

If Only I Had Known

by Eddie Binder, Former Vice President of Marketing for Dunkin' Donuts

“Just as we had brand strategy and creative experts involved in the development of the brand and all of the supporting elements, so should we have had implementation experts involved in the planning and execution of the rollout.”

With four different distribution centers set up to execute thousands of pieces of promotional materials, we thought we had it covered. How could implementing a new branding program be different from what we did on an ongoing basis?

In 1995, I was Vice President of Marketing for Dunkin' Donuts, a global chain of 3,500 coffee and donut shops. It was my responsibility to bring our newly created brand positioning to market. Our consumer research was telling us that consumers still loved Dunkin' Donuts, but they were becoming interested in new concepts like Starbucks, Seattle's Best Coffee, and Bruegger's Bagels.

Having spent months assessing our strengths and weaknesses relative to the competition, followed by an extensive design exploration, we emerged with a new brand strategy that the entire team was confident would solidify our market position. Thinking that the strategic work was complete, we immediately created new products, exciting promotions and merchandising pieces, a dynamic advertising campaign and a new store design. Given all of our internal resources, implementation of the new branding seemed like it would be the easiest part of our revitalization program.

Once the National Leadership Council bought in to the new direction, it seemed everything needed to be done immediately. But it couldn't all be top priority. What was important to complement our other marketing activities and what could wait? What stopgaps were available to us? What could we realistically commit to delivering in terms of timing, budget, and quality of execution?

How could we keep it all under control? While many of the transition requirements were readily apparent, we were continually finding important items that were overlooked and left as afterthoughts as result of omission. Of course, we would create the new window poster or menu board slats. But what about the corrugated boxes in which the product is shipped from the manufacturer to our distribution centers? Was the fact that the napkins are supplied by various vendors across the system taken into account? How could we organize ourselves so we wouldn't trip over one another and at the same time be sure nothing would be overlooked?

Because we were very good at new-idea development, we were successful in repositioning the Dunkin' Donuts brand and realizing our profit goals. However, we underestimated the complexity of the implementation component of the project in terms of managing its scope, the amount of internal resource time it required, and the overall coordination and planning.

Only after much of the re-branding work was completed did we learn that we could have been more efficient and cost-effective in the final stages of the project. Just as we had brand strategy and creative experts involved in the development of the brand and all of the supporting elements, so should we have had implementation experts involved in the planning and execution of the rollout.

I believe the key to successful management is to always try new ideas. New ideas mean making mistakes sometimes. The key is to never make the same mistake twice. Next time I'll know better.

BrandActive is an international brand implementation firm. With offices in Los Angeles, Toronto and affiliate offices in London and Amsterdam, BrandActive helps global companies physically implement new corporate identities throughout their operations.



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