Integrated Building Industries, Inc.
Christopher GLASS & ALUMINUM, Inc.
Christopher GLASS SERVICES, Inc.
Griffin GLASS & METAL WERKS, Inc.

integratedbuildinginc.com
christopherglasschicago.com
cgschicago.com
griffin-glassandmetal.com

832 Industrial Drive Elmhurst, IL 60126
3014 Fillmore Street Chicago IL 60612
595 Territorial Dr. Ste. A Bolingbrook, IL 60440

Main: 312-256-8500
Mobile: 312-684-0226
Email: info@christopher-inc.com

Forging a Future Cast from the Past

[Integrated Building Industries] [Griffin Glass & Metal Werks] & EFCO Chicago Service Center have merged forces to forge a new future of glass and metal construction materials.

Elmhurst, IL   Release: October 1, 2020   *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

[Integrated Building Industries] [Griffin Glass & Metal Werks], leading manufacturer of glass and metal components for commercial construction projects, today announced that they have acquired / merged / entered into a binding agreement with EFCO Chicago Service Center, a supplier of standard storefront, doors and frames, to strengthen the comprehensive product offerings to our clients.

The purchase of EFCO Chicago Service Center, based in Bolingbrook, IL, further increases [IBI] [GGMW]'s share in the glass, glazing, and architectural metals construction market. "The combination of EFCO brands with our own glass and metal fabrication expertise will provide our clients with increased value, " said Robert 'Bob' Wolf, IBI Vice President of Subsidiary Operations and Facilities. "The merger/acquisition is also expected to result in greater efficiencies and expedited product distribution."

In addition to this new acquisition of EFCO, Integrated Building Industries is the parent company of leading construction glass and metal companies including Christopher Glass & Aluminum, Inc., Christopher Glass Services, Inc., Griffin Glass & Metal Werks, Inc., [and others ?].

"Taking the best from both of these companies, our plan {intent} is to provide the very best in glass and metals fabrication and manufacturing for the commercial construction industry," stated Abe Asllani, Chairman of IBI. "Joining EFCO's aluminum windows, curtain wall, storefront, and entrance systems with Griffin Glass & Metal Werks tempered and annealed glass, architectural and ornamental metals, back painted glass, digital printing on glass, shower doors, handrail, and windscreen options will complete and complement our total product offerings and allow for quicker delivery to our customers." "We will meet every performance and budgetary need for any new or renovation commercial construction project while providing the very best in customer service." Mr. Asllani continued.

As we integrate the EFCO name and products into our Integrated Building Industries [? acquisition company] family of companies, we welcome every opportunity to provide the right glass and metal construction products for every project. More information about all of our products and services can be found at our company website, integratedbuildinginc.com and our subsidiary websites, links can be found on our main site.

Contact info: Name: Bob Wolf, Vice President of Subsidiary Operations and Facilities

Organization: Integrated Building Industries

Address: 832 Industrial Drive, Elmhurst, IL 60126

Phone: 312-256-8500

[Date]

Dear [EFCO customer name],

EFCO in Bolingbrook, IL is pleased to announce its recent {merger with/acquisition by} Integrated Building Industries, Inc. [? acquisition company], the parent company of leading construction glass and metal companies including Christopher Glass & Aluminum, Inc., Christopher Glass Services, Inc., Griffin Glass & Metal Werks, Inc., [and others ?].

Taking the best from both of these companies, our plan {intent} is to provide the very best in glass and metals fabrication and manufacturing for the commercial construction industry. Joining EFCO's aluminum windows, curtain wall, storefront, and entrance systems with Griffin Glass & Metal Werks tempered and annealed glass, architectural and ornamental metals, back painted glass, digital printing on glass, shower doors, handrail, and windscreen options will complete and complement our total product offerings and allow for quicker delivery to our customers. We will meet your performance and budgetary needs for any new or renovation commercial construction project.

Our highly trained, experienced teams of professionals will work with you every step of the way to provide the best customer service and the finest glass and metal materials for your construction project. With the implementation of a more streamlined approach to processing, fabricating, and delivering your orders, we are certain that you will see an increased value in working with our new combined team.

As we integrate the EFCO name and products into our Integrated Building Industries [? acquisition company] family of companies, we welcome every opportunity for you to get to know us better. Please explore our comprehensive websites which showcase our IBI family of products and services along with a long list of successful, showcase projects completed throughout the past 40 years. One of our business connections specialists will be contacting you soon to be introduced and answer any questions you may have.

Rest assured; your orders will continue to receive the highest of priority as we are working hard to make this transition [merger/acquisition ?] a seamless one. We truly appreciate your continued business and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

[Signature/Title/Contact ?]

Integrated Building Industries, Inc.
Christopher GLASS & ALUMINUM, Inc.
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Email: info@christopher-inc.com

[Date]

Dear [employee name],

The executive team of Integrated Building Industries is pleased to announce its recent {merger with/acquisition of} EFCO Corporation – Chicago Service Center in Bolingbrook, IL. This 40,250 square foot facility in the Remington Lakes Business Park is equipped to manufacture and fabricate an array of glass and metal construction products. These products include: Hung Windows, Projected Windows, Horizontal Sliding Windows, Fixed Windows, Subframes, Trim All, Unitized Curtain Wall, Traditional Curtain Wall, Window Wall, Sliding Entrances, Swing Entrances, Storefront Framing Systems, Storefront Ribbon Systems, Sun Control Sunshades, Sun Control Interior Light Shelves, X Force Ballistic, X Force Blast/DoD, X Force Impact, and High Performance Thermal/XTherm.

Combining the best from all of our companies, the plan {intent} is to provide the very best in glass and metals fabrication and manufacturing for the commercial construction industry. Joining EFCO's aluminum windows, curtain wall, storefront, and entrance systems with Griffin Glass & Metal Werks tempered and annealed glass, architectural and ornamental metals, back painted glass, digital printing on glass, shower doors, handrail, and windscreen options will complete and complement our total product offerings and allow for quicker delivery to our customers. We will meet our customers' performance and budgetary needs for any new or renovation commercial construction project.

We are thrilled to begin this new journey with you as your continued professionalism and loyalty are greatly appreciated. The next few months will be challenging and exciting as we work together towards new goals. We are counting on you to uphold our mission, vision, and values in your work every day. Our customers rely on us to provide the best customer service and the finest glass and metal materials for their construction projects. Please reach out to your manager or human resources for any questions or ideas on how we can improve the overall state of our growing organization.

As we integrate the EFCO name and products into our Integrated Building Industries [? acquisition company] family of companies, we are committed to communicating with you every step of the way. Rest assured; our #1 goal is to make this transition [merger/acquisition ?] a seamless one.

Sincerely,

[Signature/Title/Contact ?]

Integrated Building Industries, Inc.
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GRIFFIN/EFCO MARKETING STRATEGIES

Smartsheet Tip ➜ Itemize different elements of each campaign and schedule them by week

October 1, 2020

PROJECT TITLE	ACTION ITEMS	COMPANY NAME	GRIFFIN GLASS & METAL WERKS / EFCO *Verify usage
PROJECT MANAGERS	ABE ASLLANI, JOHN METZ, BOB WOLF, ANITA FORTE-SCOTT	START DATE	8/19/20 - TARGET DEPLOY DATE: 10/01/2020 *Verify

10/2/2020-Target date passed. No input received/emails ignored/no collaboration/no answers/status of project unknown. AFS

CAMPAIGN TYPE / ACTION ITEMS	ADDITIONAL INFO	PHASE ONE - Start Date 8/24/2020			PHASE TWO - Start Date 9/14/2020			PHASE THREE - Start Date 10/5/2020			PHASE FOUR - Start Date 10/26/2020		
		WEEK 1 8/24-28	WEEK 2 8/31-9/4	WEEK 3 9/7-11	WEEK 4 9/14-18	WEEK 5 9/21-25	WEEK 6 9/28-10/2	WEEK 7 10/5-9	WEEK 8 10/12-16	WEEK 9 10/19-23	WEEK 10 10/26-30	WEEK 11 11/2-6	WEEK 12 11/9-13
TARGET AUDIENCE / EXTERNAL & INTERNAL for INITIAL MESSAGING													
Determine External Target Audience	List of who we are going to sell/promote products & services to	Discussed @ meeting	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Determine Internal Target Audience	List of all IBI companies needing specific messaging re: Efco acquisition	Discussed @ meeting	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
	Train current Efco employees re: acquisition/operations/HR/messaging												
MESSAGE / BRANDING													
Message	Create specific talking points/script and provide overall undersanding of phases	Discussed @ meeting	Need more info.	Need more info.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Unify / One-Voice, One-Message	Training of all staff for unification, one-voice, one-message	Discussed @ meeting	Need more info.	Need more info.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
	Use is for both internal and external touch-points		Need more info.	Need more info.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Griffin w/ Efco	Focus on Branding Griffin using Efco products. WHICH products? Product Branding. Specifications/Details.	Request sent.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Other products	ie: Dorma & others	Request sent.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
CONNECTIONS													
IBI / EFCO	Connect key stakeholders from IBI to EFCO internal staff	Request sent.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
On-site @ locations & Teams Meetings	Create meeting agendas with action items, questions, identify needs, implement plans, timelines, expectations, marketing campaigns, etc.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.								
LOGISTICS													
Messaging	Determine WHAT is to be communicated, WHO is to be communicated to,	Need more info.	In Progress.	In Progress.	Sent for review.		Emails sent again - No replies received						
	WHEN it is to be released/implemented, HOW it is to be released/implemented	Need more info.			In Progress.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Branding	Determine WHAT branding/re-branding is to occurr, WHEN it is to be deployed,	Need more info.		In Progress.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
"Forging a Future Cast from The Past" ?	HOW it is to be created then deployed, WHERE to deploy	Need more info.				No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
MARKETING STRATEGY - BLITZ													
Brochures	Electronic & Print / Existing & Needing to be created (NEW)	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Print	Sales Sheets / Product Information	Request sent.	Waiting for reply.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Web	Updating website(s) with pertinent information	Need more info.				No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
SEO / Links	Update SEO to include new information / Create live links to direct sales/traffic	Need more info.				No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
DIRECT TO CUSTOMERS	Determine plan to attract/retain current and past Efco customers	Need more info.	Need more info.	In Progress.		No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
ONLINE													
Blog/Articles/Press Release	Determine WHAT to include, WHO to inform, then Create & Deploy	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Website(s)	Determine WHAT to include, WHO to inform, Development, then Create & Deploy	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Email Newsletter/Campaign	Determine WHAT to include, WHO to inform, then Create & Deploy	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Catalog/Ordering Platform	Determine WHAT is currently in use at Efco, Does it work?, Does it need updates,	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
	CAN it include/be deployed for Griffin?, Look/Feel/Usability/Customer Satisfaction												
LONG TERM PLANNING													
Operations	Manufacturing / Fabrication / Inventory	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						

