

Better Branding for Nonprofits

Learn how to define, build,
and launch a memorable
brand that resonates with
your biggest supporters.



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Foreword

The decision to rebrand is a big step to take for any organization, much less a nonprofit that may not have a lot of time or resources to rebrand.

But wait! Barriers of time and resources shouldn't stop you from considering a rebrand. **Your brand as a nonprofit is a huge part of your success.** Why? Because a clear tie between your mission, visual brand, and your messaging leads to more effective campaigns and higher engagement with your donors, volunteers, and employees.

After conducting our own rebrand at Neon One, we wanted to share the steps that we took to make our new brand a reality. We've included a bit more information about our rebrand at the end of this guide. Please check it out to learn more about our own rebranding efforts.

We hope that by following these tips you will be able to conduct your own successful rebrand campaign.

Keep up the great work!
The Neon One Team

Chapter One

SETTING THE FOUNDATION



What's a brand?

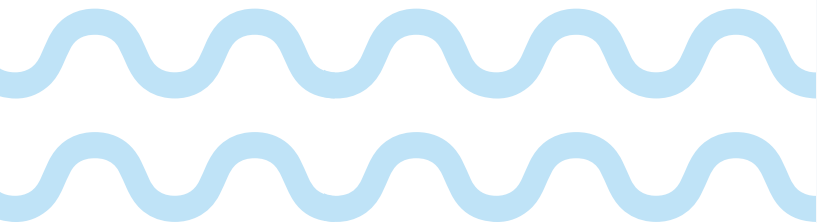
Let's start with the basics. What is a brand anyway? Is it your organization's logo? Is it the stylistic choices on your website?

A brand is the way that a product, service, or organization is perceived by an individual. In fewer words, **a brand is made up of personal perceptions.** Defining a brand can be difficult. Deciding if you are going to rebrand, including decisions like changing your logo, color palette, or organization name can be even more challenging!

Being clear on the important components of your nonprofit's brand is a good place to start when deciding if you want to fully rebrand or refresh components of your brand.

THE COMPONENTS OF A BRAND

1. **Values.** This is what your nonprofit is based on and stands for, in everything that you do as an organization.
2. **Visual Identity.** This is your logo, color palette, website design, email templates — anything visual or creative sent from or featuring your nonprofit (including your appeal letters).
3. **Voice & Tone.** This is the language and phrases used in your messaging, including the story of your brand and your boilerplate “about us.”
4. **Experience.** This includes how your donors, volunteers, members, and employees experience your nonprofit — from the ease of donating online to the accessible resources sent in the mail. Social media is even a part of the “experience” of your nonprofit.



Why rebrand?

Branding can be a leading factor to the success of an organization, but unfortunately, many times it is a low priority for nonprofit organizations. The focus on fundraising goals and measurable ROI wins out over rebranding or a brand refresh, but that should not always be the case.

Your brand as a nonprofit is a huge part of your donor engagement strategy. Why? Because your brand is formed by how others experience and perceive your nonprofit. When they feel good about your brand, when they trust you, when they connect with your messaging, that is when you get donors that come back again and again.

If until now your branding strategy has been an afterthought, then it is probably time to take a look at a few rebrand opportunities.

If you do have a brand strategy, but recently there has been a lot of change at your organization or in your community, **you can ask yourself these questions:**

- Does your mission no longer match your nonprofit work? Have there been changes in the past that have fundamentally changed your values or additions that are important to your day-to-day work?
- Are you struggling to distinguish yourself from competitors?
- Has your community or the community that you serve changed? Are you still focusing on the same type of donor, advocate, or partners?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, it's time to consider how you may want to alter or refresh your current brand.

Do you need a full rebrand, partial rebrand, or a brand refresh?



Changing your logo or your color palette can be a smart decision but ultimately may not change the perception of your brand to your audience the way that you want.

Rebrands don't have to be major changes, they can be slight alterations. You can adjust your written values without changing your visual identity and you can slowly start editing your voice and tone without making a major announcement about those changes.

Before moving forward with a rebrand, be sure that you are clear on your focus of the "why." Just because many rebrands include a new logo, does not mean that that is the best choice for your nonprofit.

Consider what you need to change to make your desired impact rather than your perceived idea of the components of a rebrand. And if at all possible, get the research to back up the brand decisions you are making.

