

CPA MARKETING REPORT



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Discover Your Brand With Research

Don't assume you know how clients perceive you.

Branding capitalizes on what employees, prospects and clients *already* believe about a company or product. So in many ways, brands aren't really created — they're discovered.

Sophisticated marketers and their partners increasingly recognize the importance of conducting market research before they try to communicate their firm's brand.

"We didn't want to fall into the trap of trying to define who we'd like to be," says **Dave Murray**, director of marketing at **Clifton Gunderson**/Peoria, Ill. (165 partners, 1,400 total staff; 46 offices). "Brands can't make you into something that you're not. They should be a reflection of who you are and hopefully strengthen the emotional connection."

"You have to do research. Otherwise, you don't have a branding project," adds **Jean Caragher**, president of Capstone Marketing/Alpharetta, Ga. "If you set up a whole branding program and it's not

who you are, people find out quickly, and you've wasted a lot of time."

Firms should budget a minimum of \$15,000 for research, Caragher says. The cost increases for multioffice firms, she notes. For example, CG spent \$50,000 on research before launching its brand in 2001, Murray says.

Alpern, Rosenthal & Co./Pittsburgh (21 partners, 170 total staff) spent about \$20,000 to research and develop its brand, says Director of Marketing **Elisabeth Leach**.

Leach presented a plan for the research and design of AR&Co.'s brand at an executive committee meeting in August. To reinforce her case, Leach solicited testimonials from MPs at other **Leading Edge Alliance** firms that had gone through a similar exercise, such as **Kostin Ruffkess & Co.**/Farmington, Conn.

AR&Co.'s executive committee

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