GRIFFIN/EFCO MARKETING STRATEGIES

Smartsheet Tip ➜ Itemize different elements of each campaign and schedule them by week

October 1, 2020

PROJECT TITLE	ACTION ITEMS
PROJECT MANAGERS	ABE ASLLANI, JOHN METZ, BOB WOLF, ANITA FORTE-SCOTT
COMPANY NAME	GRIFFIN GLASS & METAL WERKS / EFCO *Verify usage
START DATE	8/19/20 - TARGET DEPLOY DATE: 10/01/2020 *Verify

10/2/2020-Target date passed. No input received/emails ignored/no collaboration/no answers/status of project unknown. AFS

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Profitability / ROI	Business Development / Sales / Tracking Progress & ROI	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	Need more info.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
1st Year Goals	Identify, Plan, Deploy, Assess, Review, Readjust, Adapt												
2nd Year Goals	Identify, Plan, Deploy, Assess, Review, Readjust, Adapt												
3rd Year Goals	Identify, Plan, Deploy, Assess, Review, Readjust, Adapt												
Long Term Goals	Identify, Plan, Deploy, Assess, Review, Readjust, Adapt												
MARKET RESEARCH													
Targets	Current and Lost Customers Lists from Efco	Request sent.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Impact Studies	Identify best outlets for advertising/generating sales/reaching customers		In Progress.	In Progress.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Surveys	Current and Lost Customers Lists from Efco	Request sent.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
	Past experiences, deficiencies, improvements needed/desired,												
	Learn from these to implement KPI's and ROI's												
Competitors in Market	Identify, List Products, Compare/Contrast	In Progress.	In Progress.	In Progress.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
Business Development / Sales	Identify non-union glass companies & other potential customers		In Progress.	In Progress.	Sent for review.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
BUILDING / FACILITY													
Lease Details / Future Forecasting	When is lease ending? Future plans for location?												
Machinery / Staffing	Details here												
Signage / Identity Branding	Current EFCO Signage - determine what is to happen after 10/1/2020	Sent for review.	Sent for review.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
	WHAT Signage needs to be supplied (type/size/content) for 10/1/2020 deployment?	Sent for review.	Sent for review.	Waiting for reply.	Waiting for reply.	No reply received.	Emails sent again - No replies received						
OTHER													
List here	Details here												

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Overall Status: HR/OT

Confidential

Kick-Off Meeting: August 19, 2020 [Abe, John, Bob, & Anita via Teams]
1st Report Date: September 2, 2020 2nd Report Date: September 17, 2020 **3rd Report Date: September 28, 2020**

Status Code Legend

- On Track: Project is on schedule
- At Risk: Needs attention/inputs
- High Risk: At risk, with a high risk of going off track
- Off Track: Date will be missed if action not taken

Target Audience / External & Internal for Initial Messaging	● List of who we are going to sell/promote products & services to – **No reply received.** ● List of all IBI companies needing specific messaging re: EFCO acquisition – **No reply received.** ● Train Current EFCO employees re: acquisition/operations/HR/messaging – **No reply received.** 9/17/2020 – Google search shows the Bolingbrook location is listed as **Permanently Closed ??**
Message/Branding:	● Message – Sent for review 9-17-2020 - **No reply received.** Press Release sent for review 9-28-2020. ● Unify / One-Voice, One-Message – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.** ● Griffin w/ EFCO – Branding Griffin using EFCO products/Other products – **No reply received.**
Connections:	● Connect key stakeholders from IBI to EFCO internal staff {relevancy?} – **No reply received.** ● On-site @ locations & Teams Meetings – Need more info. **No reply received.** ● Create meeting agendas with action items, questions, identify needs, implement plans, timelines, expectations, marketing campaigns, etc. – Need more info. **No reply received.**
Logistics:	● Messaging – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.** ● Branding – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.** ● What, When, How, Where – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.**
Marketing Strategy – Blitz:	● Brochures / Print – Need more info. **High Risk of Going Off Track.** ● Web / SEO / Links – Need more info. **High Risk of Going Off Track.** ● Direct to customers – Need more info. **High Risk of Going Off Track.**
Market Research:	● Targets – Current and Lost Customers Lists from EFCO – Waiting for reply. **No reply received.** ● Impact Studies – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.** ● Surveys – unknown ● Competitors in Market – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.** ● Business Development / Sales – Sent for review 9-17-2020 **No reply received.**
Building / Facility:	● Signage / Identity Branding – Waiting for reply. **No reply received.**

This entire Marketing Strategies plan for Griffin / EFCO is at **High Risk / Off Track** due to zero communication, discussion, guidance, information, review, input, or follow-through from the many documents which Anita Forte-Scott has provided regarding the identified Action Items from the August 19, 2020 meeting with John Metz, Abe Asllani, and Bob Wolf. List of provided documentation is on the following pages. 10/1/2020 target date is projected to be unattainable because of the above Off Track items at this time.

Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

Communications in mergers: The glue that holds everything together

https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/communications-in-mergers-the-glue-that-holds-everything-together#

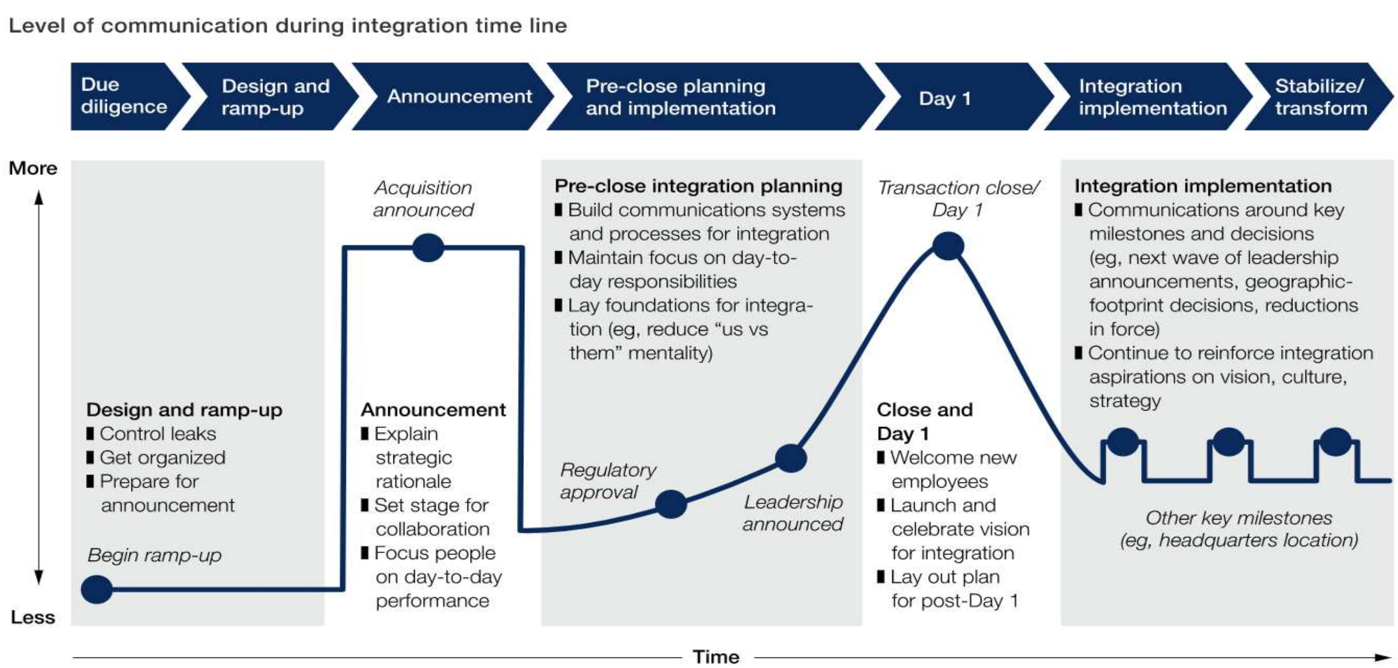
Structured communications play a critical role in mergers by preventing the distractions that often accompany them and could even damage the existing businesses. In addition, the communications plan lays a foundation for the combined organization's future success. It is one of the few merger workstreams that go "live" immediately, as soon as merger conversations begin. The communications team announces the deal and then helps to develop, engage, and manage integration planning and execution.

Structured communications play a critical role in mergers by preventing the distractions that often accompany them and could even damage the existing businesses. In addition, the communications plan lays a foundation for the combined organization's future success. It is one of the few merger workstreams that go "live" immediately, as soon as merger conversations begin. The communications team announces the deal and then helps to develop, engage, and manage integration planning and execution.

The role of communications across the merger timeline

The work and focus of the communications effort ebb and flow throughout the merger process, reaching critical peaks at the announcement of the deal, at the transaction's close, and on Day 1. Each phase in the merger timeline has its own unique communications focus (see below).

The intensity and focus of communications evolves through the integration life cycle, with different priorities at each phase.



Design and ramp-up

In the design and ramp-up phase, the key is to have the right people and infrastructure in place. Because time is usually short, the goal is to get the basics right to land the merger announcement. After the announcement, the team will have time to refine the governance process and to add members.

A ramp-up plan should also include one specific bit of preparation: controlling merger news and responding to leaks. We often see companies struggle with this not infrequent event. Although a merger is a confidential process, the story may well leak, given the number of parties involved. Being prepared with approved responses in the event of leaks saves time and angst in what would otherwise be a mad scramble to get messages coordinated on both sides and approved quickly.

Announcement

This is the first opportunity to tell all stakeholders the strategy and vision behind the merger. How well this stage is executed can go a long way to extend the merger's honeymoon period. Crisp articulation of the strategic rationale forms the basis of multiple communications tailored to employees, vendors, regulators, and others. These all reflect the main goal: to ensure that the right message about the merger is communicated consistently.

Pre-close integration planning

The pre-close period, after the merger announcement, requires special attention. This is a time when competitors go after your customers and when top talent is most likely considering whether to leave the company; some may go for interviews but wait until the close to depart.

Regularly communicating with customers and employees in the pre-close period is critical to limit damage to the organization. One mistake we see companies make frequently is "going dark"—communicating little or nothing between the announcement and Day 1. Another typical mistake is avoiding substantive topics and instead offering up "happy talk" or corporate prattle that is meant to comfort but that no one believes, except maybe the leaders. Communications should be genuine and transparent. Employees value having difficult messages communicated in a direct way.

This is also an important time for the leadership team to look for and listen to feedback, reinforce what's going well, and take corrective action when necessary.

