Application: main_307641448

Vertical Aviation International (VAI) Rebrand

Page: Organization Information

Association Name

Vertical Aviation International

Association Website URL

https://verticalavi.org/ (https://verticalavi.org/)

Mission Statement

Our purpose is to fuel the growth of the vertical aviation industry through connection, advocacy, safety, education, and support for businesses and individuals. Together, we will strengthen communities worldwide and unlock the unlimited potential and power of up.

Association Logo

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VAI-Logo-OrgName-Vertical-FullColor-MidnightBlue-RGB.png)

What is your organization's staff size?

Medium (10-49 Staff)

Is your organization planning to enter multiple Gold Circle Award entries?

Yes

How many entries does your organization plan on entering?

2

If your organization wins a Gold Circle Award, would you be willing to share your insights and best practices through articles, models & samples, virtual lunches, and educational sessions?

Yes

Page: Entry Information

Entry Title

Vertical Aviation International (VAI) Rebrand

Category

Rebranding Campaign

Project Overview

With over 75 years of leadership in the vertical aviation industry, Helicopter Association International (HAI) recognized the need for a transformation to reflect the industry's expansive future beyond (but inclusive of) pilot-manned helicopters. The association needed a rebrand that embraced its growing role and upward trajectory as a driving force behind connection, education, safety, and advocacy in vertical flight.

The existing identity of HAI did not fully capture the dynamic potential of the vertical aviation industry or the breadth of the association's mission. As the industry evolves beyond traditional helicopters to include emerging technologies capable of vertical or short takeoff and landing (e.g., drones, electric air taxis, and tiltrotor aircraft), we needed a brand that not only represented the existing helicopter community but also the broader and growing diverse vertical aviation landscape. A new identity to position the association as the trailblazing leader that powers the upward trajectory of the industry.

In late 2022, HAI partnered with Yes& to undertake this comprehensive rebranding initiative, redefining the brand to be more inclusive of all sectors within vertical aviation. As part of this rebranding, the organization developed and adopted a new name: Vertical Aviation International (VAI).

Goals/Objectives

The overarching long-term goal is to unify, legitimize, and holistically represent the entire vertical aviation industry through an evolved, expanded, and inclusive brand. Initial success would be measured by the following objectives:

1. Drive Deeper Engagement: Increase visibility and foster meaningful connections with both existing and new audiences by combining awareness and engagement efforts. Success will be measured through metrics such as media performance, engagement rates, and quality visits to the campaign landing page.

2. Lead Policy Expansion: Establish the association as a forward-thinking legislative and regulatory leader by achieving policy advancements, such as securing funding for workforce programs, enhancing vertical aviation safety standards, and fostering collaborations to support industry growth.

3. Broaden the Community: Expand and diversify the representation and scope of vertical aviation through new educational offerings and expanding representation among membership and industry community. These efforts will ensure that the organization is inclusive of all vertical flight sectors, not just helicopters, while promoting a more comprehensive, forward-thinking vision of the industry.

These goals support the mission to champion the unique capabilities of vertical flight while ensuring that the association could represent the entire vertical aviation sector, not just helicopters. The objectives were more than cosmetic—the rebrand was a strategic shift to position VAI as forward-thinking and inclusive, legitimizing its role in representing new sectors of vertical flight. It was about uniting the industry to increase advocacy power and ensuring they remained the trusted resource for innovation, growth, and sustainability in vertical aviation.

Strategy/Tactics

The plan ensured the rebranding effort would be grounded in a strategic, mission-driven foundation that fueled a tactical roll-out of the brand's new identity. Our approach included:

1. Uncover industry potential through comprehensive, inclusive research: To ensure the brand resonated with both existing and emerging audiences in the vertical aviation industry, HAI conducted extensive research. This included a mix of secondary research, quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews with members, stakeholders, and industry professionals – all aimed at capturing a more diverse and inclusive range of perspectives from industry professionals not traditionally within the membership community.

2. Develop a visionary brand story to propel the industry into a new era: Vertical Aviation International (VAI) became the association's new identity, reflecting the expansive future of vertical aviation beyond traditional helicopters. Based on research findings, the brand story was redefined to emphasize growth, agility, and possibility in vertical aviation. The new tagline and central message, "Vertical Aviation International: Powering Up" revolved around the evolution of vertical flight. It's rooted in a revamped mission: to fuel the growth and upward trajectory of the entire industry through connection, education, safety, and advocacy – so that communities around the world are strengthened by the power of UP (vertical flight).

