



# The Roadmap to Successful Brand Creation

BY DAVID BRIER

**“If you’re not stubborn, you’ll give up on experiments too soon. And if you’re not flexible, you’ll pound your head against the wall and you won’t see a different solution to a problem you’re trying to solve.” — Jeff Bezos**

**Perception is king.** With the short attention span prevalent in society today, organizations and businesses with any history come face-to-face with the challenge of effectively altering preconceptions that impact how others see them.

With so much noise in today’s world and with the endless parade of distractions, texts, media messages, blogs, and commercials ad nauseam, **this perception challenge** and the demand to successfully impact it is at an all-time high.

Thus the objective of branding is focused on the powerful tool of **differentiation.**

Hence, the need to intelligently and systematically define one's brand whether this is for a startup creating a new brand or for an existing company, organization or service that needs to:

- Redefine any brand misconceptions due to being pigeon-holed
- Appeal to a new audience
- Correct brand definition due to cultural and technological changes, **and/or**
- Capitalize on emerging trends.

**“Every success story is a tale of constant  
adaption, revision and change.”**

**– Richard Branson**

To successfully accomplish this, we incorporate the following six phases:

## **1. ORIENTATION**

In this phase, we establish how consistent the company brand is throughout the organization or if it is splintered in terms of what it stands for, what its values are, etc. This we call the “Ground Zero” step as it helps establish (through data collection and additional interviews) the common ground necessary to form a firm foundation from which to move the brand forward.

If there are various contradictory or mismatched ideas or values and goals for the brand, this vital step helps get them all aligned.

## **2. COMPETITIVE REVIEW**

To be heard, it is vital to isolate and know the commonalities among the various brand messages that exist in a given space. If all the “promises” or “attributes” being promoted are the same, these often-repeated pitches become **cliches**. This is not a good thing. Cliches convey empty value (zero distinction) and are seen by people as “noise” versus a message that cuts through the everyday noise. Cliches are the enemy of a well-conceived and successful brand.

Isolating and learning these commonalities is the primary and vitally important objective of this phase.

By establishing that, we know where **not** to go.

In over 30 years of doing this, we have never yet run into a company, an organization, a city, or a cause that wasn't drowning in similar-sounding pitches or marketing messages within its industry or class.

Thus the goal is to establish what these cliches are: in words, in imagery, in concept, in design, in style, in approach, in voice and tone, etc.

And to then find a voice that stands (defiantly and intelligently) above all the rest, not echoing what those are, but finding that place where

your brand can truly shine, truly be distinct, truly be heard, truly be differentiated.

In short, the steps are two primary ones:

1. Find the commonalities (they exist, sometimes hiding in plain sight)
2. Then isolate that special distinct voice so we will be heard as ourselves and not “one of many demanding attention.”

With this done, we successfully answer the question, **“Why should anyone really care about and take notice of what we’re offering?”**

### **3. CONFIRMATION**

The findings and recommendations in the above Competitive Analysis are then reviewed with the client company for confirmation and to ensure that no relevant competitive information has been missed.

### **4. BRAND STORY and MESSAGE**

The first two phases above sometimes overlap with them being performed concurrently (at other times they’re done sequentially).

Either way, the information collected is used to fully flesh out the second point in the Competitive Review: creating that special distinct voice so we are heard as ourselves and not “one of many demanding attention.”

This becomes the Brand Story, the “flesh” on the skeleton of the brand.

Stories are what tie people into a brand. Stories have heroes and antagonists, goals, objectives, aspirations and most important of all, purposes. It has been proven time and again that the greatest brands in the world champion purposes that you and I can rally around, not mere products, services or deliverables of any sort. Purposes are bigger than that and help to crystallize “why anyone should care.” They also help to form message points and slogans.

This may be brief or lengthy, enough to establish the brand’s reason for being, so that the foundation exists to move onto the key ambassadors of the brand and its visual presentation to the world.

## **5. NAMING and LOGO DEVELOPMENT**

The name and logo are key ambassadors of the brand.

