

Brand Globalization – Case Study

Background

This global client is an international business, providing back-office support services to large multinationals, operating in 5 continents and has representation in over 50 countries, with annual turnover of close to \$1Bn. Structurally, since 1992 the company has grown its regional and country level service centres as independent operations under licence.

The company had realised they are competing with growing number of multinational mega-companies, as more and more large consulting and software firms, who were already providing complementing services to the same target market, started venturing into the company's core business.. The change in the competitive landscape has forced the company's leadership to look into centralising their branding and marketing activities (as well as other support services). But without a central resource, this function was impossible to carry through..

The interim solution was to bring an external consultant, to help formulating a strategy. That interim solution (and the strategy formulation) has lead to the creation of a Global Marketing team, lead by myself.

Challenges

From a global perspective, the firm appeared as a fragmented organization, due to lack of consistent online appearance. Digging deeper into the digital presence, we've examined the company's websites (there were more than 10 individual and standalone websites), social presence of the company and its' leadership, and SEO properties.

The challenges consisted of:

1. Multiple websites, inconsistent in every possible way: from various hosting providers, to structure, design, content, CMS platform, etc..
2. Multiple attempts at setting social profiles, on multiple platforms, by multiple employees (current and past). Mostly remained untouched and unmanaged.
3. Lack of collaboration between marketing / IT people from the regional offices.

Vision & Objective(s)

The objective was quite a simple one – leverage global physical footprint, to create a consistent global brand. The vision of a unified global brand was the principal which guided us in the formulation of the strategy and its' implementation process.

The aim was to keep the plan as agile as possible, and provide this strategy document as guiding principals, as situations and plans change rapidly and frequently in the digital environment.

Proposed Approach

The process we followed, included:

- The definition of the overall business goals and align digital strategies against it.
- Seek and earn key executive support and sponsorship based on the business case, not the trend.
- Developing a list of prioritized digital marketing initiatives that will demonstrate business value at the global-level and in key lines of business and plot them on a two-to-three year roadmap.
- Getting the right people involved at the right levels. An effective digital strategy takes a unified approach with cross-functional support. It's a combination of digital savvy and business acumen.
- Recommendations to invest in technology and people (human resources).

Implementation Plan

The first stage, consisted of a comprehensive research and analysis phase, included stakeholders workshops and interviews, using sophisticated technology platforms, digital analysis frameworks and experts to lay out the current market environment, benchmarking current performance and comparison to select group of existing and potential competitors.

The second stage was based on the findings of our analysis and research, and involved the formulation of 5 strategic goals. We then prioritized them, and concentrated on the most important and urgent one: **Brand Globalization**.

When considering a globalization of a brand's digital assets, there are just too many components to consider and invest time and energy in, a prioritization exercise is a must. Some examples of such components: CRM, web and social analytics, social media, Search Engine Optimisation, Online Advertising, mobile applications, web application, document management and storage, Enterprise Social Networks, collaboration tools, and of course websites and social media. Following our discovery process, it was apparent that two of those components were the most urgent and important:

Website Consolidation

In order to achieve a **unified website presence**, we have identified two main options, namely:

- Utilise current web infrastructure, with 20 or more websites and domains, to maximise regional SEO benefits. This initiative will include streamlining websites' look and feel across all domains, streamline metadata and website structure.
- Another option is to start fresh, and create **one** global website, with subdomains per country / region.

This option is more scalable, as it allows additions of new countries and regions as required, without the need to register additional domains or optimise new websites for Search Engines individually.

Our recommended option was the latter, as this option will allow a cleansing process, and help position the company in the global playing field.

Considerations:

Products and services – Although the services suite varied from country to country, and region to region, the core services are similar, and core customer verticals are similar. The global site will position the company as a unified and united front, yet allow the regions to provide local experience.

Localised subdomains – a good web developer can create separate websites linked to sub domains, which are determined by the IP of the visitor. For example, an Australian visitor typing in companyname.com will automatically redirected to au.companyname.com – an Australian subdomain and website, talking to Australian specific audience. Content and information (service / product offering) are then tailored to the local audience.

