Weight Watchers: Dieting is out, Healthy is in

TEACHING NOTES

Teaching note & reflection

Teaching plan

The following teaching note aims to support teachers or presenters in the case: "Weight Watchers: Dieting is out, Healthy is in" which concerns the implementation of a rebranding. First, the Case synopsis will provide a short overview of the case, the managerial decision taken and the relevant theoretical areas to allow the teacher a holistic view of the possible learning outcomes and objectives from this particular case. The rest of the teaching notes can be viewed as in-depth descriptions and tools on how to guide the audience through the case in order to ensure that the learning outcomes are obtained. This includes the presentation of learning objectives, relevant theories, discussion questions, teaching suggestions, time-, and board plan.

Case synopsis

In 2018, Weight Watchers, a global brand well-known for helping people lose weight, decided to rebrand. The rebranding decision includes a change of the corporate name to WW, a logo change, and a new position focused on wellness and technology. The company had endured declining sales due to societal trends shift from dieting to health and wellness-oriented as well as lacking in technology in comparison to competitors. The Weight Watchers case illustrates the common phenomenon of rebranding due to external forces but the focus is on how to implement rebranding, tapping into important theoretical areas such as corporate identity and image, corporate brand management, and corporate communication. The rebranding was for the most part received poorly. WW failed to create awareness and positive associations of the new brand before and after the rebranding, leading to confusion and upset stakeholders. This case shows the importance of strategically planning the implementation of rebranding through anchoring the brand identity internally and communicating it externally to create one seamless identity and image to avoid any potential gaps and problems.

- How should Weight Watchers implement their rebranding?
  - Create an implementation plan (list of things to consider), keep in mind the internal and external as well as short and long term perspectives.

Learning objectives

The case offers a deeper understanding of corporations' vision, culture, and image, corporate brand identity, and corporate communication.

The general learning objectives of the case for the case audience are:

- To understand that a change in brand identity will affect the brand image and how to manage this relationship.
- To emphasize the importance of looking ahead and mapping out/planning each step along the way when taking a high-impact managerial decision such as rebranding
- To gain an understanding of the importance of having a structured carefully considered communication strategy

In order for the audience to gain the general learning objectives, it is essential that the case audience already have an understanding within the theoretical areas of vision, culture, and image, corporate brand identity, and corporate communication. The role of the teacher is therefore to provide the relevant theoretical information beforehand, e.g., through a lecture. Only then it is possible for the audience to make relevant suggestions for the implementation of Weight Watchers rebranding.

The following section will therefore present the academic theories that are relevant for this case, as the learnings will not be as profound without theoretical support. The following three models are advised to use during the exploration of the Weight Watchers' case; the Vision-Culture-Image model, the Brand Identity Matrix, and the Four Tasks of Corporate Communication.

Corporate Brand Identity and Image
Vision-Culture-Image (VCI) alignment of a brand by Hatch & Schultz (2001)

The starting point for the analysis of this case is analyzing which strategic problem has occurred. The aim is to gain understanding and experience in identifying corporate mishaps within the branding strategy. As Hatch & Schultz (Roper & Fill, 2012, pp. 149) explain:

> ''...getting the right connection between the I (the internal view of the company) and the we (the external reflection of who we are) is crucial to corporate brand success. Mistakes can be made in the orientation of the brand.''

The Vision-Culture-Image model (**Figure 1**), hereinafter referred to as the VCI model, will help students identify possible gaps that might arise during the rebranding and can therefore be planned for and eliminated before they occur. As Hatch & Schultz (Roper & Fill, 2012) explain, gaps between each of the three dimensions will indefinitely create corporate problems. They state that vision, image, and culture should be seen as pieces of a puzzle; *''When spread out on the table they are incoherent but put together in the proper order they can build a strong*

