The Art of Identity: Crafting Communications Standards for Oakbrook Church

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

Oakbrook Church has been on the mission of “helping people find Jesus and live like Him” for the past 27 years. The church was founded in 1985 and modeled after Chicago-area megachurch, Willow Creek Community Church. This model focuses on the creative use of the arts, contemporary rhetoric and multimedia to communicate the church’s message. However, Oakbrook is located within Kokomo, Indiana: a mid sized community with vast differences from Chicago. Therefore, Oakbrook Church needs a way to differentiate itself from Willow Creek and to identify within its localized context.

This honors thesis centered on the creation of an updated brand identity for the church with an accompanying guide to organization-wide communications standards. The guide will serve to direct future communications efforts by church staff and to promote consistency of messaging across brand platforms. The intent of this project is to differentiate Oakbrook Church as a unique organization positioned to serve the Kokomo, IN area and to provide standards for communicating the church’s brand and identity.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jason Lee for advising me throughout this project. Despite his hectic schedule as Creative Director for the church, he never hesitated to find time to meet and discuss ideas. Without his guidance and assistance, I would not have been able to complete such a thesis or develop my sensibilities as a communicator.

I would also like to thank Josh Meyers for his consultancy over the development of a visual identity for the church. In particular, he graciously spent time proofing various trademark concepts and providing additional recommendations.
Author’s Statement

As organizations grow over time, the need for consistent identity and clear communication becomes essential. It is often the role of public relations practitioners to foster and develop standards to guide this type of communication. This is true in both corporate public relations and nonprofit public relations. For my honors thesis I chose to develop a communications manual for Oakbrook Church in Kokomo, Indiana; an established organization in need of consistency and clarity. I felt this project would require me to utilize many of the skills I learned at Ball State, connect to various volunteer experiences I participated in, and connect to my future career. This project has personal significance to me due to the role Oakbrook Church has played in my development as a communicator and individual.

Oakbrook Church had the need to differentiate itself from other organizations in the area. I developed a plan to achieve this goal by creating a distinctive brand identity that characterized Oakbrook’s mission, promise and personality. After this, I represented the brand through a modern trademark that connected visually to the mission of the church and provided consistency with past identity. Finally, this brand and identity was supported by a set of communications values to promote clarity and consistency across the organization.

Each piece of this strategic plan was compiled into a communications manual for implementation by the organization. The manual was presented to the creative team at Oakbrook Church and left with creative director Jason Lee for future use. Throughout the entire process, I was able to use my public relations knowledge, design skills, and conceptualization skills to create a usable product for the organization.
Executive Summary

A comprehensive manual for the effective communication of the Oakbrook brand.

Oakbrook Church has a unique opportunity to establish itself as a invested and innovative member of the Kokomo, IN community. With clarity of mission and promise communicated across channels with a consistent personality, Oakbrook could potentially expand its influence. This document is a guide to assist and facilitate Oakbrook Church’s effort to help people find Jesus and live like Him.

The manual provides brand standards and personality guidelines designed to help effectively communicate the mission, vision and values of Oakbrook Church with one voice across all media channels. Developing this consistent approach will have a positive impact on the overall effectiveness of the church to its various publics. Additional resources and contacts are included to clarify communications workflow and encourage consistency.

Oakbrook Church's communications values are:
- Collaboration in development.
- Clarity in purpose.
- Creativity in execution.
- Consistency across channels and over time.
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The Oakbrook Brand

Organizational Mission Statement
Brand Promise
Brand Personality
Oakbrook helps people find Jesus and live like Him.

From its beginning, Oakbrook has existed to help people. Not “church people.” Not “lost people.”

All people.

Our experiences and initiatives are all directed toward meeting people where they are and then taking them somewhere new.

We don’t want people to just come into our doors once a week. We don’t just want to craft one-time experiences.

We lock eyes with the world and walk side-by-side with people as we follow Jesus and learn to live like Him.

Our organization’s mission and positioning, as well as our brand platform, reflect the ancient call to follow the revolutionary Jesus in ways that are relevant to people, today.
Oakbrook invites people to be participants in the story of God.

Our communications should all play back to the invitation of "participation".
We believe participation is:

**Active**
An ongoing engagement with the will of God in the person of Jesus. Beyond knowing and deciding about faith, we keep moving. We want people to pursue a move of God in their everyday lives.

**Open**
You don't have to look a certain way or have it all together. Everyone is invited to find themselves on the journey of faith; regardless of what stands behind and expectant of what lies ahead.

**Compelling**
Stories move people. From characters to conflict, we witness clearly when we live adventurously. Jesus' story changes everything. Our stories speak to that reality.

**Personal**
There is no formula for following God. As mysterious as the wind and as personal and a fingerprint, the move of God in a person's life reflects their history, gifting and personality. We move in the same direction, but we don't have to look the same.

**Local**
Specific to this place and this time. God has us here and now for a reason. Our stories should reflect that. We don't have to pretend to be something we're not. We're free to reflect story of God within the story of our locale.

**Global**
We're a part of the new world God is building: expanding beyond local, regional or national borders. The move of God here invites us to action anywhere and everywhere.
Oakbrook is accessible, authentic, excellent, and invested.

Participation in the story of God makes the inaccessible available leaving limitation as a memory. Active participation shows commitment and constantly stirs convention, without forgetting our ancient connections.

