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Assignment 8: Revised Script for CorpCommPodcast Series:

Contemporary History

Welcome to the Corporate Communication Podcast series on Contemporary History. My name is Debra Glassco and I am a graduate student in the Master of Science Program in Professional and Technical Communication at New Jersey Institute of Technology. The title of this podcast is AT&T's Re-branding of Cingular Wireless. We'll discuss how the telecommunications giant, AT&T, planned it's re-branding of Cingular Wireless. We'll look at some considerations corporations should take into account when attempting to successfully devise a communication strategy during a re-branding effort.

Main Body

In December 2006, AT&T began a massive re-branding of Cingular Wireless in an effort to not only merge Cingular into the AT&T family but to also retain Cingular's youthful customer base.

AT&T purchased Bell South Corporation (the parent of Cingular Wireless) for \$86 Billion. At the time, Cingular Wireless was the number one mobile telephone carrier in the United States. AT&T decided to rid itself of the Cingular brand name, one associated with youth and hipness, for the more traditional AT&T brand. AT&T is an imprint that is more-than-a-century old and has been traditionally associated with various communication services.

Although some media analysts have questioned the decision, AT&T company will be better off shedding the Cingular name in favor of AT&T brand and is also dropping BellSouth's name in the Southern deal that placed Cingular under AT&T's umbrella. According to .



will then be able to promote all its various services---landlines, high-speed Internet, cell phones and, increasingly, television --- under one name.

The dilemma may lie in how AT&T can avoid customer confusion over its name and forge separate identities for its various services. At stake, as well, is whether the corporation can successfully replace the Cingular brand, associated with youth and vitality, with the AT&T brand, associated with traditionalism and conservatism. The intricate nature of the AT&T/Cingular/SBC brand merger could leave AT&T's constituents confused as to the nature of what the new AT&T brand is all about. Here, Ralph de la Vega, then Cingular's Chief Operating Officer, announces the purchase of AT&T Wireless by Cingular Wireless in September 2004.

--Media insert 2004 Ralph de la Vega at Cingular/AT&T News Conference--

The ultimate goal, of course, is customer retention and loyalty as well as the retention of strong brand identity.

Branding is an intricate and time-consuming ordeal rife with challenges and unforeseen hazards. Corporate communicators need an effective game plan in order that the process go forward in a logical and well-thought out procession to success. A key issue illustrated by the AT&T/Cingular case is the ability of a corporation to effectively retain customer loyalty through manipulation of brand identity. The case exemplifies how the dual nature of identity and image creates a dilemma for corporate decision makers.

AT&T is attempting to re-brand itself and, in the process, capture the positive attributes of both the Cingular and AT&T brands while avoiding the negative attributes, if any, associated with each. In his book, Corporate Communication, Paul
successful framework for accomplishing just this manner of task.
Action framework utilizes a stepwise method of managing the ide



Here is the six-step process identified by Argenti: To Conduct an Identity Audit; Set Identity Objectives; Develop Designs and Names; Develop Prototypes; Launch and Communicate; and, finally, Implement the Program.

In Conducting an Identity Audit, Argenti maintains that an organization needs to accept the current reality. Some questions to be asked: How does the general public currently view the organization? What do its various symbols represent to different constituencies? Does its identity accurately reflect what is happening, or is it simply a leftover from the past? Conducting an identity audit such as suggested by Argenti would allow AT&T to devise a communication program that would give managers an accurate portrait of both the positive and not so positive attributes of the merging brands. For example, AT&T, often thought of as a stable, competent, and reliable company could also be viewed as a holdover from the past, one steeped in tradition, and slow to change. Such a view may be particularly held by Cingular's substantial youth population who have been barraged with advertisements over the years regarding Cingular as a company that is fun, hip, and dynamic.

AT&T is running this ad appealing to Cingular's youthful population. The ad, appearing on television in late 2006, features the rock group, Oasis, and youthful actors:

--Media Insert: 2006 AT&T Eclipse Ad--

Accurately determining how its customers and potential customers view each brand right now is key to formulating a strategy for successful selling of the new brand. An important pitfall to avoid would be a scenario where the image that the corporation's managers have of what the company could be is vastly different from the reality of what the corporation currently is. Argenti maintains that often the sym impressions that result are not how the organization sees itself in challenge lying before a company with a long history such as AT, research that tells them how constituents' perceptions regarding tl from their own. A scenario may well present itself where the ima itself--extensive name recognition, long heritage and reliability--