HERE ARE SOME DIFFERENT TYPES OF REBRAND OPTIONS YOUR NONPROFIT CAN CONSIDER:

- 1. Full Rebrand.** A full rebrand usually includes renaming your organization, creating a brand story (including a new mission statement and new voice and tone guidelines), altering your target audience, changing up your messaging, and creating a new logo or visual identity.
- 2. Partial Rebrand.** A partial rebrand generally includes one or two of the aspects of a "full rebrand." The purpose of a partial rebrand is to realign your brand to match your values and the audiences that you serve. This could be as simple as changing the boilerplate language and messaging of how you talk about your nonprofit.
- 3. Brand Refresh.** A brand refresh is small changes made to your logo, color palette, or messaging that modernizes and optimizes your nonprofit. Usually, these changes are seen primarily on your website.

Build your Brand Guidelines

Whether you are doing a full rebrand or a rebrand refresh, it is important to revisit the core aspects of your brand, indicated in the first chapter.

- 1 Brand Values
- 2 Brand Visual Identity
- 3 Brand Voice & Brand Story
- 4 Brand Experience

Set up meetings, create surveys, conduct research, and have conversations to better understand where you are now so that you can move to where you want to go.

Define Your Goals

Before you begin the rebranding process, you need to ask the right questions. We talked about how important your “why” is in the previous chapter along with the different rebrand options, and now it’s time to put all of that down on paper.

These questions will help you determine your goals that will guide the rest of your decisions surrounding the rebrand. Let’s walk through which questions you should think through before you start making any changes.

1. What is the expected end-goal for the rebrand?
2. What research do you have to back-up your rebrand decisions? (i.e., survey results, CRM data, audience research).
3. What is the time you are willing to dedicate to the rebrand?
4. What is your budget for the rebrand?

After answering these questions, you will be on the right path to developing a great outline to start planning your official rebrand campaign.

Rebrands can't happen on an island.

Once you answer the questions above, be sure to start to involve your employees, volunteers, donors, partners, and leadership in the process. If you do not include the people you serve, you risk putting in the effort to change your organization in a way that does not accurately reflect your desired outcome.

Rebrand Tip:

Consider assembling ambassador teams for your different stakeholder groups, this is especially important for donors. By creating teams, your audiences will feel like an important part of the process and be much more likely to promote the rebrand publicly.

Chapter Three

LAUNCHING YOUR NEW BRAND



Decide on Assets

Depending on the type of rebrand that your nonprofit chooses, it's important to make a list of assets that you will need to communicate your rebrand — whether it be new email footers for employees, or a new appeal-letter template to match your new logo and color palette.

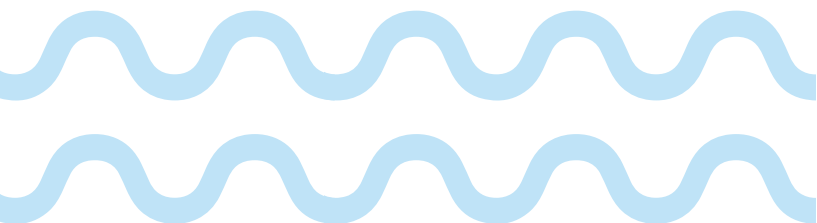
Popular assets include a new logo, new color palette, new website design, press release, or blog indicating changes, and new templates for emails and letters (for both internal and external audiences).

Your Rebrand Checklist

Make sure to get all your ducks in a row with a personalized rebrand checklist and expected dates for launch. We've even included some space on the end for you to add anything else important for your campaign.

Along with a list of new assets that you will need, create a separate list for assets that will need to be updated.

- Mission, vision, values
- Brand strategy
- Brand name
- Core messaging
- Tagline/slogan
- Launch plan
- Logo
- Color palette
- _____
- _____
- _____



HERE IS A LIST OF NECESSARY ASSETS TO UPDATE TO START YOU OFF:

Visuals/Logo: Use your new color palette and logo to update all internal and external brand references.

- Email (Employee/Volunteer email footer and email templates - including automatic replies like donation receipt)
- Website
- Donation form
- Google Business Account
- Social Media Accounts
- Letter Templates
- Internal handbooks and guides

Voice & Brand Story: Use your new messaging, tagline, or mission to update any previous mentions.

- Website (including “About Us” or “Mission”)
- Donation forms
- Email templates
- Letter templates

When you complete your new assets and are ready to update existing assets, make sure that you have a shareable resource so that anyone at your organization can easily make updates themselves.

Neon One created a creative hub landing page for quick access to everything from our brand story to each individual product logo with instructions for correct usage. Although more work upfront, it has been a great resource for our team and our partners.

