WEBER SHANDWICK
WORLDWIDE

Anti-American sentiments and their long-term impact on international corporations

Produced by Weber Shandwick

Global Brands Under Threat

A gathering "perfect storm" of socio-economic, political and cultural trends threatens corporate brand value as never before.

The period of intense military conflict in Iraq may be over and the millions of middle-class demonstrators are off the streets. There may be a sense that those entrusted with valuable corporate brands can breathe a sigh of relief as the anti-Americanism that was threatening collateral damage to some of the most highly visible global corporations ebbs away. But it would be wrong to be complacent.

There is evidence that the second war in Iraq represented a tipping-point; that a confluence of trends – political, socio-economic and cultural – puts global brands, particularly those seen as symbols of America, at more risk now than at any time since the Vietnam War.

The reasons are many and varied, and spring from perception and reality. But, America's role as the sole world superpower following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a divergence from increasingly independent European nations moving out from under America's nuclear umbrella, and America's role in Middle Eastern politics, all combine to raise anti-American feelings in many parts of the world to an unprecedented level.

> *"There have been moments of transatlantic tension before now. But fundamental changes in the international order since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the threats and opportunities presented by globalisation have created an unprecedented rift that calls for new thinking and decisive action."*
>
> Kemal Dervis, Turkey's parliamentary representative to the convention on the future of Europe, and former Turkish finance minister. Financial Times, May 30, 2003.

Tarnished image

The souring of attitudes toward America is a long-term and complex trend, but the second war in Iraq appears to have crystallised some underlying feelings and deepened resentments. The Pew Research Center in Washington, a private organisation that studies public trends in politics and the media, found in its large-scale survey conducted in May of 2003, that the successful overthrow of Saddam Hussein has exacerbated the negative feelings, rather than helping America's standing.

"The war with Iraq really seems to have hurt people's opinions of the United States around the world, and this represents a further decline from where they were in 2002, which in itself was a precipitous decline from 1999 and 2000."

Elizabeth Mueller Gross of Pew Research Center, in an interview with Radio Free Europe, June 9, 2003.

Anti-American opinion is most evident in Arab and Muslim countries, but there is also a marked deterioration in the relationship between America and some of its closest allies and trading partners. Pew's American Image survey in May showed the perception of America in major European countries recovering immediately after the end of major hostilities in Iraq, though remaining significantly below the 2002 level. The poll numbers for key Muslim countries such as Turkey (a 15% favourable reading) remained abysmally low.

U.S. Image Plummets

Favourable view of the U.S.

	'99-00	2002	March 2003	**May 2003**
	%	%	%	**%**
Britain	83	75	48	**70**
France	62	63	31	**43**
Germany	78	61	25	**45**
Italy	76	70	34	**60**
Spain	50	–	14	**38**
Poland	86	79	50	–
Russia	37	61	28	**36**
Turkey	52	30	12	**15**

Source: Pew

Similarly, America's leading role within the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in setting harsh terms for heavily-indebted developing countries had fed the backlash against American-style capitalism, not only on the streets of Buenos Aires and Jakarta, but at the highest levels of economic thought. Notably, former World Bank Chief Economist and Nobel Economics Laureate George Stigler has criticised the imposition of tough terms on governments that may have inherited difficulties from corrupt regimes that had been supported by America.

The politicised consumer and anti-globalisation

In addition, there is a widespread suspicion about globalisation and the corporations and brands most closely identified with it, most of which are American. This has gained a distinct political dimension in recent years, one that crosses generations and has led to growing consumer activism and a general deterioration in brand loyalty and brand value.

The anti-globalisation movement may have burst onto the scene at the World Economic Forum in Seattle in 1999, with images of multi-pierced young rioters breaking windows of fast-food outfits and coffee house chains. But the deeper affect was felt from a number of anti-globalisation books that hit the shelves around the same time, most powerfully that from the Canadian lawyer and journalist Naomi Klein, whose "*No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*" has been a best-seller, translated into 15 languages. The book and the author have become a focus for bringing the debate into the mainstream via the extensive media coverage it received.

There are, of course, many complex factors at play, and the irony is that evidence points to the fact that brands have been losing their hold on consumers at the same time as the clamour against their power has been on the rise.

