The drivers of brand equity in international nonprofit organizations

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Abstract

International nonprofit organizations are the world’s new “super brands,” their brand values are on par with major international corporations and they command unprecedented levels of trust. Yet brand building activities within these organizations appear relatively limited, perhaps because no brand equity models exist specifically for them. This study explores the drivers of brand equity for international nonprofit organizations by developing a model using a combination of a system dynamics approach and grounded theory development. This model proposes that four key variables drive brand equity in these organizations: consistency, focus, trust and partnerships, and advances eleven specific recommendations for nonprofit brand managers. These recommendations are based on the causal loop diagrams for the four key variables which offer a deeper understanding of what influences these four key variables and how they interact.

Key Words

Brand equity, international nonprofits, system dynamics, grounded theory development
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Introduction

International nonprofit organizations are increasingly playing an important role in our lives and have been described as the world’s new “super brands” (Wootliff & Deri, 2001). Just a few months ago, the release of the Cone Nonprofit Power Brand 100 (2009), which estimates the value of the top 10 nonprofit brands in the U.S. at $30 billion, generated significant interest. In addition to their brand valuations being on par with major international corporations, international nonprofits command unprecedented levels of trust (Laidler-Kylander, Quelch, & Simonin, 2007). The 2009 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that nonprofits on the whole, command greater trust than business, government, and media. Indeed, they are the only institution that are trusted by more than 50% of people polled (Edelman, 2009).

Given this context, branding, and by extension understanding the drivers of brand equity, is important, even critical, for international nonprofit organizations (Chiagouris, 2005; Nadaff, 2004; and Smillie, 1995). Yet nonprofit managers and leaders have seemed reluctant to actively embrace existing brand equity building activities (Bishop, 2005; Ewing and Napoli, 2005; and Nissim, 2004). This may be in part, because no explicit brand equity models exist specifically for nonprofit organizations (Haigh and Gilbert, 2005). The aim of this study is to explore the drivers of brand equity for international nonprofit organizations by developing a model specifically for these organizations, using a combination of a system dynamics approach and grounded theory development.

Theoretical Framework

Brand Equity

For Aaker, (1996) brand equity is “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to, or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to that firm’s customers.” Keller (2000) has advanced a “Brand Score Card” composed of ten attributes that the world’s strongest brands share and provides a roadmap for building brand equity. Other researchers such as Dyson et al (1996) believe that brand equity is a measure of the strength of consumer attachment or association to a particular brand and that, “a brand's foundations are composed of peoples' intangible mental associations about it. Park & Srinivasan (1994) propose a survey-based method for measuring and understanding a brand's equity in a particular product category, Seetharaman et al (2001) have identified, “Awareness, loyalty and quality perception as the three main components of a successful brand”, and even more recently, Reynolds and Phillips (2005) have proposed a framework for measuring “true” brand equity, based on two active components: resiliency and leverage. In fact, a plethora of brand equity models exist and many authors have called for a greater degree of homogenization and a “universally acceptable and simple to understand meaning” of brand equity (Blackston, 2000; Knowles, 2004; and Woods, 1998). Indeed, Reynolds and Phillips (2005) assert that the “lack of agreement about something this fundamental (measurement of brand equity) says much about the state of brand strategy and brand research.” Given this concern surrounding brand equity models, rather than select a single model and adapt it
to international nonprofits, this study seeks to develop a new model through case study research, theory development and system dynamics.