Day 1

Day 1 is a time not only to celebrate the coming together of two organizations but also to give key stakeholders clarity and guidance. First and foremost is telling employees what's changing and what's not. Too often, we hear of employees who don't know, on Day 1, who their new bosses will be or what processes to follow. A structured communications plan plays a critical role in ensuring that employees are well informed and equipped to operate seamlessly from the beginning. The communications team should not only ensure that the right leaders are in the right locations during Day 1 and week one but also coordinate town halls and webcasts to facilitate the transition. This is also an opportune time to mount a road show for top customers and to address communications to the broader base of customers, reiterating the new company's commitment to them. In addition, to maintain continuity of supply, it's essential to make vendors aware of key changes and to keep them up to date even if there aren't any.

Integration implementation

The work of the communications team doesn't end when a transaction closes. In fact, more frequent communications usually come afterward. In addition to a regular cadence of integration communications, specific messages about important decisions (such as the location of headquarters or additional organizational moves) are essential to ensure that changes are understood and accepted. Many key changes often occur weeks and months after the legal Day 1, so it's essential to tell stakeholders, including customers and vendors, when these changes will take place; for example, customers should be informed of any alterations to product portfolios and systems, as well as process changes (such as a single ordering system). Likewise, vendors should be informed of any changes to payment terms.

Six steps to building and executing effective merger communications

A six-step process is essential to build, execute, and constantly monitor and improve merger communications (see below). These steps aren't meant to be "one and done." They are usually iterative and often require refining as the communications and leadership teams learn lessons during the phases of the merger and get feedback on the initial communications—and as communications needs evolve. While a company can never be 100 percent prepared, this systematic approach greatly improves its operational rigor.

Six essentials help build and execute a robust integration-communications approach.

1. Identify key stakeholders

Every merger has a wide range of stakeholders, and each kind of stakeholder requires a customized approach and targeted messaging. Broadly speaking, stakeholders can be classified into two groups: external and internal.

External stakeholders include investors, who must be persuaded of the merits of a deal, and analysts, who expect management to make the strategic and financial case for it. Customers need to be retained and reassured about continuity of service. Vendors anxiously await information on what the merger would mean for them. Regulatory bodies and government officials are concerned about anticompetitive behavior and job losses. Finally, the general public will quickly form opinions about whether the merger is good or bad.

Internal stakeholders are primarily employees of the two merging companies, but distinct groups within them have different needs. A well-thought-out plan distinguishes between (and tailors messages for) employees in general, high potentials, and employees at risk of leaving. In particular, communications with unions or workers' councils require careful preparation and often legal counsel. The retiree population is especially interested in any potential changes to benefits.

Employees are critically important stakeholders. They must be excited about the new company's vision and buy into it. Before they can get there, however, they need to understand what will happen to them. They are wrestling with many questions. "Do I have job now?" "Will I have a job in the future?" "Whom will I be reporting to?" "Do I belong here?" Communicating with employees solely about the greater good, before addressing their personal situation, will probably be ineffective.

The communications plan must absolutely address high potentials and critical employees. In a recent merger, targeted communications and leadership time spent cultivating the high performers—including one-on-one discussions between them and the leadership on future career paths—let them know how greatly they were valued. The resulting attrition for this group of employees, who are often the first to flee, was much lower than expected.

2. Identify the main milestones and trigger events

The communications workstream springs into action very early in the merger process, and the pace rarely lets up much. An effective communications plan identifies milestones, such as Day 1, and trigger events, including the announcement of leadership appointments. The goal is to spend the majority of time and energy on the material events, while making sure that regular updates continue to flow.

All key decision makers should be aligned on what the communications focus is—and isn't. This helps to ensure that leaders buy into the vision of the merger and commit themselves to execute it well. Alignment also sets up and clarifies the conversation about who will be doing what, and when.

In a recent merger, the communications team and the integration-management office (IMO) reviewed a checklist of all possible merger milestones and quickly identified the most relevant ones. A substantial focus was placed on organizational announcements, for instance the top-level structure and leadership appointments—the areas that most concerned employees. Syndicating and getting alignment on these issues gave the team much-needed focus and direction and helped it execute the plan successfully.

3. Set up governance and resourcing for the communications team

In addition to resourcing, the communications team and integration leadership should establish a clear governance process and clarify roles and responsibilities. We typically see four roles:

- The integration steering committee reviews and approves the overall approach to merger communications, as well as messaging to core stakeholders, and serves as the final decision maker on issues that can't be settled elsewhere.
- The integration leader reviews the overall communications-activity plan and approves the dissemination of materials.
- The communications leader manages the communications workstream, working closely with the integration leader to develop, syndicate, and execute the plan. The communications leader also finds the right resources—internal and external—to guide content development.
- The communications team develops and disseminates content suggested by the communications-activity plan, working closely with functional leaders and external partners.

Effective and timely execution requires well-defined governance—a process for approving and disseminating communications. In a recent transcontinental merger, the two communications teams worked closely to define the process. The communications teams prepared draft content for dissemination at least a week in advance. They committed themselves to share content for review and approval with the communications leaders, the integration leader, the appropriate functional leaders, and, finally, the legal team. The process was set up for speed of execution, defining clear deadlines and ensuring that only the right people—and only a small number of people—were involved in the approval process.

4. Develop core messages and a 'deal narrative' to anchor all communications

All communications during the integration period should be anchored in a set of core messages arising from the deal's rationale, the employee value proposition (EVP), and the associated change story. The rationale is an articulation of the core reasoning for a deal and its drivers of value. The EVP describes why the future is bright and what the deal means for employees. The change story—a clear and compelling picture of what must be done to unlock the deal's value, and why—signals that the merger departs from "business as usual." The core messages are personalized further for each group of stakeholders. All communications should reinforce and build from these core messages.

Developing a compelling set of core messages grounded in a deal's rationale is one of the most important moves for a CEO and the C-suite. The communications team can start the process of creating the core messages by conducting a deep structured interview with the CEO (to articulate the vision and value) or by organizing a workshop with the executive team to create a single aligned story for the organization. No matter how companies generate the first draft, the core messages must be tested and refined across the organization to ensure that they appeal to various stakeholders.

5. Develop the step-by-step plan for each milestone

During a recent merger in which the communications team was highly regarded by C-level executives in both organizations, the team worked closely with the IMO to build a detailed communications plan (the merger's "who, what, when, why, where, and how"). The team used the same approach and project-management tools that the merger's other workstreams (such as IT) did. The plan brought together all merger communications, across all stakeholders, and included the key milestones and target events, as well as regular updates to different groups. It also detailed all deliverables, listing the audiences, the owners, the deadlines, the required preparation times, the content-approval processes, and the interdependencies.

Communications teams should use a wide variety of channels to reach their intended audiences and to ensure that messages sink in and get reinforced. Deciding which channels to use for each deliverable is a critical component of building the communications-activity plan. Social media plays an increasingly key role here, especially for engaging employees, customers, and the general public.

6. Establish two-way communications—monitor, gather feedback, and adjust

Creating two-way feedback channels is critical to ensure that messages are received as intended and that gaps are flagged and addressed appropriately. Often, communications efforts fall flat in this area. Either there is no effort to gather feedback, and employees in particular feel that they are being talked at, or nothing is done with the feedback—which may be even worse. A good feedback-collection process uses a number of tools, such as pulse surveys, integration barometers, town halls, focus groups, and website or email feedback. Once all this has been gathered, the communications team and the IMO analyze the feedback and take corrective action.

People we call "fire spotters"—well-respected employees who play the influencer role within organizations—can aid the feedback process. Recruiting these employees up front and using their support to gather feedback is quite helpful. They also serve as a credible way to address the feedback. In a recent merger, a couple of fire spotters quickly identified an impending wave of attrition. Given the heads up, the integration leader and senior leadership could take emergency action: a combination of nonfinancial and financial levers. While the wave wasn't stopped, the company significantly mitigated the barrier to integration.

Putting a structured merger communications plan in place

In our work with companies, we have found that several best practices are critical to develop a structured merger-communications strategy.

- *Focus on business objectives.* Energy should be directed to protect and build business value.
- *Start early and tailor.* Messages should address the stakeholders' evolving needs. If you cannot communicate decisions yet, explain the process.
- *Govern tightly.* Executives should be directly engaged through clearly defined roles and processes.
- *Be conscious of culture.* If, for example, bottom-up thinking is part of the core culture, top-down messaging may not land as well.
- *Be consistent and compelling.* All communication should be of high quality and repeatedly reinforced in multiple channels. Communicate five times more than you think you need to.
- *Humanize the message.* Address what people really care about, in a tone that is responsive to the mood and situation, not overly formal and legalistic.
- *Animate your leaders.* Actively align leaders, middle managers, and customer-facing staff so that they communicate effectively and consistently. Do not outsource this work to the communications function.
- *Stay up to date.* Keep the IMO and the deal team and major workstreams connected, so that information is up to date and that communications are as proactive and effective as possible.
- *Be responsive.* Collect and respond to feedback regularly and quickly.

Companies often make the merger-communications plan a low priority because of other pressing needs. Some outsource the work entirely to the HR and communications functions—a missed opportunity for the integration team and executive leadership. A structured focus on and investments in communications, with the support of senior leadership, have been shown to yield great benefits: a motivated employee base and engaged vendors, partners, and other stakeholders, all supporting the newly formed company's success.

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https://blog.careerminds.com/company-merger-acquisition-announcement-template

https://bizfluent.com/how-2119516-write-buyout-letter.html

https://www.rhythmsystems.com/blog/4-ways-to-prepare-your-employees-for-a-merger

PAST EXAMPLE OF WHEN PELLA/EFCO COMMERCIAL SOLUTIONS ANNOUNCED COMBINATION:

Pella EFCO Commercial Solutions

Pella EFCO Commercial Solutions
https://www.traditionalbuildingshow.com/page/pella-efco-commercial-solutions

102 Main Street
Pella, IA 50219
www.pellaefcosolutions.com

Pella EFCO Commercial Solutions combines the product offerings of Pella and EFCO — two of the strongest fenestration brands in the industry. With Pella's wood, aluminum-clad wood, fiberglass, and vinyl windows and doors and EFCO's aluminum windows, curtain wall, storefront, and entrance systems, Pella Corporation can meet the performance and budgetary needs of virtually any non-residential or multi-family project, including both new construction and historic renovation projects.

A few noteworthy examples of historic renovation expertise include the Reliance Building and Wrigley Building in Chicago, the New York Life building in Kansas City, the Main Administration Building and School of Architecture at Notre Dame, the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, French Lick Springs Hotel, Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, Crater Lake Lodge, El Cortez Hotel in El Paso, George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Herbert Hoover Library, Hotel Hershey, Hotel Jerome in Aspen, the National Building in Seattle, the Willard Hotel, and Ozark Hall at the University of Arkansas.

