the company no longer had any real association with either Italy or Switzerland. So in 2013, they rebranded—to ISIS—just a year before the terrorist group of the same name started making worldwide headlines. Oops. Now the name is Libeert.



REBRAN

You're Frequently Confused with Another Company

Constantly having to clarify, "No, we're the software company, not the athletic gear manufacturer with almost the same name"? Even if you serve different industries and geographical locations, thus eliminating trademark issues, having a business name or acronym that's too closely associated with the name of another company can cause challenges, especially when it comes to securing web addresses and online search traffic.

You've Been Carrying Around a Bad Name for Years

Does your name just suck, plain and simple? Bless the founder's heart, perhaps he or she saddled your company with an unfortunate name from the beginning. Maybe it's an acronym that doesn't stand for anything, it includes a bad pun, it's way too long or complex, it includes illogical punctuation or capitalization, or it doesn't reflect what you do and never has (AmeriTechTronCorp, for a fictitious example).



Comparing Apples

Sales associates at a small women's clothing retailer called Shabby Apple, located just across the hall from an Apple Store in a Utah mall, report that they receive several calls a day from customers who need help fixing their computers—not to mention frequent wrong-number calls from Apple Inc. employees, both corporate and retail.



+ 1866 441 0001

8 +44 [0] 1256 807352

9 Your Name is Not Suitable for the Internet

Is your company name web-friendly? If it's too generic, it will take significant time and effort before you rank in online search engines. (If Apple were founded today, would it be called Apple?) URLs are also a consideration. Some company names are fine when listed as two or three separate words, but they say something else entirely when the capital letters and spaces are removed.

- Choose Spain = choosespain
- Ford Owners = fordowners
- Children's Wear = childrenswear
- Old Man's Haven = oldmanshaven
- Work Slate = workslate

One Can Remember It, Spell It, or Say It

Do you often hear "could you spell that for me?" when you tell people where you work? If there are several possible ways to pronounce, spell, or punctuate your company name, it will be hard for your audience to remember or find you online, which can cripple your ability to build lasting brand equity. Saucony, Chik-fil-A and Ruth's Chris Steak House are apparently getting away with it, but that doesn't mean smaller companies can.

Ready for an Overhaul?

If one or more of the six rebranding reasons I just outlined rings true to you, an overhaul may be in order, and the sooner the better. Because once you decide you need a new name, every single dollar you spend on your current brand is wasted money.



STAGE TWO:

Creating Your New Brand

Once you've decided to rebrand, you're looking at roughly a 6- to 18-month process, depending on your industry and the complexity of your business. If you have planes to repaint or 150 retail stores around the country to transform, it's going to take a lot longer. But as long as you recruit the right kind of expert help and keep the following tips in mind, your corporate makeover can go more smoothly (and more quickly) than you think.

Workfront's transformation from its old identity, AtTask, took a total of 4 ½ months from the moment we said, "Yes, we're doing this," to the day we unveiled our new website and replaced the sign on the building. Yes, that's unusually fast, but we serve a particularly fastpaced market.



Three Steps to Create Your New Brand

Perform a Brand Audit

Only fools rush in to brand reinvention. The first, most important step is to calculate how much brand equity you have to begin with.

Poll your employees and current customers, asking them about brand attributes:

- What three words would you use to describe this brand?
- If this brand were a person, how would you describe him or her?

Then for prospective customers, meaning those that fit the profile of who you target for your product or service, ask a fundamental brand recognition question:

• Are you familiar with the company's name?

You might have determined that you have good reason for an overhaul during stage one. But if your brand audit reveals a higher-than-expected name recognition and strong customer attachment to your current corporate identity, consider stopping here and building on what you have.

Generally speaking, the stronger your brand recognition, the bigger the reason you'll need to justify a change. As a good benchmark, if your brand recognition is greater than 50% within your target market, you should really think hard before deciding to rebrand.

2 Employ Experts

Even if you have the savviest CMO around and a great creative director, both of whom have spearheaded internal rebranding efforts in the past, this is still not their area of expertise. Additionally, they have day jobs that already consume their time. Adding something as big as a rebrand onto an already full plate could result in a very lengthy process.

While your CMO or creative director may oversee the process, choose to use a firm that specializes in brand building and reinvention, so you can benefit from their depth

Tip: Pick the Right Naming Agency

It's easy to become enamored with, say, the agency that helped name the iPad—for the bragging rights alone. But if your company is on the smaller side, you'll never spend enough money with that agency to be much of a priority, and it will be a bad fit.

Look for a naming agency that has assisted other clients of your company's approximate size and has experience in similar industries. Not only will it be more affordable for you, you're also likely to get better results.





of experience and many years of trial and error. They've gone through this process dozens if not hundreds of times with other clients. They'll save you money, they'll save you time, and they'll help you do it right.

