



Reframing the Child Support Message

22nd Annual AB 1058 Child Support Training Conference
November 13-16, 2018



Focus Groups and Branding Implementation Plan

- I. Background, Research Objective and Methodologies
- II. Key Findings
- III. Conclusions & Next Steps

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Branding Research Objective

The objective of the research was to uncover current perceptions, attitudes and feelings about DCSS among various audiences.

This research will help define the DCSS brand and develop a message platform that will serve as the foundation for organizational activities, and internal and external communications.

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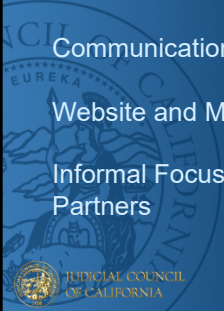
Methodology Overview

Media Audit

Communications Audit of Five States

Website and Materials Audit

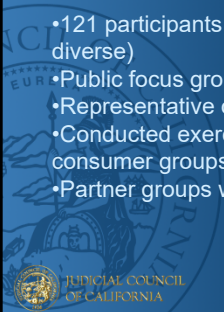
Informal Focus Groups with Employees & Partners



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Focus Groups with Employees, Partners, and Public

- 121 participants, male and female (ethnically diverse)
- Public focus groups held in English and Spanish
- Representative of 17 counties
- Conducted exercises similar to those used in the consumer groups to uncover key brand themes
- Partner groups were in Los Angeles and Fresno

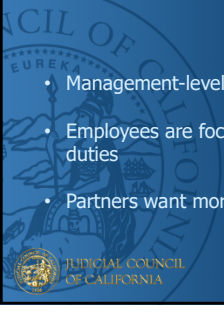


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Informal Focus Groups

Findings: Management/Employees/Partners have differing perspectives on Child Support Services:

- Management-level staff speak of providing for children
- Employees are focused on their complex day-to-day duties
- Partners want more collaboration and flow of process

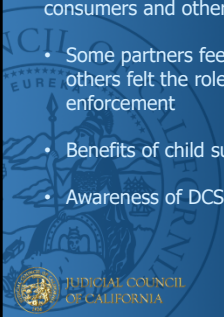


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Individual Partner Interviews

Findings: One-on-one phone interviews reinforced what consumers and other partners said:

- Some partners feel DCSS should be a gateway agency; others felt the role of DCSS is limited to collections and enforcement
- Benefits of child support are described as transactional
- Awareness of DCSS is low



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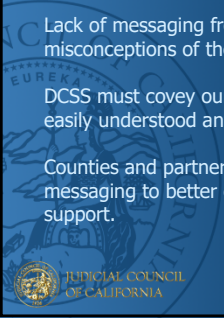
Individual Partner Interviews

What does this mean?

Lack of messaging from DCSS about "who we are" allows misconceptions of the public to stand unchallenged.

DCSS must convey our purpose and scope in a consistent, easily understood and neutral manner.

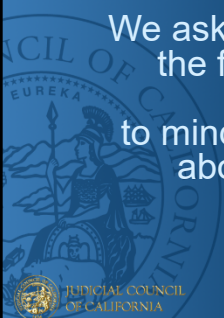
Counties and partners can help reinforce DCSS' messaging to better educate the public about child support.



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Public Focus Groups

We asked all 78 people the first word that comes to mind when thinking about DCSS...



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...not **one** person mentioned family, parents or children.



The words most often mentioned have to do with how and what (not why): "money," "paperwork," "bureaucracy" and "government."

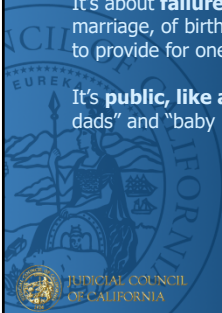
Many words focused on financial outcomes: "unfair," "not enough," "unpredictable" and "debt."

Only five people had a positive word come to mind: "helpful," "financial support," "supportive," "smooth" and "liaison."

Brand Essence Findings

It's about **failure**: of a relationship, a failure of marriage, of birth control, of judgment, of one's ability to provide for one's family, etc.

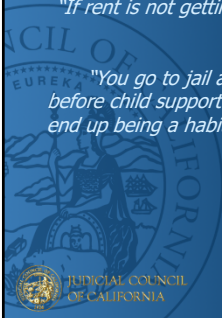
It's **public, like a scarlet 'C'**: It unmask "deadbeat dads" and "baby mommas."