We deliver expertise and project support from start to finish. Local Pella EFCO Commercial Solutions representatives are part of your team, managing the details throughout the design and construction process — so you have more time to focus on the big picture. Services include:

Budgeting Assistance

- Help determining solutions within your parameters
- Value-engineering solutions with a complete pre- and post-bid cost-savings analysis

Design Assistance

- Elevation and detail drawings for inclusion in your project documents
- Custom product design
- Thermal and structural engineering analysis
- Help with specifications
- AIA/CES programs and other learning opportunities

Project Management

- Help managing your project's fenestration budget and timelines
- Full shop drawings
- On-site support (testing, installation options, quality inspection)
- Special Projects management team to oversee complex building challenges
- Local service to the owner and tenants after the sale

Sustainability Solutions

- Products and expertise that contribute to green building performance and certification
- Products with significant percentages of recycled content

Engineering Solutions

- Full code review to determine proper design loads
- Structural analysis and design
- Full blast and impact design capabilities
- Formal submittal calculations sealed by Professional Engineer (all 50 states)

Thermal Analysis

- Full thermal model capabilities and submittal calculations, including dew point analysis
- NFRC compliance, including certified Approved Calculation Entity (ACE)
- Building envelope analysis to aid in evaluating decision-making

Communicating a Merger to Employees: 4 Ways to Tell Your Team About a Merger or Acquisition

By Ted Skinner

An acquaintance of mine has recently undergone a merger at her corporation. As a mid-level employee, she knew it was coming; her company had announced a few months ago, but she hadn't heard any specific details other than it was going to happen.

When the time came for the companies to merge, there was confusion, misalignment, and miscommunication. Unfortunately, when merging companies, often preparing employees for coming change has been left off the agenda or is an afterthought. Trust me that it is just as important, if not more so, to make the teams are prepared for the merger as it is to worry about day to day operations. The long-term success of the merged company depends on the communication strategy to communicate with employees.

Here are 4 Ways to Prepare Your Employees for a Merger or Acquisition:

1. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

If you think you are communicating too much, you most likely are not. Employees would rather feel like they have too much information than not enough information. Provide too little information, and minds start to run wild with ideas about promotions, layoffs, and everything in between. Many CEOs try to figure out how to tell employees about a merger, but you should make sure that you are open and honest about the situation. Communicating merger to employees open and honestly is the most important thing that you can do. Typically the senior management is accountable for breaking the news, but most of the questions are going to be asked to team leaders as the employees are most likely to feel comfortable to ask them.

2. Stay Focused

During a merger, you may expect employees to be distracted. However, you need to keep them focused on your company's core purpose. Remind them why they are important, and how their role is critical to the company and its purpose. Don't let the merger ruin the culture of either company, take the both of best of both worlds post-merger. Business leaders need to stay focused on integrating the new company and keeping employee engagement high during the merger integration.

3. Be Honest

Changes are bound to happen in a merger; you can't avoid it. Be honest with your employees that status quo will not remain, things are going to change. This is more than a financial transaction and merging balance sheets, it is merging two living, breathing organizations and their culture. Any attempt at obfuscating the truth will be filled with rumors. Don't let your team fill the void, let them know everything that you can.

According to an article on Monster.com, "Even if you're the company that's taking over, some of your people will have to alter their current roles or take on brand new ones. Have private discussions with those you think will probably be most affected. Notify them sooner than later. You want to give them as much lead time as possible to prepare. Then, when the ax falls (or they get promoted), the transitions will flow smoother."

4. Managing Change

How will employees' jobs change? How will the org chart change in your company? Who will be the single source of truth during the transition? According to Insperity, "One of the biggest reasons mergers and acquisitions fail is due to poor change management. As a result, how you interact with employees and manage the change process can be the difference between success and failure as you merge two organizations. This is where your communication plan and leadership team alignment will pay off."

7 Marketing Best Practices in post-merger integrations

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/7-marketing-best-practices-post-merger-integrations-caltabiano/

There is considerable evidence that many M&As fail. Estimated failure rates goes usually from 60 to 80 per cent. Despite the increased attention on post-merger integration (PMI), dynamics of how two firms' marketing strategies are integrated have been largely neglected. Considering that M&A activity is predicted to increase as more CEOs use M&A strategies to grow/exit their business, also marketing and communications for post-acquisitions are expected to gain proper focus and attention.

Nevertheless the lack of attention given today to marketing issues is interestingly in contrast with the findings of merger failures' analysis, which indicate lack of proper communication and customer retention activities among the major reasons of such failures. Customers in fact tend to stop investments and put their relationships on hold, until a clear message is delivered by the firms.

Competitors often take advantage of the situation reinforcing the negative perception that clients have about the two merging firms; sometimes they take it as an opportunity to steal customers in whichever way they can. In some instances this will be a direct marketing or sales campaign towards the largest or most profitable customers. In some industries, such as IT or pharma, they may directly target salespeople with a view to stealing them.

To make the situation even more challenging, managerial energy during post acquisitions is often used in internal tasks neglecting customer and marketing-related issues; PMIs are in fact often internally oriented. A possible consequence is that decisions are made predominantly on the base of internal criteria such as organization, processes, structure.

Hopefully integration will be driven soon by customer-related considerations creating additional customer value rather than reducing the cost of serving them. While marketing will gain the right attention, here is a series of points which I would suggest companies to look at before planning any kind of post-mergers integrations.

1. Communication with all stakeholders

Mergers involve uncertainty and risk. Communication is essential to focus the organization and to help mitigate these risks. Customers are the first target: they often take their business elsewhere just because they receive inadequate information. A proper customer communication plan should be in place at least a couple of months before the formal acquisition.

Communication is essential to focus the organization and to help mitigate risks.

But they shouldn't be the only communication target. There is a list of other stakeholders to think about. It's important to consider which of these are important to the business and to make sure they are communicated with appropriately. Once key-issues for each stakeholder group have been identified, the company will be ready to communicate using proper channels.

For example, right immediately after the acquisition of Invensys in January 2014, Schneider Electric focused heavily on internal and external communications. The communication plan supporting the acquisition was tailored to the identified audience and was segmented by customers and partners types: customers, partners, system integrators, OEMs, distributors, JVs, supply chain partners. The plan included external and internal communication assets (videos, blog posts, social media packages, press releases).

2. Internal Communications

Internal communication is a second area of focus. A message sent is not necessarily a message received. People should be sent the integration communication and messages time and time again. Employees need to understand what the firms are trying to do, what the vision is and what they are required to do. Telling people what is going on, what will happen and what we want and expect from them is crucial. With more informal, face-to-face communication in and around the merger the formal material becomes more credible and useful among employees. Even at the risk of over-communicating, it's crucial to create emotional connections between the company and its constituents ("*don't tell me what's happening; tell what's happening to me*").

3. day-1 and day-100 plans

Planning, planning, planning - full integrated plans of intended marcom activity, at different stages of the acquisition (e.g. 'day-1' and 'day-100') with costs and benefits, together with deadlines, associated actions, dependencies and risks are a *must-do* for all integration teams.

4. Centralized communication process

Centralizing the communication process is key to guarantee consistency around the globe. The central marketing team should release messaging and assets to the countries time before the launch dates, to make sure proper translation and localization of all assets were done in time

5. A common "messaging platform"

Use a singular message that's relevant to all of your audiences and use it to launch and cap all communications. Make the complex simple. During the acquisition of Invensys the marketing integration team created a 10-pages '*message platform*' or '*messaging playbook*' which was distributed to executives and all regions and provided strong consistency and control over messages communicated around the world.

6. Branding strategy

Individual branding strategy should be released for each of the acquired brands. A '*one size fits all*' approach is not going to work and might create dangerous situations with clients and employees of the acquired firm.

For example, from a branding perspective Invensys brought several independent brands which had to be integrated within Schneider Electric's portfolio under Schneider's "one-brand" strategy. Under the *one-brand* policy all brands had to migrate to Schneider Electric: most of them were moved straight after the acquisition, while others were rebranded at a later stage. The objective was to deliver a consistent customer experience under Schneider Electric brand while also transferring Invensys brand equity to Schneider Electric. The team in charge of the integration process had to define a specific path for each brand that had to be consistent with the Schneider Electric strategy; each brand was evaluated on customer install base, geographical scope and overall brand equity.

Six “associated” brands were identified. Associated brands will transfer equity on the long term to the master brand through association and promotion of the combined brands. All other brands migrated to the Schneider Electric brand immediately after the acquisition.

7. Employees advocacy

Employees advocacy plays a critical role with the alignment of the two companies’ cultures, removing biases and clearing initial concerns. Social Media represent the *natural* channel to put this strategy in place.

After the acquisition of Invensys a very exciting 'experiment' was represented by a social media competition started few weeks after the main campaign was launched, to recognize the power of Schneider Electric and Invensys employees coming together as ONE. The idea was to show the world that we were positive and strong, and together we could solve our customers’ toughest problems. The competition encouraged our employees to use their personal Twitter accounts to tweet about the power of being “Better Together “. For every tweet posted with the *#BetterTogetherSE* hashtag the firm committed to donate a corresponding amount to Habitat for Humanity (one of our global charities), with a goal of reaching a donation of 20K€.

Brand Equity

“Brand recognition and customer loyalty add to the intrinsic value of a company. They drive sales, insulate a company from competition, and lead to increased market share.”

- JENNIFER FERN, VP AND SBA SPECIALIST AT KEYBANK

Merger or Acquisition? 10 Essentials for Marketing

https://www.theedgeroom.com/ter_article/merger-or-acquisition-10-essentials-for-marketing/

Open any industry newsletter or visit a news website and you'll see announcements on the latest industry merger or acquisition. Companies merge or acquire other companies for a variety of reasons, perhaps to fill product or service gaps, broaden their geographic reach, obtain strategic technology or grow revenue. Given the high rate of M&A activity in technology, those of us in the legal or accounting technology industries will likely be involved in an acquisition at some point in our careers.

A merger or acquisition presents unique marketing challenges. At the heart of it, the merging of two organizations, no matter how carefully planned, brings strategic, logistical and cultural pressures that must be recognized and addressed in order to avoid confusion, errors, loss of customers or loss of key employees. Whether you are a company founder, executive or marketer, it's important to plan the transition so that the two organizations smoothly combine as one.

Create a transition team that includes all functional areas of the company.

This should occur when the deal is agreed on, but prior to the effective date. The cross-functional team will identify and make plans to address issues in the areas of products, services, support, human resources and more. Marketing is a key participant in that team; their role is to develop and manage communication of consistent messaging surrounding the event.

Clarify marketing roles and relationships.

In an acquisition, every department faces the potential for confusion about overlapping roles, processes and responsibilities. Marketing leadership, as early as is practical, should communicate the roles and responsibilities to all members of the newly combined organization. Make it clear that "renegade" communications are not allowed. The message must be carefully controlled during the transition.

Address branding/rebranding issues.

Review and update the parent organization's branding architecture, that is, the structure of brands within the organization.

In many cases the brands and corporate identities of the two organizations don't easily fold together. Work with the executive team to understand the strategic goals behind the acquisition. Let the longer-term strategy and your knowledge of the market perception of each company or product guide decisions on branding or rebranding. If a product road map or long-term product strategy is available at this point, consider that outline of future offerings in the brand architecture.