**International Nonprofit Organizations**

International nonprofit organizations have become a powerful force in the world and have grown not only in numbers, but in terms of influence and visibility. They have, “moved from backstage to center stage in world politics, and are exerting their power and influence in every aspect of international relations and policymaking” (McGann and Johnstone, 2006). New forms of nonprofit organizations have emerged and new technological and communication capabilities have revolutionized the way nonprofits interact with their publics (Andreasen and Kotler, 2002). The forces of globalization have caused many nonprofit organizations to become more international and, in increasing numbers, partnerships and alliances of all types have opened new frontiers and created new challenges (Austin, 2000). Concurrently, the roles of national governments and the private sector have changed, as have the nature of philanthropy, social needs, and complex emergencies (Lindenberg and Bryant, 2001). This changing landscape has profoundly altered the mindset and duties of nonprofit managers and leaders, and propelled them into new competitive arenas where astute brand stewardship can be a differential advantage (Laidler-Kylander, Simonin and Quelch, 2007). Smillie, (1995) considers that the building and nurturing of strong global brands critical for the future survival of many of today’s major international nonprofit organizations.

Oster (1995) suggests that nonprofit organizations differ from their for-profit counterparts in at least five major areas: their organizational culture; their human resources; their collaborative rather than competitive approaches; the complexity of their customers; and the importance of their mission. Compared to their for-profit counterparts, international nonprofit organizations often have highly decentralized organizational structures with low control by headquarters, coupled with a consensus building culture (Foreman, 1999; Quelch and Laidler-Kylander, 2005; and Grossman and Rangan, 2003). Austin (2000) suggests that for many nonprofit organizations, “collaboration (rather than competition) is becoming the rule.” Nonprofit organizations also have a broader spectrum of stakeholders and brand audiences to contend with (clients, donors, volunteers and governments) (Letts, Ryan and Grossman, 1999; and Ritchie, Swami and Weinberg, 1999). In addition, for many nonprofits, a disconnect exists between the purchaser (donor) and user (recipient) of the organization’s product or services (Liao, Foreman and Sargeant, 2000). In for-profit organizations, the purchaser and user of the product are the same, and a direct feedback loop exists between the purchaser and the company. For many nonprofits, this feedback loop does not exist and the purchaser (donor) is rarely able to assess the organization’s products and services. Instead, purchasers must rely on their trust in the nonprofit’s ability to carry out its mission successfully (Laidler-Kylander, Simonin and Quelch, 2007). Finally, nonprofits are mission driven organizations and Oster (1995) argues that for nonprofits the mission must not only create trust among clients and donors, but act as an organizational boundary, motivate staff, and help in performance evaluations.
Methodology

System Dynamics.

System Dynamics “is a methodology for studying and managing complex feedback systems, such as one finds in business and other social systems” (as defined by the System Dynamics Society at systemdynamics.org, Nov 2005). It combines the theory, methods and philosophy needed to analyze the behavior of complex, non-linear systems and has been used in many fields including; corporate planning, policy design, biological and medical modeling, and theory development in the natural and social sciences. System dynamics uses concepts drawn from the field of feedback control, to map the dynamic relationships in a system, using tools such as causal loop diagrams (Sterman, 1989). These tools are based on the assumption that the world is made up of closed loop structures where an action drives a result, which leads to information, which in turn gives rise to another action (see Figure 1). A number of software packages exist that help translate the above causal loop diagrams into computer programs that then simulate these dynamic relationships, in order to explore the consequences of different interventions, delays, and feedback. The objective of system dynamics is not necessarily to arrive at a specific answer, but to provide insights into a system, particularly with respect to the impacts of feedbacks and delays. As Senge (1994) argues, “System dynamics enables us to view the world differently and to learn and therefore to change.”

System dynamics is ideally suited to the development of a model seeking to understand what drives brand equity in international nonprofits. Brand equity is difficult to define, complex, dynamic, and open to interpretation (as demonstrated by the large number of for-profit models that exist). Brand equity is non-linear and certainly involves substantial feedback relationships and delays (Miller & Robinson, 2003; and Otto, 2002). Although brand equity is very real, it is intangible, a construct or soft variable that is relationship based and driven by perception, making it nearly impossible to measure directly. Complex dynamic systems like brand equity, require powerful new methods such as system dynamics that enable the translation of the “mental” or implicit models held by nonprofit brand managers, into explicit models. The objective of this study is to propose such an explicit model.

