

I.T. @ Baker & McKenzie: Resolving an Identity Crisis

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We realized we had a branding problem when, in 2002, partners from Mexico City, New York, Chicago, London and Hong Kong gathered for a client meeting and threw their business cards on the table, creating a kaleidoscope of colors, sizes, logos and fonts. Different firms? No, they were all with Baker & McKenzie.

Managing a visual identity is a challenge, particularly across a firm that has 69 offices in 38 countries. Baker & McKenzie is a network of more than 3,100 lawyers and 5,200 other legal professionals and support staff. Founded in 1949, we opened our first international office 50 years ago in Caracas. We are citizens of more than 60 countries, admitted to practice in 250 jurisdictions, and speak more than 70 languages. Global revenues for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004 exceeded \$1.228 billion.

Prior to 2003, our branding program had consisted of a logo, a signature color, font standards, limited stationery guidelines and little else. Offices were allowed to select their own colors, images, sizes and formats for all marketing and business communications materials, and developed local programs that reflected personal preferences and cultures. But there was no similarity among our offices.

We determined that our competitive advantage would be dissipated if we did not regain control of our brand identity and project a consistent image in the marketplace. To reposition our brand over time, we developed a visual identity and branding program. And we used the web to deliver it.

With budget pressures as great as ever and limited personnel to provide training and design expertise, we needed to create a cost-efficient system to help our attorneys, support staff and vendors create marketing and business communications compliant with our visual identity program guidelines.

In the past, we could rely on distributing two two-inch, hard-copy binders to offices with instruction on formatting stationery and basic business communications using the

signature color, logo and selected fonts. But as we grew – and with the introduction of a branding program that encompassed everything from business cards to websites – hard copy materials were no longer practical. They quickly became outdated, and costs for constantly shipping and updating binders (to say nothing of the drain on staff time) were also factors.

We needed a system that was not only more cost-effective but also dynamic and could evolve with our branding program. It needed to be intuitive and easy to learn, but full strength – with the ability to upload and download templates and PDF files of firm materials, warehouse large image files (such as logos and photographs) and provide visual examples of how finished materials should look.

And so, Baker Identity Manager (BIM) was created. With the help of Denver-based Monigle Associates, a brand consultancy, and our consultant, Mike Reinhardt, we built a website to introduce, instruct, maintain and update our visual identity program guidelines and resources. We collaborated with the brand design consultants who had created our visual identity program, Chicago's Zünpartners, to develop guidelines, tools and templates, as well as the look and feel of the site. Their team was lead by creative director Bill Ferdinand.

Criteria

We identified several criteria for BIM:

Resources

We needed both instruction and actual resources: template files, images and a database of materials that can be uploaded/downloaded as needed.

Accessibility

It must be available 24/7 to everyone in the firm, as well as to agencies, printers and other vendors who create materials on our behalf.

Flexibility

It must be able to accommodate frequent content changes.

Constraints

We had a finite amount of time, with limited funding for development, on-going maintenance and training.

Why Monigle?

Our marketing and IT staff evaluated the benefits and costs of building in-house versus hiring an external vendor, and determined that outsourcing was the most efficient option, both in time and cost. We then received approval from Craig Courter, then chief technology officer, (now COO), to proceed. We surveyed the terrain of brand management firms but quickly came to the conclusion that Monigle Associates' system was most appropriate for our needs. The company had installed at least 70 similar systems at the time we were looking, and that number today exceeds 125. In fact, one of our closest competitors, Clifford Chance, has since followed our lead and hired the Monigle team.

Identity Manager

A Web-based system, Identity Manager instructs users on how to apply formatting, production and style guidelines to a specific communication – with downloadable best practice examples, templates and related graphic files all in one place. Users can e-mail directly from the site, create a "favorites" page, view links to relevant websites and print the whole site or sub-sections if needed. All firm professionals and most outside vendors can access the system at any time, in any time zone.

The system was easily developed externally and is now maintained internally. We can make changes in real-time, as needed, minimizing the need for additional agency fees and development resources. Content and downloads can be changed in real-time, as needed, minimizing the need for additional agency fees and development resources.

We estimate that we recovered our investment for the BIM within its first year, through the following savings:

- Virtual, rather than print distribution of program tools and guidelines.
- Use of in-house staff versus vendors to produce most materials.
- Material production time has been reduced by at least 25 percent.

Lynmarie Lane, senior marketing specialist in the global marketing department, now maintains the site internally and keeps the content current.

The site is frequented by more than 100 internal marketers, and was used by more than 700 people last year, including 70 outside vendors. The site is accessed, on average, 750 times a month.

Now, our partners from around the world can come together and throw their business cards on the table with confidence.

Timeline

May - July 2002:

Internal build options evaluated; decision to buy approved.

August - November 2002:

Vendor search and selection of Monigle Associates.

December 2002 - February 2003:

Site development.

March - July 2003:

Templates, documents and other brand materials uploaded and site enhancements implemented as required.

August - September 2003:

Site launched. Training executed with staff, attorneys and vendors.

January 2003:

Baker & McKenzie takes over content management for BIM site.

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