Brands used to be much more straightforward propositions. The ranking of the world's top 10 most valuable brands for many years has changed very little. But in the past few years the values of those older, iconic brands have dropped sharply. Indeed, the value of all the top brands has been under pressure as brand loyalty among all age groups has softened, particularly in regions such as the Middle East. The proliferation of product choice and buying options has largely driven this trend. Consumers have become more sophisticated about branding techniques, and anti-Americanism exacerbates it.

> *"More than just a product, companies nowadays are marketing lifestyles and values, which requires a much greater sensitivity not only to the psychology of individuals but to the norms and political perceptions of countries, regions, and society as a whole."*
> Rolf Olsen, president, European practices and client development, Weber Shandwick

Products and companies can be severely damaged by not paying attention to trends in political attitudes, as well as to issues such as the genetically modified (GM) foods debate, sensitivities to environmental policy, associations with unpopular regimes, labour practices, and so on.

The new social consciousness among consumers is not just confined to the younger generation. An advertising industry study of American lifestyles found that the percentage of consumers between the ages of 20 and 29 who said they stuck to well-known brands fell to 59% in 2000 from 66% in 1975. The same survey showed that the percentage in the 60-69 age bracket who said that they remained loyal to well-known brands also fell over the same period, to 59% from 86%.

"I believe we have entered a permanent era of constant ebb and flow in which the global acceptance of brands will be tempered by backlashes. There is no going back. Much of this ebb and flow will be played out on the small screen in local communities or in certain countries or in specific demographics.

Sometimes the news will be in the noise of boycotts, protest and graffiti. Sometimes the news will be in the silence – what is not being said as consumers worldwide continue with their habits. The greatest wisdom we can acquire in our business is to know the difference between the two, and understand why the silence is speaking volumes."

Jack Leslie, chairman, Weber Shandwick

At this particular point in time, this is what we know about the noise and the silence:

We know that companies and their famous brands often find themselves at the receiving end of small but highly visible boycotts. We know these reactions can differ widely from market to market, and from brand to brand. We know that companies are wise to pay attention to their local roots. We know that anti-Americanism in Europe will lead to active and passive resistance against American products. We know that non-governmental organisations are powerful and experienced in consumer guerilla tactics, such as boycotts. We also know that, in normal times, small but symbolic boycotts often affect companies at the margins. But times have changed and we should not let our guard down.

Consumer activism matures – as direct action grows, a deeper passive resistance also poses a major threat

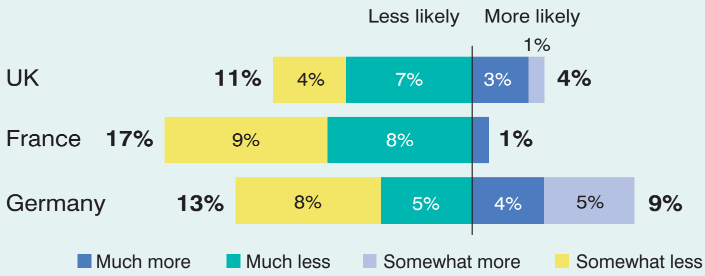
Surveys conducted by KRC Research, a division of Weber Shandwick, as well as anecdotal evidence from Weber Shandwick offices and elsewhere in the wake of the war in Iraq, underline the extent to which consumers have become politicised and are willing to take direct action.

KRC's research showed that up to a third of consumers polled had boycotted a brand to make a political point, while consumers generally were far more likely to take such action than they were five years ago. For example, 39% of British consumers said they were more likely than five years ago to boycott products in order to make a point about an issue – whether war in Iraq, child labour, or an environmental issue.

The results of KRC's survey of American consumers was even more stark. Four in 10 (43%) said that France's role in the war in Iraq had made them less likely to buy French products, including three in 10 (29%) who said it made them much less likely. Results were only slightly lower for Germany: 36% said Germany's role in the war made them less likely to buy German products, including 22% who said it made them much less likely.

In addition, of those responding to a survey of 30 business leaders across Europe, a third thought that the effect of the war on consumer attitudes would linger for between three to five years.

