

Unit 2: Backgrounder

Scenario: It's finally happened: you've graduated college, and while you still have unfulfilled aspirations, you have started a job in your industry of choice. However, just as you are learning about your new job and employer, big changes in how the organization presents itself are coming. Your boss has made it clear that the company needs to rethink its brand and has selected its newest hire, you, to gather information on branding to be presented to a task force that will consider options for this rebranding effort. This task force includes all the higher-ups in the company, and your information will be one of the deciding factors on what direction the company should go to move into the 21st century.

Task: Research successful and/or unsuccessful rebranding efforts and communicate that information to your company in a report (backgrounder, or white paper). This backgrounder is distinct from a proposal, in that your focus is to be informative, rather than persuasive. To the extent that you make recommendations, they should take a "soft sell" approach. You are being asked to conduct background research that will inform action, rather than plan action yourself. However, you must make careful decisions about what information to include and how to present it in order to contribute to this initiative productively and make a good impression.

You are free to imagine the company you "work" for and their reasons for rebranding however you like. Those reasons may be one of the following or some combination:

- Managing the company's reputation, especially in a crisis
- Adapting to changes in customer needs and wants
- Expanding to national or international markets
- Keeping up with changes in technology (digital, mobile, viral, etc.)
- Aligning different aspects of customer experience (web, physical space, advertising)

You will draw on readings and class discussion on rebranding, research techniques, and document design, as well as your industry knowledge. In addition to the backgrounder itself, you will produce/deliver the following:

- A research plan memo and progress memo
- An InDesign practice document
- An elevator pitch (See separate assignment details)
- A self-assessment memo

The final backgrounder will be due **Friday, March 13**.

Goals: (1) To engage in primary and secondary research and present results in a professional context, (2) to develop document design abilities, (3) to apply concepts of brand management.

Unit 2 Calendar

Week 5: Feb. 9-13	<i>Mon.</i> Plain Style	
	<i>Wed.</i> Introduction to Project 2	
	<i>Fri.</i> Branding Proposals	Read <i>SWaW</i> , p. 323-341 Read Williams, "The Basics of Branding"
Week 6: Feb. 16-20	<i>Mon.</i> Research Methods	
	<i>Wed.</i> Reports and White Papers Rebranding	Read <i>SWaW</i> , Ch. 8-9 Read "How to Rebrand," "Refresh Your Brand," and "When Does Rebranding" Research Plan due
	<i>Fri.</i> Visual Rhetoric	Read <i>SWaW</i> , Ch. 6 Post an example white paper to course site and comment on its design
Week 7: Feb. 23-27	<i>Mon.</i> InDesign, Pt. 1	
	<i>Wed.</i> InDesign, Pt. 2	Progress Memo due InDesign Practice Document due
	<i>Fri.</i> Documentation	Read <i>SWaW</i> , p. 355-365
Week 8: Mar. 2-6	<i>Mon.</i> Peer Review	Draft of white paper due
	<i>Wed.</i> Typography	Read "A New Typography of Language," "Typography 101," and "A Beginner's Guide to Pairing Fonts"
	<i>Fri.</i> Writing Style	Read <i>SWaW</i> , A1-A7
Week 9: Mar. 9-13	<i>Mon.</i> Rhetoric, Ethics, and Economics	Mathieu, "Economic Citizenship and the Rhetoric of Gourmet Coffee"
	<i>Wed.</i> Work Day Meetings with instructor	
	<i>Fri.</i> Elevator Pitch Presentations	Deliver elevator pitch in class Final white paper due