



helping non-profits thrive

A strong charity brand comes from strong beliefs and values

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Introduction

Charities have amongst the strongest brands of any organisation, commercial, public or voluntary. The image projected by groups such as the RSPCA or Greenpeace is both powerful and universally known. Yet the need for charities to have a brand is still disputed by many charity practitioners. This article takes for granted the need for charities to have a strong and distinct brand in the form of an organisational personality. It sets out a methodology for creating a strong brand for voluntary sector organisations. Above all, it argues that a brand should be rooted in, and derived from the nonprofit organisation itself and not be distinct and separate from it.

Learning from the commercial sector

Many practitioners believe that charities should adopt the techniques and practices of the commercial sector in order to create a powerful brand. Overall the techniques in the commercial sector, particularly FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) goods, can be defined as follows:

- A heavy emphasis on visual identity: use of particular colours, logos and typography. The use of consistent imagery in TV advertising and meticulous attention to detail maintaining the corporate style of the brand.
- Many brands are maintained by heavy use of image advertising. TV, press, internet, email, text message, posters and adshels are all used to continually to pump out the visual identity and message and reinforce it in the public perception. Stereotypically this advertising focuses on image rather than specifics for the product and services.
- In the commercial world, brands are created from scratch. The brand is the product of the marketer. Changing advertising agencies can result in a changed brand. Because brands are created by marketers, the maintenance of the brand is focused on appearance and style.
- Because brands are created, brand management and corporate identity are inextricably intertwined. Brand personality is virtually synonymous with the brand identity and packaging.
- One of the pre-requisites for a successful approach to branding in the commercial sector is a large marketing budget to drive the message home in a variety of media.

Is the commercial sector model appropriate?

There are three main reasons why non-profit organisations need a more coherent and individual model of branding than adopting the FMCG/ commercial sector one verbatim.

1. Charities are the product of a desire to change the world: to cure cancers, tackle overseas poverty, stop animal cruelty and so on. This means their personalities are potentially far deeper than those of most commercial brands. To use

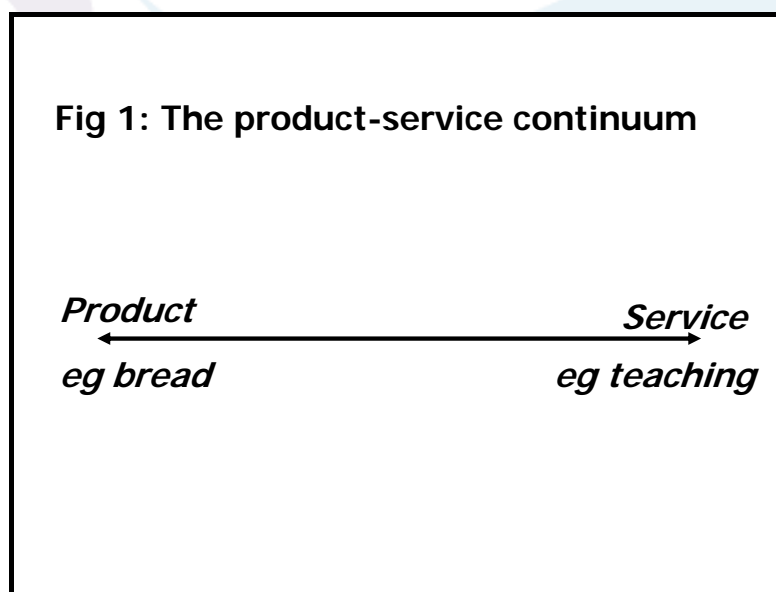
commercial techniques for such inherently powerful brands is both expensive and unnecessary.