Up to 20% of consumers in the UK, France and Germany say the U.S.'s role in the war in Iraq has made them less likely to buy U.S. products.



Source: KRC Research

Individual anecdotes of this politicised consumer activity abound:

- Almost one out of four people in the Asia Pacific region said they have avoided purchasing American brands, according to a recent survey of 1,000 people by advertising agency Leo Burnett. The agency polled consumers in India, China, South Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines.
- German bicycle maker Riese und Mueller has cancelled all business deals with American suppliers. The company, which buys about $3 million worth of parts from half a dozen suppliers, wants the American companies to renounce the war in Iraq.
- Consumers in Europe and the Middle East have snapped up 4.5 million bottles of Mecca-Cola, an anti-America soft drink launched in October. Mecca-Cola – with a motto that translates as "Don't drink stupidly, drink responsibly" – has orders for 14 million more bottles. The cola is also sold in Middle Eastern neighbourhoods in the U.S. in Detroit, and soon in New Jersey.

Consumers thinking local

The war in Iraq also stirred deeper anxieties, according to research conducted by McCann Pulse™, a proprietary service from Weber Shandwick's sister company McCann-Erickson. McCann Pulse™ monitors the social and cultural forces that affect consumers and their attitudes towards advertising and marketing communications. The company spoke to consumers in more than 30 markets around the globe in March 2003.

Among its key findings were:

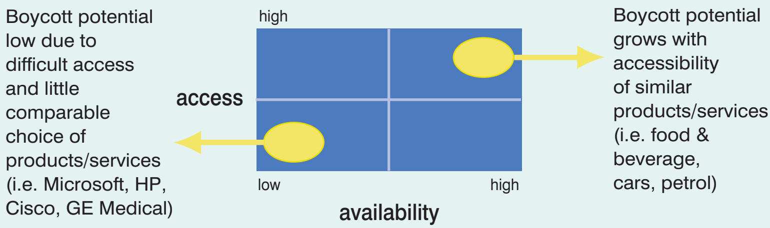
- Consumers are "thinking local" by focusing on their homes and families and by supporting local brands and merchants that they know and trust. This action is more an anti-globalism retrenchment than strictly an outcome of anti-American sentiment, suggesting that all big multi-national brands will have to work harder and communicate more carefully today to gain and maintain the trust of global consumers.
- Product boycotts appear to differ not only from market to market, but from one brand to the next, as local brand perceptions appear to be affecting a product's fate.
- The war risks tarnishing the reputation of American culture and the mythic "American dream," which has long drawn people from around the world to the United States to live, work or visit. And if brand "America" continues to erode around the world, American media, entertainment and pop culture could be the next industries to suffer after travel and tourism.
- Feelings of powerlessness are unleashing pre-existing, anti-globalism sentiments, particularly in Western Europe, where resentment is growing for the unchecked dominance of global power – be it the U.S. government or the perceived arrogance of multinational corporations.
- Because many U.S.-based brands have long and rich histories in local markets around the world and have effectively integrated themselves into the local cultural fabric, they are often immune from anti-American sentiment, no matter how strong, because they are perceived as local. In other cases, however, American brands are at odds with local cultural values and become easier targets of boycott movements.

The passive resistance time-bomb

Some products are resistant to the type of direct boycott suffered by the most symbolic consumer non-durable brands because they are seen as irreplaceable, such as technology. But a perception of arrogance and lack of sensitivity to local culture can easily build against such strongly ring-fenced products.

An ill-judged ad campaign, a cavalier attitude to local customs and manners or heavy-handed imposition of labour practices or dealings with local partners could lead to an unexpected backlash, taking various forms that can be harmful to a company.

Consumers/customer boycott



BUT
Frustration due to dependence on product leads to passive resistance and readiness to change as soon as possible ⟶ **Lingering reputational issue**

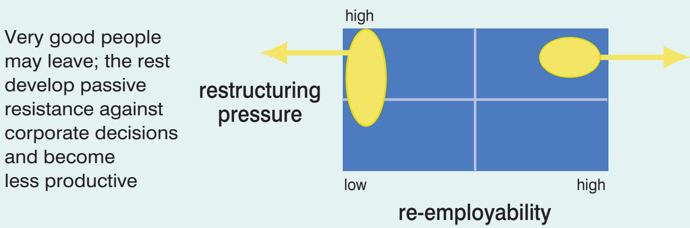
Source: Weber Shandwick

Country business heads may not suffer from a direct boycott or feel the effects of a political freeze-out, but it does not mean the company and its brand are not vulnerable.

