



BRAND STRENGTH REPORT



Prepared for: Theresa May, Conservative Party

Your overall score makes you a leader! You're clearly at the top of the food chain with the ability to command the respect of the jungle. But don't rest on your laurels, the balance of power can change quickly, you need to ensure you continue to invest in your brand. Congratulations, your brand is a roaring success, keep up the good work!



SO, FIRST THINGS FIRST...



These simple questions were designed to reveal your current belief in and commitment to brand and marketing.

I would describe my Party as a leader in our sector.

It's a simple question, but hard for most parties to answer. We all want to be leaders, or at the very least ambitious challengers, but are we really doing everything necessary to earn that status?

Leadership comes from doing certain things very well: being truly innovative in both what you do and how you do it, having exceptionally high standards, employing and nurturing brilliant people who love their jobs and the Party, building a reputation for honesty and integrity over time, being a responsible part of the wider community, and having a clear point of view about the future.

So take a very long hard look at the real leaders in your sector, or indeed similar parties in other countries, and work out what they have done and are doing to earn that position.

Marketing and Brand are regularly on our board room agenda.

Regular, high level debate about Brand and Marketing issues in the boardroom is all too rare. Most board meetings seem to be about detailed operational issues against a background of current financial performance. But strategic marketing (which is very different from marketing communications) and brand thinking have a critical role to play in shaping the future of the Party.

How often do your leaders step outside the Party to look at the wider issues and drivers that are shaping the country?

Are you confident how your role within the country will evolve over time? Are you focused on the right things?

What do you want your Party to be famous for?

How do current perceptions support that ambition?

How can your culture and values drive operational performance?

How are you going about explaining your Party strategy to employees, the voters and partners in ways that really get them excited about the future?

Within the last 12 months, we've asked our voters what is important to them. (e.g: through focus groups, surveys, engagement campaigns, interviews etc).

Getting close to your voters and potential voters seems so obvious but it surprises us how few parties and businesses are really comfortable with asking their customers and the public what they think - and then doing something about it! Don't think the rather dry Satisfaction Survey is the answer to everything either. Pick up the phone, pay a visit, invite them in. Make it direct and personal and you will learn so much more. This should also happen at every level in the Party from Party leader down to accounts administrator.

If we asked 10 people across our Party to describe what we do, how we operate and what values we stand for, their answers would be pretty consistent.

At their simplest, brands are stories. A story that people can tell easily and naturally, that they feel involved in and that they believe to be true. If the people working in your Party aren't comfortable with that story, then you've got work to do. Take a simple test and ask 10 random employees to describe the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of your Party. Then go from there.

To shape your story you need to involve your people, get the leadership team to agree, then develop a creative way of articulating it.

YOUR VISION

This deals with how well you have defined your Party strategy and plan, established clear goals, communicated these to the people that matter and differentiated yourself to the public. Think of any successful Party and you'll find they have a clear vision and a well explained strategy and plan.



**Strategy
& direction**

We have a clear strategy and a well defined campaign plan.

A strategy is as simple as saying “We’re going to create an online-only bank that sets a whole new standard in great customer service”. First Direct set out with a clear goal and have stuck to their plan.

The plan is all about how you are going to actually deliver that simple strategy. The plan will look at: the marketplace opportunity, the product and service offer, the target customers, the distribution platform, internal systems and processes and last, but by no means least, the financials.

We all know it's a bit more complicated than this, but you get the general gist.

Most businesses we meet can't explain their strategy or plan in simple terms. If you ask for a copy of the business plan you're likely to get a set of spreadsheets. If that.

We can't start building a brand unless we clearly understand the business strategy and plan. Think about it. Your brand is really a way of explaining that very same strategy and plan in a way that is going to engage with employees, customers and partners and get them excited about your business. A political party is no different to a business in this respect. If you can't explain your strategy and policies effectively, then you will struggle to get people to vote for you.

We have clearly defined goals that we measure and report on regularly.

Most parties put up a large number as their goal: “We want to have 200 seats in parliament by 2020”. Sounds simple enough. But is this really the most important thing to focus on and is that really just a way of measuring other things that are much more important?

Goals should be the things that will help you win and keep voters: the best for support, the simplest and most beneficial policies, the most active in the local community, the best place to work.

So put some real effort into deciding what really matters and how you will keep score.

Then publish this information as a simple data set that is updated each month and share it across the Party. Your people can't change the outcomes if they don't know what is actually happening week by week or month by month.

