Launching a Rebrand: How to Plan for Success

—by Leah Yaw and Carl Clark

Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health is one of the nation’s largest nonprofit organizations providing services, insight, and leadership in the evolving field of behavioral health care. The organization offers a variety of programs in the areas of autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, specialty mental health, and child welfare, including therapeutic foster care services for at-risk children with emotional, behavioral, and cognitive needs.

In early 2016, the organization launched a new name—Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health—and a refreshed brand promise: to change lives by unlocking and nurturing human potential for people with emotional, behavioral, or cognitive differences. The result of more than two years of extensive research and discussion with families, individuals in care, clinicians and other staff, regulators, payers, educators, donors, community advisors, and allied health professionals, the new brand clarifies and amplifies the organization’s long-term vision and mission, as well as its day-to-day operating focus.

Fresh off the brand launch, Senior Vice President of External Affairs Leah Yaw and Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Carl Clark share insight on how organizations launching rebrands can align internal and external goals to generate maximum enthusiasm and brand adoption among key audiences.

What are suggested next steps for an organization that has recently introduced a new brand identity?

Leah: Once you’ve developed your new brand identity, the real work begins. The most important component of any rebranding effort is engaging and informing employees, partners, and stakeholders. These groups are your most important brand ambassadors, so it’s critical they understand how the brand is changing, continued on pg. 2
why it is changing, and what that means to your organization and to your industry. The external launch of your new brand in the media is important, but most of your ongoing brand visibility will come as a result of your constituents embodying your mission and carrying your message forth in their day-to-day work. Your key stakeholders are the vehicles through which a new brand is driven home—or not.

Carl: And so to make sure we engaged stakeholders when we launched Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health, we placed significant effort behind our internal outreach. Using face-to-face communication and promotional materials, we generated excitement and engagement among employees, partners, and stakeholders. This has been important to help drive adoption among our centers and employees across the country. A rebrand is a critical time to retell your story in order to galvanize employees and remind clients, partners, and stakeholders about the critical work you do.

Leah: It is also absolutely critical for External Affairs and Operations to work in lockstep fashion around a rebrand. If you consider brand a tool simply to magnify your presence to the outside world, you’ve reduced its power by half.

Carl: Exactly. Successful organizations use their brand as a tool to generate internal alignment and engagement, while also deepening their connections with, and impact on, the world around them. Some organizations have even amplified this approach by adding a Chief Design Officer to the C-suite.

How can an agency engage employees and board members in their new messaging to ensure that communications are consistent?

Carl: Our staff, board members, and community ambassadors are the heart of our organization and the driving force behind our mission. They already represent the spirit of our brand day in and day out, but it’s not always top of mind for them to use our refreshed brand language, which is important.

Leah: The goal throughout our launch was to help all constituents articulate our new brand with the same authority and confidence they bring to their jobs and volunteer leadership. To do this, we developed a series of tools, including a brand style guide, explaining the motivation behind the change and the elements of our rebrand—from a new name and tagline to new graphic elements—within a context that was meaningful to staff and board members. We highlighted how these new elements are most effectively used and how to talk about them in the most simple, straightforward, and consistent manner.
With this rebranding, we keep the acronym we are known for—FFTA—and demonstrate that our movement has progressed to being a resource to agencies supporting family-based treatment for children and youth, whether that family is a bio family, kin family, foster family, or a guardianship or adoptive family. While treatment foster care remains at the heart of our work, FFTA will develop and introduce new resources that will help current FFTA members serve children and youth with treatment needs in family settings in addition to foster care. These new resources will also attract other organizations that are supporting children and youth with treatment needs in non-foster care families to FFTA. We anticipate these new, complementary organizations to contribute to FFTA’s growth and collective experience. With our combined work and resources, FFTA and its members will be stronger advocates for vulnerable children and youth and more impactful in helping them succeed in families.

This issue highlights family focused treatment services that are complementary to but provided outside TFC, such as behavioral health services in a family preservation setting, treatment with birth families whose children are in foster care, family finding and trauma services to support kinship care, and federal support of post permanency treatment services for children and youth in adoptive and guardianship families. In addition, the issue highlights FFTA member agency Devereux’s own experience with and advice about rebranding, a California FFTA Chapter Spotlight, and a summary of recent Federal policy developments.

Our rebranding is a step that positions us for much more. The FFTA Board, staff, and I are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for our organization and the members we support.

Jodie Austin is the President of the Family Focused Treatment Association and President of KVC Nebraska.
Connecting regularly with your partners and stakeholders will also allow you to reinforce your mission and services to valued audiences.

Should printed documents be updated with the new brand?

Leah: The digital environment makes things so much more versatile than just a few years ago. In many ways, print just doesn’t tie our hands the way it used to. My advice is that any material in active use—your website, social media channels, marketing materials, stationery, business documents—should be updated as quickly as possible to reflect the new brand. Legacy pieces, including annual reports or outdated product sheets, do not need to be reprinted. Obviously, going forward, everything new should carry your new brand.

Carl: Another important consideration is to make sure your promotional materials reflect the new brand not only in look and feel, but also in tone. Your new brand must suffuse all copy and communications, so that the brand mission and promise come across clearly.

In your experience, what’s the biggest mistake agencies make when they rebrand?

Leah: I think the most significant mistakes made in rebrands are twofold: burdening your brand with marketing content as opposed to infusing it with organizational ethos, and failing to follow through on your process. The first issue can be managed by being very deliberate throughout the research and creative phase that a brand should represent who you are, not every single thing you do. A strong brand represents the spirit of an organization and communicates a simple and, it is hoped, incredibly powerful promise to constituents. A litany of specific product and service offerings belongs in a brochure, not a brand statement. Second, it can be tempting to think that once you’ve developed and introduced strong, meaningful brand messaging, your work is done, but it’s truly just beginning. A strong brand is the foundation of every aspect of an organization—internal and external—and must be represented and upheld in everything you do. Supporting, promoting, reinforcing, and living up to your brand promise is an ongoing job that requires continued outreach and communication to all constituent groups.

Carl: Leah is right. Follow-through is crucial, and especially the aspect of upholding your brand promise for employees and those you serve. Human service organizations are at their best when fully aligned around a mission and a vision that guide their work and engage dedication and passion. An organization’s brand is simply the communication of that aligned, engaged excellence.

Launching a new brand is an exciting undertaking. To achieve success, agencies must approach the brand launch with the same energy and enthusiasm required for the brand development. With thoughtful planning, audience-focused execution, and ongoing commitment, brand visibility and engagement are sure to follow.

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