Grounded Theory Development Through Case Studies

Glaser and Straus (1967) established the principles of grounded theory as the inductive development of theory from qualitative data, using a general method of comparative analysis. Most social science research today is designed to verify existing theories or add knowledge to an existing theory. Few researchers attempt to actually develop theory. Deshpande for example, laments the dominance of “hypothesis testing” in research in marketing and urges researchers to, “develop new, rich and explanatory theories” (Deshpande, 1983). This research takes the path less traveled and attempts to develop a theory or model of what drives brand equity in international nonprofits.

Case study research has been found to be an effective methodology in both marketing and international business when there exists a paucity of knowledge and theory, and when the phenomenon to be studied is broad and complex (Bonoma, 1985). In particular, case studies have proven useful for generating both theoretical and practical insights in the field of nonprofit marketing, (Austin, 2000). In grounded theory
development, cases are chosen for theoretical rather than statistical reasons and “the goal of theoretical sampling is to choose cases which are likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory” (Eisenhardt, 1989). Based on the theoretical sampling approach and existing access opportunities, three relatively similar international nonprofit organizations were selected: Care, Oxfam International, and World Vision. These are all large international NGOs, Anglo-Saxon in origin, well-known, and broad based (being active in development, relief and advocacy). These three cases were used to generate an initial model of brand equity for international nonprofits. Two additional case studies: The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and Amnesty International were included following the initial model development in order validate the model and identify potential differences relating to an organizational focus on relief, in the case of the Red Cross, and advocacy, in the case of Amnesty International. (See Table 1 for details on these international nonprofit organizations).

**Constant Comparative Analysis**

Inherent to grounded theory development described above, is the analysis of qualitative research data using constant comparative analysis. Constant comparative analysis involves taking one piece of data: an interview, a statement or a theme, and comparing it with all others that may be similar or different (Thorne, 2000). Categories are created when the researcher groups the data and these categories should emerge out of the data (inductive analysis) rather than being imposed on prior to the data collection (Patton, 1990). According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985) the task of categorization is to create temporary categories whose data bits relate to the same content. The constant comparative method together with theoretical sampling, constitute the core of qualitative analysis in the grounded theory approach developed by Glaser and Strauss.

A constant comparison approach, with the iterative development of data categories was used by Repenning and Sterman (2002) in their system dynamics research on Capability Traps. This study is very similar and constant comparison is at the heart of all the data analysis in the study. In some instances, categorization evolved inductively from the data itself. In other cases, discrete categories of data already existed and the data was simply compared across these existing categories. The objective in both cases, was to surface variables or themes that recurred or dominated the specific issue under investigation. Over the course of our study, a total of 218 separate data blocks were categorized and compared. This extensive data analysis enabled the identification of key variables driving brand equity in international nonprofits.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection was achieved using focus groups comprising 4 to 7 participants from each of our selected case studies (see Table 1). Focus groups were conducted in the United States, Canada, the UK and Switzerland, and lasted approximately 3 hours each, for a total of 24 hours of focus groups with 34 participants. The data collection comprised two phases. In the first phase, focus groups were conducted to develop an initial brand equity model using a series of semi-structured questions and a set of system dynamics exercises. The outcome of this first phase was the development of initial causal loop diagrams for key variables which were then “tested” for validity during the second phase. During this second phase of data collection (conducted approximately 6 months later),
focus groups (with many of the same participants) were used to revise and correct the initial causal loops, resulting in a final model which comprises the four key variables or drivers of brand equity and their associated causal loops. These four key drivers are: consistency, focus, trust and partnerships.

