

An audit you'll actually enjoy



You've been on a team-building retreat. You may have even hammered out a mission statement and long-term vision. But these tools aren't much good if no one knows about them: you need to broadcast your message to the world. Is your communications strategy up to the challenge? In this issue of **inkspots**, **Nyman Ink** will help you answer that question by taking you through the steps of a communications audit. And hey, don't worry — *this* kind of audit is a lot of fun.

First, book the boardroom, preferably for a day or longer. And spread the word. You and your colleagues are going to need space and time to spread out a lot of stuff, move it around, and brainstorm. It's time to make a creative mess.

The kitchen sink, too

Second, grab everything that your company uses to communicate, internally and externally. (See the box to the right for an idea of what to include.)

Don't stop at printed materials. Get online. Make your Web site part of your audit. While you're there, look at your e-mail signature and your screen saver. Listen to your telephone directory and voice mail messages, and the music that plays in

the office or while clients are on hold. If your company has a dress code or a uniform, include it. If you have company vehicles, what do they look like? Feeling really ambitious? Have a look around your office and take note of the environment itself: colours, furniture, signs, light, art and decor.

A brand new look at branding

Now for the fun part: take a long, hard look at the communications tools you've gathered. Get the opinions of as many of your colleagues as possible, from all departments and at all levels of seniority. Even better: get your customers, actual or potential, to take a look.

What do you see? What *should* you see? Try making a list of words that

best describe your organization (or what you want your organization to be). And then, ask these questions:

- Do our materials convey the message we want to convey?
- Do we have company colours, a logo, a slogan? If yes, do we like them? If not, are we going to

Items to include in your audit

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| ✓ advertisements | ✓ mouse pads |
| ✓ books | ✓ mugs |
| ✓ brochures | ✓ music |
| ✓ business cards | ✓ newsletters |
| ✓ compliment slips | ✓ office decor |
| ✓ e-mail signatures | ✓ order forms |
| ✓ enclosures slips | ✓ pens |
| ✓ fax cover sheets | ✓ Post-it notes |
| ✓ holiday greeting cards | ✓ screen savers |
| ✓ invitations | ✓ signs |
| ✓ invoices | ✓ T-shirts |
| ✓ labels | ✓ uniforms |
| ✓ letterhead | ✓ vehicles |
| ✓ matchbook covers | ✓ voice mail messages |
| ✓ memos | ✓ Web sites |

- develop these things?
- Do we use our colours/logo/slogan consistently on all our printed, online and other materials?
- What's worked well in the past? What was a dud?
- What do we like? What isn't so hot?
- Do our clients, potential clients, donors, board members, employees, the press and anyone else see a consistent message, every time they see something from our company?

Ideally, all the materials spread out in front of you should convey a consistent message — and that message should communicate all the stuff that went into your mission statement and vision, otherwise known as your brand. You might be a fast-paced, aggressive and entrepreneurial law firm. Or, you might be a fun, quirky and creative provider of creative communications solutions


From 'The Newsletter Specialist' to 'Creative Communications Solutions'

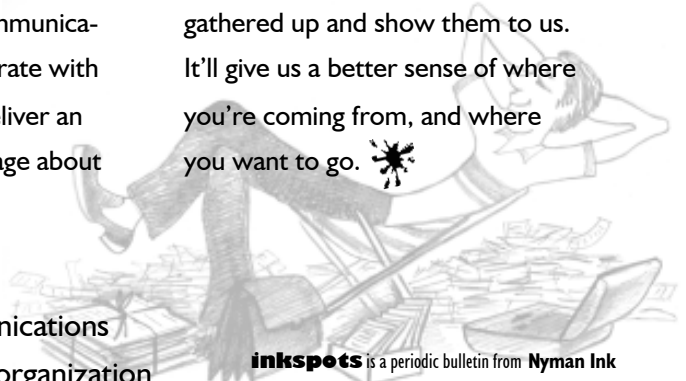
When **Nyman Ink** conducted its own communications audit recently, we realized that our tagline, The Newsletter Specialist, no longer reflected the reality of our business. Yes, we specialize in newsletters, but, over the past decade, we've evolved into a company that provides all kinds of creative communications materials — from brochures to billboards, in print and online. So we've come up with a new way to describe what we do — **Nyman Ink: Creative Communications Solutions**. We still do newsletters, but we also do a whole lot more!

(sound like anyone you know?). Whatever your identity, you need to make sure it's reflected in your brand, and that every aspect of your communications strategy builds and maintains that brand.


We're not telling you that everything (yawn) has to look the same. What we are saying is that every element of your communications strategy should integrate with every other element to deliver an accurate, consistent message about

you. If that message comes across loud and clear in your audit, congratulations! You've done a good job. If it looks like that message was written and designed by Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, call us. We can help.

PS: When you call, do us both a favour: keep all those things you gathered up and show them to us. It'll give us a better sense of where you're coming from, and where you want to go. 



Coming Next Issue

• • • • • So, you've conducted your communications audit (good stuff!), and you've discovered your company or organization is having a bit of an identity crisis. Don't despair. In the December issue of **inkwell**, we'll tell you how to define and achieve a coherent and effective **corporate identity**. 

inkspots is a periodic bulletin from **Nyman Ink**
 Written by Susan Goldberg
 Edited by Judy Nyman and Susan Laszlo
 Designed by Neil Thorne
 Illustrated by Dina Belaia



NYMAN INK
 The Newsletter Specialist

450 Dufferin Street, Toronto, ON M6K 2A5
 Tel 416-516-6999
 Fax 416-516-6963
 Toll free 1-877-866-4440
 E-mail mail@nymanink.com
 Web www.nymanink.com

Publications Mail Agreement No. 1715968