13 Limit Your Decision-making Group

Even with a team of experts on your side, presenting you with dozens of options for names, logos and colors, at some point decisions must be made. You need a small, close-knit group to talk through the options, evaluate the fit, and make a final ruling. If the group is too large, you're going to spend a lot of time debating personal opinions, because *everyone* will have an opinion (qualified or not), and everyone thinks they could be a marketer.

For the AtTask-to-Workfront rebrand, the decision-making council consisted of three individuals: me in the role of CMO, as well as the CEO and my creative director.

CMO CEO Creative Director

Tip: Be Bold

Almost everyone tries to play it safe when it comes to rebranding. They may come up with a wonderful, unique, provocative, memorable name—and then get cold feet when it's time to make a decision. The goal cannot be to pick a name that no one will complain about. Such a name does not exist, and if it did, it would be as boring as the color beige.

Your name choice may really resonate with 80% of people, while 20% react with, "You're naming it WHAT?" If you truly want an identity that stands out from the crowd, it has to be bold and provocative, and that means some people aren't going to like it. Be okay with that.



Ten decision makers is too many!



Only you can determine the exact right number for your organization, but just know that 10 is always too many. The CFO and the VP of HR may be great people, but they don't have a background in branding, and they're unlikely to contribute meaningfully to the process.

Output the Name and the Visual Identity

During the name selection process, you'll be looking at trademarks, copyrights and web URLs, on top of the nuances of pronunciation, spelling, capitalization and more. There are plenty of variables to deal with during that phase of the process as it is, so don't throw logos and fonts into the mix as well.

Look at your list of name options all in the same font, in black text, on a white background. Otherwise, you'll get stuck on how the different options are stylized, and the visual identity can unduly influence your name choice. These are two distinct processes. Once you've settled on the perfect name, let the fonts, colors, and icons fly.

Name Options

Mock Tech Solutions

Mock Tech Systems

MachTech Inc.

MokTek

MockTech Inc.

Logo Options







5 List Everything that Needs to be Changed

Having a project management system in place is essential for a project of this size. It allows all stakeholders and participants to see what's been done, what's left, and whether you're on track for launch.

Some things will be easy and obvious (website, business cards, sign on the building) and other things won't be noticed until well after the switch (an obscure auto-responder email or a seldom-used accounting form, for example).

When AtTask transitioned to Workfront in 2015, we logged 412 individual tasks in our work management software as part of the rebrand project, and we still didn't find everything until the very end of the process.

Tip:

In order to move through the process as quickly as possible, separate the items that must be complete before you launch, such as the website, and which items can be tackled after the announcement, like adding the new logo to every old brochure and white paper. More on that during stage 3.

🗹 Things to Change

- business cards
- building signage
- accounting forms
- email signatures
- website

- employee badges
- tradeshow booth signage
- customer contracts
- voicemail greetings
- printed collateral

- presentation templates
- company incorporation
 registration
- URLs
- digital ads



+ 1866 441 0001

STAGE THREE:

Unveiling Your New Brand

No one wants to spend 6-18 months of intense work transforming their corporate identity only to botch the unveiling. Planning and presentation are everything. To make the biggest possible splash with your exciting new look, start by dividing your tasks into two separate efforts—the internal launch and the external launch and following the six remaining tips.

0000



Three Tips for a Successful Internal Launch

Give Employees a Heads-up

Many companies fail to realize that getting their employees behind the brand is the first and most important step in a successful launch. You want as many cheerleaders and advocates as possible. If you can't convince the people on your payroll that this is a good move, your chances with your broader audience diminish significantly.

How Workfront Did It

We gave AtTask employees a 10-week heads up that the name was going to change, and we explained why (our product had expanded to encompass the complete lifecycle of enterprise work—far more than tasks alone). We told them change was coming before we had even decided on a new name. This gave them time to process the idea, get their questions answered, and buy in to the reasoning.

2 Get Employees Involved

There are two big reasons to get your whole company involved in the rebranding process. The first is that it's their company too, and you'll build feelings of loyalty and belonging by acknowledging that fact. The second is that 400+ rebranding tasks can't be accomplished by one person alone.

How Workfront Did It

A month before our external launch, we unveiled our new brand internally to our then 500+ employees. It may sound risky to expect hundreds of people to all keep their mouths shut for 4 straight weeks, but our decision to put faith in our employees paid off. All we had to say to them was, "We're trusting you to keep this confidential," with instructions not to tell friends or neighbors—and especially not to post anything online. Our faith in them paid off.





+ 1866 441 0001



Make it a BIG DEAL

If you announce your new name and logo via a group email, there's no fanfare, no excitement, no shared experience or excitement. At best, your new identity will fall flat. At worst, you'll get hundreds of different reactions emailed back at you—most depending on the state of mind of the viewer in that moment. If someone's in a terrible mood that day or has had bad personal experiences with your chosen brand color, they will have nothing good to say about your new look. The key is to orchestrate the mood—and do it in a big way.

