



MARKETING'S ROLE IN M&A

A Checklist for Doing It Right



Most companies do it wrong. Here's
how not to be most companies.

1. Follow the “Do No Harm” Approach

A successful M&A is all about mindset. Don't undervalue your brand's success—your reputation, your loyal customers, your website traffic. Focus on amplifying your strengths without losing what made your brand work in the first place:

- **Get Marketing Involved as Early as Possible**
 - Include marketing leadership in early-stage M&A discussions.
 - Audit both companies' audiences, messaging, and market perception.
 - Build a unifying narrative that makes sense internally and externally.
 - Translate financial and legal strategy into clear, confident brand messaging.
- **Check Your Ego at the Door**
 - Set aside preconceived notions about branding or marketing.
 - Let data and audience insight drive post-merger brand decisions.
 - Focus on what customers want and need to see from the unified brand.
 - Align perception with business reality, not personal preference.
- **Consolidate Your Brands**
 - Conduct a thorough brand audit across all customer-facing assets.
 - Evaluate which brands are working, which aren't, and why.
 - Determine what can be merged or sunset to reduce complexity and cost.
 - Use competitor analysis to identify brand vulnerabilities and protect customer loyalty.
- **Control the Message**
 - Create a clear, consistent communications plan for all stakeholders.
 - Define the who, what, when, and how of your merger announcement.
 - Develop internal messaging materials such as FAQs and rollout scripts.
 - Ensure employees are equipped to communicate the change with confidence.
 - Clarify the impact of the merger for both internal teams and external audiences.

2. Prioritize People and Communication

- **Prepare Leadership for Communication**

- Define how and when the leadership team will announce the merger or acquisition.
- Decide on the format:
 - In-person meeting (recommended if feasible)
 - Formal written communication
 - Virtual meeting via Zoom or other platforms

- **Identify Who Will Make the Announcement and Ensure They Are Fully Prepared**

- Notify internally before public announcements.
- Communicate the change in advance of any public press releases or external announcements to prevent team members from learning about it from third-party sources.

- **Craft a Comprehensive Announcement**

- Address the *who*, *why*, *when*, *where*, and *how* of the merger.
- If team meetings are uncommon, ensure you explain why the meeting is necessary to avoid speculation.

EXAMPLE

Avoid scheduling a meeting too far out without explaining its purpose to reduce employee anxiety.

- **Prepare for Employee Questions and Concerns**

- Be ready to answer questions during and after the announcement. Consider common concerns, especially around job security.
- Encourage transparency—let employees know you're committed to answering their questions, even if some details are still being finalized.

- **Provide a General Timeline for Changes**

- Share a timeline for when major changes might occur. Remind employees that integration often takes time and may not happen immediately.

- **Introduce Key Leaders from the New Organization**

- Following the announcement, introduce key leaders to foster familiarity and assurance.
- Consider hosting introductory sessions or having department heads speak with teams to outline what life at the new organization will look like.

- **Offer a “Welcome to the Team” Gift for Acquired Employees**

- Help acquired employees feel part of the team by providing a branded welcome gift (e.g., a tumbler, notebook).
- Include the new company's website or brand logo on the gift to familiarize them with the organization's identity.

3. Coordinate External Communications

- **Plan Press Releases and Public Announcements Carefully**

- Coordinate with both organizations on timing to ensure a unified public message.
- Ensure all internal teams are fully informed before any external announcements.

- **Develop a Client Communication Strategy**

- For complex products, consider hiring a dedicated communications specialist to manage client relations.
- Plan a sequence for client updates:
 - Issue a press release
 - Email clients with tailored information about the changes
 - Post updates on social media platforms
- Allow a grace period for teams to collect client feedback on the transition and incorporate it into further communications.

4. Sales and Marketing Alignment

- **Define Sales Team Timelines and Training**

- Establish when the sales team should transition from selling the previous product to the new offering.

- Provide necessary training on new products, and update all sales materials accordingly.
- **Audit Existing Marketing Resources and Tech Stack**
 - Review both company's marketing materials to identify resources that can be repurposed.
 - Evaluate each tech stack to determine which tools should be retained, replaced, or consolidated.
 - Check renewal dates on contracts to avoid unnecessary expenses and ensure timely transitions.

5. Develop a Marketing Migration Plan

- **Co-Branding vs. Full Rebranding**
 - Assess the timeline and decide between co-branding and full rebranding:
 - For slower transitions (6+ months), co-brand initially to ease clients and employees into the change.
 - For faster integrations (2–4 months), move directly to a full rebrand to reduce costs and streamline processes.
- **Determine the Primary Brand**
 - Consider the market recognition of both brands and decide which one to emphasize or retain based on target market awareness.
- **Key Branding Elements to Consider for Rebranding**
 - **Company Website:** Update domain, design, and content to reflect the unified brand.
 - **Social Media:** Update all profiles to reflect the new or co-branded identity.
 - **Office Signage and Interior:** Align both interior and exterior design elements with the new brand.
 - **Customer Portals:** Rebrand portals and user interfaces for consistency.
 - **Voicemail, Email Signatures, and Domains:** Update all communications to reflect the new brand.
 - **Marketing Essentials:** Redesign promotional items, business cards, and digital assets (e.g., digital ads, email templates).