



Brand Strategy Proposal

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Situation: The Vermiculite Association has many challenges and opportunities to grow its brand in the marketplace through implementing a strategy that targets several key internal and external audiences.

Approach:

The brand strategy for The Vermiculite Association requires an assessment of current communications of the organization; as well as gathering information about the vision of its leadership. We will also want to know about the attitudes and beliefs of our members and target audiences in the marketplace. The process will require staff and member participation, as well as a monetary and time commitment. The end goal is to move vermiculite and TVA forward by delivering information and emotion that will solidify the TVA brand and build favorable awareness of vermiculite. Through work and cooperation, we will define the organization's brand through the vision, mission, value proposition (member benefits), attributes, personality and voice of TVA. This initiative is to communicate our value, increase awareness and build loyalty.

Goals:

- To build awareness of vermiculite, by fully communicating the virtues and value of vermiculite in current uses and expanded uses
- To expand the marketplace for the industry and its members
- To increase the number of Association members
- To manage issues, including the historic asbestos issue
- To initiate a consistent and sustained brand, communications strategy and tactical implementation plan

Strategies:

- Position TVA as the knowledge source for the industry
- Update the communications strategies "look" and content
- Grow the communications initiatives to include target audiences like, Miners/Exfoliators not in TVA, Regulators, Public, Media
- Encourage current members to be "brand champions" for the use of vermiculite in known and new capacities; and to promote TVA as a knowledge source for the industry

Tactics:

- Positioning - educate stakeholders and end-users of the benefits of using vermiculite
- Update communications - graphics, content via web and other communications channels such as relevant social media. Merge existing content with information-focused graphics for quicker, easier to understand presentation.
- Increase communications initiatives - encouraging transparency, removing stodgy and academic tone, reducing/explaining industry jargon on a more common grade-level via all communications
- If achieved, heavily promote the EPA's update on the safety of vermiculite in the marketplace. Use this to address asbestos issue, drive down negative content currently on Internet
- Identify and develop third-party endorsers as to safety and environmentally sound practices (Certification)
- Repurpose enhanced content for multi-channel distribution – TVA website, Internet, etc.
- Consider a positioning line
- Identify key brand champions and provide communications toolkit

- Graphic specific initiatives:
 - Use more colorful graphics as tools to more quickly communicate the complexities of vermiculite, processing, processing quality control, etc.
 - Establish a unique “look” for TVA
 - Build a template/style guide for all documents – headers, footers, fonts, colors etc. to solidify the brand
- Continue and improve use of current TVA communications channels
- Develop key messages for vermiculite and TVA. This tactic might also include position papers where appropriate.
- Expand communication resources
 - Member developed backgrounder information
 - Process reviews
 - Usage information
 - Tap into existing member materials for association use
- Expand Media Use
 - Grow use of trade media used by miners and exfoliators – from the TVA and/or through the members
 - Use enhanced content to project the virtues of vermiculite, common and not-so-common uses
 - Paid ads to ensure placement and timing of enhanced messaging, informative graphics and content
 - Earned content distribution to trade media and new distribution systems
 - Explore potential storytelling opportunities for mass media outlets – national media, major media near the member locations, leveraging the brand champions
- Website specific initiatives:
 - Continue improvements to the look, organization and content of the TVA web site to move it to a more engaging informative website for both members and end-uses of vermiculite.
 - Make the web a central resource for all communications initiatives
 - Website optimization
- Web positioning to mitigate the negative coverage of vermiculite
 - Locating and identifying all negative content
 - Assembling a list of keywords used – using a content/competitor keyword ranking report
 - Building a framework to deliver enhanced, more appropriate content, as developed
 - Using the TVA website and LinkedIn/Facebook presence along with Internet tool and enhanced content
- Reduce the negative impact of the contamination of asbestos issue.
- Possible Certification Program:
 - Testing by a third-party to demonstrate the purity of vermiculite
 - Potential member growth for TVA
 - Reduce concerns of impurities going forward. While one mining operation brought vermiculite to the marketplace in a negative light with asbestos contamination (that company is no longer mining), it is a goal to mitigate the negative impact of that information by communicating the virtues of a TVA Certification Program

Estimated Costs for Implementation:

Costs will vary based upon the number of projects the Board wants to pursue. However, we are anticipating a cost of \$15,000 to \$22,000 to implement the items outlined above.