How Workfront Did It

We brought everyone together into one large conference hall, with 2,000 logoed balloons hidden in the ceiling. We had logo lights and a stage and a 30-minute buildup, with branded swag to throw out into the crowd. We built anticipation. We pretended we were about to reveal the name, then backtracked, "Wait, wait...maybe first we should tell them the names we *didn't* pick." And we trotted out a list of hilarious, fake runners up.

Then, the reveal. We produced an action-packed video, complete with stunt men, drone cameras and special effects, which we played on a pair of giant movie screens. At the climax of the video, the branded balloons poured from the ceiling and Workfront's new lion logo was spotlighted on the wall, larger than life. You couldn't *not* be excited in that moment, even if you might have been initially lukewarm about the name itself.



Three Tips for the External Launch

1 Make it a BIG Deal

This tip may sound familiar (since you read it, oh, three paragraphs ago), but it's important for your external audience too. Even if you've done everything else perfectly up until the public reveal, you will fail if you don't expend enough effort and money to spread the word about your name change.

How Workfront Did It

We launched extensive print and digital campaigns, using the same creative agency that built our new look and feel, to plan media buys and evaluate where to advertise. Sound expensive? It was. But it makes sense when you keep the rocket ship analogy in mind. (See Tip 2.)





Front Load Your Budget

A rocket ship uses the majority of its fuel and energy just to get off the launch pad and break away from the earth's gravity. With this in mind, deliberately allocate a substantial portion of your annual branding budget to the first quarter of the name change. Remember: the day after announcing your name change, your brand recognition will be officially zero.

Additionally, remember that while you care about your brand identity, the market doesn't, for the most part. You need to take some powerful, impactful actions to get off the ground, and you need the market to take notice.

How Workfront Did It

We reserved 2/3 of our annual branding budget for our initial brand launch. Yes, a full 2/3 of our branding budget was spent on awareness campaigns in just the first quarter of the year. We focused all of this advertising on one key point: there's an enterprise work management solution called Workfront.

If we had focused instead on the transition from AtTask (with a headline like 'AtTask is now Workfront'), it would have meant nothing to those unfamiliar with our old brand. We did attach a 'formerly AtTask' label to the new logo for a few months, to help bridge that gap.





Tell Key Customers Early

Prep stakeholders for your release. Make a list of important customers, partners, analysts, and influencers who need to be informed a few days in advance of your public launch. Otherwise, you risk alienating your most loyal allies and clients.

How Workfront Did It

We announced our new brand in a very personal way to key customers a day or two before the public reveal. Then several other steps happened almost simultaneously:

- the press release went out
- the website switched over
- emails went out to the broader customer base, partners, investors, and other associates

We also provided an email for each executive to send out to his or her own personal network.



What's Next?

You debated the benefits of rebranding and decided to go for it. You painstakingly built the perfect new look and feel. You launched your brand to wide public acclaim. Now you can sit back and relax, right?

Wrong. Now you've got brand equity to build. And more than likely, you've still got an extensive list of "post-launch" tasks to wrap up. In many ways, you've started back at square one. But if you checked your reasoning against the questions in Stage One, followed the five steps in Stage Two, and incorporated the six tips from Stage Three, you may find it's an incredibly exciting place to be.

Workfront's Success Story

At the time we changed our name from AtTask to Workfront, we were a 13 year-old company. As prescribed in Stage Two: Step One, we did a brand audit prior to the name change and found a 22% brand recognition by our target market for the AtTask name.

We knew it would take work to get back to that level and beyond, given how long it took to get to that point initially. The results of our brand audit 11 months after the name change to Workfront showed that we had done this right—brand recognition of 23% in North America and 45% in our primary international market in the UK. Definitely worth the effort.

If you do decide to rebrand, I'd love to hear how it goes for you. You can find me on LinkedIn (Joe Staples) or on Twitter (@jstaples21).



Workfront's North American brand recognition surpassed pre-rebranding levels in just 11 months.



Workfront's international market brand recognition reached 45% in just 11 months.

WORK CITED

- 1. http://www.google.com/about/company/history/
- 2. http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/history/decade_1920.html
- 3. http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/23/us-belgium-chocolate-isis-idUSKCN0IC11G20141023
- 4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnXktXA59WE





+ 1866 441 0001

Manage your next rebrand—and everything in between—with Workfront

With an Enterprise Work Management solution like Workfront, your team can ensure a successful rebrand with:

- The ability to streamline and manage every single task your rebrand can throw at it
- Visibility into all team members' current workloads and future availability
- Standardized request queues to make it easy to assign and accept work
- An archivable, searchable record of all collaboration around tasks and projects
- Digital proofing capabilities to make reviews and approvals smooth and stress-free

workfront.com





Copyright © 2016 Workfront, Inc. All rights reserved.