



Reinvent Your Brand Blueprint

CASE STUDY: *Reinventing an 81 Year Old Brand in 6 Months*

After 81 years the Central Hockey League had gone through an identity crisis. It had been in the shadows of its competitor league the ECHL. Prior to the expansion restarting 17 years earlier – the CHL belonged to a small group of independent teams.

The challenge was to create a brand that incorporated a unified, client, supplier, employee, community and management focus WHILE respecting all other hockey levels and media.

Turning a minor pro league into a major brand proposed a challenge but not an impossibility...

The PROBLEM

Two tiers down from the NHL (the premium professional hockey league), the CHL had identity and transitional issues from an earlier merge with another league (17 years prior).

Behind the scenes, all other hockey leagues were familiar with the established CHL and its executives, players and officials. The reputation was credible in the eyes of the hockey world, but very limited to the general public.

The governors and GMs of the teams had expectations of what the league should be and how their involvement locally would help position the teams in their markets as community leaders.

The challenge was how to bring everything together economically while maintaining a level of professionalism that would not change its position but enhance it.

The SOLUTION

In order to create a brand there are 4 key steps that need to be taken to ensure success.

A perspective on the customer was the obvious front runner, but very close behind are staff, ownership, media and supplier relations. How was a business to handle such a large ask?

STEP 1

The management of teams were asked to describe the current situation in their market.

STEP 2

They were then asked to describe the ideal world for their teams in their markets.

Their answers revealed a gap. This gap that needed to be filled quickly as a new season was on its way and once a season starts – it is very difficult to make changes in programs, promos and market positioning.

STEP 3

Over a 6 month period, the brand began to unfold. Following the 8 principles to branding, the teams and the league office laid out the core fundamentals of their business model. This included knowledge of the game and all the moving parts that encompass professional hockey in North America.

STEP 4

After understanding this basic component that every business is dependent on someone, the league went to work on creating the ultimate experience the teams we looking for.

This work revealed the truth (the most important piece to any brand):

- Geographical positioning across the US
- Hierarchy and positioning in the hockey world
- Positioning in the local communities
- Purpose of a team and the league as businesses vying for marketshare.

The answer was right in front of everyone. It lead to a clear message and purpose of the Central Hockey League in their space AND the space of the hockey world. The message provided strength in local markets, the league's overall market and the hockey world.

The RESULTS

A central focus emerged, called – The Center of Hockey.



Extensive research and implementation resulted in better marketshare presence. The brand was making an impact on all aspects of the business. Players were recognizing the league with a greater appreciation. Other leagues were recognizing the CHL's efforts as a supporting member of hockey. Staff and management had a stronger position in the marketplace and the media noticed the efforts with quality stories and coverage.

The OUTCOMES

Once branded with TCOH, the CHL was quickly embraced by the NHL, Hockey Canada and sports media. The vision was clear. There was a new focus. And the message was simple – the CHL was here to help...

Staff, Management, Communities, Suppliers, Media, Sponsors and most of all the Fans.

SPECIAL MENTION

As with any business, when the time is right a new player in the marketplace lends itself to the acquisition market. In 2014, the CHL team's became part of the ECHL – making AA hockey complete like its higher brother the AHL (one team for every upper level team). The NHL now had its true farm system with the AHL and now ECHL.

Kevin Huhn

Award Winning Expert

Certified Coach

Author, *"How to Reinvent Midlife Dreams"*

Founder HOPES, WISHES and DREAMS

www.KEVINHUHN.COM