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# The Art of the Rebrand: Utilizing Strategic Communications to Obtain Employee Buy-in During a Rebrand

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**THE ART OF THE REBRAND:  
UTILIZING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TO OBTAIN EMPLOYEE BUY-IN  
DURING A REBRAND**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the

Weissman School of Arts and Sciences

Baruch College, The City University of New York

In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**In**

**CORPORATE COMMUNICATION**

By

Samantha Y. Azizo

August 1, 2019

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee,  
and approved by all its members, this thesis has been  
accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts in Corporate Communication.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify how organizations can effectively communicate with employees during a rebrand in order to obtain their acceptance of the changes, otherwise known as employee buy-in. Prior research has found that employee acceptance of a rebrand is a contributing factor towards a successful rebrand; however, prior research fails to determine how the rebrand can be best communicated to employees to obtain their buy-in. The research performed for the study took place in two parts. First, 142 online surveys probing employee and consumer perception about rebranding were performed. Secondly, three semi-structured interviews with professionals who have had experience with rebranding in their given organizations were conducted.

The quantitative and qualitative survey results found that employees certainly want to be engaged in the rebranding process and have a say in it. Furthermore, in terms of messaging used to achieve employee buy-in during a rebrand, employees want it to feel that it connects to them on a personal level. Lastly, in relation to communication channel selection, the research found that employees preferred interactive channels that allow them to take part in dialogues regarding the rebrand. Each of these ideas were subsequently substantiated by the interviews conducted in which professionals with experience in rebranding recounted what made each rebrand a success.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Literature Review.....	8
Definitions of Rebranding.....	8
Types of Rebranding.....	10
Triggers of Rebranding.....	12
Key Elements of Rebranding.....	13
Gaps in Literature and Question.....	16
Research Methodology.....	19
Quantitative Survey Process.....	19
Qualitative Interview Process.....	21
Key Findings.....	23
Engagement Levels.....	23
Messaging.....	27
Channels.....	29
Discussion of Findings.....	36
Relevance to Literature.....	36
Practical Implications.....	36
Research Limitations.....	38
Future Direction.....	39
References.....	42
Appendices.....	46
Appendix A: Survey Questions.....	46
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	53

## **Introduction**

Change is inevitable and all organizations encounter change some time or other. In fact, organizations need to be dynamic and change in order to survive over time. However, despite the unavailability of change, organizations and people alike often resist it, fearing the unknown. Given the complexity of change, it is crucial for organizations to strategically think about how to implement changes to not only avoid alienating stakeholders, but helping them embrace it. With this in mind, how can organizations use communication as a tool to bring stakeholders on board with changes?

One particular type of organizational change is rebranding, in which an organization changes the way it identifies itself in the eyes of its stakeholders. Oftentimes, this change in identity takes place on a visual level, whereas an organization's logo, color palette, font, or other tangible brand aspects may be changed. Within the concept of rebranding, researchers have established the importance of stakeholder buy-in in which the organization actively on-boards its stakeholders with the changes taking place. In other words, the rebranding changes must be accepted in order to be effective.

Despite the fact that stakeholder buy-in is a component of a successful rebrand, the current research available fails to address how this buy-in can be achieved in practical terms. Therefore, the following study will attempt to determine how organizations can achieve this much needed buy-in using strategic communications. Specifically, the research will focus mainly on achieving buy-in from employees. Employees were chosen as the focus of this study because as the words of noted visionary and business mogul, Sir Richard Branson, "A company's employees are its greatest asset and your people are your product." Without one's employees an organization has nothing to offer to its consumers; therefore, it is only fitting to get one's employees' buy-in first.

The ultimate goal of this research endeavor is to clarify how an organization can effectively communicate with employees during a rebrand in order to obtain their buy-in. This question will be answered by employing quantitative research in the form of a survey and qualitative research in the form of interviews. Accordingly, the research conducted will help fill in the gap found within rebranding literature and help organizations pinpoint communication tactics to keep in mind when communicating a rebrand to employees in order to obtain their buy-in.



## **Literature Review**

In order to fully understand rebranding in attempt to add to the existing research on this topic, it is important to delve into the literature that deals with it. Doing so will help gain a holistic view of rebranding and understand what it entails in reference to the primary research that will follow. For the purpose of this project it is worthwhile to explore four critical areas of rebranding. First, one must be familiar with the various definitions and terms related to rebranding. Second, it is beneficial to gain a rounded understanding of the different types of rebranding. Third, one must be aware of what triggers the rebranding process in a corporation. Fourth, it is critical to explore the key elements that make up successful and unsuccessful rebranding attempts in order to pave the way for the research.

### **Definitions of Rebranding**

When reviewing the literature that delves into rebranding, there appears to be a general consensus as to what it is. Various authors give their own definitions; yet, between the definitions there are only minor differences. One of the most widely-adopted definitions of rebranding is one explained by Laurent Muzellec, a noted researcher and professor at Trinity College Dublin of the University of Dublin, and is found in many of his works on the topic. According to him, rebranding is “the process of building anew a name representative of a differentiated position in the mind frame of stakeholders and a distinctive identity from competitors” (Muzellec, Doogan, & Lambkin, 2003, p. 32). In a later work by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) rebranding is defined as “the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design, or a combination of them for an established brand with the intention of developing a differentiated (new) position in the minds of stakeholders and competitors” (p. 805). The key to these

definitions is that a rebrand is meant to change the way stakeholders and competitors view the brand in the marketplace.

Similar to the above definitions, Merrilees and Miller (2008) define rebranding in comparison to branding. According to their work,

Corporate rebranding can be contrasted to corporate branding, which refers to the initial coherent articulation of the corporate brand and can occur at any time. Corporate rebranding refers to the disjunction or change between an initially formulated corporate brand and a new formulation. (p. 538).

The terms “brand renewal, refreshment, makeover, reinvention, renaming and repositioning” fall under the concept of rebranding as well (p. 537).

In short, rebranding can be understood as a change of brand identity from the original brand identity to a new identity in the eyes of stakeholders which can include consumers, employees, investors, vendors, the government, and general public. Regardless of the general consensus that rebranding entails a change from an old identity to a different and newer one, there are differences in opinion as to what actually constitutes rebranding. Most, if not all research on the topic views rebranding as a change in slogan, logo, name, color palette, font, or other tangibly visual marks of a brand. However, there exists a group of researchers that consider change in strategy or a repositioning of a brand to fall under rebranding as well (Muzellec et al., 2003; Daly & Moloney, 2004; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006; Zhao, Calantone & Voorhees, 2018). If rebranding includes change in strategy, this tends to be a shift in intangible facets of a brand such as market position or redefining a brand’s values, mission, or promises to its stakeholders.

## **Types of Rebranding**

Prior research and literature explain that rebranding can take shape in many forms and exist in many dimensions. There are a number of different classifications a rebrand can have, many of which are not mutually exclusive. Much of the literature agrees that rebranding takes place on a continuum. One end of the continuum would include minor visual branding changes such as changes in color, slogan and typeface. A recent example of these minor changes can be seen with the fast-fashion retailer, Zara, which, in early 2019, debuted a new logo that merely had a slightly different font and less spacing between letters.

On the other end are more drastic changes such as a change in the organization's logo and in the most extreme cases, even its name (Daly & Moloney, 2004; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004; Zhao et al., 2018). A prime example of this more drastic form of rebranding is the recent change from Weight Watchers to WW, where the corporation's name, logo, and overall look underwent a change. Changes that lie on the far end of the continuum along with name and logo changes tend to be riskier than those merely relating to minor visual changes (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004).

Aside from the rebranding continuum, rebrands can be classified as urgent and non-urgent cases. As per Miller, Merrilees, and Yakimova (2014), "Urgent cases have a specified launch deadline for the revised brand... In contrast, non-urgent cases have no implementation deadline" (p. 270). In a study of 76 cases of rebranding, it was found that 74% of all rebrands were classified as non-urgent (Miller et al., 2014). One can better understand the nature of non-urgent rebranding in light of the concept of evolutionary rebranding. Evolutionary rebranding is "a gradual change in few elements of brand esthetics over a period of time" (Roy & Sarkar, 2015, p. 344). In relation to evolutionary rebranding, Tevi and Otubanjo (2013) delve into this

concept by linking rebranding to Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution. They argue that rebranding is a process in which a brand reacts via change to its external and internal environment, in order to survive. Similarly, Dixon and Perry (2017) also believe that brands need to constantly evolve in order to remain relevant: "The brands that stay relevant are in a constant state of evolution, aggressively managing and monitoring every customer engagement. They are 'living brands', meaning they are more responsive, personalised and intelligent" (p. 139).

