



**VISUAL
IDENTITY
MANAGEMENT**

LOOK RIGHT →

Visual Identity Management

Best Practice



Leading brand owners will build on a solid foundation to become more proactive.

Training and engagement will deliver greater consistency.

Audit and control measures will become more widespread and accepted by the business unit as protecting value.

Businesses understand that visual performance does affect brand value and it will become a key indicator in the future.

Adam Newall, Managing Director, VI360

Managing visual identity

As the number of communication channels increases and the mix of channels mutates in order to target ever more knowledgeable yet fragmented audiences, the visual identity of a company remains as the only consistent reference point. The primary identity element (logo or wordmark) may evolve over time, or may be completely replaced with something new, but the enormous number of applications to different brand carriers, over a potentially vast number of businesses around the world, means that equity is soon transferred and recognition stays high.

The million dollar investments made every year into the delivery and maintenance of primary brand carriers like signage, vehicle fleets, uniforms and printed material often go unnoticed. Sometimes funded from the centre, but usually funded from operational budgets of the business units, these investments are often delivered via a disparate network of people from brand and communications departments, estates management, sales, marketing, procurement, distribution and corporate affairs.

It is in this environment that those responsible for managing the visual identity of large corporations must deliver results.

In a detailed study into visual identity management best practice **VI360**, the visual identity management specialists, has used interviews with leading brand owners to identify current best practice, risks to success and the direction for the future.



A strong visual identity is like a table stake for entry into the big game. You can't expect to play without it.

Global Brand Consultant. Deloitte

VI360 conducted this study during the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008. It is based on contributions from a select number of leading brand owners across a wide range of business sectors and geographical bases.

The companies represented in the 2008 study are:

Name	Sector	Base
Andrea Palama	Watches	Hong Kong
Britvic	Beverages	Chelmsford, UK
Deloitte	Consulting	London, UK
Fortis	Financial	Brussels, Belgium
HSBC	Financial	London, UK
Land Rover	Automotive	Banbury, UK
Petrobras	Energy / oil	Sao Paulo, Brazil
Royal Bank of Canada	Financial	Toronto, Canada
Skeljungur	Energy / oil	Reykjavik, Iceland
StatoilHydro	Energy / oil	Stavanger, Norway
Tata Group	Conglomerate	Mumbai, India
Temsa	Automotive	Adana, Turkey
Vodafone	Telecoms	Dublin, Ireland



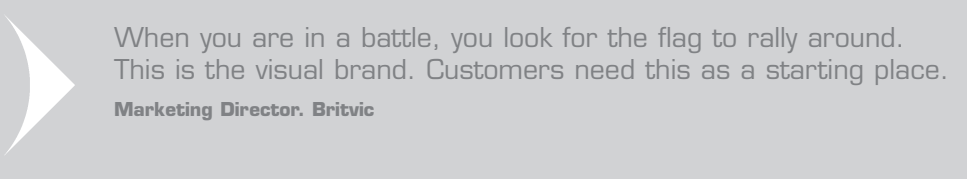
Successful VI management is partly corporate culture and partly pragmatism. It's up to me to sell our vision. Then each person in our organisation becomes responsible for brand and VI.

Manager brand standards and compliance. Royal Bank of Canada

Best practice in visual identity management

Best practice is not absolute and varies from business to business. It is possible to extract a list of attributes that will form the basis of a management approach for most companies. The blend of these and other attributes is dictated by the brand owner and how they choose to use the resources they have.

- ◆ A brand owner or brand management team with a strong personality, conviction and diplomatic skills; accessible, authoritative, respected and committed to proactive leadership and engagement
- ◆ A clearly defined and widely accepted set of expectations for the delivery and maintained quality of the visual aspects of the brand throughout the company
- ◆ Clear and simple guidelines and instructions covering all aspects of the visual identity - for internal brand professionals and external agencies and suppliers
- ◆ An effective and uncomplicated online resource which allows users to access the guidelines easily, to use templates and order forms to produce or acquire branded materials and to find contact details for the brand team
- ◆ A flexible training programme which provides generic or tailored instruction on how the visual identity should be managed – set in the context of holistic brand management
- ◆ A clearly defined approach to two-way communications regarding the visual identity enabling effective dissemination of information, development and innovation from the centre and queries or requests for advice from the business units
- ◆ Regular audit and compliance procedures that provide quantitative and qualitative feedback on the visual appearance of the brand and are considered by the business units to be constructive and fair
- ◆ A genuine top management figurehead for the brand (CEO or founder) that puts strong brand management (including visual identity) at the heart of company culture.




