



# Brand Identity Discovery Report

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BRANDING | DESIGN | STRATEGY

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## **Current Situation**

Both Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution staff and external supporters are passionate about WHOI's ocean research, science and engineering, education, advocacy work, and their broad impact on our oceans and our planet.

They also share a sense of frustration that beyond the inner oceanography circle, few people are aware of the Institution globally, understand the depth and breadth of what WHOI does, and what differentiates it from other organizations.

As result of its relatively small community, most funding is coming from government and military grants, and a limited number of private donors/foundations (mostly older, white, males from New England).

To stay relevant and successful for its future, WHOI is embarking on a rebranding initiative to generate more awareness globally, grow its community of supporters (both public and private), and elevate and modernize its brand to better reflect their innovative work and impact in the world.

## WHOI's Challenges

- Different external targets—multiple audiences ranging from the general public, private donors, corporations (public and private), government(s), and military, and partner organizations
- Different internal stakeholders—multiple audiences and departments, ranging from oceanographers, scientists, engineers, educators/faculty, students, vessel operators, and staff
- Different sub-brands that need to align with the WHOI parent brand
- Align and motivate key internal teams around the new brand to:
  - maintain consistency throughout the Institution
  - gain traction around its use to generate impact and awareness both internally and externally
  - create brand ambassadors who support the renewed spirit and rally behind the change
- Leverage the brand refresh to (re)introduce WHOI to potential donors and supporters to generate new revenue streams

## **WHOI New Brand Identity Objectives and Needs**

- Develop a responsive logo system, for use in various applications and mediums, that better reflects the Institution's mission today
- Create a new overall brand identity for the Institution that is compelling, helps to generate new awareness/engagement, and provides a solid foundation for the future
- Create a brand that embodies WHOI's global impact, brings the new messaging narratives to life, and allows for expansion in the future
- Decide on the usage, format, guidelines, and application of the existing WHOI seals
- Develop brand guidelines that are clear, easy to follow yet flexible, and encourages consistency of use throughout the Institution
- Deliver the foundational brand elements for the creation of marketing and educational tools, both in-house and externally
- Develop a system for pairing the various sub-brands with the Institution's parent brand more clearly

## One-on-One and Group Interviews; Boathouse Research

### External Audiences:

- Marquis conducted 32 in-person and online interviews with a variety of external audiences from New England and beyond. Of this total, 15 people knew of WHOI and 17 people did not. Interviews were performed one-on-one, in a private setting.

### Internal Audiences:

- Marquis conducted interviews with a select group of 15 WHOI employees (three in-person groups and four online interviews) representing different departments, age groups, and tenures at the Institution (ranging from a few months to thirty years). Our objective was to gain an understanding of the internal staff's feelings toward the existing brand identity elements as well as provide an opportunity for members of the WHOI community to offer their input regarding the brand identity going forward.

### Boathouse Research:

- Marquis also reviewed all research conducted previously by the Boathouse agency that included findings from over 75+ hours of interviews with over 200 scientists, engineers, supporters and experts inside and outside WHOI.

# INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHICS

## Who We Talked To

### External Audience Demographics:

#### ***Gender:***

- Male (18)
- Female (14)

#### ***Race:***

- White (28)
- Hispanic/Latino (2)
- Sri Lankan (1)
- Asian (1)

#### ***Generation:***

- Millennial (6)
- Generation X (12)
- Baby Boomer (12)
- Silent Generation (2)

#### ***Location:***

- New England (9)
- NY/NJ/PA (13)
- Other State (10)

### Internal Audience Demographics:

#### ***Gender:***

- Male (8)
- Female (5)

#### ***Years with WHOI:***

- 0 – 1 year (3)
- 2 – 5 years (4)
- 6 – 12 years (3)
- 13 – 30 years (3)

# INTERVIEW FINDINGS

## 1. What does the Institution do? What is most important to know about us?

### External Responses:

Various phrases from those who knew WHOI. Most only quoted one to three of these items.

- Explore the oceans
- Coastal impact
- Ocean science
- Marine research
- Sponsor expeditions
- Military research
- Shipwrecks, found the Titanic
- Educational projects (school children, groups, post-grad, fellowships)
- Protects the ocean and the environment around it
- Training center, can get degrees there
- Climate change, ocean acidity, testing the waters specifically in the Atlantic
- Builds underwater robots
- Conservation, cleaning up the ocean
- Scientific research institute that studies ocean life and how to protect it. Need to be super smart to be associated with it. Alvin, Titanic. Offers classes for kids. Reputable.

