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**HOW TO BUILD A CORPORATE
DESIGN AS A MODERN INFORMATION PROVIDER:**

**DEVELOPING A NEW CORPORATE DESIGN
FOR THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE OF GERMANY**

Paper submitted by Federal Statistical Office¹

1. PRELIMINARY NOTE

1. The current process characterised by the transition to an information and knowledge society requires the statistical offices as well to find their new position as modern providers of information. In the course of increasing competition, they have – so to speak – to create their own competitive "brands" which materialise, i.e. make visible to the wider public, their immaterial activities such as the provision of objective and professional information, communication and services. Such brand is both to reflect the identity of official statistics and to serve the statistical institution as a basis for external and internal orientation. As regards the staff, it is a visual and live anchor.

2. CORPORATE DESIGN

2. Corporate design refers to the appearance of a business/an institution. It is the visual reflection of the strategy applied by it to implement its corporate identity.

Corporate identity

corporate behaviour | corporate communication | corporate design

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3. The corporate design of a business ensures its uniform, recognisable and clearly specified appearance in the public. All activities are put together to develop a clearly defined identity and, consequently, position in the market.

4. The major characteristics of identification are the following:

- name / trade name
- distinctive symbol / logo
- colour
- typography
- scheme / graphics

5. Applying the corporate design to any means of communication must be feasible:

- printed media: external, internal publications, survey documents
- electronic media: internet, CD-ROM
- architecture: real estate, events

3. BUILDING A NEW CORPORATE DESIGN FOR THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

6. The Federal Statistical Office, producing and offering official statistics as well as related information and consultation services, makes use of all media available to publish its data.

7. As regards printed media, every year a total of 770 titles with an annual print run of 1 million copies are published. Apart from selling data on disks and CD-ROMs, the Office provides online access to more than 1.2 million time series and, since 1996, has offered detailed information on the internet. Every year, about 500 press releases are issued and 15 to 20 press conferences are organised. The annual number of enquiries dealt with by the Office's information services amounts to 500,000. The visual means of communication used include, for example, the survey documents produced by the Federal Statistical Office.

8. The currently used elements of design such as the abacus symbol and "Figures for all" as a slogan were developed in the 80s in preparing the 1987 Population Census. The strategy at the time was to reduce fears among the population regarding statistics in general and, in particular, the population census by making the system of official statistics transparent, providing access to it, emphasising its population-friendliness and showing that statistics is nothing dangerous.

9. With the intent to be a modern information provider, the Federal Statistical Office needs a new strategic profile to meet the present requirements of the information and knowledge society. The major aims in this context are to enhance the quality of the services offered and to market the products in a modern and customer-oriented manner. In the course of a chaired strategy discussion, the Federal Statistical Office has developed its corporate identity.

10. This identity is based on the following pillars:

- neutrality, objectivity, scientific independence,
- methodological competence, high quality standards, timeliness,
- relevance,
- confidentiality, reliability,
- research and innovation,
- customer focus, high-quality services, partnership,
- transparency
- comparability, continuity, and efficiency
- high level of qualification, and flexibility
- identification

11. With the aim to make this corporate identity visible to its customers and respondents, but also to its staff, the Federal Statistical Office is working out a new corporate design.

12. The Federal Statistical Office has engaged an external partner in developing, shaping and implementing the Office's corporate design. The project was launched in late April 2000. The first visible lay-out decisions are to be presented twelve months after award of contract, i.e. in spring 2001. The whole project is to be completed by the end of December 2001, if possible.

13. The project comprises the following four phases:

- analysing phase
- concept preparation phase
- designing phase
- implementation phase

3.1 Analysing phase

14. Since a corporate design will be effective only if it is linked in a realistic manner to the corporate culture of a given institution, the first step to be taken is to analyse the actual situation, which includes the following stages:

3.1.1 Identifying one's image among **- customers requesting information** **- respondents**

15. In this context, a representative survey among approximately 1,000 persons, a customer enquiry and a selective enquiry among respondents in surveys are currently being carried out.

16. In analysing the present external appearance of the Federal Statistical Office, its impression on both customers requesting data and respondents is scrutinised. In many cases, the demands of the two groups are contradictory even in cases where respondents and customers are identical. Customers request data that are as detailed as possible, while respondents resist additional enquiries.

17. The aim of analysing the external appearance of the Federal Statistical Office is to find out whether the Office's principle to be a modern and at the same time the largest German information provider who limits the burden on respondents to a minimum, which is part of the Office's corporate identity, is fulfilled. Another task in this context is to analyse what associations the symbols so far used by the Office (in particular the abacus) have called up among the public.

3.1.2 Identifying one's image among the staff

18. While identifying its external image, the Office is also specifying its image among the staff. A staff enquiry is aimed at finding out to what extent, on the one hand, the workers realise that their own activities contribute to the Office's external appearance and, on the other, the principles of corporate identity coincide with the actual working situation as judged by the staff.

3.1.3 Analysing the means of communication available

19. The means of visual communication so far used by the Federal Statistical Office are to be checked in particular for their associative effects on both the staff and outsiders. These means include, for instance, the abacus symbol which has been used as a logo since the 1987 Population Census. Another task is to examine the recognisability and easy readability of the Office's publications.

3.1.4 Synthesis

20. The above analyses are intended to lead to a final assessment of the actual situation. That assessment to be made by an external agency based on objectivisable results should permit the Federal Statistical Office to analyse in a realistic manner the need for action and strategic decisions.

3.2 Concept preparation phase

21. Based on the specification of the actual situation upon evaluating the results of the above enquiries and on the corporate identity of the Federal Statistical Office as a basis for defining a target corporate image, the concrete content of the visual communication strategy is to be determined in order to ensure a distinctive appearance differing from that of other providers of information.

22. This includes, apart from a decision regarding the currently available means of communication (e.g. revising the abacus versus introducing a new logo), in particular the identification of the Federal Statistical Office's position with respect to the conflict between "public = reliable" and "public = administration = slow/inflexible/obsolete", and also the visual reflection of the focus of the Office's corporate image, namely "The Federal Statistical Office is the major provider of information in Germany".

23. To determine the Office's position and define its strategic objectives, chaired strategy discussions are carried out in close cooperation with the Office depending on the project progress. Other aims of the discussions are to basically specify the trends of visual communication which are eventually to lead to a written description of the desired appearance and the impression it makes. That description is then to be taken as a basis for the immediate development of a distinctive design.

3.3 Designing phase / CD manual

24. Based on the concrete and written description of the Office's position and its strategic objectives and means of communication, a concept for the visual presentation of the Federal Statistical Office is to be developed, which will include the basic features of the Office's corporate design, namely:

- logo
- slogan
- typography
- colour scales
- schemes, and
- diagrammatics for the specific statistical requirements

25. The work will be based on the present publications and the other means of visual communication so far applied. The agency commissioned with the work is to submit three alternative drafts each.

3.4 Implementation phase

26. The graphical elements specified are to be gradually introduced in all means of communication used by the Federal Statistical Office. To the extent possible, this is to be done by the staff of the Office themselves.

27. In this context, the external agency commissioned is to prepare a concept which, taking into consideration the qualifications of the staff members and the hardware and software available, will initiate the introduction and application of the Office's corporate design. The concept is expected to include both a training conception and hints for the treatment of related organisational matters. It is to focus on furthering the staff's motivation to apply the Office's corporate design in their everyday work and on providing the assistance required to achieve this goal.