When you are in a battle, you look for the flag to rally around.
This is the visual brand. Customers need this as a starting place.

Marketing Director. Britvic

Risks to effective visual identity management

Just as best practice is not the same for all companies, factors like these can undermine management effort and compromise the return on substantial investments. Recognising and taking on problems needs careful planning. Many symptoms of poor performance are linked and require holistic consideration.

- ◆ Brand is not recognised as a valuable asset by the business
- ◆ Invisible or unresponsive brand management team
- ◆ Brand team over promising and so disappointing its stakeholders
- ◆ Disjointed or one directional communication from the centre to the business units
- ◆ Complicated guidelines that are difficult for the business to follow or comply with
- ◆ Flexibility that is perceived as weakness or allows uncontrolled interpretation
- ◆ Publishing guidelines without proactively managing delivery and engagement
- ◆ Incorrect use of the visual identity by untrained or unauthorised personnel
- ◆ Different attitudes to compliance between business units or countries
- ◆ Poor examples of visual identity application left unchecked and unrectified
- ◆ Culture of non-compliance and low investment priority regarding brand
- ◆ Lack of understanding within the company or amongst senior managers about how consistent application of the visual identity can enhance perception of the business and how poor consistency can destroy value



When making comparisons with our peer group, there are elements of best practice that we could take from all of them but we don't want to *be* like any of them.

Communications Manager for Primary Brand. Land Rover

The position of visual identity at the heart of commercial activities

Global demand for consistency of supply and service is constantly rising and as a consequence, so is the level of acceptance and expectation that the companies providing these products and services will present a consistent visual identity. It is the most fundamental demonstration of a corporate promise and, as many brand owners have noted, gives customers a sense of reliability, trust and an ability to connect with the brand time and time again.

Local interpretations of the brand are often necessary to allow companies to accommodate national or cultural differences, but the core elements of the visual identity remain the same to provide customers an invaluable reference point.

There is a noticeable shift in the perceived importance of the visual identity management as a valuable component of brand management. It is the recognition within the business and the workforce that a consistent visual identity can lead to a comparative commercial advantage.

As international businesses expand rapidly into new territories and new business sectors, there is a significant advantage of starting with a high level of visual recognition. Equally, the cost of managing and promoting multiple brands is becoming harder to justify.

All brand owners are convinced that visual identity performance affected brand value. In common with those interviewed in 2005, they still find it difficult to explain or define exactly how this link can be accurately quantified.



The link between visual impression and customer opinion has something to do with attraction. It's how we meet people - at Service Stations or in other contexts.

Visual identity really means something. Ideally, your VI signals what you stand for.

Head of Brand Governance and Brand Management. StatoilHydro

Different businesses, different management approaches

Each business has a different set of challenges to deal with. Corporate brands tend to change identity infrequently. However, rapid expansion of the business, consolidation and acquisition and changes in the customer facing business model mean that constant revisions and innovations are required.

Consumer brands on the other hand are faster moving with high numbers of point of sale materials that need strict management control.

Where corporate and consumer brands use the same name, it is particularly challenging to manage the different perceptions of corporate investors and product buying general public.

Company culture, perhaps relating to entrepreneurial pedigree, private ownership or country of origin also has a great influence on the management approach.



We have 3 central elements

1. Communications and training
2. Code of ethics
3. A good problem / solution format

We respond to any questions or queries within 24hrs. This means that there is no sense of frustration amongst the businesses that the centre won't respond to their needs.

Vice President, Corporate Affairs. Tata Services Limited

Perception of peer group

To make a connection between peers, brand owners were asked to select three companies that they felt managed their visual identities well. A broad range of brands were mentioned and it is interesting but perhaps not surprising that brand owners consistently chose a high number of brands in their own sector. The most commonly admired brands were Apple, Coca-Cola, GE, HSBC, Ikea and Virgin.