positive reputation for the organization" (Roper & Fill, 2012, pp. 149). This leads us to the second aim of using the VCI model: to gain an understanding of how the three dimensions within the VCI model are interrelated, and why it is important to consult the questions within the VCI model when making corporate decisions. It is highly relevant for the students to analyze Weight Watchers' current position and where it is heading (desired position). This allows for a deeper understanding of which dimensions are to be considered and aligned when taking corporate decisions, such as rebranding.
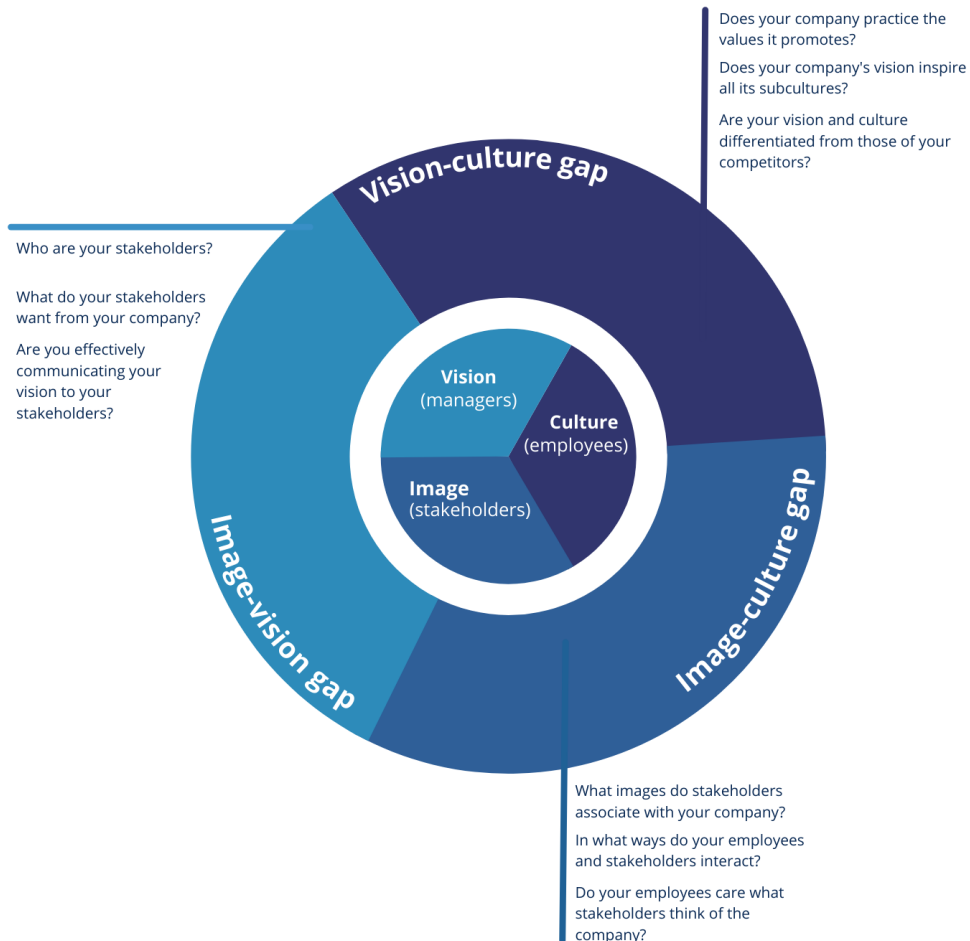

Does your company practice the values it promotes?

Does your company's vision inspire all its subcultures?

Are your vision and culture differentiated from those of your competitors?

Who are your stakeholders?

What do your stakeholders want from your company?

Are you effectively communicating your vision to your stakeholders?

Vision-culture gap

Image-culture gap

Image-vision gap

Vision (managers)

Culture (employees)

Image (stakeholders)

What images do stakeholders associate with your company?

In what ways do your employees and stakeholders interact?

Do your employees care what stakeholders think of the company?

