

## Strategic, thoughtful brands will survive

Budgets slashed, jobs eliminated, CEOs forgoing bonuses. With so much negative news and distractions, this may not seem to be a great time to focus on bolstering a company's brand. But although it might appear counterintuitive, this is a critical moment for your brand's success—there has never been a better time to address what constitutes your brand and how that is communicated.

The branding conversation has been played and replayed—to the point that it sounds like old news. But now more than ever, the strength and consistency of your brand and the clarity surrounding your company's promise is going to influence future success. Is your brand's reputation built on an authentic foundation that makes promises and delivers on those promises for stakeholders who value the brand? Is your brand promise transformative, but delivered through old channels in tired communications?

*Communicate with all your audiences to take advantage of this pause in the full-throttle modern economy; it will increase your chances for future success.*

Taking advantage of this pause in the full-throttle modern economy means increasing your chances for future success.

More than how your companies look—although visual branding is a critical element of your brand constellation—the messages you communicate both externally and internally can be distilled to their most competitive essence, and the means by which they are delivered can be optimized and modernized.

Most companies have robust systems and processes in place to market and communicate. Those systems are dependent on good data and information so that they can create smart and effective campaigns and plans. As we've seen with the recent election, '08 holiday sales cycle, and the collapse of traditional media advertising, consumer behavior is going through a metamorphosis. Understanding where stakeholders are headed – where they get their information and what they do with it – requires a change in how we communicate.

## Employees are your best brand advocates

Start with your own internal audiences. Ask them why they care about the brand they work for (rather than telling them why). Think about new ways to talk to external audiences. Investors, customers, analysts, the media—all possess invaluable information and insight about your brand.

While marketing budgets may have tightened, our ability to communicate has never been more affordable and efficient. Earned media, digital communications and experiential marketing can be leveraged in new and creative ways to communicate with stakeholders.

Work to sustain confidence in your brand—it will help ensure your future.