A name has certain criteria:

1. It should not be confusing
2. It shouldn’t be tough to pronounce, or challenge the audience with any ambiguity
3. It should be distinct so it doesn’t sound cliched or trivial.

The name is an outgrowth of the insights from the above first two steps.

Once the name is established (most often, it is developed concurrently with a slogan), the logo is designed.

Sometimes the name, slogan and logo development are done concurrently since they can feed off of one another, like lyrics and a melody or music and a dance routine. It's worth noting that interdependency sometimes exists and is most beneficial when done that way.

## **6. BRAND VOCABULARY**

**Brand Vocabulary** is a term that refers to the collective “voice” of a brand — the sum total that we come know a brand by.

Let's take Nike for example: brand vocabulary includes its logo, tagline, package design, choice of photos and imagery, style of video editing, the tone of the ads, the feel of its website — all the elements we know Nike by, whether we see one ad or are immersed into a retail shopping experience. The same is true for Apple, Starbucks, Coca-Cola, Virgin Airlines or Disney World. Whether it's for a movement, a cause, or a cultural event, we all experience this Brand Vocabulary. Done well, it's crystal clear. Done poorly, it leaves us confused or uncertain.

The scope of the project can be large: the Brand Vocabulary can be more or less extensive depending on the project at hand.

Either way, each of the components must be “dancing to the same tune and tempo” as the others.

Sometimes the scope is smaller, tackling fundamental parts of that vocabulary such as the basic applications of color treatments, social media icons, social media headers, online content (as distinct from printed versions), and stationery templates.

And sometimes it's very extensive such as developing an entire in-store system for an 80,000+ member co-op such as the one shown below (as distinct from a smaller retail company or a simpler brand).

With the above phases and milestones done, one achieves a brand that is smart, well-conceived, distinct and armed for the battle of gaining its well-deserved recognition in its market.

**“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”  
– George Bernard Shaw**

**On the following pages is the example of the Brand Vocabulary created for a consumer cooperative with over 80,000 members followed by other rebrands we are proud to have created for our clients.**

# A BRAND VOCABULARY

## PRIMARY FORMAT



## ICONS AND GRAPHIC ELEMENTS



## SECONDARY FORMATS



## CORE FONTS

### TREND HM SANS ONE

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890  
!@#\$%^&\*()

### NAIVE LIGHT, MEDIUM & BOLD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890  
!@#\$%^&\*()

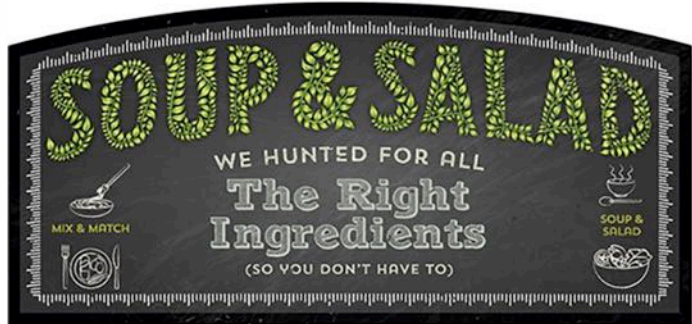
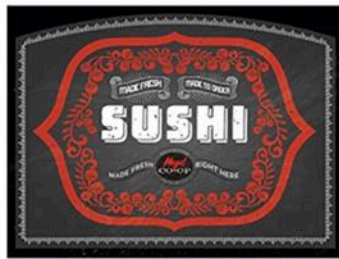
### WESTRICK HAND REGULAR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890 !@#\$%^&\*()

### ARCHIVE LIGHTFACE EXTENDED

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
RSTUVWXYZ 1234567890  
!@#\$%^&\*()