The campaign strategy and plan have been communicated effectively to everyone inside our Party.

It's no good creating the best strategy and campaign plan in the whole world if your people don't understand it and can't see what part they have to play in delivering the bigger picture.

You can communicate this in different ways. A new, young apprentice may want something pretty clear and simple to take on board, while the seasoned manager may need a hefty dose of detail to convince him or her of the way forward. Horses for courses, but it's got to be the same essential story each time.

Remember that stories are great, but it's how you tell them that matters. Put some effort into both the 'what' and the 'how'.

Finally, as part of the Leadership team you may think the story is really clear. After all you've been deeply involved in writing it. But other employees may not have the same degree of involvement. Don't underestimate how much they want to know and how important it is that you take time to share the thinking of the leadership team.

Our Party has a clear positioning that differentiates us from our competition.

Whatever you decide you are in business to do, you need to lift your head up and see who else is out there doing something similar. Are you essentially the same as many others or do you really stand out for offering something unique or going about what you do in a very different way.

Take your top 5 competitors and do a rigorous analysis of what they are saying and doing. This will help you to see where there is a genuine opportunity to be different.

YOUR OFFER

We often talk about customer-centric businesses but very few companies, and political parties for that matter, truly have the customer or voter at the heart of everything they do.

Changing perspective and seeing the world through your voters and the public's eyes is often the start of something much more exciting.



**Customer
Proposition**

We have a clear understanding of who our key stakeholders are

Have you ever sat down and drawn a simple diagram of all your key stakeholders and their relationship to your business? Do this as a series of concentric circles. Those closest to the centre are the people with the strongest relationships and greatest levels of interdependence. As you move further away from the centre, other stakeholders such as the local community, investors and suppliers are likely to appear. Each stakeholder map will be different, but it's the best place to start to understand who you are dealing with and how they relate to each other and to your organisation.

Draw a diagram showing what your world looks like today and then show how you want that to change in the future.

We have a clear understanding of the public's needs and wants

Thinking directly about your voters and the public, have you stepped into their shoes to understand what their concerns and challenges are? Have you been out to visit them, spent time with them, listened to them, observed them? Have you drawn up detailed voter profiles that help you understand specific groups and personality traits?

It sometimes shocks us that parties don't go and spend quality time with the general public to better understand how they could add value. Sometimes it's just a question of asking. People generally aren't shy of giving their opinion. They have a vital role to play in the development of the country. Bring them in and get them involved in the policy-making process. As early as you can.

When we recently managed a series of internal management events for a client, we went out onto the high street to ask their customers what they thought. We filmed the responses and brought their customers right into the conference venue on the big screen. Dramatic stuff.

At our very own annual team away day, we invited one of our key clients to join us and explain the pressures that they work under. It really helped our designers to hear directly from a senior client and to see the world through their eyes. This first hand insight into a client's life helped the team understand how to approach projects to deliver real value.

The public fully understand our policies

Voters generally buy into one specific policy first. After all they have a specific need to address. But if you want to turn a single vote into a longer relationship that works for both parties (pun intended), then you need to ensure that all voters understand the scale and scope of your full manifesto and how more sophisticated or complex policies might offer them specific advantages at the right time.

Don't miss the obvious opportunities to tell them: the back of a receipt, your manifesto, your online pages. The worst thing you can do is assume that they know everything you can do for them.

The British public are at the heart of everything that we do and shape all key decisions

How often have you thought "life would be so easy if we didn't have to deal with the general public!". It's a tempting thought that many Party leaders have. Thankfully, most of them recognise that without the public we wouldn't be here in the first place.

Strange then, that so many decisions can be taken without taking the views of the public into account or thinking about what the impact of the decision might be on them.

If you really know what the public need and want and you design your policies around giving them something that other parties aren't catering for, then you are half way to having a successful Party. Ask yourself "how will what we are doing make life better for our voters?". If the answers aren't clear, then think again.

YOUR IMAGE

First impressions count and nowhere more so than in a competitive political environment. Branding is about much more than a logo, but as a symbol that represents the breadth and depth of what your Party stands for, your identity sets the tone for everything that follows.



External Manifestation

Our brand is widely recognised by the people that matter to us

Not every brand can achieve the blanket profile that a dominant player like Apple has established. Even if your business operates in a very niche sector, it is possible to make sure that you are famous within that narrower marketplace.

