

What's in a "brand"? Ask our State Officers...

2017 New Jersey has **I.M.P.A.C.T.**
"Inspirational Motivation Promoting Ambitious Creative Thinking"

2016 New Jersey **S.O₂.A.R.S**
"Students Organize to Achieve Real Success"

2015 New Jersey is **M.A.G.I.C.A.L.**
"Making All Goals Ignite Change Among Leaders"

2014 New Jersey **S.H.I.N.E.S.**
"Students Help Initiate New Experiences Statewide"

2013 Jersey **S.T.R.O.N.G.**
"Students That Represent Our Next Generation"

2012 New Jersey has **S.W.A.G.**
"Students Working, Achieving Greatness"

2011 New Jersey is **B.O.S.S.**
"Building Opportunities Sparks Success"

2010 New Jersey has **D.R.I.V.E.**
"Devoted Responsible Individuals Volunteering Endlessly"

2009 New Jersey is **H.E.R.E.**
"Helping Everyone Reach Expectations"

2008 New Jersey is **I.D.E.A.L.**
"Initiating Dynamic Experiences Among Leaders"

2007 New Jersey is **H.O.M.E.**
"Harmony Offers Motivational Experiences"

2006 New Jersey's **S.H.O.R.E.**
"Students Help Others Reach Excellence"

2005 New Jersey is **S.U.B.L.I.M.E.**
"Students United By Leading In Many Endeavors"

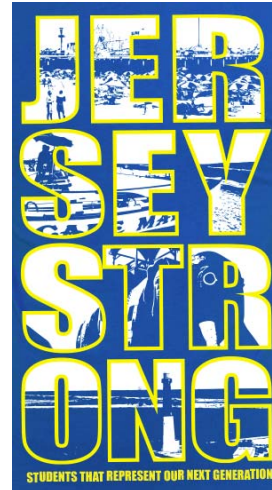
2004 New Jersey keeps it **R.E.A.L.**
"Responsible Enthusiastic Active Leaders"

2003 New Jersey has **L.I.F.E.**
"Leaders Interacting for Excellence"

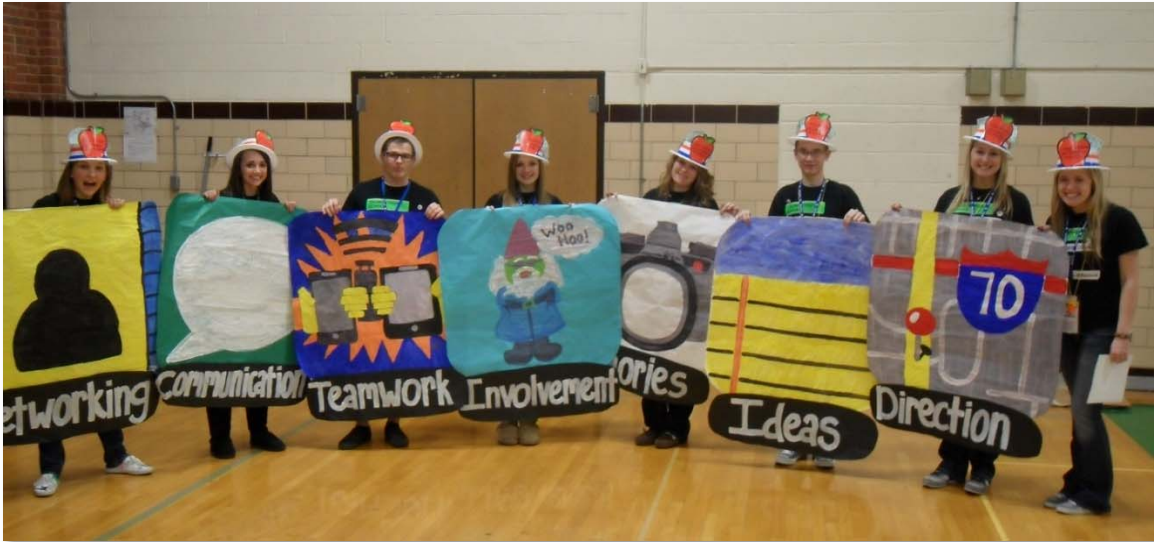
2002 New Jersey has **S.P.U.N.K.**
"Students Promoting Unique Never-ending Kindness"

2001 New Jersey has **S.T.R.E.N.G.T.H.**
"Successful Teenagers Reaching Exceptional New Goals Through Hard Work"

2000 New Jersey has **H.E.A.R.T.**
"Hardworking Energetic Active Responsible Teens"



MISSION & BRANDING: What's yours?



