

Case Study: Brand identity and architecture research

1. Identifying the issue

A Fortune 500 company with a diverse set of businesses needed to define a new brand identity and architecture. The new brand and architecture needed to support the legacy business (which still provided the bulk of profit) and recent high-tech acquisitions (which represented future growth opportunities). Isurus worked with a team that included the client's marketing and market research groups, a branding agency, and a marcom agency.

Isurus worked with the team to focus a large and disparate list of objectives into a set of manageable research goals. The process consisted of a series of conference calls and face-to-face meetings with the team. The process identified two main goals:

- Identify a value proposition that would be both differentiating and credible. Given the transitional nature of the business, the client needed a value proposition that would work for both its legacy business customers and in new growth markets. The agency team had developed a list of value propositions based on input from customers, prospects, and senior management.
- Guide the brand name migration strategy for acquired businesses. The client needed to assess the brand equity associated with the acquired companies and the parent company in order to decide how quickly to migrate the acquired companies to a parent "master brand".

2. Research approach

Based on the client's needs, aggressive timeline and available budgets, Isurus recommended quantitative research to prioritize the value propositions and qualitative research to guide the brand name migration strategy.

The quantitative research used a combination of online surveys (for SMB audiences) and telephone surveys (for enterprise and niche segments). The analysis of the survey data used multivariate statistics to identify value propositions that drove brand preference.

The qualitative research used a combination of in-person focus groups (for SMBs), virtual focus groups (for enterprises) and IDIs (for key accounts and niche segments). The qualitative research included projective techniques to explore the brand equity associated with the acquired brands and the parent brand.

The research covered North America and several EU markets.

3. Analysis and reporting

Starting from a set of eight value propositions, Isurus' analyses identified two value propositions that would be differentiating. One was a safe choice that reflected the current brand and was largely credible, and one that was more exciting and aspirational but also less credible. The research summarized the pros and cons of each option by audience (legacy business vs. new business, enterprise vs. SMB) and the implications of each value proposition for each audience.

The qualitative research yielded a clear migration path for the acquired brands. Several brands could be migrated to the parent brand quickly: the acquired business had relatively little brand equity and its customers were unconcerned about the acquisition. One acquisition required a more gradual transition to the parent brand in order to educate customers and prospects about the synergies between the parent brand (known for its legacy business) and the acquired company's sophisticated technology product.

4. Actions taken

The client opted to use the aspirational value proposition based on its relevance to the business units that were expected to contribute heavily to future growth. This decision was made with the knowledge that the company would need to invest heavily in the brand in order to make it credible to all audiences.

Most of the acquired businesses were quickly migrated to the parent brand. The brand migration for one acquisition proceeded more slowly in order to give the company time to demonstrate synergies between the two companies to both customers and prospects.