Branding Basics:
What Every Certification Sponsor Should Know

Presentation for the
National Organization for Competency Assurance

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Overview of seminar

- Basic branding concepts and brand building essentials

- Case Study: The Travel Institute

- Q&A

- Panel discussion (time permitting)

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A brand is . . .

- A distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the products/services of an organization and differentiate them from those of competitors

- A mixture of attributes – tangible and intangible – which can create value and influence the purchase decision

- A set of promises

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Benefits of a strong brand

- A clear, valued, and sustainable point of differentiation relative to competition

- Lower marketing costs

- Attraction of new customers

- Price premiums

- Repeat business

- Immediate credibility for new products/services

- Greater customer loyalty and willingness to forgive a mistake
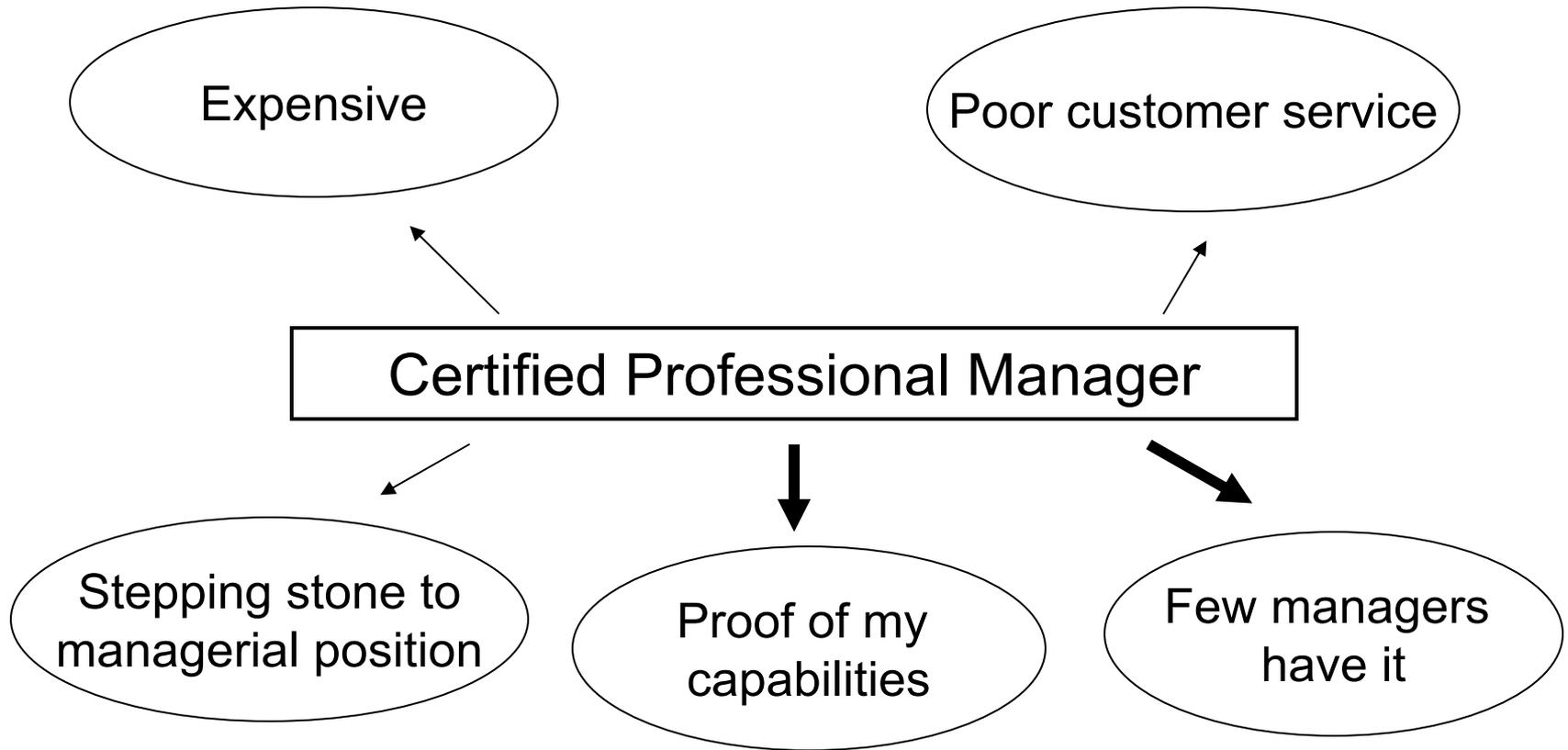
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Brand equity