Languages – A global site, although written in English for the majority of visitors, should include multiple languages, as spoken in the region / country.

Legislation – Localised websites should adhere to and be governed by local law. This should be reflected in the calculators, site T&Cs and other localised components of the site.

Social Media

A unified social media presence has two main components.

Look and Feel – which is governed by the **brand guidelines**, and extends beyond company own properties (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.), to executives and employees' own profiles and avatars.

Unified Voice – which is governed by a comprehensive and global **Social Media Policy**. The social media policy should provide company employees with a definitive guide of how it is expected of them to behave on the various social networks, while under contractual agreement. This is a Human Resources policy, which should be written by a specialist HR lawyer, specialising in Social Media.

Actual implementation

Once the strategy was in place, we set to work. As in most cases, the implementation process uncovered some hidden issues, which we had to quickly overcome, to follow the strategic direction, and achieve the desired outcome:

Branding

There was no central **branding guidelines document**, hence the Logo, Email signatures, business cards, document templates etc. needed to be created and distributed across the globe.

Websites

Removing most of the old websites, and consolidating dozens of active and inactive domains, the team and I have created **one global website**. We've created a multisite infrastructure, with separate regional websites operating under this structure. The site is globally managed, with the ability to allow individual site management to multiple users, at various permission levels.

Social Media

Social media was not a topic of much attention. From a global perspective there was no social infrastructure, or standardisation of social properties.

- We've identified all social media accounts, on all known networks, identified their owners, consolidated or deleted unnecessary accounts and pages, and removed fake accounts.
- We've created a Social Media Playbook, which included guidelines from a brand and users' perspectives.
- We've put together a list of recommendations, to become the baseline for a social media policy.
- **Social Media Monitoring and engagements** – Tools and structure put in place, along with required training and staff up-skilling.
- **Content Calendar** structure is now in place, with global coordination of content across the regions.
- **Email Marketing** - Introduced an external, web-based Email Marketing system, and created HTML templates, following the Brand Guidelines.

Results!

Some results are quicker to surface than others. It's still early stages, where most of the work to-date had to be clean up of legacy items, and putting an infrastructure in place for the future. From a Branding perspective, we've achieved our goals within a short period of time. The company now has

- A unified & documented brand guidelines;
- A system generating email signatures & business card artwork;
- A unified and consistent branding on all social media accounts;
- One (centrally managed) website structure, which is current, versatile and scalable;
- Increased engagement over social media accounts, for example:
 - Increased LinkedIn Company Page following by over 50% in 3 months
 - Significantly Increased LinkedIn Group engagement
 - Build up a strong following on Twitter, (earning a high Klout Score) from scratch.

It's important to emphasise, that the strategy creation process included not only an audit, but a benchmarking component. These benchmarks, will allow the company to track their performance against their starting point, but also against their competitors. Coupling it with a strong set of KPI's, this company is on the right track for success in the digital space. As time will go by, there will be more tangible results available, as now the infrastructure will allow better monitoring of success.

About Socially Acceptable:

At Socially Acceptable, we offer a variety of smart services, frameworks and processes that help you make sense in a interconnected world. Many people feel that that world is outside their control. We pride ourselves in putting the power back into our clients' hands...

Our lead Strategist, Raz Chorev is a sought-after Business Advisor, specialising in Digital Marketing and Social Media. Raz is a Social Business advocate, and the author of the popular LinkedIn e-book, Easy Steps to LinkedIn Success, achieving over 50,000 downloads.

With 18 years of practical business, sales and marketing experience, Raz has contributed to the growth of many companies by creating and implementing digital and social media strategies. With an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the digital and social media space, Raz communicates complex propositions in a simple and approachable way. Raz has been utilising Social Media since 2006 and has since been advising several organisations on how to navigate the social media maze and maximise its effectiveness for their business whether they are a financial institution, industry association, NGO, academia, recruitment firm or SME. Raz has published dozens of articles in business magazines...