

2018 IDA Awards Entry, Marketing and Communication
Brand Overhaul, The Downtown Denver Partnership

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Situation: For more than 60 years, the Downtown Denver Partnership has convened, collaborated and led a bold vision to build an economically powerful center city. With a bias for action, we invest for tomorrow and execute for today, converging the right people at the right time to make an impact. Like many organizations like ours, the Downtown Denver Partnership is often thrust into the midst of policy, politics, development and mobility conversations.

In order to continue to be relevant in this space, the Downtown Denver Partnership knew it had to better connect with our key audiences with messages that would resonate well in light of any political or social challenges we were facing. To add to the order, the Downtown Denver Partnership has had the same logo, mission statement, manifesto and key messages that had been established over a decade ago. Shifting the organization's positioning, identity and overall communications with our audiences was going to be a challenge both internally and externally, but we knew it had to be done. To accomplish this goal, the Partnership worked to re-evaluate and establish its overall organizational position and develop a new and relevant brand identity.

Innovation: To discover and define the new direction that the Partnership would take we went through a rigorous research process – one that included focus groups, individual interviews, round table discussions and casual coffee talks with board members, employees and leaders in the Denver community, member organizations and other stakeholders. The process was disciplined in its approach to generate brand insight for achieving our organizational goals. Our goals were to: identify the company's unique points of differentiation, identify our target audiences and to better understand what services and information resonated best with each of those audiences. The findings from the process would drive the development of our communications moving forward.

From the research gathered the following insights were derived:

- **Maintain focus.** While it may be intriguing to promote the myriad of ways the Partnership is active in the city, it is critical to create a hierarchy of importance that assigns emphasis to what matters most to key audiences.
- **Innovative position.** Continue to position the Partnership as an innovator, emphasizing areas that matter most to attracting new business and retaining top talent.
- **Play up passion.** The civic duty to city building resonates, especially with future leaders.
- **Define impact.** Clearly define how members can engage, and even more important, how their action—no matter how small—makes an impact.

Representation/Execution: We evaluated the key insights and takeaways from the brand development process to begin to explore and define a new brand position for the Partnership. What was uniquely realized through the process is that in all actuality, the Partnership is not just a hoster of events, but rather a creator of industry, a maker of place; we're woven into the fabric that makes our downtown uniquely ours. This realization became a pivotal insight in driving the definition of the new brand position as it not only allowed the Partnership to enter into a space that elevated the organization as a true city building one, but it allowed us to step up, to a new tier of influence.

In the end, we clearly identified the following brand position and marketing platform:

- **Brand Position:** Visionary City Builders
- **Point of Difference:** The only organization of its kind in the region where stakeholders converge to make meaningful impact, creating the place where people want to be
- **Brand Promise:** Building an economically powerful center city

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In addition, we developed a new brand identity – when you start to inspect the new logo mark for the Partnership you'll notice that there are 2 interlocking squares, one representing Downtown Denver and the other the Downtown Denver Partnership. The idea with the new mark is that the Downtown Denver Partnership couldn't exist without Downtown Denver, and vice-versa. This new logo is not just an updated identity, but also a story for everyone at the Partnership to tell, reminding each stakeholder that everyone's role is important and helps to build the vitality of our center city.

Sustainability: It was important that the Partnership held the equity built with the previous identity, but evolve to one that shows relevance to affirm our leading position in the downtown community. It also became apparent that a newly defined brand position was not only critical to conform and clarify external messages, but to rally internal audiences as well. Many current employees lacked direction as to what they were working towards and the benefits that it brings to members and stakeholders alike.

By clearly laying out a Partnership manifesto for the internal team, we're allowing the brand to live and ultimately thrive in a way that's necessary and relevant to each stakeholder group from employee to member and everyone in between.

The brand we've built is sustainable in more ways than one:

- We've established unique messaging platform for all internal and external communication that are held together by common truths
- We've established a single, uniform brand identity for the company
- We're in the midst of changing the perception and conversation about how and why the Partnership exists

Outcome: Overall, the brand positioning and newly developed identity has been seen as incredibly successful. The defining phrases became the ethos of the company, truly shifting the way that we talk about ourselves internally and externally – helping stakeholders to connect with the work we do on a daily basis.

- We are building an economically powerful center city
- Building our center city. Making our place.
- We are visionary city builders.

Our new brand position and identity was launched using a variety of MarCom tactics the most visible being a new website. The website helped to catapult the brand into the external atmosphere – we used our new messaging matrix and truly targeted language to each defined audience. In addition, we plastered our main downtown thoroughfare, the 16th Street Mall with planter banners, transit pillars and digital interactive kiosk ads with our updated messaging that let stakeholders know *why* our organization existed. Many stakeholders provided anecdotal feedback to our executive team and membership representatives that they felt confident that the Partnership was heading down the right road, that we understood our place in the Denver community and that we were being perceived as an organization that could truly make an impact on our center city.