

Is Your Brand Broken or Just Old?



No, you probably don't need a rebrand.

You may have noticed that a lot of big organizations have rebranded recently, and some have discovered the hard way that changing a familiar brand can be a risky business. The instinct to rebrand comes from a very relatable place: a desire to stay relevant, to appeal to younger audiences, or simply to shake things up. Yet, more often than not, these rebranding efforts don't achieve their desired results.

Take Tropicana's 2009 packaging overhaul, for example. Tropicana replaced its familiar straw-in-orange packaging with a dramatically modernized design, and sales of the Pure Premium line dropped by 20%. Although Tropicana quickly reverted back to its old packaging, the packaging change cost the company more than \$50 million dollars.

More recently, Cracker Barrel discovered just how much weight can be attached to a familiar visual identity. In August 2025, the restaurant chain introduced a simplified logo that removed its familiar "Old Timer" character. After intense customer backlash, the company reversed course less than two weeks later and restored the old logo.

What's interesting about both examples isn't simply that the new designs were unpopular. It's that the organizations underestimated what their existing brands meant to the people who already knew and loved them. In an interview with the New York Times, Neil Campbell, the Tropicana North America president, reflected, "We underestimated the deep emotional bond they had with the original packaging...what we didn't get was the passion this very loyal small group of consumers have."

This “deep emotional bond” is what we’re referring to when we say that a brand is a relationship.

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A brand is the collection of experiences, memories, expectations, and impressions that a person calls to mind when they see your logomark or hear your organization's name. You can shape those impressions, but you can never fully control them.

And that’s where legacy nonprofits find themselves in an interesting position. If the only two options are “stay crusty and illegible” and “lose \$50 million due to branding disconnect,” then it’s no surprise that most nonprofits stick with the safe, known option rather than the chancy upgrade.

If your organization has been around for a couple of decades, your brand almost definitely has some history behind it. Maybe you’ve gone through a formal rebrand, or maybe you’ve gradually updated your logo, website, and materials over the years. Maybe your staff have created their own unofficial system of fonts, color, and templates because the official ones no longer suit their purposes.

Here’s the important distinction that Tropicana and Cracker Barrel missed: a brand doesn’t become outdated simply because it’s old. It becomes outdated when it no longer serves the organization it represents. So before you start shopping around for a new logo, let’s figure out if your brand is actually broken, or if it just needs a little attention.



ARGUMENTUM AD NOVITATEM

This logical fallacy, the appeal to modernity, assumes that something is better simply because it's new or modern. But can't you tell just from looking at the new logo that their rebranded biscuits don't taste as good?

Broken or just old?

If you downloaded this resource, there's a good chance you're already aware of some day-to-day inconveniences your brand is causing your staff.

Rank yourself on these six questions to get a clearer picture of where your brand is supporting your mission vs. where it may be getting in the way.

Brand Recognition

Do people outside your closest circle of supporters, staff, and board recognize your name and visual identity?

1

POINT

Yes, our brand identity is well-known in our local & online communities.

2

POINTS

Unsure. Our brand is well-known locally, but our brand recognition doesn't extend much beyond our immediate community.

3

POINTS

No, our name and/or logo would not be recognized by most community members or online visitors.

Mission Fit

Does your current identity reflect the work you do today, or has your mission field shifted?

1

POINT

Yes, our brand identity is still aligned with our mission and work.

2

POINTS

Unsure. Some things have shifted, but some things are still the same.

3

POINTS

No, our brand identity no longer accurately represents our organization and/or the work we do

Digital Performance

Does your website hold up against peer organizations of similar size and budget?

1

POINT

Yes, our website is significantly better than our peers' websites.

2

POINTS

Unsure. Our website is not significantly better or worse than our peers' websites.

3

POINTS

No, our website is significantly worse than our peers' websites.

Differentiation

Could someone mistake your materials for those of a peer organization at a glance? (i.e., donor mailings, social media, event materials, signage, etc.)

1

POINT

No, our branded materials are distinctive and recognizable.

2

POINTS

Unsure. Some of our materials are distinctive, but others blend in.

3

POINTS

Yes, our branded materials could easily be mistaken for those of another organization.

Internal Use

Do your staff actually use your brand materials, or have they created their own workarounds? (i.e., templates, letterhead, social media graphics, color palette, typography, etc.)

