

# Branding Basics: What Every Certification Sponsor Should Know

Presentation for the  
National Organization for Competency Assurance

# Overview of seminar

- Basic branding concepts and brand building essentials
- Case Study: The Travel Institute
- Q&A
- Panel discussion (time permitting)

# 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

# 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

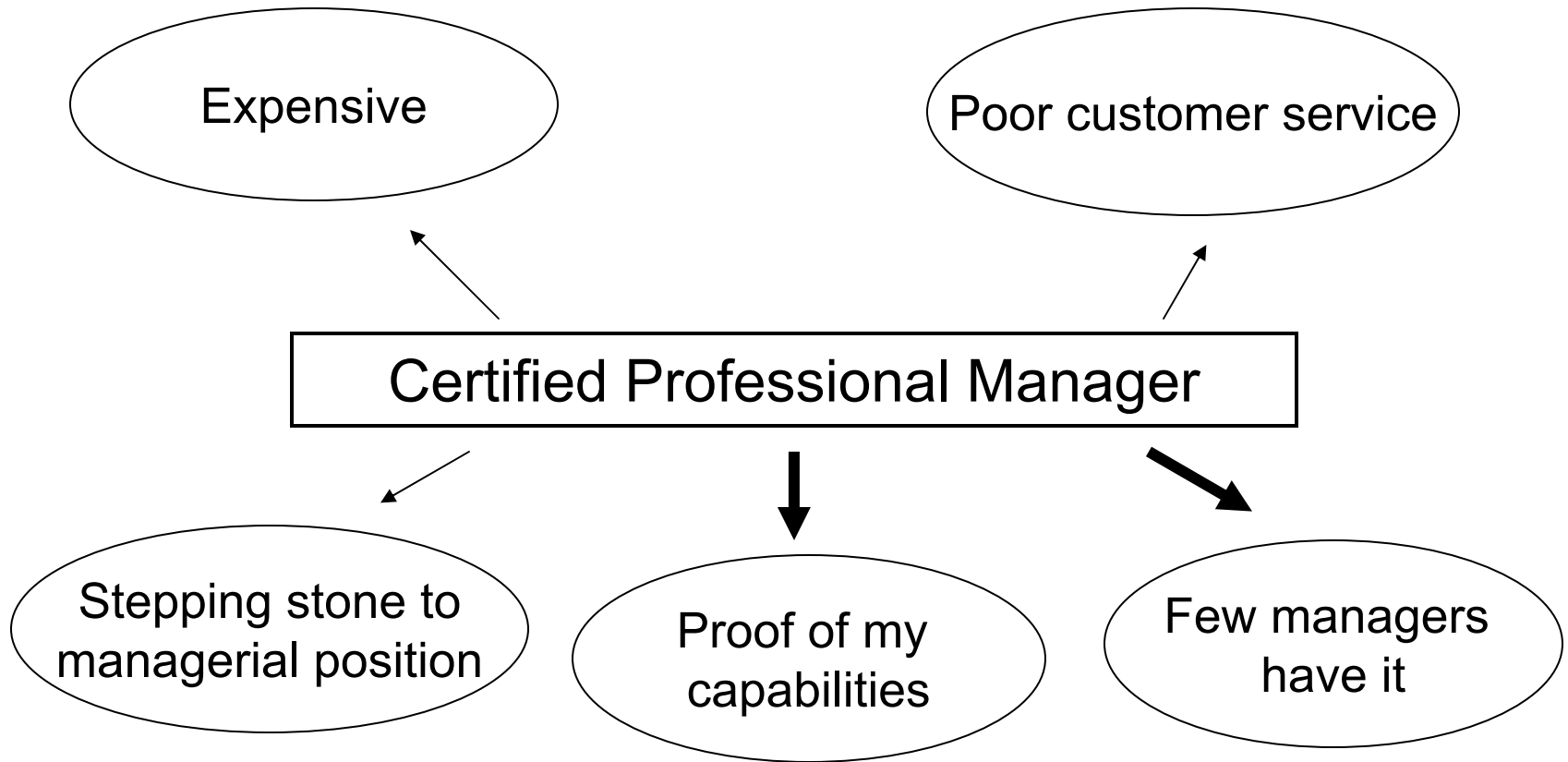
# Brand equity

- 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

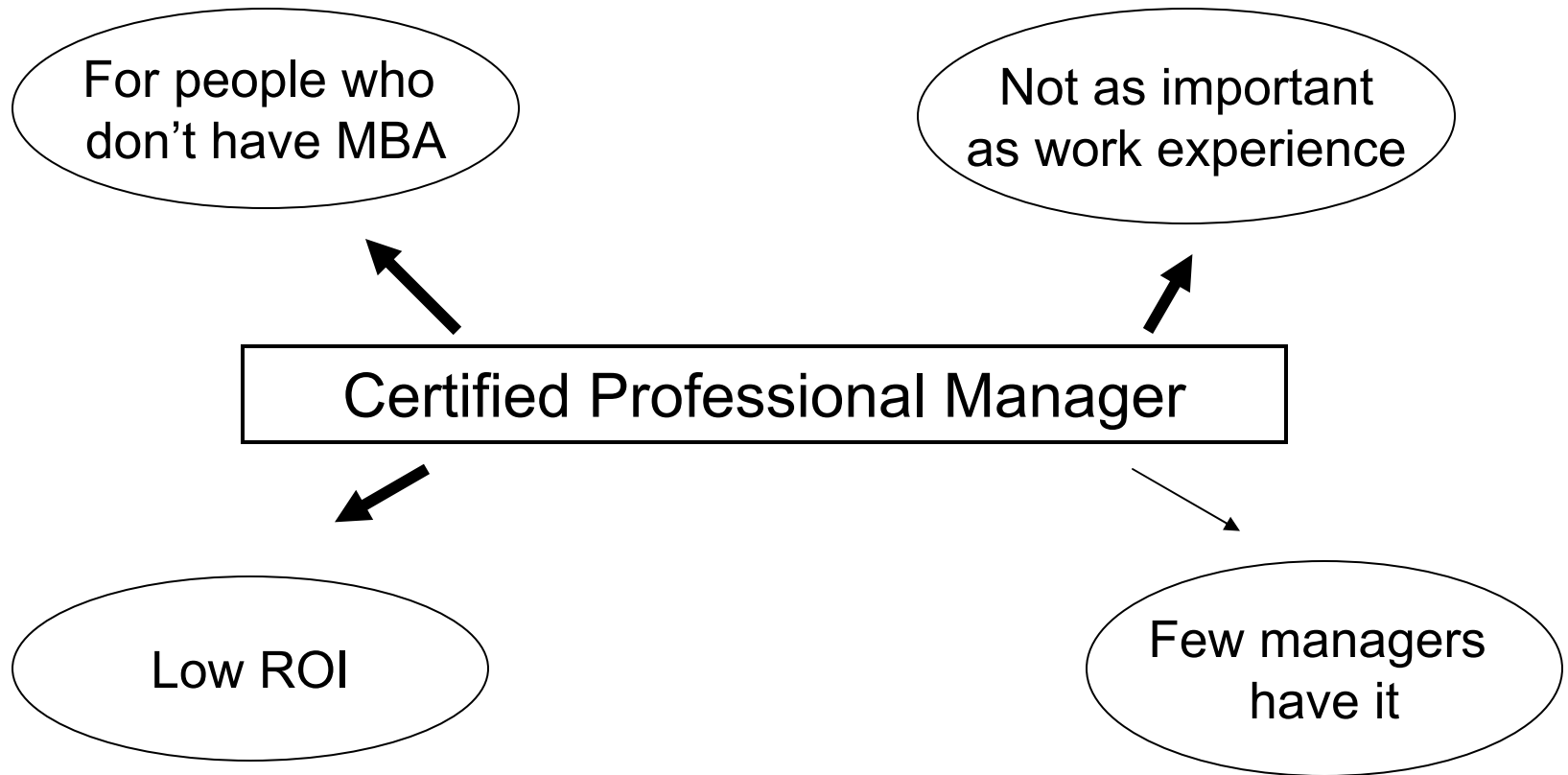
# Brand associations

- **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

# Candidates' associations



# Employers' associations



# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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?

# 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?

# 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?

# 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?

# 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

# 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

# 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](http://www.trustcfa.org)

# 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?

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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)

# Brand blueprint

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

# 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

# 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

# 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

# Global branding: Options

- A truly global brand

**OR**

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

# Global branding: Benefits

- Economies of scale
- Advantage in gaining brand awareness
- A global presence spurs associations suggesting competitive products, strength, and/or viability

# 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

**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*

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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

