Pacific Crest (page 1)

Project: Re-branding

Even small nonprofits can define their authentic brand and use it successfully to build a fiercely loyal audience of supporters, be represented across several channels, and engage diverse audiences

Background

Pacific Crest is an elite music group, a performance drum corps for high school and college aged students.

Challenge

When the group was founded in 1993 the name of the corporation was Pacific Crest Youth Arts Organization. But as time went on, they began to notice that they spent nearly all their time working on the drum corps, and that most people thought of them not as a youth arts organization but as drum and bugle corps. That's when Pacific Crest decided to hire Stone Soup to help guide them through a brand discovery. Firt, we posed several key questions:

1. What is Pacific Crest? What is our character and personality? What do we actually do here? What value do we provide to our students?
2. Where is PC headed? How are we perceived, and how do we WANT to be perceived?
3. What is truly unique about Pacific Crest? Who is else is doing what we do? What are competing for?

PC engaged stakeholders to help answer these questions – not just students but also the Board, staff, parents, donors, and high school band directors whose students had been in the program.

Solution

From the study sessions, we learned that Pacific Crest is:

1. A second family for our students
2. Competitive
3. Educational
4. Leadership development
5. Performing arts


▲ OLD LOGO

▲ NEW LOGO

▲ PRELIMINARY LOGO DESIGNS (NOT CHOSEN)

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6. Structured

7. Focused on youth

8. Fun!

We determined that Pacific Crest's drum corps was not one of many programs, but rather **the** program, and that while there are other activities they're engaged in, these are all in service to the drum corps. Given this new perspective, they changed their structure to better reflect their business model. The drum corps is now the central focus.
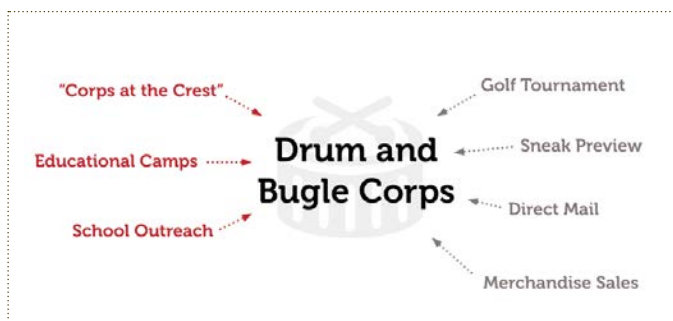
▲ PACIFIC CREST'S NEW BUSINESS MODEL

Pacific Crest's very sustainability depended on them knowing their brand. The Executive Director reported back with this clever list:

- **Knowing your brand** enables you to clearly…
- **Identify your program goals** that will…
- **Create evangelists** who help you…
- **Tell your story** which impacts your…
- **Fundraising and outreach** which improves your…
- **Sustainability**

We were then able to clearly articulate PC's three core brand messages:

1. Pacific Crest challenges committed young performers in a superior quality performance ensemble with similarly motivated peers

2. Pacific Crest develops the technical and artistic performance skills of our students though a highly intricate blend of music and movement that's performed for live audiences around the country

3. Pacific Crest changes students' lives through a rigorous rehearsal schedule, mentoring, and a summer performance tour that builds character and develops maturity and leadership

The group decided to try putting all of this into play on Facebook with posts and images that communicated their brand messages.

In one post for example, they focus on a group of *similarly motivated peers*. It also shows the "second family", one of their brand attributes. Another emphasized *performance excellence*, and still another on *superior quality*. The campaign wasn't simply a random group of photos, as each one helps communicate the brand messages.

After working with Pacific Crest for a few months, Stone Soup's final deliverable was a logo update.

To reflect 20 years of milestones, Pacific Crest needed a new look. They wanted to better communicate who they are and what benefits they provide to the community. They also were interested in attracting more of their target audience, and increasing donations and ticket sales. However, their alumni are fiercely loyal to the existing brand (permanent tattoos of the logo are not uncommon), and we anticipated a backlash if we did not tread with careful consideration.

For the logo design, we agreed to build on what they already had instead of executing a major overhaul of their visual identity.

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▲ SAMPLE FACEBOOK POST

Their new look symbolizes a commitment to a strong future by using similar colors as before, and retaining the wave icon that their community – especially alumni – has come to associate with Pacific Crest.

• Wave remains, but is more prominent
• Colors are similar but richer
• Crest replaces circle

We settled on the crest not only because the word is in their name but this is a common shape used by sports franchises and educational institutions, who often employ them to imply strength, solidity, and tradition.

Once the final logo was approved, we provided PC with a Brand Standards Manual, a document to help Pacific Crest keep on track with their brand communications, to avoid inconsistencies with the brand's visual elements and messages. It includes different logo file formats for print and web usage, and describes when its appropriate to use each one. It also has the brands color palette, recommended typeface families, and other "rules" for the visual identity.

Results

Although they are a small nonprofit, Pacific Crest was able to define its authentic brand and use it successfully to:
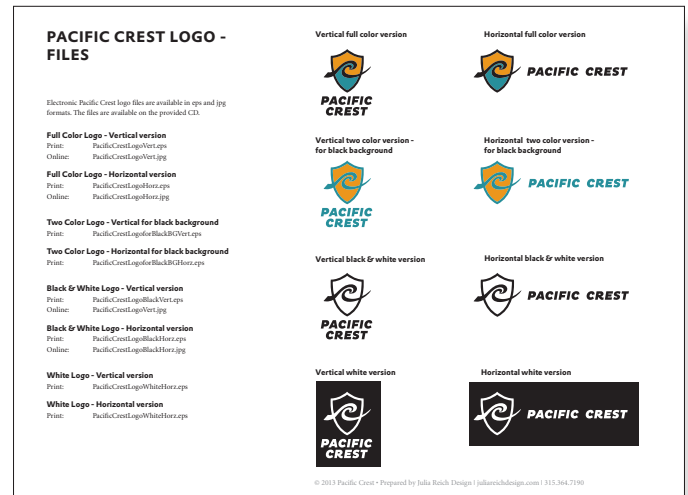
▲ PAGE FROM THE BRAND STANDARDS MANUAL

1) build a fiercely loyal audience of supporters,

2) be represented across several channels, and

3) engage diverse audiences such as youth, parents, alumni and event customers.

They are well-positioned to forge ahead with savvy, strategic communications and fund raising efforts. ⊛

"We're doing a better job telling our story. The new brand got our heads around what it is we really do - it changed how we think about ourselves. We can tell our story more succinctly. And we describe ourselves in the same way each time, whether it's a grant or a phone-a-thon or a social media campaign."

—STUART POMPEL EXEECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PACIFIC CREST

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