On the other hand, the opposite of evolutionary rebranding is revolutionary rebranding, which is "more radical and may fundamentally redefine the company – like a change of name." (Roy & Sarkar, 2015, p. 344). Furthermore, both evolutionary and revolutionary rebranding can be understood in reference to the aforementioned rebranding continuum. On the end with minor visual branding changes lies evolutionary rebranding that tend to take place naturally over time. On the other end of the continuum lies elements such as a name change or a change in the organization's mission or vision.

Two other dimensions of rebranding are proactive and reactive rebranding. According to Miller et al. (2014), these terms can be understood thusly: "Proactive cases are initiated when an identified opportunity to enhance the brand drives the rebranding initiative, whereas reactive cases have external factors that negatively affect the brand activating the rebranding effort" (p. 270). An example of proactive rebranding is explained by Merrilees and Miller (2008) who explain that organizations should always be aware of changing markets and changes in customer composition. Therefore, proactive rebranding is when an organization anticipates changes to its markets or customer composition and responds accordingly.

## Triggers of Rebranding

When addressing the concept of rebranding, it is important for corporations to have a reason to rebrand. In other words, the process of rebranding a corporation should never be random; rather, there must be a cause that necessitates the process. Stuart and Muzellec (2004) explain that, “The overall stimulus for corporate rebranding is to send a signal to the marketplace, communicating to stakeholders that something about the organization has changed” (p. 473). However, the need to signal change to stakeholders is often driven by certain causes, or *triggers*, which is the term that is often used in the literature.

Elsewhere, Muzellec et al. (2003) go on to classify common triggers into four categories. The first and most frequent cause of rebranding is a change in ownership. Factors such as mergers and acquisitions, spin-offs, divestitures, and a change from private to public ownership may a rebrand. An often-cited example of a rebranding effort triggered by a change in ownership is when the Irish mobile cellular network Eircell became Vodafone after an acquisition by the international corporation in the early 2000s (Daly & Moloney, 2004).

The second category relates to a change in corporate strategy whereas the corporation is undergoing diversification or moving from operating on a local scale to an international one, or vice versa. Zhao et al. (2018) points out an extreme rebranding relating to this trigger, in which Long Island Ice Tea Corp. (a beverage company) suddenly rebranded itself to Long Blockchain Corp. back in 2017 in the height of the bitcoin and blockchain rush. In essence, this company rebranded itself to signify diversification.

The third trigger pertains to changes in competitive positioning that cause the corporation to consider a rebrand to better enhance its market position and beat out competitors. Issues such as an outdated image and reputational problems fall into this category. A popular example of a

rebrand triggered by this issue was the change from Phillip Morris Companies Inc. to Altria Group, Inc. in the early 2000s in hopes of dissociating the corporation from the negative connotations it had as a tobacco company (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006).

The fourth and final category is triggered by changes in the organization's external environment and is often spurred by legal regulations and or crises (Muzellec et al., 2003). A well-known example of this is when Andersen Consulting rebranded to Accenture in the early 2000s. This rebrand was stemmed from a separation from and a subsequent legal dispute from its former parent company, Andersen Worldwide Société Coopérative (AWSC).

Much of the literature agrees with the classification system crafted by Muzellec et al. (2003) yet, many go on to generalize the aforementioned triggers into internal factors (such as mergers and acquisitions and change in strategy) and external factors (competitive environment and legal regulations) (Goi & Goi, 2011; Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006; Roy & Sarkar, 2015; Tevi & Otubanjo, 2013). Other sources tend to focus on more simplified drivers of rebranding such that "firms often resort to rebranding campaigns to reinvent a brand and facilitate growth, choosing to update the brand's identity and/or strategy" (Zhao et al., 2018). Bolhuis et al. (2018) agree with Muzellec et al.'s (2003) aforementioned factors that often drive a corporation towards rebranding, adding that the "desire to modernize or rejuvenate the organizational appearance" can be a driver as well (p. 4).

### **Key Elements of Rebranding**

With many things in life, there is no definitive way for corporations to get it right when it comes to rebranding. The process of rebranding will vary depending on the size, industry, and other factors of the corporation, in addition to the time-frame and extent of the rebrand. Despite

this, researchers have proposed models and methods that corporations should follow when undergoing the rebranding process. Yet, at this time there is no model or method that is widely accepted by both researchers and those involved in rebranding on the corporate level. However, through various studies, researchers have been able to agree on a number of elements that are commonly apparent in successful rebrands; the lack of these elements tend to lead to unsuccessful rebranding attempts.

One of the most agreed upon features of a successful rebrand is one that includes research to properly assess the need for the rebrand, the benefits of rebranding, the potential risks involved, and expectations (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). According to many, research should take place in all phases of a rebranding process, such that “research before and after a name, logo and/or slogan have been devised is vital” in rebranding processes (p. 480). Dixon and Perry (2017) note that, “Effective rebranding starts with a deep customer understanding, not just insights regarding pain points. This requires clarity about what your brand stands for” (p. 144). This deep understanding can of course be achieved by thorough research. It is important to note that there is no one correct way to perform the needed research rather the most common ways tend to include hosting focus groups with various stakeholders (Dixon & Perry, 2017) and undertaking both quantitative and qualitative research (Miller et al., 2014). Consequently, when corporations fail to undertake proper research before and during the rebranding process it “impedes the development of a distinctive brand” (p. 277).

Another key element that is commonly found in successful corporate rebranding processes is the need for the new brand identity to incorporate the values of the old brand identity into the new brand identity that is the result of the rebranding effort. This belief is best summarized by Stuart and Muzellec (2004) whereas, “In making changes to the corporate brand

of an organization, continuity and consistency are key notions to bear in mind” (p. 480). Miller et al. (2014) define this element as an enabler to successful rebranding in which, “the revised brand maintains continuity with past brand meaning” and that, “research suggests that this continuity encourages key stakeholders to endorse the revised brand” (p. 276). Similarly,

Designing a suitable brand vision for the corporate rebrand should balance the need to continue to satisfy the core ideology of the corporate brand, yet progress the brand so it remains relevant to contemporary conditions... Successful corporate rebranding may require retaining at least some core or peripheral brand concepts to build a bridge from the existing corporate brand to the revised corporate brand. (Merrilees & Miller, 2008, p. 540)

Although a rebrand will often contemporize the brand and its identity, keeping a sense of continuity from the old brand will help keep it familiar in the eyes of stakeholders. Furthermore, the idea of continuity can be an important factor for employees as well. On this notion, Stuart (2012) asserts that “the degree to which employees identify with the new corporate brand will depend upon the perceived degree of coherence that is, logical consistency, with the present corporate brand and the underlying corporate identity” (p. 163). In addition, a number of researchers point out that when there is no continuity or link between the old and new brand identity, this can impede on the success of the rebrand. In fact, the disconnection between the core values of the original brand to the rebranding effort can be attributed as a reason why a large international telecommunications corporation did not have a well-received rebrand (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007).

A third key element that many agree is a necessary ingredient in successful rebrands is the need for stakeholder buy-in. Stakeholder buy-in is the process of introducing major



stakeholders to the changes in branding and getting them to accept it positively. The concept of stakeholder buy-in mainly refers to employees and consumers as stakeholders. The purpose of stakeholder buy-in is to make sure no stakeholder feels alienated in the process, which can be detrimental to their relationship with the corporation. Miller et al. (2008) consider stakeholder buy-in to be so important it is both an actual phase of their rebranding model, and a major enabler towards a successful rebrand. Similarly, through research, Bolhuis, de Jong and Van den Bosch (2018) note that “Both employees and consumers appreciate a new CVI [Corporate Visual Identity] higher when they are better informed about its purpose and background” (p.12). Given the weight stakeholder buy-in has on the outcome of a rebrand, it is important to take an active approach for this element of the rebranding process.

Ignoring the key stakeholders during the rebranding process can lead to weak or unsuccessful rebranding efforts. Miller et al. (2014) point out that an autocratic rebranding approach is one in which corporations merely impose the rebrand upon its stakeholder without their consultation. In one particular instance found of this issue, “Employee displeasure with the corporate rebranding initiative influenced unfavorable employee–customer interactions, in turn thwarting implementation of the new corporate brand strategy” (p. 277).

### **Gaps in Literature and Question**

As mentioned above, many sources point out the need to obtain stakeholder buy-in when it comes to rebranding. In addition to outlining the need for stakeholder buy-in, a number of sources point out the difficulty in obtaining it, such that, “The absence of such buy-in could dilute and even threaten the effectiveness of a corporate brand” (Merrilees & Miller, 2008). This applies for both employees and consumers whereas, “it appears to be hard to equally satisfy internal and external stakeholders” (Bolhuis et al., 2008, p. 12).