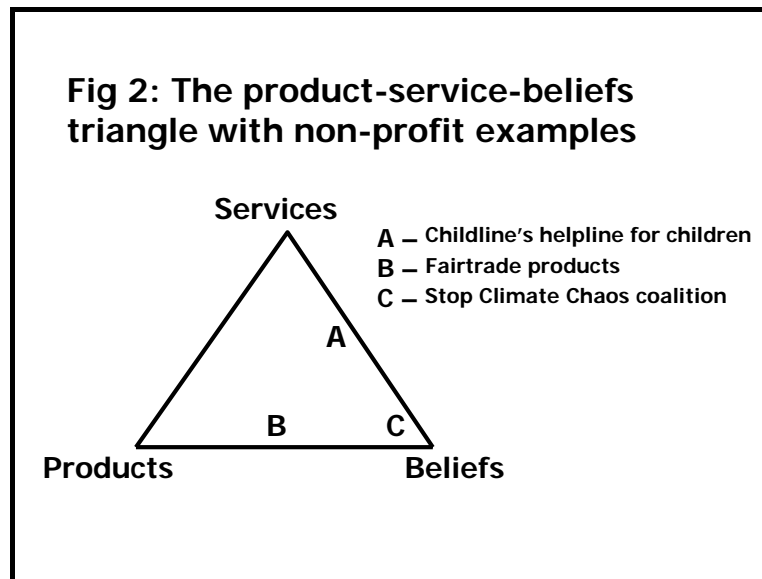
2. For a commercial brand to be successful it typically needs millions of pounds of marketing budget. Even then thousands of products fail each year. Charities quite simply cannot afford this approach. This is why for so many charities direct marketing and public relations are used so extensively. Even then all but the very largest of charities have advertising budgets in the hundreds of thousands of pounds, rather than the millions typically associated with the commercial brands.
3. The nature of charities is such that a comprehensive corporate identity relaunch is very difficult. The expense and the internal resistance of a relaunch can be awesome for a charity. Old leaflets and materials need to be destroyed, shop fascias need to be revamped, staff need to be retrained and more importantly thousands of volunteers need to be brought on board. This whole process is extremely time consuming. It recently took one major charity 5 years to plan and instigate a corporate relaunch.

If there is a part of the commercial sector whose branding architecture comes closer to the not for profit sector it is the financial services sector, where the absence of a tangible product and the importance of the image of the organisation itself are paramount. So while charities must be prepared to work on developing their brand, they should not be prepared to copy the commercial sector too closely.

What kinds of brands are charities?

One way to describe a brand in the commercial sector is as lying on a product service continuum. Figure 1 shows this spectrum of products and services. The kind of brand described in the previous section is most usually a product, particularly an FMCG product, such as food or washing powder. However the opposite end of the spectrum doesn't adequately describe a charity's brand. What charities do is not simply a service, any more than it is simply a product.





The crucial element that is missing in this mix is included in Figure 2; it is the element of beliefs. These beliefs can take many forms: political policies, statements of right and wrong, working practices and so on. The additional feature is an element of belief or of ideas or values being part of the offering itself. In the commercial world a strenuous exponent of beliefs marketing is the Body Shop. The process through which their products pass, the price paid to producers, the environmental impact of packaging and the opposition to animal testing are all elements of a corporate philosophy, a set of corporate beliefs.

This concept of beliefs is incorporated into Figure 2 to make a products-services-beliefs (PSB) triangle. The figure shows various examples of how different points on the triangle represent different existing offerings. The PSB triangle is a vital precursor to creating a charity brand.

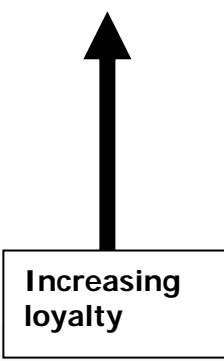

The simple reason for this is that all non profit organisations are rooted in a set of beliefs. They exist because they have a view about how they would like the world to be and how it currently is. These beliefs can be very small scale and local (the kids on this estate deserve better play facilities) or all embracing and global (children around the world are entitled to a basic education, basic health care, etc.) My argument is that it is these beliefs that should form the basis of a charities brand or personality.

Using a hierarchy of motivations to communicate a brand

The PSB triangle adds beliefs to a marketing mix. These beliefs can be communicated on a number of levels in order to motivate the receiver. One way in which the effect of these communications can be understood is through the hierarchy of motivations.

The hierarchy of motivations is based on psycho-linguistic programming. It helps to explain the different ways in which people are motivated by communications. Figure 3 shows the core concepts of the hierarchy and the way in which a brand is communicated at 5 different motivational levels.

Figure 3: The hierarchy of motivations

Motivational level	Key supporter phrases	Loyalty trends	Rewards trends
Identity/vision	<i>I share their vision of the world</i>	 <p>Increasing loyalty</p>	<p>Increasing need for tangible rewards</p> 
Beliefs/values	<i>I believe in their approach</i>		
Capability	<i>They have shown they can do it</i>		
Behaviour/specific action	<i>My money will make a difference</i>		
Immediate environment	<i>It will make a difference to me</i>		

These levels, starting at the lowest point on the hierarchy, are as follows:

Immediate/local environment

People give to a charity by putting money into a collecting tin on a Saturday morning because it allows them to shop in peace. People have their image of Oxfam formulated by the Oxfam shops. People take part in the national lottery because they may win millions of pounds. The environmental motivation is the simplest of forces: people do things because their peers are doing it, or their immediate environment will change, or they may directly benefit. The environmental (or local level) is the hardest motivation to use to build a brand yet it probably motivates more people to support charities than anything else. People's interests are entirely socially-centred at this level. Activities like Red Nose Day, the Poppy Appeal, and Christian Aid gain much of their support because the social pressure to participate is so strong.

