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Entrant's Organization: AKADREM, Inc. Client: Guardian Holdings Limited (GHL)	Title of Entry: One Group, One Team: Guardian Group's Internal Rebranding
Time period of project: April – Dec. 2012	Previous Awards: 2013 IABC Gold Quill (Excellence)

Overview

The overarching goal of this internal rebranding project was to build brand pride and create an emotional connection to a new Group brand, uniting employees under the theme of "One Group, One Team" in spite of the geographic boundaries and different business entities within the Group.

Guardian Holdings Limited (GHL) is the parent company for an integrated insurance and financial services group operating in 21 different territories in the English and Dutch Caribbean. In 2011 the Group operated with multiple brands across the Caribbean: Guardian Life, Guardian General, Guardian Asset Management., West Indies Alliance, NEMWIL Insurance and Guardian Holdings Ltd in the English Caribbean; and Fatum in the Dutch Caribbean. In January 2011, the organization hired my company, AKADREM, Inc., to conduct a communication audit to assess the status of the Group's communication practices and recommend solutions.

In summary, audit results showed that whilst there was high degree of awareness of the individual companies within the Group, there was little association and recognition that the companies belong to the same Group, while the umbrella brand was almost non-existent (awareness rates at 1-2% across the territories). The results were discussed at the Executive and Board levels and recommendations were approved in August 2011. The latter entailed in a nutshell: a) rebranding the Group under one name, essentially moving from a pluralistic to a monolithic brand architecture; and b) internal restructuring of communication units and creation of a new Integrated Marketing Communications Unit (IMC) to enable the new brand management.

Given the history of the Group, it was evident that we needed to start rebranding from within, well before going public with a new Group brand. Our internal rebranding strategy focused on educating internal audiences on the rationale for rebranding, engaging employees in understanding the new brand and more importantly, connecting them to the "One Group, One Team" idea.

Stakeholder Analysis

Our target audience comprised all internal stakeholders. This is a population of 1,637 employees and 871 agents (sales force) in 8 different business entities and 21 different territories/islands in the Caribbean. The following table provides a snapshot of how we classified our audiences to assess their special needs and inform our internal rebranding strategy:

CLASSIFICATION PER	AUDIENCE	AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS/NEEDS	STRATEGY/MESSAGING
Organizational Level / Function	Executives #54 (across all territories)	-Already aware about change; most understood and recognized need for it, but not fully engaged -Not confident that implementation would be successful; unsure of new IMC team	-Recap & reinforce Group rebranding strategy; emphasize their role as champions of project -Regular updates on rebranding exercise -Face to face meetings with IMC leadership
	Managers #82 (across all territories)	-Not fully aware of changes; needed information before the wider employee group -Loyal to their own BUs -Unaware/unsure of role of new IMC unit -Engagement low	-Explain new Group mentality and highlight benefits; explain IMC -Inform and educate on rebranding; provide regular updates -"You know first" subliminal messaging
	Staff/Agents #1,187 + #871 (across all territories)	- 42% of respondents did not know the group's vision and mission; 51% felt they knew nothing about the Group - 75% recognized need for strong Group brand - Very loyal to their own BUs and brands -Only 41% satisfied with internal communications within Group	-Reiterate Group's vision & mission; link with One Group rebranding -Create emotional connection to the entire Group -Regular updates on the rebranding exercise -Explain role of new IMC team
Territory	English Caribbean 86.6%	-English speaking; headquarters in Trinidad, cultural intricacies well known --Each BU very attached to their own brand	-Explain rebranding and convey benefits of One Group mentality
	Dutch Caribbean 13.3%	-Native language Papiamentu and Dutch --Complete name change, from Fatum to Guardian; very attached to Fatum name	-Account for language barrier in communications -Have a different strategy and positioning of the rebranding from the English Caribbean

Goals and Objectives

The main goal of the internal rebranding project was to build brand pride amongst internal audiences and instill the “One Group/One Team” mentality. Our objectives were:

Audience	Primary Objectives	Benchmark	Target	Type
All Staff & Agents across territories	Increase awareness and understanding of Group vision, mission, goals	41%	60% within 1 year	Outcome
All Staff & Agents across territories	Create awareness, understanding and engagement to the new Group brand	NA	65% within 1 year	Outcome
	Secondary Objectives			
Executives & Managers	Build confidence in new IMC team to deliver under monolithic brand	NA	65% by July 2013 (6m after establishment)	Outcome
All Staff & Agents across territories	Increase satisfaction with internal communication within the Group	40%	60% within 1 year	Outcome

Planning

We adopted a three-phased approach to communication planning for this project: pre-public launch (of the new brand), launch, and post-launch. The present entry is focused on the internal rebranding initiative in the pre-launch period. The underlying key messages of our communication initiatives in this period were: a) The Group is transitioning (One Group, One Team); this rebranding exercise is the beginning of a change process; b) The Group is rebranding adopting a monolithic brand architecture consistent to the Group’s vision and mission. We planned to utilize a number of tools to achieve our objectives. Some of the highlights of our plan include:

CEO’s video message & accompanying communiques: We wanted to establish the CEO as the main champion of this project to highlight its strategic importance for the Group. We planned to create a video in which the CEO would speak to the “One Group/One Team” vision and the strategic importance of rebranding. This would be the first time the CEO would address employees this way.