3. Design a visual identity that embodies progress and possibility: We established an evolved brand personality – the trailblazing team leader – with brand values of Trust, Passion, Service, Innovation, Inclusion, and Safety that laid the foundation for a new visual identity which emphasizes the forward and upward energy of vertical lift. Key elements included a contemporary color palette and typography that felt inclusive and future focused and imagery representing diverse professionals in the industry.

4. Reimagine the industry's premier event to reflect the industry's exciting future: As a key component of the rebrand, VAI strategically reimagined its flagship event, renaming HAI HELI-EXPO to VERTICON to better reflect the full scope of vertical aviation – and the uniquely passionate enthusiasm that pervades the industry. Announced at the 2024 show, this strategic move ensures that the industry's largest annual gathering evolves alongside the sector itself—expanding beyond helicopters to include the latest advancements in vertical flight.

5. Launch a reimagined future with a strategic, multi-channel roll-out: The rebrand was introduced through a strategic multi-channel campaign to build awareness and excitement. Initial launch channels included a brand new VAI website, an evolved social media presence, and a multi-pronged email campaign. The new brand was unveiled at the annual HAI HELI-EXPO on February 26, 2024, where it was met with overwhelming positivity from industry stakeholders.

Success Metrics/Results Achieved

VAI can now more strongly and clearly advocate for a unified vision of vertical flight, giving the association (and the entire industry) more credibility and legitimacy.

1. Drive Deeper Engagement:
a. Within the first week following the announcement of the brand, the news gained remarkable traction, with over 100 mentions across industry media entities, reaching an audience of over 9.46 million and driving a 1.2K surge in engagement with the VAI brand across publications.

b. Industry voices like Global Air, applauded the change, calling it "a commitment to looking and moving forward" and recognizing how the new name "keeps VAI inclusive of the entire vertical aviation industry."

c. The rebrand revitalized VAI's digital presence, driving a 99% increase in website visits, a 128% jump in page views, and a 266.5% growth in unique visitors.

d. The new website wasn't just attracting attention, visitors were actively engaging as reflected by a 54% uptick in engagement and a 44% increase in visits to the "Join VAI" page, signaling amplified interest in membership.

2. Lead Policy Expansion:
a. Buoyed by its expanded remit, VAI worked with the FAA to modify standards and guidance for the planning, design, and construction of heliports – ensuring they are optimized for all vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft (not just manned helicopters).

b. On an international scale, VAI deepened its influence by establishing relationships with Brazil and Chile, hosting legislative discussions to support industry interests abroad.

3. Broaden the Community:
a. Increased membership through a fresh membership campaign rallying the industry behind the power of vertical flight, resulting in 89 new members while retaining 95% of current membership.

b. Restructured the Board of Directors, expanding it to 11 members, ensuring more inclusive representation from the industry beyond traditional helicopter operators, including dedicated seats for government service providers.

c. 60% of VAI's 1,200 company members are now manufacturers and suppliers (vs more traditional operators), as VAI introduced new membership categories and offerings to reflect the larger, evolving landscape of vertical aviation.

DEIA Response

The rebrand was designed to address diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility by prioritizing inclusivity in both its messaging and implementation. Recognizing the evolving landscape of the vertical aviation industry, we sought to welcome younger, more diverse professionals into the community while ensuring that the traditional, longer-standing member base felt valued and included in this evolution. Accessibility was a critical component of the campaign's design. We ensured all materials adhered to accessibility best practices, including high-contrast visuals and readable font sizes, e-reader compatibility and 508-compliant language, and an intuitive, user-friendly landing page design to enhance usability for all audiences.

Please upload all files associated with your project in the fileds below. If more links are needed to send supporting materials please email GoldCircle@asaecenter.org (mailto:GoldCircle@asaecenter.org).

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Page: Supporting Materials

Is there a URL or landing page for this entry? (optional)

https://verticalavi.org/ (https://verticalavi.org/)

Is a username and password required to view the supporting material?

No

Instructions

Would you like to add an additional URL? (optional)

No