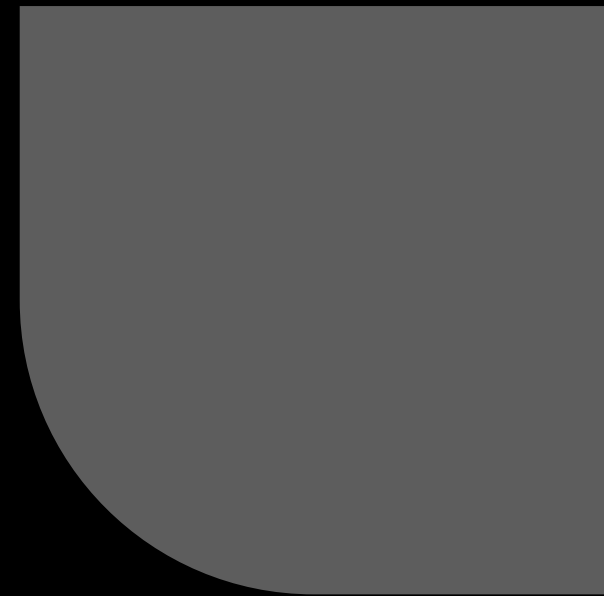


MCTC REBRAND PROPOSAL



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

TO **BE** WHAT YOU

MIGHT HAVE **BEEEN**



WHY NOW?

Mendocino County is at an exciting juncture in its evolution as a destination brand. While the past 18 months have been full of unprecedented challenges, the destination has met those challenges with an equally unprecedented sense of teamwork and collaboration, and it has unlocked a new potential for the area.

Demographics that we for years have been trying to reach – largely unsuccessfully – were made aware of Mendocino as a destination in the midst of the pandemic. With international travel closed down, and 'distance' being a highly-sought-after commodity, our drivability and unique marriage of remoteness and infrastructure made Mendocino newly attractive to a much larger group of people.

Now is the time to ride that momentum with a refreshing and exciting brand statement – one that sets Mendocino County apart as a unique destination in the minds of this greatly increased new audience.



MENDOCINO

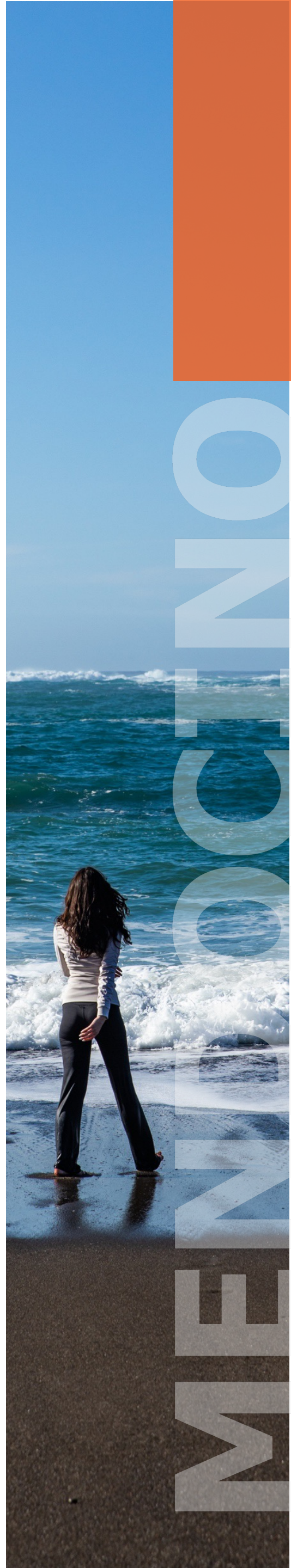


HOW CAN WE DO IT DIFFERENTLY?

While there have been definite improvements with each iteration, our brand identity has never quite lived up to the promise of the region – it has never captured the ineffable, unique characteristics that make people fall in so deeply, madly in love with Mendocino County.

By managing it in-house, we will bring a deeper understanding of what makes our area special, and leverage that in our market research to find out how we can excite potential visitors and remind past visitors why they fell in love with our region in the first place.

We will develop a tagline that could apply *only to us*, and branding that is uniquely Mendonesian. We're not Tahoe or Santa Cruz or even Sonoma. We should stand out accordingly.



NEW WEBSITE

It's worth addressing the website as its own piece here. In theory we could reinvigorate the brand and refresh the website based on that new branding.

But it's worth a website rebuild for a number of reasons. For one, with a new brand comes new opportunities to change the user experience to reflect that new brand in a way that feels natural and not forced – trying to reskin this website would lead to an awkward feel, and would be a disservice to a rebrand.

The existing website was also built using some fairly limited structural technologies on top of the WordPress core. This leads to some under-the-hood inefficiencies (in terms of expanding things) and some front-end problems (non-retina images, for example). We'll rebuild in the most forward-proof way possible, making sure we can continue to expand it over the next few years.



AGENCY XI

WHY ME?

In the past we've contracted with some fantastic agencies, and developed some great material. I've watched this organization grow so much in the more than ten years I've worked with it, and have admired many of the decisions outside agencies have made.

That said, I have always felt there was a disconnect between the region itself and what the agencies ultimately develop. This is a unique place – and while that sounds like something that can be said of anywhere, it is especially true of Mendocino County. It takes a lifetime to really *grok* what it is in the water that makes it so special.