1

POINT

No, our staff/volunteers proudly identify with our brand and consistently use standard brand materials for promotional purposes.

2

POINTS

Unsure. Our staff might build workarounds, but that's likely due to a lack of pre-built materials.

3

POINTS

Yes, our staff/volunteers have demonstrated a reluctance to adhere to brand standards & materials.

Donor Perception

Have donors or grant funders made negative assumptions about your size or competence based on your brand?

1

POINT

No, our brand has never gotten in the way of connecting with new donors or qualifying for grants.

2

POINTS

Unsure. Feedback from donors and/or grant funders has been mixed or absent.

3

POINTS

Yes, we've had reason to believe our brand makes us appear less established, capable, relevant, or trustworthy than we actually are.

6-9 Points

Your brand is doing pretty well! Keep it up! Your brand probably doesn't need major intervention. Keep an eye on the places where you scored higher, but don't fix something just because it's old. A healthy brand can still have some cosmetic wrinkles.

10-13 Points

Your brand could use a tune-up. You're probably noticing some friction already. Your brand isn't necessarily broken, but it's starting to make your organization's work in some areas harder than it needs to be.

14-18 Points

Your brand has become a roadblock. It sounds like your organization has outgrown parts of its current identity. That doesn't automatically mean you need a full rebrand, but it's time to take a serious look at what's working, what's not, and what needs to change.

WHAT A DATED BRAND IS ACTUALLY COSTING YOU

Maybe your website looks a little old. Maybe your staff keep making their own templates, and maybe your annual report blends in with everyone else's. So what?

On their own, those things might not seem particularly consequential, but remember: your brand is part of the experience people have with your organization, and those experiences shape what people think, feel, and ultimately do.

A strong brand image directly impacts donors' intentions to give.

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What the data says

Nonprofit brand image measurably predicts donor intention to give: [a study in 2025](#) found that brand image alone explains up to 31 percent of the variation in donors' intention to give money. Additionally, another [2025 study](#) found that donors who identify closely with the brand values and identity of a nonprofit organization are more likely to give to that organization.

What this means for your organization

Having a strong brand image is arguably even more important for nonprofits than for commercial companies, because they rely entirely on public trust rather than selling physical goods. Donors gravitate toward organizations whose brand feels solid and current, but a muddled or dated identity makes it harder for donors to see themselves as part of your mission.

Brand strength shows up in donor engagement, recurring gifts, and volunteer interest.



What the data says

In a [2022 global survey of nonprofit senior decision-makers](#), 93 percent said a strong brand identity positively affects donor engagement, 74 percent said a cohesive brand identity increases recurring donations from existing supporters, and 68 percent said a strong visual brand increases volunteer interest.

A [2025 analysis of 200 nonprofits](#) found that nonprofits with strong brands reported higher levels of volunteer & donor retention and intended future engagement.

What this means for your organization

Your brand shows up every time a donor opens an email, a volunteer sees an event flyer, a prospective business partner visits your website, or a staff member sends an invitation to a community group. When those touchpoints all feel like they're coming from the same organization, people have an easier time recognizing you, remembering you, and getting invested in your mission.

Brand strength relies on a strong digital presence, too.

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What the data says

A [2021 survey of 500 consumers](#) found that 50% of consumers say their first impression of a brand is based on its website's design, and 42% agreed that they would leave a website because of poor functionality.

What this means for your organization

If your website looks neglected, is difficult to navigate, or feels disconnected from everything else you produce, people may form an impression of your organization that has very little to do with the quality of your actual work. Your brand has to work wherever people encounter it; your brand is only as strong as your weakest touchpoint.

Investing in design correlates with real revenue movement.



What the data says

Nonprofits that invested in professional design over a two-year window were 50 percent more likely to report a revenue increase than those that didn't.

What this means for your organization

Professional design isn't a magic fundraising wand, but neither is it mere decoration. Your brand is one of the tools you use to communicate competence, build familiarity, and create a consistent experience for the people you're asking to trust your organization.



You need restoration, not reinvention.

If your diagnostic score was higher than you'd like, what should you do?