### Internal Responses:

- Leaders in ocean science
- Cutting edge research and engineering
- At the forefront of ocean science
- Global reach
- We go to the deepest parts of the ocean
- Ocean and human health (*focus on how it can affect policy change, be a catalyst for change*)
- Science we are doing can have a broad impact on environmental concerns
- Leader for more consistent verifiable data
- Collaboration, open science, working with other countries and organizations
- Synergy between engineering and science
- Largest oceanographic science center in the world (*engineering and science work in the same place, but others do this too*)
- We go anywhere and go to great lengths to understand the largest and least explored part of our planet (*do-ers*)
- Our oceans are under appreciated

# INTERVIEW FINDINGS

## 2. What name(s) are used, or do you use, for the Institution?

### External Responses:

#### Various phrases from those who knew WHOI.

- Just “Woods Hole” (4 people)
- Woods Hole Oceanographic “Institute” (7 people)
- Woods Hole Oceanographic (1 person)
- The Oceanographic Institute (1 person)
- WHOI (1 person)

#### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

“I don’t really talk about them in conversation. But, if I did, I would say... that place in Woods Hole.”

“I would say the full name because it gives them credibility.”

“I don’t say the word ‘Institute’... it’s just too long.”  
*(note: most say ‘institute’, not ‘institution’)*

### Internal Responses:

- Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
- Woods Hole Oceanographic
- Woods Hole
- The Oceanographic
- WHOI

#### STAFF QUOTES:

“Many people in the oceanography community know us as “WHOI” but outside people don’t know it.”

“WHOI is a horrible curse word in Russian.”

“Outsiders don’t use WHOI unless they are from the Cape.”

“People call it an Institute vs. an Institution. That doesn’t really bother me.”

“I hear people call us all sorts of things because they don’t know our name. They say, ‘are you a marine biology institute?’.”

“Some people say: Oh you are the MIT Center!”

“I think it would be great if we were known as ‘*THE* Oceanographic’.”

## 3. What name(s) are acceptable to you, or unacceptable?

### External Responses:

This specific question not asked of external audiences.

### Internal Responses:

#### *Acceptable Names:*

- Using the full name
- Woods Hole Oceanographic
- The Oceanographic
- WHOI

#### *Unacceptable:*

- Woods Hole
- Using “Institute”

### STAFF QUOTES:

“I don’t object to any of the names. They serve different purposes. Although, when people use ‘WHOI’ they are immediately confused. They can’t tell the difference between us and other groups with acronyms. There is no context.”

“My preference depends on the audience. WHOI works just fine when talking to people in our industry. To a lay person, I say the full name.”

“The full name is the best. Saying the full name makes it sound like a serious place. I never heard of the acronym WHOI before I worked here and I don’t think it’s the best version, nobody knows what it stands for.”

“Pronunciation of WHOI is problematic. We should spell it out first, then use the acronym after (in letters, content, etc.).”

## 4. How do you feel about using the acronym WHOI (as name or as a visual)?

### External Responses:

#### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

- “The acronym is weird. I wouldn’t recognize them if they used this on its own.”
- “Hoy? Who-a? How do you say it? I wouldn’t initially associate it but I would figure out.”
- “Yes, I like it.” (Says “Who-eye”)
- “I wouldn’t recognize it like I do NOAA or World Health (WHO).” (Says “Who-eye”)
- “Yes, I know it. And know its pronounced ‘WHO-EE’.”
- “If I didn’t have a context for it, I wouldn’t have a clue what it was.”
- “Wouldn’t know the acronym but would have been able to figure it out. Think World Health Org, I always see their acronym.”
- “The acronym doesn’t mean a thing to me because it hasn’t been promoted like ‘NASA’ was for so long.”
- “The acronym won’t dictate whether or not it’s a household name. Needs television coverage, social media, publishing the research, more publicity, etc.”
- “I don’t have any issue with them using it. But, I need their full name to understand what they do.”

