

Case Study: Air France-KLM

**With our help,
there's a new name
providing complete ground
solutions to the world's
top airlines.**



The Brief

Air France-KLM approached BRANDSavvy following the decision to merge Air France Ground Services and KLM Ground Services divisions into one new and separate company. The brief was to develop a new name, brand identity, brand positioning strategy and communications plan for this new company that allowed airline neutrality in the aviation marketplace while maintaining impact and visibility.

The Solution

Doing the groundwork

First, we carried out a branding workshop to put us in the picture about Air France-KLM's new company, its personality, aims and ethos. BRANDSavvy established a project team – consisting of key people from both Air France Ground Services and KLM Ground Services – to drive and lead the rebrand. We set up and facilitated the workshop to help the project team put their new brand into words. The workshop helped us to define and agree their vision, mission, values, company personality, and guided the creation of a brand statement. The ultimate goal here was to identify the customer promise which would become the foundation of all the brand communications and activities for the new company.

Naming the brand

Next, came the name. A brand new company needs a brand new name. We wanted to indicate the emergence of an all-new, robust and complete handling company. But not only that, we needed a strong brand that was instantly recognisable across the industry so that the new company could arrive in style and hit the ground running.

It was also important that there was no direct brand relationship to the shareholders, Air France and KLM, in order to avoid a brand conflict with other airline customers and to allow the continuation of the name should KLM or Air France ever divest.

So we began looking for a powerful, neutral, easy to pronounce name for the new company.

Thinking up a name that does the big job of creating an impression while summing up values and character is a tall order. It takes imagination and vision, and little bit of *je ne sais quoi*.

We consulted the new company's most creative resource – their staff – to suggest vibrant names that would encompass their offering. We also set our creative teams at BRANDSavvy to work on name development. From all the names generated we made a shortlist, conducted some internal and external focus groups to test their effectiveness, made careful trademark registration checks, and presented the final shortlist to the new joint board for selection and approval. The name chosen was 'Cobalt Ground Solutions'.

Once we had board approval on the new name, we designed a series of brand identities for the board to consider and select the preferred option for logo and colour. On final approval of the name and brand identity, we employed a trademark lawyer to handle the registration process.

Cobalt is born

Market research is vital, and we carried out a comprehensive programme to gain insight into the requirements of the merged companies' existing and prospective airline customers. We also identified communication options with the aim of focusing attention on cost-effective marketing.

With the research results in hand, we developed a brand positioning strategy to place Cobalt as the premier provider of flexible ground solutions to the airline industry. The strategy included a positioning overview, key objectives, key benefits, target audiences and relevant insights, a profile of their ideal customer, key positioning messages, a communication channel analysis, a media analysis and rationale, a communications and positioning strategy, tactics and implementation, and evaluation criteria.

The focus here was to be very targeted with all communication channels to ensure maximum bang for every buck of the budget.

On presentation of the strategy to the board, we developed a communications action plan for 12 months, with a month-by-month breakdown of all communication channels and activity, a time and action plan, and a full breakdown of all media costs.

Once we had identified the communication channels and media, we developed the visual and verbal brand for Cobalt. The new brand reflects the company's personality, defines its offerings, strikes a chord with the target markets and above all, is consistent across the board. We also conducted focus group testing to ensure that the new visual and verbal brand resonated with the target market before we launched it to the world.

BRAND PASSPORT



Your travel documents



The soft launch

Cobalt's employees will live and breathe the brand, so we worked closely with the project team and the board to develop an internal launch strategy and communication materials. We developed a series of internal brand documents to help immerse employees in the message, and help ensure they deliver the brand promise consistently. These documents included 'A brand built around you' pack containing a brochure introducing the new brand and a quick reference brand passport.

Using a partner company, we applied the new brand livery to over 200 vehicles at Heathrow and London City Airports, as well as designing threshold and directional signage for all passenger lounges managed by Cobalt Ground Solutions. Then we commissioned a freelance fashion designer to produce a range of staff uniforms to compliment the new brand.

The last stages of the brand development saw an integrated marketing campaign designed to build brand awareness of Cobalt, and help generate new business. Our team worked on a stand alone website for Cobalt to act as an information source for existing customers, a sales tool for new business, and a recruitment tool for existing and potential employees.

It doesn't end there...

Even with the initial flurry of branding work complete, we will still work hand in hand with Cobalt to develop and maintain their new brand. The creation of digital brand and brand identity guidelines are one example of our continuing commitment – these will be housed on the new website and ensure consistent representation and application of the brand by third parties.



An Air France-KLM Group Company



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The Outcome

The Cobalt brand sits perfectly within the Air France-KLM group of companies as a simple but effective and sophisticated name synonymous with reliable, professional and cutting edge service. Importantly, Cobalt retains the positive attributes of its founding companies, with a serious – but open and approachable – personality, and a memorable look and feel evocative of the company's strong aviation heritage.

BRANDSavvy has delivered a new brand for Air France-KLM that does all of the following and more:

- Positions Cobalt with a convincing and commanding brand that reflects the strong foundations of the company.
- Introduces a modern, streamlined, and powerful look and feel to Cobalt, which itself is an all new, separate company with a strong offering in the industry.
- Allows brand neutrality that reassures customer airlines there will be no conflict with any of Air France-KLM's own airlines or subsidiaries.
- Uses a palette and imagery reminiscent of both the founding companies own distinctive and well-established brands.
- Offers a style and tone that is easy to implement across all communications at all levels of the company.

The Result

The new brand has already demonstrated exceptional success, with three new customer airlines joining the customer base of 26 airlines brought across from the merger. In addition, Cobalt's work helping to move airlines from Heathrow Terminal 2 and start them up at Heathrow's newly refurbished and expanded Terminal 4 has the company fully booked until November 2009. After this, Cobalt's business at London City will continue to amplify as the airport prepares to become the international gateway to London's 2012 Olympic Games.

We can help you.

If you can think of one good reason why customers should choose your offering over all others, then you have a reason to get us to brand it or rebrand it.

At BRANDSavvy, we'll secure your success through the power of effective branding – helping you stay visible in your markets, and in the minds of your customers, with tried and tested brand-building methodologies.

Contact us today to arrange your FREE branding workshop and prepare for branding success.

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