

Three Branding Strategies for Your Church

In 2004 the marketing guru David Aaker, published a book entitled Brand Portfolio Strategy, in which he describes a tool called a “Brand Relationship Spectrum” to help simplify the world of brands when companies steward multiple products or services. **Revisiting his book will help us create a very simple, three-part language for church leaders.** Understanding these basic strategies can have a profound impact on how your church communicates.

But before moving on...Even though, the “b-word” can be lead to resistance from the church crowd, it shouldn’t. **Branding is simply how your church builds relationships with communication tools.**

The genius of tool is represented by two terms that Aaker used to coin the ends of the spectrum. On one end of the spectrum he identified a strategy called the “**Branded House**” to describe a company like **Apple, Harvard or Cisco**, where one unified brand is the sole driver for many products or services. For example, [Apple](#) creates products like iPhone, iPod, iPad, iTunes, etc., but they are driven primarily by the Apple master brand. On the other end of the spectrum is the strategy of the “**House of Brands**” to describe the diversity of stand-alone brands that all belong to one relatively invisible company like **Procter & Gamble or Yum Foods**. For example [Yum](#) brands represent, KFC, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell. But when you eat at these establishments, you don’t encounter the master brand at all.

Most ministries, however, live between the two ends of the spectrum- somewhere between “Branded House” and “House of Brands.” **Therefore we name the third way- in the middle- as “House Blend.”** This in-between language was created by a friend and brilliant dude, [Armando Fullwood](#).

Here is how Armando explained the House Blend:

The “House Blend” – This is an architecture based on the development of sub-brands with the added credibility of the existing parent brand. Google, for example, started as a search engine then continued to establish the primary brand through offerings such as Gmail, Calendar, and Maps. Eventually, they began to acquire other, smaller tech companies such as Blogger, Picasa, and YouTube. These acquisitions maintained their existing brands but gained credibility through the primary brand of Google.

Another example, is [Nabisco](#). They own many retail brands that consumers recognize like Wheat Thins, Ritz, and Triscuits. But you will see a master brand visual from Nabisco on a box of Wheat Thins in the upper left-hand corner (you can probably picture it.) That would be an example of the House Blend strategy.

Now the key to naming these three strategies starts with evaluating your church ministries. **Most churches drift toward a house blend or a house of brands too quickly.** Armando offers some initial insight here:

Smaller organizations that are still focusing on gaining market share need to choose the architecture that will help them grow the fastest. A “House Blend” is most often the wrong choice in these cases. House blends thrive on the credibility of the parent brand. If a smaller company has a product or service that they would like to introduce into their existing structure, it’s usually a good idea to create a sub-category of their existing brand rather than creating a new brand for that product or service. This makes a “Branded House” architecture an excellent choice.

Also, non-profit, experience-based organizations such as churches thrive on branding simplicity. For example, in a church with multiple ministries it can be tempting to create a new brand/logo for each division (House of Brands or House Blend). However, this creates internal competition. Each brand begs for attention from the attendee and struggles to be recognized as “part” of the main brand. Many times, each ministry feels the responsibility to develop their own brand, which can consume an enormous amount of energy. Instead, try focusing on your main brand and simply categorizing ministries under that brand. For example, if Faith Church has a children’s ministry, it wouldn’t have it’s own name...it would simply be the “Faith Church Children’s Ministry”.

In the rest of this series on branding, I will continue to unpack key questions around church communication and illustrate what brand guidelines should look like for different churches. We will address questions like:

- 1) Why do churches tend to fragment their message so much?**
- 2) What about the missional church? How does branding apply as it sounds so “corporate” and old school?**
- 3) How do you know when its time to launch new ministry sub brands in a large church?**
- 4) What does a well developed communication and branding strategy look like?**

Read more from Will [here](#).

Would you like to learn more about branding for your organization? [Connect with an Auxano Navigator and start a conversation with our team.](#)