This requires brand owners to think carefully about where their key stakeholders are likely to see and experience the brand and to make sure that it achieves maximum recognition through smarter communications activity.

So don't just think about being famous, focus on being famous to the people that matter.

We have a distinctive visual identity that helps us to stand out

It is possible to give your brand a whole new look and feel through a strong graphic identity. If you want to change how people perceive your Party, this is a good place to start: simple, confident design, fresh and distinctive colours, bold use of shapes, clear and legible typography, engaging illustrations and photography all combine to create a graphic language that will help you to stand out.

Just make sure the reality of your policies lives up to the expectation that you are creating in voters' minds.

It's a good idea to do a competitor brand audit. Identify say 5 key competitors, making sure some of them are aspirational competitors, and create some boards that show how these brands have built their identities. This will help you see who is setting the standard and identify where there is an opportunity to be different.

We present a consistent image across all touchpoints with the public

This is a really simple one to get to grips with. Find a large wall and create a visual montage of everything that a potential voters sees (branded vehicles, outdoor advertising, general PR), touches (websites, emails, literature) and experiences (offices, events). Stand back and see what the overall impression is. Does it add up to something greater than the sum of the parts?

Once you've done this for potential voters, do the same exercise for employees throughout their journey: from recruitment, through induction, training, personal development, reward and recognition, socialising, volunteering all the way through to leaving. Past employees can remain part of your community too.

We operate with a consistent service personality across all our operations

Take the brand to the next level and think about the service your people provide.

When someone walks into one of your reception areas, what is the welcome they receive? How are they treated? What is the physical environment like? Are you doing anything differently?

When we went to visit the head office of FTSE 100 business the other day, the reception was manned by two security guards who were clearly more interested in the football scores than in us. The desk was untidy. The efficiency was somewhat lacking. When first impressions count, we weren't that impressed.

At every touchpoint on the voter journey how do your people interact with the public and what is the message they communicate about your brand through their attitude and behaviours?

YOUR CULTURE

If your people feel motivated by a positive working environment, with shared values and a sense of empowerment, their contribution is going to be significantly greater than if they dread each new day at the office. What's it like at your place?



Internal Manifestation

We have a well-defined, values-led culture

Do you know what it was that made your Party successful in the early days? Are these the same things that will keep you at the leading edge in the future?

Do you know what the qualities, behaviours and attitudes are of the people that you regard as being the 'stars' of your organisation? Have you stopped to try and 'codify' what it is these high performers do that sets them apart?

If you can identify the core values that you want at the very heart of your Party on a day-to-day basis, then you will have some essential criteria to use when you recruit, induct, train, develop, reward and promote people.

We have a tip here: try and find a way of explaining these behaviours in a way that makes them a bit more interesting. Teamwork is a simple to understand concept but overused in the land of organisational values. Why not express the same idea as "All for one and one for all". This has got a better chance of becoming part of a distinctive culture and you can have some fun with the concept.

Organisational values should never just stay as words on a page. They have to become part of 'how' you work. So again, if teamwork is what you want to promote, then create dynamic spaces where teams can actually get together and make things happen. Find imaginative ways to reward people when they live the values: an annual award for the most effective team or the most effective team player.

We have strong and respected leadership

The values that you ask your employees to embrace while at work should be the very same values that your leaders demonstrate. In our experience this often isn't the case.

Let's say your business has identified 'teamwork' and 'respect' as two of their key values. It can be the case that the leaders of the business aren't very good team players and they don't treat people with a huge amount of respect.

So living the values has to start right at the very top. If you can get the top-level Party leadership team to demonstrate that they are committed to some simple, guiding principles then they will be respected and emulated by others in the Party.

Our people, at all levels, feel empowered and involved

Whatever level we work at, we all want to feel that our views count. We also want to feel that we are trusted to act in the best interests of the Party and have the authority to take certain decisions appropriate to our role and responsibilities. It's no surprise that the more responsibility you give people, the greater responsibility they take for their actions, as long as they feel equipped to take the necessary decisions and are supported by their managers.

Some cultures seem designed to do just the opposite and end up disengaging and dis-empowering people.

High performing businesses tend to have good relationships between people in the organisation and they avoid unnecessary levels of hierarchy. They have open and transparent communications and share information regularly about business performance. They celebrate successes and examine failures in a measured way to ensure lessons are learned.

