



the starr conspiracy

Just Be **Yourself?** Nah, You Can **Do Better** Than That.

A CASE STUDY



You, Reimagined

Remember the Railroads

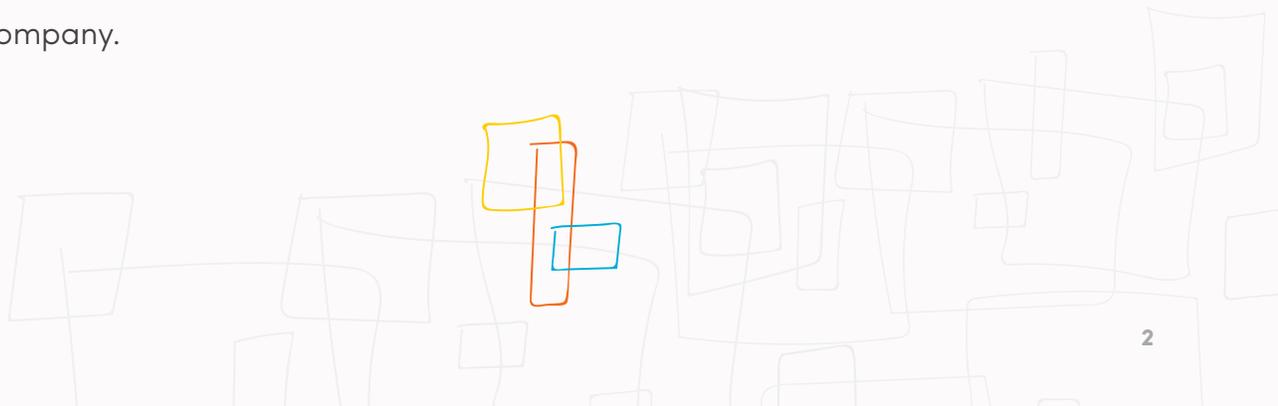
Change is tough. There's a reason it scares people. Mostly, it's because it triggers fears of the unknown. But to grow your business, you continually have to navigate through the gray. So if you fear change, take a deep breath, say a chant, pop a pill, and relax. There are worse things in life.

Like not changing at all. Ask yourself: Who are you as a business? Who do you want to be? These are not questions merely to refine corporate values or to concoct some vague mission statement that no one but you will remember in a week. Rather, you should always be pondering your company's identity on a far more practical level — your market position, your buyers, your competition.

Chances are, the answers will make you uncomfortable because you'll discover gulfs between reality and aspirations. That's bad news and it's good news, because such realizations can be powerful catalysts for — uh-oh, here it comes again — change. So take comfort in this:

Who you are today is not necessarily who you should be tomorrow.

When you realize — and you will realize — that you must make fundamental changes to your company to thrive, how will you go about making those changes? Here's an example of how we worked with a client to leverage their old identity to transform themselves into a whole new type of company.



THE PROBLEM

More Than Mugs

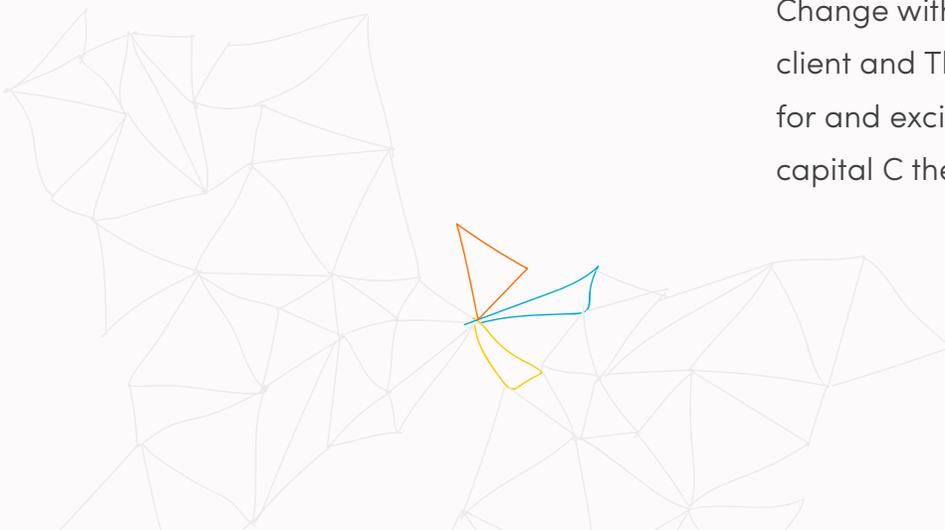
A provider of incentive programs (focused on gift cards, plaques, product rewards, etc.) was eager to leverage The Starr Conspiracy’s research that point-solution providers could bolster their businesses by transitioning to more extensive employee engagement platforms. However, having focused solely on incentives and rewards for so many years, the client wasn’t sure how to make the jump to a wider platform.

