

The Verativ Brand Is Born!

Why consultants need a brand strategy too.

spencerbrenneman.com



Asking the Questions a Customer Might

“I was skeptical of the whole branding process when we got started, but I’m a believer.”

Michael Bender,
Founder, Verativ Consulting

After more than 20 years working in journalism, technology, and program management, Michael Bender was ready for a change. Specifically, he was determined to create a consulting business that helped organizations see new possibilities in how they create, use, and sell their content.

“I enjoy solving complex problems as well as diversity in my work. I love words and appreciate more every day their power to educate, motivate and influence. All my adult life focused on creating, editing, storing and delivering content,” Bender says. “Every company needs plans for doing their best content, and I wanted to help.”

At first, Mike wasn’t convinced he needed help creating his consulting business’ brand. However, like most entrepreneurs, he was so close to his concept that he wrestled with how to focus the business and its message.

“I realized that by having someone else ask the questions a customer might ask, I could better clarify my offering and my value proposition,” he says. “I realized, too, that visual identity is important, so I needed help ensuring that my logo conveyed a feeling consistent with the words and structure of my site.” Bender had worked with Spencer Brenneman President and Chief Brand Strategist Douglas Spencer at Thomson Reuters. The fact that

Douglas built a consulting business around branding, made Spencer Brenneman a logical choice to assist in creating Bender’s new consulting brand.

Adapting the Branding Methodology

Although Spencer Brenneman typically works with businesses and not individuals, they were eager to help. They started by tweaking their “Assess, Define, and Shine” methodology for consulting.

Simply stated, Assess, Define, and Shine is a process Spencer Brenneman uses to first understand where a brand is and where it wants to be, typically through qualitative and/or quantitative research (Assess).

Then to define the brand, the process explores questions such as:

- Why the brand exists and why anyone should care
- What makes them relevant and competitively differentiated from all the other choices customers have?
- What is the best way to connect with employees, clients, and prospects in emotional, memorable, and meaningful ways?

The Shine! phase is the creative phase when the visual and verbal identity for the brand come to life.

Adapting the branding methodology for a budding consulting business meant a couple of changes: First, instead of the qualitative and quantitative research, Spencer Brenneman created a thorough questionnaire for Bender to answer. The focus of the exercise was to understand the types of clients Bender would serve, what assumptions they may make about working consultants, and most importantly, what emotional needs do they bring to the work.

Defining the New Consulting Brand and Making it Shine!

Working off Bender's answers to the questionnaire, Spencer created hypotheses to answer the three main questions above. Working collaboratively, the two men and Spencer Brenneman's Ryan Kelley reviewed the questionnaire,

the hypothesis, and all their iterations.

From there, Spencer Brenneman began the Shine! phase by aiding Bender with the selection of a name—Verativ—as well as crafting a simple, one-sentence description, an elevator pitch, and full website copy.

Senior Art Director Kim Vanni, also a Thomson Reuters veteran, began the process of creating the brand's face, its visual identity, based on the work in the Define phase.

She says that the clear definition of Verativ's brand attributes and the value that Verativ brings to clients were the parameters that drove both logo design and image treatments.

"Our goal for the logo was to present these skills as both genuine and creative, like the company and its leadership," says Vanni. "As such, the word mark was our starting point, using a sans serif typeface that is clearly readable like a newspaper headline, but that also features slightly curved terminals and an unexpected ligature that allude

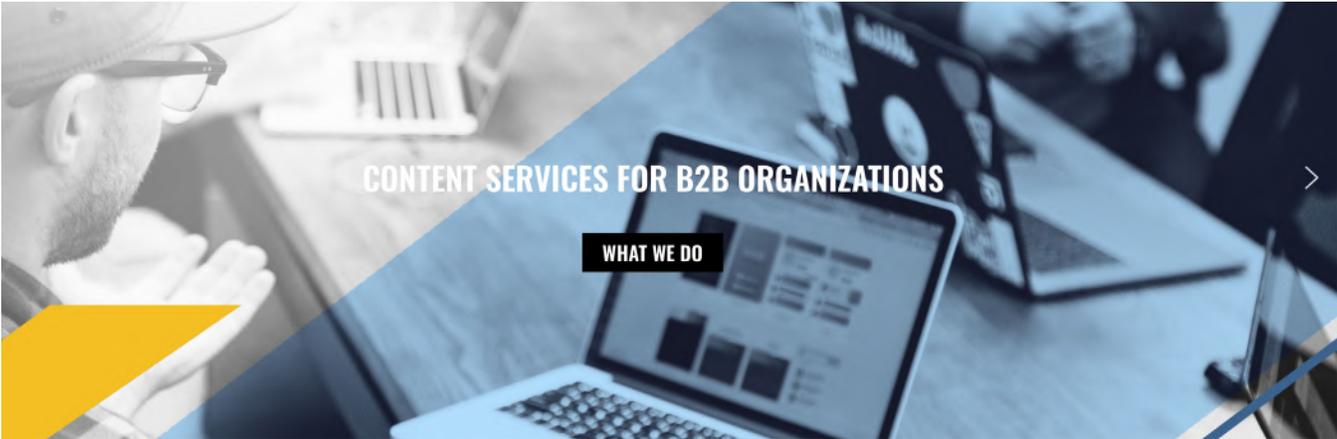
to the brand's thoughtfulness, creativity, and modernity."

From there, we developed a graphic mark that uses negative space to reinforce the V-shape and implies an upward/forward motion, not unlike a stylistic bar graph. Further reinforcing the logo elements, Vanni used overlaid diagonals in different arrangements atop black-and-white, newspaper-like photos. This approach not only supports the visual theme but also provides another way of tying the upward and progressive graphic element into the more traditional.

"Finally, the color palette was designed to complement the brand's professional, creative identity with the Steel Blue identifying honesty, dependability, reliability, and responsibility, says Vanni. "The Goldenrod is both uplifting and optimistic, and is also shown to stimulate logic and mental clarity."

With both the verbal and visual elements in place, Spencer Brenneman created a simple, yet elegant website to launch the Verativ brand.

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WHAT WE DO



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Kim Vanni, Senior Art Director



OUR SERVICES



Content Creation

Develop a voice of authority through content calibrated for your mission, the language of your market and the needs of your customers.



Operations

Work most productively with workflow, organization and technology strategies designed to adapt to growth and change.



Go To Market

Build engaging products, training materials and sales collateral with content that helps customers get to your value quickly.

Results

Adapting Assess, Define, and Shine! worked well for Bender and his new consulting brand. He found the process clear, simple, structured and affirming, he says.

"I was skeptical of the whole branding process when we got started, but I'm a convert," Bender says. "Though your business strategy might change constantly, having brand documents helps you stay aligned with your values."

Spencer Brenneman learned a lot from the process as well, including how to simplify it even more for consultants and solopreneurs. Their work with Bender and Verativ led

them to create a self-paced, online course, "Blueprint to Building Your Consulting Brand." It's designed to give consultants everything they need to build a consulting brand on their own.

As for his experience with Spencer Brenneman, Bender says it was great.

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