> *"New data suggests most consumers in Europe and Asia aren't turning away from American brands, even if they oppose the war with Iraq. But a sizable minority say they avoid buying American – a strong signal that even the most resilient brands can't ignore the potential fallout from sustained anti-Americanism."*
>
> Wall Street Journal, March 24, 2003

Passive resistance, for example from employees, can be an enormous threat to productivity and quality, and can have a negative long-term impact on corporate reputation and value.

Employees/Suppliers



Source: Weber Shandwick

"A strong corporate brand can give way to an anti-brand culture if the company becomes detached from its local market, workforces and community."

Janos Goenczoel, non-executive chairman, Weber Shandwick, Europe

Brand value is shareholder value – higher risks to brands require better strategies

In the face of this unprecedented insecurity, it is important to have the tools on hand to effectively manage the fast-changing currents affecting brand and corporate reputation, which are an increasingly important component of shareholder value.

Brand valuation is used by major U.S. and global corporations to measure the impact of external events and internal strategies on the value of brands, and, more proactively, to identify the steps to be taken to minimise future brand risk.

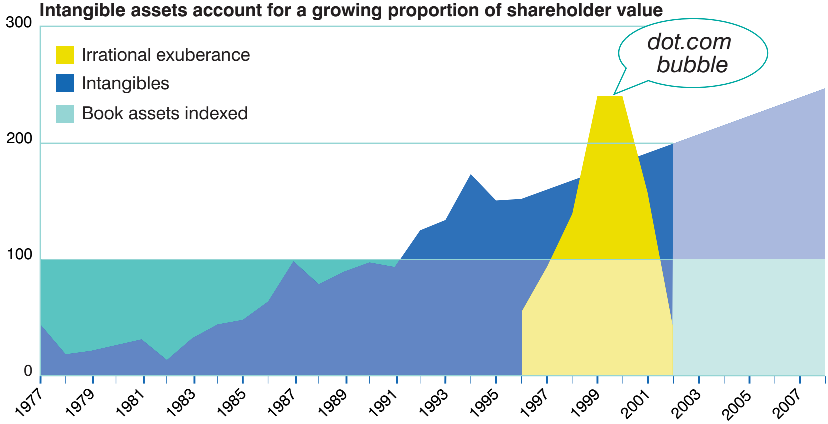
FutureBrand, a sister company of Weber Shandwick, is one of the few companies in the world expert at measuring the value of a brand, its growth or decline. FutureBrand's brand valuation methodology conforms to international accounting standards and U.S. GAAP, and is accepted by the SEC, Standard & Poors, Moodys and the IRS. It is recognised as a best practice in brand valuation, more strategic and more robust than alternative approaches.

Brand as shareholder value

Intangible assets account for an ever-increasing share of the value of companies. The proportion of shareholder value created by intangibles has risen to 70% today from less than 20% in 1980. FutureBrand data shows that this role of intangible assets is projected to increase even when adjusting for the irrational exuberance exhibited in the dot.com era.

Intangible assets include patents, technology, R&D and human capital. For most companies, the most valuable intangible asset is their brand. The contribution of the brand to shareholder value ranges from a low of around 10% for a commodity-type business such as forest products or utilities, to 80% or more for well-known high-fashion companies.

