



By Matteo Vianello, Creative Director

The health insurance industry is not highly trusted by consumers, faring just slightly better than tobacco and oil. At the same time, costs are continually rising, the industry is heavily regulated, and consumers are frequently frustrated when dealing with the system.. Meanwhile, most health insurance companies act, look and speak in similar ways; differentiation is low.

To make things more complex, California consumers are confused about the difference between Blue Shield and Blue Cross – competitors that, in other states, are usually a single company. They have high awareness of Blue Shield but don't perceive it to own any specific "attributes" that really matter to them. That's partially due to the fact that we did not conduct any corporate advertising for a period of several years, at a time when our competitors were increasing their advertising efforts.

Knowing that differentiation is important, we conducted extensive research to understand what matters to our key audiences, and began a journey to take the hassle out of health insurance. We understood that the changes we needed to make wouldn't happen overnight, but also knew that immediate steps would be necessary to start making things easier for our customers. Part of this effort included learning to communicate in a whole new way.

Our old brand made no clear distinction between us and our competitors, and did nothing to minimize confusion with Blue Cross. It featured generic lifestyle photography, decorative use of color, and dozens of font sizes and corporate signatures.



**Blue Shield of California**  
An Independent Member of the Blue Shield Association

[Caption] *The old corporate identity literally had fine print built into its signature, which didn't convey a strong degree of ease, friendliness, and innovation to audiences tired of expensive bureaucracy.*

# blue of california

[Caption] *We simplified our corporate logo by removing the fine print, using a lowercase font, and replacing the word “shield” with the shield symbol. The new signature embodies our strategy to become the carrier known for ease of doing business and suggests that we are open and friendly.*



[Caption] *Our newly branded disease management materials are streamlined communications focused on being clear, relevant, and human.*



[Caption] *A key part of our new identity system is the Iconic Phrase, a system element that dials up the presence of the shield in communications.*

A brand identity sometimes gets limited play in advertising, thus creating a missed opportunity to strengthen the brand as completely as possible. Our playful and distinctive mode of expression uses the shield icon as a natural part of speech, and lends itself well to advertising across media.

In December of 2006, after launching our integrated brand advertising campaign, our unaided brand awareness in the California market improved by 6 points. In our most recent research, we found our advertising messages were generating an 18% higher purchase consideration. The extensive use of the iconic phrase as a messaging device was critical in stemming blues confusion.

As a result of our quest to redesign our brand, on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2007 we were named one of the world's best identity redesigns in the third annual ReBrand 100<sup>®</sup> Global Awards, judged by a panel of international business leaders who reviewed the "before" and "after" scenarios of each brand transformation. "The solutions we found strongest and most effective were those that applied intellectual rigor and honesty in the delivery of brand attributes," said Manuel Toscano, a principal at Zago Design LLC, and juror for the 2007 ReBrand 100.

This award confirms that Blue Shield is effectively communicating to Californians that we are making health coverage easier and more affordable. It's a great accomplishment. It proves that our in-house creative team stands literally shoulder to shoulder with some of the most accomplished design consultancy firms in the world.