The Executive Education Brand

Creating a known and sustainable brand and value proposition for university executive education

Presenters:
Kevin Clark, IBM
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Contributors:
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Laurie Dowling, UCLA
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Project charter

- Voluntary
- Result of the spring UNICON conference in Canada
- Explore potential enduring brand expressions for executive education
- Explore potential value propositions to further define and express the worth of executive education
- Present draft results of work at the fall UNICON conference
Brands and Value Propositions

**Brands**

- Chris Beaumont: “Brands do one thing – they simplify choice!”

- **brandscendence**, *n.* “a brand that has the quality or state of being transcendent; a kind or make of brand, as indicated by a name, stamp, trademark, or the like that goes beyond ordinary limits; a brand that surpasses; a brand that exceeds, a brand that is superior or supreme over time.

  – Kevin Clark, *Brandscendence: Three Essential Elements of Enduring Brands*

**Value Propositions & Positioning**

- A value proposition in business and marketing is a statement summarizing the core differentiation from the offerings of competitors. (positioning)

- It can also include a summary of the customer segment and competitor targets.

- Geoffrey Moore, *Crossing the Chasm*: “Positioning is the single largest influence on the buying decision.”

- Value propositions are often used in a business model and business plan to describe value added to offerings.
Why an Executive Education Brand?

- Category brands create value for all offering participants
- An increasingly diverse base of suppliers and the need for differentiation
- The “Executive Education Profession” (an aha! → a spring conference discovery)
Team

- Erich Almasy, Ivey University
- Kevin Clark, IBM Corporate Alumni Relations
- Laurie Dowling, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
- Betty Lau, Hong Kong University of Science & Technology (HKUST)
- Ray Smith, Duke University
- Jeff Spearly, Penn State University
Brand Experience and the Client Experience Relationship *

**Customer Journey**

**Expectation**
- Branding
- Awareness
- Marketing

**Pre-Purchase**
- Briefings
- Proposals

**Purchase**
- The purchase transaction

**Delivery**
- Perform
- Service delivery
- Project
- Communication

**Post Purchase**
- Experience measurement and feedback

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*What we believe*  
*(the continuum of values and experience)*  
*What we do*

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First team call: brainstorming for attributes

- Create knowledge
- Share knowledge
- Understand
- Lead
- Practice
- Inspire to think
- Thought leadership
- Socratic method
- Optimism about change
- Incremental change
- Building success
- Building successful careers
- Transforming business
- Diversity of participants (open enrollment)

- Creating networks
- Creating environments for learning
- Innovative
- Out of the normal world
- Creating the business leader marketplace
- Strategic direction
- Lifelong learning (person)
- Lifecycle learning (organization)
- Living values
- Build intellectual capital
- Build social capital
- Continuous learning
- Employability
- Developing executives and organizations
University value

- University brand
- University certificate
- Trinkets & trash
- Executive education alumni
- Badge value of university-sponsored programs
- Executive education participants stay in touch with professors more than MBAs or undergrad’s
- Co-creating with adults
- Getting away from work to a “place of learning”
- Thinking – debating – learning
- Diversity of opinion
- Impact on the world of business → faculty-participant interaction
Feedback from first round of brainstorming

- **From Jeff Spearly:** “…based on a review of the literature, successful executive education initiatives are most often described as:
  - Focused on corporate strategy and the marketplace
  - Driven by applied research
  - Rooted in partnerships
  - Measured by contributions to the growth and success of corporate clients

- **Spearly continues,** “For me, executive education (education in general) is all about:
  - Sharing new knowledge
  - Helping others learn or discover new information and perspectives – a new way of thinking about “things,” and
  - Bring relevance to this new knowledge – understanding application within their environment (workplace).”
“Executive Education” is a confusing phrase to clients…
...but we can’t think of another one that better suits the activity.

Executive:
- Not all people attending executive education are executives (current + aspirational clients/participants)
- Is there a better word or phrase that could describe the target customer or client? No → “executive” still has a lot of equity.