In terms of getting employees on board during a rebrand, Gotsi, Andriopoulos and Wilson (2008) make note of the difficulty by stating, “Managing corporate brands, especially in times of corporate re-branding, is a complex process that requires organization-wide buy-in and an appreciation of the challenges involved in aligning subcultures of different sub-groupings with the requirements of the new corporate brand” (p. 56). Various pieces of research briefly mention that internal branding activities such as training programs and internal communications can help obtain employee buy-in (Daly & Moloney, 2004; Miller et al. 2008), in addition to communicating the changes via the use of brochures, corporate newspapers, annual meetings, workshops, or the corporation’s intranet (Muzellec et al., 2003). Stuart (2012) delves into process of getting employees on board with the rebrand in order that they can accurately represent the brand to external stakeholders. The research emphasizes that this process will depend on factors such as the organizational structure, the way in which the employees currently identify with the brand, and the extent of the rebrand. For instance, some employees will better accept the rebrand when they see it reflected in the organization’s leadership, while others may better accept it based on how much they understand the process of the rebrand (Stuart, 2012). For optimal success, both the organization’s employees and leadership need to accept and understand the rebrand.

Based on the above, it is apparent that the literature does indeed touch upon the necessity of stakeholder buy-in. However, there appears to be a lack of examples of how it can be achieved and actual corporate/organizational rebrands that got it right. Because stakeholder buy-in is such an important component of rebranding, it is even more important to know how to execute this function within an actual rebrand. Therefore, it would be helpful to have a concrete conception of how corporations can actually communicate in an attempt to get stakeholder approval. The

scope of the following research will specifically focus on obtaining buy-in from employees, which, as inferred from the introduction, make up the heart and soul of an organization. Based on this need and the above gap within the literature involving rebranding, the proposed research question is as follows:

**Q1: How can an organization effectively communicate with employees during a rebrand in order to obtain their buy-in?**

The above question will be answered using a quantitative and qualitative approach that aims to engage and obtain buy-in from employees for a rebrand.

## **Research Methodology**

In order to properly learn how organizations can successfully obtain employee buy-in for a rebranding effort, research was done on a quantitative level via online surveys, and on a qualitative level via interviews. As explained in both the survey design and interview design sections below, research was done on the thoughts of both employees and consumers when it comes to a rebrand. Although the core focus of the research is on employees in attempt to obtain their buy-in, analyzing the perspective of consumers was an important component of the research as well. Doing so allowed for a proper evaluation of what employees' needs truly are, and how to properly differentiate these needs from the needs of consumers, which together arguably make up the most important stakeholder groups for an organization with regard to rebranding. In essence, being able to compare and contrast the findings of employees to those of consumers can help serve as a benchmarking system for organizations in the midst of a rebrand. It will help organizations recognize that the same communication strategy for consumers may not work for employees and vice versa.

### **Quantitative Survey Process**

**Survey Design.** The survey was designed as an online survey, created and hosted on the website Qualtrics.com. Exactly 20 questions in English were included in the survey, and the survey was broken down into four parts. The first part consisted of a single question that sought to obtain consent from participants before being able to answer the other survey questions. The second part of the survey was comprised of seven questions asking respondents their opinions about rebranding from the point of view of a consumer. The third portion of the survey was made up of nine questions and asked about rebranding from the point of view of an employee. The

final three questions of the survey served as demographic questions asking for the age range of respondents, the length of their average work-week, and their country of residence.

In addition, after survey participants consented to take the survey, they were asked to read a short definition of rebranding that stated:

Rebranding is when an organization (for-profit or not-for-profit) changes its identity and the way it displays itself to its customers, employees, and others. Most of the time this change in identity is a visual change where a logo, color, font, or slogan of the organization is revised. In many cases, a rebrand includes a change in name and a change in the organization's mission and values, as well as its operating principles.

Participants were also shown an image containing three examples of recent rebrands, as seen in *Figure 1* below. This was important information to provide to participants to make sure they understood what rebranding is when answering the questions within the survey.



*Figure 1:* Examples of recent rebrands shown to survey participants. (“Welcome to Dunkin’”, 2018); (Elliot, 2017); (Farley, 2009)

**Time Frame & Distribution.** The survey was opened to respondents on March 17, 2019 and closed on June 22, 2019. An anonymous link was distributed via social media, email, text message, and online forums asking for respondents to participate. No incentive was provided in exchange for participating in the survey.

**Population & Sample Size.** The population of this survey consisted of anyone over the age of 18 who is either currently employed or has been employed within the last six months. Employment status was an important requirement to ensure that respondents could accurately assess their views of rebranding from an employee's perspective. Within the population, the sample size of this survey consisted of 142 respondents who completed the survey in its entirety. The survey sample was drawn from a pool of non-probability participants; in other words, whomever was available to complete the survey at the time. Based on the sample size, the margin of error is calculated to be  $\pm 8.2$  percentage points at a 95% confidence interval.

### **Qualitative Interview Process**

**Interview Design.** In addition to quantitative data observed from the survey conducted, qualitative data was collected as well via three semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed for the key findings garnered from the survey to be solidified and supported by real-life examples. The semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled the interviews to have pre-set questions but remain flexible enough to react based on the interviewee's answers along the way. The interviews were designed to last approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

The interview began by asking participants to describe the general idea behind a rebrand or organizational change they were a part of, in addition to asking what was changed, and how it was done. The interviews also asked questions as to how an organization that underwent a

rebrand or major change successfully obtained employee buy-in during the process. Lastly, interviewees were asked if there was any pushback or reluctance regarding the rebrand coming from both employees and consumers.

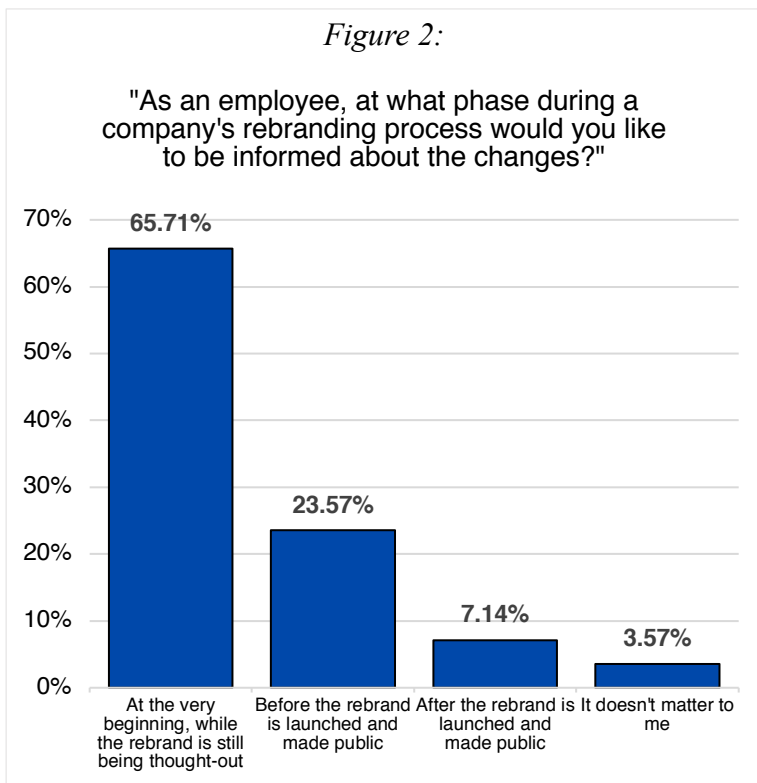
**Time Frame & Recruitment.** The interviews began on June 23, 2019 and were completed by July 16, 2019. Interview participants were recruited by recommendations, acquaintances, and by cold emails sent to organizations that recently rebranded. No incentive was provided in exchange for participating in the interview.

**Participant Criteria and Demographics.** Before each interview was conducted, each of the three participants were made sure to meet the criteria established prior to the interview process. Each interviewee needed to be above the age of 18, must have had experience working with a rebrand or major change within an organization of any kind, and must have consented to participate. It was critical that the interview participants were well versed on the topic of rebranding or large-scale organizational changes within their respective organizations, and had actual involvement in the process, so that the participants could accurately reflect on the process. Furthermore, prior to beginning the actual interview each participant was asked permission to have the interview recorded and to have their name and information disclosed in the research.

## Key Findings

### Engagement Levels

Before outlining the various methods in which employee buy-in involving a rebrand can be obtained, it is first important to assess engagement levels of employees when it comes to rebranding. Key findings pulled from the survey results reveal that employees do want to be involved in the rebranding process. As indicated in *Figure 2*, 65.71% of respondents claimed that they would like to be informed of changes entailing a rebrand at the very beginning, while the



rebrand is still being thought-out.

