

NASDCTEc/NCTEF Board of Directors Conference Call

MINUTES

July 23, 2105

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. EDT

Participating: Jo Anne Honeycutt, Marie Barry, Pradeep Kotamraju, Wayne Kutzer, Eric Spencer, Bernadette Howard, Eleni Papadakis, Sheila Ruhland, Jean Massey, Mike Raponi, Vanessa Cooley, Tim Hodges, Rich Katt, Lee Burket, Bernadette Howard

Staff: Kimberly Green, Kate Kreamer

Guests: Frances Cox, Pete Janhunnen

Unable to participate but provided a proxy (proxy noted in parentheses): Cheryl Carrier (Jo Anne Honeycutt), Rod Duckworth (Jo Anne Honeycutt), Kathleen Cullen (Jo Anne Honeycutt)

Welcome: Honeycutt welcomed the Board and guests to the call.

Roll Call: Green conducted a roll of call Board members in attendance. The roll call results are reflected above.

Review of June 23, 2015 NASDCTEc and NCTEF Board of Directors' Conference Call Minutes: Kotamraju presented the minutes to the Boards for consideration. No additions or changes were noted. Acceptance of the minutes will take place via electronic ballot.

Feedback from the membership: Kreamer provided an overview of the results of the member engagement process, which included individual calls, group calls and a survey. In total, we engaged 1/3 of the full membership. 41 states and Guam completed the survey. 29 states completed the survey and participated in a call. Only four states did not provide any feedback.

Some general themes of the feedback provided:

- Largely supportive of the branding initiative with the caution of having this effort build on the organization's current, positive momentum and leverage past successes. This effort is not about fixing something that is wrong but building and expanding reach, capacity and impact.
- Important to retain focus on states/state leadership
- Desire to ensure new brand does not supplant CTE: Learning that Works for America but embraces and aligns with the campaign
- Need to have a well-conceived roll out/marketing strategy

Kreamer shared a 'word cloud' that represents the most common terms used by our members when describing our organization: visionary, leader, leadership, knowledgeable,

advocate, helpful, effective, supportive, professional and leadership (slide 4 from the July 22, 2015 slide deck).

Framing of the proposed brand platform: Kreamer introduced Frances Cox and Pete Janhunen of Fratelli Communications, the firm that has been engaged to assist with the rebranding efforts. Fratelli outlined the firm's capabilities and experience. Cox shared that they were impressed by the consistency in the feedback from among the members. The feedback demonstrated a high level of ownership and engagement by the members, which underscores the responsibility to ensure that the rebrand honors their commitment and reflects their input.

First, it is important to remind the Board that the brand platform is an internal document that will be used to guide the development of the new name, logo and future marketing and communications efforts.

Cox provided some backdrop for the branding platform.

Strategic environment: First, it is important to remember that our organization does not and will not operate in a vacuum and therefore, the brand platform must reflect an understanding of the strategic environment in which it operates. For our organization, this includes the CTE space, education space (K-12 and higher education) and the workforce development space.

Strategic guidance: Second, on a more general note, the firm reminded the Board that the brand must reflect what is happening today, as well as position and prepare the organization to succeed in the future. The brand should be simple and reduce confusion for both internal and external audiences members. For our organization, this means making sure we are clear about the brand for the organization and how it links or connects with the CTE: Learning that Works campaign (which is a brand for the enterprise or community of CTE).

Presentation of the brand platform:

Brand drivers are what is at the heart of the brand. What do our members count on us to do.

Our brand drivers are:

- Network of state CTE leaders
 - Serves state directors' needs
 - Advances CTE broadly
- National CTE champion
- Trusted source of latest information
- Federal and state policy advocate

Essence is the idea at the core of the brand: For our organization it is providing visionary leadership and a national voice for the state-based CTE community.

Positioning is how our brand will set us apart from others in the marketplace. Our organization provides state CTE leaders with the network, resources and advocacy support needed to ensure CTE is a full partner in the movement to produce better prepared students and workers and a more competitive American workforce.

