



CD BABY REBRAND

THE REBRAND

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CD Baby

Home to more than one million artists and 9 million tracks, CD Baby has paid out over \$1 billion in artist royalties since its founding in 1998. CD baby's complete artist-services platform simplifies and streamlines the complexities of global music distribution, publishing, and promotion—connecting independent musicians with new audiences and revenue streams so they can enjoy creative autonomy and thrive on their own terms. Founded and run by artists for artists, CD Baby exists to make success in the music business accessible to all.

CD Baby has a catalogue of more than 350,000 albums. Music created by these acts, ranging from part-time hobbyists to full-time musicians with successful careers, spans all genres, from avant-garde to world music. Dave Matthews has an album for sale on CD Baby, recorded with Mark Roebuck before the inception of Dave Matthews Band, released under the name Tribe of Heaven. Other notable artists releasing their music via CD Baby include Ingrid Michaelson, who has used CD Baby for digital distribution for every release ("Ingrid Michaelson Discography;"), as well as Twenty One Pilots, Gravity Noir, BCF Lil 'Shine, Viper, Aloe Blacc, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, The Head and the Heart, Bon Iver, Fastface Timi, Sara Bareilles, and The National. Americana acts Mary Gauthier, Marshall Chapman, Lorenzo Jaar, Gretchen Peters, and Tom Russell; blues musicians Harmonica Hinds, Jeremiah Johnson, and Liz Mandeville; Italian American pianist and composer Richard Aaker Trythall; Canadian singer-songwriter Allison Crowe; the UK duo Nizlopi; the early music ensemble, The Boston Camerata; and Italian-born, American classical violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, music director of the New Century Chamber Orchestra; Iranian Pop Star Mohsen Yeganeh; South African Concept Artist Alessandro Batazzi; Russian American opera singer Elena Zoubareva; and Big Sur. American singer-songwriter Grayson Hugh sells his music on CD Baby, as well as on his website. Grammy Award-winning artist Janis Ian, a pioneer among independent musicians marketing online, sold her CDs on the website and through her website. Indeed, CD Baby has served as the distributor for many Grammy, and Latin Grammy nominated and winning titles. (Robley, 2018) (Robley, 2015) (Robley 2017)

In 2019, CD Baby was the only digital aggregator with top preferred partner status with both Spotify and Apple Music. (Dukoff, Spencer, 2018)

The company was described as an "anti-label" by its parent company's Chief Operating Officer Tracy Maddux. (Rohter, Larry, 2014)

The company also hosts two annual conferences for independent musicians looking for education, networking, and performance opportunities. Described as "the only music conference geared specifically towards the needs of independent artists in charge of their careers" (Music Connection, 2018)

Although CD Baby was one of the earliest DIY music aggregators on the Market and the first online CD store for indie artists, competitors that entered the market later overtook

CD Baby in terms of revenue. Most notably, TuneCore. TuneCore was founded in 2005. Turnover 2020: 2 billion Dollars (Götting, 2021).

I passionately believe with a rebrand and changes to its pricing structure, CD Baby can regain the top spot amongst DIY music aggregators.

Does CD Baby need a rebrand?

A rebrand is an exciting opportunity to improve CD baby's image and take the business to the next level. Rebranding offers many benefits, including the chance to re-establish CD baby's brand identity, attract new customers, and streamline its messaging across channels.

Signs They Need to Rebrand

CD Baby's current brand no longer reflects who they are.

- Their business has evolved, but they have the same logo and website copy from twelve years ago, they have clearly outgrown their current branding.

Their brand does not speak to their customers.

- A successful rebranding can drive CD Baby's customer acquisition efforts by enabling them to connect with new types of customers in different locations and demographics.

Downtown Music Holdings acquired CD Baby.

- When two businesses with separate brand identities join forces, finding common ground and building a new brand around shared values will help provide clarity and build trust.

Their brand is stunting business growth.

- CD Baby has plans to expand to international markets (e.g., Africa) that do not identify with their current messaging.
- CD Baby's out-of-date visuals prevent media and business partners from taking them seriously.