Identify key audiences and tailor the message.

Most marketing organizations spend the lion's share of their time focusing on customer or client audiences and the messages we direct to them in advertising, product collateral, social media and the like. In the event of an acquisition, it's important to consider all audiences for whom this acquisition could be of interest or whose relationship with the parent company might be affected. Expand the messaging platform to include employees, sales channels, technology partners and prospective new hires, as well as clients of the parent company and the acquired company. A truly personalized message will be tailored for each of these constituencies. Work across the company with sales, support, HR and other departments to be sure that communications of the change are positive, detailed and offer additional resources for those who want to learn more. An internal FAQ document can be an effective way to quickly answer the most common questions.

Plan website updates to announce the acquisition.

At a minimum, the websites for the parent company and the acquired company should be updated to announce the acquisition to each new visitor. These changes typically go live on the day of the press release announcing the acquisition. In addition, if the value proposition for the new combined organization has changed, copy edits will be in order. Consider how the website(s) will help educate the market on the merger or acquisition and on the branding changes. Determine a transition timeline, (typically 3-12 months) when both sites will remain live, while the site of the acquired company will encourage visitors to move to the parent site. At a future date, the site of the acquired company will have an automatic redirect, sending visitors immediately to the parent site.

Take inventory of marketing assets.

The day the acquisition is announced, visitors to your website should find current content – product and service briefs, white papers, case studies and other assets that carry the current brand and contact information for the company. It's not unusual for an acquisition to involve review and update of 100 or more pieces of content. Prioritization is key here; be familiar with site analytics to understand which pieces are most frequently downloaded and therefore a higher priority for updates. Lower-priority pieces might be pulled and put in a work queue for updating.

Build a PR and media relations plan.

All activities surrounding the launch of the newly combined organization will key off the PR announcement date. The messaging platform developed for the transition will inform the PR message and content as well. In addition to a press release on the acquisition, work with a media relations expert to strategize on garnering coverage of the announcement, including executive interviews or topical articles on trends or technology in your target market segment.

Build a social media plan.

Review content and activity levels of both companies on all social sites. If the parent account will become the primary account for the newly combined organization, update the branding, description, logos, etc. Refine the list of hashtags and terms, and create a social media policy to reflect those choices. As the transition progresses, merge the accounts of the acquired company into the parent account. This is relatively straightforward with Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+. Instagram and Twitter are a bit more complicated. Set your bio to redirect all potential followers to your permanent account. Post a "We're moving" alert for several weeks to encourage followers to move to the new account.

Publish a project timeline with assigned owners.

While juggling the first eight efforts on this list, be sure to assemble a detailed project plan with a list of tasks by category. Each task should include an owner, approving person (if required) and deadline. Regular meetings or calls with the transition team will keep everyone up to date and allow opportunities for new questions and tasks to surface.

Plan the celebration!

In a well-managed transition, the real work and planning happen in the weeks or months leading up to the public announcement of the acquisition. Communicate continuously with employees about the strategy, messaging and changes they can expect to see. Engaged employees will generate great energy behind the transition if they feel they are a part of it. Be sure to add a line item in the project plan for an internal company celebration of the launch – icing on the cake, so to speak, after all the hard work is done.

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Initial meeting via Zoom with Abe, John, Bob, Anita: Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies 8-19-2020 10:00 AM

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: GGMW Marketing Meeting 8-19-2020 11:23 AM

Hi guys, Thanks for a great meeting. All of your input and directions were clear and necessary. I can tell you have been working on this for quite a while and I am looking forward to being a part of this growth. Congratulations again!
I will compile our meeting notes into an understandable Google Sheet and send the Secure link to each of you. Using the Google Sheet, we each can add, update and track all progress of the Action Items and any other tasks that arise.
When you make an addition/edit to the form, it will save and be visible to all of the participants who have the secure link (each of you and myself). If you ever need any assistance with the Google Sheet, please let me know.
Thanks again! Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email received from John Metz, cc: Abe Asllani: RE: CGS Quote 8-19-2020 12:30 PM

Just noted this in a document for a service contract for this that I signed. It's a recent quote (beginning of May). John

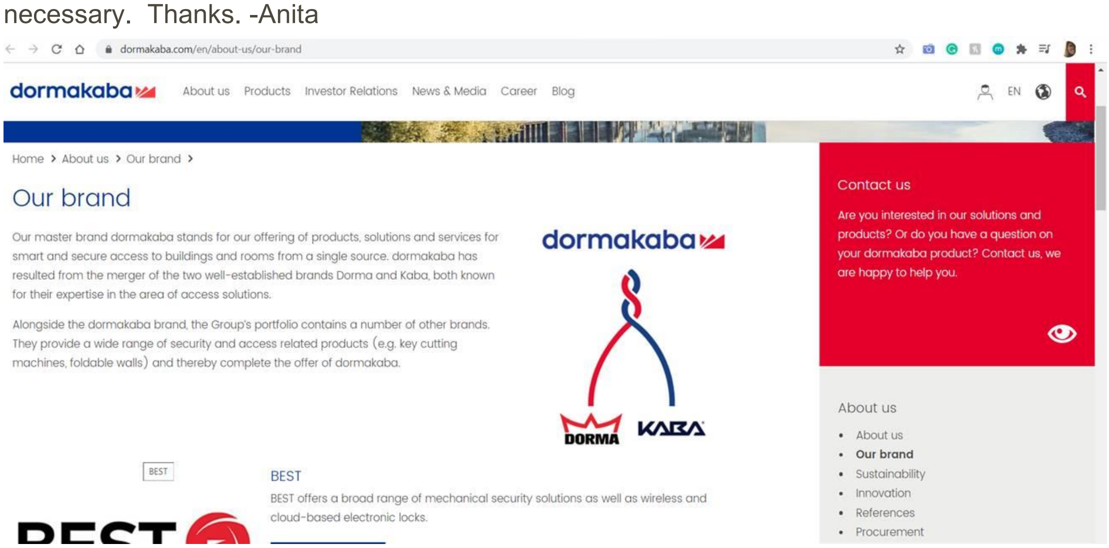
"Forging a Future Cast from the Past"

Email reply to John Metz, cc: Abe Asllani: RE: CGS Quote 8-19-2020 1:15 PM

Yes, that's been used in the past. It's very apropos in the upcoming events. We can incorporate it if desired. I'll add it to the list. Thanks! Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: Name merging… info. 8-19-2020 3:18 PM

Good afternoon gentlemen, As part of our discussion this morning, dorma came up which got me thinking about dormakaba and their merger of companies and names. This could be part of a long-term plan discussion for the future if necessary. Thanks. -Anita



Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: 8-19-2020 2:11 PM

Good afternoon gentlemen, I have created a Google Sheet where we can update, track, and add tasks as it pertains to our meeting this morning about Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies. Please see the document using this Google link. You can edit/add anything as we move forward. There are blank lines in each section for additions and a section labeled "Other" at the bottom for anything else that doesn't fit into one of the listed categories.
Please let me know if you have any questions and let's meet again soon to go over this document and determine if it closely follows your needs in this new endeavor. Thank you, Anita (Google Sheet Link provided)

Email received from Bob Wolf, cc: Abe, John: RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8-20-2020 2:28 PM

I'm not able to open the sheet **Bob Wolf** Vice President of Subsidiary Operations and Facilities

Email reply to Bob Wolf, cc: Abe Asllani, John Metz: RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8/20/2020 2:36 PM

Hello Bob, I am sorry that you were unable to open the sheet with that link. I had added you, Abe, and John as editors. Please try this updated link to review the sheet: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g53iIMV-eexOx1yUdWpcx3iiT7dtW94A1v7CGvY7QU0/edit?usp=sharing
If your system is not allowing you to open the Google Sheet using the updated link above, I have also attached it as a .pdf. (.pdf document attached to email: Griffin_Efco Marketing Strategies – Event Marketing Timeline.pdf)
Hope this helps. Thank you. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: RE: Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8/25/2020 2:05 PM

Good afternoon gentlemen, As part of the Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies plan, I have created a list of products for both companies asking which will be marketed and sold under the new joint company configuration.
Please review this Google Sheet and add check marks next to the products indicated. There is also space to add other products and links to external sites for Dormakaba products and systems.
Please use this secure link to view and to make your additions to this form:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12CALk1RU1B_mVfZdHlA-ZiM3hwpQBr52XsnlXWYrxlE/edit?usp=sharing
Thank you! Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: Griffin/EFCO Building Signage Options DRAFT 8/25/2020 5:33 PM

Good evening gentlemen, As part of the Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies plan, I have designed a draft of some option for signage on the Bolingbrook building location. Please see the .pdf I have attached. Each page is labeled with location and option. Thank you. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott
(attachment: EFCO_GRIFFIN Building Signage DRAFT.pdf)

Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Email received from Abe Asllani via the Samsung Galaxy Note 10+, cc: Bob, John: RE: Griffin/EFCO Building Signage Options DRAFT 8/25/2020 9:02 PM

On Aug 25, 2020, at 9:02 PM, Abe Asllani <abe@christopher-inc.com> wrote: Would like to see more options with a background. Sent via the Samsung Galaxy Note10+, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

Email received from Bob Wolf, cc: Abe, John:RE: Griffin/EFCO Building Signage Options DRAFT 8/26/2020 2:32AM

There's no good and secure way of anchoring a banner to a pre cast building without making holes into precast . A more permanent sing would be recommended **Bob Wolf** Vice President of Subsidiary Operations and Facilities

Email reply to Bob, Abe, cc: John RE: Griffin/EFCO Building Signage Options DRAFT 8/26/2020 1:36 PM

Thank you, Abe and Bob for that feedback. I will prepare and send some additional options for affixed, permanent signage for the 2-elevations on the building and decals for the front doors for your review.
Have a great rest of your day! Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email received from John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8/31/2020 4:25 PM Importance: High

Anita, reviewing the Google docs form you put together I see that there doesn't appear to have been any further modifications/responses at present. I will be discussing this with Abe and Bob this Friday. With respect to that meeting, do you have notes that you prepared from our meeting on 8/19/2020? If so, please forward these to me by Wednesday. Second, I will also need a status report on your work on this project since that meeting. Please also have this to me by Wednesday. Thank you and let me know if you have any questions. John T. Metz, CPA, CCIFP

Email reply to John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8/31/2020 4:43 PM

Good afternoon John, Thank you for reaching out to me about the Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies progress.
From our meeting on August 19th, I have 6 pages of notes which I condensed down into the Action Items which we identified towards the end of that meeting and
listed them in the spreadsheets created. However, as I have been using my notes as a guide, I will type these up and get the .doc to you as soon as possible.
I apologize that this was not done sooner as I had thought that the Action Items in the spreadsheet highlighted the main points.
I will also get you a status report of my research and findings which align with the corresponding points in the spreadsheet.
I have no further questions at this time save for those on the correspondences I have already provided.
Thanks again. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Email received from John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8/31/2020 4:55 PM

