

The power of a brand

How the Detroit Athletic Club Rose to Greater Success
by Defining their Brand Story

w/ Ted Gillary and Laura Leszczynski



**STRATEGIC
CLUB SOLUTIONS**

Strategic Consulting for Clubs

WHAT

makes your Club special?

Not your history.

Not what you do.

Not just your amenities.

It answers how your Club
makes them a better person?



Problem:

Clubs are pressed to be

**Relevant,
Updated &
Growing membership.
All while squelching attrition.**



Let's say you get past those objections

Why your Club? What's your brand?

**WHAT'S
YOUR
STORY?**







Meet Ted Gillary

Executive Manager of Detroit Athletic Club
25 years and 6 months

“We couldn’t answer why we should preserve the Club.”

Situation 1994

- Rough shape because the environment in Detroit was up and down.
- Hard times. Club suffered. Facility wasn't in great shape.

Situation in 2008-09

- Fell apart again



The DAC's Brand Strategy was highly successful

- The first growth (1997-2005) -improving service, quality and our building.
- The second growth period (2013-present) will last longer, more sustainable
- The solid quality image the DAC projects and the experiences we deliver.



“We needed to understand what the essence of the DAC was.”

Process

- Needed to understand importance of the Club
- First, quality process
- Master plan
- Locker room conversation – time to refocus
- Board buy-in



“What you think you know,
you may not know so well.”

Knowledge gathering

- Survey non-members and interview – got actionable public thoughts
- Map out groups at the club

“Do you know who your influencers are?”



“It’s not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.” —Roy Disney

Vision, mission, core values exercises

- **Don’t compromise on this**
- Board support
- Need to understand the club in a new way
- We grew because Members believed in the Club
- Sales force is the Members
- Need to spark



“We needed to figure out what the benefit was to be a Member at the DAC.”

**Got away from the utilitarian
access/conversation**

Yes, great facility but I'm a Member because...

Clarity helped recruit.



Did 2 things at the same time

2011/2012

Branding strategy

Master plan



Action items

Promoted the
essence of the DAC



AT THE DAC, WE WELCOME OUR GUESTS.

Definition of *essence*

The unspoken spirit of the Club that guides all of the DAC's actions.



WE PAY ATTENTION.

Action items

Hired Photojournalists

Showing makes it easy.



WE PRESERVE.

Change

- Attrition slowed
- Waitlist
- Could address future capital needs
- Stable management (critical for a club)
- Consistency and tenacity
- More quality staff



“People work better when they know what the goal is and why.” —Elon Musk

Hiring process

- Found people who fit the culture
- Hospitality in their blood
- Friendly
- Look at data and think differently
- Listen to each other
- Meet twice a year and listen
- Staff is the facilitators



“If you don’t know where you come from,
then you don’t know where you are.
If you don’t know where you are,
then you don’t know where you’re going.”
-Terry Pratchett

5 steps plus your story

1. **Frame out your Purpose and vision** – Where you’re going and why
2. **Map out the Strategy** – How you get there
3. **Understand** the important parts of **your story** – the narrative



1. What's your **BACKSTORY**: your journey to now?

- What's your DNA?
- Why was your club founded?
- What were the guiding principles of its foundation?
- Helps you thread in your past to create your current identity in the present



2. What are your **VALUES** – your guiding beliefs?

We believe...

When in sync, it feels right.

When not, we feel disappointed and dissatisfied.

Shared values unite



3. What is your **PURPOSE**: your reason to exist?

Give them a reason to support your brand and **be loyal**.

What do you stand for?

Why are your members loyal to your club?

How do you make their life better?

What do you provide for them that keeps them coming back?





Researched:

We all have a human desire to be better versions of ourselves.



4. What is your **VISION**: your aspiration for the future?

“Without a purpose, we don’t know why we’re on the journey. But without a vision, we don’t know the destination.” —Bernadette Jiwa

- If you could dream big, what would it look like?
- How would you deliver on it?
- What does 3 and 5 years down the road look like?



5. What is your **STRATEGY**: The alignment of opportunities, plans and behavior?

How you will deliver on your purpose and work towards your aspiration, while staying true to your values.

- Need a plan
- Gets everyone in alignment: Board, Staff and Members
- Can ask better questions
- More fiscally responsible
- It's the how
- Needs to be consistent and “on brand”



You have to do all five.

Backstory

Values

Vision

Purpose

Strategy

STORY PARTS

CHARACTER

Problem

Meets a Guide

Plan

Calls to Action

Failure

Success

Character –

It's ALWAYS the member.

The Member is the hero in the story!

What do they want?

What is the one simple desire?

Time, quality networking, status, resources, meaning



**It's not about you (the Club).
It's always about them.**



STORY PARTS

Character

PROBLEM

Meets a Guide
Plan

Calls to Action
Failure
Success

What problems are you solving?

External – physical

Internal – How does this make them feel?

Philosophical – why is this just plain wrong?

Ask your team:

- No one should have to _____
- We ought to _____
- People shouldn't have to deal with _____



STORY PARTS

Character

Problem

MEETS A GUIDE

Plan

Calls to Action

Failure

Success

You are the guide

Empathy

Authority



STORY PARTS

Character

Problem

Meets a Guide

Plan

Calls to Action

Failure

SUCCESS

You have to tell them how your Club will make their lives better.

- What is life like when s/he is a member?
- Tell the stories, set the scene –
- **NUGGETS OF DIFFERENTIATION**
- Before and after being a member
- Status, quality of life, best use of time, feeling accepted



Who are you helping them become?

Single greatest _____

Better golfer

Better dad

Stand taller

Better connected

More well-rounded





Everybody needs change

It's part of our survival instinct.

According to research, the single motivator driving ALL of our decisions **is the human desire to transform.**



**You have to speak
to their wants and desires.**

And it's more than your facilities and amenities





So what if you don't do this?

- Do I fit in?
- Is this worth the money?
- Can I justify the cost?
- Not satisfied and not loyal = flight risk

Need to understand what they think, feel, say and do and their motivation- what they would **like** to think, feel, say and do

“You can’t ask for help if it’s too late.”

As soon as you begin to notice the vision isn’t accurate or mission is irrelevant, it’s time.

Constantly measure the relevance of the mission, understanding the story, what’s important to you.

Can’t forget who you are.



What if the DAC didn't do the branding?



Hopefully your mind is more open to the
POWER OF BRANDING

See the possibility. Missed opportunity?

It's more than a logo.
It's everything you do, say and show.

Q&A



Happy to help

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