Consistency, refers to the consistency in both organizational operations and messaging of an international nonprofit. Focus, relates to the scope of an organization’s field operations as well as its ability to stick to a specific mission over time. Trust, is a reflection of one of the differences of nonprofits discussed above, where donors (customers) cannot experience or measure the product or service the organization delivers. This disconnect requires the international nonprofits various stakeholders to trust that the organization will do what it claims to. Finally, partnerships (with business, government, and other NGOs) can significantly enhance or jeopardize brand equity for international nonprofits. These four variables are at the heart of the proposed system dynamics model for brand equity for international nonprofits which comprises a series of causal loops as well as a computer simulation.

Results

Causal Loops

As discussed above, a series of initial Causal Loop Diagrams (CLDs) were developed, one for each of the four key drivers highlighted above. These CLDs help explore the dynamic meaning of each of these four key variables, the relationships and causality between them and other model variables, and to highlight important feedback structures in the overall model (Coyle, 2000). Although all four brand equity variables and their CLD are central to this model, in this paper, I will concentrate on presenting the CLD for focus in detail.

There are surprisingly few references as to the impact or role of focus on brand equity. Most of the corresponding literature involves the analysis of brand extensions and their impact on brand equity. The brand extension research is pertinent here in the sense that as international nonprofit organizations move into new activities, thereby reducing their operational focus, they are extending their brand to new product or service areas in the minds of their brand audiences. Recent research suggests that brand extension strategies dilute parent brand equity and that “fit” between the original brand and the extension brand is important, (Buil, Martínez, and de Chernatony, 2009). This notion of “fit” echoes the importance of consistency, another of the model’s key variables. It is also interesting to note that during the AMA’s (American Marketing Association) nonprofit marketing conference in July 2006, the importance of brand focus was a key theme.

In the final causal loop for focus, better described as operational focus (depicted in Figure 2), three connected loops make up the overall causal loop for focus. The “Internal role of focus” loop is a reinforcing loop that captures how an increase in operational focus can result in better resource allocation which in turn leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness. This boost in efficiency and effectiveness translates to enhanced brand trust which positively influences organizational legitimacy. An increase in the organizational legitimacy reinforces the validity and appropriateness of the organizations mission, which provides the boundaries for the organization’s activities, and therefore helps establish organizational focus. In the “External role of focus loop,”
also a reinforcing loop, operational focus helps establish a strong positioning for the organization which increases visibility in the market. Visibility positively influences both funds raised and perceived relevance. An increase in relevance strengthens the emotional connections with customers which in turn, enhances brand identity. A stronger brand identity justifies and supports the organization’s current operational focus. However, visibility also drives funds raised, which in the CLD for consistency, results in organizational growth which negatively impacts organizational focus. As an organization becomes larger and more diffuse, it becomes harder to maintain operational focus. This dynamics effect is depicted in the balancing loop labeled in Figure 2 as “Impact of fundraising loop.” For nonprofit managers, not only do efforts to increase operational focus have a direct positive impact on brand equity, they also increase organizational legitimacy (one of the major challenges currently facing international nonprofit organizations) and enhance brand positioning helping to differentiate an organization from its competitors.

Computer Simulation

According to Sterman, (2000) building a computer simulation model is a critical step in the classical system dynamics process. Following Homer and Rogelio’s (2001) assertion that simulation adds value despite a predominance of soft variables, we created a mathematical simulation model for one of the independent variables of the Brand Equity model, that of Trust. The model was written using VENSIM, from Ventana Systems, one of the two main simulation softwares used for system dynamics modeling, with the assistance of John Lyneis, from the system dynamics group at MIT.

Although the parameters of this article do not allow an in-depth discussion of the simulation itself, we found that building a simulation model, enhanced our understanding of brand equity in international nonprofits. Specifically, the simulation model of the trust variable revealed that two variables dominated the growth of trust: differentiation and organizational integrity. The simulation helped us understand that visibility can be a two-edged sword in terms of brand trust, because higher visibility can lead to more intense scrutiny of an organization with the potential of uncovering inefficiencies or even organizational scandals. We conclude therefore that simulation sheds light on the relative importance of specific variables as well as their dynamic nature.

