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The Stronger Roots Program

Case Study:
Walk the City

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Walk the City: Building a new brand identity with constituency building in focus

A brand is not just a logo, but an emotion. A feeling that you can get engaged in and become a part of something, to make walking in your city more comfortable and routes to schools safer. This way of thinking is what made an established, 30-year-old Czech organization, Prague Mothers, decide to rebrand and change its name to Walk the City, a name which better reflects its current activities. As a result, the organization has reached out to many new supporters, improved relationships with the existing ones, and is on its way to becoming a lovebrand.

Walk the City (Pěšky městem), formerly Prague Mothers (Pražské matky) is a Czech association focused on improving the environment, public space and pedestrian conditions,

mainly in Prague. The organization's history began with a demonstration on May 29, 1989, organized by a group of brave Prague based mothers who began to seek information about the smog burden that the Communist regime was not providing to its citizens. Today, their main activities include the -Safe Routes to School-program and the -Pedestrians to ourselves- portal, through which pedestrians can raise concerns about problems they encounter on their journeys through the city. Since October 2020, the organization has used the name Walk the City.

STEPS OF REBRANDING

The main reason for rebranding was that the original name (Prague Mothers) no longer reflected the topics the organization was working on. People often assumed the

organization dealt with children or feminism, and not transport. Men in particular, were suspicious of the original name, expecting various confrontations and conflicts of interest. Constantly having to explain their true purpose was exhausting, counterproductive and problematic also in relation to potential donors and gaining support for their activities.

Despite having concerns about how complicated the process of rebranding may be, Prague Mothers were open to the change, and the Stronger Roots Program gave them the support they needed to implement these changes. It supplied funding, mentoring and provided the opportunity for consultations with various experts with constituency building in focus. Together they agreed on the following steps of rebranding: **1:** discussion on mission and vision **2:** new name **3:** new logo and visual style **4:** new texts and communication strategy **5:** new website.

At first, the organization internally anchored their values, priorities and target groups. They also searched for a concise new name. *“Before, we tried a communication agency, but it did not work out. In my opinion, it’s ideal if the new name is created within the organization, because the organization lives its own story, and its people have to identify and get comfortable*

with the name. I don’t rule out that an agency can help come up with it, but it’s a bit of a lottery because both teams need to be equally involved.”

They invented the name Pěšky městem (Walk the City).

With the help of an expert, they created a new logo, website architecture and a visual communication manual, working with playful colors and graphic elements. *“We were lucky to come across a great brand and UX/UI designer who guided us through a workshop to clarify how our new brand should look and feel to our supporters and to us. We wanted to evoke feelings such as friendliness and modernity.”* The new styling gave clear guidelines for the tone and shape of their message, with a friendly and open personal voice reflected in the written content.

POSITIVE WAY OF COMMUNICATION

Walk the City chose a positive communication strategy, based on sociological surveys that focused on how the public feels about nonprofits. *“People don’t like the division into - we are the good guys, we do good and you are the bad guys, you drive a car and you have to change everything about yourself. That doesn’t work, and neither does criticism, which is not usually a sufficient reason to change one’s behavior.”* Particularly on topics that are often characterized by opposites, such as drivers vs.

pedestrians, the organization consciously chose a conflict-free style of communication and positive tone. For example, instead of saying “The street is closed to car traffic”, they would use “The street is open to people, meetings and life”. As they focused on building a social base, they also looked for ways to emphasize the engagement, focusing on the messages of ‘we do things together’ and ‘we can’t do it without you’.

RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

Reactions on rebranding have been positive, with people responding in an enthusiastic manner, and Walk the City sees that people in general are more willing to engage with them more closely. They are convinced that the change made a positive impact on the image of the organization, especially as new people contact them, including men. Having men who can better identify with the mission and feel as a part of the organization is an important step for growth. *“We started*

getting requests for interviews and statements. Researchers, students and journalists find us and initiate cooperation, which was not happening very often under our previous name.” Previously, while they had always worked with a large number of people who were actively involved in activities, it was mostly on a one-off basis, with only a small percentage remaining active after a particular event. Now, they work with their constituencies in a targeted and personal way, introducing a regular newsletter and membership card Špacírka (Walking Sticker) to keep their involvement and attention. The result is an increase of engaged people on social media, as well as a successful fundraising campaign. They also reinforced communication with local groups in Prague and widened a platform of active local groups Chodci sobě (Pedestrians to Themselves). Visits on the portal increased by 42 % compared with the same period last year.

Toolbox 1

Sharp cut to the new brand identity

For about six months, the organization prepared its existing supporters, with occasional mentions of the name change on social media. But on the D-day of

launching their new website, they decided to make a sharp cut and go straight to the new brand: “*We originally had the idea that we would have a sort of transition period on the website, where we would announce that we were switching to a new name. But our experienced mentor explained that this is only how very large and well-known organizations communicate about name or logo changes - for example, banks or insurance companies. We didn’t have to do that. With the launch of the website, we should start strengthening the new brand of Walk the City.*” To ensure clear continuity, they created a “History” subpage on the website where everything is explained. “*The Prague Mothers are, and will continue to be a part of us, despite the outward “sharp cut” and we are proud of that.*” Walk the City now works under the new logo, though they kept the old one only for special anniversaries.



● All quotes are by Petra Syrová, the chairwoman of Walk the City (Pěšky městem)



This case study was written as a part of the Stronger Roots Program.

The Stronger Roots Program aims to increase the resilience of civil society organizations and their networks, strengthen their social capital and embed them in the communities and societies in which they operate. It is implemented by Open Society Fund Prague, the NIOK Foundation, Open Society Foundation Bratislava and Glopolis.

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