

Brand Strategy Abstract

A comprehensive brand strategy is essential for any company. This brand strategy will examine the effectiveness of the WWII Soldier's current brand profile and identify areas for improvement. The paper will analyze various brand elements, including brand's name, logo, business card, tagline, and mission statement. It will then examine the current promotional plan as well as future marketing efforts and provide a summary of the WWII Soldier's product line and target market.

BRAND COMPONENTS

Brand Name

The brand name for this company is the WWII Soldier. The original naming concept was that the company carries everything that a WWII Soldier would have used. However, the name was chosen primarily for its built-in search engine optimization properties.

Since high Google rankings were a priority when the company was created, it made sense to use a popular keyword phrase. Today, “Exact Match Domains,” domains that match a Google keyword, are not as beneficial as they once were. Changes in Google’s search algorithm have lessened, over time, the value of exact match domains. Search Engine Journal surmises that an advantage may exist, but it doesn’t justify the high cost of a premium, exact match domain.

It’s worth noting that the WWII Soldier’s domain was not a premium domain when it was purchased. Today, however, when we looked into expanding into the First World War, we discovered that clearly our website has had an effect on similar domains still on the market. The domain www.wwisoldier.com is listed for sale on Godaddy for \$1,049.

According to *The Brand Gap*, the WWII Soldier name fits the following criteria: brevity, appropriateness, easy spelling and pronounceability, and protectability. Thanks to a number of copycat brands in the field, the WWII Soldier’s name is not particularly distinctive.

The brand name’s biggest flaw is extendibility. The company is already struggling with branding challenges relating to expanding into other time periods. However, Sticky Branding points out that while logos, website, and marketing campaigns come and go, brand names gain meaning over time (Miller).

Based on this opinion, the company's recent success in the film industry would be the number one reason not to change the brand name.

Brand Identity



We were using three cartoon soldiers as our logo, but it didn't pass the good logo design requirements because it wasn't scalable or grayscale friendly (JustCreative). It's important for small companies "to become recognizable with consistent logos, colors, fonts and even design concepts" (Niagara). Therefore, it's important to have a solid logo that's flexible enough for all scenarios.

The new logo uses the font "American Captain," which has a similarity to art deco fonts of the time period, while also staying true to the simplicity of military markings.

In designing the new logo, I wanted to pay homage to the many heavily illustrated logos of the time period, while keeping a more modern, upscale look that would be retro but still appeal to Hollywood. The stylized soldier makes the "O" and is a reminder of the personal aspect of the brand because it's one individual face. The face uses a pen and ink brush effect that

was commonly seen in hand-drawn logos of the period. The soldier’s chiseled jaw gives an element of strength.

The color black “implies power and sophistication, but on the other hand, it is associated with villainy and death.” It’s also a subtle throwback to the black and white images of the time.



On the business card, I used a brownish olive color because it is a quintessential military color and doesn’t imply any nationality. Browns are known for their ruggedness, while greens signify confidence, success, intelligence and reliability (Ciotti).

The business card front is dominated by the logo, while the back continues with an art deco feel. The body font is Twentieth Century, a popular 1940s typeset, which supports the time period of the company’s product. The pictured business card is a generic one that gets handed out at shows and included in our packages so it doesn’t include a person’s name.

The business card supports the brand by bringing focus to the logo and name recognition, which is an important focus because it is also the website domain. In addition, when customers are walking through an event with tens of thousands of people, it’s important that they are able to match the business card to the banner.

Brand Tagline

The tagline that I pitched in the last class as part of the company's mission statement was "Experience History." It's a quick, yet emotional way to sum up what the company does without explaining that the WWII Soldier makes historically accurate, useable, reproduction props.

In the brand story commercial, the company used the tagline "Do more than remember... reenact." There was some feedback that might be perceived as negative from the second tagline that a few customers felt that reenacting is not the right way to remember history.

BRAND MESSAGING

Archetype

While there are elements of the hero and the creator, the brand's main archetype is the sage. Specifically, the WWII Soldier falls into the expert or guru category (Sparkol). A lot of the company's success as a business hinges on being an authority and making accurate reproductions. If the company's information is considered suspect, it will negatively affect the company's reputation.

Putnam defines the sage personality as the teacher, expert, and thinker. This is almost an exact match with the company's motivation. A large part of WWII Soldier's product development process involves discovery, research, and then educating the customer on items that they may not even be aware existed.

However, the WWII Soldier does also have elements of the creator archetype, especially when talking about imagination. While the company can't reimagine history, imagination plays a major part in crafting historical displays.

In the case of the hero archetype, the customers, especially reenactors and historians, see themselves as the hero because they are playing the role of the soldier on our logo. In addition, Putnam attributes the hero with mastery through courageous acts. While we do wish to achieve our own mastery, we're also responsible for assisting our customers in their hero's journey.

Mission Statement

WWII Soldier does not currently have a mission statement on its website. The following proposed mission statement would be a good fit for the company. The WWII Soldier's mission is to tell the story of the Greatest Generation through the products they used."

This mission is short, to the point, and gives a goal, but it's not awkward or long. In fact, a New York Times article warns that mission statements "have become so filled with jargon and bromides that many employees now dismiss them as window dressing." Because the WWII Soldier staff is less than a dozen employees, a simple mission statement is all that's needed.