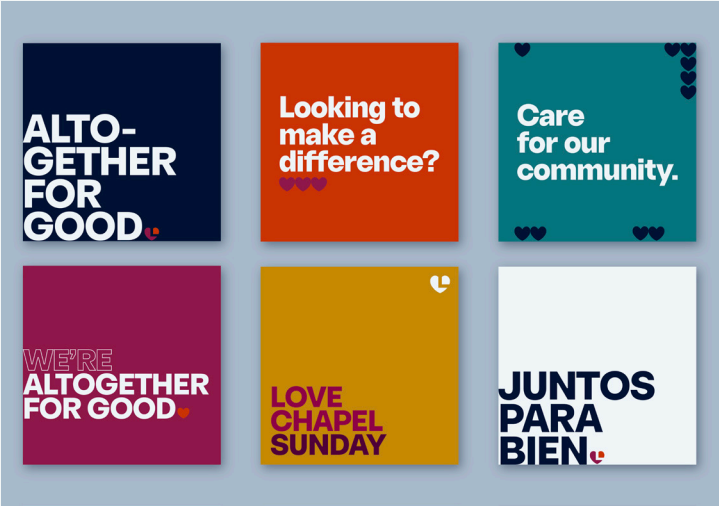
First, don't panic—a brand that needs attention does not automatically need a full rebrand. Remember what happened to Tropicana. Remember Cracker Barrel. The trust and recognition you've built over the years have real value, and you shouldn't throw them away simply because some parts of your brand have become dated.

But you also shouldn't leave a struggling brand untouched simply because you're afraid of changing it. There is a better middle ground. At Amenable, we call it brand restoration.

Brand restoration is not a rebrand; it's not a reinvention of your brand. We use the word "restoration" intentionally, because it calls to mind the ways that conservators restore older paintings and sculptures to their former glory.

We approach brand restoration the same way. We keep what's already working, repair what's broken, and skip the parts of a full rebrand that make it risky. It's a rejuvenating spa day, not plastic surgery.

Sometimes the difference is significant, and sometimes it's only noticeable from the inside—our approach is not one-size-fits-all. **Here are some examples of what we're talking about** —————>



Love Chapel

LoveChapel had earned decades of trust in Bartholomew County, but their informal visual identity didn't reflect the strength of their work. We refreshed their brand to better represent Love Chapel as an organization that is welcoming, capable, and altogether for good. [Read more on our website.](#)





Camp Get-A-Way

Camp Get-A-Way had been creating meaningful experiences for families for more than 20 years, but the old logo didn't communicate much about what made the camp special. We refreshed their brand to preserve its warmth while making the camp experience evident at a glance. [Read more on our website.](#)



THE TRINITY FORUM

The Trinity Forum's brand communicated intellectual rigor, but held younger readers at arm's length. We restored their brand to preserve its credibility and gravity while making the organization more approachable and relevant to the people they hoped to reach. [Read more on our website.](#)

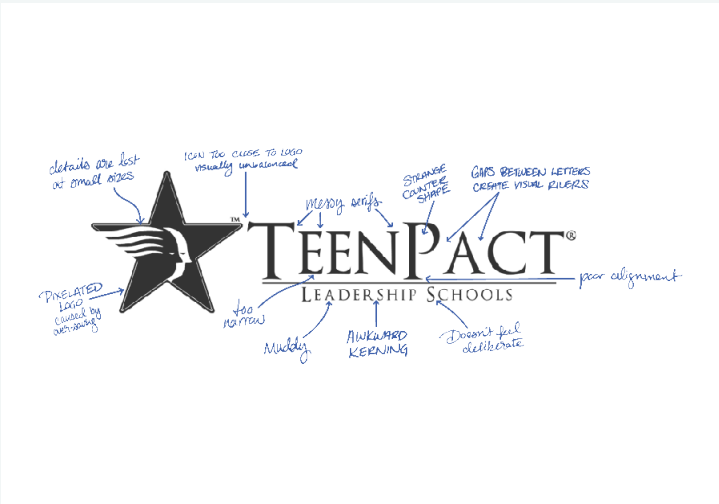


ORIGINAL



RESTORED

ORIGINAL



RESTORED



TEENPACT LEADERSHIP SCHOOLS

Two decades of volunteer-driven growth had left TeenPact with a recognizable name, but a fragmented visual identity. We restored their logo and built a cohesive brand system that could carry TeenPact into its next chapter. [Read more on our website.](#)

What does your brand need?

If you completed the diagnostic, you already have a place to start. [Send us your score](#) from the diagnostic quiz, and we'll help you find the best path forward for your organization.



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Resource

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