Discussion

Managerial Recommendations

The brand equity model for international nonprofits, composed of four core variables: consistency, focus, trust, and partnerships, as well as their associated causal loops and a simulation for trust, leads us to propose a number of specific recommendations for nonprofit managers. The causal loop for consistency highlights the importance of increasing internal coordination throughout the organization and concentrating external messaging. The causal loops for focus discussed in some length above, suggests that sticking closely to the mission and striving for operational focus over time and across countries is critical to driving brand equity. In the case of trust, the causal loop model points to the importance of a strong brand positioning, raising visibility both through messaging and field presence, and the promotion of organizational integrity.
Finally, partnerships can enhance brand equity when these partnerships are selected on the basis of fit and proactively managed by the organization. A common theme running through all four causal loops is the importance of internal branding. Indeed, each one of the key variable causal loops contained a sub-loop specifically addressing the internal impact of that variable. For example, the causal loop for focus in Figure 2 contains a loop depicting the internal role of focus on the organization. The resulting recommendation stemming from this unexpected importance of internal branding, are to recognize and embrace the internal role of the brand and to encourage internal brand ambassadors. These recommendations are described in detail in Table 2.

**Limitations and Future Research**

While this study has led to some key finding and contributions, it is also important to recognize the limitations of this work and to identify future research needs. The limitations of this study fall into two main categories: 1) Issues of replicability of the research and 2) Issues of applicability or generalizability of the model itself. Concerns with the replicability of the research center on focus group structure and participation; and the interpretation of data using constant comparison. In the former, focus groups discussions can become susceptible to “group think” or particularly dominating participants. In the latter, researcher bias may influence data interpretation and categorization. To some extent the validation of the initial causal loops with a second round of focus groups, may have helped to mitigate these limitations. It is clear that the question of applicability of this model, beyond international nonprofit organizations to other types of nonprofit organizations or even certain for-profit organizations, requires further research. For domestic nonprofits for example, it is possible that certain variables such as consistency and focus may be less important in driving brand equity, since domestic nonprofits do not share the complexity that stems from large multinational multi-site organizations. However, variables such as trust and partnerships may prove to be critical brand equity variables for most, if not all, nonprofit organizations.