Figure 1. *The Vision-Culture-Image model (Hatch & Schultz, 2001)*

Corporate Brand Management
Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016)

The VCI model assisted students in identifying Weight Watchers' current and desired corporate position. With the help of the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (**Figure 2**), hereinafter referred to as CBIM, students will take a deeper look into Weight Watchers' corporate brand identity. The aim is to gain an understanding of how the dimensions of the matrix are interrelated and should be considered as such when making corporate decisions. Students should leave the

room understanding the different roles and functions of the CBIM's dimensions. It is important to explain that no dimension stands on its own; the content of one of the dimensions influences the content of the others. It is important to let students become familiar with Urde's (2013) idea that both internal and external factors are equally important aspects of a brand's identity. As Urde (2013, pp. 748) explains, aligning all nine elements within the CBIM model is of significance to ''*the organization and its culture as a source of identity and the foundation for a corporate brand*''. It demonstrates to students how a company, in this case, Weight Watchers, can be defined and built as a brand.

With the help of the CBIM model, students can identify and compare the company's current and desired brand identity to investigate which elements that need to be considered in the implementation of rebranding, and eventually fill in the gaps that became apparent with the help of the VCI model.

Value Proposition	**Relationships**	**Position**
What are our key offerings and how do we want them to appeal to customers and non-customer stakeholders?	What should be the nature of our relationships with key customers and non-customer stakeholders?	What is our intended position in the market, and in the hearts and minds of key customers and non-customer stakeholders?
Expression	**Brand Core**	**Personality**
What is unique or special about the way we communicate and express ourselves making it possible to recognise us at a distance?	What do we promise, and what are the core values that sum up what our brand stands for?	What combination of human characteristics or - qualities forms our corporate character?
Mission & Vision	**Culture**	**Competences**
What engages us, beyond the aim of making money (mission)? What is our direction and inspiration (vision)?	What are our attitudes and how do we work and behave?	What are we particularly good at, and what makes us better than the competition?

Figure 2. *Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2016)*

Corporate communication

Four tasks of corporate communication adapted from Woerkum & Aart (2008)

Now that the strategic brand strategy has been examined with the help of the VCI model, and the corporate identity has been explored with the assistance of the CBIM model, the third and final framework that will be used to analyze the Weight Watchers case is Woerkum & Aarts' 'Four Tasks of Corporate Communication' model (**Figure 3**), hereinafter referred to as the FTCC model (Roper & Fill, 2016). Here, the overall purpose is to give students an understanding of why a well-executed communication strategy is a crucial strategic move when taking both small and large corporate decisions, as a poorly executed strategy can lead to a bad corporate reputation. Roper & Fill (2016, pp. 220) explain:

> '' *The use of corporate communication, both internally and externally, can be crucial if there is to be coherence, consistency, and purpose to informing and persuading stakeholders, delivering on promises, and behaving (and being seen to behave) in a responsible manner*''.

