

“Branding” Terminology for Non-Profits and Social Justice Organizations

Stakeholders - People who are directly invested because the process and outcomes of your work impact their own work and/or their own personal lives. This could include staff, members, leaders, funders, allies, elected officials, volunteers, constituency members etc.

Constituency - People and communities involved in or served by your organization.

Audiences - Groups of people who may or may not be directly impacted, invested or involved in your work, but who you want to communicate with in order to advance your goals. This includes both audiences you connect with through “one-way” communications as well as those you engage through networked social communications.

Identity - Your organization’s mission-driven soul. The internal expression of your values, your mission, your culture and impacts, who you relate closest to and what sets you apart as you do your work in the world. How strong your identity is depends on how closely aligned your most important internal stakeholders are around these critical components of you you are.

Identity Strategy - An approach to developing a strong, aligned identity that includes assessment of how your internal stakeholders currently understand who your organization is to them, and a plan to strengthen alignment around your identity. The plan can include regular discussions among your internal stakeholders over an undefined period of time, or could consist of a defined time (eg. 3 months, 6 months) with intensive discussion to clarify the aforementioned areas.

Brand - Your organizational persona. The external expression of your identity in relation to your stakeholders, constituency members and audiences, together with what these groups think of your organization (regardless of what you want them to think - see reputation below). This expression should clearly demonstrate what you have to offer, and why this matters.

Brand Strategy - Similar to identity strategy, brand strategy is simply a process and plan for assessing, strengthening and aligning the external expression of your identity and your reputation with key groups.

Brand Promise - Of the dozens of types of branding concepts in the marketing world, brand promise is probably the most applicable to non-profits and social just organizations. Brand promise is the almost gut-level potential that your organization projects and that your stakeholders believe in. This potential or promise is an intangible result of your tangible impacts and the culture of how you interact with your stakeholders.

Reputation - What people think of you. Based on perception, experience, resonance, track record, organizational culture, and the identity you project as you do your work in the world.

Trueline - An authentic articulation of what sets your organization apart, agreed upon by internal stakeholders.

Tagline - The external expression of your trueline, packaged in a catchy phrase with language that resonates with your primary audiences and consitutencies.