

How to Evaluate Your Brand

FOR YOUR CAUSE

Related Cause Clarity topics:

- How to maintain your brand
- How to maximize donors
- How to attract new donors



This worksheet is a complementary guide to help you put into practice the advice found in our “How to Evaluate Your Brand for Your Cause” video. Each 3-minute video is packed with information and is designed to be watched multiple times—even while you are completing this worksheet.

WHAT Assess the strengths of your brand and determine where your cause can improve connections

TIME REQUIRED 10 hours

WHO IS INVOLVED This process is best completed by one lead with further input, review and refinement from other team members.

A strong brand makes your organization recognizable and helps people understand who you are and what you do. It is important to periodically re-evaluate your brand and compare your organization to similar institutions. What works best about your brand? What can be improved? What makes the brand most effective? It can be particularly helpful to re-evaluate your brand when your nonprofit has gone through a major organizational change. Once you have all of this data, aggregate and summarize the findings from your assessment activities and include recommendations and next steps.

This worksheet walks you through three steps that lead you through a brand evaluation.

1. Ask yourself how you are doing
2. Survey others on their perceptions
3. Research competitors

Here is a list of what you will have when you have completed the steps:



- Internal “SWOT” analysis of your brand
- Insights about external perceptions of your brand
- Comparison of your brand to competitors in the field

→ For more help, contact Cause Communications at CauseClarity@CauseComm.org or visit CauseCommunications.org/tools to see other Bite-Size Courses.

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An honest assessment of your brand can mean the difference between having a recognizable presence in the field and getting lost in the shuffle of organizations doing work on similar causes. For this, you need to consider internal organizational perceptions, external stakeholder perceptions and competitors. The following steps will help you understand all three perspectives.

1. Ask yourself how you are doing:

To answer this question, complete this "SWOT Chart" (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) for your cause. It is generally more helpful when filled in as part of a group discussion, but can be completed by individuals and then responses aggregated. Be candid in your assessment. This process will help you identify untapped resources and opportunities to build on based on your team's perspective. Strengths and weakness are internal factors that are controlled by the organization, while opportunities and threats are external factors that are not controlled by the organization.

	Your Brand
<p>Strengths e.g., distinct name</p>	
<p>Weaknesses e.g., inconsistent use of logo and tagline</p>	
<p>Opportunities e.g., merger or shift in focus by other organization</p>	
<p>Threats (aka Challenges) e.g., change in donor habits/preferences</p>	



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2. Survey others on their perceptions:

You have several options to gain an understanding of what others outside your organization think about your brand. First, identify whose perspectives are important to you (e.g., stakeholders, partners, other organizations, donors or board members). Develop a questionnaire.

- *The quality of the questionnaire is the key to success. Once you have developed the most vital questions, consider testing it with a small group to eliminate any problems before polling the full audience. For rating questions, use a scale with an even number of choices (e.g., 1-4 instead of 1-5), so that there is no “neutral” option.*

Then, determine the best way to get the data from your priority audiences. This may be a survey, interviews or focus groups.

- **Surveys:** Surveys are the most useful way to gather data from a larger number of people about questions that require a brief response. Online survey programs (e.g., SurveyMonkey) can be used to collect results and aggregate the responses for free or at a low cost.
- **Interviews:** One-on-one conversations with key stakeholders can reveal a wealth of information that is useful to your branding and marketing efforts. It is best to interview at least three people from different audience groups to analyze common threads that may emerge. As a general rule of thumb, allow for 30 minutes per individual interview.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus groups also provide the opportunity to dive deep into the why and how behind people’s opinions. They can simply be an hour-long meeting of stakeholders at your office offering opinions in exchange for coffee and desserts. Online focus groups are also an option if your stakeholders are geographically dispersed. Check out the “Extra Tips” for more ideas.



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3. Research competitors:

A. Create a list of your top five competitors. Look for organizations with a similar mission, organizations that serve similar populations, organizations with the same or similar name (even if they serve different populations) and any other organizations to which your cause has been compared.

B. Search for these organizations online and print out their logo, tagline (if any), mission, website homepage and information on their key programs. Post these on a wall to see how competitors look visually and how they describe themselves and their work.

C. Examine the similarities (e.g., are logos in the same color? Same type of language?) and differences between these organizations and your cause and answer the following questions for each competitor. What stands out? What are points of differentiation or distinction for each organization? What makes your organization unique?



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→ EXTRA TIPS

Brand Survey Sample Questions

1. What do you think is most unique about ABC nonprofit organization?
2. Where do you usually first hear or see news/changes at ABC nonprofit?
3. Are you happy with how news/changes are communicated to you from ABC nonprofit?
4. Do you recognize the ABC nonprofit logo?
5. What is your attitude toward ABC nonprofit?
6. What sense do you have of ABC nonprofit's reputation in the community?
7. What is ABC nonprofit best known for?
8. For you, what is the most compelling reason to support ABC nonprofit?
9. Do you have any reasons for not wanting to support ABC nonprofit?
10. Does the tagline "[insert ABC nonprofit tagline]" resonate with you"? Why or why not?
11. If ABC nonprofit was a person, how would you describe him/her?
12. What three adjectives best capture ABC nonprofit?
13. Do ABC nonprofit's advertising and communications stand out from the competition?
14. Are ABC nonprofit's products and services clearly identifiable?
15. Are you familiar with ABC nonprofit's current marketing campaign? What do you think about it?
16. Are there other issues regarding ABC nonprofit and its plans that you would like to raise?

A few tips on focus groups:

- The ideal size of a focus group is six to 12 individuals
- As a general rule, members of a focus group should be encouraged to exchange ideas
- You may want to conduct separate focus groups with different audiences (e.g., donors, volunteers, staff and those you serve)
- A skilled moderator is essential to help elicit helpful information
- Use open-ended questions
- Recording the conversation or having a person taking notes can be very useful for debriefing the information afterward