

## Establishing Your Cultural Brand

Knowing your unique niche and what makes you both special and different from your competition is the start of building a successful brand, as discussed in *Webinar News #1: Creating a Competitive Position for Your District*. Understanding how to take this information and translate it into imagery, words and action is how you get to a successful brand. In this webinar news, we focus on helping creative districts understand how to define and manage their cultural brand and take ownership of that brand through integration into the physical environment, programming and communications.

Establishing your cultural brand means:

- **Understanding the important components of a brand and understanding brand buy-in**

Having a strong brand is about more than just a great logo, it's about developing a brand that reflects your district and creates name recognition with your audience. A successful brand creates a feeling and generates a positive response when people hear it or see it.

- **Brand management**

Building a successful brand takes time and means being vigilant about how the brand is used and portrayed. You must be the brand police and ensure that how your brand is used and is outwardly represented is consistent.

- **Weaving that brand through in all that you do**

The most effective way to quickly build a brand is to make sure everything you do reflects it. Your programming, projects and activities should all represent the brand and build on the key differentiators that set you apart.

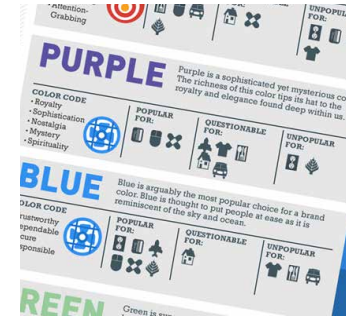
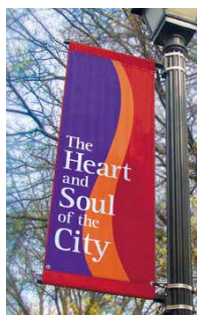
- **Establishing a firm foundation for telling your authentic cultural story**

The brand should be a platform from which you build and tell your story. It is the starting point for a bigger conversation about your district. Thus, your brand should create interest and give hints about the bigger story to be told.



**“Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room!”**

– Tim Leberecht, CMO, frog



## Some Tips and Tools to Get You Started

So how do you effectively establish and build your cultural brand for your creative district? Here are a few tips and tools you can utilize.

### Make an emotional appeal with your audience

Tell a story with your brand that is personal and intriguing, and that will resonate with people on some emotional level. Your brand should be the beginning of an impactful narrative you tell about your district.

### Reflect the values of your audience

You can't be everything to everybody, so identify your target audience(s) and speak to them directly. Understand what motivates them and how they spend their time and money, then design communications and programs that are attractive to them.

### Make the brand flexible

Good brands embrace the fact that people are constantly changing - in how they live, in how they work and in how they buy - and the trends are constantly evolving. Don't create a brand so fixed in today's realities that it can't grow with you. Remember to reflect your key assets and create a brand that's aspirational and allows you to evolve and grow.

### Create a unique and memorable brand experience

Consider how consumers experience your brand in every way. For creative districts, for example, this means it's not just about exposing people to your unique creative and cultural offer, it's about creating an entire environment that reflects your brand and is where people want to be and then providing an offer that keeps them there.

### Build a sense of community

The brands that succeed aren't just selling a product, they are selling a community. They offer participation in new cultural movements and give people entry into a club of like-minded individuals. They help you harness your district as an interactive gathering space for people with similar lifestyles and consumption habits.

### Reflect the best of the customers you are trying to attract

The best brand campaigns use messaging that reflects the customers they are trying to attract - the language, imagery and ideas are playful, fun and evocative, not dry, formal and terse.

Getting to your cultural brand is both ART and SCIENCE. Knowing both quantitative and qualitative information about your district is an important starting point. From there, think creatively and outside of the box about how you tell that story. Don't get stuck in a formula and don't allow the community branding process to water down the final product. Be bold and inventive. And most importantly, ensure your district delivers. No brand has staying power without a strong product behind it.

### So Now You've Got Your Brand...

Consider how you integrate that brand into everything you do:

**Marketing** Print, Online, Social Media

**Communications** Newsletters, Media Releases, Public Relations

**Programming** Events, Activities, Promotions

**Economic Development** Recruitment and Retention, Development

**Physical Environment** Signage, Public Realm Design, Building Facades

### A Couple Q & A's

#### Is there a difference between a brand and a logo?

The logo is the iconography/typography that represents the brand. It is the visual representation of the brand. A logo is purely a visual tool used to build recognizability of your brand's presence within a medium, outlet, touchpoint, etc.

#### How can I know if my brand is working or not?

Asking that question is the first step. Internally, make sure your team/staff are consistently demonstrating how the work they are doing is building the brand. Externally, test awareness utilizing surveys and small focus groups, tools such as Google Analytics for your website and social media insights to see how people are talking about you.