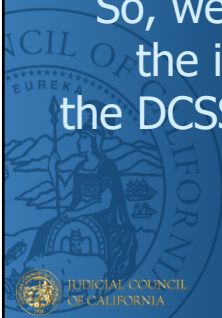
Brand Essence Findings

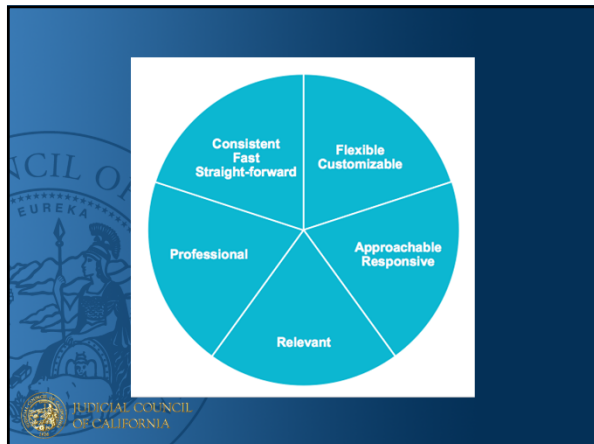
"If rent is not getting paid and I have to tell the landlord, it's all out there." – Female

"You go to jail and there's no time to get on your feet before child support asks for money. It's like a set-up. You end up being a habitual offender, and it's a felony. It's real stressful." – Male



So, we asked about
the ideal DCSS;
the DCSS of the future.





The Fundamental Realities:
 The focus group research indicated that the fundamental realities that overlay the entire child support system are

- Failure**
- Misunderstanding**
- Complexity**
- Program Legacy**

The Goal

Positioning: Position the child support system as the “middle ground;” a neutral, non-judgmental, “go-to” resource for child support help and information.

Normalization: Normalize child support as just one of the many resources and services available to parents – a simple fact, not a failure.

Market research has proven that there are certain concepts that will consistently motivate audiences. These motivating concepts are:

Freedom and Learning - some people need to feel free of authority or influence, and others want to feel smarter or wiser.

Stability and Structure - some people are highly motivated by anything that makes them feel safer and more secure.

Connection and Belonging - if you have a teenager that HAS to have what their friends have, you understand this one.

Challenges and Results - some people dislike something about life/self and want changes or wisdom to make it better.



The Image of Child Support

The next step is to define the archetypes that people associate with these motivating concepts.

Brand archetypes are universal, relatable symbols and ideas. A company's archetype will evoke the feelings the company wants associated with their brand.

An archetype is identified by reviewing all of the words that focus groups use to describe a product, to find a dominant theme.



Child Support Archetypes – The RULER

Our focus groups gave us **bureaucracy, powerful, control** and **stability** when describing Child Support Services. These words identify **the Ruler**, an archetype that resonates with those who desire Stability and Structure.

All archetypes have a negative side, and Rulers can be **arrogant, inflexible** and **rigid**, which we also heard often from the focus groups.



Child Support Archetypes – The RULER

The goal is what's best for the community: **The Ruler** offers security, protection and stability. Child Support does this for BOTH parents – helping a payer comply with an order offers protection and stability as much as getting money for a payee offers security and stability.

Microsoft is a Ruler brand – offering everything you need to do your job and run your life successfully.



Child Support Archetypes - The MAGICIAN

Relevant, informative, life-changing, and **facilitator** are words that were used to describe an ideal Child Support Services, and these words define **The Magician**. The Magician motivates those who long for Challenges and Results - in short, to change their lives.

This archetype promises all kinds of wonderful things, but negatives include **manipulative, untrustworthy** and **liar** - all connected with the perception of *broken* promises.



Child Support Archetypes - The MAGICIAN

The Magician promises knowledge and change. Child Support Services empowers parents and can reframe difficulties. We help our customers grow wiser and positively influence their situation, offering a way out of failure to competence.

Every cosmetic company is a Magician brand, but so is Tesla. Buy a Tesla, and the world's environmental problems will be solved.



Key Messages

A focus on children, happy families and positive parenting is not a credible message

What motivates us is NOT what motivates them

We offer benefits TO PARENTS:

- ✓ Child Support Services keeps the records
- ✓ Child Support Services keeps things on track
- ✓ Child Support Services does the work for you
- ✓ Child Support Services can be a go-between
- ✓ Child Support Services helps, encourages, and guides



The Brand Manifesto

Child Support Services offers a professional, approachable, non-judgmental “middle ground” for parents and guardians to get informed and ultimately transform a challenging situation into a path forward.

We are committed to helping parents navigate services available, ensuring children are provided for and promoting peace of mind through information and action.



Next Steps

A new logo and a new look and feel is the PERFECT TIME to:

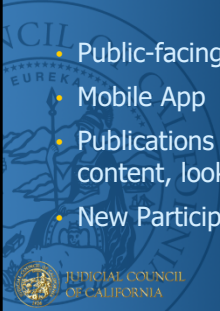
- Review all publication content for consistency with new messaging
- Remove acronyms and outdated terminology
- Update imagery



Next Steps

Revise Outreach Materials:

- Public-facing website
- Mobile App
- Publications updated completely – content, look and feel
- New Participant Packet



Next Steps

- "Tool Kit" for partners, with top-level messaging and materials
- Create and maintain information-sharing opportunities



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