

One, for all

A companywide team has developed a fresh approach to visual identity that capitalizes on the power of the iconic Boeing brand

By Carrie Howard

A brand is more than a logo, a name or an ad campaign. It's a promise that a company makes to the marketplace and the reputation a company earns for keeping that promise.

The best brands can hold a distinctive and powerful place in the market that allows them to introduce new products more successfully, defend their markets against competitors more easily, and command premium prices for goods and services. Leading companies manage what they do, what they say and how they present themselves to ensure that their promise is reinforced in everything that a customer, investor or influencer experiences. Boeing is one of those leading companies.

Thanks to the products and services Boeing employees produce and provide—and to the company's unmatched history in aerospace—the Boeing brand is one of the most well-known brands in the world, routinely landing on lists of the world's most respected brands compiled by publications such as *Barron's* and *Business Week*. The Boeing brand is an irreplaceable asset that marketing research firms estimate to be worth billions of dollars.

But even a great brand needs maintenance to stay fresh and to support the changing needs of a growing business. That's why an enterprisewide team has worked to ensure that the brand stays current, represents Boeing as one company, and properly supports the work Boeing employees are doing to fulfill promises and work toward being the world's best and best-integrated aerospace company.

"A few years ago, we began to take the next steps in the brand's evolution," said Fritz Johnston, director of Brand Strategy and Advertising. "Driving a 'one brand' culture is more important now than ever before. We didn't become one of the world's iconic brands because of any one product or service. Our reputation comes from the breadth and depth of our capabilities. And that has to do with much more than how we look; it is also how we act. Every contact we have with stakeholders, from the quality of our products and services to the tone of our business communications to the appearance of our business cards, building signs and presentations, is an opportunity to strengthen the brand."

Johnston noted that about 20 years ago, Boeing had more 200 different styles of business cards and letterhead. "None of our exterior signage matched, and our vehicle colors and markings were all over the map. Our exhibits and collateral literature looked different," he said. "Today that has changed, and we have strengthened our brand presence and reduced costs by millions of dollars. Now we need to take the next big step of ensuring that we present a unified, compelling and distinctive face to the world."



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A communication package created by the visual identity team includes a brochure, tip cards and a wall poster that explain the Boeing Brand Visualizer in an easy-to-use format.



This Commercial Airplanes display of model jetliners, shown at an exhibit at the Singapore Airshow 2008, was one of the first projects to reflect concepts that are now part of the Boeing Brand Visualizer. **ED TURNER/BOEING**

AUDITS REVEAL WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES

The current brand refresh effort began in 2006, when a team headed by Jim Newcomb, director of Brand Management and Promotion, conducted an audit of communication materials throughout the company. The audit showed a distinct lack of unity. Business-unit exhibits at international air shows, for example, appeared to come from completely different companies. Many of the materials appeared dated compared with communications produced by Boeing competitors, and that difference contradicted Boeing's positioning as an innovative technology leader. A second audit in 2007 confirmed the impression of visual clutter and disconnectedness.

In late 2007, Tom Downey, senior vice president of Communications, announced the functional alignment of the Brand Management & Advertising organization and Creative Services, the organization responsible for creating communication materials for the company. (Creative Services supports *Boeing Frontiers* by providing services such as design, photography, writing and editing.) The companywide Procedure PRO-42, "Corporate Identity Program," was updated to give Creative Services governance authority over corporate identity. "This formally gave Creative Services responsibility and authority for the protection of the brand for the first time and helped to solidify the informal relationship we had with corporate branding," said Bob Williams, director of Creative Services.

With roles and responsibilities defined, it was time to take a fresh look at the Boeing graphic standards.

In February 2008, a one-company team representing Communications, Creative Services, Customer Relations and business-unit Marketing Communications organizations met to discuss how to bring harmony to the Boeing visual identity. The team was assisted by Chicago-based Drafftcb, Boeing's advertising agency; Paul Haverly, Commercial Airplanes design consultant; and corporate design consultant Methodologie of Seattle. The task that lay before the team was daunting; team members were forced to re-examine their roles and their assumptions about the Boeing brand.

The team's mission was to take the Boeing visual identity to the next step by meeting three goals:

- Create a more unified, compelling, fresh and modern representation of the Boeing brand.
- Make it easier for audiences to find information about Boeing by reducing clutter in communications.
- Reduce costs and waste by driving consistency and promoting Lean design principles.

Team members reached across organizations and businesses to build working relationships based on a common goal. "We always said that it wasn't a cross-company team, but a one-company team, with everyone working to do the best for the company," Newcomb said.

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– Bob Williams, director of Creative Services

Applying the Brand Visualizer and visual identity tools to communications leads to consistent, contemporary, uncluttered communications that express the dynamic Boeing brand.

Creative Services produced more than 19,000 projects requiring application of Boeing brand standards in 2008. The examples shown below represent a small sampling. Streamlining processes and simplifying standards will result in significant cost and time savings.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

One of the biggest challenges facing the team was visual clutter. The sheer amount of communication materials sent to stakeholders was overwhelming, and individual pieces were visually dense and unorganized. “It’s important to not put the audience in a position where they have to hunt to find you. If we can portray ourselves with a powerful, consistent look, we will stand out from the clutter,” Downey said.