Specific behaviour or specific action

The start of any long term relationship is built on the power of the initial contact. The charity squeezes all its message, its emotion, its brand into one small offer.

"£12 can make a blind person see"

"£15 will feed 10 children for a month"

"£1 plants a tree"

are all opening shots in the desire by charities to motivate people, and so build a relationship and a brand. By using these kinds of offers the charity is making itself much lower profile, while putting the specific piece of work to the fore. Motivating people at the specific action level is an attempt to communicate a brand and a charity in the organisation equivalent of a blind date: a tempting offer without further commitment. Even so, the charity must communicate itself appropriately; its initial communication cannot position it as a young, radical, campaigning organisation when in reality it is a conservative, traditional charity. Communicating a brand at the 'specific action' level is a great way to start a dialogue (witness the explosion in the ethical present market at Christmas) but in many cases it is not easy to sustain the relationship unless people are moved up the hierarchy of motivations.

Capability (to deliver)

Many fundraising charity communications are done at the capability level.

"We have 1,000 scientists"

"We are feeding 10,000 children a day in Rwanda"

"We planted 250,000 trees last year"

are all examples of charities demonstrating their capability to carry out a programme. Demonstrating the capability to carry out the work in question is a vital element for a charity communicating the strength of its brand. Most direct marketing fundraising is communicated in this way: it is a practical demonstration of what the charity believes in combined with a demonstration that it can deliver the goods. One thousand scientists shows a belief in research, feeding children in Rwanda shows a belief in emergency relief, planting trees shows a belief in re-forestation Britain. For anybody who supports a cause finding an organisation that can make a difference is vital.

Values and beliefs

"We can halve breast cancer over the next 10 years"

"Thousands of children die every year as a result of third world debts to western banks"

"Woodlands are a vital part of our heritage and our enjoyment of the natural world".

Beliefs are at the heart of why charities exist and they are one of the most accessible parts of a charity's brand. Yet too many charities leave their beliefs as implicit statements, rather than communicate them explicitly. They attempt to motivate extensively at the capability level, while failing to build loyalty by also explicitly communicating beliefs. The real advantage of building a brand (and the respective motivations in those who respond to them) through beliefs is that failure is possible. By this I mean that if your brand is built on the capability to deliver then a failure to deliver is entirely unacceptable. But a belief-based brand allows, even suggests, that the road to success will be paved with the rollercoaster of success and failure.

Vision and identity

"Help us create a world free from cancer"

"No child should die for lack of basic health care, education or nutrition"

"Together we can create a greener Britain"

Vision is the synthesis of a set of organisation beliefs, woven into a statement of how the world should be. The most common exponents of vision are politicians. Indeed it is precisely because politicians extol a broader vision that they are forgiven their temporary lapses in delivery, the odd whiff of corruption or the occasional cash for honours inquiry.

Charities such as Greenpeace and Christian Aid also have a powerful vision of the world (see figure 4). That powerful vision is one of the reasons for a strong and loyal following for each of those organisations. Most charities have a vision and many articulate it incompletely or unconvincingly. It is, though, an integral part of communicating a brand.

Figure 4: Practical examples in the hierarchy of motivations		
Motivational level	Fictitious examples: Royal Children's Cancer Society	Real life examples
Identity/vision	<i>We must eliminate childhood leukaemia</i>	Greenpeace
Beliefs/values	<i>Every child has the right to the best treatment and care</i>	Amnesty International
Capability	<i>We respond to 1,000 telephone calls every week</i>	RSPCA's animal inspectors
Behaviour/specific action	<i>£15 will help provide a grant for a family with a sick child</i>	Plan UK and child sponsorship
Immediate environment	<i>The local chemotherapy unit will help your kids</i>	Red Nose Day

The hierarchy of motivations has a number of features which are vital ingredients for brand building.

1. An organisation must use the widest range of the hierarchy's motivations. People build a brand image through a myriad of experiences or influences in the breadth of ways. The organisations which have a strong vision, but no capability to carry it out are not credible. People who respond at the environmental level need to be motivated in other ways as well.
2. The higher the motivations which people respond to the more loyal and committed they usually are. Once people share in your vision of the world, failings in the ability to carry out that vision are more easily forgiven - just look at the way in which political parties survive!
3. The lower the motivation which people respond to, the more reward driven they will be and are more likely to switch brands or charities when they see their self interest as being better met.