It's easy for us as (typically overwhelmed) Student Council advisors to go from one event to the next without taking time to stop and think about WHY we and our students do what we do. Have you ever thought about what the **MISSION** of your Student Council really is? An analysis of your activities and traditions through the lens of a clearly defined mission can reveal much about what these activities and traditions really accomplish, as well as what you can do to increase their relevance and importance to your Student Council and all segments of the school community.

There are many ways to figure out what the mission of your Student Council program really is. In corporate America, millions of dollars are spent on consultants and retreats to hash out the existential question of "why are we here and why do we do what we do". Needless to say, as Student Council advisors we don't have that level of resources to answer our own questions – but that doesn't mean we shouldn't ask them. The answers might be closer than you think.

The photo above, borrowed from the Missouri Association of Student Councils, shows a group of student leaders who (surely with some quality advisement) arrived at a pretty solid idea of their mission. "Networking, Communication, Teamwork, Involvement, Memories, Ideas, Direction" clearly state what they and their program are all about and underlie everything they do.

Here are some questions that you can ask yourself and your student leaders to get thinking about what the **MISSION** of your Student Council really is and/or what it should become:

- What is your **reason** for existence?
- Who are your customers or **target audience**?
- What **image** do you want to convey to that audience?
- What are your **services**, and what **level of service** do you intend to provide?
- What are your **goals**, and how will you achieve them?
- What underlying **philosophies or values** guide your answers to the above questions?

The third question above addresses the concept of **BRANDING**. Image can be everything; you don't have to look very far to find successful (and not so successful) results of branding...



In “A Simple Blueprint for a Successful Brand” (*Forbes*, 12/14/2011), Jerry McLaughlin, co-founder and CEO of Branders.com defines: “Brand is a perception someone holds in their head about you, a product, service, an organization, a cause, or an idea. Brand building is the deliberate and skillful application of effort to create a desired perception in someone else’s mind.”

He easily dissects the colossal 1985 failure of New Coke, “If your 100-year-old brand is ‘The Real Thing’, then what’s your reformulation? ‘The Un-Real Thing’? The more plainly the distinct performance aspects are associated in our minds, the stronger the brand – but that doesn’t keep the biggest brands with the biggest budgets from screwing it up again and again.”

McLaughlin takes the highly successful example of Southwest Airlines to walk through the following three components that he believes form a blueprint to successful branding and shaping perceptions about you, a product, service, organization, or idea:

- **What?** What is the service that you or your organization provides? The most successful brands tend to represent only specific “what”, which is typically straightforward. For Southwest Airlines, the “what” is really quite simple – moving you and your bags by air from point A to point B.
- **How?** For every service or product, there can be many ways of delivering the “what”? What is the special way that you or your organization deliver your “what”? For Southwest Airlines, the “how” is “at a low price” and “with no bag fees” – take away either of these important aspects and the brand begins to fall apart.
- **Feeling?** Customers want to do business with people they like and prefer to consume products or services they feel good about. For Southwest Airlines, the brand is fun and laid back; right down to the heart shaped logo in warm colors it makes people feel good. McLaughlin points out that part of the success for Southwest lies in that “this stands out across a landscape of grim, unhappy airline brands.”

In “The Top 7 Characteristics of Successful Brands” (*Forbes*, 11/12/2013), Jayson DeMers, founder of AudienceBloom.com, outlines the following:

- **Audience Knowledge** – do you know what your target audience is, what their interests are, and how they communicate?
- **Uniqueness** – creating an identity within a niche doesn’t demand a revolutionary idea, just something special to distinguish it from the others.

