

FOCUS PAPER

# Brand Management Portals: Clear focus on the brand

Successful brand management

## Brand Management Portals: Clear focus on the brand

Corporate Brand Management Portals provide all functions and tools for successful brand management and are in integral part of an active and successful branding strategy. Brand Management Portals are no profiling tools for marketing departments being smiled at by the rest of the company; they add value across the whole organization: by providing a complete range of brand- and marketing-related information, tools and reports at one central place in the company. A Brand Management Portal can thus represent the gate to more transparency and process efficiency as well as better quality of campaign implementation in marketing – on the condition that it is properly positioned within the company from an organizational point of view as well as with respect to its content and processes. This paper analyses the dimensions of an integrated Brand Management Portal and gives information about its ideal content and scope as well as about its implementation.

### Comprehensive and seamlessly integrated: Dimensions of a Brand Management Portal

Every Brand Management Portal has a clear focus on the brand. For this purpose, it accounts for all dimensions regarding brand and branding. It unifies various tools under one roof: CI-guide, tools for marketing implementation, a consistent data pool and a reporting system.



Figure: The dimensions of a comprehensive Brand Management System – the focus is on the brand

#### 1. Corporate Identity (CI) and Corporate Design (CD)

A strong Corporate Identity is the basis of consequent and stringent branding, which in the end supports and promotes a brand's success. A company's complete image is reflected by the CI. The Corporate Design builds the bridge to the

creative implementation – with basic information and style guides how to use the CI in communication materials. A Brand Management Portal provides all information regarding CI and CD in a media-adequate way: Whether static or interactive, text-based or animated, a broad variety of implementations is possible. Examples of CI use and templates that are available via the Portal are essential for its success with the users. These important materials turn it into the central point of CI-information for all employees, because it adds noticeable value to employees by helping them to do things right and by making the information how to do those things right accessible in a very fast and easy way. A context-sensitive, direct and horizontal connection of the CI style guide with operational tools (e.g. printed material creation) allows for an intuitive handling of the Portal.

A CI Portal in consequence goes far beyond a pure collection of information about CI and CD and becomes the anchor point for all employees' identification with the brand. Animated and moderated sequences illustrate the brand values, positioning and strategy and can be accessed via intra-/extranet any time.

## 2. Operational Implementation

The operational implementation frequently holds considerable challenges: shortage of resources in the marketing department, a large number of parties involved in the processes and a plenty of operational tasks on various To Do-lists, which are to be accomplished under great pressure in adequate quality. This dimension is as well reflected in a Brand Management Portal. It provides software tools to create relief in the daily marketing business of planning, creating media and executing campaigns, such as:

- A media database (Media Asset Management) as central storage point for all media assets such as pictures, videos, graphics, brochures and other marketing materials. Besides the simple storage of media assets such a tool fulfils a variety of functions, like the automated conversion of images into the required formats, editing pictures, different rights and roles for the users and many more (see: "BrandMaker Media Pool").
- Possibilities to create and individualize media extremely cost-efficiently. For printed media, this is a so-called Web-to-Print Module, for online media, this may be a tool for the simple creation of individualized banner ads. Being based on defined templates, these brand management tools allow for the individualization and localization of media and marketing materials (e.g. adverts, flyers, office equipment, materials for decentralized units) while at the same time safeguarding the CI-requirements and without causing additional design and layout efforts (see: BrandMaker Media Management).
- Marketing Planning and Budgeting: To support the planning processes in marketing, Brand Management Portals provide specialized marketing planning software. It stores and manages all planned activities and budgets in a central database. Due to this fact, all marketing employees work with up-to-date information at all times – rights and roles determine read and write possibilities for single employees (see: BrandMaker Marketing Planner).
- Further functions of the Brand Management Portal may for example be an event planning software, tools to execute direct marketing activities or a shop module to order giveaways etc. According to a company's specific requirements and tasks, these functions can be composed to build an adequate, complete solution.

### 3. Marketing Controlling and Feedback

A Brand Management Portal serves as working tool and feedback channel at the same time: All actions executed via the Portal are captured for controlling, so that valuable feedback about the tasks accomplished and the marketing materials used is collected for the marketing management. Thus, for example, it becomes traceable, which materials are being used by local units, such as branches, retailers and subsidiaries, in which frequency and for which purposes. Consequently, the Brand Management Portal represents a management tool delivering clear and precise information about what happens in the marketing execution. This means:

- Reduction of efforts in data processing.
- Optimization of future campaigns based on feedback by the local units and in consequence optimization of the allocation of marketing resources.
- The central marketing departments are closer to the needs of local marketing units.
- Mutual and common understanding is promoted and in consequence a better brand image is created.