**Future Research**

Future research along two main axes should be contemplated. First, simulation models for each of the three remaining key brand equity variables: Consistency, Focus and Partnerships might be developed, much in the same way the simulation model for Trust described briefly above. This would enable us to learn more about the relative importance of different model variables. Secondly, the model proposed in this paper could be tested with a broader group of both international and domestic nonprofit organizations, through a larger scale, survey based approach. It might also be exciting to test the relevance of the model with certain for-profit organizations, particularly since the increased prevalence of corporate social responsibility initiatives suggests that for profit corporations are attempting to “borrow” some of the brand equity of their nonprofit partners.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Care International</td>
<td>Care International is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. Composed of 12 country members, it is non-political and non-sectarian and operates each year in more than 69 countries, reaching more than 65 million people in poor communities. Established in 1946, revenues in 2008 were just short of $886 Million and the organization employed 14,500 people worldwide. Care’s stated mission is: “to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from our global diversity, resources and experience, we promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility. We promote lasting change by: 1. Strengthening capacity for self-help; 2. Providing economic opportunity; 3. Delivering relief in emergencies; 4. Influencing policy decisions at all levels; and 5. Addressing discrimination in all its forms.” In addition, the organization is guided by four core values: respect; integrity; commitment; excellence. (<a href="http://www.care-international.org">http://www.care-international.org</a>).</td>
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<td>Oxfam International</td>
<td>Originally established in 1942, Oxfam International is today a confederation of 13 organizations working together with over 3,000 partners in more than 100 countries, to find lasting solutions to poverty, suffering and injustice. For 2006/2007, total program expenditures, excluding management costs, were US $704 million. The organization “seeks increased worldwide public understanding that economic and social justice, are crucial to sustainable development. We strive to be a global campaigning force promoting the awareness and motivation that comes with global citizenship while seeking to shift public opinion in order to make equity the same priority as economic growth.” (<a href="http://www.oxfam.org">http://www.oxfam.org</a>).</td>
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<td>World Vision International</td>
<td>World Vision International is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Established in 1950 it currently operates in 98 countries, serving 100 million people through 40,000 employees. Income in 2008 stood at US $2.6 billion (including in-kind donations). The organization's mission statement is to be a “partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.” Six core values guide the organization: “1. We are Christian; 2. We are committed to the poor; 3. We value people; 4. We are stewards; 5. We are partners; 6. We are responsive. (<a href="http://www.wvi.org">http://www.wvi.org</a>).</td>
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<td>IFRC</td>
<td>Founded in 1919, the International Federation comprises 185 member Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, a Secretariat in Geneva, and more than 60 delegations around the world. (The Red Crescent is used in place of the Red Cross in many Islamic countries). The IFRC’s programs are grouped into four main core areas: promoting humanitarian principles and values; disaster response; disaster preparedness; and health and care in the community. In 2008, total Federation income was 549 million Swiss francs and programs reached an estimated 158 million people. The organization's mission is to “improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.” Finally, seven fundamental principles guide the organizations: humanity; impartiality; neutrality; independence; voluntary service; unity; universality. (<a href="http://www.ifrc.org">http://www.ifrc.org</a>).</td>
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<td>Amnesty International</td>
<td>Founded in 1961, Amnesty International (AI) is an independent worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights. In 2008, this movement was composed of 2.2 million members, supporters and subscribers in over 150 countries and territories in every region of the world. AI’s mission is to “undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights. (<a href="http://web.amnesty.org">http://web.amnesty.org</a>).</td>
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Figure 1
Causal Loop Diagram
Depicting Closed Loop Structure of the World
Figure 2
Causal Loop for Brand Equity Model
Focus Variable
### Table 2
Managerial Recommendations for Building Brand Equity in International Nonprofit Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase Internal Coordination</strong></td>
<td>In order to enhance consistency, it is important to increase internal coordination by: 1) Employing individuals whose responsibility it is to drive coordination throughout the organization; 2) Increasing the number of internal coordination meetings, activities, and objectives; and 3) Expanding the scope of internal coordination by establishing cross-functional teams to address specific challenges. Oxfam, for example, has recently created a marketing coordination position at the international secretariat office to coordinate the marketing activities of different geographical offices, and Care has successfully used cross-functional teams composed of marketing, finance, and program managers, to develop a new organizational structure.</td>
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<td><strong>Concentrate External Messaging</strong></td>
<td>In addition to increasing internal coordination, it is important to concentrate external messaging in order to have a greater positive impact on visibility. Five years ago, even international nonprofit brands with high brand equity such as World Vision and CARE displayed a plethora of different messages, logos, and taglines. Today, these brands’ external messaging is more consolidated and concentrated: logos and taglines are more homogenous throughout the organization, and messaging more universal. The impact of this greater consistency in external messaging is an increase in brand visibility and differentiation.</td>