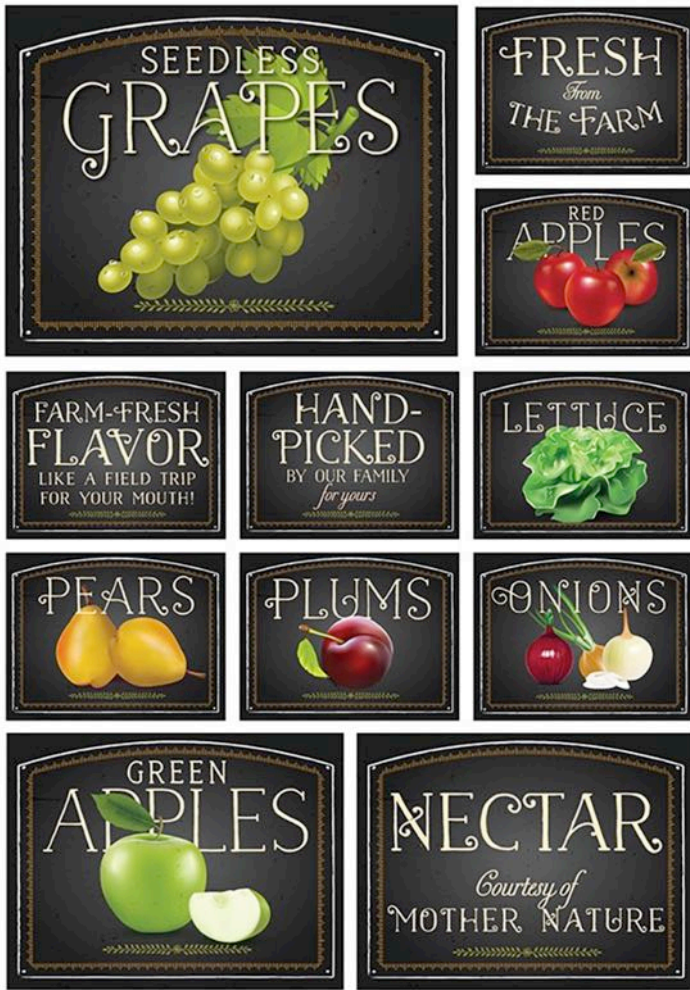
DESTINATION BRANDING



DEPARTMENT BRANDING



PRODUCT BRANDING



MISCELLANEOUS BRANDING



# Rebrand Examples

Each of the following examples overcame a perception problem, with the outside world not seeing what the company thought the world should see.

The proximity of a company to itself has become a liability forfeiting objectivity, and thus failing to serve the organization's best interest of being perceived distinctively, precisely and with great control over the dialog it started with potential customers, patrons, sponsors and partnerships.

## Changing Perceptions in Munich

This first example took a company that had a name that it had outgrown years ago. The solution required a new name and new identity.

Before



*Translated: Roof Management & Services*

*New brand first addressed the name since it incorrectly focused on a service and didn't reflect what they offered. The company offers real estate investing by diversifying risk and consistently building wealth and/or protecting existing assets.*

After



*\*We create what matters* 5

The brand logo itself—formed out of a single line—shows a human figure against a landscape (that’s a human profile) leading up to a structure that could be a garage or any building structure.

In short, it unifies people, land and real estate with one continuous stroke. The stars represent the hopes and aspirations of their investors and renters. Its effectiveness was reflected in a 50% increase in growth within nine months of the rebrand being unveiled.