Another challenge: Making all the materials look as if they came from one company. Boeing boasts diverse products and services, but at times the company appeared to be a conglomerate of smaller companies, which weakened the overall impact of communications. “It’s important for everyone who works under the brand to recognize that to the outside world, there’s only one name over the door, and that’s ‘Boeing,’” Downey said.

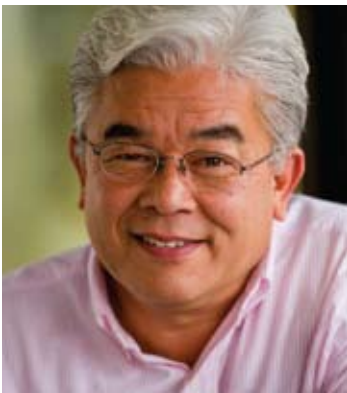
The team realized that it also needed to reduce clutter in the graphic standards, which users reported were difficult to access and understand. To focus their efforts, the team devised a tool called the Brand Visualizer, which Newcomb described as “a simple, clear graphic presentation of the company’s visual identity standards.”

Based on the corporate vision, strategies and values, the Brand Visualizer ensures that company communications give a true picture of Boeing’s character and capabilities. The “brand DNA”—the why, how and what of the Boeing brand—guides design decisions and provides a yardstick against which to measure the success of communication materials (see box on Page 41).

Using the brand DNA as a guide, the Enterprise Brand Visualizer Team, as it came to be known, simplified standards for the Boeing name, voice (written communications) and face (visual identity). The team reduced the multitude of typefaces used to just one family, Helvetica; streamlined color palettes; and curtailed variations on the Boeing logo. The team determined that imagery is a particularly powerful way of portraying Boeing’s strengths, and emphasized use of high-quality imagery optimally placed in clean, open layouts.

The contrast between the new design materials and materials previously collected for the audits was striking. The team and its business partners agreed the new materials more aptly represented the Boeing brand.

The team also recognized that simplicity is not just good communication strategy; it’s good stewardship of resources. “We’re strengthening the brand through powerful common visual expressions, and we’re applying Lean+ for the office by coming up with a common look and feel, processes and templates,” Downey said. “We think we’ve found a great way to achieve several objectives at once.”



OWNERSHIP IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Developing standards is only half the battle. The brand team now is moving into the implementation phase of the brand-refresh project. “The Brand Visualizer is not just a tool; it also is a process for ownership,” said Newcomb. “Anybody can do standards, but keeping people focused is another step.”

Training for Creative Services and Communications staff will be conducted throughout 2009. Later in the year, staff will attend specialized workshops in branding and design, and there are plans to formally recognize “best of Boeing” design efforts.

“We have to make sure Creative Services employees are trained in and attuned to the brand, because you can’t govern something you don’t understand,” said Williams. “Having a more formalized relationship with corporate branding has helped tremendously in enabling us to put processes in place to make sure our people have the training and resources they need to oversee the brand.”

A companywide brand network helps ensure that design activities are coordinated. The newly streamlined Brand Center (<http://brandcenter.web.boeing.com> on the Boeing intranet) will be rolled out this month to provide easy access to brand standards via the Boeing Web. Regional Creative Services branding focals with in-depth knowledge of the brand standards have been given the responsibility to support Creative Services staff and answer questions from business partners.

“We work hand-in-glove with our business partners, and many were involved in helping us develop the standards, so the transition has been smooth,” said Williams. “We’ve been more successful in getting the word out about our brand standards and processes than in the past. And if someone comes in who wants something done that doesn’t reflect the Boeing brand, we have the authority to recommend alternatives and work with them on an appropriate approach.”

The brand team is quick to point out that an employee does not have to be directly involved in design to have an impact on the Boeing brand. “The actions of every employee inside this company, no matter where they are in the organization, no matter who they touch inside and outside, reflect on the brand,” Downey said. “In Communications, that plays out in the consistency of our messaging, spoken and written, in how we present the company visually. It also plays out in the materials that we use, both in print and electronic media, to help win business and communicate the Boeing story.” ■

These photos of Boeing employees are based on concepts stated in the Boeing Brand Visualizer. **Bob Ferguson/Boeing**

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Boeing Brand DNA

The Boeing brand approach supports the company's corporate goal: To be the best and best-integrated aerospace company in the world. The Boeing Brand DNA, below, details the "why, how and what" that make and keep this goal a reality.

ENTERPRISING SPIRIT

Why We Do It

We share a passion to take the next great leap in the business of aerospace.

PRECISION PERFORMANCE

How We Do It

We hold ourselves to the highest standards of performance, ethics and accountability.

DEFINING THE FUTURE

What We Achieve

We work as a global team to shape the future of aerospace.

Global brand assets



Boeing's global brand assets are the tools the company and its employees use to project a consistent presence for the company. These assets are:

Our voice.

The tone the company and its people use when speaking to stakeholders.

Our name.

How the company is known the world over.

Our face.

The way the company visually represents itself. The distinctive visual elements of the brand include the Boeing logo, typography, color palettes, layout grid and imagery.