



A CHANGE OF MIND

BERT D. LYNN

When I first saw “Case” appear in print as a brand name for Case Western Reserve University, I had mixed reactions: one part shock, one part dismay, one part disbelief, and one part anger. How did this happen? Who made the decision, and what was the reasoning?

I have served as journalist, public relations director, advertising agency CEO, and advertising vice-president for a major airline. As a lifelong communicator, I knew that any organization with a long name needs a “shorthand” version for instant identification. But why Case, instead of Reserve, Case Reserve, or CWRU?

My feelings were so intense that, for the first time, I declined to contribute in the annual solicitation. I wrote an indignant “letter to the editor,” which was published in this magazine. I also exchanged correspondence with President Edward Hundert, expressing my concerns. He was cordial and understanding, and candid about the reasons for the action that had been taken.

The branding program would be significant in helping our campus become a global center of research and learning. Case was selected for the brand name when research demonstrated that it resonated the most effectively compared with the other choices.


I found myself concurring with the motives for the brand program, and not with the result of the name selection. But then came a turning point. I began to examine what had transpired from the perspective of my professional experience, rather than from my emotions. I admitted to myself, “You can’t please everyone, no matter what you do.”

My knowledge of the logistics of such matters cautioned me that the brand program was too far along for the

name decision to be reversed. Even modification at this point would be too complicated and too costly. Was my opposition well-founded, I wondered, or was I just resentful because I differed with the brand name decision? Beneath it all was the growing realization that I wanted to help this university I loved, not harm it.

The vision for the university’s future is inspiring, and I believe it is attainable. But such a goal requires and deserves the enthusiastic, united support of the alumni. It is a daring and innovative plan, whose potential for success is evidenced by the “Race at Case” and the enormous exposure given the university by the Vice Presidential Debate. Such projects are energizing the campus with a vitality and vigor which I have never seen there before.

Have I changed my convictions on the brand name? Yes, clearly I have. I believe that our pride in the progress and achievements of this university will be more meaningful in the long run than pride in its history and traditions. Case is a long-established, prestigious institution. If its short, quickly read name best fills the bill as our brand identifier, then so be it! I can live with that.

I have reversed my refusal to contribute, and my check has been sent. Instead of opposing the name chosen for brand purposes, I am endorsing that program, and intend to support it in whatever ways I can. It is my hope that fellow alumni will also arrive at this conclusion, and do so with confidence in what the future holds for Case Western Reserve University. 

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