Our working environment is positive and energised

What does it feel like when you first walk in to your office? Is it a happy, buzzy place with a sense of purpose. Do people look pleased to be there? Are they rushing out the door at 5.31pm or do they stay just that bit longer to finish off a job and chat with their colleagues?

Who sets the tone in the office or is it left to chance? When the boss walks in, does the atmosphere change?

Work out what kind of working environment you want and then manage how this is created and promoted.

If you want teamwork to play a bigger part, then create large communal tables where teams can get together on a project!

If you want creativity to play a bigger part, then create large whiteboard walls where people can map out their ideas and move beyond the confines of an A4 piece of paper.

If you want people to come to work early, start providing free breakfast to anyone who gets in before 8.30am.

YOUR EXECUTION

When we talk about 'execution' we're looking at how to bring the brand to life through creative communications in print, digital, display, film and event formats to inform, engage and inspire employees, voters and the general public.



Getting your message across

Our Brand and Marketing activity is a key enabler for Party success and growth

Just as we started with a campaign strategy and plan, can you lay your hands on a brand and marketing strategy and plan?

Does this explain how you will help the Party achieve its goals, matching voters with your policies and motivating employees to want to be part of your success?

You'll know that your brand and marketing is working for you when the phone rings or the inbox pings with potential voters wanting to know more. In simple terms this is 'inbound' marketing.

If you're having to cold-call the public and beat down the door to get in and 'sell' to them, then there's a lot more you should be doing to raise awareness and open doors.

Look at the quality of the opportunities that you do get and see if these match what the Party needs to be successful. Again, if you're frustrated with the wrong kind of prospective voters then you need to look at your brand and marketing activity.

On the recruitment side, effective brand and marketing will go a long way to attracting the right kind of candidates. The best people want to work with parties that are recognised for being leaders or challengers.

We successfully communicate across both traditional and new media channels

The advent of digital media didn't make marketing communications any easier. In fact it just got a whole load more complicated within a fast-moving, online and social media landscape that promises much but often delivers little.

Two decades on and marketers understand that the best communications integrate traditional and new media to create dynamic campaigns that inform, engage and inspire.

Our latest ads prompt readers to go online and watch some short films featuring customers sharing their real-life experiences. Print translates to web which translates to digital video which translates to social media.

Our communications with voters, partners and employees is a two way dialogue

Communication, by its very nature, should be two way: you talk: I listen, I talk: you listen. If you only ever want to talk about yourself then you won't be having much of a conversation. So start by asking questions and see what response you get.

We've just designed a brave new range of advertising concepts for an existing client. We're not quite sure how people will react, so we're going to ask their database of 5,000 customers and prospects to help us choose the best adverts to use.

The very fact of asking people to consider the options, choose their favourite, vote online and give us their feedback will generate incredibly valuable feedback, reduce the risk of the campaign and strengthen relationships with over 5,000 engaged brand advocates. Many of these contacts are warm prospects anyway, so we will have reached our primary audience before even placing a single advert in a magazine.

We have the right marketing knowledge and skills to succeed

When it comes to trickier subjects such as SEO or social media, content marketing or viral campaigns, where do you turn for useful advice? Do you have people within your Party who know the answers or know others who do?

A good in-house marketing or brand manager doesn't need to be an expert in all things, but they do need to know how to manage. That's about knowing what a good strategy and plan looks like, convincing others of the importance of investment in marketing, harnessing the skills of domain experts and measuring and reporting on progress so the Party knows what value is being delivered.

If you look at your external partners, do they have the right knowledge and skills to help you achieve your objectives? Do you trust their advice and are they consistently delivering added value?

have we helped?

We hope you've found some useful pearls of branding wisdom within this report and that we've given you the advice you need to ensure your brand becomes king of the jungle.

Many business don't take branding seriously, and it's our job to show them just how important to success brand is.

If you want to know more, or to chat through your challenges with our Head of Brand, Rebecca, then get in touch!

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about rbl

rbl is a brand-led agency providing the perfect balance between strategy, creativity and delivery.

Our approach encompasses brand research, strategy, creative, planning, implementation and management.

We collaborate with clients to co-create the brand they want to own. After all, it's your brand not ours.

Through creative communications in print, digital, display, film and event formats we bring brands to life, informing, engaging and inspiring employees, customers and partners.

Our clients range from elite sports teams to FTSE 100 plcs, entrepreneurial start-ups, owner managed businesses, social enterprises and charities.

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