### Internal Responses:

- Once people know us, they use WHOI (like insiders)
- WHOI is a great brand because when we use this once, then they know us. But it’s not understood externally without context or explanation.
- Would rather promote the acronym going forward than the full name
- If it had an image of the ocean, or some other visuals incorporated with it, it would be great

#### STAFF QUOTES:

- “I am open minded about using the acronym in the brand identity. I can see advantages and disadvantages. If we could create an analogous campaign like NASA (t-shirts) that would be great.”
- “I wouldn’t lead with WHOI alone. I think we need the full name someplace. But, if we could have both, that would be great. ”
- “I’m all for it being used visually. People are more used to seeing acronyms visually than just hearing it without seeing the letters. I’m all for acronyms, just don’t use them only as spoken word. Needs some context.”
- “Using WHOI will give us more flexibility to have sub-brands/tracks under it because it’s not so long.”

## 5. What visuals come to mind when you think of WHOI?

### External Responses:

- Underwater scene, water, ocean, deep water ocean, ocean waves
- Modern research vessel. Jacques Cousteau type ships. Research lab type ships
- Submarines
- Coastline, rising tides
- Marine life/sea creatures: Fish, shellfish, whales, sharks, dolphins, turtles
- The planet, globe
- Science and technology images
- Shells, seaweed, coral
- Hurricanes, volcanos, tsunami
- Map of Cape Cod and Falmouth; Woods Hole port where the ferry is. Divers at Wood's Hole. Older professors. Experienced notable brainy people (the best of the best).
- Beautiful photos
- Titanic
- 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
- Shades of blue and green

### Internal Responses:

- Sea water/ocean
- Ocean vehicles
- Research vessels
- Science and technology imagery
- Our original ship/sailboat

### STAFF QUOTES:

“I wouldn't want to see anything too specific as I'd think it would alienate various departments. No one symbol can represent every group.”

## 6. How do you feel about the current wordmark logo? (like/dislike?)

### External Responses:

Not applicable to external audiences. Did not ask.

### Internal Responses:

- I like it, it grew on me. I like the aspect ratio.
- I got annoyed when making shirts that I had to use the wordmark, not the seal
- It's very generic, the font can be improved
- 'Oceanographic' is the key term for emphasis—like the aspect ratio because of this
- Why even put the word "Institution"? Seems superfluous (can we abbreviate it or keep it small?)
- Feels more casual than the seal
- We use this to capture the human eye because it's easier to read, but we use the seal for more brand recognition

### STAFF QUOTES:

"I'm neutral about the wordmark. I'm fine with it, but it didn't jump out at me."

"I like the wordmark. To me, "Institution" is secondary. The emphasis is on the correct words being bigger. Font seems fairly modern. Not too devo/computer-like. MIT logo feels too techy for us. I like something in the middle like the current one."

"I like that the central word is "Oceanographic", which is the main point."

# INTERVIEW FINDINGS

## 7. Do you recognize the WHOI seals? What do they represent to you?

### External Responses:

#### Recognition:

- Of the 15 people who knew WHOI from our interviews, 10 of those people didn't recognize either seal. Those that didn't know WHOI also didn't know the seals.
- Of the five who recognized the seals, they recognized both seals from various experiences.

#### What the seals represent to them:

- Yacht Club, Sailing organization (18 people said this)  
All about the boat and not the ocean.
- Interaction with the ocean (in terms of travel on it)
- Something nautical
- Something to do with the ocean
- Long standing presence in Woods Hole as science institution
- Exploration, like the Mayflower or Columbus
- Old fashioned ship that explored things
- Maybe a union of fisherman or sailors
- Sunset cruise or a whale watch
- Reminiscent of government or military

### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

“The sailboat doesn't represent well. Looks like a sunset cruise or a whale watch.”

“The current seal just feels like a means of transportation. The original looks like rich people on their fancy ship (like a yacht club).”

“Surprised that the focus is on a surface vessel. It seems off to me based on what they do.”

“Looks like it's more to do with sailing than ocean research. The original version is more 'ocean specific' and looks like the institution is more established (more history) due to it's design.”

“Looks stuffy, like a yacht club.”

“I do think that the sailboats in each seal make me think that the institution has more to do with sailing than protecting the world's oceans.”

“Sailboat doesn't scream 'oceanographic research.’”

“Original version represents what I think of for WHOI. Current seal more of just a sailboat.”

“They don't give me the full picture of what they do. They feel more recreational.”