Anita…action items in the spreadsheet -- I did review this a couple of times, however, it appears that nothing has changed as far as actually completed items. It would be helpful if I could get this in the form of the status report I requested. Thanks. John T. Metz, CPA, CCIFP

Email reply to John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 8/31/2020 5:03 PM

Good afternoon John, I will have a status report with specific details along with updated items in the spreadsheet to you by Wednesday, or before. I will also be happy to provide weekly updates and status reports to you, Abe, and Bob so we all can keep track of the progress and those listed Action Items.
My pleasure as this is an exciting endeavor and I wish to do all I can to help make it successful and profitable.
I will be in the office on Tuesday and Thursday this week if you have a moment to discuss anything on the Action Items that may require further investigation or more attention. Thanks again. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email sent to John Metz Meeting Notes from 8-19-2020 9/1/2020 3:53 PM

Good afternoon John, I have attached my typed notes from our 8-19-2020 Teams meeting.
I am finalizing the Status Report you requested as well as updating the Google sheets for the Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies progress. I will have those to you tomorrow, Wednesday, September 2, 2020.
I am looking forward to working more with you, Abe, and Bob on this exciting endeavor.
Thank you & have a great rest of your day. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott
(attachment sent: Meeting Notes 8-19-2020.pdf)

Email received from John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 9/2/2020 8:36 AM

Thank you…weekly reports are a good idea. Please work this into your schedule for Fridays. John T. Metz

Email reply to John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 9/2/2020 9:02 AM

Good morning John, I will add weekly reports to send out on Fridays, but, this first one will come to you today as you requested. Would you like the notes I sent you yesterday to also be sent to Abe and Bob, along with the status report I am finishing up today? I wasn't sure if you wanted to review them first before discussing with Abe and Bob on Friday.
Also, will I be joining the meeting on Friday? If so, please let me know what time to be on Teams as Friday is my work-from-home rotation day. Thanks! Appreciate it! Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email received from John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 9/2/2020 10:21 AM

Thanks, Anita. You can send these to me; I will share these with Abe and Bob. The Friday meeting will just be Abe, Bob and I. John T. Metz, CPA, CCIFP

Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Email reply to John Metz RE: Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies – Invitation to edit 9/2/2020 10:30 AM

Thank you for the clarification, John. I will get the Status Report to you shortly as I am just finishing it up and am updating the Google Sheets with pertinent information. Have a great day! Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Email sent to John Metz Status Report & Google Sheets Update with Links 9/2/2020 12:41 PM

Good afternoon John, I have completed the Status Report to-date, and have updated the Google Sheets: a) Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies b) EFCO/Griffin Product Check List. Please see the Status Report attached and use the following links to access the updated Google Sheets:

a) https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g53iIMV-eexOx1yUdWpcx3iiT7dtW94A1v7CGvY7QU0/edit?usp=sharing
b) https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12CALk1RU1B_mVfZdHlA-ZiM3hwpQBr52XsnlXWYrxlE/edit?usp=sharing

I am continuing work on the Action Items within my scope. Please let me know if there is any new information which would be helpful. Have a great rest of your day. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

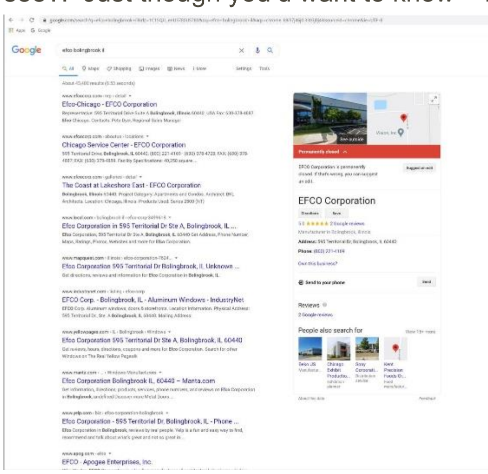
(attached: Griffin-EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9-2-2020.pdf)

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: Griffin/EFCO Building Signage Options DRAFT V.2 3.0 9/8/2020 1:51 PM

Good afternoon, Please see the attached .jpg file of additional options for Griffin signage to the EFCO building. Thank you. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott (attachment: Version 2 – EFCO_GRIFFIN Building Signage DRAFT 3.0.jpg.zip)

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: EFCO Bolingbrook listed as Permanently closed on Google 9/17/2020 11:19 AM

Hi Abe, John & Bob, While I've been working on the Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies (update report coming to you soon), I found on their Google search that someone in their company has 'Permanently closed' the Bolingbrook location – see?: Just though you'd want to know – in case you didn't already. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott



Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9/28/2020

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Update 9-17-2020 4:11 PM

Good afternoon gentlemen, Please review the attachments for the most recent information regarding the Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Update. Without immediate attention from you, many of the listed Action Items are facing a High Risk / Off Track determination at this time. No follow-up communication, discussion of Action Items, access to information, or detailed direction has been supplied to me since the original meeting date of August 19, 2020. Expectations will need to be adjusted with only 9-days left until the October 1st original project completion date. Please use the following links to access the updated Google Sheets: (see links/attachments below)

1. Google Sheet Link to Griffin/Efco Marketing Strategies
2. Google Sheet Link to EFCO/GRIFFIN Product Check List
3. Griffin-EFCO Marketing Strategies Report 9-17-2020.pdf
4. EFCO Griffin Logo Merger Announcement Letter DRAFT 9-17-2020.pdf
5. EFCO Griffin Merger-Acquisition Announcement Letter DRAFT 9-17-2020.pdf
6. EFCO Griffin IMPACT STUDY 9-17-2020.pdf
7. MARKET RESEARCH LIST – Griffin-EFCO 9-17-2020.pdf

Email sent to Abe, John, Bob: Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Update 9-28-2020 2:20 PM

Good afternoon gentlemen, Please review the attachments for the most recent information regarding the Griffin/EFCO Marketing Strategies Update. Without immediate attention from you, most of the listed Action Items are facing an Off Track determination at this time. As I indicated to you on 9-17-2020, very little to no follow-up communication, discussion of Action Items, access to requested information, or detailed direction has been supplied to me since the original meeting date of August 19, 2020. Expectations will need to be adjusted with only 2-days left until the October 1st original project completion date. See the detailed list of communication and documents I have supplied to you since August 19, 2020, in the Griffin-EFCO Marketing Strategies Status Report 9-28-2020 document attached. Please use the following links to access the updated Google Sheets, on a laptop or desktop computer, which you have been invited to edit and provide feedback/input on:

1. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g53iIMV-eexOx1yUdWpcx3iiT7dtW94A1v7CGvY7QU0/edit?usp=sharing
2. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12CALk1RU1B_mVfZdHlA-ZiM3hwpQBr52XsnlXWYrxlE/edit?usp=sharing

I have also attached .pdf copies to this email of the above Google Sheets. Best Regards, Anita Forte-Scott

Respectfully submitted by Anita Forte-Scott - 09/28/2020.

FIRST THOUGHTS / SOME OPTIONS

Starting point:

+ EFCO

Beginning Letterhead / Option to introduce the [merger / acquisition]:

Header -

Footer -

EFCO

Integrated Building Industries, Inc.

Christopher GLASS & ALUMINUM, Inc.
Christopher GLASS SERVICES, Inc.
Griffin GLASS & METAL WERKS, Inc.

integratedbuildinginc.com
christopherglasschicago.com
cgschicago.com
griffin-glassandmetal.com

832 Industrial Drive Elmhurst, IL 60126
3014 Fillmore Street Chicago IL 60612
595 Territorial Dr. Ste. A Bolingbrook, IL 60440

Main: 312-256-8500
Mobile: 312-684-0226
Email: info@christopher-inc.com

EFCO

PRODUCTS
brought to you by

Integrated Building Industries, Inc.

Christopher GLASS & ALUMINUM, Inc.
Christopher GLASS SERVICES, Inc.
Griffin GLASS & METAL WERKS, Inc.

How to Introduce a New Logo to a Customer Base

When consumers see a logo, they remember past experiences with the organization. Changing that logo, or replacing it with an all new design, can create a public relations nightmare if those customers don't understand the reasons behind the change. On the other hand, launching a new logo can hit a marketing home run by attracting new business. You'll need a carefully orchestrated introduction to present your new logo inside and outside the organization.

Internal Sell

An internal launch consisting of meetings, an employee communication program and promotions featuring the new logo should precede the public unveiling. You want employees to understand and become enthusiastic about the change so they can serve as ambassadors of the new design. Sponsoring contests that encourage them to promote the logo can help. For example, Bluegrass Promotional Marketing's Project United awarded employees who met with the most key clients in person and presented its new logo and name, Activate.

Complementing External Events

In addition to news releases, advertising and social media activities, your logo launch may include events targeting specific audiences. Bluegrass Promotional Marketing launched its new identity at a national trade show but gave its suppliers a pre-show preview. Local events also increase awareness. For example, Grand Ridge Plaza, a Seattle-area shopping center, introduced its new logo during a Saturday affair at which staff wore logo colors and gave out prizes. Shoppers could register for the grand prize, a $500 gift certificate, on site or online.

Post-Merger Logo

Introducing a post-merger logo should be done in stages. Any advance communication about the merger should feature both old logos next to the new one. Post-merger, the same items should carry only the new logo and explain the new organization's mission and values. For example, when Duke Energy merged with Progress Energy, its website explained how the new logo symbolized the new organization's future. The site also told customers the logo would soon appear on company trucks, employee uniforms and their statements.

Hard or Soft Launch

The timetable to integrate a new logo across the entire organization depends on your budget and marketing strategy. A hard launch, or simultaneously converting everything like signage, advertising and sales literature may not be feasible, but it does help limit confusion in the marketplace. Phasing in a new logo, or a soft launch, over three to six months makes the change more affordable because you can replenish supplies as old stock is depleted. Other logo-carrying items with an immediate impact on the organization's image, such as business cards, badges, and social media pages, can be updated before facility signage.

Consistency Counts

The goodwill your new logo introduction creates can fade if your staff and vendors change or distort the design. Give them a corporate identification manual in printed or electronic form that outlines accepted standards for logo placement, color and fonts.

Pella / EFCO Example:

EFCO changes logo, anticipates forward moving year

Friday, December 27, 2013 https://www.monett-times.com/story/2036562.html

Murray Bishoff

Order this photo

EFCO, a Pella Company, will have a new logo in 2014. Company president Mike Farquhar announced the change as the Monett-based manufacturer anticipates improving conditions as the national economic recovery progresses.

"EFCO has a logo that has looked the same for the past 20 years," Farquhar said. "Over time the business has changed. The old logo looks dated. We've used this opportunity to think about how we market the EFCO brand and what the brand stands for in the eyes of our customers."