Coca-Cola



HSBC



Virgin

The attributes that the brand owners picked out as being most admirable were:

- ◆ International consistency
- ◆ Addition of value over a long period of time
- ◆ Delivery of the visual identity is a reflection of the brand personality

The most important thing is that people are attracted to you and this will happen if you are mechanically and metaphysically consistent.

It's about being beautiful and charming!


Director Brand Strategy and Manifestation. Vodafone

Visual identity management moving forward

The basic visual identity management tools and procedures are now well established for the majority of leading brand owners. Expert advice, guidelines, templates and approved suppliers are available to help business units to deliver the corporate visual identity.

The next stage in the development appears to be underway in the shape of proactive engagement, formally recognised training programmes for a growing number of personnel and continuous innovation using on-line management resources. This is enabling brand owners to raise the bar in terms of application quality and maintenance. As a consequence, compliance programmes (visual identity audits) that were considered a pipe dream only a few years ago are now becoming an accepted part of everyday business.

Even those companies that have been leading the way, and defining best practice, have experienced resistance and scepticism about the contribution that the visual identity can make in a business sense. But this attitude is starting to change. New technology, two-way communication, better training and improved compliance procedures are all essential but the most important factor, which is allowing all these tools to bring rewards in the future, is the widespread acceptance that visual consistency is a powerful and valuable commercial asset.



Brand management (including visual identity) must be consistent and linked to marketing strategy and communications strategy. Moving all these things together will bring better commercial results and impact positively on the brand.

Manager of Corporate Image and Product Brands. Petrobras

About this study

Visual Identity Management best practice 2008 is qualitative study into the challenges faced by visual identity managers of leading brands and how they meet these challenges today and in future.

Participants were invited to steer the conversation within the context of the subject area, to elicit the anecdotal stories and informed opinions that have proved to be so insightful. Without the contribution of these people, this study would not have been possible.

A highlight of this study has been the passion and commitment shown by the brand owners who made time to contribute. Although they represent companies that are defining best practice, they often highlighted areas for improvement within their own business. In essence, the best want to do it even better.



I am a perfectionist. I regard non-compliance as my fault. It is a continuous battle; however, we now have sufficient people of quality and ability within the business.

Manager Group Brand Identity. HSBC

About the author



Adam Newall is a highly experienced visual identity management consultant having spent many years working with the likes of 3M, Caterpillar, Corus, Nordea, Shell and TNT.

Adam founded **VI360** in 2003, providing specialised visual identity management services to leading international brand owners. He was previously a director of the London office at NykampNyboer and Publicity Services team leader at Shell International.

VI360 specialises in holistic visual identity management and strategy. We focus on all areas of the visual branding and identity management process. From conception and strategic planning, through launch and transition to care and evaluation, we believe a strong visual identity is the foundation stone upon which to build successful and valuable brands.

VI360 is a sister company of Brand Finance plc which has offices in 15 countries.

Strong visual identity management is vital for protecting brand value

AAA brands start with simple trademarks and memorable visual identity systems. Functional and emotional associations are then built into the trade marks and visual identities to create consumer preference, loyalty and value.

But once brands have grown and thrived managers often forget the importance of the humble visual identity, as though advertising alone drives brand value. It should never be forgotten that the foundation for every great brand is its visual identity, and it needs constant investment to stay fresh and powerful.

Coca-Cola, the most valuable brand in the world, has the roundel, the red trade dress, the curved bottle, the typographical style and signage in every corner of the world. It constantly invests and reinvests in its VI management. If its visual identity were to be damaged consumer perceptions would rapidly deteriorate.

Yet the importance of visual identity management is sometimes forgotten or underestimated. The **VI360** study is therefore a timely reminder of the huge importance and value attached to strong visual identity management. Every AAA brand needs a strong VI policy and the **VI360** research indicates just how this vital process should be addressed.

David Haigh CEO of Brand Finance plc and Chairman of **VI360** Limited



The visual identity is part of the experience chain. It helps to build brand awareness and trust.

Brand Manager. Fortis



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