### 4. Brand Management and Brand Value Created

A Brand Management Portal also serves the target groups management and board to support their jobs in branding and brand management. It automates the delivery of performance data and key brand indicators. Market research data can be directly imported into the portal and are automatically processed. Thus, the brand management can consult these aggregated figures to define strategic brand objectives and positioning as well as to evaluate brand success.

### Vision: The Comprehensive Brand Portal

The vision behind a Brand Management Portal is that all brand- and marketing-relevant data, tools and information are concentrated in one source. Whenever an employee encounters or works on a marketing topic, he or she knows: the Brand Management Portal provides everything required to accomplish this task properly. To set up the Marketing Portal in a way that serves all target groups properly, it is important to analyze the system stakeholders and their requirements very closely. Frequently, different target groups benefit in different ways: employees outside the marketing departments, marketing professionals and managers at local company units (branches, retailers, subsidiaries, affiliates) as well as management and board members. The different target groups of course have different needs and requirements to their Brand Tool: it needs to be information platform, marketing software and reporting tool at the same time.

While the CI-Portal, tools for creating CI-conform office equipment and the media database can for example be accessible to all employees, the areas that are accessible are defined according to their relevance and support for each user group. The complete marketing organization can for example be provided a comprehensive planning and controlling tool, while the execution tools may be only available for specific users or user groups to create printed and online advertising materials. The board and management, on the other hand, need access to all controlling data for their decisions; thus, for them, the tool needs to meet other requirements.



Figure: Example – A Brand Management Portal provides different functions to its target groups.

### The Benefits – Operational Excellence and Strategy Support

For all stakeholders, the Brand Management Portal generates tremendous benefits: it simplifies daily business, creates a consistent data pool for all employees and promotes thinking outside the box:

**For marketing employees in headquarters and at decentralized locations:**

- Relief from operational tasks in the daily business
- Support with all kinds of marketing jobs and tasks
- Quality-assured basis for CI-conform advertising materials
- Central gate to all tasks and information related to branding and brand communication

**For the brand management:**

- Transparency of marketing activities and all related information
- Compass function and navigation help for the brand strategy
- Strengthening of the marketing employees' brand awareness
- Awareness of the importance of brand and branding with all employees

Consistent basis for marketing data, common view and thinking outside one's own box

Figure: Benefits of a Brand Management Portal

## Some Basics for Implementation

To prevent running into obstacles when implementing a Brand Management Portal, some basics should be taken into account:

- Layout: A Brand Management Portal must not look just "somehow": an integral part of its success is the acceptance by the employees. This acceptance is extremely increased by giving the portal the face of the brand: this is why a user interface adapted to the CI is a must.
- The transitions from module to module should be as seamless as possible: This requires the complete integration of all functions available – without any intermediate steps, workflow interruptions and redundant clicks.
- The Brand Management Portal must represent real support and deliver tool-based process optimization to generate noticeable added value. This is realized by automating repetitive, administrative and operational tasks.
- The Brand Management Portal must be available centrally from the intra- and/or extranet – ideally via SingleSignOn. This means that no further login is needed as soon as an employee is logged onto the Corporate Portal.
- For seamless processes, the system should also integrate external service providers such as agencies, letter shops and printing providers.
- The Portal must be "IT-friendly", e.g. in terms of the technologies used, security and interfaces with other systems such as CRM and ERP.
- A reasonable distribution of the tasks to maintain the system and its content is essential to allocate these duties to a group of people instead of just a few.
- Management support is indispensable: To be well positioned to the employees, the Portal requires support by the board and management.
- No "mammoth project"! The system roll-out should be executed step by step to achieve quick and noticeable wins.

A last, but integral point is the selection of the proper software solution when building a Brand Management Portal – Making the right choice here will generate long-term and sustained brand success.

## About BrandMaker

BrandMaker is a Marketing Resource Management (MRM) system, which provides a broad spectrum of solutions: Offered are solutions for marketing strategy (scorecards as "guide rails" for marketing) and management modules (for example, software for integrated market planning and budgeting); as well as modules for marketing implementation and for optimization of the creative supply chain (job management, review management, media asset management, a web-to-print module, event planning, and a module for creation of online media). The system has a modular design and is applied according to the individual client requirements. The software is developed and marketed by the company BrandMaker GmbH. BrandMaker solutions are in use successfully in marketing departments of companies of varying size and in various corporate sectors – for example at EnBW in the energy sector, Commerzbank AG and DekaBank in the financial sector, at international service providers like Ernst & Young and companies from the producing industry such as ZF Services GmbH. The software company for optimized marketing processes has about 150 employees across Europe.

<http://www.brandmaker.com>