

## CUSTOMER:

Charter Media, a division of Charter Communications, Inc.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

Charter Media wanted to update its brand identity to differentiate the company and cable TV advertising, and bring a new level of excitement to employees and clients – to ultimately increase sales and client results.

## SOLUTION:

The Brand Ascension Group helped Charter Media define its brand, and build the perceptions congruent with the brand through Charter's people, customers and prospects.

## BENEFITS & RESULTS:

- Improved hiring techniques by ensuring new employees fit with the Brand DNA
- Executive decision-making guided by the brand platform and promise
- Overall company culture redirected and focused on brand building initiatives
- Enhanced brand perception through multi-sensory experiences & touch-points
- Significant time-savings in engaging and working with creative agencies to communicate branding

## Charter Media Charts Course for Growth with New Brand DNA, Identity, and Renewed Sense of Purpose

### THE CHALLENGE

In the evolution of television, local cable is relatively new, emerging about 20 years ago. As it has grown, this medium has increasingly become more of an avenue for local businesses to bring their messages to their own targeted community.

Charter Communications, a Fortune 500 company, provides local cable services in about 40 markets nationwide, with advertising sales and production services offered under the Charter Media® brand, which targets local businesses.

In 2006, Charter Media sought to update its brand identity after close to eight years with the same look and feel. The goal: differentiate Charter and cable TV advertising from the competition, and bring a new level of excitement to employees and clients – to ultimately increase sales and client results.

"Nothing can be more important than charting your brand and how you're going to look and behave in the next two to four years," said Jim Heneghan, Senior VP of Advertising Sales. "When multiple media are calling on local businesses, it's important that we are different in every facet of our business. We felt that the brand of Charter Media needed to be updated in the same way our technology platform, people and programming have been upgraded over the past few years."

Charter Media began the search for an advertising firm to assist with its

rebranding efforts with a highly external focus. However, marketing and sales representatives soon realized the company needed to define, build and create its internal brand's infrastructure more clearly before engaging with a company to help communicate it at the external level.

"We realized we didn't know who we wanted to be," said Todd Stewart, Corporate VP, National Advertising Sales. "We decided to take a step back to evaluate it."



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### THE SOLUTION

For such an important initiative, Charter Media senior management

requested an extensive search for a branding firm that could assist in the defining, or reinvention of Charter Media's internal brand. After evaluating three potential firms closely, Charter Media selected The Brand Ascension Group as the best fit.

"What I touched on immediately was the chemistry that my senior team developed with The Brand Ascension Group," Heneghan said. "Chemistry is important because, in this entire process they are reaching out to the field, to our customers, getting to understand our business from the inside out."

### Defining Charter's 'Brand DNA'

The Brand Ascension Group's unique approach involves helping companies begin an internal diagnostic to define their brand (Brand DNA) and then assist in building the perceptions congruent with the brand through their people, customers and prospects (STATSi™). When conscious brand strategies are built from the "inside out," they show up in every interaction among employees, the systems and processes, the overall culture of the company, and ultimately create distinction with customers and prospects – not just in the look of a logo or Web site, or sales materials. These tangible

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items then become a powerful, more consistent symbol or representation of the true "DNA" of the brand.

Charter Media quickly came to understand the full scope of branding as 16 individuals across different departments participated in a 2-day facilitated Brand DNA process to determine the company's differentiators, standards, style and core values. In this highly interactive and experiential session, participants collaborated in a variety of exercises to define the "blueprint" or DNA of its brand, and how it could be "operationalized" on every level of the company. They were instructed to "dig deep" and begin applying their new DNA to each of the sensory receptors to include touch, taste, smell, sight and the potential sound of it. By the close of the session, the Charter Media team had thoroughly defined its brand DNA, Platform and Promise.

"The depth and breadth that The Brand Ascension Group took us into what we stand for, and the thoroughness of it, were a revelation to me," Heneghan said. "The team approach was very powerful because people fed off each other."