Intangible assets account for a growing proportion of shareholder value



Source: FutureBrand

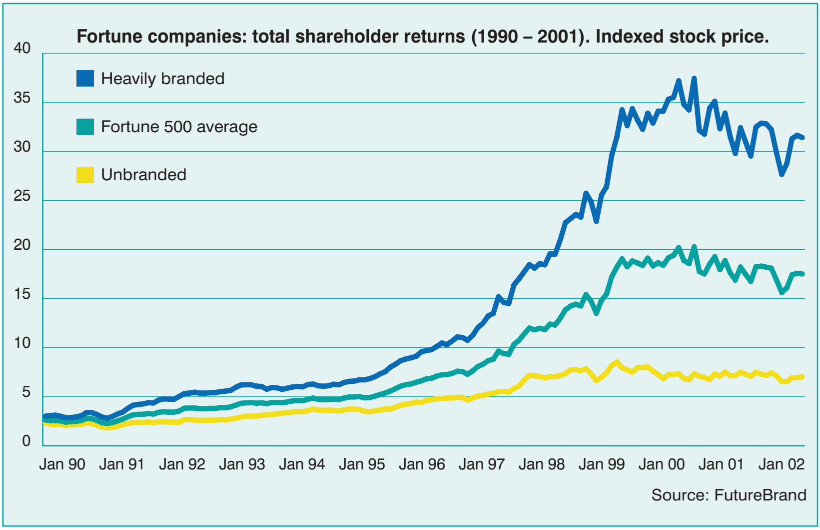
Brands are a major source of competitive advantage. Companies today are in a constant battle to create value in an ultra competitive global market place.

In many industries, it has become fairly easy to copy products and the best systems for manufacturing and marketing those products. The competitive advantage lies in the "intangible assets" that are harder to replicate, the most of important of which is the brand.

Reputation rests in the brand. The brand represents a psychological set of associations in the minds of consumers, investors and other stakeholders, which guarantees a future level of cash flows and investment. On the demand side, the brand drives purchase, loyalty and price premiums.

Companies with strong brands find it easier to attract new customers and retain existing customers. They can sell more products at higher prices than companies with weaker brands. The ability to license brands enables companies to get into new businesses and markets without taking the capital investment risk. On the supply side, the brand helps a company obtain better agreements with suppliers and partners and recruit and retain more talented employees. Investor research studies have shown that strongly branded companies command lower risk premiums and are able to shave significant interest payments off their cost of debt.

The result is that companies with strong brands command consistently higher share prices over time.



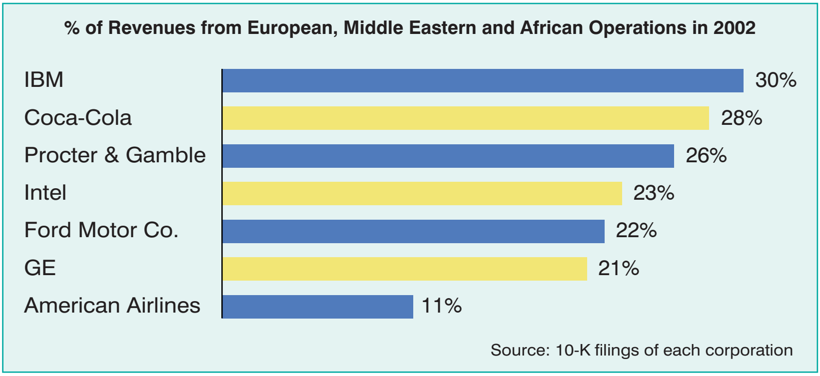
Brands are high risk assets

Brands are thus valuable financial assets for corporations. Brands are also higher risk than most other types of assets. The value of any asset can easily be damaged. An event or a scandal that affects reputation can cause a large amount of shareholder value to vanish, almost overnight. The brand is impacted by both internal and external sources of risk.

Corporate reputation is becoming as important as individual product brands, if not more so.

The brand is created by the reputation of the product or service and by the reputation of the corporation that stands behind it. As the competitive advantage period for products and services becomes shorter, the role of corporate reputation is becoming increasingly important. In recognition of this fact, corporations are moving to associate the corporate brand more closely with their products and services (Nestlé, Kraft, GM and Pfizer being prime examples).

Anti-Americanism is creating a risk to the reputation of U.S. corporations over which they have much less control. A large percentage of the value of major U.S. corporations is today dependent on overseas, and in particular, European operations.



Strong brands minimise risk

Strong brands survive crises of all kinds more easily than weak brands. Strong brands protect against economic crises. Brands do not just create value and competitive advantage in good times but protect companies in tough times by forging strong links with consumers, investors and other stakeholders. In the current downturn, the share price gap between companies with strong brands and companies with weak brands has widened.

