

Brand Changes And GM Policy Revisions - Do They Hold Any Common Lessons?

Choices around why, when and how to make changes to their brands will look very different for every company, whether the exercise involves a relatively minor refresh or a substantial overhaul. In some instances, adaptations may be prompted by internal business manoeuvres – a merger or acquisition, for example, or establishing operations in a new global location. Other brand alterations may be driven by mostly external factors, like major shifts in market conditions, significant transformations in buyer demands, lifestyles or behaviours; or fundamental evolutions in design and style trends.

Still other brand reworks are prompted by a convergence of several of these things happening at the same time. Regardless of how different the mix of incentives may be, however, there are some consistent, universal ingredients at play, too. All successful change endeavours call for:

- Careful research and data points to inform optimal planning and decision making
- Cross-functional stakeholder buy-in
- Thoughtful communication to internal and external audiences.

In the second half of 2023, we announced a brand refresh that was several months in the making. Rooted in the fundamental concept of “Your People. Our Passion,” our brand refresh involved changes to our logo, brand elements and messaging. The primary goal was to bring greater clarity to the passion and care with which our people listen and deliver tailored solutions in a rapidly changing world of work and movement.

You can learn more about the refreshed brand details by scanning the code.

Overall, the brand refresh objectives were to:



- Bring greater emphasis to what the global mobility industry is all about—people, including:
 - Corporate relocation clients and their people and family members embarking on new assignments
 - Network partners and internal associates, including highlighting their unique levels of expertise
 - Individuals and families looking for help when embarking on their own, self-initiated moves
- Better communicate a focus on building strong, authentic connections and lasting partnerships through a caring, friendly and supportive culture
- Reinforce a reputation as a strong mobility partner with global, scalable capabilities, while highlighting the benefits of a personal approach.

While many of these elements were already deeply ingrained in our operational model and long-standing mission to deliver happy, productive people, the leadership team also acknowledged that there was room to bring greater clarity too, and some refreshed messages around, not just what services we offer around the globe, but who delivers them and how we do it – with deep conviction. The refresh helped us tell a better story about our tenured team members and the passion and care with which they respond to the needs of our clients and their people.

But this story is not solely about us. Throughout the process, we observed many parallels between the work we were doing and what’s involved in knowing why, when and how to update or rewrite a global mobility policy, too. Here we explore some of those key learnings in greater detail in the hopes they bring value to you and your work.

1. RESEARCH AND PLANNING: Know Thyself, Know Thy Audience

Extensive investments of time and research go into a brand change. Before new options can even begin to be developed, it’s essential to identify, understand and gain collective agreement on:

- The fundamental essence of the company and its culture. In other words, those “non-negotiables” that must be retained. For us,

that was to build on our reputation for being a caring and collaborative partner who puts people first

- What’s working well, and what could be improved
- What current customers know and appreciate most about the company and its reputation today
- What the competitive landscape looks like and what makes the company stand out from the crowd, including any internal experience, talent and tenure differentiators
- What the most important trends are that are likely to significantly shape the industry over the next several years, and where customers are going to need the most support or innovative approaches to solving their problems
- Whether there are any missed opportunities to raise more awareness or better communicate the company’s solutions, benefits and advantages to current and new customers.

Policy Parallels

Current employees and potential recruits are discerning consumers, too. The same key elements above are true when embarking on mobility policy revisions – you need to know how your current offerings reinforce – or detract from – your core culture and company values, as well as what support employees value most, or where there may be room for improvement. What are your industry competitors offering to attract and retain the best talent, and in what ways do you stand out? What housing, immigration, geopolitical or regional trends are most likely to impact your core talent population and business goals? Do you have employee “champions” who are passionate about informing and supporting families on the move? Is your company doing enough to promote relocation opportunities and the understanding of the benefits across the entire organisation? Or are there missed chances to raise awareness that would help you tap into and move talent from within, while also recruiting effectively via external sources?

2. GAINING STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

At the beginning stages of our brand refresh, we collected insights from current

groups representing various job tiers and functions across all global locations; mobility industry intelligence and general marketing research. Spearheaded by the marketing, communications and creative services team, we held multiple sessions with key stakeholder groups for feedback on core value propositions, messaging and iconography.

That feedback was consolidated and prioritised, and various options were tested and ranked by preference before final decisions were made and shared. The result was a truly collaborative effort, respecting and validating the opinions, voices and inputs from many different people.

Policy Parallels

Mobility policy approaches require the contributions and approvals from a diverse group of stakeholders who wear many hats, juggle competing priorities and view the process through highly unique lenses: Business unit leaders focused on reaching their division goals, procurement teams looking at overall costs, HR teams eyeing DEI and talent development goals. Much like a successful brand revision, any changes to mobility policy – large or small – must have cross-functional understanding, inputs and support to be successful.

3. THOUGHTFUL COMMUNICATION

The best rebrand efforts are effectively communicated to and clearly understood by every segment of the audiences touched by them: internal employees, current and future customers, service or network partners and other external parties. It's essential to keep in mind the various ways in which each audience segment prefers to absorb information: company intranet or news bulletins/leadership town halls, emails, personal phone calls, client portals, social media - the list is long, but it all goes back to the "knowing" as identified in step one. When changes are based on careful research, data and empathy, reflect contributions from several unique perspectives that are clear and agreed upon, and mirror the values and culture of the organisation, the rest should easily fall into place.

Best practices indicate that any company changes are shared internally first, giving team members access to training tools and resources that help them fully understand and effectively communicate all the "why, what, how and when" details. We conducted several



time-zone sensitive online overview and training sessions, shared internal emails and created a companywide intranet portal with rebrand resources,

including FAQs, a press release and links to a video announcing the brand refresh.

Policy Parallels

If, after conducting your research, gathering data and securing key stakeholder buy-in, you are ready to embark on your own policy "refresh or rebrand," the next most important step is to communicate, communicate, communicate. Give your executive team, business unit leaders, managers and HR partners talking points and FAQs so they are ready to field questions. Offer to conduct training sessions on what's different, and why. Educate your service partners on what's new, and whether there are any parameters around who the changes apply to. Share highlights of the changes across your employee communication channels, keeping in mind that everyone absorbs information differently, so it may take infographics, slide shows or videos to fully take hold.

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CONCLUSION

Our brand's refresh exercise can be summed up in a single word: listening.

We listened to what our customers valued most, what they wanted more of, and where we and our fellow industry partners were already going – and how we could improve. We listened to what their employees and

families on the move wanted and needed. We listened to what our own team members were truly passionate about and what we could be doing better to deliver even more flexibility and share the message about the long tenure, experience and positivity they bring to everything they do.

"A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another". - Seth Godin, marketing and leadership expert, best-selling author and speaker.

At the end of the day, brand changes and policy revisions alike are not judged by what is written about them, but by how well they are embraced, the results they generate and how they make people feel and act. This Seth Godin quote resonates because it highlights memories, stories and relationships. The human elements that connect us. Like introducing a new or revised policy, the launch of the refresh was just the beginning. We'll continue to measure feedback, share updates and showcase examples of our brand, our people and what we stand for. For Sterling Lexicon, this is only the first chapter in our new brand story, and we look forward to continuing to write the rest of it together.



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Kristin is director, thought leadership and communications for Sterling Lexicon. She brings nearly 30 years of experience in global workforce mobility, PR, marketing and communications to her role. Before joining the company in 2020, she worked for many years at Worldwide ERC, the workforce mobility association, in collaboration with cross-departmental teams and industry representatives to develop event programming, research and advocacy content and serve as editor in chief of Mobility magazine. Contact Kristin at kristin.white@sterlinglexicon.com.