- **Passion** – successful people have a serious passion that keeps propelling them to work hard and continually deliver greatness, that passion can lead to enthusiasm and joy which is infectious.
- **Consistency** – when people come back, they usually expect the same level of quality and service as they received the first time.
- **Competitiveness** – for a brand to make a name of itself, team members should thrive on competition and constantly strive to improve.
- **Exposure** – a successful brand relies on the ability to reach people through multiple channels.
- **Leadership** – to coordinate efforts of team members and guide a strategic vision (i.e. Mission), someone has to step up and steer the ship.

While these articles (and *Forbes* in general) are squarely aimed at marketing professionals in corporate America, there are lessons we can take from it to improve how we brand the valuable work we do as Advisors. The bottom line is that if your target audience (and others, too) fails to understand what your Student Council is all about, they are far less likely to support it. Our branding challenge is to communicate what it's all about in a simple and straightforward way to multiple audiences – students, teachers, administration, parents, etc.

This and the last decade have been dominated by standardized testing, teacher/school accountability, financial and political pressures that threaten the valuable work that we as Student Council advisors do to cultivate and develop our next generation of leaders. Now more than ever, we need to be able to justify the important work that we do – to a variety of audiences. After all, it is these student leaders who we as a nation will need to rely on in the coming decades to clean up the many messes our generation is still in the process of leaving behind. With our help now they, and our nation, will be prepared for a brighter future.



Returning to our picture from Missouri, these student leaders borrowed from an extremely successful international corporation that knows a thing or two about branding to come up with the following: **“Leadership – There’s an App for That!”** Well done!

PURPOSE: What does your Student Council seek to accomplish?

Think about what your Student Council is (or should be) doing for your school, students, faculty and staff, community, etc. *DO NOT list actual projects or activities below, instead what you think is ACCOMPLISHED through them.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

MISSION: Begin to define what your Student Council is really all about

Review your list from the last page and narrow it down to the **THREE most important purposes** that you honestly think your Student Council should be dedicated to within your school and community. *Include any purpose in which you believe, even if your Student Council is not currently fulfilling it!*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PROJECTS: Examine the “what” of what your Student Council really does

Now name what you think are the FIVE largest, most significant and/or time consuming projects or activities your Student Council does within your school or community. *Do NOT look back at the prior pages, just think about the projects or activities that you have done or are currently doing!*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