- A set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, that add or subtract from the value a product/service provides to customers (David Aaker)

- Primary brand-equity assets are:
  - name awareness
  - brand associations
  - perceived quality
  - brand loyalty

- Brand-equity assets require investment to create and active management to maintain
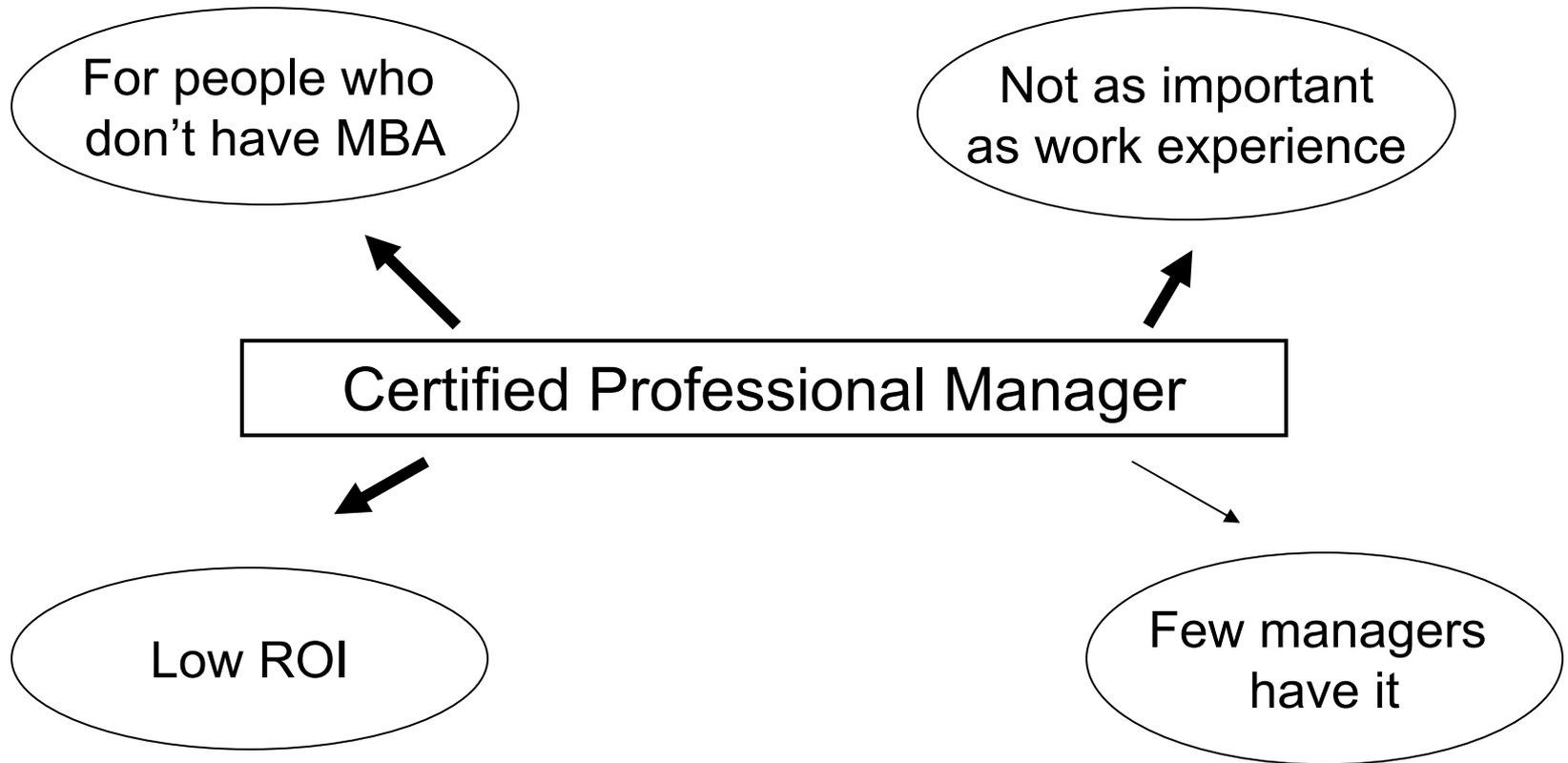
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Brand associations