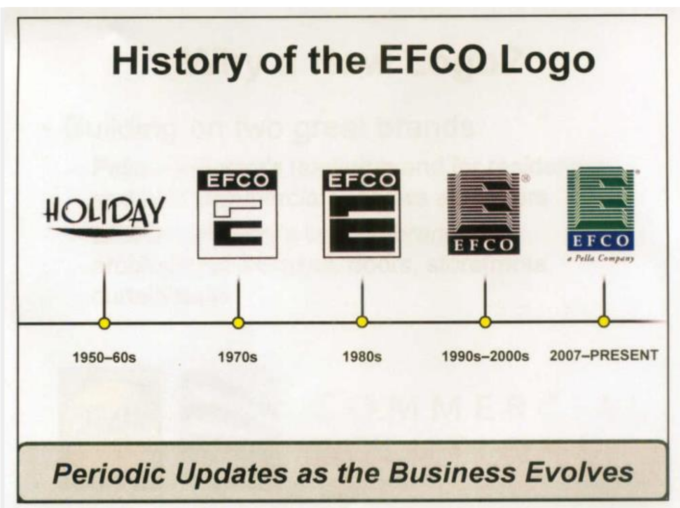
The new logo looks both like an "E" for EFCO and has the appearance of a commercial building. At times the Pella and EFCO logos will appear side by side as an indication of the breadth of the commercial solutions the two brands represent.

"We'd like to communicate what exactly we do," Farquhar said. "Pella is the leader in residential windows and EFCO is the industry's leading brand for commercial windows. We have signature projects all over the United States."

For example, EFCO has replaced more than 2,000 windows in the Wrigley Building in Chicago, Ill. New construction on the Loring Park apartments in Minneapolis, Minn. is also using EFCO windows.

"We're wrapping up a good year," Farquhar said. "We've had a excellent safety performance and strong sales. We gave raises to our team members right before Christmas. We've got lots to celebrate this year."

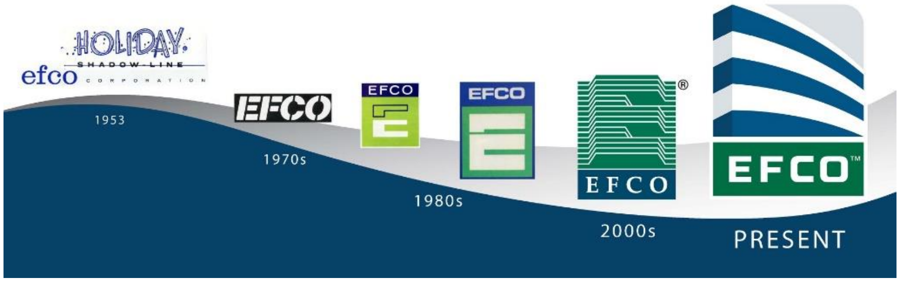
Farquhar sees good reason for continued progress in 2014. Residential window sales for Pella moved upward in mid-2013, and historically the commercial market follows. The shift will mark a welcome change after the commercial market hit a record high in 2008 then experienced a record decline, shrinking in half.



"In 2010, our stated objective was to get through the downturn without losing our full-team team," Farquhar said. "We got through with attrition and other programs. We kept our team intact. In 2012 we started adding to our organization again. It feels good to have new team member meetings again, which we didn't have in 2010 and 2011."

Pella enabled EFCO to invest for the future in recent years through the addition of new equipment and the addition of new locations in Springfield and Las Vegas, Nev., both of which have door assembly operations.

"Our market is just on the cusp of recovery," Farquhar said. "I'm optimistic about the economy and business growth. Changing our signs is purely a reinvestment in the EFCO brand."



Can a Company Use Two Logos?

Karen Tiber Leland

Author and President of Sterling Marketing Group

Logos are a lot like fingerprints. Each one is a distinctive mark that tells the world who you are. The goal is to create a logo that represents your brand in look and feel and becomes synonymous with your business. The short answer to the question is that multiple logos give off mixed messages and can dilute your marketing and branding efforts.

However, in some cases, two different logos can be combined to make one brand-new logo. To know whether or not this will work, it's important to distinguish between the two types of logo elements: marks and typography.

A logo mark is an actual image that identifies the company and which may or may not include the company's name. For example, Starbucks recently went from a logo featuring both its signature image of a mermaid and its name to just the image. The idea being that the brand is now so closely identified with the visual image that the name is redundant.

A typographical logo is the person, brand or company name done with a particular visual treatment, sans an image. For example, new social media darling Pinterest uses only its name as its logo, not any other identifying symbol or picture.

One option is to combine both a typographical and an image element to make a master logo. For example, BMW's logo integrates both its name and a round blue, white and black image. Just remember that with the Web, your logo is likely to end up anywhere. Having a single one creates a consistent message across platforms, while toggling back and forth between two can create customer confusion and brand bewilderment.

That having been said, logos, like businesses, evolve, so if the previous one no longer fits with your current company brand, it's okay to scratch it and start over. In this case, my advice is to be brave, stay on brand, make a choice and run with it.

Together we brand: Behind every great merger, there’s a great merger branding strategy

As companies grow, they evolve.

Over time, an organization can branch into new sectors, attract new customers, and even integrate with other competing businesses. Used correctly, company mergers can be an exceptional way for ambitious firms to attract new audiences, and generate amazing profit. The problem is, blending one company with another isn’t as simple as it seems.
Mergers are complex transitions which focus on aligning equity in a business, shifting perceptions, and migrating customers from one segment to another. They’re something that requires surgical precision, exceptional attention-to-detail and the full support of an entire business community. After all, when mergers and acquisitions fall through, the result isn’t just the loss of one company, but the potential death of two.
While you’re busy trying to fit the pieces of your new brand puzzle together, your competitors can swoop in and steal market share, damage your reputation, or even complete their own acquisitions. Unfortunately, a lot of brands don’t know how to go about merging companies with a focus on the brand.

While it’s easy to get caught up in the numbers and financials of a merger or acquisition, the truth is that there’s more to a successful M&A process than combining balance sheets. The most successful and famous company mergers on the market today achieved their goals because they didn’t treat branding as an afterthought.

If you’re thinking of combining your assets with another company — don’t be one of the 83% of mergers that fail. Remember, the companies that brand together, stand together.

The merger branding strategy: How acquisitions affect brand architecture

Complex as they are, mergers and acquisitions can be a powerful thing for brand identity.

- **Struggling with your reputation?** Company mergers provide an opportunity for a refresh.

- **Need help expanding your brand reach?** An acquisition gives you access to a whole range of new customers.

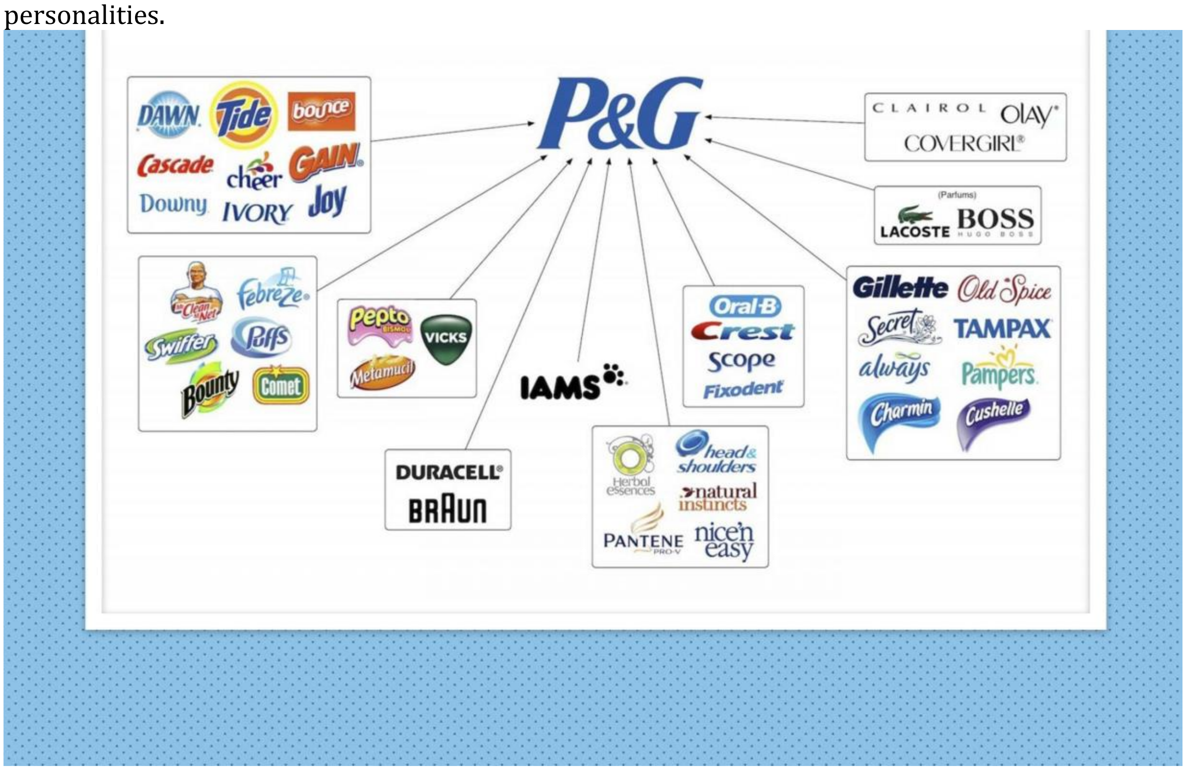
- **Want to evolve your identity?** The right merger can even change your industry image.

However, problems can arise when businesses spend too much time focusing on the figures and contracts, and not enough time, planning the “brand” part of their merger. From day one, you’ll need to decide how your merging companies are going to come together to connect with your target audience and develop loyalty.

Successful mergers and acquisitions begin with choosing the right brand architecture and implementing a strong strategy for evolution. Here are just some of the architecture options you can choose from:

Merger branding option 1: Stay the same

If it ‘ain’t broke don’t fix it. Perhaps the most conservative way to handle mergers and acquisitions is to retain the identity of both companies after the merger. This doesn’t necessarily mean that each brand operates independently, but the marketplace continues to see both names as separate entities as far as branding goes. This is the strategy used most often for companies who have highly differentiated personalities.



One great example of a “stay the same” merger branding solution can be seen with Procter & Gamble – the house of brands that acquires and operates dozens of different companies under the same parent label. While all the businesses in P&G are connected, they appear to operate independently, preserving their brand equity and individual personalities.

Merger branding option 2: The fusion

Fusion branding is perhaps the most popular brand strategy for mergers. It involves auditing the identity of each company and finding distinct sticking points where the companies can link together. A fusion works best when the two businesses have similar purposes or brand visions, to begin with. It often leads marketing teams to not only fuse the imagery and logos of the companies but also their names too!