The second aim is to give insight into the steps of effectively communicating corporate decisions, such as rebranding. Conducting a communication strategy is far from a linear process and many factors should be taken into consideration before decisions are communicated internally and externally (Roper & Fill, 2016). Another purpose is to make the students understand the importance of a clear and carefully considered communication strategy. As Roper & Fill (2016) explain, a comprehensive communication strategy gives corporations the power to control the narrative, thus clear and considerate communication is power. In comparison, vague or poor communication gives power to others to control the narrative, such as (social) media and news outlets. Discussing the Weight Watchers' case using the FTCC model should help students understand why corporate communication is crucial in successfully taking the business in a new direction. It should provide students with a clear overview of which one(s) of the four communication tasks; exploring, informing, relating, and negotiating, is appropriate to execute before implementing the rebranding.
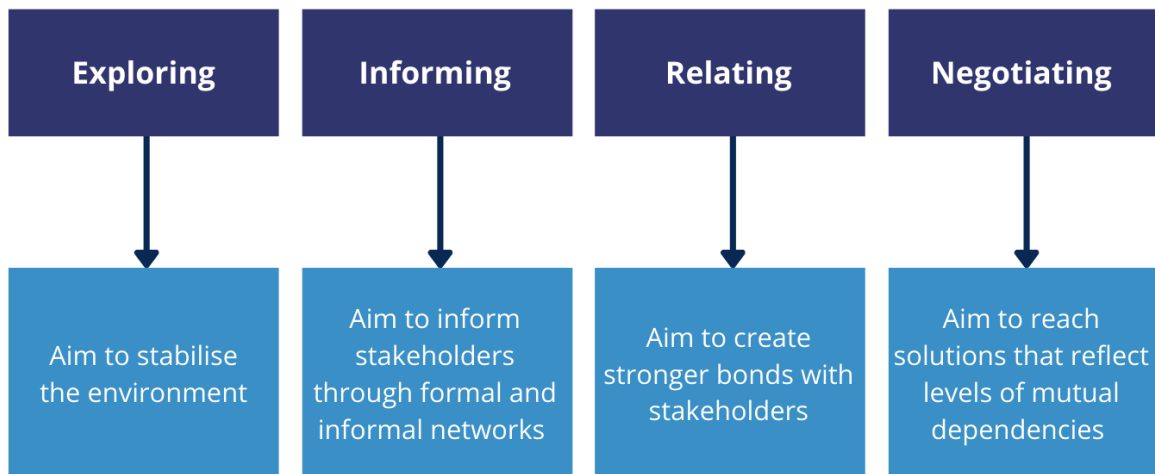
Figure 3. *Four tasks of corporate communication (Roper & Fill, 2021)*

Key learnings objectives

Through working with the case "Weight Watchers: Dieting is out, Healthy is in" the audience will gain both basic and advanced learning. **Table 1** summarizes the basic and advanced key learnings. The main emphasis is put on applying relevant theory to a practical case in order to be able to create an implementation plan for rebranding.

Overall key learning objectives		Applied & illustrated to the case
Remembering	… how a rebranding must be strategically planned before implementing in order to be successful.	Here: The corporation did not implement the rebranding successfully. For instance, the corporation failed to create brand awareness and positive associations, both before and after the rebranding as well as poor communication that did not resonate with the consumer.
Understanding	… the phenomenon of rebranding and some internal and external factors that might have an effect on the corporation's decision to rebrand.	Here: Declining sales, new societal trends, healthy in, dieting out, competitors being more tech-savvy, and a new CEO with a new vision of the corporation pushed the corporation to rebrand.

Applying	… relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts to understand and manage a corporations' vision, culture, and image, corporate brand identity, and corporate communication.	Here: Vision-Culture-Image (VCI) alignment, Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, and Four Tasks of Corporate Communication.
Evaluating	… the audience's own solution in regards to the actual management decision - what are the strengths and weaknesses? …the "right" order and steps to consider when rebranding.	Here: Strength: Long-term perspective Weakness: Brand identity and brand image were not coherent. Here: Strength: Internal change before external. Weakness: Awareness and positive associations must be created before rebranding, not after. Corporate communication.
Creating	… an implementation plan (list of things to consider), for rebranding.	Here: Providing a relevant background and a clear new positioning to strive towards, wellness and tech-savvy, to enable the creation of an implementation plan.

Table 1. *Key learning objectives*

Discussion question

To have a sufficient discussion it is essential to use the main question to get the conversation started. The case audience shall provide an implementation plan for the rebranding which requires them to have an open mindset and see the rebranding from different perspectives. Make the student think about how they would implement the rebranding approach and which steps they believe that Weight Watchers need to take to accomplish a successful transition to WW with the new tagline Wellness That Works.

Main question
- How should Weight Watchers implement their rebranding?
  - Create an implementation plan (list of things to consider), keep in mind the internal and external as well as short and long term perspectives.

Assisting questions

- What possible problems might arise with the rebranding process? How can these be avoided?
- What should be done before the change of brand name and logo?
- Considering Weight Watchers' current position versus the desired position, what steps are necessary to take to ensure coherent brand identity (internal) and brand image (external)?
- Who are the most important stakeholders to focus on?
- Should the communication differ or be the same for internal and external stakeholders?
- How to get the message of rebranding across? How to make the audience resonate with the new values?
- In what order should the rebranding steps be taken?