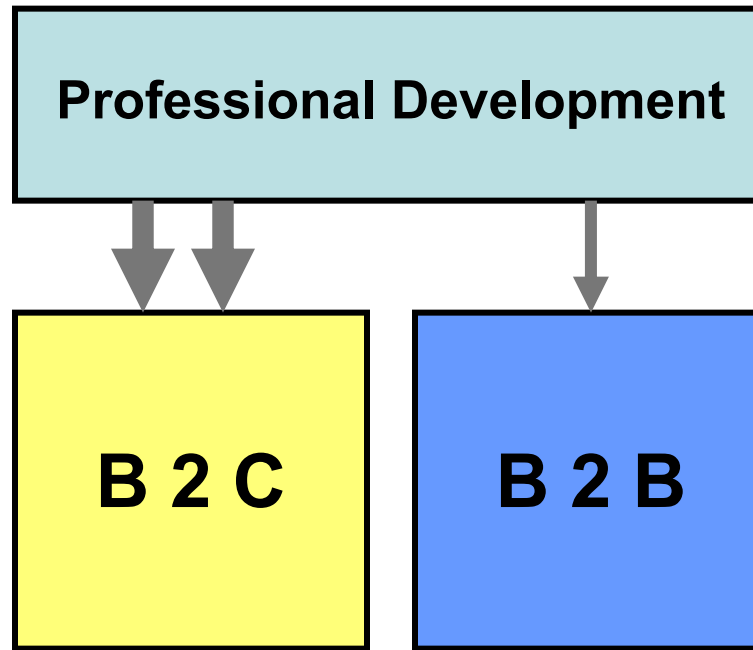
# Strategic Alignment

- 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

# Our Industry Role

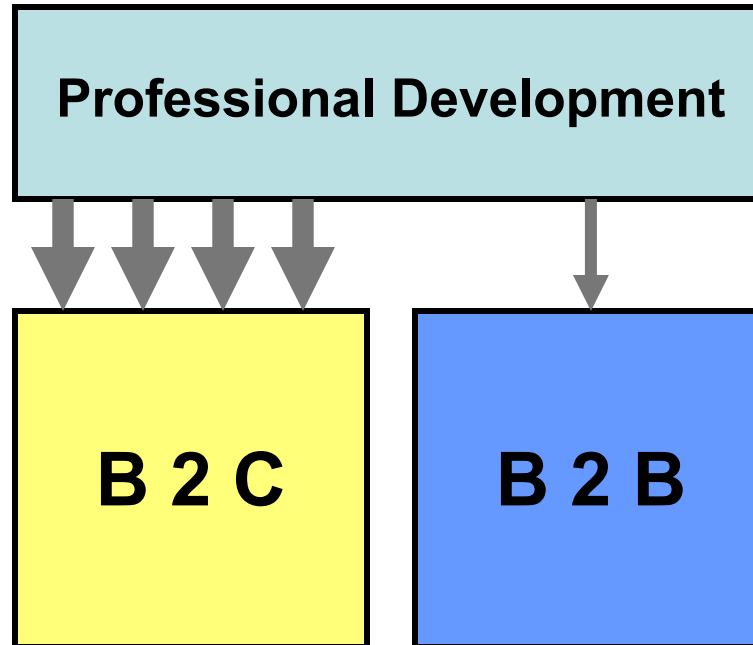
- Establish clear industry standards
  - Professional knowledge and proficiency
  - Maintain the integrity of standards
  - Build awareness of standards
- Help increase knowledge, skills and professionalism
  - Full spectrum of travel sellers; B2C/B2B
  - Benefits businesses and customers

# Our Industry Role



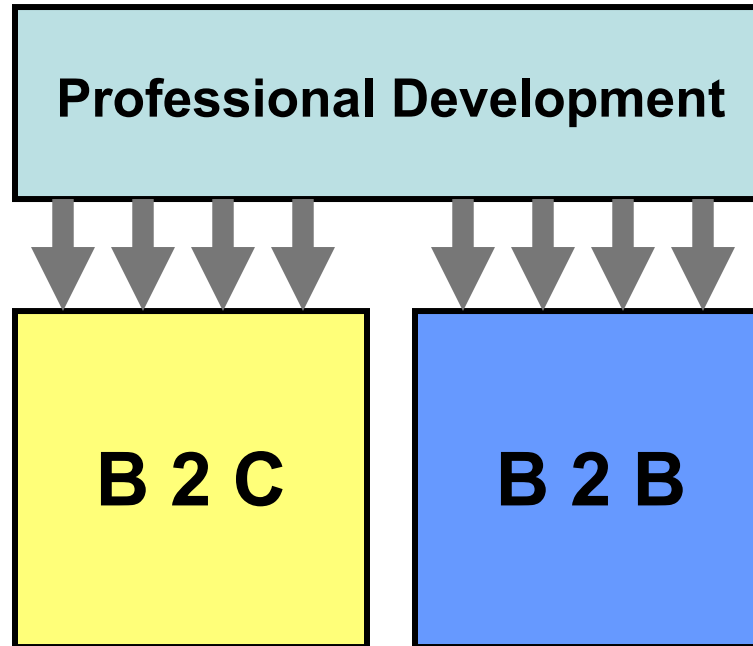
Historically focused primarily on traditional retail channels

# Our Industry Role



Must expand learning opportunities for all travel retail models...

# 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

# 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?

# 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

# 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

# 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

# Brand Themes

- Deep educational base
- Non-profit, non-partisan and neutral
- Loyalty, pride and respect
- Knowledgeable and insightful
- True advocates of travel professional growth

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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)

# 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

