

"I Am an Experience Architect." What Does Your Brand Say?

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It's a new year. Is it time to freshen your brand? As director of NAPE and publisher of the *Landman* magazine, I lead a team that strategically orchestrates one-of-a-kind, memorable experiences for our clients — whether they are doing business on a trade show floor, flipping through pages of a magazine or perusing a promotional brochure. We focus on building a brand known for its innovation. We don't sell tickets to a trade show. We sell a unique, unrivaled opportunity for E&P players to make million-dollar deals. We take risks.

The NAPE prototype (established in 1993) focused on oil and gas prospects, which made it unique among trade show competition. The rollout was a bit of a gamble by AAPL landmen and was met with some opposition at first, but the buzz and atmosphere it created 25 years ago still lives on today. We continue working to make it bigger and better, establishing the NAPE brand as the innovator of the industry.

At NAPE, it's about the people, the prospects and the experience, and we know the importance of riding for the brand and being true to it. We never lose sight of our notable and recognizable tagline, "NAPE — where deals happen."

Corporate branding is more than your logo and color scheme. Some companies have a very professional/executive feel both inside and outside the office, while others have a trendy/urban vibe. That vibe, whatever it is, is part of your brand.

So here are just a few ideas for establishing your professional brand or polishing it up:

Do a self-audit

Take a look at how people encounter your brand — including customers, external peers, prospective clients and even your own staff. Do your phone greeting, email signature, sales presentation and office environment consistently convey your image and message?

Dust off the website

Review your website with fresh eyes and evaluate the content for relevance and clarity. Look at your analytics and evaluate the site's performance. Look for ways to integrate social media — so users can "like" and "share" your content. Consider how the site performs on tablets, smartphones and other mobile devices. It might be time to refresh not only the content but also the design and delivery. The world has changed a lot in the past few years, and being stale and out-of-date reflects poorly on your brand. Check out the NAPE website at napeexpo.com to see how we, as "experience architects," have re-crafted the site into a modern, streamlined, innovative face of NAPE.

The AAPL leadership has charged us with creating something similar for AAPL, and plans are underway, so stay tuned for a new and improved AAPL site in the coming year.

Secure your position

Even if your brand has a clearly defined positioning statement and value proposition, be sure to check in with stakeholders to make sure it's still accurate, authentic and engaging. You may be able to do this informally, or it may be time to conduct a formal positioning exercise.

Get everybody on the elevator pitch

Make sure everyone on your team is clear about the brand. If they can't communicate your value proposition in a paragraph — or a sentence — it's time to hone your message.

Share your success and your good thinking

Imitation is flattery. I have personally had industry peers tell us they look to NAPE as the trendsetter. We love sharing ideas, and thought leadership is more important than ever. Develop content strategy that uses articles, PR, blogging, speaking and teaching to establish and reinforce your expertise in your field. Once you've determined the ideas and content you want to convey, get your message out. A wealth of emerging media options — both free and paid — can help you share your thinking in dynamic new ways.

Stay top of mind

Develop a plan to keep your brand in front of clients and referral sources on a regular basis. You never know when an email or a postcard will cross the right person's desk at just the right time.

Have a party!

Even as the power of online communities grows, there's nothing like bringing people together. Invite clients, colleagues and prospects to a seminar, a workshop, the AAPL Annual Meeting or NAPE. Create something memorable — and they won't forget you. We just threw a huge 25th Anniversary party at NAPE Summit with 12,000 of our friends, and it was spectacular!

Branding takes dedication, focus and time to continually review your components to ensure you are on target. Your brand can either evolve or get left behind. Don't be afraid to take a risk. No guts, no glory.

Sources: napeexpo.com; masonbaronet.com