Teaching suggestions

This section provides the teacher with some guidance and suggestions on how to prepare, present, and lead the discussion of the case. The purpose is to provide the teacher or presenter with tools and directions to make sure that the students will have a profound discussion to evolve their learning and understanding while improving complex problem-solving and cooperation skills.

Pre-presentation phase

In order to get the most out of the case and ensure that the student will obtain the desired learning objectives they should be given the opportunity to read the written case before class. The teacher should also be well-read on the written case in addition to the management decision and teaching note. Even if these teaching notes present some additional questions, the teacher is encouraged to come up with some questions of his/her own. The preparation of a visual presentation of the written case is also highly encouraged, almost required.

Introduction phase

It is of great importance to introduce the bigger picture of the area and get thoughts going before putting the class in an action mood. As this case surrounds rebranding, why not ask the audience if they remember any rebranding and whether or not they considered the rebranding as successful, why/why not? Eventually, stir the conversation into health apps and ask if anyone has participated in Weight Watchers or heard about anyone who has. To ask the class about Weight Watchers makes the teacher acknowledge the level of knowledge that the target audience has and can have that in the back of its mind going forward. Supporting the presentation with visuals will help the target audience to easier follow the case introduction and place them in an action mood. The presentation of the case ends with the main question which invites the students to start their discussion in teams of three to four persons.

Discussion phase

At first, it is important to again highlight that the students should take on the role of the brand manager of Weight Watchers and remind them to remain in action mode. Even if it should be obvious, a little reminder to not search on the outcome of the presented case can never hurt. Allow the student to discuss freely at first to allow some brainstorming and get the thought process started. After a while, stir them in a more strategic direction with the help of the assistant questions. In the final phase of the discussion, encourage the students to gather their thoughts and summarize them as an implementation proposal. This could also be done throughout with the help of a board plan.

Conclusion phase

The purpose of this phase is to conclude the case and tell the audience how Weight Watchers actually implemented the rebranding through a presentation of the managerial decision. It is the responsibility of the teacher to end the discussion and smoothly shift the focus towards the managerial decision supported with visuals. To make it an elaborative concluding discussion, include the students and ask for their opinions. What are the similarities and differences between the implementation plan of the students and the actual managerial decision? Do the class believe more in their own implementations or Weight Watchers? What are their own strengths and weaknesses with their implementations? Lastly, make sure to wrap up the case with a summarization of the class thoughts, through the board plan, and what the major learning objectives were.

Time plan

Observe that the time plan is scheduled for a session of 30 minutes, more time would be beneficial, see **table 2** for time distribution.

Key phases	Activities
Introduction phase (7 min) 23,33%	a. Engage the students (3 min) b. Present case + case question (4 min)
Discussion phase (13 min) 43,33%	a. Free discussion (4 min) b. Assisting questions to guide the discussion (7 min) c. Student gathers their thoughts (2 min)
Conclusion phase (10 min) 33,33%	a. Present managerial decision (2 min) b. Compare students' solutions with managerial decisions (5 min) c. Concluding comments & learning objectives (3 min)

Table 2. *Time plan*

To get the students thinking on the right track and engaged in the subject, it is important to introduce the topic in an easy-going and approachable manner. Therefore, engage the students through the directions in the introduction phase for around 3 minutes. Even though the students should be well-read on the written case, it is still of utmost importance to place them in action mode and present the case as intriguing as possible. Therefore, at least 4 minutes should be set aside for the presentation of the case. As the students enter the discussion phase, first allow 4 minutes for free discussion. Then, with the help of the assisting question, guide the students in a more strategic direction for 7 minutes. At the end of the discussion, it is of significance to encourage the students to gather their thoughts for 2 minutes and summarize them in an implementation proposal. Round of the case according to the conclusion phase, make sure to include 2 minutes to shortly present the managerial decision and an ending discussion of 5 minutes for comparison of their solution with the actual implementation. Lastly, conclude the comments from the class and highlight what they have learned for 3 minutes.