I bring 30 years of familiarity with the region: close friendships with business owners from Gualala to Westport, from Hopland to Leggett; thousands of miles spent hiking trails and driving the back roads; 100-year-storms weathered; literal tons of mushrooms and huckleberries foraged; hundreds of gallons of wine consumed, glass by glass; and more sunsets than I can count – each one special in its own way.

I've worked with this organization every step of its journey. I've been the one responsible for the websites these outside firms build – I know what works and doesn't work in the long run; what *our* businesses can and will provide. I've been the one tasked with making sure the brand identity plays among our followers and fans. And I've been the one who has to keep the new branding sustaining – grabbing a camera and getting the fresh shot or fresh video clip needed for the vision to succeed after the initial dozen photos are used up.

At the same time, I've had the opportunity over the past decade to work with dozens of clients in areas outside of Mendocino County. To see first-hand what's being done, and done well, in points beyond.

I'm ready to bring it all together, and to help us create something at last that is completely Mendocino, completely unique, and completely world-class.



THINK. LEARN. INNOVATE.

We will always be learning throughout this process – taking our assumptions out into our target markets to test them, refine them, and ultimately develop something as bold and fresh as our destination deserves.



Stage One: Brainstorming

Working from our collective experience we will use a blank-slate approach to revisit all of the differentiators that we see that make Mendocino County so attractive to visitors. We'll highlight hurdles – both those that have been observed over the years, and new barriers that may exist because of the changed landscape.

This is where we come up with multiple visions of how to brand Mendocino County – whether to lean into beauty, or history, or oddity, or remoteness, or closeness, or products, or nature, or space... We'll come up with multiple approaches that are as different as possible, to give us a range of things to test.

Stage Two: Market Research

Here we go into our primary drive markets (SF Bay Area and Sacramento) and survey actual people – past visitors and those who have never been. We gauge their knowledge of the area, their interest in the area, and their potential to be moved by different key messaging.

This is when we test our various aspirational values, to see what resonates, what differentiates, and what has the most potential to keep us top of mind with new visitors, and to reinspire past visitors.

This is where our assumptions are tested, and where we uncover new ideas and form a clear vision and direction for the new brand.



Stage Three: Conceptual Brand

Using our understanding of the area, our creativity, and the consumer knowledge generated through market research, we build out the conceptual brand. What exactly we are going to encapsulate with our new visual and linguistic branding.

In the past we have perhaps erred on the side of incorporating too many pillars into a single brand, and also diluting the brand into something generic enough it could be relevant to almost any destination. A primary goal in this rebrand is to create something *uniquely* Mendocino.

Once our conceptual brand direction is approved, we are ready to start creating.

Stage Four: Visual Brand

With our conceptual brand in place we begin to flesh out the visual brand – what typography best accomplishes our brand goal, what color scheme (this orange is certainly something we have a lot of, so sticking with it would probably be preferable), what types of photographic imagery, what illustration and iconographic style?

If we are going to develop a logo beyond a wordmark, this is also where that will take place.

We'll create multiple looks and feels here, but if our research phase was productive we will almost certainly have a clear idea of which will best accomplish our goals.

Once approved, we're ready to move on.



Stage Five: Tagline(s)

With the visual brand in place, we're ready to further distill our brand essence down to a single tagline, and potentially a handful of variants to use in different contexts.

Our tagline is an opportunity for us to show not just what makes us attractive, but what makes us special. An ideal tagline shouldn't be able to easily be put after Sonoma or Santa Cruz or Monterey or San Diego or Bend or Montana or Slovakia. It should carry with it an implicit promise that Mendocino is one-of-a-kind – that what we are offering is more than beautiful ocean views or great wine or a generalized sense of adventure... it is the essence of who we are.

Stage Six: Asset Alignment

With our brand essence distilled and our visual appearance outlined, we're ready to align everything to ensure we have what we need moving forward.

Here we do a comprehensive audit of our existing assets, and highlight those that align with the new brand. We also take this time to create new assets that perfectly match our new brand – new photography, new videography, new illustration, new creative copy. All of these pieces come together to make sure our brand doesn't fall short once it actually hits the real world limitations of our region and resources.

In the past we have not always succeeded at this point, and it's critical in this process to be keeping an eye on assets as we're moving, to make sure we don't end up starved and unable to support our ultimate brand vision.



Stage Seven: Website

This process will have begun as soon as the visual map of the brand is approved, but with our assets in hand we're ready to complete work on a new website that supports the brand fully.

This website will utilize best practices not only for SEO and speed, but for funnel management to get our visitors where we want them to go, for backend updates so that we are always able to iterate and grow the site as new opportunities arise, and for more comprehensive analytics so that we can truly dig into our data to generate a constantly evolving snapshot of our customer, allowing us to always be maximizing our impact on them once we have their eyes.

Stage Eight: Collateral

With a new brand comes new collateral. Visitor guides that meet the needs our research discovers, creative ads and a modular ad kit for use in both the real world and online, swag to wow the world as we return to in-person conventions and press opportunities, and all the myriad bits and bobbles that help breathe life into our new brand identity.

Stage Nine: The Reveal

With our new brand in place, a new website launched, and new collateral to showcase it in the world, we're ready to formally launch the brand.

We'll work with PR to generate buzz around the new brand, and target a variety of high-profile awards and write-ups to ensure we get the recognition we deserve as a destination.

THANK YOU!



I'm very excited about the possibilities the current moment offers us, and look forward to working with this team to create something unlike anything else out there – something truly Mendocino.