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<td><strong>Strive for Operational Focus</strong></td>
<td>As international NGOs grow and expand, the pressures to address a greater number of social issues and markets also increases. Organizations that started off as highly focused operationally, have become more diffuse in their activities. This has been the case for most international NGOs in this study. Amnesty, for example, has gone from a human rights organization focused on prisoners of conscience to an organization advocating on the behalf of a wide range of populations including gay, lesbian, and transgender groups. This is not to say that there is anything wrong about this decision per se, but to point out that this broadening of the scope of the organization can negatively impact both the clarity of brand positioning, and resource allocation. As a counter example, Médecins Sans Frontières was often referred to by case study participants as an example of a strong competitor brand that drew its substantial brand equity from its operational focus on medical emergency and relief operations.</td>
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<td><strong>Stick Closely to the Mission</strong></td>
<td>In many cases, the nature of the funds themselves can cause an organization to stray from its original mission, or adapt its programming to meet the requirements of different donors. A nonprofit’s mission can help an organization establish boundaries. This was described by focus group participants from World Vision as a particular challenge. World Vision adopts a holistic approach to development and promotes flexibility in the field, in order to implement the best solution to each specific case. World Vision’s very broad mission statement supports this lack of operational focus but the result, according to study participants, is an unclear brand positioning and related concerns about both efficiency and effectiveness.</td>
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<td><strong>Develop a Strong Brand Positioning</strong></td>
<td>A strong brand position promotes brand trust. An effective brand positioning in the minds and hearts of a brand’s audiences must: 1) Provide a clear fit with perceived needs (or high perceived relevance) and; 2) Clearly differentiate the organization relative to the competition. The ability to differentiate the organization both promotes trust directly, and can reduce the impact of brand scandal spillovers which reduces trust.</td>
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<td><strong>Raise Visibility through Messaging and Field Presence</strong></td>
<td>Visibility through both messaging and presence in the field also positively impacts brand trust. Those organizations with substantial field presence may be more visible and tangible to brand audiences than those organizations that rely simply on messaging. This may be particularly true for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity that have both a domestic (US) presence, and international operations. For some organizations a domestic presence in donor countries may not be possible, but an extensive field presence can be leveraged through the media in the way Médecins Sans Frontières, for example, leverages its activity of “témoignage” (the witnessing and shaming of humanitarian law abuses).</td>
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<td><strong>Promote organizational integrity</strong></td>
<td>Through internal workshops and the implementation of standards and best practices, internal NGOs can enhance organization integrity and increase brand trust. The IFRC provides a pertinent example of this through the implementation of its Self Assessment and Peer review program. This peer review process stimulates the sharing of best practices and enhances organizational integrity by providing goals for governance and operations.</td>
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<td><strong>Select partners that provide the best fit.</strong></td>
<td>In terms of enhancing brand equity through partnerships it is critical to select partners that provide the best fit with organizational values and activities. This is supported by the literature, which suggests that the most successful nonprofit for-profit partnerships are those in which partners have a high degree of fit, in terms of values and interests (Austin, 1999; Becker-Olsen &amp; Hill, 2006; Dickinson &amp; Barker, 2006).</td>
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<td><strong>Proactively manage partnerships</strong></td>
<td>As a pertinent example, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has a sophisticated approach to its portfolio of for-profit partners, which it manages through senior account managers. In addition, WWF uses a partner evaluation system based on three components: cash, communications, and conservation. All potential and existing partners are evaluated in terms of the financial benefits they bring, communication opportunities, and willingness to implement environmentally sound practices that bring WWF closer to its established conservation goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Recognize and embrace the internal role of the brand</strong></td>
<td>Although internal branding is not one of the model’s core brand variable per se, it is an interesting finding of this study and a theme that runs throughout the brand equity model. We urge international NGO managers to embrace the powerful internal role of the brand and promote the brand to internal audiences. Most of the organizations in this study intuitively do this already, although the actual word “brand” is used sparingly and with care. Promoting an understanding of the brand, internally communicating the importance of the brand, and ensuring that the internal and external perceptions of the brand are in alignment, can be achieved by encouraging internal brand ambassadors.</td>
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<td><strong>Encourage internal brand ambassadors</strong></td>
<td>External celebrity brand ambassadors have widely and effectively been used by international nonprofit organizations. Well known examples include Danny Kaye for Unicef, and Princess Anne for Save the Children. Internal brand ambassadors play a similar role internally, they are employees or volunteers that are passionate and excited about internally promoting the brand</td>
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