This is almost three times as much as employees who want to be informed before the rebrand is made public, and almost ten times greater than employees who want to know after the rebrand is officially made public. This key finding stipulates that employees find it important to be involved in the rebranding process.

This strategy, of informing employees about a rebrand at the very beginning while the rebrand is still being thought-out, was one that was utilized by the company M.Gemi, an e-commerce-based luxury retailer that focuses on handcrafted Italian made shoes and accessories. The company is currently undergoing a rebrand that already launched with a change in logo, color palette, and website design, that will soon reflect in different brand touchpoints such as



packaging. During an interview with M.Gemi's Chief Brand Officer, Heather Kaminetsky, she mentioned that:

So, through the branding process we actually would update the organization. We have all-hands meetings on Fridays, so every Friday we would give an update to the employees and where we were in the different stages of completion of the project. This ensured that everyone was informed about what was happening, how we were going about it, and kept employees up-to-date on decisions being made.

In fact, the company made it a point to inform its employees about the rebrand at the earliest stage possible. Per Kaminetsky,

We actually informed them [employees] that we were doing a rebranding project and that we were searching for an agency. So, literally, when I tell you it was an overload of communication [with the employees], it was an overload. They were along the entire way, like when we signed the contract with the agency, to when we got the first scope from the agency, the whole thing.

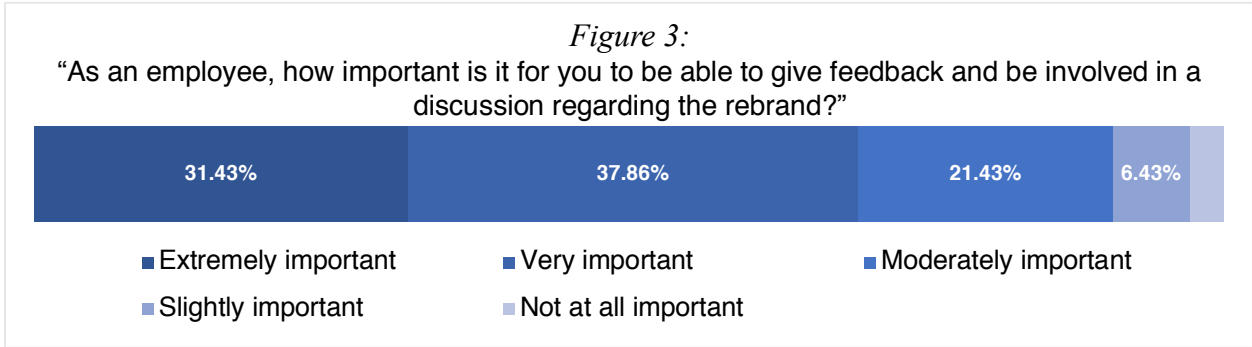
It is clear from both the survey data and this example of an actual rebrand that informing employees early on in the process can serve as a starting point towards obtaining employee buy-in.

Taking the concept of employee engagement during a rebrand a step further, the survey also found that 69.29% of respondents either stated that is very important or extremely important for them to be able to give feedback and be involved in a discussion regarding the rebrand (*Figure 3*). Not only does allowing employees to offer feedback on the changes keep them engaged, but doing so allows for them to better buy into the changes. This idea is best summarized by Liam FitzPatrick and Klavs Valskov, in their guidebook *Internal Communications: A Manual for*

Practitioners (2014), who base their recommendations on the work of Bill Quirke (1996). When communicating change to employees the authors note:

If we [employees] have a say in what is to happen, the chances of us supporting and embracing the necessary transformation are greatly increased...Now it seems widely-accepted wisdom that people are more likely to transform if they have some sort of control over how that transformation is to be implemented (pp. 173-180).

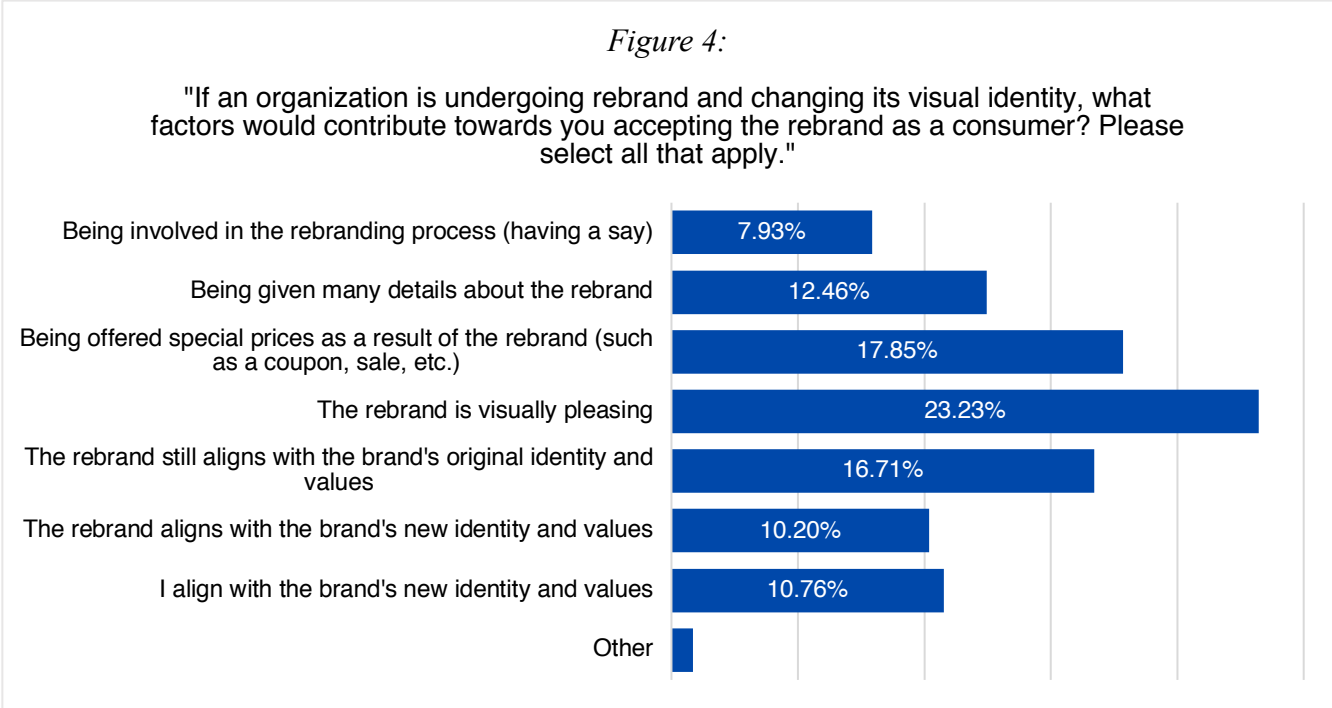
The above guidance from FitzPatrick and Valskov, in conjunction with the survey finding helps demonstrate that organizations cannot ignore employees during a rebrand and must involve them in the process. There are a number of methods in which an organization can collect feedback regarding the rebrand to keep employees involved. The organization may consider utilizing digital surveys or focus groups to collect the feedback of employees regarding the rebrand. Furthermore, in-person meetings with employees can serve as an opportunity for employees to offer their feedback, as outlined in detail below.



In contrast, findings indicate that consumers have different levels of engagement compared to employees. The awareness of this difference can really help organizations distinguish the needs between employee and consumer communication tactics when it comes to rebranding. When asked at what phase consumers would like to be informed of an organization’s rebranding effort, only 16.20% of respondents chose that they would like to be informed at the very

beginning, while the rebrand is still being thought-out. This finding is in contrast to the 65.71% of employees who chose this response, as mentioned above.

Furthermore, when asked what factors would contribute towards acceptance of a rebrand from a consumer’s point of view, only 7.93% chose the option of being involved in the rebranding process and having a say in it, as depicted in *Figure 4*. These findings imply that consumers are not expecting to be involved in the process of the rebrand. Herein lies the difference between engagement levels of employees and consumers during a rebrand, employees want to be involved and engaged in the process, while consumers do not expect to be involved.