I believe the look and feel simply are not in line with their values anymore and how they should portray themselves. CD Baby needs a smarter, more professional, trustworthy image to grow its customer base and develop business partnerships.

Full Vs. Partial Rebrand

A full rebrand involves a complete identity shift where we take a hard look at the company's vision, mission, and values. Here, the very essence of the brand and the brand identity are at stake. In a partial rebrand, however, the brand identity will largely stay the same, and just a few key elements (e.g., the logo) will change. A full rebrand is a complete makeover, whereas a partial rebrand is more of a quick touch-up.

A partial rebrand is a helpful solution for established businesses that have already built a strong brand. It enables them to refresh their image while retaining the elements they like and want to keep.

CD Baby's brand no longer represents the company's vision, mission, and values, because its business has experienced transformative growth in recent years and was acquired by another company.

Building a Holistic Brand Strategy

Mission Statement and Values

CD Baby's vision, mission, and values make up who they are as a brand. It is vital to figure out the who, what, and why before we start jumping into logos and colours. Otherwise, we may end up with a new identity that, while pretty, does not incorporate the essence of their brand, which leads to disappointed customers.

A clever way to get clarity and ensure all are on the same page is to hold internal brainstorming sessions and talk to customers. Speaking to a wide variety of stakeholders internally and externally will help the marketing team understand all perspectives. It is worth taking the time to achieve alignment and clarity in the planning stage, so we have a solid basis for important decisions around the visual identity. This can help avoid conflict and costly mistakes later.

Audience and Market

One of our goals is to gain market share. It is essential to define CD baby's target audience and market positioning before kicking off the rebranding process. A thorough analysis of who their customers are, and how they perceive the brand, will help ensure the rebranding initiative is in line with consumer expectations.

When using customer insights to adapt the brand strategy, it is important to keep the company values in mind. Otherwise, the new brand can quickly seem inauthentic and provoke criticism.

The key to building a holistic brand strategy is to have open discussions across the entire company to come up with a set of brand values all agree upon. Having this foundation paves the way for more specific discussions around the logo and colour palette.

“Be clear on how you want to be perceived. Your values are the founding tenets of everything. Set values first and then test multiple iterations”. (Bhatia, 2022)

Creating A New Brand Identity

Rebranding Checklist

- **Brand Voice and Messaging**

The way CD Baby communicates as a company needs to reflect their vision, mission, and values while also appealing to its customers. This might mean making dramatic changes to the communication style. This can include tone (e.g., fun, friendly, and trustworthy) as well as vocabulary, layout, and grammar. Trying to gain ground among younger music target audiences, CD Baby should adopt a more casual language. Language is a powerful way to show the world who you are and what you stand for, which is why establishing a unique and authentic brand voice is a crucial part of the rebranding process.

- **Logo**

The logo is the cornerstone of visual identity, and our subconscious minds respond in different ways to different logo shapes. CD baby's logo looks dated and does not project the right image. Refreshing will not do the job. Therefore, I recommend flat-out changing the logo, taking into account where the logo will be seen (digital channels, merchandise, print) and current logo trends. Geometric designs and minimalist crests tend to look more modern.

- **Colour palette**

It is essential to dig into colour psychology and explore whether the brand colours are in line with CD Baby's mission and values. Brand colours influence customer perception and can incite certain emotions, so we want to be sure they are the right ones.

- **Typography**

Just like the logo and palette, the choice of font tells customers a lot about the company, and we want to be sure it is supporting the brand image and not detracting from it. Fonts also psychologically influence us due to how we interpret the shapes. It is essential to choose a font that reflects the brand's "personality."

Sharing Your New Brand Company-Wide

Ensuring company communication is in line with the new brand strategy can be challenging, especially for large companies with teams in different locations across the globe. Employees not actively involved in the rebranding process will need to familiarise themselves with the new brand voice, logo, and other elements.

This is where having a documented set of official brand guidelines, sometimes called a style guide, can help. Outlining the company's new design standards will help ensure communication is consistently on-brand across teams, locations, and channels. Over time, this should improve brand recognition and trust.