Promise is the largest credible claim that the brand can make to the external audiences. For our organization, this is that we are the exclusive network of state leaders focused on delivering high-quality CTE.

Personality is the character of the brand. For our organization this is:

- A Leader – is visionary and effective
- Intelligent – is knowledgeable and insightful
- Dynamic – is innovative and articulate
- Dependable – is responsive and supportive
- Engaged – is convenes and advocates

Board discussion:

Honeycutt thanked Fratelli Communications and the staff for the work done to date. It is presented and synthesized in a concise but powerful fashion.

Hodges noted that the brand platform articulates what and who the organization is all about in a concise and accurate manner, with special acknowledgment of the positioning statement.

Ruhland was impressed by the inclusion of the reminder that during a rebrand process it is important to let go of anything that does not support success – even (and especially) areas of historic interest. She further concurred with Hodges that what has been presented is reflective of the organization. Janhunen shared that often the piece about letting go is interpreted as discipline, which will be especially important when the brand is implemented and applied to future strategic planning.

Kutzer felt that the drivers really underscored the challenges presented to our organization – being a national champion with a singular voice focused on excellence when we are working with 50 plus different state organizations. Being a convener that can bring all the states along is a difficult but unique role of the organization.

Cooley raised the concern that workforce development didn't come through as strongly as she felt it should in the positioning despite it being listed as one of the strategic environments shared earlier. The language needs to be more prominent. Cox shared that the language "full partner" in the positioning statement was intended to fulfill this need without having to lay out all the communities (k-12, higher education, workforce development) and also provided flexibility for new strategic environments that the organization may need to partner with in the future.

Secondly, Cooley wondered how this branding effort can be leveraged at the state and local levels. Green and others shared that this branding initiative is about the national organization. While the process can be shared with states and locals to replicate, the outcomes of this work would not necessarily apply to states or other locals. The link that can be made is that our new organizational brand will rely upon the brand promise of the CTE: Learning that Works for America campaign.

Kotamraju questioned whether the term “state-based” in the essence would result in the organization providing direct service to locals. The answer is no. The brand focuses the organization on serving states and state leaders that have a direct impact or interest in CTE.

Barry agreed that what has been presented captures the essence of who we are and what we do, as well as what is unique about our organization. She felt that the positioning language was a bit “soft” and “squishy” and was not strong enough about the connection that our work has with education versus workforce. After the explanation of what a “full partner” was intended to cover and the fact that the document is internal, she indicated should could support the language as presented.

Cox noted that we want to be sure that the brand platform does not include any words that ignite concern or raise red flags but are also specific yet broad enough to be flexible so we have room to grow and adapt as the organization moves forward.

Discussion ensued about the positioning statement with recommendations to change the verb ‘produce’ to educate, to strengthen the end phrase to address “building” or “creating” a more competitive workforce. The question was raised as to whether the term “train” should be added and there were varied opinions about this suggestion. In the end it was recommended that the positioning language be reframed as follows:

Only X provides state CTE leaders with the network, resources and advocacy support needed to ensure CTE is a full partner in the movement to successfully prepare students and workers for a more competitive American workforce and economy.

Original language:

Only X provides state CTE leaders with the network, resources and advocacy support needed to ensure CTE is a full partner in the movement to produce better prepared students and workers and a more competitive American workforce.

Kotamraju asked about how the personality terms are used in defining the brand. Janhunen shared that generally these terms are used to inform the designers as they work on the logos/visuals to support the brand. These words describe the brand in human terms. They work to ensure that the visuals of the brand evoke and reinforce the words of the brand.

Green shared that staff will work with Fratelli to update the brand positioning statement, as well as make the tweak to the essence language to clarify the state focus. These changes, reflective of the feedback provided, will be shared with the Board electronically along with a link to a three-question ballot requesting votes on the June 23, 2015 NASDCTEc and NCTEF minutes and the updated brand platform. Ballots are due back to on July 24 by 5 p.m. EDT. A summary of the votes will be distributed to the Board on July 27, 2015.

Meeting convened at 4:31 p.m.