- **Associations** are anything that is linked in the customer's mind to a brand

- The strength of the links is enhanced through experience with the brand or exposure to communication about brand; more exposure = stronger link

- Brand image is a set of associations

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Candidates' associations

Expensive

Poor customer service

Certified Professional Manager

Stepping stone to managerial position

Proof of my capabilities

Few managers have it

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Employers' associations

For people who don't have MBA

Not as important as work experience

Certified Professional Manager

Low ROI

Few managers have it

Name awareness

- **Name awareness** is the ability of potential customers to recognize or recall that a specific certification falls within a certain category of credentials

- Levels of awareness:

  - Top of mind

  - Recall

  - Recognition

  - Unaware

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Perceived quality

- **Perceived quality** is the customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of your credential with respect to its intended purpose, as compared to available alternatives

- Differs from actual or objective quality

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Perceived quality

Product Quality

- content of exam reflects professional practice
- exam questions are fair
- credential is widely recognized
- etc.

Service Quality

- competence
- empathy
- responsiveness
- credibility
- trustworthiness

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Brand loyalty

- **Brand loyalty** is the attachment a customer has to a brand and reflects how likely the customer will be to switch brands or discontinue use of the brand

- Derives primarily from direct experience, but also may be affected by name awareness, brand associations, and perceived quality

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Brand building…Step-by-step

- Conduct a brand assessment

- Identify the desired image and associations for the brand

- Create a brand promise

- Identify the resources and capabilities needed to build and support the brand

- Develop a brand management plan, including a brand blueprint

- Monitor brand management and effectiveness

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Conduct a brand assessment

- What are your credential's brand image, associations, name awareness, and perceived quality as seen through the eyes of customers and stakeholders?

- How loyal are they to the brand?

- Where do they stand with respect to same for your competitors?

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Conduct a brand assessment

Assessment of brand associations:

- What are the most common brand associations?

- Which associations are strongest?

- Which associations are most meaningful?

- Which associations are strong reasons to buy?

- How do our associations compare with those for our competitors' brands?

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Conduct a brand assessment

Assessment of name awareness:

- What is our level of name awareness? Our competitors'?

- Is awareness increasing or decreasing?

Assessment of perceived quality:

- What drives perceived quality?

- What are the important quality signals to our customers and stakeholders?

- How does perceived quality of our brand differ from that of our competitors?

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Conduct a brand assessment

Assessment of brand loyalty:

- How much "repeat business" do we have (e.g., recertification rate, employers who regularly pay certification fees)?

- How satisfied are our customers with the credential? With our organization and staff?

- What is the degree of "liking" for our brand? Our competitors'?

- How committed are our customers to our brand? To our competitors' brands?

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Identify desired image/associations

Associations should be:

- Meaningful and relevant to customers/ stakeholders

- Points of differentiation vs. your competitors

- Realistic for your organization and sustainable

- Believable to customers and stakeholders

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Identify desired image/associations

- For established brands, consider which associations should be weakened or eliminated and which should be enhanced or created

- Preferable to build on existing associations and/or create new ones

- Develop/strengthen associations that will catalyze the market to act

- Avoid developing too many associations or trying to be everything to everybody

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Identify desired image/associations

- Strive for a brand image that is different and memorable (name awareness)

- Develop a tag line/slogan that makes your brand memorable

    - It'd your future. Plan it!" Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards

    - "It's more than a patch. It's a passion." Automotive Service Excellence

    - "CFA spells trust." CFA Institute, www.trustcfa.org

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Create a brand promise

- A **brand promise** is the essence of the emotional and functional benefits your customers can expect to receive from their experience with your brand

- Your unique value proposition – from your customer's perspective

- The promise is derived from the answers to 3 pivotal questions (Duane Knapp):

  – What business is our brand in?

  – What differentiates our brand from the competition?

  – What is superior about the value we offer our customers?