Developing a set of organisational beliefs

All charities have beliefs, but most keep theirs locked in a safe, where they lose their lustre. Charities should wear their beliefs on their sleeves. How does a charity with no apparent or explicit beliefs set about creating ones that not only can form a basis for a powerful brand, but also drive the organisation's communications forward?

Once you have established a set of beliefs as a marketing team (or even senior management team), they will probably need refining, developing and synthesising. Go through a second round of setting out your beliefs, but this time prompted by the following questions:

- What kind of world do you believe in?
- What statements of right and wrong can your charity adhere to?
- What statements of how you work make you different?

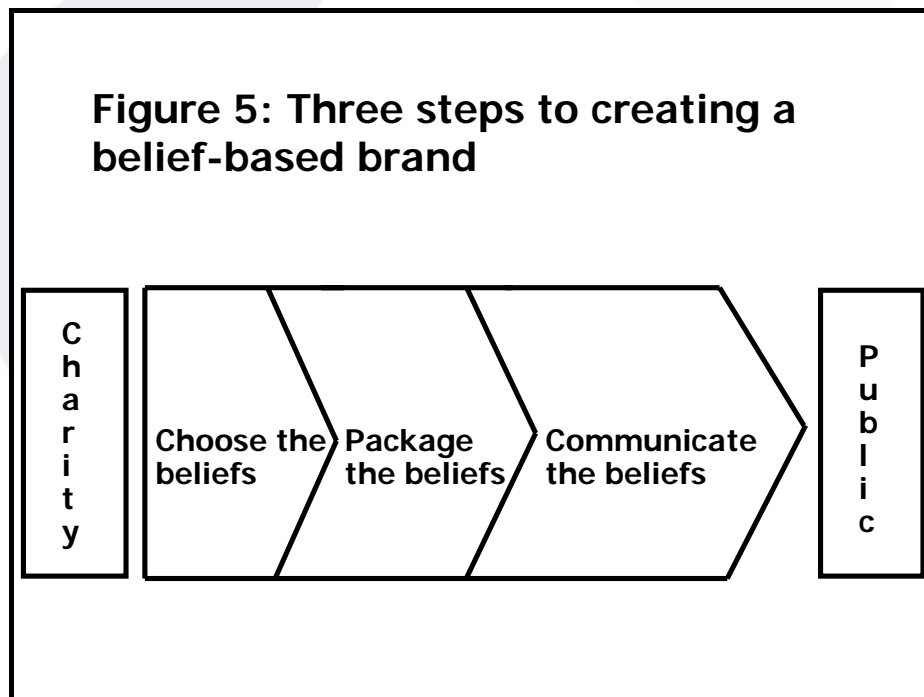
- What statements of how money will be used make you different?
- How will the world be better if you succeed as an organisation?

At the end of the process you should have half a dozen statements of beliefs. To be useful these should be:

- Simple to communicate
- Define you and your cause
- Differentiate you from your competitors
- Motivating to your existing and potential audiences and staff

Three stages in creating a belief-based brand

Figure 5 sets out the 3 stages in creating and delivering brand values. This new model has at its heart the notion of using a charity's beliefs to create a powerful brand.



Stage 1 - choosing the beliefs.

Once your organisation's beliefs have been crystallised using the approach laid out above, the next stage is to pick particular audiences for whom these beliefs are most relevant, most appealing and most motivating. The worked example of a fictional charity, Royal Children Cancer Society, shows this step by step. Perhaps the greatest mistake a charity can make in its brand management is to try and make its brand appeal to everyone. By attempting to make a brand appeal to too broad an audience, the power of the brand will almost certainly be lost. Conversely, the more focused the audience for a brand personality, the more appropriate and relevant that message can be made for that specific audience.

In order to be able to talk to the audience for whom the brand is intended an understanding of the demographics of the audience is needed. In the case of RCCS the audience are parents and grandparents so that the demographics are defined accordingly.

Stage 2: Packaging the beliefs

It is not enough to clearly delineate beliefs and target audience. The way in which those beliefs are packaged for communication is a vital element of creating the brand.

This packaging includes the following elements:

- **Development of services** e.g. RNIB's Talking Books for blind and partially sighted people or Diabetes UK's care services for people with diabetes.
- **Development of products.** For example, National Trust's or RSPB's season ticket membership, Plan UK's child sponsorship schemes and Greenpeace's new rainforests work are all example of products which represent the brand values for the organisation as a whole.
- **Demonstrating beliefs in action through case studies.** Case studies play an important role in showing how the organisation's beliefs operate in practice. It may be the story of a particular piece of research and the subsequent breakthrough in cancer treatment that demonstrates Cancer Research UK's approach, or the purchase of a particular piece of land, by the Woodland Trust, in the new community forest areas which demonstrate their commitment to the community forest initiative. Organisations should be building a file of their case studies which demonstrate their brand and beliefs in action.

