

New York
2018

The Key Ingredients to Co-Branding

Designing brand
intersections that create
unique market value

CONRAN DESIGN GROUP



SOCIETY IS INUNDATED WITH CHOICES. IT'S WHAT WE HAVE ALWAYS DREAMED OF, RIGHT?

In large part, this abundance of choice – fueled by the digital economy – has created amazing benefits for consumers: a sea of bespoke products tailored to your exact needs and delivered to you almost anywhere, in the blink of an eye. Indeed, these benefits (and their consequent expectations) have quickly become ingrained in our culture, ways and means, lexicon, routines and lifestyle. It's the "new normal;" packaged and available at your doorstep, in an instant.

It goes without saying that marketers engaged in this "ecosystem of choices" are more and more challenged to differentiate their wares by trying new approaches to achieving something breakthrough. Often, this means entertaining new combinations by embedding complementary brands to create stand-out offerings. Specifically, by leveraging the respective equities of two brands into one inherently new product, each brand can extend their equities to completely new target audiences and climb up a whole new "consideration ladder" at the shelf. Enter *co-branding*.

The craft of co-branding (and its cousin *ingredient branding*) was really brought to the forefront by Intel's groundbreaking *Intel Inside* campaign, which conveyed to consumers a higher level of computing performance based on their choice of semiconductors. Interestingly, even with consumers' lack of semiconductor knowledge, they became convinced over time that any computer that didn't have an Intel processor was somehow deficient. It was a brilliant, groundbreaking campaign that lasted decades and was recently brought back out of retirement, for good reason.

Informed by the success of *Intel Inside*, today's branding experts are constantly tasked with designing added value into our clients' products to help sharpen their offering and enable greater differentiation. Normally, the conversation is something like this: "Just give me Intel Inside." But of course, it's not that simple.

To begin, successful co-branding exists at the intersection of great brand strategy and great business strategy, often yielding a game-changing combination. This can realign consumer expectations around a wholly new experience that makes one ask, “Why wasn’t this done before?” But it is often the case that co-branding falls flat, revealing that few companies actually understand the very simple premise behind how co-branding should be conceived, executed with partners and explained well to all audiences.

To succeed in co-branding, it is important to review the logic. First, we assume that a target audience loyal to Product A would buy more product if it were enhanced or associated with Product B, a complementary product. It then follows that Product B loyalists would be willing to sample Product A, now that the two are harmoniously combined. Simple, right? Well, not always. Actually, when we explain the rationale for co-branding to our clients, we often simplify the discussion by representing it as follows:

“What you love (Product A) – made better with this (Product B)”

To be sure, the market – especially consumer packaged goods – is replete with examples of great co-branding. For example, Tide detergent infused with Febreze. It’s what you love (Tide), made better (with Febreze). So your clothes are both spiffy clean, and they smell their very best. What could be better? Sometimes a co-brand can work reciprocally to create even greater market potential.



But co-branding can take on even more complexity, when the offer is logistically and operationally married within a branded experience versus strictly a union of manufacturing. A great example of an operationally-embedded co-brand, which I have experienced on overseas flights since 2016, is the union between Westin Hotels & Resorts and Delta Airlines. This partnership brings together certain well-regarded amenities from Westin – namely its Heavenly Bed brands – and houses them within the Delta Airlines travel experience under the brand moniker, *Heavenly In-Flight*.

Heavenly In-Flight is literally part of each partners' operations, and unfolds (pun intended) across many experiential touchpoints: Westin towels in the Delta lounge showers, *Heavenly In-Flight* bedding in Delta One and First Class, and Delta promotions featured prominently across all Westin Hotels.



The experience is unique in many ways. The complete logic of the relationship, the flawless delivery executed by both partners, the seamless integration into the customer experience, and the partnership's first-to-market impact have established this co-brand as a market leader right from lift-off, and beyond. ■



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David is responsible for building and growing the branding and design offer in North America.

A brand consulting veteran with more than two decades of experience at firms such as Landor and Siegel+Gale, David also worked in client-side marketing at Unilever and Time Warner. He brings a deep understanding of branding in multiple industries across research, strategy, naming, identity design and packaging.

Key Brand Work:

Unilever, Alcon, National Association of REALTORS®, Roche, Essilor, AstraZeneca, Merck, Teva, Walgreens, Zoetis, Nestlé, Acelyty, Sanofi, Citi, Comcast, Coca-Cola, Verizon, Deutsche Bank, Novartis

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ABOUT US

Conran Design Group is a global design agency with a 60-year heritage, specialising in branding and corporate communications.

We believe in the power of design to drive strategic and commercial advantage. We use design to inform, inspire and engage people, shaping the interactions that challenge and influence beliefs and behaviour.

This is what we call Designing Advantage.

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