**Internal Responses:** Not applicable to internal audiences. Did not ask.

# INTERVIEW FINDINGS

## 8. Do you feel the seals represent WHOI well? And why?

### External Responses:

- No (23)
- Yes (6)
- Not Sure (3) people)

### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

“Mission is broader than what these seals represent.”

“No, they don’t. But, I understand that this was likely their original research ship.”

“Yeah, they do, but could be better. They are more than a ship...needs more ocean than sailing.”

“Yes, the original does because the ocean piece comes in, but the current seal is ‘blah, not focused’.”

“No, doesn’t represent science, tech, or research.”

“Nope. Not at all, it’s outdated.”

“I don’t know because I know them. But if I didn’t, I would question whether the seals reflect what they do with science, research, and education.”

“Yes, it’s visually clear that it’s the vast seas.”

“Both seals miss the mark. The original seal is a bit more representative of what they do, but neither of them really give me a sense of what they do.”

“I like the seals, but they don’t scream research, exploration, education.”

### Internal Responses:

- It’s not applicable today but you can’t offend any of the departments by using it. The ship is safe, but it’s not modern.
- No, but it’s hard to represent such a diverse group. The history is something we can all agree on.
- I associate it with WHOI only if the story is given as background
- I like the sailboat because it’s associated with the ocean
- Sailboat looks like a yacht club
- No, it’s an ode to the past, but it doesn’t represent the institution today

### STAFF QUOTES:

“Coming from my experience, I’m not sure either one works based on what is going on today. It has more to do with how it was founded vs. what we do today.”

“It’s dated in that we’ve grown bigger than this. But on the other hand that is the unique part of us.”

“The sailboat portrays our history and importance. I think the current seal represents us well and I take great pride in this seal. I really like it.”

## 9. Which seal do you prefer (original or current)? And why?

### External Responses:

- Original seal (22)
- Current seal (10)

### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

“I prefer the current seal because it’s cleaner, but it’s not representative of their mission.”

“Original. Design makes a statement. The current one looks just like a sailboat slapped in the middle.”

“I prefer the original seal because it has the ocean in it and is slightly more representative of the org.”

“Current seal, less going on. Looks more modern while the original seal looks more educational.”

“Original. Looks more official for a world-renowned organization.”

“At least the original seal reflects some history. Neither really does much.”

“Current: crisper and sleeker. Original: more nostalgic.”

“Original. It’s less modern in design, but speaks well to the age of the organization and suggests history and heritage, similar to the seals of many universities founded centuries ago.”

“Current seal looks incomplete. Original looks more official, like government seals.”

### Internal Responses:

- Original seal is still good (feels like MIT’s original seal), but I like the current seal
- Original seal is harder to read from a distance but has a place because it’s our first and more distinctive
- Removing the sailboat would bring push back internally, but to donors, they don’t care
- If we decide to choose one, choose the original seal because of the historical value
- Many asked prefer the current seal because it’s simpler and easier to read

### STAFF QUOTES:

“I strongly prefer the current seal. It’s more modern, easier to read and recognize.”

“I prefer the original seal because it’s more detailed and represents our history better.”

“I prefer the current one because it’s less busy and easier to read at a large scale. The original one might be confused with a museum or too complex.”

“I prefer the original seal since it’s more historical.”

“If the experts told me to revert to the original seal, I’d be open to hearing it and changing back to it.”

## 10. In today's world, is the seal relevant? Why?

### External Responses:

- No, not relevant (18)
- Yes, still relevant (9)
- Maybe, depends on context (5)

### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

"No. Unless you know that this is their original ship, it just looks like a nice sailing ship and has no recognizable connection to the organization."

"Yes. Looks official, authentic."

"Yes. There's probably a lot of places where having a seal might look better than just a wordmark."

"Not really. I think seals are more suited for government entities."

"Not sure it would draw you in if you don't know what it is. Depends on what they are trying to market."

"Neither of these seals are relevant in today's world. It's so old-fashioned and doesn't represent where they are going."

"No. Doesn't really speak to new generations."

"I have no familiarity with them so they don't hold any value to me."

"Original feels more thoughtful and historic. Neither feel very modern. Needs something more modern, cutting-edge, to show relevance at the highest level."

"I think it could be relevant, but it depends on what their goal is for the seal."

"It's not too relevant, but maybe more for branding/marketing purposes."

"Yes. People associate seals with distinguished institutions. People trust distinguished non-profits more when giving them money."