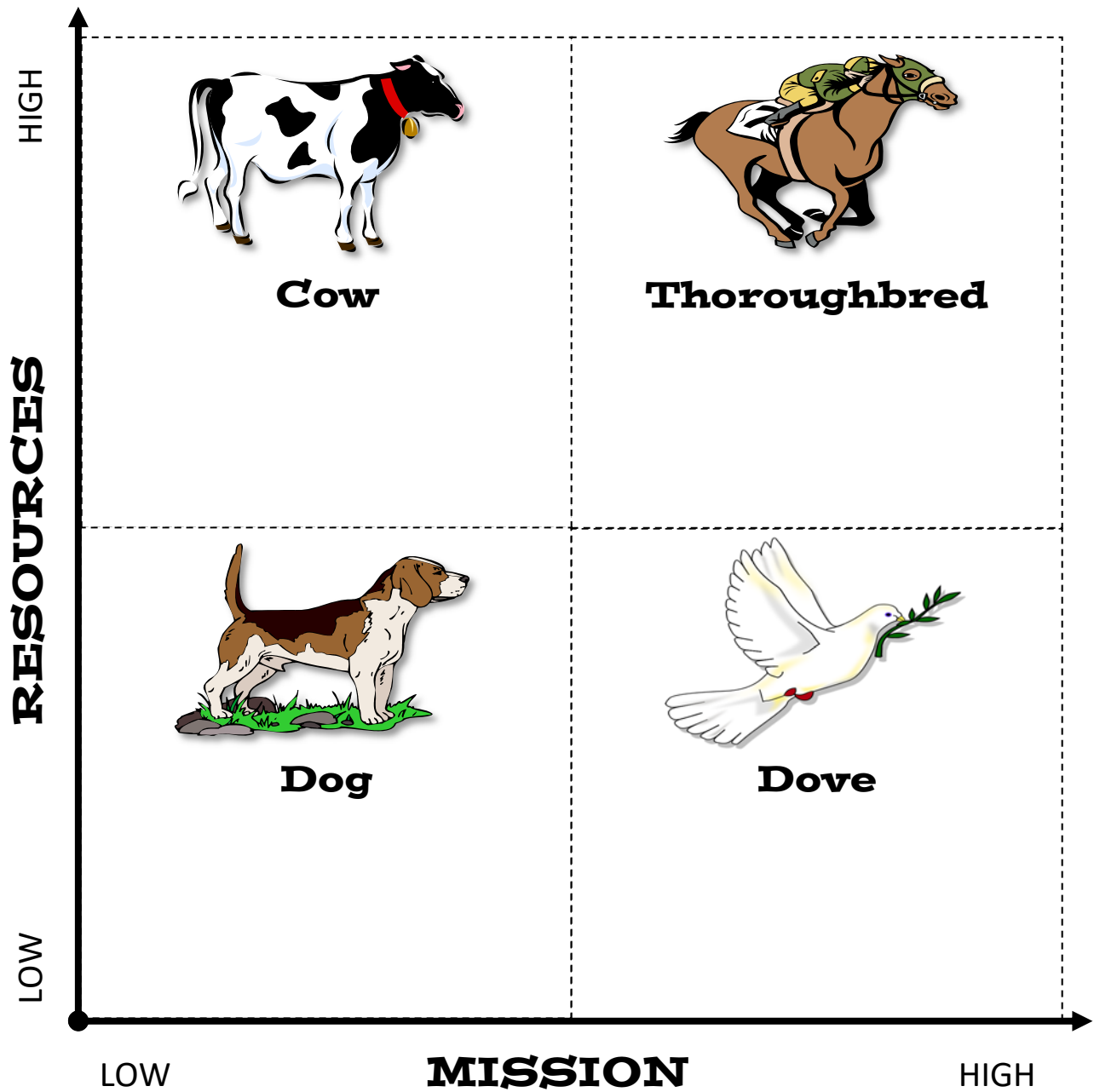
4. _____

5. _____

EVALUATING YOUR PROGRAM

Mission vs. Resources

Place each of the projects or activities you named on the previous page onto this 2 by 2 matrix, into the quadrant you think most appropriate. BE HONEST!



Matrix borrowed from "Programs with Purpose", a workshop presented by **Susan Fortin** at the 2013 NAWD National Conference on Student Activities in Austin, TX

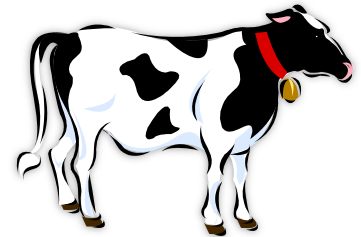
EVALUATING YOUR PROGRAM

What does it all mean?

Let's look at what each quadrant means so you can think about why you put a particular project or program into it, and what your Council should think about for each of these projects or programs as well as the big picture. *It is typical for a Council to have projects or programs in all four categories!*

Cow

These are the ones that may not be directly in support of the mission of your Council, but they probably PAY for the other ones which do. Let's be honest with each other and admit that we ALL have a couple of these.

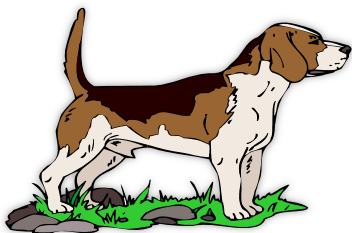


Thoroughbred

These are the ones which not only fulfill the mission of your Student Council, they also pay their own freight! However, if you listed all (or even most) of yours here then you're probably not being honest with yourself.

Dove

These are the wonderful ones that exemplify what your Council is all about, but at the sacrifice of resources. In a truly perfect world your Student Council could do just these, but someone (*moo!!!*) has to pay the bills.



