



A Nonprofit by Any Other Name

...may find sweeter results, as the Children's Health Environmental Coalition discovered after changing its name to Healthy Child Healthy World.

Running a nonprofit with a generic name is like traversing Antarctica dressed entirely in white. Not only are you in for long stretches of tough sledding, after a while you'll begin to believe you're invisible.

In 1992, the Children's Health Environmental Coalition was created to inform parents about toxic substances in the environment that could seriously harm their children. Over more than a decade, the nonprofit chalked up notable accomplishments in pursuit of its mission, but there was always a gnawing sense within that the name wasn't helping. It was a forgettable mouthful, and the acronym CHEC was no better.

When Christopher Gavigan became CEO and executive director in 2005, he inherited a name with plenty of equity but also plenty of detractors inside and outside the organization. Gavigan was inclined to agree with the detractors. "The words children, health, environmental and coalition have clear meanings," he says, "but they don't necessarily add up to something *meaningful*." And for those who didn't already know the organization, he adds, "the acronym suggested everything from writing a check to the Czech Republic."

The name and acronym feel even more deficient when you know the organization's founding story. In 1991, James and Nancy Chuda lost their four-year old daughter, Colette, to non-hereditary cancer.

Besides grieving over such an unthinkable loss, the Chudas had to cope with the fact that nobody could explain why Colette had been struck with the particular form of cancer that took her life.



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As part of their search for answers, the couple established the Colette Chuda Environmental Fund (later renamed), and eventually learned that Nancy's exposure to pesticides - even prior to her pregnancy - probably triggered her daughter's cancer. The Chudas dedicated their lives to informing other parents of similar environmental risks and preventing more tragedies like their own. But like the Antarctic explorer with poor fashion sense, they cloaked themselves in a name that would allow a lot of hard work to go unnoticed by a larger audience.

During his first year as CEO, Gavigan worked slowly and carefully to convince his board that the time was right for a refreshed look and feel. Given a name handed down by still active founders and a logo intended to symbolize Colette, Gavigan clearly had to tread lightly. By 2006, though, he'd built a consensus for change, and one donor (who chooses to remain anonymous) stepped forward with the name of a branding firm and the funding to cover its work.

[Cronan](#), a branding and design strategy firm based in Berkeley, California, began working with CHEC in July 2006. Michael Cronan and Karin Hibma, who had already coined TiVo (and would later christen Amazon's e-reader the Kindle) began, as always, by asking a lot of questions. "Cronan didn't tell us we needed a new name or even a new logo," says Gavigan. "They tactfully listened and gathered information and let us see what we had."

What became evident through this process, though, was what CHEC *didn't* have. "CHEC had no ownership of its own name," Michael Cronan says flatly. Yes, there was only one Children's Health Environmental Coalition, but other nonprofits were using different parts of the name, and several other entities were using the acronym CHEC. So ownership was muddled at best.

"The biggest question about a name," notes Hibma, "is whether or not it communicates the story." CHEC was a nonprofit born from a very powerful story with a name that conveyed almost none of that. "And the logo wasn't as memorable or meaningful as it could be," Hibma adds. "The silhouette didn't connect with the personality of this little person or the larger story."

After interviewing board members and other advisors, Cronan and Hibma came back to CHEC with a list of ninety names to consider. They told Gavigan and his colleagues to look at each name with several questions in mind: Is it unique enough that we can own it? Does it identify who we are? When people hear it, does it sound familiar (which is a good thing) and is it memorable? And perhaps most importantly for an organization that Cronan believed was "on the verge of launching a movement": Is it a name people can rally behind?

These questions helped CHEC winnow the list to six finalists, and at the same time, Cronan began to rework the logo, especially the rendering of Colette. "The previous figure felt like a figurine with no depth or interest," says Gavigan. "Cronan wanted to give that child personality and to represent *all* children." A smiling freckled face and a color palette with more and brighter hues infused the new logo with life and optimism while also nodding towards diversity.

In March 2007, after six months of discussion, informal research and refining, CHEC became Healthy Child Healthy World, with an entirely new look, starting with its logo. The organization was able to grab the domain healthychild.org, which Cronan calls "a real triumph in the world

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of naming." And the tagline, "Creating Healthy Environments for Children" was added, playing off the organization's old acronym and providing a link to its past.



In the two years following the rebranding, membership increased 200%, traffic to the website increased 700%, and the organization hasn't had to hold public fundraising events which, prior to the

name change, were a necessary source of revenue. There have also been high profile partnerships with WebMD and Whole Foods, which have further expanded awareness of the organization's work.

And how much of this is attributable to the new identity? "That's hard to quantify," says Gavigan, "but it's at least fifty percent. Now, whenever we go out to talk about the organization, the new brand offers a clear sense of what we value and the impact we focus on creating."

To read more about the art and science of naming, branding, and logo design, we recommend the following:

["Warmer, Fuzzier: The Refreshed Logo" \(NY Times, Sunday, May 31, 2009\)](#)

[Branding for Nonprofits, by DK Holland](#)

[IdentityWorks website](#)

Free Webinar: The True Costs of Telemeetings

They can save money, but if they waste time, are they worth having? On July 17th, find out how 1,200 public interest professionals answered that question.



Everyone is looking for ways to cut costs and work smarter these days, and that means more organizations are scheduling teleconferences, videoconferences, and webinars instead of in-person meetings. On paper, where the savings clearly add up, this makes sense, but is anybody calculating what is lost when we "meet without meeting?"

This spring, The Goodman Center invited public interest professionals from across the US and Canada to answer that question. More than 1,200 people completed our online survey, and now we have a much clearer picture of the downsides.

On July 17 from 9-10a Pacific, we'll present the full results of our survey in a free webinar. Each participant will also receive a complimentary copy of our new report, *Dialing In, Logging On, Nodding Off: The True Costs of Teleconferences, Videoconferences, and Webinars*. To learn more and register, [click here](#). Join us in July and find out why your organization may

want to press the pause button before scheduling its next telemeeting.

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LA Area Only: PresentationCamp on June 20th

Join us from 10a-6p for only \$10 and brush up on your presentation skills.

PresentationCampLA is a collaborative, user-organized conference focused on helping you improve your presentation skills. This is a great opportunity for participants to learn from, teach to, and network with professionals involved in improving presentations in the Los Angeles area and around the world!

The idea for this kind of "un-conference" came from people who realized that the best times at conferences were the times *between* sessions, where people with like interests could meet ad hoc. The intent of PresentationCamp LA is to facilitate this type of interaction for an entire day. Rather than having scheduled speakers, anyone can pitch session topics during the morning of the event. Those sessions receiving the highest votes are put on the schedule and groups form for intense learning. I'll be there pitching a session based on my book, *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes*, and I hope to see you, too. To learn more and register, [click here](#).



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July Classes at The Goodman Center

Two online courses and a free one-hour webinar are now open for registration at The Goodman Center.

Strategic Communications: Cutting through the Clutter

July 15th and 16th (9-10a Pacific)

Design your communications around four critical connecting points and your target audience will be more likely to listen and act. Now, more than ever, you need to make sure your communications are cutting through the clutter.

Telemeetings: Dialing In, Logging On, Nodding Off

July 17th (9-10a Pacific)

Teleconferences, videoconferences, and webinars can save money, but what is lost when you "meet without meeting?" Find out how 1,200 public interest professionals answered that question when we share the results of our nationwide survey in this free one-hour webinar.

Meetings: Less Pain, More Gain

July 22nd and 24th (9-10a Pacific)

Improve your meetings and make the most of your time every time you pull your team together.

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