### **Changing Perceptions for a Midwest City**

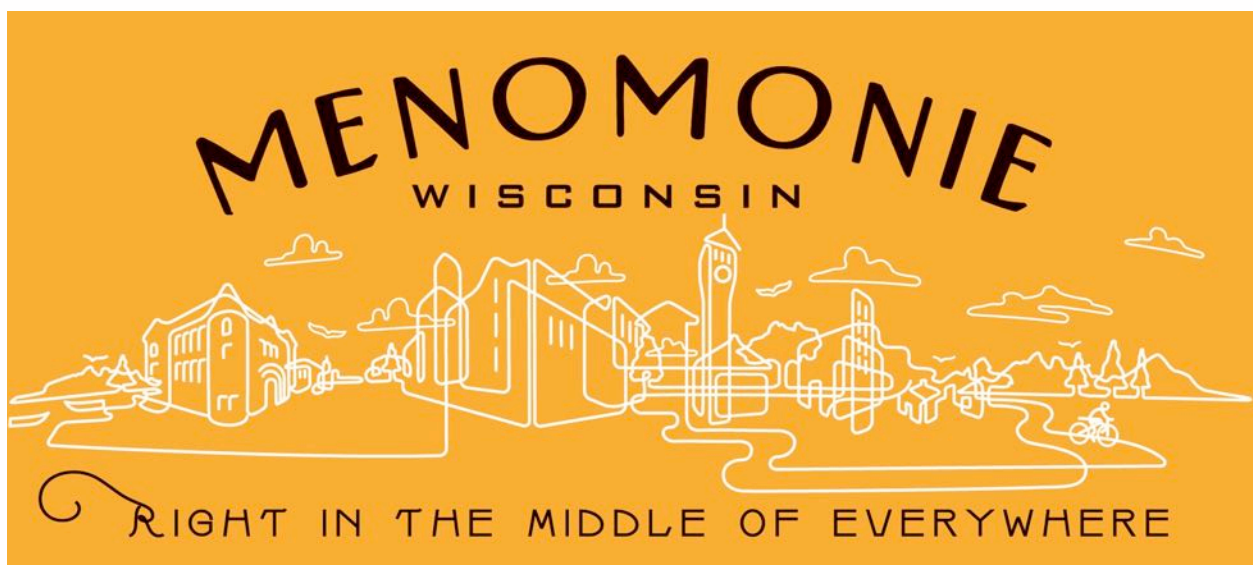
After years of “hiding in plain sight,” the Midwest city of Menomonie, Wisconsin, needed to change perceptions. The perception it wrestled with

daily was one of “being in the middle of nowhere.” Our solution was one of celebrating the fact that it was “right in the middle of everywhere.” We shifted the perception of the town from “someplace to go when you want to be bored” to a fresh, intimate small town that saw walk-in tourists escalate over **500% within 12 months** using nearly all the same channels but now with a stronger brand, an aligned message and clear distinctions instead of cliches.

BEFORE



AFTER





## Changing Perceptions for a 30-year Old Coffee Franchise

In the highly competitive coffee space, you have ever-changing chains from Starbucks to Peet's to Caribou along with the local independents always shaking up a new way to attract customers. Dunn Brothers was no different.

BEFORE

# DUNN BROS COFFEE®

**THE BOLD STANDARD™**

AFTER

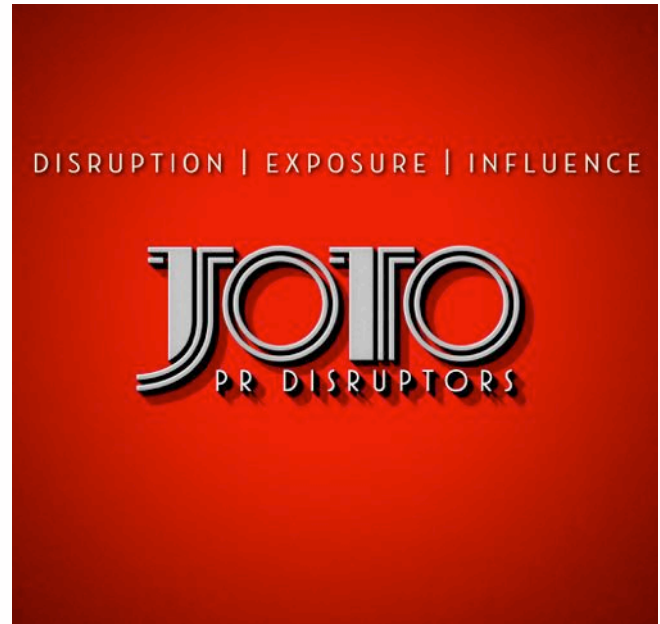


## Disrupting a Complacent Industry

The PR industry has been doing things the same way for many more years than is healthy. Leave it to a defiant alumni of an INC 500 company and Crisis Management to rebel against the status quo of PR and give clients **an unprecedented level of results** with none of the excuses that the PR industry is too well known for.