The vendor was interested in shedding its image as “that company that offers employees watches, T-shirts, mugs, and keychains.” They sought to evolve into a platform that integrated a suite of employee engagement functions like wellness and talent management.

The problem, of course, was that the company had previously done a great job branding itself as a single-solution provider. So ironically, whereas prior effective branding had benefited who the company was, it now served as a potential obstacle to branding the company as who they aspired to become.

When buyers have a great sense of your former identity, it becomes that much harder to forge a new one.

Consequently, the organization knew it would not only need to morph their business model but, just as important, their messaging to educate current buyers and attract new ones. In other words, this was Change with a capital C — and both the client and The Starr Conspiracy were up for and excited by the Challenge. (Yes, capital C there, too.)



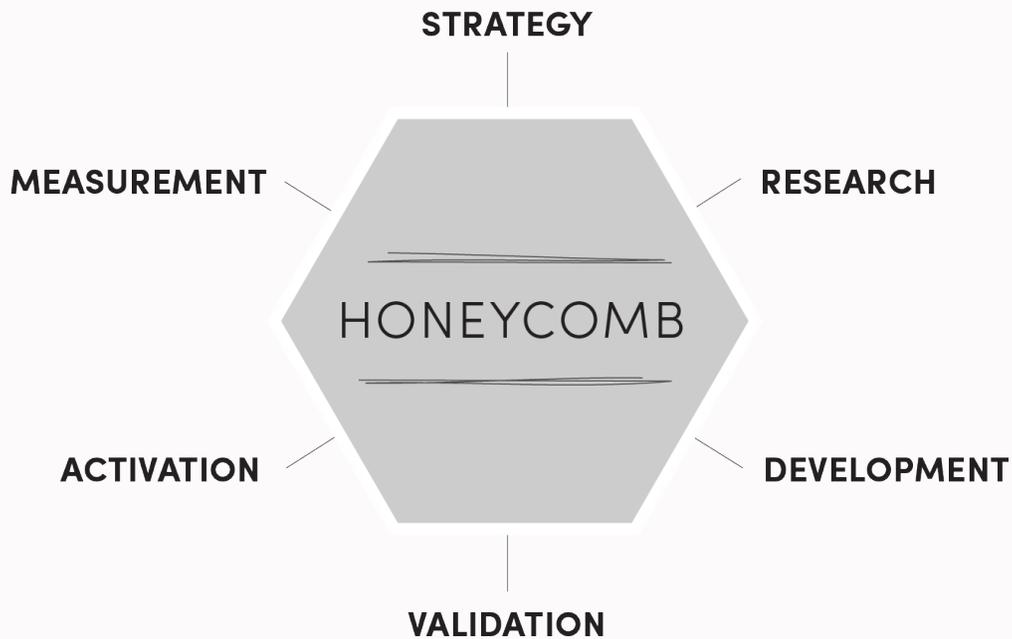


THE SOLVE

From Point Solution to Platform

To help the organization reshape itself, as with all projects we conduct, The Starr Conspiracy took the company through our Honeycomb Process. It's a vital journey to help the enterprise discover their Drive,¹ develop impactful messages, understand their new category, and engage with radical buyers — those who share the organization's passion.

HERE'S WHAT WE DID:



¹ A company's Drive consists of the internal factors that define a client's voice. Those factors include: obsession (core desire), gifts, traps, fears, legacy (goal), and archetype.