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Create a brand promise

- Identify your current brand promises – as defined by the market

- Evaluate whether this is the desired position

- Ask staff what they think the brand promises are

- Determine whether staff perceptions are consistent with the desired position

- Assess the degree to which your internal and external communications and activities support the brand promise

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Identify resources and capabilities

You (or your vendors/consultants) need to be able to:

- Conduct market research and analysis

- Define marketing/branding strategy and tactics

- Develop and implement a public relations plan

- Provide excellent customer service

- Enhance and update products and services

- Integrate branding activities with your business strategy

- Monitor the effectiveness of your brand management plan

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Develop a brand management plan

Outline action steps needed to:

- Communicate the brand

    – Brand blueprint

    – Communication strategies and vehicles

    – Integration of branding strategy with all communications

- Provide excellent customer service (ensure a positive brand experience)

    – Customer touch point analysis

    – Regular monitoring of service and satisfaction

    – Staying in touch with customers

    – Creating extras that delight customers

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Develop a brand management plan

Outline action steps needed to:

- Develop and maintain a culture that supports the brand

  - Staff training on the brand (e.g., image, promise)

  - Assurance that each organizational representative (e.g., staff, vendors, consultants) knows what he/she must do to support the brand

  - Inclusion of branding activities in performance evaluation systems

- Maintain consistency in branding efforts (e.g., graphics, messages, customer service)

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Brand blueprint

- **Specifies how the brand will be communicated**
  - Name
  - Symbols/marks
  - Byline
  - Tag line
  - Graphic representations (color, font, acceptable images)
  - Messages

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Monitor brand management and effectiveness

- Conduct periodic brand audits

  - Status of brand-equity assets

  - Competitiveness of brand

  - Currency and relevance of brand

- Monitor consistency of branding efforts and adherence to the brand blueprint

- Develop and apply metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of branding efforts

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Brand extension: Friend or foe?

- **Brand extension** is the use of a brand name established in one product class to enter another

- Leveraging the brand can: (a) reduce costs associated with introducing additional credentials or new products and services and (b) increase the probability of success

- The extension needs to fit the brand

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Brand extension: Friend or foe?

Some cautions:

- An extension may confuse customers and stakeholders

- A brand name can fail to help an extension, possibly even creating associations that hurt the extension

- The extension may survive and diminish the equity of the original brand by weakening positive associations or adding new, undesired ones

- The extension may cannibalize the market of the original brand and the candidate volumes for the extension may not make up for damage to the original brand's equity

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Global branding: Options

- A truly global brand

OR

- A related variant on the original brand adapted for each country/region

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Global branding: Benefits

- Economies of scale

- Advantage in gaining brand awareness

- A global presence spurs associations suggesting competitive products, strength, and/or viability

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Global branding: Cautions

- Associations that are universal may not necessarily be the most effective in building brand equity

- A local brand may have relevant, distinctive associations that are beneficial

- A global brand can have negative associations locally:

    - politics and other factors may influence associations

    - associations may be subject to vicissitudes of international and local events

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Brands can be changed, but only infrequently and only very carefully

Al and Laura Ries, The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding

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(Formerly ICTA—The Institute of Certified Travel Agents)

A Branding Case Study
David Preece, CTC

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Travel Distribution Environment

- Total U.S. travel continues to grow

- Gains are driven by leisure travel; business travel still soft

- Lifestyle-based and experiential travel are increasingly important

- Access to information is transforming consumers and retailers

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Travel Distribution Environment

- High-end travel growing while value-consciousness is heightened

- Infinite number of new retail business models, fueled largely by Internet technologies

- Market share shifting among offline and online channels

- Rate of shift will slow and channel shares will reach equilibrium

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Travel Distribution Segments

- **B 2 C** *(Business to Consumer)*

  - Retailers selling directly to consumers

  - Offline, online, brick & mortar, home-based, hybrids, mobile counselors, etc.

- **B 2 B** *(Business to Business)*

  - Companies selling primarily through retailers

  - Range of products and services

  - Suppliers, wholesalers, tour operators, consortia/co-ops/franchises, destinations

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Changes for ICTA

- Trends that affect travel professionals also impacted ICTA

- Organization wasn't keeping pace with industry dynamics

- Needed to redefine and clarify our role to ensure vitality and relevance

- New strategic direction will help better serve travel professionals

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Strategic Alignment

- **All elements must be aligned with the new strategic direction**

    - Industry role and mission

    - Brand position and company name

    - Organizational structure

    - Programs, products, services, credentials

- **Obligation to honor the ICTA legacy *and* face future realities and opportunities**