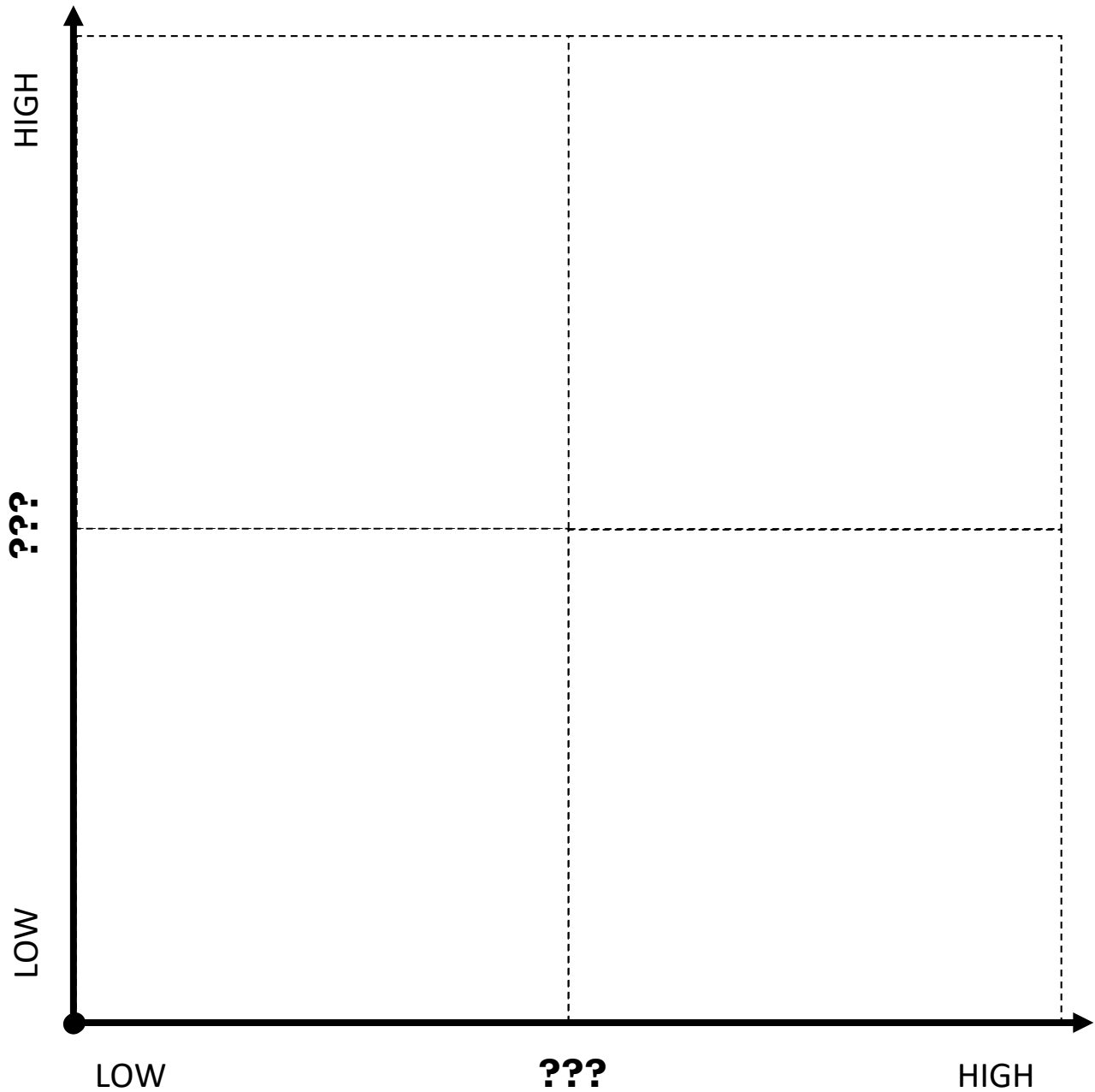
Dog

These aren't relevant to the mission of your Student Council and they're draining resources, so WHY are you doing them? Then again, if you (or your kids) can come up with a VALID reason, it might not be a Dog after all.

EVALUATING YOUR PROGRAM

Make up your own grid!

Come up with your own criteria! Examples include Time vs. Mission, Expense vs. Outcome, Energy Expended vs. Number Served and Student Interest vs. Teacher Involvement. Be sure to also come up with your own descriptive animals!



Matrix borrowed from "Programs with Purpose", a workshop presented by Susan Fortin at the 2013 NAWD National Conference on Student Activities in Austin, TX

PROJECT ALIGNMENT WORKSHEET

Project/Event Name: _____

Date & Time: _____

Location: _____

Organizing Body: _____

Student Contact: _____

Adviser Contact: _____

Description of Project/Event:

This project/event contributes to the following aspects of our defined mission:

Aspect of Mission	Contribution