Strategy: Rather than encourage the company to shrug off its past as an incentive provider, The Starr Conspiracy worked with the vendor to build on it. The organization was already a rewards leader, so adding recognition programs to its offerings was a natural way to evolve the brand and helped pave their journey to become a more holistic employee engagement platform.

At the same time, The Starr Conspiracy developed a bold plan to enable the vendor to take advantage of its large size, scale, and global reach to gain necessary technology and develop a powerful voice in the market.

Research: The Starr Conspiracy engaged in extensive marketplace analysis and conducted detailed internal and external stakeholder interviews. We explored a full range of opportunities for the vendor to rebrand itself.

Development: The Starr Conspiracy identified an array of characteristics and variables to improve the organization's perception of themselves, their category, and their buyers, including:

- **Drive Variables:** Defining who the company is — in this case, an organization committed to helping people feel valued
- **Message Variables:** Detailing what the company does (see below for more details)

- **Functional Associations:** Primary features the business wants to be known for — moving forward, the company would drive engagement with tools and features well beyond traditional incentives
- **Brand Attributes:** Main characteristics of the brand
- **Brand Archetype:** Overarching personality of the brand

Notably, the company's former category of rewards and recognition — along with talent management, wellness, and measurement — now became the organization's functional associations. This enabled the company to claim its space in the upgraded employee engagement category.

Validation: The Starr Conspiracy validated the project with the client's senior leadership and major customers.

Activation: The Starr Conspiracy produced message guides for internal and ongoing message development to drive marketing and product development. Additionally, we helped the organization conceive a new, unique name to tell an updated — and upgraded — story more impactfully to create greater brand recognition and recall.

Measurement: The Starr Conspiracy engages in continued measurement studies to bolster brand awareness, functional association, and brand affinity.



THE RESULT

A Rewards Company Discovers the Reward of Remodeling

As a result of going through our Honeycomb Process, the company was able to go from an incentives provider to an employee engagement platform focused on rewards and recognition.

Additionally, the organization gained alignment among employees, prospects (the market), and clients around the company's Drive. A unified voice around core messages further helped the organization and its radical buyers engage with each other. Specifically, the business rallied around its message variables:

Radical Buyer: The company identified their most valuable, passionate audience, enabling them to connect with those buyers more effectively. The business was especially able to leverage existing relationships with HR leaders who were already passionate about recognition and who shared aspirations around creating synergies among the various aspects of employee engagement.

Category: The enterprise gained a greater understanding of the new employee engagement category they were now joining to better focus their business objectives.

Essential Value: The organization was now able to help buyers drive employee engagement outcomes, particularly through a rewards and recognition lens.

Competition: The company surpassed its competitors not by ignoring the fact that it still offered incentives but by placing them in a more meaningful context, as facets of larger employee engagement efforts.

Choice Factor: The organization gained a deeper understanding of why buyers would pick them over other vendors — specifically because they offered enterprises opportunities to improve their workplaces via an updated, modern approach that elevated people over products.

Ultimately, the company was able to provide buyers with a new level of personalized, customized, and sustained service. With a new name, new objectives, and new capabilities, the organization worked to become a top employee engagement platform.

Most important, the company owes their accomplishments to continued efforts to recognize when change was needed — and then embrace it. The company could have very easily maintained their position as an incentives leader, but they desired more for themselves. And they got more.

A great success story, right? Let's discuss creating one of your own.



What About **Your Change** Initiatives?

What Does Your Company Want to Be When You Grow Up?

To succeed in business, it's not that you have to pretend that change isn't scary. It is scary. But even more frightening is what can happen to your company if you don't accept the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities that change can offer.

Luckily, in the face of change, we're here for you. We'd love to have a conversation about your marketing needs and how we can work together to help you find your unique place in the market to attract buyers.

LET'S TALK

About The Starr Conspiracy

The Starr Conspiracy embraces the humanity in business to build brands that have emotional resonance. More than a global business-to-business marketing agency, we're a movement. We're changing the way technology companies view themselves, their customers, and the world. Unlike conventional agencies, we fuse advertising, technology, and advisory services in completely new ways — ways that defy categorization and challenge the old-school agency structure.