Board plan

During the case discussion phase it is important to organize comments from the class in a pre-prepared structure to get a visual overview of the discussion to enable a summary of the key points and be able to give recommendations. Hence, the need for a board plan, either a regular whiteboard or a digital board if the class is online. The discussed topics consider the key tasks and challenges. The presenter or teacher should therefore develop a preliminary board plan framework they can use during the discussion phase (see preliminary board plan in **table 3**). Be aware that the board plan in **table 3** is only preliminary and takes a foothold in the learning objectives and could be considered a guide on how to get the case audience on track.

Key tasks and challenges	Alternatives	Actions
Consider how potential gaps in a brand's vision, culture, and image can be managed before problems manifest	• Encourage the students to view internal and external dimensions • Tell the students to consider the differences of the corporation's current vision, culture, and image in contrast to after rebranding	• To include various perspectives that will minimize the risk of creating gaps • Visualize the different dimensions and consider potential problems and how to prevent these

Deciding on a corporate communication that will resonate with stakeholders.	• Address strengths and weaknesses of corporate communication • Raise different stakeholder groups to the students and potential communication channels and styles	• Choose communication that creates brand awareness and positive association • Visualize the communication based on the four tasks: exploring, informing, relating, and negotiating
Realizing the importance of planning and that the sequence of the steps matters	• Structure the thoughts based on a categorization of different steps • Question the students' steps, emphasize when they should be implemented	• Structure the suggestions in chronological order (e.g., before, at the time of launch, continuously) • Prioritize suggestions based on the importance

Table 3. *Preliminary board plan*

Reflection

To write a case was not something that we had previous experience with which made it both fun and challenging as it took some time to get adjusted. The freedom of structure was indeed both challenging and refreshing.

In contrast, to report writing, writing a case is a new way of telling a more story which was a bit challenging. It is not super different, as previous knowledge can be used to some extent but everything needs to be tweaked for a regular audience of students. In report writing when it feels like you do all the research at the beginning and then just work with it, whereas when writing a case new information is added constantly, which requires a more open mind and more flexibility. It is not as easy to create a goal picture and work for it as more details reveal and unfold along the way, one consistently needs to revise and update previous work. Moreover, you as the writer are not fully in charge of the structure, the story needs to shine through clearly, which requires more emphasis on how you present things rather than solely what is presented.

Further, one realization that shined through clearly for us, is that there is more to the story than just the surface, digging deeper into the subject makes it even more interesting. Another realization was finding information and relevant sources. It required a new way of locating ourselves through the internet than studying a topic and reading literature and scientific articles discussing the subject. In this case, it was necessary to get both the rebranding from the company's perspective from press releases, communications, and strategies, as well as get a picture of the rebranding by overlooking tons of news articles and people's opinions from social media like Twitter. Structuring the written case and management decision in chronological order was not apparent initially, just as it took a while into the process before we got access to the internal information with the press release and how the company and the CEO spoke out about its event.

Shifting perspective from student to teacher allowed us to use the knowledge we gained through the course in a new exciting form. In addition, it was interesting to see how one could learn through methods other than the traditional read and memorize. Through viewing in-real cases, we were able to apply the relevant theory and draw conclusions.

One particular challenge throughout the whole case-writing was to stay objective. We tended to be a bit biased towards implementing the rebranding as we had the information of how stakeholders received it. In other terms, ee got a bit caught up in identifying the failed stages of the rebranding process rather than objectively presenting what decisions were taken by the management.

Reference list

Fill, C & Roper, S. (2012). Corporate reputation - brand and communication, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Urde, M. (2013). The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 20, no. 9, pp.742–761.

Urde, M. (2016). The brand core and its management over time, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol 25, pp. 26-42.