

City of Toronto

The Branding of a City



The City of Toronto's image on the world stage was blurred. It lacked the dimension and clarity of iconic cities such as Paris, New York or London, or the singular clarity of a place like Austin or Las Vegas. Absent a rich "storyline", Toronto was perceived as simply another North American city among outsiders, and a large and impersonal metropolis among Canadians.

Four organisations from public and private sectors, including the Mayor and Governor tasked us with rewriting the story of the city they knew could be.



Toronto City Summit Alliance



Rebranding Toronto - Two Tales of One City

The strategy was to redefine Toronto's image to Torontonians and the province of Ontario first and the rest of Canada and the world after. Provide Toronto with a codified, inspiring, visual and verbal language for the brand, Align the different stakeholders to the final brand proposition to ensure coherence. Develop a brand proposition that would speak equally to leisure travellers, meeting and convention planners, businesses, talent and foreign investors.

Public Engagement Campaign

A city is nothing but what its citizens make of it. The Toronto experience had to be originated, embraced and told by Torontonians or it would never resonate with any credibility internally, much less with the outside world. The first step was to create a citizens engagement campaign to come up with the basis of the storyline for the city.



Bus shelters and postcards invited all Torontonians to tell us their story.



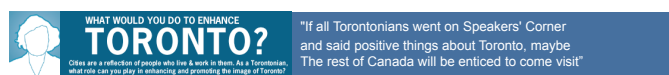
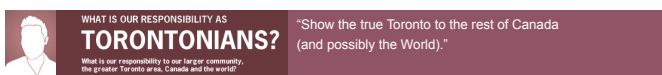
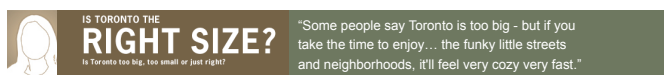
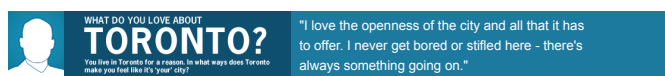
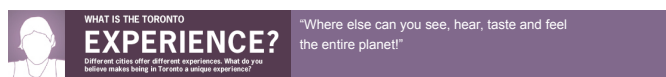
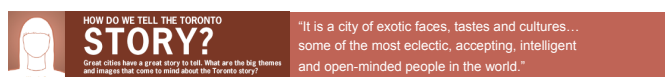
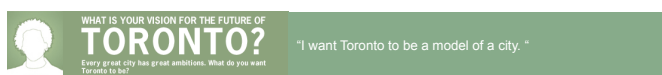
We built street teams who engaged with over 3,000 pedestrians and online participants during 7 weeks to identify and develop the vision and values of the city.

We were able to summarise the most resonant messages on what Toronto's vision was, its story, its experience, its scale, social mission, what locals loved about it and what would they change about it.

This helped us develop the key brand positioning - a city without limits, without boundaries, rich, diverse, open and welcoming, singular and authentic.

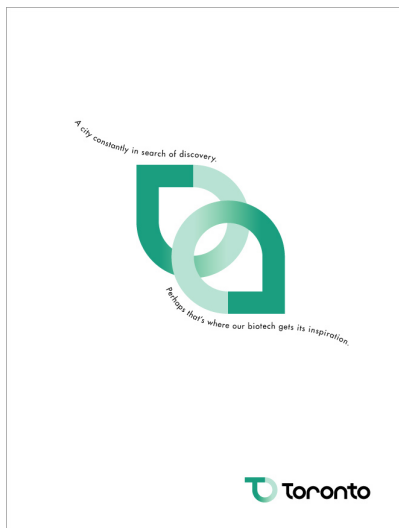
The message came from its people, so it would resonate and inspire internally, have credibility among Canadians, and change perception in a positive way with Americans and other foreigners.

The city was now ready for an entirely new narrative...



Logo and Tagline Development

Toronto is an alternative, a city of imagination where biotechnology cohabitates with climate control, where diversity and tolerance are organic, with thriving universities, a film industry and a restaurant scene that rivals any metropolis. Toronto, as we see it, has no limits.



We developed a format that would be as creative, alternative and innovative as the city itself.

Following the format of the corporate naming structure such as "ABC, Inc." or "ABC, LLC" or "ABC, Ltd." we want exactly in the opposite direction - Toronto. Unlimited.

We leveraged the new iconography and integrated it into the city landscape to signal parks, recreational areas, the lakeside, the Toronto Film Festival, restaurant week, museums, trade shows, etc. The icon and the logo became part of the city itself.

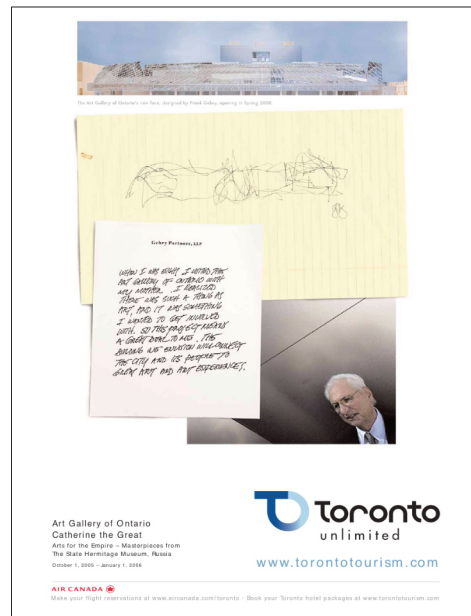
This was a very new, unseen approach, which would inspire foreigners to see Toronto in a different light and peek their curiosity to discover what it's all about.

The logo was an organic transition of a "T" and an "O" as the locals like to refer to their city as "TO."



Advertising Outside Toronto

In order to tell the story to Americans and foreigners, we hired iconic Toronto celebrities to tell their story of Toronto hand-written in their own words. The celebrities were carefully selected as they were part of the message - these were all authoritative figures in very different fields. Americans were all too familiar with, yet most were surprised to learn they were Torontonians - this was intended to accentuate the element of surprise.



Art Gallery of Ontario
Catherine the Great
Arts for the Empire - Masterpieces from
The State Hermitage Museum, Russia
October 1, 2005 - January 1, 2006

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Architect Frank Gehry
Entertainer Paul Schaeffer
Best-selling Author Malcolm Gladwell

Each told a story of Toronto consistent with the narrative we built for the city. A compelling and aspirational message coming from a familiar source opened foreigners' minds to expect a completely different Toronto that had been previously built in their imaginary.



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Following the launch of the campaign, some of the most influential media started very much changing the tune to how they spoke about Toronto.

Within a year, the city went from a non-entity in the perception of mainstream influential media to one of the hot spots to be discovered.

- The New York Times

"Toronto Turns It On"
- Wallpaper