Brand Guidelines

What To Include in The Brand Guidelines

- **Logo usage**
There are different versions of the logo for different purposes (e.g. print vs digital, colour vs grayscale) and specific rules around spacing or the size of the logo in relation to other assets. We need to make it clear what is allowed and what is not.
- **Typography rules**
We need to include information on how and where to download the company font.
- **Brand voice**
Ensure that everyone in the company, especially those creating content, is clear on your tone of voice and understands the wording and grammar rules.
- **Explain why**
People are more likely to stick to brand guidelines if they understand the logic behind the decision and can easily access everything they need (e.g., fonts, icons, the latest version of the logo, etc.).

Sharing The New Brand Worldwide

Updating CD Baby's online presence with its new brand identity requires some thought and planning.

We need to discuss the requirements with all key stakeholders and ensure they allocate sufficient resources so their copywriters, designers, and developers can do the brand justice. Usually, the web development team will push the changes through in a "staging" (test) environment first before updating the live website, so everything can be carefully checked before it becomes public.

Not to forget the other owned media channels! Putting together a list of all the channels that need to be updated – such as the company's Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages. This helps ensure consistency and that nothing falls through the cracks.

Case Study Instagram



When Instagram was founded, it was just a simple photo-editing app. Within a few years, the business had transformed into one of the most popular social media networks of all time, with people sharing more photos and videos than ever before.

The three-dimensional Polaroid-inspired camera logo gave way to a colourful yet cleaner design. Instagram also refreshed the user interface and introduced a set of unified icons for Hyperlapse, Layout, and Boomerang to unify Instagram with their other apps.

Why was the rebrand successful?

As part of the rebranding process at Instagram, they asked people at the company to draw the logo from memory in 5 seconds. Almost all of them drew the rainbow, the lens, and the viewfinder. By staying true to the company's heritage, they were able to strike a balance between recognizability and diversity with a new branding that customers find more appealing.

"Brands, logos, and products develop deep connections and associations with people, so you don't just want to change them for the sake of novelty. But the Instagram icon and design were beginning to feel, well... not reflective of the community, and we thought we could make it better." (Spalter Ian, 2018)

Case Study MasterCard



Driven by the rise in digital payment methods, MasterCard knew it needed to offer an optimal brand experience across all digital devices. The digital payment space is also highly competitive, and Mastercard was keen to differentiate itself from its competitors and ensure its brand stood out.

Mastercard kept the interlocking red and yellow circles but removed their name from the logo. The fresh and confident new logo conveys the message that the Mastercard brand has achieved the level of recognizability reserved for brand royalty such as Nike and Apple. The company name does not need to feature in the logo because everyone knows it.

Why was the rebrand successful?

Mastercard conducted two years of research to ensure that customers recognised the interlocking red and orange circles as the Mastercard logo, which gave them the confidence to make this bold move. They also paid close attention to market trends and technological advancements, setting their brand up for success in a world where people increasingly use their phones and smartwatches to pay for goods and services.

Raja Rajamannar, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Mastercard
"Reinvention in the digital age calls for modern simplicity. With more than 80% of people spontaneously recognising the Mastercard Symbol without the word 'Mastercard,' we felt ready to take this next step into our brand evolution." (Stalzer J., 2019)

Yes, CD Baby needs a rebrand.

Rebranding as a strategic process requires a very in-depth understanding of a brand's current strengths, weaknesses, and future outlook. With the guiding principle to "begin with the end in mind," a rebranding strategy should assess the new brand's fit into not only the existing architecture but also into the one that will evolve. It is a matter of finding a cohesive bond between the brand's evolution and the organisation's evolution over time.

Rebranding is neither a fad, a tactical measure, nor a short-term stop-gap arrangement to plug a weakness in the portfolio. It is a challenging, highly impactful, and strong influencer of a brand's lifecycle and direction, and rebranding should be given the C-suite attention and proper diligence it deserves. Branding and brands are most important than ever, **and rebranding is an important strategy to maintain and increase long-term value.**

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