

Profiting from a rebrand

Educate your team on the upsides and they'll, in turn, educate your customers

BY BAILA LAZARUS

When Peter Haggarty was hired three years ago to rebrand the Elephant and Castle chain, he faced some steep hurdles. The owner, **Elephant and Castle Group**, was struggling after closing several non-performing restaurants, including Elephant and Castle, Alamo Grill and Rainforest Café restaurants. Fiscal 2004 had ended with a net loss of almost \$900,000.

Haggarty, president of **ROMD Marketing and Design**, had gone to California to launch E&C's foray into San Francisco. The owners felt a new ad campaign would help turn around fortunes, and Haggarty agreed. But he felt there'd be additional payoffs by re-examining the brand in detail.

"In a rebranding exercise, you have to have that buy-in from staff to get ... to the next level, where the objective is greater sales," said Haggarty. "The research that we did resulted in a new corporate identity, new signage, new advertising bus-shelter campaigns, educational materials and presentations to the leadership in the organization, the franchisees and the general managers."

Haggarty took the same products with the same people and repackaged it with a different menu and a different story. "We literally fattened up the elephant, we turned him from left to right, his trunk is now in the air and he's happier. The CEO said, 'As soon as you made him fat and happy and looking upwards, so went sales,' by 10 points, and they

never looked back."

The restaurant's turnaround led to it being sold in 2007 to **Repechage Investments Ltd.** of Newfoundland for \$30 million.

Ken Lapp, president of **Standard Marketing**, also cautions not to jump into a rebranding campaign without making sure that survey information is up to date.

"A good-sized company should be doing research, such as focus groups, to find out what the different segments of the general public and the different target markets for their products think about their product," said Lapp. "You have to use every means at your disposal to communicate with your many publics – your staff, your investors, your customers, your suppliers."

Another key strategy to make the most out of a rebranding campaign is to take advantage of online social media and spread a story about your brand.

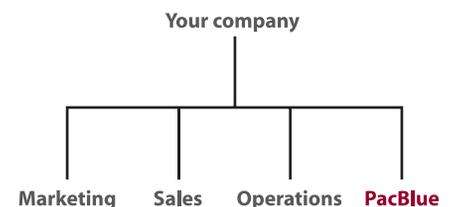
Despite the success enjoyed by some companies after a rebranding, many actually experience a drop in revenue. A common occurrence, said Lapp, is a drop-off in sales, as people get confused because of the new logos, or just don't like them. In order to minimize that impact, if the circumstance warrants it, Lapp suggests keeping the old logo or name beside the new one.

That's one of the reasons why, after the *Jewish Western Bulletin* rebranded in 2005 to become the *Jewish Independent*, it kept the former title, in smaller font, alongside the new one. ■

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