Employee/Agent workshops: Conduct workshops with stakeholders across the Group to inform and educate audiences on key messages. Although electronic communication is standard and quite effective in the organization, we felt that face-to-face communication was absolutely essential to both highlight the significance of the project and to be able to customize messages and position the rebranding to different audiences.

Cleansing campaign: A cleansing campaign would serve to remove ‘old’ corporate messages and ‘clean-up’ the office environment (as a symbolism of making way for the new brand). We hoped this would create momentum and enthusiasm.

Brand Ambassador Campaign: Due to the geographical spread of our audiences, the cultural differences and the loyalty of employees to their own BUs, we needed a core team of influencers in each territory. As such, we planned to recruit staff to become brand ambassadors.

Feedback Loop: The new IMC team needed an effective feedback mechanism to gather opinions, reactions, and suggestions. At the time of planning, we had no such effective mechanism.

Managers’ Pack: A toolkit would be designed to facilitate managers/team leaders/supervisors in their role of educating and supporting their direct reports on rebranding.

New Brand Teaser campaign: IMC would initiate an internal electronic teaser campaign on the new brand.

Further, more activities were scheduled for the next phases of the rebranding cycle, including a never-before-seen launch event to reveal the new brand to all internal stakeholders, scheduled to be simulcast across the territories with subsequent celebrations, as well as post-launch activities to sustain and reinforce the brand message.

Execution

CEO’s video message & accompanying communiques: The video was successfully promoted through internal communication channels and actually created a server slowdown due to high traffic on the day of the release. Follow-up communiques to all staff with rebranding updates followed. Further, we designed customized communiques from the CEO to executives and managers encouraging them to become champions of the rebranding project.

Employee/Agent workshops: More than 50 workshops were conducted across the Group to educate audiences on key messages. Employees, in groups of no more than 40 persons, from across the company’s four key territories attended one of the workshops. Support from managers within the BUs during these workshops increased their own engagement to the project, as well. Workshops in Curacao were conducted in both English and Papiamento, while local leadership spoke specifically to the name change.

Cleansing campaign: We took advantage of the very negative feelings over an older “180-degree” initiative, which had left its brand marks all over office space. We thus began tearing everything down, creating a buzz and building excitement. In Curacao this was accompanied by complementary messages in Dutch sent to staff by local leadership to position the “cleansing”. An additional item in the Dutch Caribbean was also the re-painting of the head office building to the new brand colours.

Brand Ambassador Campaign: During the workshops we recruited staff to become brand ambassadors and followed up with personal communiques from the IMC team to the candidates for the program; response exceeded all expectations. Our target was to recruit 40 brand ambassadors from across the region; we received 105 volunteers very early in the program. As thrilled as we were to see such a response, budget-wise we were not prepared to accommodate more than 100 ambassadors. Instead of curtailing excitement of volunteers, we opted to revise our budget allocation, and eventually closed at 203 brand ambassadors. These individuals subsequently went through specialized workshops.

Feedback Loop: The new IMC team implemented a new internal communication system software, Snapcomms, to facilitate internal communications and establish a convenient and efficient feedback mechanism for employees across territories to voice their questions, concerns and suggestions. Employee feedback is now gathered on an on-going basis and informs communication plans.

Managers’ Pack: This toolkit was designed to be used by the target audience after the public launch, but its creation was aimed at encouraging them to champion the project from early on.

New Brand Teaser campaign: This teaser campaign was aimed at increasing the hype over the new brand and indeed created anticipation and “water-cooler” discussions over rebranding.

Results

The pre-launch internal branding project met and actually exceeded our targets. Results are shown below.

Audience	Objective	Benchmark	Target	Results
All Staff & Agents	Increase awareness and understanding of Group vision, mission, goals	41%	60% within 1 y or less	March 2013 survey results [10 months after implementation]: -- 63% know the Group very well -- 66% indicated they have more knowledge about the Group compared to a year ago
All Staff & Agents	Create awareness of and engagement to the new brand	NA	65% within 1 y or less Recruit 40 brand ambassadors	August 2013 survey results [just 4 m after implementation] -awareness& understanding of new brand: 81.6% Group average; 85.2% Trinidad; 89.2% Barbados; 73.5% Jamaica; 79.5% Dutch Caribbean -Recruited 203 Brand Ambassadors
Executives & Managers	Build confidence in new IMC team to deliver under monolithic brand	NA	65% by July 2013 (6m after team establishment)	June 2012 survey results [4 m after IMC establishment]: -- 78% of company leadership believes that the IMC structure is better or a lot better than the previous structure -- 89% believe that the restructuring to IMC was a beneficial move for the Group
All Staff & Agents	Increase satisfaction with internal communication within the Group	40%	60% within 1 y or less	March 2013 survey results [10 months after implementation]: - 62% satisfaction rate