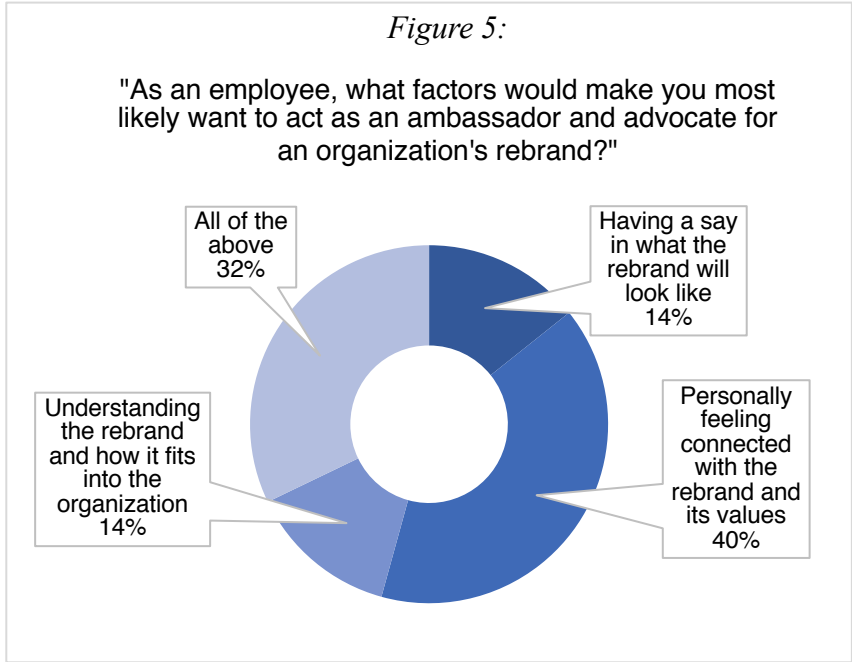


With this difference in engagement levels in mind, how exactly can organizations that are undergoing a rebrand obtain employee buy-in to improve the quality of the rebrand and its effectiveness? Key findings attained from survey results and interviews can help inform of the nature of the messaging and channel selection organizations should consider when it comes to rebranding and obtaining employee buy-in.

**Messaging**

Organizational messages intended for employees need forethought and planning, instead of just being decided on a whim. According to FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014), every communication plan needs a message that is “the kernel that binds together a package of information giving it meaning and shaping the response we need for the receiver” (p. 74). Planning and crafting a specific message, especially in reference to a rebrand, can ensure the message is heard and accepted. Given the importance of messaging and content, research conducted helps to advise how organizations can frame the message needed to achieve employee buy-in.

Per the survey, when respondents in the role of employees were asked what factor would most likely want them to act as an ambassador or advocate for an organizational rebrand, 40% chose that personally feeling connected with the rebrand and its values will help them do so (Figure 5). Within this percentage, a majority of employees who implied less of a desire to be engaged in the rebranding process (by responding that giving feedback in the process is only



moderately important, slightly important, or not at all important to them) chose this factor as well. Altogether, these are extremely significant findings that can help organizations create messaging to generate

employee buy-in. Employees want the rebrand to resonate within themselves, whether it appeals to their logic, emotions, or values. This finding is in line with the maxim of “what’s in it for me?”, also commonly known as WIIFM, whereas “employees will constantly be placing what you are saying into the context of what it means for them” (FitzPatrick & Valskov, 2014, p. 48). Therefore, when crafting a message in attempt to bring one’s employees onboard during a rebrand, consider phrasing the messaging in a way that depicts how the rebrand will affect them, and what benefits it will bring to them. Furthermore, an organization should stress that the message of the rebrand can fit into their values as employees within the organization and appeal to them on a personal and emotional level.

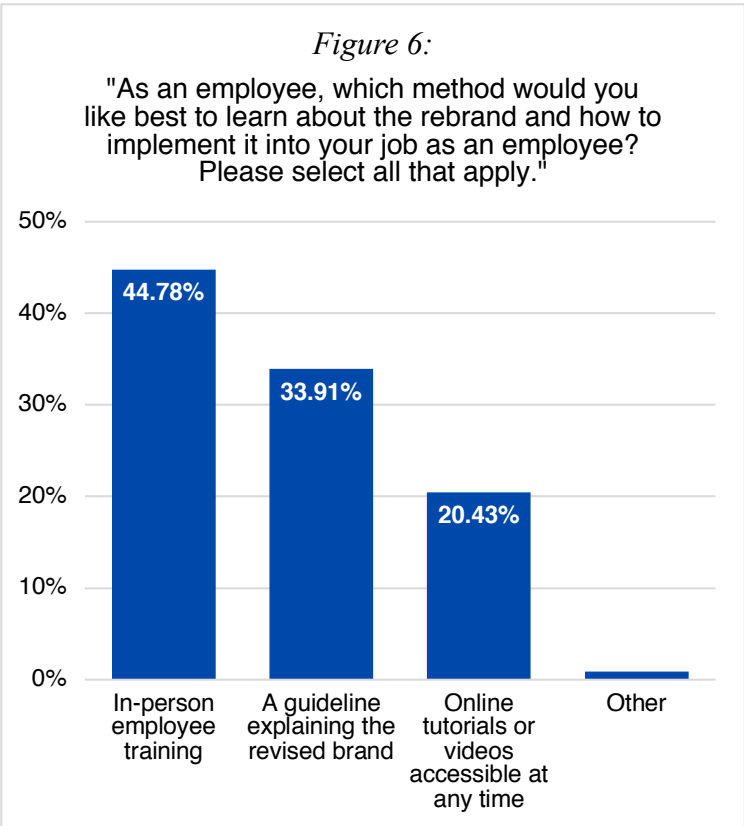
Contextualizing rebranding changes to employees who were going to directly be affected by the changes was an important component of communicating the rebrand to employees at M.Gemi. Heather Kaminetsky noted that although all employees were kept in the loop regarding the rebrand (as detailed above), it was especially important to involve teams/departments that would be directly affected by the rebrand. When asked which teams were given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and give feedback she said, “customer care did because that [the rebrand] obviously touches them, the creative and marketing teams did, parts of the merchandising team did.” It is quite clear that the nature of the responsibilities required by employees in these types of teams made it critical for them to be able to connect with the rebrand and be aware of how it will affect their duties.

Consequently, based on the survey results, consumers would seem to react to different organizational messages regarding a rebrand. In response to the question “If an organization is undergoing a rebrand and changing its visual identity, what factors would contribute towards you accepting the rebrand as a consumer? (Please select all that apply.)” The most frequently chosen

response was, “The rebrand is visually pleasing”, followed by “Being offered special prices as a result of the rebrand (such as a coupon, sale, etc.)” (Figure 4). It appears to be that consumers may better respond to messages geared towards the physical aspects of the rebrand, as opposed to an emotional and personal connection that employees may respond to.

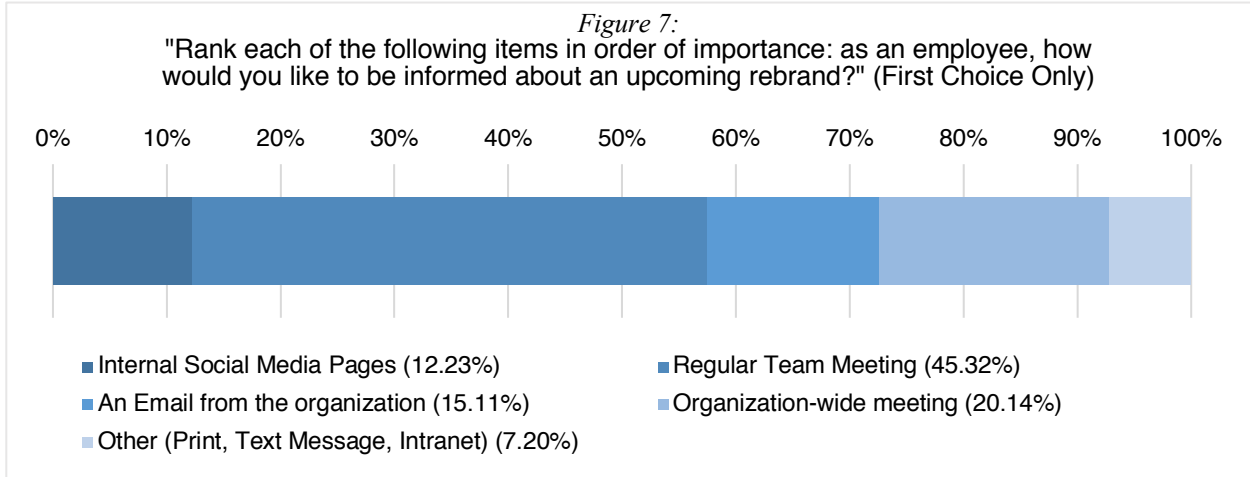
**Channels**

Aside from the actual message organizations may share with employees regarding a rebrand, the methods of how that message is shared is just as important when obtaining employee-buy in. In their guidebook, FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014) point out that channels are a crucial component of a communication plan because, “At work people will draw conclusions about a message based on where they see it” (p. 92). Therefore, there are two key findings that can be gathered from the survey data that help to clarify how various communication channels



can be utilized to help achieve employee buy-in. First, the research performed found that nearly 45% of employees want to learn about the rebrand and how to implement it into their jobs via in-person training (Figure 6). One respondent of the survey noted, “I’d like to hear from my boss how this is going to directly impact the day-to-day work of our department and how we can help

support the rebranding efforts through our work both internally and externally.” This input supports the need for interactivity between employees and an organization during a rebrand, and the second key findings build on this concept. When survey respondents were asked to rank which communication channels they would like to be informed about regarding upcoming rebranding changes, the top two channels selected as first choice were regular team meetings and organizational-wide meetings, as depicted in *Figure 7*.