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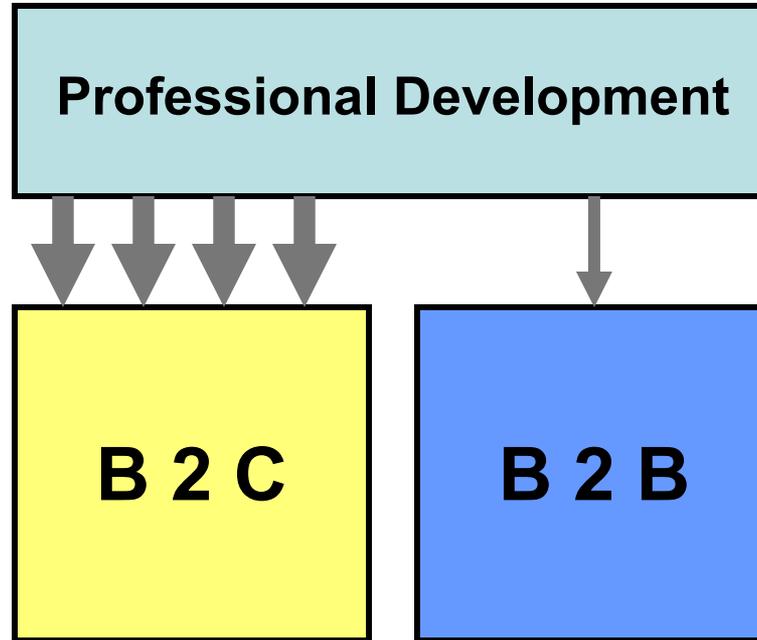Our experience. Your success.

Our Industry Role

- Establish clear industry standards
  - Professional knowledge and proficiency
  - Maintain the integrity of standards
  - Build awareness of standards
- Help increase knowledge, skills and professionalism
  - Full spectrum of travel sellers; B2C/B2B
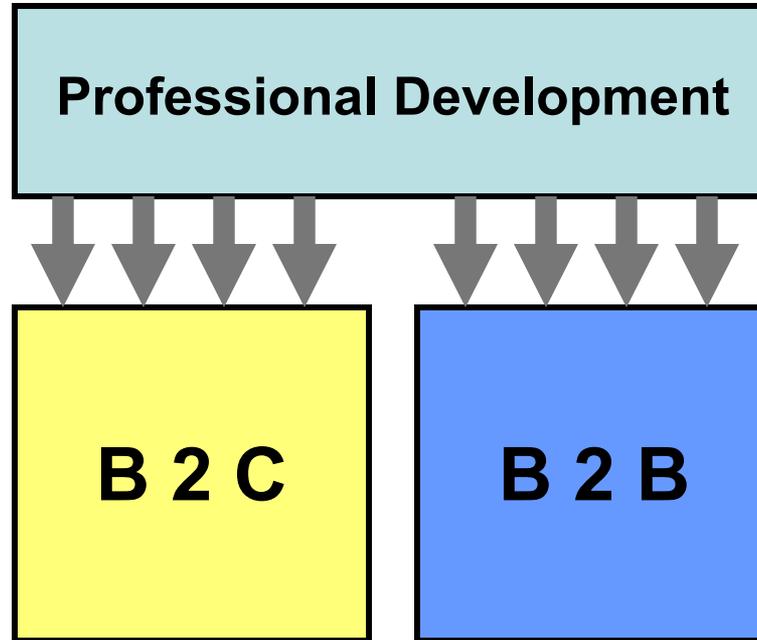 - Benefits businesses and customers