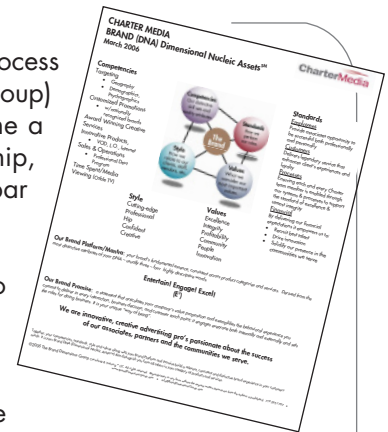
Next, The Brand Ascension Group embarked on its own information-gathering process (Brand Elevation Phase II), the Brand Diagnostic, to discover and assess how congruent Charter Media was at living and embodying its newly invented Brand DNA. This diagnostic initiative involved talking to randomly selected customers (external) across the nation and a cross-section of employees (internal) throughout various departments. Charter Media learned that it currently ranked high with employees and customers, but that there were important areas of opportunities to execute and elevate its brand DNA across its various audiences and parts of the business.

### Engaging Employees in the Brand Roadmap, Strategy

In the next Brand Elevation Phase III, the Brand Elevation™ STATS™ methodology, 13 highly motivated employees were invited to fulfill a unique role within the company: The Charter Media Brand Task Force. By engaging Associates from multiple departments – sales to service, operations

to accounting to HR – the process (virtually facilitated by The BA Group) led the team to strategically outline a roadmap to evolve the leadership, shape the culture and raise the bar on standards and processes.

The Brand Task Force was also charged with developing a communications strategy and plan for the dissemination of the



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brand's message internally and externally across employees, customers, and other audiences. Out of this Task Force came a structured phased implementation plan along with a strategic communications strategy, unveiled in early 2007.

"We wanted to make sure employees didn't feel like they had to accept something they didn't have a voice in," said Patty Bullington, Corporate Director of Marketing. "The Task Force took ownership of their recommendations and took them back to their own departments to get others excited and engaged."

The Brand DNA and Diagnostic initiatives confirmed to Charter Media that its overall current visual identity was no longer representative of its newly invented brand. The company sought a creative agency to revamp its current look and feel to an icon/logo that is more congruent with its DNA, who it is now and rapidly becoming.

### THE RESULTS

Today, Charter Media's powerful new brand DNA touches everything from its media kits to the look of every office lobby to hiring and training. Understanding that branding is an ongoing process, Charter continues to implement and manage its brand DNA across the organization, and is already seeing noticeable results from its efforts.

With a clarified Brand DNA, the company became more confident in composing RFP's for specific design and marketing initiatives. The detailed RFP it recently created caused several potential firms to comment that it was "one of the best agency RFPs they had seen."

"With a defined brand, we saved a huge amount of time in writing our RFP and we're spending our money more wisely

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with our agency," Stewart said. "Their pitches come in more concise to our expectations and deliverables are getting out much faster."

## **Living and Embodying the Brand at Every Level**

From staff to executives, those engaged in the branding process now think, communicate and make decisions based on the company's brand platform.

"In discussions and decisions, we now have a litmus test to evaluate against," Stewart said. "The balanced scorecard approach that The Brand Ascension Group introduced helps us determine if something ties in with the overall brand promise."

In the hiring process, managers convey the new brand DNA to every candidate. Through a DNA evaluation, Charter can better determine a true, positive fit by knowing the specific brand DNA attributes it is looking for in new hires. Candidates get a clearer impression of Charter Media's enthusiasm and sense of purpose and want to be a part of the culture.

***From Heneghan's perspective, when Charter employees, "internal customers," operate from within the company's Brand DNA, the shared vision and excitement powers momentum with clients as well – and drives sales up.***

"There's a renewed sense of purpose among our people. They really do believe that they are in a forward-thinking, forward-looking business, and believe that cable TV advertising is indeed hip," Heneghan said. "We're seeing the start of solution-based selling by an enthusiastic staff on an engaged product line, so clients then see that cable TV is an engaging medium. It's like, 'don't you want to be part of this wonderful thing?'"

As The Brand Ascension Group works closely with the company to further roll out the new messaging to all employees nationwide, Charter Media expects to see significant results from its efforts to differentiate itself, and create a powerful internal culture that supports, lives and embodies the brand.

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## **About Brand Ascension Group**

The Brand Ascension Group is a multi-faceted, experiential branding firm. Through consulting, training and design, they partner with visionary organizations who are committed to building the perceptions of their brand consciously through their people, customers and prospects. With innovative methodologies, The Brand Ascension Group educates and inspires organizations to define, create, and build consistent, relevant, and distinctive brand experiences – from the INSIDE OUT. [www.BrandAscension.com](http://www.BrandAscension.com)