From a holistic point of view, these two key findings reveal that employees are looking for what is known as talk or interactive channels where they desire interaction and dialogue between themselves and their organizations. According to FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014), talk channels are important in many instances because,

Most of us develop our understanding of information or ideas by asking questions or by taking part in some form of conversation. We need a place where we can ask how something is new, what we have to do about an instruction or explore practicalities. (p. 97)

In other words, having face-to-face meetings and in-person training can provide a space for employees to fully understand the rebrand and engage in a dialogue surrounding it. Furthermore,

giving employees the opportunity to partake in dialogue surrounding the rebrand can help foster employee engagement within this endeavor.

It is also important to note the value of involving direct supervisors or line managers. As seen in *Figure 7*, the choice of regular team meetings was chosen more than twice as much as organization-wide meetings. FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014) emphasize the importance by stating, “Line managers can be one of the most powerful channels of communication in your organization because people like to hear from and discuss issues with someone they know and, crucially, who knows them” (p. 134). This idea, of using line managers as the initiators of dialogues plays into the findings regarding messaging and content explained above. Because line managers have a direct relationship with their employees, they are in the best position to relate the changes to them, demonstrate how the changes will affect them, and place the changes into context for them.

The importance of in-person communication is echoed by Andrew Willis, a former manager of global brands including IBM and Citi, and founder of the organization, Stop Abuse Campaign. Stop Abuse Campaign is a not-for-profit organization that aims to prevent childhood traumas that can adversely impact lives later in life. When speaking to Willis, he noted that when communicating change to his employees, who are volunteers, he is limited to phone-call meetings or video-chat meetings at the most because the employees are spread throughout the country. However, as per his experience,

Face to face is always better and allows you to use processes like discussion producing tools, or like sticky notes on the wall and organizing them into group thoughts...those things are possible face to face, and impossible really online. I think face to face is always better.



Again, it is made clear that face-to-face meetings and in-person training can help foster dialogue and discussions, which can be extremely useful communication channels when undergoing organizational changes such as a rebrand.

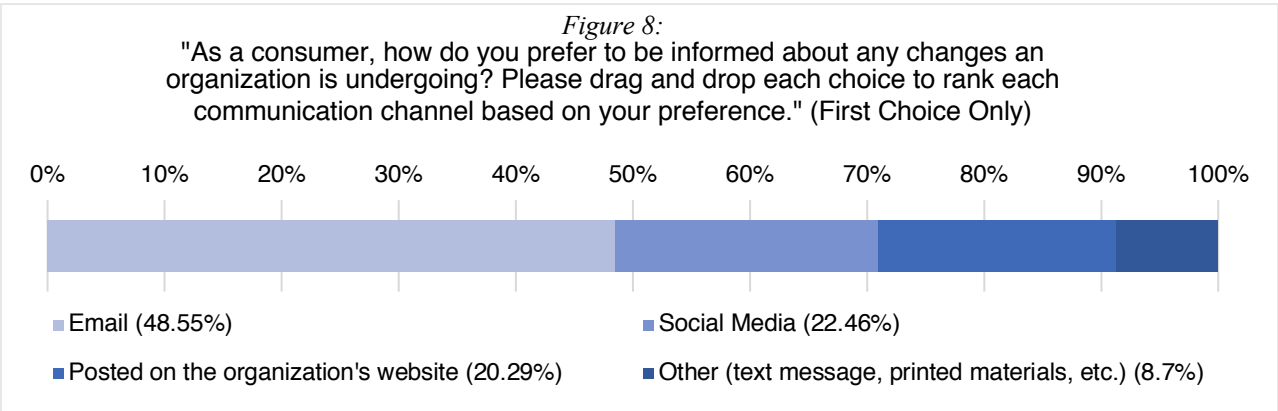
Similarly, working together with employees was an important factor during the rebranding of ArtsWestchester, an organization that seeks to promote and grow the accessibility of all forms of art in Westchester County, New York. Led by longtime Chief Executive Officer Janet Langsam, the organization underwent a successful rebrand that included a name change from Westchester Arts Council to ArtsWestchester back in 2009. Since the formal rebrand, the organization's brand and identity has slowly evolved to keep up with current trends and to remain contemporary. In an interview with Langsam, she mentions that when it came to onboarding employees in relation to the rebrand,

We went through a process where we tested a couple of names and did focus groups [with employees], so I think people [employees] coalesced around it...Let's put it this way, a lot of people can't visualize something, so one of the things that we did was help them [employees] visualize what the name would look like on various collateral material and how it would be reflected in our materials...The staff and the boardroom were all part of the process.

In essence, Langsam was able to get employees to buy into the rebrand by engaging employees and allowing them to be part of the process.

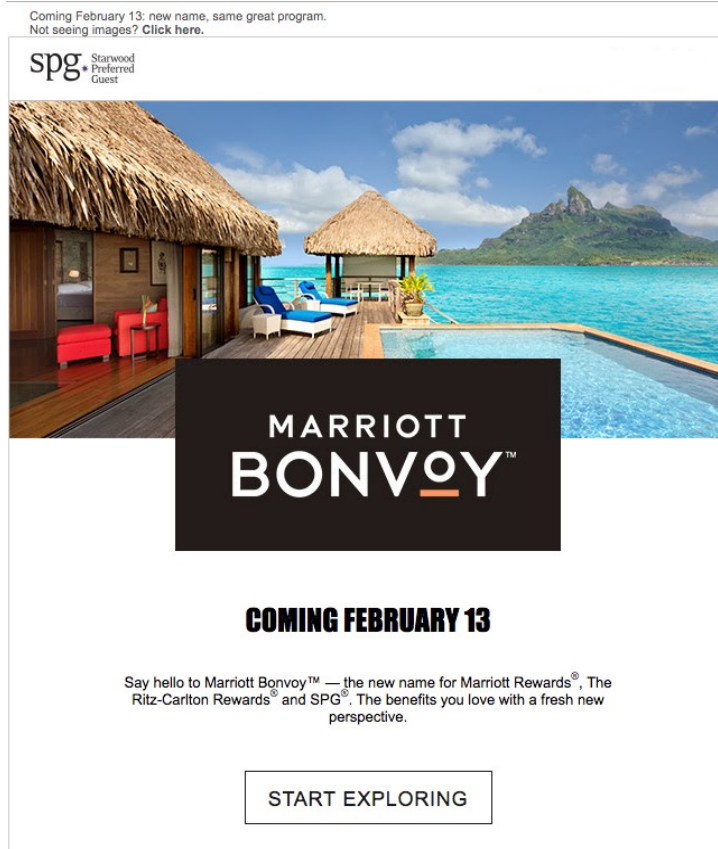
Whereas employees are more drawn to interactive and dialogue-based channels, consumers tend to prefer push channels. Push channels are "channels that deliver a one-way flow of information...because they send information out...The recipient is a passive actor, doing

nothing on the receiving end” (FitzPatrick & Valskov, 2014, p. 94). In other words, with push channels there is no expectation of a dialogue or interaction. According to the survey findings, the first choice of communication channel that consumers prefer to be notified about a rebrand is email, which was chosen more than two times more often than any other method (Figure 8). After email, the second first choice of method for consumers is social media. In many cases, social media is considered a push channel because organizations can broadcast information on their pages for consumers, and there is not always a guarantee of interaction between the organization and consumers on social media.



The use of email to notify consumers of a rebrand was the prime channel selection in the recent rebranding effort undertaken by Marriott International. In early 2019, the hospitality company replaced its existing loyalty programs into one program named Marriott Bonvoy. Although the rebrand didn't officially launch until February 13, 2019, Marriott made it a point to first inform consumers of the change via email about a month prior to the official launch, as portrayed in the official corporate email sent to consumers in Figure 9.

Lastly, it is important to note that when communicating change regarding a rebrand to employees and even to consumers, it is not enough to just say it once. Although both employees and consumers clearly delineated their preferred method of communication when it comes to a



*Figure 9:*

Part of the email message Marriott International sent to consumers on January 16, 2019, notifying of the upcoming rebrand.

rebrand through the survey (regular team meetings and email, respectively), these should not be the only channels employed to get the message across; so much so that, “Experienced communicators know that people need to hear something several times before it registers with them...If you only have one channel, communications become an undifferentiated wall of noise that is likely to be ignored,” (FitzPatrick &

Valskov, 2014, p. 92). The findings of the survey also revealed that employees and consumers alike recognize the need to have the message of a rebrand communicated via multiple channels multiple times. In reference to employees, 49.95% preferred to be notified of the rebrand three to four times, and consumers chose an average of 3.44 different channels of communication. Together, these findings express the importance of employing multiple channel and multiple expressions of an organization’s message regarding a rebrand.