To support our inviting position, our visual style must also evolve. We must be seen as genuine, available and trustworthy. People with real stories on a real journey. At the same time, we must maintain our role as courageous innovators, committed to the highest quality and reflecting back to beauty. We must project these personality characteristics at every interaction point, consistently and continually.

The brand personality describes the tone and manner of the Oakbrook brand that we want to communicate, in both the things we say and also in the interactions we have with our key audiences.

**Accessible**  We are inclusive and open. We aren't better than anyone and are kind to everyone.

**Authentic**  We openly address conflict and celebrate success. We value real relationships.

**Excellent**  We hold high standards and always look to improve. We reflect beauty to the world.

**Invested**  We aren't here to look good. We're here to do good that lasts.
The Oakbrook Logo

Conceptualization
Specifications
The Oakbrook logo is the most immediate representation of our brand to the public. It must be used consistently in approved forms.

The newly refreshed Oakbrook logo was conceptualized to make the Oakbrook brand easily recognizable as a church, connected to the brand mission, and consistent with previous logos. As Figure 1 illustrates, various elements of the logo were included to provoke these associations.

For example, the outer circle provides the overall geometry for the icon. This allows for a high degree of usability across various platforms. Also, the internal geometry reflects the look of stained glass, which is often associated with churches.

The center of the icon reflects the brand mission by utilizing images that resemble a compass. This connects to the mission of helping people find Jesus. It also implies the second portion of the mission by signifying the ongoing journey of following Jesus.

The distinctive four outer circles provide consistency with the previous brand identity which utilized four circles (Figure 2). This will help to avoid confusion as the new icon is implemented to the public.
The Oakbrook logo should be used as the brand's primary identifier. If the logo is printed on anything, the Communications Department must review and approve.

Logotype and Mark

The official Oakbrook Church identity consists of two components: the words 'Oakbrook Church' and the accompanying graphic mark. They both must be reproduced from authorized original reproduction-ready art and cannot be redrawn, re-proportioned or modified in any way. Only the Oakbrook Church Communications Department has official art suitable for publication. Both the logotype and mark must be reproduced. Only the Communications Department can determine in which cases it is permissible and/or appropriate to use the logotype without the accompanying graphic mark or the mark without the accompanying logotype.

Colors

Consult with the Communications Department with questions regarding appropriate color usage.

Primary Scheme

- **OC Green**: CMYK: 46/5/80/0
  - RGB: 149/193/98
  - Hex: #95C162

- **OC Dark Gray**: CMYK: 0/0/0/80
  - RGB: 88/89/61
  - Hex: #58595B

- **OC Light Gray**: CMYK: 0/0/0/20
  - RGB: 209/211/212
  - Hex: #D1D3D4

Secondary Scheme

- **OC Orange**: CMYK: 0/56/72/0
  - RGB: 87/128/144
  - Hex: #F68A55

- **OC Blue**: CMYK: 70/40/35/5
  - RGB: 87/128/144
  - Hex: #578090

- **OC Light Blue**: CMYK: 36/2/16/0
  - RGB: 161/212/214
  - Hex: #A1D4D6
Safe Area
When reproducing the identity, no printing or imagery may violate the safe area of the identity. This area is refers to the letter height of the logotype at the size the logo will be reproduced at, extending out in all directions from the identity as illustrated below.

Reverse Logo
The logo may be reversed when necessary as displayed below.

Typeface
The Akzidenz-Grotesk type family will accompany materials on which the identity appears, including stationery, forms and business cards. Akzidenz-Grotesk was chosen for the compatibility with the new identity and helps convey the new image and brand of Oakbrook Church. Akzidenz-Grotesk is the typeface that the words 'Oakbrook Church' are set in.

Akzidenz-Grotesk Regular

ABCDFEGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890&?

Akzidenz-Grotesk Italic

ABCDFEGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890&?

Akzidenz-Grotesk Medium

ABCDFEGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890&?

Akzidenz-Grotesk Bold

ABCDFEGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890&?
Resources and guidelines to ensure concise and consistent communications.

Recommended Resources

For additional reading beyond the scope of this manual, consult the following sources:


**Printing Standards:** Forms, Folds, and Sizes: All the Details Graphic Designers Need to Know but Can Never Find, Poppy Evans, Rockport Publishers, 2004 ISBN 1-5925-3054-0.

Communications Contact

For answers to communications questions not included within this guide, contact:

**Jason Lee** | Creative Director
765.461.7790
jlee@oakbrookchurch.com
Communications Standards: Communications Values

Our communications values help to guide all department activities from conceptualization to final product. These values are intended to be implemented and observed across the entire organization.

Collaboration in Development
When developing communications messages and priorities, collaboration is the key to producing a quality product. Messages are not produced in ministry silos, but rather stem from a collaborative effort from the entire staff as one unified church.

Clarity in Purpose
The guiding question behind all communications must be, "Why does this matter?" Such clarity in purpose will allow messages to be refined, removing clutter from communications channels and targeting specific audiences.

Creativity in Delivery
No idea is too wild to be voiced. Once purpose is made clear, creativity must be employed to determine the most effective, artful and excellent vehicle(s) for communicating the message(s).

Consistency Across Channels and Over Time
Once communicated publicly, care must be taken to fulfill promises made, manage expectations provoked and evaluate effectiveness over time. If messages are not consistently nurtured, the organization will lose credibility and with it, influence.
References

Information regarding Oakbrook Church gathered from: www.oakbrookchurch.com