Education (not training):
- Providing more than education → also providing inspiration
- Job growth and rotation
- New knowledge and perspective
- Teaching clients to think
- …for lack of a better word, education still fits pretty well
Conclusion of round two

- Executive + Education – while not the perfect marriage of words, is the current way the activity is known today…
- …so the “low-hanging fruit” may be in the exploration of a meaningful value proposition that describes executive education.
- Note: Clients who become “partners” in executive education programs are generally those who fully outsource to us.
Draft value propositions

- Executive Education: Dialogues in leadership
- Executive Education: Discovering success together
- Executive Education: Journey to a lifetime of answers
Third team meeting

- “We agree today that ‘University Executive Education’ or ‘University-based Executive Education’ or some derivative expression should form the umbrella brand name.”

- **University Executive Education** (working brand name adopted)
Next round of value propositions

- **Focus on university value-add:** “University Executive Education delivers practical wisdom to develop thoughtful leaders and drive sustained success.”

- **Focus on “badge value” of being university-based:** “University Executive Education delivers the credentials and confidence to shape thoughtful leaders and drive sustained success.”

- **Focus on client/participant:** “University Executive Education develops thoughtful and effective leaders by delivering practical wisdom to drive sustainable success.”

- **General feedback:** Add *experience* to the value proposition.

- **Feedback from Jeff Spearly:** “We don’t give people wisdom nor do we drive sustained success. Rather, we impart wisdom – share knowledge and perspective, help people develop their own wisdom, their own vision; and … enable them to drive success within their organizations.”
Updated value proposition

- University Executive Education provides a unique experience for practicing executives and university thought leaders to collaborate in a setting favorable for discovering distinctive and practical insights.

- All the right elements, too long.
Other expressions

- University Executive Education is a unique experience for practicing executives to discover distinctive and practical insights with university thought leaders.

- University Executive Education is a unique experience to explore distinctive and practical insights with university thought leaders.

- University Executive Education is an experience in exploring distinctive and practical insights with university thought leaders.

- The University Executive Education experience: practical insights through collaboration with thought leaders.

- University Executive Education: the experience of practical insight though collaboration with thought leaders.

- University Executive Education is the experience of practical insight through collaboration with thought leaders.
The trouble with “insight”

- **Ray Smith**: “I am having a problem with… (the word) **insight**.”
  (We don’t give insight, we help executive’s develop their own insight + perspective + knowledge, etc.)

- **Smith offers:**
  - “We develop thoughtful, effective and insightful executives able to operate in a complex world.”
  - “We help executives lead and operate effectively in a complex world.”
  - “We develop effective and insightful executives by bringing them together in a thoughtful environment.”
  - “We bring together executives and thought leaders from our schools in an environment that helps develop the world’s leading executives.”

- **Jeff Spearly offers:**
  - “University Executive Education provides a unique experience to gain practical and distinct knowledge and insight through collaboration with university thought leaders.”
For your consideration (DRAFT)

- **Brand: University Executive Education**
  - In all cases use the word “university” to differentiate from other forms of executive education
  - University is the “master brand,” and “executive education” is the specific offering

- **Value Proposition**

  “University Executive Education delivers an experience for leaders to gain unique perspectives, discover practical insights, and promote personal and organizational growth.”
Brand Experience and the Client Experience Relationship

University Executive Education

“University Executive Education delivers an experience for leaders to gain unique perspectives, discover practical insights, and promote personal and organizational growth.”

Customer Journey

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Executive Education</th>
<th>Pre-Purchase</th>
<th>Purchase</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Post Purchase</th>
</tr>
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Touch point differentiation by each university on this base promise

What we believe (the continuum of values) What we do
Next steps

- Validate and vet “University Executive Education” as the basic brand expression, and...

- …discuss and gain collaborative input on the draft value proposition from the UNICON membership at large.

- Bring a consolidated proposal forward for UNICON leadership adoption at the spring conference.

- Publish results.
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