Relatedly, Janet Langsam, CEO of ArtsWestchester, expressed the importance of repetition when it came to communicating the name change ArtsWestchester underwent during

the organization's rebrand. Per her experience,

One thing we did was we used 'Formerly Westchester Arts Council,' so we launched it with the new name; but, in most of our communications we did say 'Formerly Westchester Arts Council'. We used that for a number of years in a lot of our materials... That was a caveat that we put into the mix.

Like the above, the importance of using multiple channels and sharing the message of the rebrand multiple times was an important factor in having it accepted amongst the organization's stakeholders.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Relevance to Literature**

The conclusions gathered from the quantitative and qualitative research both extend and support existing literature on the topic of corporate rebranding. This is especially true when it comes to the existing literature on stakeholder buy-in and the research findings pertaining to this concept. One particular instance of the research findings both supporting and extending the current literature available is based on the study of Daly and Molony (2004). The Daly and Molony study concluded that when it comes to rebranding, organizations should develop training programs to “(a) gain the support and commitment of employees and (b) train employees in the acquiring company's policies and procedures” (p. 34). The research findings support this notion by proving via the survey results that employees prefer in-person training to learn about the rebrand (see *figure 6*), and the interview responses mentioned above. In addition, the research findings extend Daly and Molony’s (2004) work by classifying this idea of employee training as a talk/interactive channel that can help foster employee engagement, allow them to ask questions and be involved in dialogue concerning the rebranding changes.

### **Practical Implications**

The research findings that aim to understand what forms of communication can help achieve employee acceptance when it comes to a rebrand can certainly assist organizations that are contemplating a rebrand or currently undergoing a rebrand. As mentioned above, much of the literature stresses the importance of stakeholder buy-in during a rebrand, especially with employees. In fact, some of the literature emphasizes that consumers will only accept a rebrand if employees accept it and, in turn, properly represent the changes to consumers (Stuart, 2012).

However, the literature fails to determine exactly how this buy-in can be achieved and what communication strategy can help this process. With the research findings collected from the survey and interviews, there are three main ideas that can be extracted for organizations to apply when undergoing a rebrand.

First, as seen with the survey findings, employees want to be involved in the process of the rebrand. Employees want to be engaged in the process by being informed about the rebrand during its planning stages, and provided with the ability to share input.

Secondly, organizations can foster this engagement and achieve employee buy-in by carefully planning the messaging content geared towards employees. As proven by the findings, allowing employees to feel personally involved with the rebrand and its values is a motivating factor towards having them accept the rebrand. This plays into the concept of “what’s in it for me,” where employees relate to messaging that appeals to them on an emotional level.

Lastly, aside from messaging, the choice of channel when communicating the rebrand to employees is an important aspect when seeking buy-in. The research conducted for this study demonstrates employees are drawn towards interactive channels, as opposed to one-way or static channels. This translates to employees wanting to learn about the rebrand via in-person training and be informed about it through regular team meetings, especially from direct supervisors.

Altogether, these three ideas make it clear that the more employees are engaged and involved in the process of the rebrand and are able to digest it, the more they will come to accept it. This can all be accomplished through a communication plan that draws employees in and allows them to be involved.

Practically speaking, organizations may be hesitant to get employees involved in the process of rebranding, as it can be very costly on many levels. It is no secret that a rebrand

requires a lot of time, effort, and money to make it successful; and, involving employees in the process can make it even more costly. However, given the significance of obtaining employee buy-in when it comes to a successful rebrand, getting them involved is but a small price to pay compared to the possible risk of a failed rebrand due to a lack of employee acceptance. Overall, organizations contemplating a rebrand should heavily consider the above findings in order to craft the best possible communication plan geared towards employee buy-in. This is especially true considering that stakeholder buy-in is a key element of the rebranding process.

### **Research Limitations**

Like every research endeavor, the researcher tends to encounter certain limitations that are oftentimes inevitable. In this particular project, there were three main limitations encountered. The first limitation relates to the small scale of both the quantitative and qualitative data gathering. Only 142 surveys were completed and three interviews conducted, with all information and material being extracted from that data alone. Of course, the amount of surveys and interviews conducted are not an adequate enough representation of employee and consumer perception. This can be understood as convenience sampling, whereas the most accessible people were given the opportunity to complete the survey or be interviewed. Because of the small amount and misrepresentation of both employee and consumer perception as a whole, it is a possibility that the data is somewhat skewed or biased. Further research in this area should aim to collect more data by increasing the research participation and repeating the research conducted, thus making the findings more credible.

The second limitation encountered during the research relates to the qualitative portion of the research collected. The interviews conducted relied on the interviewees' memory and

recollection of events. As some of the interviews conducted relied on a recounting of events that took place a number of years ago, there can be an assumption of memory fallibility, in which some details were left out, forgotten, or misconstrued by the interviewees. In the future, this problem can be mitigated by conducting more interviews, making sure interviewees have had recent experience with rebranding, and interviewing colleagues or partners of those interviewed about rebranding to confirm facts and recollection of events.

A final limitation confronted with during the research process was the possibility of confirmation bias. Because there was only one researcher designing the studies and interpreting the data, there is a possibility that the studies and subsequent data were framed with a biased perspective. Oftentimes, this bias materializes in a way that confirms one's existing beliefs or desired outcome. The issue of confirmation bias could have emerged in the quantitative portion of the research if the questions on the survey were designed to support a certain premise and if the results were framed to match the premise. Similarly, the issue of confirmation bias could have appeared during the qualitative portion of the research during the interviews conducted; whereas, asking leading questions may elicit a particular response from the interviewee. This common limitation in all forms of research can be alleviated by commissioning multiple people to conduct the research, as opposed to just one.

### **Future Direction**

Taking the project's limitations into account, the next and most appropriate step would be to continue research in the area. Specifically, it would be fitting to continue surveying employees and consumers, and continue interviewing employees with experience in rebranding to either



validate the current research findings or extend them. Like any good research endeavor, the research needs to be replicated to establish credibility and validity.

Furthermore, additional research can explore the differences between stakeholder groups when communicating a rebrand. Although this research focused on employees, and somewhat on consumers, similar research can be conducted on investors/donors, suppliers, communities, governmental groups, and more. Findings gathered from research on different stakeholder groups can help communicators draw up an all-encompassing communication plan to employ during a rebrand.

Lastly, because the concept of rebranding can fall under the broader category of change management, it would be worthwhile to conduct research on this topic as well. Change management can broadly be defined as “the process of continually renewing the organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of the marketplace, customers and employees” (Moran & Brightman (2001), and rebranding clearly fits under this definition. Therefore, conducting similar surveys and interviews based around change management can then be compared to the results gathered from the research done on rebranding. At this point, researchers will be able to see if there is a different approach needed when approaching employees (and consumers) about different types of organizational changes other than rebranding, such as change in leadership, change in environment, change in processes, or change in offerings.

Overall, this particular area of research can be extremely beneficial for organizations that are looking to strategically and effectively rebrand or implement changes, making it a useful area of study. The ultimate and final goal sparked by the above research will be to compile a “go to” book outlining best practices when it comes to rebranding that infuses tried-and-true applications

alongside contemporary recommendations and suggestions. Furthermore, this particular area of research can help inform communicators about best-practices regarding the concept of change management as a whole.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Survey Questions

**THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK:  
Baruch College Department of Communication Studies**

ORAL AND INTERNET-BASED INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT

**Title of Research Study:**

Obtaining Consumer and Employee Buy-in during Rebranding Efforts.

**Principal Investigator:**

Samantha Azizo, Candidate, MA in Corporate Communication, Student

Thank you for expressing interest in this survey. You are being asked to participate in this research study because your thoughts and opinions can help inform the study of organizational rebranding. The purpose of this research study is to exam how organizations such as not-for profits or large corporations can obtain employee and consumer acceptance when undergoing a rebrand. Your participation can help improve the quantity and quality of information available on this topic. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to answer a 20-question survey that will take about 5 minutes to complete.

There are minimal to no risks involved with this research. The only nominal risk is the possibility of a data breach in which the information collected via this survey is compromised. Although there are no direct benefits applied to participants of this survey, partaking in this research can better inform the process of rebranding and change management.