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Our Industry Role

Professional Development

B 2 C

B 2 B
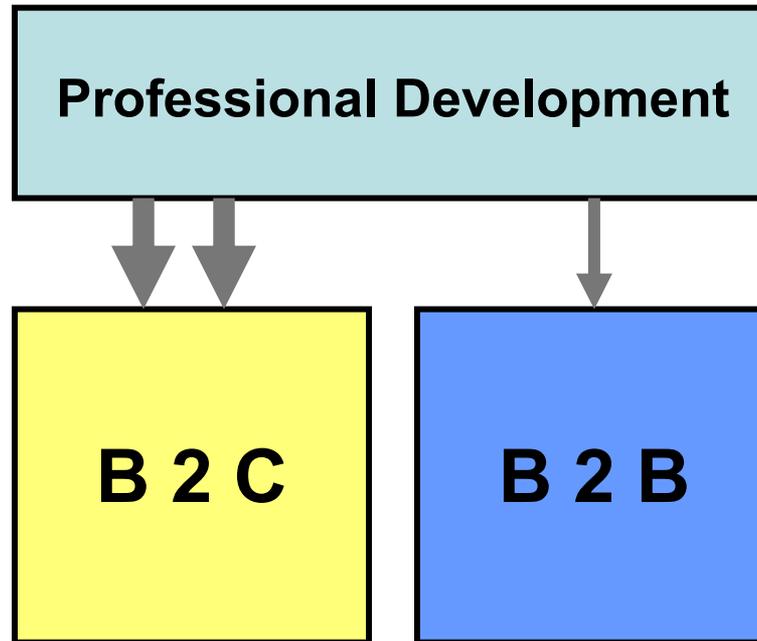
Historically focused primarily on traditional retail channels

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Our Industry Role

Must expand learning opportunities for all travel retail models…

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Our Industry Role

…while also offering relevant, customized solutions for the supplier side

Our Industry Role

- **More balanced approach consistent with industry trends**

- **Result is a rising tide that lifts all boats**

- **Benefits all parties involved**

    - Travel industry

    - Travel companies

    - Travel professionals

    - Travel consumers

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Brand Identity Project

- Why should travel professionals choose to be associated with us, and why should they choose us right now?

- How do we talk about ourselves and what does the marketplace want to hear from us?

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Brand Identity Project

- **External and internal research**

  – Member and non-member survey

  – Board of Trustees interviews

  – Perceptions of company, brand, positioning, programs, name

- **Review of industry landscape, trends and range of educational sources**

Ideal Positioning

- Be unique and build differentiation

- Be relevant and meaningful to key audiences

- Promote simplicity and clarity

- Be built around travel professionals' needs, not our desires

- Transcend product and service offerings

- Support long-term growth

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Ideal Positioning

- **Be focused**
  - Key is a single-minded brand proposition that we can own and rally around
  - Commit to deliver that brand promise consistently across practices, behavior and communications

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Positioning Evolution

- From education provider *TO* building relationships based on knowledge and insight

- From narrow channel focus *TO* serving the full spectrum of models

- From meeting functional needs *TO* creating learning experiences

- From customer satisfaction *TO* partner trust and loyalty

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Brand Themes

- Deep educational base

- Non-profit, non-partisan and neutral

- Loyalty, pride and respect

- Knowledgeable and insightful

- True advocates of travel professional growth

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Brand Positioning

"A Community of Knowledge and Insight"

- Standard bearer for travel professional education

- Education is the foundation and the brand is the conduit for individuals and entities

- A place to go anytime to seek help in any degree to navigate a dynamic industry

- Relationship with truly vested travel professionals is active and ongoing

- Reward is a productive, prosperous career and heightened professional esteem

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Brand Name

- Extensive name exploration project

- Aligned with business strategy, brand positioning, products and credentials

- Simple, clear and concise

- Evolutionary, not revolutionary

- Builds on brand equity and sets stage for the future

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Brand Name

"The Travel Institute"

- Retains core equities of legacy
- Broader and more inclusive
- Implies leadership, authority and prestige
- Supports role as standard bearer
- Blends practice with academics
- Allows for future evolution

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Brand Visual Identity

- Supports brand positioning and name

- Establishes a graphic system for sub-brands

- Distinctly non-industrial

- Dynamic, progressive and colorful

- Represents a community in unison

- Reflects energy of the travel industry

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Credentials Branding

- **Professional certifications are a key element of our legacy, offerings, image, brand equity**
    - Certified Travel Associate (CTA)
    - Certified Travel Counselor (CTC)
    - Certified Travel Industry Executive (CTIE; 9/04)
    - Destination Specialist (DS)
    - Certified Destination Specialist (CDS)
    - Lifestyle Specialist (LS)
    - Certified Lifestyle Specialist (CLS)

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Credentials Branding

- Branding research included inquiry into the individual brand equity of credentials

- Some certifications had branded identity, but were associated with previous the ICTA brand

- Critical to evolve credentials brands along with the corporate brand to ensure consistency and synergy

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