

# A Strong Strategic Brand Identity Means a Strong Impact

Thanks to Monica Freire, director of the congress department at AIM Group International Lisbon, we delve into the benefits of a smart association brand in times of crisis.



Branding has for long time been synonymous with product and service promotion applied to commercial activities and viewed with some distrust by non-profit associations. How many times in our business have we heard our clients say: “Our association is scientific, looking for quality content and does not aim to make a profit”, “We are focused on research and scientific sharing and events are our main means of communication”...?

All of this is true, but were these associations catering to all their members and community needs?

In recent years, we have witnessed a change in this paradigm with the democratisation of branding. It’s a change in the way associations are viewing their strategic position and understanding the importance that branding can have to stay relevant. A way to stand out in an increasingly competitive industry.

Branding an association is much more than creating a logo and promoting meetings. Associations now need more than ever to think in a holistic and strategic way. Having a well-defined mission is only a first step towards a consolidated

strategy: more than identifying what you represent, it is necessary to establish the means to achieve your ends: what is your USP; what are your short and long-term objectives; how will you plan in a concerted manner in order to reach each of your target audience.

Smart branding has become essential for the survival of associations as much as any other entity. Establishing a bond of recognition, a sense of belonging and making sure that you deliver what you promise.

So, what is a smart strategy for an association? Obviously, there isn’t any one-size-fits-all solution, but for sure solutions involve a more business-oriented vision. Setting goals for your activities, a careful SWOT analysis, implementing your KPIs and measuring your results using all the analytics tools you have at your disposal. Never forget to listen to your members and establish a constant and bi-directional communication with them.

When we look at the last few months, we cannot help thinking that associations with this strategic vision are better fit to face such unprecedented events. Maintaining

multichannel communication not only has allowed associations to survive, but it also showed that they are able to stay relevant to their members. COVID-19 has been an enormous challenge, but also a way to turn times of adversity into new opportunities.

We all know that physical events are irreplaceable for associations and its members. We also know that scientific exchange is particularly important in times of medical emergency. The transformation of physical events into fully virtual, although temporarily, is part of this growing capacity to create new branding solutions: connectivity between associations and their membership, hybrid and longer lifespan events, bite-size content, etc. All these opportunities must now be seized by associations to allow sustainable growth and get closer to their target audiences.

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