Rebrand Tip:

Whether it’s a Google Drive folder or a landing page on your website, creating one tried and true location to access updated logos, color hex codes, and boilerplate messaging will help every employee and volunteer be more self-sufficient about promoting your brand.

Planning your Campaign

You've put a lot of time into your rebrand, so it's important to share the good news.

It's not a surprise to hear that the major part of your campaign is going to be communication. Break up your audience types in order to craft messages that best fit that audience.

Your lists should look something like this:

- Donors (one-time, recurring, and major)
- Members
- Leadership and Stakeholders
- Volunteers
- Employees

If your nonprofit has a CRM, you should be able to easily sort each category into lists for email communication.

On top of email communication, think about other creative methods of communicating the news.

Here are a few ideas:

- Social Media Campaign
- Host a Live Virtual Event
- Major Donor Phone Calls (for a more personalized approach)
- Partner and community outreach
- Connect the rebrand to a major fundraising campaign
- Send something tangible (i.e., handwritten card, sticker with the new logo)
- Create a fun virtual experience (i.e., trivia night, giveaway)

The main message that every stakeholder should understand by the end of your rebrand campaign is your mission and vision for impact. As long as every communication uses your mission as your guidepost, your communication will be successful.

Rebrand Tip:

Don't forget to tailor a special message with your employees and volunteers, especially if they are working remotely. Your internal team and employees are the best people to spread the word about your rebrand, so be sure you are giving them all the resources they need to accurately talk about the rebrand.

Chapter Four

REBRAND EXAMPLES

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Ulman Foundation

The Ulman Foundation, previously known as the Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults, announced their name change on November 14, 2018.

The organization used the name change and new visuals to revisit the history of their organization, focusing on the work that they have done in the past to lead them to where they are now, the oldest and largest nonprofit organization in the country focused on young cancer patients and families.

When people think of rebranding, many times they are worried about losing the history or their organization. This is a great example of how you can highlight your history, while still moving your organization forward.



What did the rebrand include?

- Updated name
- New logo
- New physical signage
- Updated social media accounts
- New website

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America found that they were no longer effectively reaching one of their most important audiences -- young, prospective mentors. They needed their brand to more strongly convey the urgency of their mission. Their extensive research led them to explore the steps they needed to take to revive the well-known brand.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America partnered with Barkley, a full-service advertising agency, for their rebrand. After five months of data collection, including eighty interviews with Bigs, Littles, match support specialists, board members, donors, and guardians and a branding workshop with forty-eight agency leaders, they decided to make some major changes.

Changes included a new logo and new colors, stepping away from their prominent purple color, along with new messaging to better reach young mentors.

One of the most important aspects of their rebrand was the input from their Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliate network, key stakeholders, and Littles throughout the rebranding process. Their brand transformation was a necessary part of their evolution as an organization to continue meeting the needs stated in their mission and vision.



Big Brothers Big Sisters

BEFORE



AFTER

What did the rebrand include?

- New tagline
- New logo
- New color palette
- New messaging

Neon One

At the start of 2020, we knew that our parent brand, Neon One, needed not only a visual refresh but a full-rebrand (including a close look at each of our products). After speaking with customers, partners, and team members, we found that what we stand for as a company was not clear enough with our current visual brand identity or product names.

These conversations helped us unfold our next steps as an organization, to include all of our products under a unified “house of brands” strategy. This strategy is an important step toward integrating our products and providing a more comprehensive ecosystem for our clients.

Our rebrand project was more than updating our logo, color palette, and overall look and feel. We went to our roots – revisited our why, our company core values, our reasons to believe, and our product strategy – to ensure alignment, continuity, and relevance to who we are today.

Very few things changed fundamentally, but everything has been resolidified, refreshed, and modernized. And, for the first time, we believe everything works together in concert and puts us in a much stronger position to be the best technology partner.



BEFORE



AFTER

What did the rebrand include?

- Updated product names
- New logo
- New color palette
- New messaging
- New vision, mission, and values
- Updated website

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NEON ONE REBRAND](#)



WHATS NEXT

Rebranding your nonprofit is a lot of work, but when done correctly has great pay off. After you've launched your rebrand campaign, be sure to continue to revisit your brand to track the success of your changes and continue to adapt and connect with your donors and stakeholders. Best of luck!



About Neon One

Neon One was founded with the mission of becoming the most comprehensive and authentic end-to-end technology ecosystem for nonprofits. Our purpose is to help social good organizations build sustainable, long term growth to enable them to succeed in their mission.

Explore Neon One's collection of social good technology.

[CHAT WITH A NEON ONE EXPERT](#)