Below is their **before** with the rebrand at right.

JOTO  
PUBLIC RELATIONS



This rebrand introduces a bold, in-your-face aesthetic making it clear they are disruptive and **not** part of the tired, old regime.



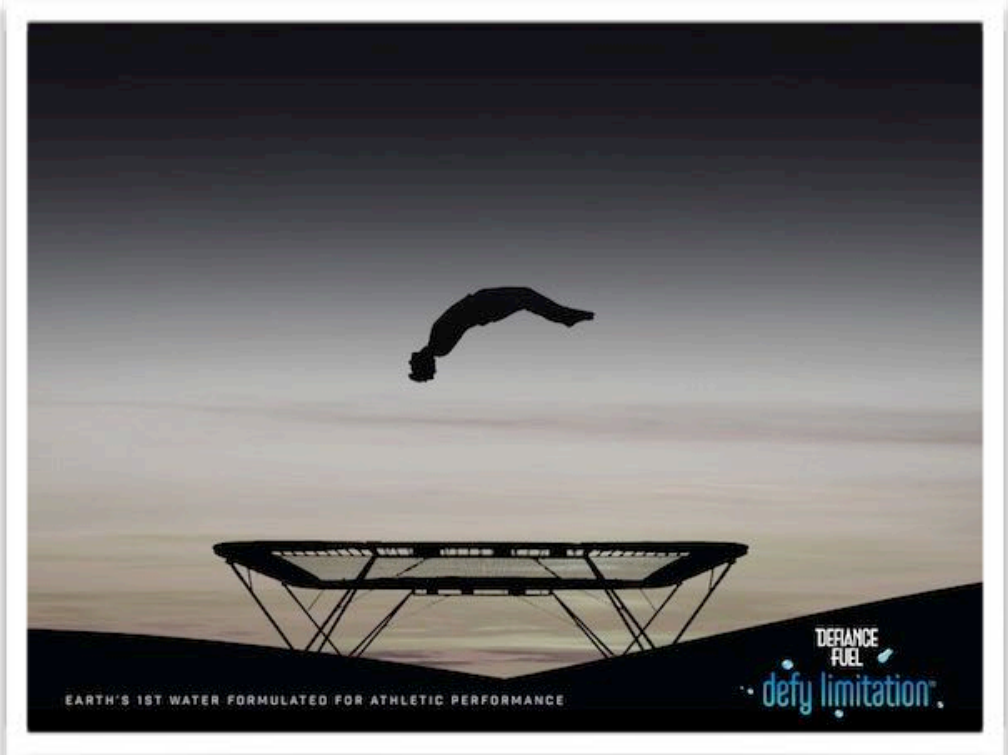


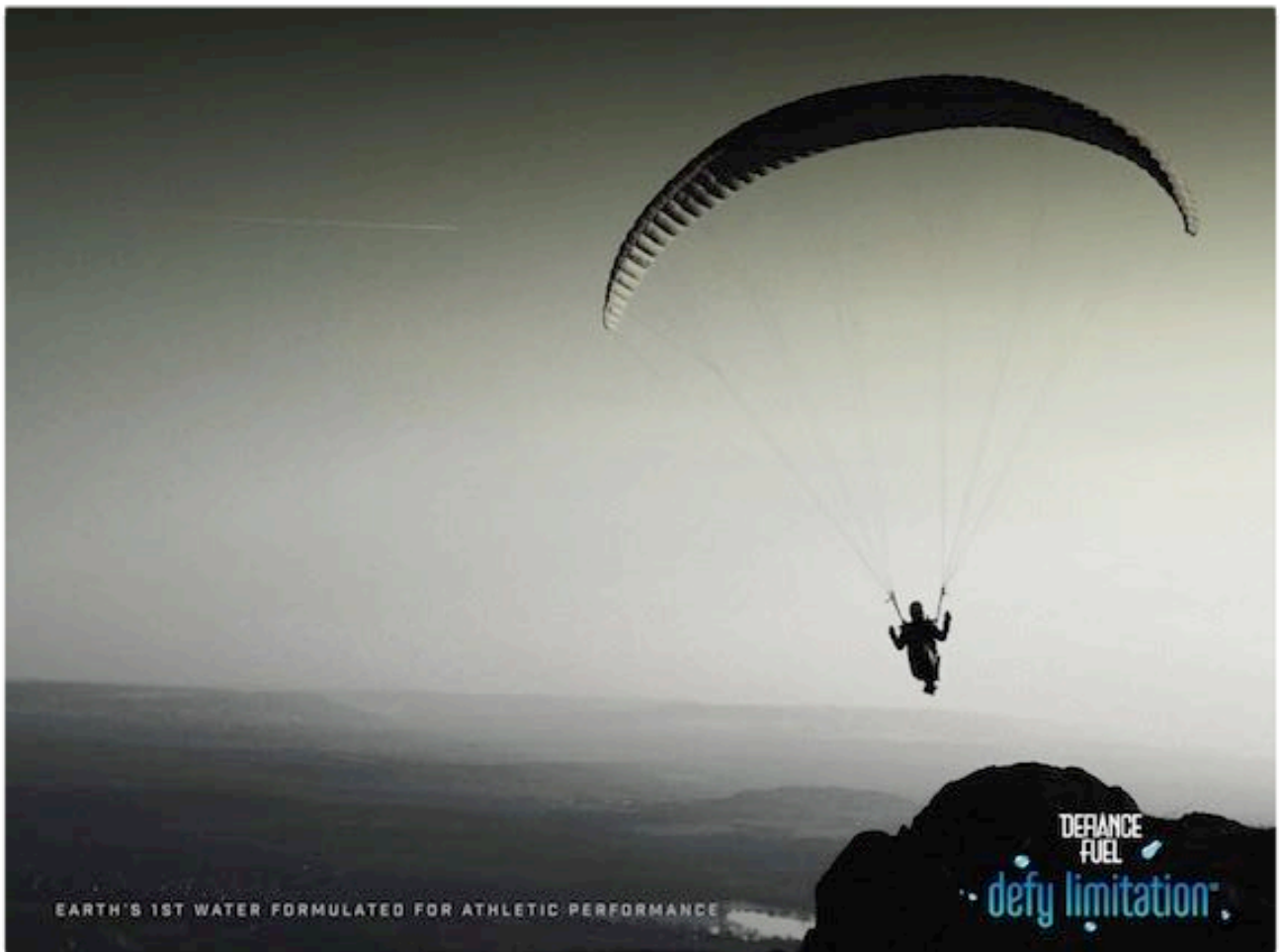
## **Changing Perceptions for Athletes and a Startup**

This rebranded a category, not merely a company. A new company, after 25 years of R&D, was finally ready to launch a remarkable water that cut recovery time in half for athletes of all ages. From junior high school students to professional athletes, this water interacted with the cells in a manner no other could. **The challenge was developing a message that resonated with an audience, helped form a community of like-minded people, and changed perceptions of what water could really do.**