Brand Story

The brand story of the company is really the tale of how the Greatest Generation is disappearing, and with them, the history and the stories behind the Second World War. The story takes on the classic WWII statement "Remember Pearl Harbor" and says these things may have happened seventy years ago, but they're still relevant. In fact, we're not talking about people that died seventy-five years ago; we're talking about men who died five or ten years ago.

The brand story touches two emotional chords amongst the target customer. First, the story creates the sadness that, yes, these men are dying and that history must be preserved, but also there's an element of anger that some people don't know or don't care. For most of our

customers, World War II is very personal because it connects them to a loved one. Their participation honors that person. This brand story strengthens that connection for our consumer.

Promotional Plan

Because the company's website is due for a redesign, a large part of the promotional plan involves using many of the brand elements to create a new website that incorporates many of our brand differentiators. Currently, the WWII Soldier's website lacks the company's color scheme and logo.

In addition to a new web design, the company is rolling out a series of Facebook ads to grow brand awareness through a series of brand story commercials that highlights customer family members who served in WWII. The company is also in the process of establishing business accounts on various social media sites such as Pinterest and Instagram. In general, online branding needs to be a bigger focus for the company.

Brand awareness is a challenge because WWII Soldier is primarily an online business, and yet we do make appearances at historical events. It's difficult to connect the event experience, which naturally has all the elements of being retro and earthy with an online persona, that, by nature feels slick and modern. However, we have a few ideas on how to generate more brand recognition.

We plan to purchase a new cargo trailer in 2017 that will be vinyl wrapped with our logo. We have also considered creating a promotional and marketing items such as pens and custom bags for when we do more tradition tradeshow and events.

One of our primary forms of promotion is sponsorships of historical events. To expand our offline awareness, we could look into becoming a corporate sponsor for museums, theatrical productions, and charities that support our brand message.

MARKET RESEARCH

Target Market

Our target market is history enthusiasts and museums, as well as motion picture and theatrical production companies. Although women are an important part of our business, we consider men to be our target consumer, even when purchasing women's products. We estimate that as much as half of our sales of women's products are purchased by men as gifts for women.

We take pride in the fact that we're an international brand. We have strong consumer bases in Canada, Europe, and Australia, as well as Russia and the Ukraine. However, due to the high cost of international shipping and a lack of a European distribution center, our primary target demographic is the United States. Our market saturation is much stronger on the East Coast and Midwest, which means that, in the short term, we may need to focus on the West Coast and Texas, however, our target market is far more based on interests than location.

Product Description

The WWII Soldier manufactures and resells historical reproductions. The company focuses on products from 1939 to 1946, although the company is expanding into the First World War. The company replicates original product packaging as well as the products themselves.

Like a five and dime or department store, the company carries a wide assortment of toiletries and other personal products that are both period correct and useable. The company's most popular product line are reproduction t-shirts.

There are many historical reproduction companies that cover various time periods. Within a specific time period, such as WWII, there are specific companies that focus on various niches such as uniforms and weapons. WWII Soldier's niche is personal items.

WWII Soldier is the biggest player in the WWII market place for non-uniform props and the only personal items company that carries US, British, and German items. Our direct competitors are Kriegsende Militaria, WWII Supply Room, and Service of Supply.

WWII Supply room manufactures prop packaging made of paper wrapped around wooden blocks and focuses on rations, cigarettes, and toiletries.

Kriegsende Militaria specializes in WWII German militaria. They also manufacture some reproductions, but they carry more originals than reproductions.

Service of Supply carries a variety of American original and reproduction field gear and personal items. It's difficult to identify a unifying theme between their products, which seem to be adhoc based on ease of reproduction or the owner's need for his own product. Because many of the owners are themselves reenactors, the product development cycle is often based on the current needs of the owner's reenactment group.

Competitive Differentiators

The WWII Soldier has the largest assortment of personal items and is the only company that currently manufactures reproduction WWII era t-shirts. One of the company's differentiators

is that they tend to carry useable products, unlike other companies that sell predominately empty boxes.

WWII Soldier is almost as well known for our traveling reproduction Army Post Exchange (PX) as it is for its reproduction products. The company literally sets up a WWII tent and operates a fully-functioning PX store at historical events around the country. In addition to allowing customers to save shipping on orders, they are also emerged in an authentic shopping experience. It's one thing to see a single product in a photo; it's something entirely different to see wooden slat shelving full of 1940's merchandise and be able to smell and feel it.

Customers choose our brand over our competitors because we have unique items that, in many cases, are unavailable for purchase anywhere else. We are able to use the side-by-side test with many of our products, where we put an original next to our reproduction. Our competitors often don't own the original and don't have the research to do comparisons.

Most importantly, though, customers choose us because we have functional products that aren't Styrofoam or blocks of wood. In addition, we don't just offer just one of something. Some companies carry one type of cigarette package from the 1940s. We carry a replica carton from every major cigarette manufacturer and have, in some cases, multiple variations for each year of the war.

Our customers rave about the experience of shopping at the WWII Soldier's PX. However, bringing that experience to the web has been a struggle. A big part of creating the PX experience online is simply educating and publishing original photos and documentation. Original ads help to establish authenticity and relevance while keeping in line with the brand's archetype. Better image choices and professional photography will also help dominate the niche.