A strong brand is key to protecting corporate reputation against the anti-American threat. Brand-building and brand management become critically important in this era, when brands are under political attack as well as competitive attack. The strongest brands of all are those that are both global and local. Global means not just an American brand that is successful internationally, but a brand that is accepted as “theirs” by each country in which it operates. The strongest brands take on the nationality of the local market in the minds of consumers. This is true of McDonald’s, for example, in many countries – a recent survey showed that a majority of British people believe it is a British company. And what could be more British than Heinz Baked Beans?

Protecting global brand value and corporate reputation – an action plan

Emphasise local roots

Although very strong American brands are less threatened by the political climate, they should “act local” by emphasising their strong local roots as employers and community and charitable sponsors. Brands that adopt and respect local cultures through their actions and their marketing communications will fare best today.

Stress corporate responsibility

In light of the anti-globalisation movement’s scepticism of large, multi-national companies, businesses must pay more than just lip service to corporate responsibility. People are growing more aware of how brands are behaving in a global context. There will be more pressure on brands to communicate what they stand for on the global playing field, via disclosure of more information about their actions related to the environment, their labour practices and their broader contributions to society.

Combat consumer powerlessness

Companies should demonstrate that they are listening to their customers, who by and large feel unheard. Global marketers need to help consumers feel more empowered in buying and using global brands by focusing on two-way marketing programmes that are responsive to consumer wants and soft-sell messages that let the consumers know that they are in the driver’s seat. And given the shaky economy, consumers are seeking comfort in the familiar and are looking for value, durability and trustworthiness in their purchase decisions.

Avoid political messages – or use only with great care

Given the divisiveness domestically of the U.S. war against Iraq and its widespread unpopularity abroad, U.S.-based brands should avoid strongly linking themselves to U.S. foreign policy. The separation global consumers make between the brands and the foreign policies of the United States is delicate and should not be blurred by marketing campaigns.

In some cases, youth-oriented, fashion brands are using pacifism in their marketing communications, stressing an anti-war coolness reminiscent of the 1960s counter-culture. This type of communication can be effective for niche brands with clearly-defined audiences, but may alienate some patriotic consumers of mass-market brands in the United States or Britain.

Stress positive universal values over materialism

Provided it is in keeping with a brand's established image, global companies should convey values that go beyond mere "bigger is better" materialism – which global consumers negatively associate with the American government. Humanistic messages can show that American-based brands are about more than conspicuous consumption. Expressing optimism or universal human ideals such as family and health may resonate with global consumers, while boosting their morale.

Show respect for local cultures and sensitivities

International corporations should pay close attention to local habits and sensitivities, especially in relation to their employees, suppliers and political constituents. Corporate decisions that have an impact on these stakeholders should be carefully communicated to avoid misinterpretations.

Scrutinise corporate messages

Corporate messages in advertising or public relations activities should be well scrutinised. It is helpful to avoid "exaggerated" self-praise in these times.

Monitor markets

Corporations should carefully monitor their markets to get a better sense of the existing threat to their brands due to anti-globalisation or anti-American sentiments. Continuous opinion polls and surveys covering the important stakeholders of the company will be essential in the future. The phenomenon of anti-Americanism and its impacts is expected to last three to five years.

Take action

If a brand is threatened with boycott, it is important to address the issue very quickly at the highest corporate level.

Think in messages and constituencies

Corporations should focus on carefully defined messages addressing their most valuable constituencies and their influencers. They should drive their communications activities forcefully in order to take hold of and keep a long-term control of the dialogue.

Develop a communications campaign

Use all the efficient tools of a well thought-out, mid- to long-term communications campaign.

Turn threat into opportunity

Those corporations that act swiftly and consistently can not only avert the threat against their brand but also use this situation to strengthen and stabilise their brand in their markets.

Weber Shandwick at work

Weber Shandwick is one of the world's leading public relations agencies, with offices in major media, business and government capitals around the world.

As a global company, Weber Shandwick is founded on a heritage of "being local." Our system is designed to work globally, while leveraging our strength and diversity at the local level. The cornerstone of our operation is having teams that are best in their market, or best in their special practice area.

We are interconnected around the world through a single IT network, knowledge management processes and a common approach to communications called "Outcome Management," while we remain a locally diverse team.

Whether it is consumer communications, public affairs, investor relations or focused corporate communications for international companies, we put our diversity to work to determine the most effective means of communications.

Our "Outcome Management" approach is built around six clear steps:

Step 1: Design the Outcome
Step 2: Build the Team
Step 3: Leverage the Knowledge
Step 4: Control the Dialogue
Step 5: Drive the Campaign
Step 6: Assess the Outcome

- Team process for defining S.M.A.R.T. winnable outcomes (S.M.A.R.T. = strategic, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-specific)
- Stakeholder review with emphasis on key constituency groups "builders, buyers, influencers, funders", centered around the very function of the stakeholders
- Gap analysis for focused message development
- Message review and development
- Monitoring and measurement

We have institutionalised a planning process that "closes the loop" and drives forward a clear Outcome in every step of the process.

Our people are trained on driving this process through at the highest level, and our team is ready to meet you anywhere around the globe.

If you would like to engage in a brand valuation exercise, or discuss any branding or corporate reputation challenges that you are facing, please contact Rolf Olsen at rolsen@webershandwick.com.

Our global specialists

Weber Shandwick clients can tap into the expertise of our specialists in reputation, crisis and brand management.

Our European team

Rolf Olsen leads all Weber Shandwick's practice groups in EMEA. He has 25 years' communications industry experience and oversees relationships with affiliates, pan-European client development and marketing. Rolf has a particular focus on developing relationships with technology clients across Europe.

Hugues Andrade is CEO of Weber Shandwick in France. He specialises in corporate positioning, reputation and issues management, privatisation, and brand management. Hugues has advised companies in the air transportation, automotive, travel and leisure, retail, tobacco, energy and financial services sectors. His clients have included Gaz de France, Peugeot, Air France, Pepsi Cola and Procter & Gamble.

Annick Boyen is managing director of Weber Shandwick in the Netherlands. She is a specialist in managing corporate reputation during public listings, and has advised on mergers and acquisitions involving Randstad, Kingfisher and Fortis. Annick advises healthcare and corporate clients including Eli Lilly, Medtronic, Interbrew and Levi Strauss on strategic and pan-European communications.

David Brain is joint CEO of Weber Shandwick in the UK and Ireland. He is a specialist in corporate positioning, brand marketing, technology and corporate affairs. He has worked with companies in sectors from aviation and financial services, to food and drink and logistics, including Visa International, Unilever, Seven Seas, the Brewers' Society and the Government of Egypt.

Colin Byrne is joint CEO of Weber Shandwick in the UK and Ireland. His experience ranges from brand building and reputation/crisis management, to environmental PR and government relations. Colin has worked in sectors including agriculture, automotive, energy, food and drink, retail and not-for-profit, for clients such as IKEA, Nestlé, Shell and Oracle.

Christiane Dirkes is CEO of Weber Shandwick in Germany. She has extensive experience in reputation management, crisis communications, corporate and issues management and consumer PR strategy. Christiane has worked for clients in the retail, food and drink, travel and tourism, technology, and energy industries, including Siemens, Unilever, Marks & Spencer and BMW.

Furio Garbagnati is CEO of Weber Shandwick in Italy, and has more than 20 years' experience of corporate, financial and crisis communications. Furio has counselled many high-profile organisations in the financial services, government, utilities, and telecoms sectors, including the Milan Stock Exchange, JP Morgan and Schroders.

Mark Herford is CEO of Weber Shandwick in Switzerland. He has extensive experience in reputation management, crisis communications, issues management and PR strategy. Mark has worked for clients such as Exxon, Heathrow Airport Limited, DHL, Digital Equipment Corporation, Compaq, BOC, Hewlett-Packard and a number of mining and energy companies in Asia Pacific and Europe.

Miguel López-Quesada is responsible for Weber Shandwick's operations in Madrid, Barcelona, Lisbon and Oporto. He has extensive experience in crisis communications, brand reputation and issues management, Miguel has advised high-profile multinationals in the food and drink, entertainment, health-care and technology sectors, including McDonald's, Coca-Cola and Yahoo!

John Russell is CEO of Weber Shandwick in Belgium. He has extensive experience in corporate and financial communications, public affairs and crisis management. He has advised organisations in the IT and telecomms, healthcare, utilities, government and food sectors, including Nestlé, Interbrew and Hewlett-Packard.

Petr Stoklasa is managing director of Weber Shandwick in the Czech Republic. He is experienced in PR strategy, corporate reputation, B2B communications, and interactive marketing. Petr has advised many organisations in the telecomms, healthcare, not-for-profit, media, and food and drink industries, including Unilever, Boots, Durex and Scholl.

Ervin Szûcs is managing director of Weber Shandwick in Hungary. A strategic communications specialist, he has provided counsel to international corporations on communications and marketing strategy development. His clients have included the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Nokia and Lockheed Martin.

Our U.S. team

Jack Leslie is the chairman of Weber Shandwick. Jack has served as a senior political strategist on numerous presidential campaigns in the U.S. and abroad and currently advises corporations, governments and international organisations on communications strategy. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, served on its Task Force on Public Diplomacy, and testified before the U.S. House Committee on International Relations following September 11.

Ranny Cooper is president and chief operating officer of Weber Shandwick's public affairs practice and oversees the firm's research and advocacy advertising divisions. She directs crisis and public policy activities and has advised a diverse number of trade associations, public institutions, and corporations including the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, the American Council on Education and Johnson & Johnson.

Peter Duda is an executive vice president in the New York office of Weber Shandwick and heads the corporate issues group. Peter has provided strategic communications advice to clients in such fields as financial services, healthcare, infrastructure/manufacturing and consumer products and services. Client experience includes Prudential Financial, Merck, Ingersoll-Rand, Canal Plus, Nextel Communications, Arm & Hammer and Nabisco.

Joe Kessler is the president of Weber Shandwick in California and president of Weber Shandwick's global technology practice. He provides strategic corporate communications counsel to clients in several industries, including technology, media, energy, consumer products, healthcare and professional services.

Ken Luce is the president of the Southwest offices of Weber Shandwick. He has extensive experience in public affairs, issues and crisis planning, corporate communications, media relations, risk management, government relations, and consumer product promotion. Ken's client experience includes Sprint, American Airlines and Microsoft.

Peter Mancusi is senior vice president, and also heads the firm's corporate practice in New England. Peter previously served as business editor at the Boston Globe.

Jim Meszaros is a principal in the Washington, D.C. office of Weber Shandwick and heads the firm's public affairs international practice. He has worked with multi-national companies such as Monsanto, Pharmacia and Ingersoll-Rand on international business and trade issues.

Lance Morgan is president of Powell Tate | Weber Shandwick in Washington, D.C. He specialises in developing and executing media relations strategies for public policy debates, and handling crisis communications activities for high-profile clients.

Andy Polansky is president of Weber Shandwick in North America and chairperson, global practice areas. He has extensive experience in a broad range of communications disciplines, including business-to-business and consumer product marketing, corporate communications and issues management.

Jody Powell is chairman and CEO of Powell Tate | Weber Shandwick. He has been instrumental in creating Washington's most dynamic and respected public relations firm, serving a client roster that includes many of the nation's prominent corporations, trade associations and not-for-profit organisations.

Mike Spataro is executive vice president, Web Relations (the interactive division of Weber Shandwick). Mike has created and managed campaigns for a variety of major brands, including Got Milk?, Hanes Underwear, Xerox and Paramount Studios. Mike has 20 years of experience in brand building, corporate public relations, product marketing publicity and journalism.

Micho Spring is the chairperson of Weber Shandwick's U.S. corporate practice and Weber Shandwick in New England. Her practice focuses on enabling corporate clients to use communications strategies to support their business strategies and respond to public policy challenges.

Sheila Tate is the vice-chairman of Powell Tate | Weber Shandwick. Most of Sheila's business career has been devoted to agency work. Previously, she served as press secretary for the 1988 campaign and transition of George H.W. Bush and as press secretary for first lady Nancy Reagan.

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