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Branding the Writing Center

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Abstract
Brand identity affects student’s perceptions of the writing center. Referencing an article on the seven key elements of brand identity design, this article goes through a step-by-step analysis of how writing centers can create a brand to establish trust between students and tutors.

Key Words
Brand Identity, Design, Tutoring, Writing Center, Trust
What makes up the brand of the writing center? In an article published in the WLN, Alexandria Bottlesen writes that, “the people in a space can influence how places are perceived in terms of who we are, what our work is, and how we tailor our spaces to convey a certain ‘brand’ for the writing center” (*Tutors*’ *Column*: "Image is Everything: The Data Behind Impressions and Perceptions"). The way the writing center is put together and presented greatly affects the way a student perceives the writing center.

In an article titled *The 7 Key Elements of Brand Identity Design*, brand identity is defined as, “...the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another” (Talbot and McDonald, 2016) In this case, the writing center “brand” will influence a student’s decision to choose coming to the writing center for help or not. I will go through each of the seven points touched on in this article and talk about how writing centers can establish their brand identity to better help their clients.

**1. Clear brand purpose and positioning**

Purpose and positioning is essentially a mission statement; it’s all about your *why*. Why does the writing center tutor students? At Utah State University, our writing center’s purpose is, “…to increase confidence in writers. The Writing Center helps students with all phases of the writing process, from brainstorming to revision” (Utah State University). This statement helps prospective students to know right off the bat that when they come in, they will be helped no matter where they are in the writing process. A poorly written - or lack of - a statement of purpose can leave students feeling uncertain about whether they are welcome and if the writing center is open to assisting them with whatever struggles they have.

**2. Thorough market research**

Market research should be focused on discovering what the needs of your clients are and how you can best meet them. In the case of the writing center, the needs of students go beyond simply receiving help with their papers. Student needs could encompass things such as feeling heard and validated, being in comfortable surroundings, having a knowledgeable tutor, and more. Doing this research will help to discover the specific areas in which your writing center can improve and better meet student needs. The more you know about the “market” of student writers, the more you’ll be able to interpret and meet their needs.
3. Likable brand personality

Just like how you see a person’s personality, brand personality should give off a certain feel. Is your writing center cool, calm, and discerning? Or perhaps warm, inviting, and open? Finding out the personality of your writing center will help you recognize where you can make changes and create the atmosphere you are aiming for. The personality of your writing center can be seen especially clearly in its personnel; a warm greeting vs silence from a tutor as a student walks in will send a clear message about how welcome that student is in the writing center.

4. Memorable logo

While many writing centers don’t have much of a choice regarding logos due to being attached to a university, there are still ways you can use this to your advantage. Having a logo, whether unique to the writing center or part of a university’s, will help students to easily recognize your “brand” when they see it. Websites, flyers, and pass-along cards will be more effective because students will know where the information came from simply by looking at the logo.

5. Attractive color palette

Similar to the brand personality, an attractive color palette will be especially effective when used inside the writing center itself. Colors affect emotions, so the question you want to ask yourself when deciding on a color palette is, how do you want your clients to feel when they first walk into your writing center? Color communicates a huge range of emotions. A study done on the psychology of color in interior design found that “…warm colors tended to produce stronger participant responses when rating the scene on ‘high arousal,’ ‘exciting,’ and ‘stimulating.’ Cool colors tended be associated with ‘not very arousing,’ but to be rated higher on ‘spacious’ and ‘restful’” (Yildirim, et al). An attractive color palette using the right tones can speak volumes about how you want your students to perceive your writing center.

6. Professional typography

Typography in the writing center will be most relevant on websites or flyers. Having a clear, readable, well-designed website will go a long way in helping students feel welcome and not overwhelmed by trying to navigate a confusing and cluttered website. When used together with a well-designed logo, these can further the brand of the writing center in making it recognizable and creating a welcoming and professional environment for students.
7. On-brand supporting graphics

Graphics go right alongside typography and logo. These will make any flyers, social media posts, or pamphlets easily recognizable as being from your writing center. These can be an extension of your logo, particularly if you are attached to a university and unable to create your own logo. Cohesive graphics will help your writing center to seem more professional, be more recognizable, and feel more approachable to students by pulling together the typography, logo, and color scheme you have established.

Putting all of this together, the physical things you create surrounding your writing center (logo, use of color, typography and graphics) will reinforce the emotions evoked (brand purpose, research, and personality). When used together, these will help to create a cohesive brand for the writing center that will communicate to students that writing centers are a place to go for support and assistance in their writing journeys.
Works Cited


Utah State University. “Tutoring.” USU Writing Center, writing.usu.edu/service/tutoring.