If you decide to partake in this survey your responses will be recorded. However, please note that no personally identifiable information will be collected from this survey such as your name, email address, or IP address.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you have any questions, you can contact Samantha Azizo at [Samantha.Azizo1@baruchmail.cuny.edu](mailto:Samantha.Azizo1@baruchmail.cuny.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you can contact CUNY Research Compliance Administrator at 646-664-8918 or [HRPP@cuny.edu](mailto:HRPP@cuny.edu).

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.**

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 18 years of age
- you are currently employed or have been employed within the last 6 months

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on

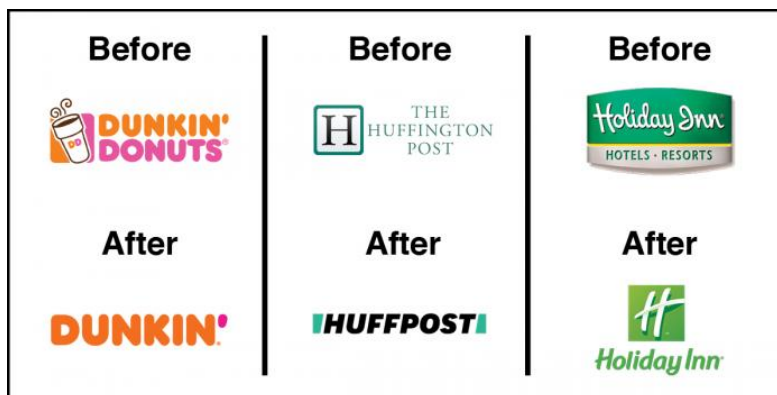
"disagree".

- Agree
  - Disagree
- 

Before beginning the survey, please read the following:

Rebranding is when an organization (for-profit or not-for-profit) changes its identity and the way it displays itself to its customers, employees, and others. Most of the time this change in identity is a visual change where a logo, color, font, or slogan of the organization is revised. In many cases, a rebrand includes a change in name and a change in the organization's mission and values, as well as its operating principles.

The survey will ask you questions about how you feel about rebranding as both a consumer and an employee. Below are a few popular examples of recent rebrands to help get you familiarized with the concept.



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The following questions relate to how you feel about rebranding as a **consumer**.

Q1. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being unimportant and 5 being very important, how important is it for you as a **consumer** to be informed of changes that occur within an organization that you feel positively towards?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Q2. As a **consumer**, how much does an organization's mission, values, and identity matter to you?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

Q3. How important is it for you, as a **consumer**, to be informed about the following changes within an organization:

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Changes to its mission, purpose or values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes with availability of products or services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes in leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes to its visual identity (logo, color, font, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4. As a **consumer**, how do you prefer to be informed about any changes an organization is undergoing? Please drag and drop each choice to rank each communication channel based on your preference.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Email
- \_\_\_\_\_ Posted on the organization's website
- \_\_\_\_\_ Social Media
- \_\_\_\_\_ Text Message
- \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Materials (such as a mailed letter, printed advertisement, or in-store flyer)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Q5. With the previous communication channels in mind, how many different channels do you prefer to be informed of an organization's rebrand? Please use the slider to select a number.

Number of Communication Channels:      0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Q6. As a **consumer**, at what phase during an organization's rebranding process would you like to be informed about the changes?

- At the very beginning, while the rebrand is still being thought-out
- Before the rebrand is launched and made public
- After the rebrand is launched and made public
- It doesn't matter to me

Q7. If an organization is undergoing a rebrand and changing its visual identity, what factors would contribute towards you accepting the rebrand as a **consumer**? Please select all that apply.

- Being involved in the rebranding process (having a say)
- Being given many details about the rebrand
- Being offered special prices as a result of the rebrand (such as a coupon, sale, etc.)
- The rebrand is visually pleasing
- The rebrand still aligns with the brand's original identity and values
- The rebrand aligns with the brand's new identity and values
- I align with the brand's new identity and values
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

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The following questions relate to how you feel about rebranding as an employee. Please reflect on your experiences as an employee *of any organization* when answering the following questions.

Q8. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being unimportant and 5 being very important, how important is it for you as an **employee** to be informed of changes that occur within your organization?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Q9. As an **employee**, how much does your organization's mission, values, and identity matter to you?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

Q10. How important is it for you, as an **employee**, to be informed about the following changes within an organization:

	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Changes to its mission, purpose or values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes in leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes to its visual identity (logo, color, font, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes in offerings of products or services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q11. As an **employee**, at what phase during a company's rebranding process would you like to be informed about the changes?

- At the very beginning, while the rebrand is still being thought-out
- Before the rebrand is launched and made public
- After the rebrand is launched and made public
- It doesn't matter to me

Q12. By dragging and dropping, please rank each of the following items in order of importance: as an employee, how would you like to be informed about an upcoming rebrand?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Social Media Pages
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular Team Meeting
- \_\_\_\_\_ An Email from the organization
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organization-wide meeting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Posted on the organization's intranet
- \_\_\_\_\_ Text Message
- \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Materials (such as a mailed letter, memo, printed flyer or poster)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Q13. As an **employee**, how important is it for you to be able to give feedback and be involved in a discussion regarding the rebrand?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Q14. As an employee, how many times do you prefer to be notified of the rebrand?

- 1-2 times
- 3-4 times
- 5-6 times
- 7 or more times

Q15. As an **employee**, which method would you like best to learn about the rebrand and how to implement it into your job as an employee? Please select all that apply.

- In-person employee training
- A guideline explaining the revised brand
- Online tutorials or videos accessible at any time
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q16. As an **employee**, what factors would make you most likely want to act as an ambassador and advocate for an organization's rebrand?

- Having a say in what the rebrand will look like
  - Personally feeling connected with the rebrand and its values
  - Understanding the rebrand and how it fits into the organization
  - All of the above
-

The following questions are demographic questions for statistical purposes.

Q17. Using the drop-down list, please select your age range.

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 and older

Q18. About how many hours do you work a week? Please use the drop-down list to select your answer.

- I am not currently employed
- 1-10 hours
- Less than 20 hours
- 21-35 hours
- 36-45 hours
- 46-55 hours
- 55 hours or more

Q19. Which country do you currently reside in?  
Please type your response: \_\_\_\_\_

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*End of Survey*

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## **Appendix B: Interview Questions**

### Interview Introduction Script:

Hello, my name is Samantha Azizo and I am currently a graduate student at CUNY Baruch College, where I am pursuing my master's degree in Corporate Communication. Today I am collecting interviews for my thesis project.

The topic of this interview is rebranding. Roughly speaking, rebranding is when an organization (for-profit or not-for-profit) changes its identity and the way it displays itself to its customers, employees, and others. Most of the time this change in identity is a visual change where a logo, color, font, or slogan of the organization is revised. In many cases, a rebrand includes a change in name and a change in the organization's mission and values, as well as its operating principles.

The purpose of this study is to understand how organizations get consumers and employees on board with the changes that come along with a rebrand. The interview should last no more than 15 to 20 minutes. For research purposes, this interview will be recorded; yet, please be assured that all of your information and answers will be kept on a password protected system. If you have any questions during or after the interview, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Prior to this interview you have been given the informed consent document and voluntarily agreed to take part in the research.

## Interview Questions

1. Can you please give a brief overview of what your organization's rebranding effort entailed?
  - a. What was the extent? Was it a complete overhaul such as a name change, or merely a change in color, etc.?
  - b. Why did the organization decide to rebrand?
  
2. Was the rebrand done completely from within the organization, or was a third-party hired to help with the process?
  
3. At what point in the rebranding process were employees of the organization informed about the rebrand and forthcoming changes?
  - a. How was the rebrand communicated to employees? What channels and methods were used, and why?
  
4. What, if any, feedback did the organization receive from employees regarding the rebrand?
  - a. Was there any specific feedback regarding how the rebrand was announced?
  - b. Did the organization do anything with the feedback?
  
5. Did the organization receive any pushback from employees regarding the rebrand?

The next set of questions will focus on how the organization dealt with its consumers during the rebranding process:

6. At what point in the rebranding process were consumers informed about the rebrand and forthcoming changes?
  - a. How was the rebranding communicated to consumers? What channels were used, and why?
  
7. What, if any, feedback did the organization receive from consumers regarding the rebrand?
  - a. Did the organization do anything with the feedback?
  
8. Did the organization receive any pushback from consumers regarding the rebrand? If so, why?
  
9. Were any immediate benefits or drawbacks noticeable following the rebrand? (From both the perspective of employees and consumers.)
  
10. What, if anything, would you change in communicating the rebrand to employees and consumers?

Interview Conclusion Script:

Once again, thank you for your time in helping me complete this research project. Your interview is a valuable component to my research process. If you have any questions please let me know.