Matching products to channels

Any product should have a series of distribution channels through which it is communicated. For most products there will be a natural channel or channels with which to communicate to a particular audience. Potential child sponsors are few and far between, but highly motivated so lead generation press advertising has worked consistently for organisations such as Plan UK.

Stage 3 - Communicating beliefs

Once the organisation's beliefs have been chosen and packaged, they need to be communicated appropriately to the intended audiences. The channels chosen for this need to reflect the charity's brand. Different communication channels are appropriate for different charities because of the nature of their brand and their audiences. Telephone fundraising may be appropriate for Greenpeace but not for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

The different communication strategies a charity may need are as follows;

- Communication for recruitment of supporters
- Communication to supporters
- Communication to clients and client groups
- Communication to the public
- Communication to stakeholders

The Royal Childrens' Cancer Society¹ (RCCS) focuses its brand.

Stage 1 - Choosing the belief

The RCCS has chosen the following as their beliefs and values:

- s No child will die of leukaemia by the year 2000
- s Parents need support and information about leukaemia
- s Research is the long term solution
- s Care is the short term solution
- s We will campaign against causes of childhood cancer
- s Our vision is that no child will die in vain

The audience for our brand is as follows:

- sParents and grandparents are the fundraising audience
- sMost parents are 25-40 ABC1 and C2
- sMost grandparents are aged 55 - 75 and retired.
- sThe government is also an audience with a view to changing certain laws

Stage 2 - Packaging the beliefs

- s We will offer an information service about cancer and the issues surrounding it
- s We will create a telephone line and website for easy response and requests.
- s We will create a parents self-help and fundraising scheme
- s We will develop a new corporate identity to emphasis this approach
- s We will create a legacy scheme for the grandparents of children with cancer
- s We will create a case book of children's stories with both happy and sad outcomes
- s We will start a campaign against smoking in public
- s We will create a newsletter for all supporters and enquirers in order to make sure that no parent is deprived of even the most basis information concerning childhood cancer

Stage 3 - Communicating the beliefs

Recruiting supporters

- s We will use inserts to get donations
- s We will use press ads and public relations in Parents magazine to gain awareness with the target audience
- s Where appropriate and sensitive we will use lists and names and addresses supplied by hospitals and doctors.
- s We will treat all enquirers as potential fundraisers

Communicating with supporters

- s We will use mail for our routine communications both for information and appeals for funds
- s We will use the telephone for speed and intimacy so that parents can ring us and vice versa
- s We will create Youtube clips for busy and fraught parents for whom reading may be unrealistic or even impossible
- s We will hold day workshops to allow parents to share their experiences and get mutual support

¹ In case you are wondering, this organisation along the rest of the case study is entirely fictitious

The boxed example of Royal Cancer Childrens' Society shows how they approach the issue of communicating their beliefs. Many charities are acutely sensitive about how often they write to supporters, and rightly so. The frequency of communications reflects the charity's brand. The amount of paper used, the use of recycled paper, and the use of supporter open days are all important elements in how a charity communicates. Jan Carlzon uses the term "moments of truth" to describe critical moments at which a consumer forms an opinion about the organisation which is communicating with it. Whatever the beliefs of an organisation and however brilliantly they are packaged, poor or inappropriate communication of those beliefs can create "moments of truth" which can be universally negative. Too many charity supporters have formed a highly negative view of a charity because of its "overuse" of direct mail. One major UK charity usually takes over 20 rings to answer the telephone. Supporters may feel; "If an organisation can't even answer the phone, how can I trust it to carry out research with my money?"

Conclusion

This paper has set out an approach and methodology for creating a powerful charity brand. While in many aspects, marketing for charities is similar to that for companies, this paper has deliberately distanced itself from some of the techniques adopted in the commercial sector for branding. Beliefs lie at the heart of what makes charities different and for this reason it is logical to use them as the source of a charity's brand. Charities who follow the model set out here, and make sure it permeates throughout their entire organisation, will find they can create a powerful brand much more cheaply and easily than the commercial evidence would suggest.

More detailed papers on branding for non-profits are available from the nfpSynergy website (www.nfpsynergy.net). In particular 'Polishing the Diamond' sets out many of the issues covered in this paper in more detail and 'The Jeweller's Story' sets out a variety of case studies about branding in non-profit organisations.