One sub-form of the fusion merger branding strategy is "refreshed fusion" – an instance where two names are combined, but the graphic entity changes. For instance, ConocoPhillips was created when Phillips and Conoco merged in 2002. They kept both names but chose a brand-new logo.

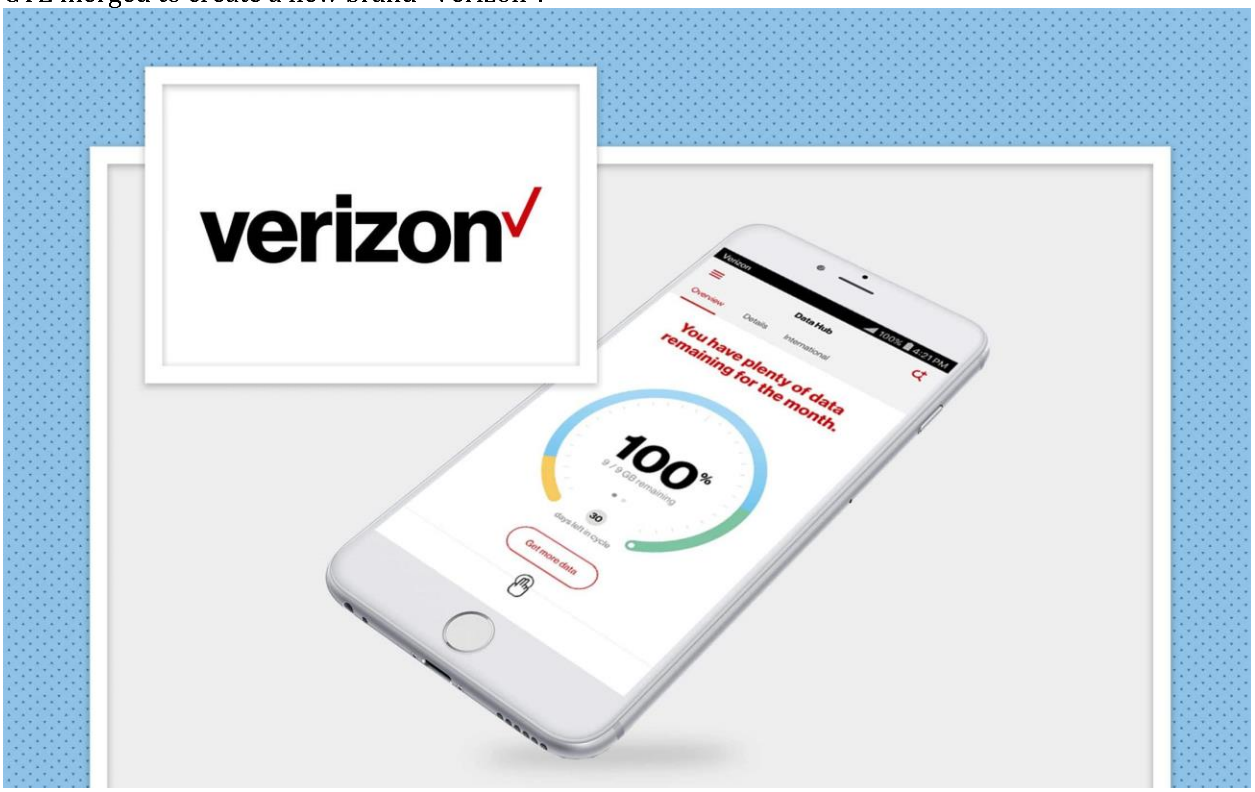
Merger branding option 3: Stronger horse

As the name might suggest, the “stronger horse” strategy for company mergers involves elevating one better-known brand over the other. Generally, this happens when one of the companies in the merger has better equity, potential, or a stronger customer base.

In most cases, the “stronger horse” merger or acquisition will elevate the company responsible for purchasing the other brand to the top of the branding manifesto. However, there are instances where this rule can change. For instance, when First Union purchased Wachovia, they put the smaller company’s name first because First Union had constantly suffered from problems regarding their perception and reputation. Eventually, Wachovia became “Wells Fargo”. The idea with any merging companies is to make sure that the brand with the strongest reputation and potential stays intact.

Merger branding option 4: The new brand

Finally, perhaps the most aggressive option for branding after mergers and acquisitions is to create an entirely new entity. This can be the best step forward for some companies who are planning on undergoing a significant transformation. For instance, a good example is when Bell Atlantic and GTE merged to create a new brand "Verizon".



The decision to launch a new brand came because both of the older phone companies wanted to move away from their previous product and service portfolio and start focusing on mobile instead. By choosing a new brand identity, the two companies ensured they could start fresh in the communications market. While this is obviously risky move, it can be a great way to overcome any of the restrictions that might have been holding your brand back or stopping it from entering a new market.

The secrets of successful merger branding: How to start your strategy

Even with all the benefits they offer, mergers and acquisitions aren't for the faint-hearted. Merging companies go through a range of rigorous processes that require a significant level of focus, and planning. If you want your acquisition to go without a hitch, then you need a solid strategy.

The right plan can help you to look at your company merger from the right angle, ensuring that everything from internal culture, to external marketing, is properly coordinated. While every merger is different, the following tips could help you to make the most of your company's evolution:

1. Get a complete 360-degree view of the situation

Good research is an essential part of any successful branding initiative. However, when there are two merging companies in play, it becomes increasingly important for you to know the inherent weaknesses, strengths, histories, cultures, and markets of each organization.

Knowing both brands inside and out makes it easier to identify any of the shared DNA you could use to create a fusion brand, or which elements you might highlight in your next value proposition. A good strategy also makes it easier to uncover challenges that you'll need to address before you go to market, like cultural misalignment or changing market dynamics.

2. Always keep the customer in mind

The best merger branding strategy will always be one that puts your customer first. Combining two different companies can mean bringing together distinct market offerings. You'll need to think about how the organizational structure of your USP will work to support customer expectations.

Conducting research into the kind of target market you want to address with your new company architecture will ensure that you're getting rid of the elements you don't need from your old identity and embracing the right new ones.

3. Engage and inspire your employees

One of the fundamental reasons why mergers and acquisitions fail is that the cultural integration isn't right. The good news is that a great brand with a distinct set of values can help to unite workforces, cultures, and mindsets within your organizations, bringing employees together with a specific purpose.

Remember that many of the famous company mergers you've heard of throughout the years were successful because they worked from the inside out. This means that transforming your employees into enthusiastic advocates for your new identity will make it much easier to take your brand to market.

4. *Choose your story*

The business world is becoming an increasingly complex and cluttered place. When you merge your brand with another, the aim shouldn't just be to hopefully make more money. It should also be to create a narrative and brand purpose that cuts through the noise and delivers real value to your target audience.

The right story and a well-defined purpose can be the rallying cries that convince both your existing customers and new leads to stand with you as you move through the unpredictable journey of mergers and acquisitions.

5. *Refine your image*

While there's more to a brand than your logo and visual assets, it's worth noting that your customers will often remember you based on what you look like. Your merger branding strategy will need to include plenty of information about what you're going to do about your image. For instance, are you going to create a new logo to represent a new identity, or combine elements of the old logos?
What about your brand colors? Are you going to maintain some of the shades you used to use before, or do you think it's better to start with a new pallet? You'll need to answer these questions before you launch your brand, so you can create marketing materials accordingly.

The 3 top tips for company mergers: How to align merging companies

There's a good reason why various studies suggest the failure rate of mergers to be somewhere close to 90%. Interestingly, it has nothing to do with the finances, and everything to do with properly leveraging a new brand.
In too many cases, brands aren't promoted and leveraged to provide clarity or unity until it's already too late. However, branding can play a crucial role in uniting the people both inside, and outside of your team. Here are the three top tips you can keep in mind when launching your own company mergers.

1. *See it as an opportunity to wipe the slate clean*

Bringing together two disparate workforces and product portfolios is a challenging task. Many organizations are terrified of disrupting the status quo in their business because they see change as a threat, rather than an opportunity. However, the truth is that mergers and acquisitions give you the perfect opportunity to recreate the company you want to run.

Bringing two brands together means that you can either wipe the slate clean and start a new brand story, or amplify the narrative you've already got in place. It means you can rethink everything from your name to your voice and positioning, without the side-effects of a confused audience. Though mergers will always be a daunting task, they're also a great way to revisit your customer touch-points and refine the experience for everyone you connect with as a brand.

Look at EmblemHealth for instance – a group created in 2006 through the merger of GHI (Group Health Incorporated) and HIP (the Health Insurance Plan of New York). When the two companies came together, they designed a new name, a new logo, and a brand-new company promise, and their refresh brought them out on top. Today, the company has 3.1 million members, and it's worth $10 billion too.

2. *Implement strategy into everything you do*

While it might seem obvious that you need a plan for a successful company merger, many businesses spend all their time focusing on financial due diligence and contracts and leave brand planning as an afterthought. The best mergers and acquisitions don't wait until the ink is dry before establishing a strategy to build their brand.

Decide who will be responsible for your brand strategy from day one, and make sure that those people know all the most intimidate details about each company. Lenovo is an example of a company who did this particularly well back in 2004 when they purchased "ThinkPad".
During that time, Lenovo was a largely unheard-of brand, and they decided that hiring ThinkPad would help them to earn recognition from a Western audience. By leveraging the popular ThinkPad name, the company started to raise awareness for their company in new spaces around the world.

3. Choose and communicate your message carefully

Finally, whether you're starting a new company with your merger, or evolving your current one, you'll need a clearly-defined message for your chosen audience. Building a strong user persona for the brand that you'll be launching is a great way to get started. Since you're developing your brand from two pre-existing companies, you should have plenty of information to guide your profile.

Once you know who you're talking to, you can take the best parts of both business voices, or create an entirely new narrative from scratch. For instance, Dixons and Carphone Warehouse took a dual-brand approach to marketing when they merged in 2014. The deal was described as a "collaboration of equals" at the time, which showed the similar attitudes of the two companies.

By fusing their brand voices together through shared values and personalities, Dixons Carphone was able to launch a strong and successful new technology company.

Managing mergers and acquisitions

Ultimately, mergers and acquisitions are a huge challenge for any company.

Now that 3.2 trillion M&A deals are expected to take place by the end of this year, every company will need to think more carefully about whether they're really ready to combine their assets with another brand. After all, merging companies isn't just about integrating products and reviewing financials. Devoting a greater focus towards making sure that both brands involved in a merger come together smoothly could be the key to success for any company. With the right merger branding strategy, you can use current customer perceptions to simplify your story and improve your connections with clients. Or, you could decide to build an entirely new and disruptive organization from scratch.

However, if branding is forgotten or ignored during the merger process, you could be left with a huge mess on your hands. The more time you spend refining the materials, processes, and guidance you need to build your new, or evolved brand, the more likely you are to end up with an entity that can not only survive a merger, but stand the test of time.