

Re-Branding Your Organization

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Commission
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Roanoke Valley-Alleghany
REGIONAL
commission

Background

- In 1998, the Commission decided to re-brand itself – changing from the 5th Planning District Commission to the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission.
- The name change required a change in our charter – 2/3 of the membership had to approve the change.

The Original Logo and the 1998 Logo



- From 2000 to the present, the Commission expanded its programs, adding the following:
 - RIDE Solutions: our regional ride share and alternative transportation program
 - Volunteers for Energy: a program to promote energy efficiency and conservation
 - Partnership for a Livable Roanoke Valley: our regional sustainability initiative funded by HUD
 - Save-A-Ton: a program sponsored by local governments to reduce carbon footprint.

- We had other programs we've administered for decades, such as the Roanoke Valley MPO.
- Over the years, it was difficult to associate (or link) these programs directly to the Commission. So people thought they were independent programs.



Transportation Planning — Economic Development — Environmental Planning — Community Development — Sustainability Programs

Livable Roanoke Valley



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)



Roanoke Valley Area MPO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



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Current Branding Efforts

- In 2011, the Commission updated its Strategic Plan. The Plan looked at our role in the future, calling for stronger efforts to promote cooperative regional service delivery (for example, procurement, parks & recreation, social services, stormwater mgt.).
- During discussions of the Plan, Commission members noted that we didn't get our name out enough about the programs we provided.

- In the Fall of 2011, our Executive Committee decided to pursue a PR/Communications Plan.
- In the Spring of 2012, we hired a local PR firm to assist the staff with the development of a Plan. We needed a firm that could provide us an honest evaluation of our public relations efforts.

What we wanted from the PR firm

- Conduct a public relations audit through surveys and interviews with local, state and other stakeholders.
- Review our current website and evaluate its effectiveness.
- Review our existing social media efforts.
- Prepare a PR/Communications Plan.
- Train staff on importance of PR and how to implement the Plan.

What the PR firm found in their audit

- The survey/interviews showed that people felt that our work was of a high caliber and our staff was very professional.
- Most respondents said that we did not market the work of the organization very well and that stakeholders didn't know we managed numerous programs (e.g., RIDE Solutions, Volunteers for Energy, etc.).



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- Our logo was “dated” and we should simplify the graphic. This would allow us to better co-brand our other programs under one logo.
- It was proposed that we de-emphasize the full name of the organization and focus on calling the organization the “Regional Commission”.
- Our social media efforts were OK but we needed to expand our efforts and better track how well people were responding to our social media.



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What the PR Plan called for

- Goals/strategies to promote regular contact with the news media and stakeholders – increasing our exposure in the region.
- Mechanisms for assessing PR outcomes.
- Options for implementing the Plan:
 - Retain an outside firm at a set monthly cost
 - Hire full-time staff communications person
 - Use an existing staff member as a part-time communications person and supplement that with outside support.

Commission response to the proposed PR/Communications Plan

- Some disagreement by the Commission about changing the logo; however, the PR/Communications Plan was fine. Final vote – 36 in favor, 1 vote against and 1 abstained.
- The new brand will be “rolled-out” at our 43rd Annual Dinner in late October.

The Logo selected by the Commission



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Lessons Learned

- Recognize that you'll never get 100% consensus. Even staff is sometimes reluctant to change.
- Need to establish decision points along process where it's no longer possible to revisit decisions.
- Need to set clear benchmarks and decision points and make sure stakeholders know when it is time to provide input. Process needs to be mapped out early.

- Need to understand there is a cost associated with PR work: PR firm -- \$27,000; and on-going external support -- \$4,000.
- Be clear throughout process what the Plan is supposed to accomplish.
- Understand that re-branding is not a comfortable process. People often like the way “things used to be”.
- Keep your Commissioners apprised of your progress. The Executive Committee wanted the Commission to choose the logo.

Two Logos sent to the Commission for their Recommendation



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Anticipated Benefits

- Better recognition of Commission among external stakeholders about the programs we administer.
- A process for ensuring more media coverage for our projects/programs.
- Greater recognition for Commission members as more media coverage is given to projects in our communities.
- A stronger regional image for the Commission.
- A more effective website and social media efforts that will reach a larger number of people.

Linking the Logo to Programs



RIDESolutions



A PROGRAM OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSION