Beach Buddies Community Engagement Design

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Introduction:

Ever since I could remember my summers began and ended at the beach. From the time I was a small child until now it has always been my place of solace. It is a place where I can let my thoughts, emotions, and creativity run free.

Each time I think of the white sandy beach I am taken to the sound of waves crashing on shore, the smell of salty seawater filling the air, and the feel of the sun kissing my skin; times when I would sit on the beach and watch dolphins, fish, and turtles swim freely through emerald green water. One day, after witnessing the horrific sight of a local marine animal entangled, helpless, and lifeless in a piece of trash that was left behind, I decided it was time to take a stand and do something that would prevent this from happening to other ocean creatures. I never thought of the danger that marine life are in as a result of the invading trash left behind by careless people. From that moment on I pledged to myself that if I saw a piece of garbage on the sand or in the water I would pick it up and put it in its proper receptacle instead of passing by and pretending I did not see it.

Issue: Ocean Pollution

Every day, whether people realize it or not, they are damaging the environment with every plastic bottle, candy wrapper, fishing line, and piece of trash they use. Trash is one of the most harmful things in our oceans. “267 species around the world are harmed by plastic. 44% of seabirds, 43% of ocean mammals, and 86% of sea turtles ingest or become tangled in plastic. Plastic constitutes
approximately 90% of all trash floating on the ocean’s surface, with **46,000 pieces** of plastic per square mile.”

**What is pollution/trash? What is recycling?**

Trash or pollutants are unwanted items that are thrown (intentionally or accidentally) into the natural environment such as the ground, water, or air that can cause potential harm to humans, animals, or plants. Some people see garbage as garbage and do not differentiate between waste and recyclables. Recycling is not a complex task. By taking the time to put plastics, paper, cardboard, glass etc. into proper bins so they can be processed and then made into new items helps reduce waste.

There are three simple words that can remind everyone how to help in this battle against environmental pollution. **REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE.** If we simply reduce the non-biodegradable items we buy and use, reuse the items several times, and recycle items that we are ready to get rid of then it will greatly benefit the environment.?

In a recent study, it has been found that 80% of items that are thrown into the trash in the United States are recyclable; however, only 28% of those items are actually recycled.³ Ocean pollution is not a tragedy that has just come about; it is something that people have been fighting for a long time. Organizations that emphasize sustainable design, interactive events, and community involvement can get people enthusiastic about recycling and being more resourceful around the globe. Once I became more aware of this issue, I decided that it would be fitting to
create an organization called Beach Buddies and develop an identity for it. This program would help promote recycling, using eco-friendly items while at home or at the beach, and supplying people with information and ways that they can help keep our oceans clean and the ocean creatures safe.

**Beach Buddies: Identity**

When Beach Buddies was first being created it was important to figure out the target audience. Any branding needs to have an active plan that will successfully be communicated to the target audience. Since this is a “family friendly” organization anyone, young or old, corporations or small businesses can and should be a part of it. I knew that Beach Buddies needed a logo that was not only eye-catching but also memorable. It needed to be a universal symbol, something that could be immediately recognized.

For the logo (Figure 1) I wanted to use the colors green and blue for two reasons; because of what the colors represent and because the tagline of the organization is “Go **GREEN** for the **BLUE**”. Green represents nature, life, well-being and safety, which is what this organization is all about, safety for the marine life and our beaches. Blue is the color of the ocean, which brings a feeling of calmness and peace to whomever or whatever is in it or sees it. The turtle is a universal symbol that anyone can recognize and connect with. Most people see the turtle as a symbol of protection, stability, strength, and longevity.
Beach Buddies: Mission and Logo Placement

The Beach Buddies mission is to remove trash and debris that gets left behind or washed up on beaches. Whether oceans or inland waterways, this organization is a movement that brings community, conservationists, and corporations together to tackle the issue of environmental pollution from coast to coast. It focuses on encouraging people to recycle, using more eco-friendly items to protect themselves and marine life, and to share the knowledge of what can be done to have cleaner, safer beaches or waterways.

Logo location plays an important role in how the audience will accept and relate to the organization. As shown in figure 2 there are several different ways that this can be achieved. Initially the goal was to put the logo on beach umbrellas and chairs that would be rented out to tourists, and to place vinyl graphics relating to Beach Buddies on trash and recycle bins that will be along the beach. The organization will work with various resorts in the area to get them on board with promoting this cause by also renting out the Beach Buddies chairs, umbrellas, and other “beach friendly” items to fellow beach goers. By doing this, it will allow the organization and resorts to use some of the proceeds made from the rentals to organize events or cleanups to educate people about ways to protect the environment and teach children responsibility.
Interchangeable signage (Figure 3) will also be used to spread the word of Beach Buddies and the events that will be taking place. While I feel that it is important to use some non-traditional placements for logo and different advertisements mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is equally important to put them in the most obvious places for people to view them as well. Figure three shows examples of how signage can be displayed. The three signs are designed with a clean and simple layout. Since the attention span of passers by has decreased so greatly over the years the signs need to be noticeable and memorable. It is unnecessary to crowd the design with too much information. It is always important to include the logo and to be very clear about what is being presented on the sign, whether it be through imagery, type, or both. Crowding a design with unnecessary elements distracts the viewer from the message. Ideas can be overwhelming but they do not have to overwhelm the design. Less is more.
Plan of Action: (Figure 4)

The original intent for the next step of this project was to simulate an event where volunteers could come together and participate in a beach or river cleanup. However, since timing did not allow for this, I modified it to be an event that was geared more towards children. The main focus of this event, Trash to Craft, was to take everyday items and reuse them by making art. I met with a two select groups of students from Mrs. Grace Fergie’s kindergarten class at Anderson Elementary School (Brownsville, TN) and Miss Tiffany Hays’ first grade class at Thelma Barker Elementary School (Jackson, TN) and talked with them about the ocean, and why it is important to recycle, then gave them the opportunity to become junior beach buddies for life. They also got to make fish, octopi, turtles, and crabs out of various materials that are commonly left behind after a fun-filled day at the beach. The adorable little sea creatures were made from Styrofoam cups, paper bowls and plates. The children also got a chance to be the first individuals to become official Junior Beach Buddy members. The Junior Beach Buddy Club is for children who want to learn more about the ocean and how to protect our waterways and marine life. Becoming a JBB is very simple. An activity book can be picked up at any JBB station during any of our events such as craft days, cleanup days, or any other seasonal special programs that take place. Once a child has received his or her book and has completed the activities, read and signed the JBB Pledge, then it can be
brought back to any JBB station to receive an official JBB t-shirt along with other Beach Buddies gear.

This club is designed to get children excited about the ocean, educate them about environmental pollution and how to keep our waterways and shorelines clean. It is meant to be a laid-back enjoyable activity that families and individuals can participate in together to make the oceans, waterways, and shorelines better places for years to come. The Junior Beach Buddies Activity Book is designed to educate children to be responsible for themselves and the environment around them while having fun interactive activities that keep their minds sharp and up-to-date on the most current facts about the ocean and our ocean friends.

**Staying Connected: (Figure 5)**

Technology, such as smartphones and the web, has easily become our main source of communication during the past decade. Recently, QR Codes (Quick Response Codes) have become a more popular tool that can be used to access a webpage, blog, video, or photo application, enabling more direct access to the information.

A QR code is placed on almost all of the signs and merchandise Beach Buddies has to offer. This code works like a
Barcode on any product. To scan the code it is necessary to download a barcode scanner app for the smartphone. No worries, it's free! Once the app is downloaded any of the Beach Buddies items with the code on it can be scanned, and the official Beach Buddies blog site will open.

This blog contains our mission statement, various events that are going on (past and present), and posts that are related to recycling or anything that we find that would benefit our organization or our fellow beach buddies. In addition, there will be links to some of our favorite organizations that share our vision in the fight against environmental pollution. The site is also available via url at www.beachbuddies.wordpress.com. Since updates are made to the blog frequently, this is an easy and fast way for Beach Buddies supporters to stay connected with the organizations at all times.

Conclusion

Design and the creative process are like working a puzzle. Once the pieces fall into place, the work becomes a cohesive element, which can then be modified and fine tuned. One of the main goals in all of this is to "honor the brand's past while moving the business forward." This is a brand that I feel is easily recognizable but could just as easily fall through the cracks and be pushed to the side, often like the
thought of environmental pollution. By keeping up with the non-traditional locations for advertisements and new events, and staying current with ways to communicate with target audiences, Beach Buddies will prosper.

Unfortunately ocean pollution will never be 100% eliminated, but involving the help of members of this organization and others with similar views, it can at least be significantly reduced. I strongly believe that, through graphic design, events, and a friendly face, organizations around the country and even the world can get people motivated to recycle and be more resourceful, therefore cutting down on the amount of trash that is dumped into the ocean every year. Beach Buddies is meant for everyone who has a heart full of compassion and the desire to help the environment and the animals that populate.

This should not be the effort of one organization, but that of an entire community. Go GREEN for the BLUE.

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4 http://www.orcadesigngroups.com/about/blog/item/88-strategy-for-updating-a-brand-image
Bibliography


http://www.orcadesigngroups.com/about/blog/item/88-strategy-for-updating-a-brand-image