

**Brand Alignment**

EPA:  
Strong Branding  
Principles Heal a  
Fractured Brand



Since its inception in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has operated without identity guidelines. Consequently, offices throughout the organization had no set standards when it came time to develop publications. This leniency lent itself to inconsistencies from a brand equity, image, and resources standpoint.

The EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) has 18 labs, centers, and offices in the EPA system that produce over 1,000 scientific and general publications each year. It had four logos and a seal that were often used interchangeably, without clear definitions of their intended use. ORD produced many materials without any standardization on identity: newsletters commonly looked different each quarter; layout and design for publications within a series tended to vary with each issue.

The EPA's imprecise identity created a unique opportunity for ORD to apply the principles of branding while improving product effectiveness and saving cost in the process.

**Benefits**

ORD had much to gain by establishing identity guidelines. As the research arm of EPA, the Office of Research and Development is responsible for providing sound science to safeguard both human health and the environment.

For ORD, increased communication consistency and effectiveness across the wide range of products would yield:

- Communications products that showcase ORD's quality science
- Significant savings in design costs and production time
- An enhanced image among its many internal and external audiences.

From the beginning of the initiative, the project team agreed that the one major goal and emphasis was to create a system that could potentially be adopted by the entire Agency even though it was developed for and initiated by the Office of Research and Development. This stood as an important litmus test and key indicator of short- and long-term success.

In addition, ORD wanted to reduce publication costs by 50% and layout and production time by 40%.

**Strong Foundation**

*Research drove this project and guaranteed its success.*

To establish the business case for a project inspired at the grass-roots level of a major government agency, ORD conducted nearly 350 interviews with scientists, managers, and staff prior to the kick-off of the visual identity project. Upon the beginning of this project, JDG performed a communication audit and one-day workshop and focus group with the project Advisory Board comprised of scientists, senior managers, and communication staff representing both ORD and other offices throughout the EPA.

To collect additional real-time feedback and to present status updates, the team held small group feedback sessions and video conferences with key agency stakeholders throughout the process.

**Before:**

*The lack of consistency in logo usage and placement, color, and information hierarchy among these publications demonstrates a clear case of fractured identity.*



Research ensured that ORD and JDG charted the appropriate course and guaranteed a successful implementation and adoption. It yielded insights on current communications vehicles, organizational perceptions, and new potential products.

**Successful Result**

From months of research and strategic development, JDG produced a comprehensive 52-page ORD Visual and Product Standards Manual that set the direction for logo usage, typography, color, information architecture, design and layout, photography and much more.

The manual's gradual rollout, which began in September, yielded early adoption by many in ORD and select Agency constituencies. An interagency working group, a high-profile

project team in the Agency, adopted the system for the influential 2007 Report on the Environment: Science Report. Select agency printing officers adopted the system for product processing, while two of the ten regional offices began using the system before the manual was even published. The adoption of the system continues through a lateral weaving among the many divisions of the Agency.

In addition to evaluating savings on a product-by-product basis, a number of communication pilot programs were chosen to formally demonstrate the significant cost savings, reduction in layout and production time, and for documenting customer reaction. Each activity has far surpassed their expectations.

The National Program on Human Health communication pilot, for example, consisted of developing a suite of standards-inspired templates (brochure, website, fact sheets, contributions report, etc.) that could subsequently be used by the other National Research Programs.

The initial design and production for one brochure template took three weeks. Its second use took one business day. On average, costs were reduced by more than 75% and production time was cut by more than 50%. Many requests for additional products using the new templates are being received, and the increased efficiency of the templates has resulted in time and cost savings for ORD. The redesigns have been applied to

many other research programs and projects and are already yielding savings from those outputs as well.

Ultimately, the increased adoption, cost savings, and strong identity development will help ORD and the EPA build a voice for environmental science that will resonate in the U.S. and worldwide.

The manual was recognized with a 2007 M Award from the D.C. Chapter of the American Marketing Association and two Silver Inkwell Awards from the International Association of Business Communicators.

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**After:**

JDG produced a comprehensive 52-page Visual and Product Standards Manual that unified the brand.