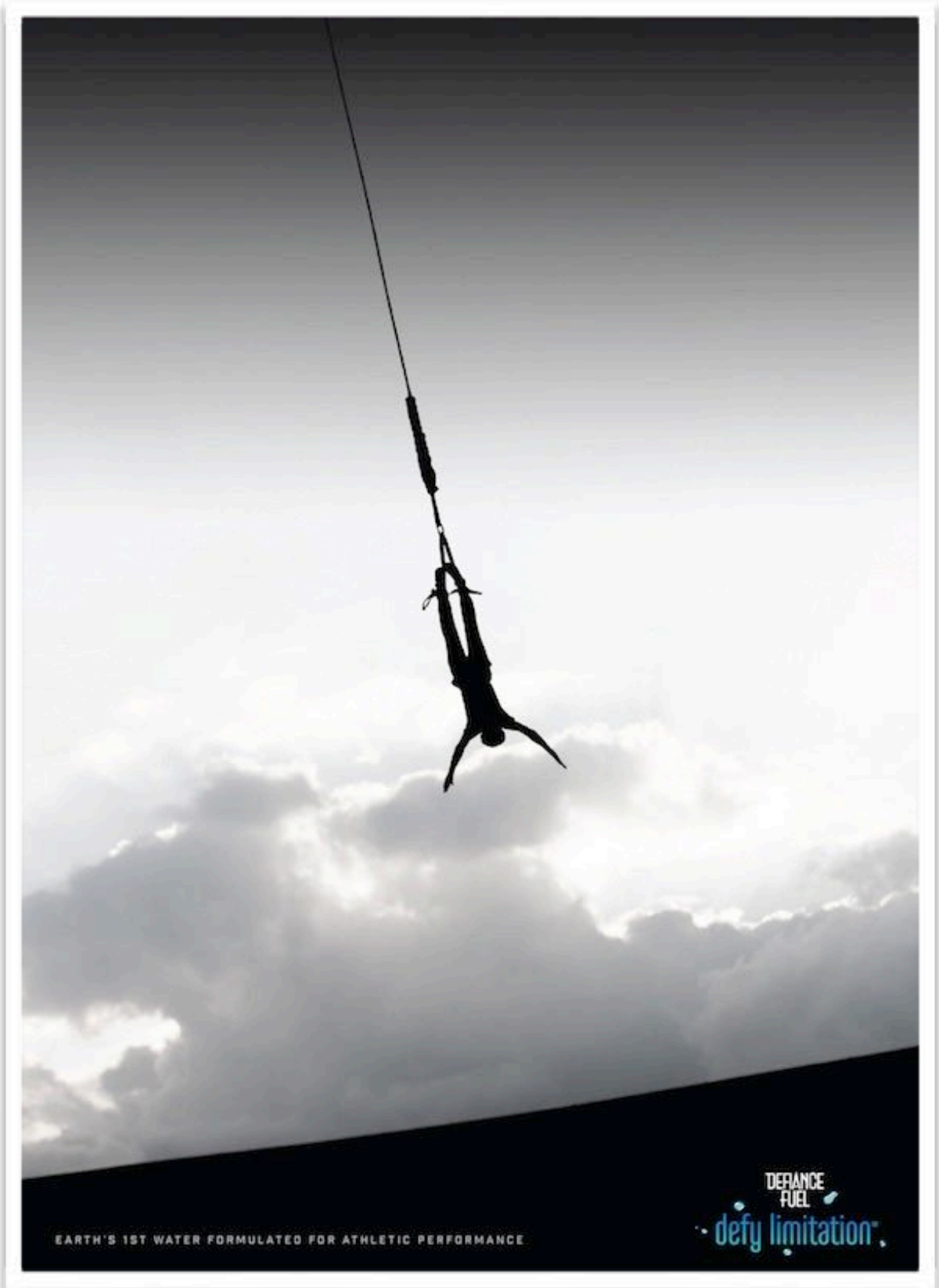
The answer was “Defy limitation” with the product name Defiance Fuel. The most notable outcome was one of understanding and echoing the voice of the athlete, regardless of age, gender or other demographics. We found the universal thread that brought athletes of every type together under one banner and resulted in a 100% sign-up rate from those who watched the video and heard the message.

Here are some of the posters used as part of this campaign and brand.









## Miscellaneous Rebrands

Below is a sampling of rebrands done for a variety of industries.

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**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



BEFORE

Simply  Snackin.<sup>®</sup>

AFTER

PLAY HARD  SNACK OFTEN<sup>™</sup>

**SIMPLY SNACKIN'**

— NATURE'S ORIGINAL PROTEIN BAR<sup>™</sup> —

BEFORE



AFTER





DBD International, Ltd.

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