"Yes, I like the original. It's older so shows they're still viable after all these years. The current one needs something in it like waves or something."

"I don't think they need a seal to represent the organization. Won't do anything to make them stand out."

**Internal Responses:** This specific question not asked of internal staff.

## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

### 11. Do you feel there is historical value for keeping the seal?

#### External Responses:

- No, no historical value (9)
- Yes, keep for historical reasons (19)
- It depends (4)

#### EXTERNAL QUOTES:

“I’m sure they do have historical value for the institution. But historical value is different than brand recognition. Value is in the recording of them and keeping them, but if you are trying to change public perception of the institution, I wouldn’t want to see them use this everyday in their brand.”

“I like the history behind it. Shows respect and longevity, but needs to be contrasted with something modern. (we’ve been here for a while and are moving forward).”

“Yes, has historical value. But, I don’t know if people have a real connection to their history. If the message is about their historical relevance, then the seals work, but if the message is about the future, then no, they aren’t relevant.”

“A seal cannot convey multiple messages and the mission of the organization... maybe put them somewhere else. Detracts from the mission.”

“Depends on the use of the seal. Official stationery, fine. If these logos are used to attract more people and social media, NO. Need something else.”

“Yes. Seals convey something old, history, secret societies.”

“Maybe for people who are in WHOI, there’s value, but it doesn’t speak research. No clue that it’s a research vessel. It’s a way to pay homage to the past. I have been part of rebrands twice now with non-profit orgs and we did minor tweaks to theirs.”

“Nope. No historical value. Need something more forward thinking.”

“Sometimes historical information could mean a lot to a brand, but not necessarily to the audience.”

“Yes, absolutely. That’s why I like the older, original seal.”

“They still have historical relevance because it signifies how they started. They should be kept because it shows their history.”

**Internal Responses:** This specific question not asked of internal staff.

## 12. In your opinion, what should we do with the seals going forward?

**External Responses:** This specific question not asked of external audiences.

### Internal Responses:

- There is a sense of pride in working here, I wouldn't want to lose the seal(s)
- Keep one for historical purposes
- Use it on specific things
- Keep the original one for specific purposes
- Make a new logo to replace the seals but keep the original seal for specific purposes
- Create an icon that can exist on its own and in context to the text (*like World Wildlife Foundation*)
- We need to not mix and match the seals

### STAFF QUOTES:

"I totally recognize the need to be more consistent in our visual representation to the outside world. If having two (seals) is confusing, I'd be very open to adopting one or the other and having standards for how to use it. If we come up with a logo that is far superior than what we have I'd be all for it if the case is made."

"It's important to keep our history. I would be disappointed if we lost the historical value of our institution. Both should be kept in some fashion."

"I like having a seal. There is a lot of brand recognition in both of them. To the outside world they won't remember much except its circular and the ship. The current seal is more recognizable than the wordmark. I'd be comfortable retiring the original seal except for specific uses such as internal formal documents, etc. Ideally, I would like to see both being used with rules around them. Flexibility is good. Use what fits in best. Pay attention to the different audiences."

"Going back to my experience at my previous job, there was a whole guidebook about how and where to use the various logos. It was very strict, but it did serve a purpose to help us. So the concept of having both seals, with rules around how to use them, could work. The reason either of them works is the historical value. Creating a new one would be very difficult because it would be hard to represent all that we do at WHOI."

## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

### 13. What is your vision for the new brand identity? What would excite you?

**External Responses:** Not applicable to external audiences. Did not ask.

#### Internal Responses:

- Ocean, sea water, feeling of movement
- All the different colors of the ocean
- Modern, cutting edge, clean, easy to read
- THE Oceanographic (capitalize “the” to showcase it’s the most advanced place)
- An icon with the letters “WHOI” that can be used across many different spectrums
- Oceanographic imagery with the acronym
- More multi-colored (diversity & inclusion) identity
- Emphasize the global nature (*interconnectedness*)
- Want to be more recognized, like NASA
- We should consider using the acronym as the logo
- Icons that represent the different types of our work
- Have a style guide

#### STAFF QUOTES:

“Exciting would be to find a way where our long standing history is maintained, but also that modern oceanography is incorporated. If we could incorporate all those elements that would be great.”

“Needs to be more continuity. If we depart, it wouldn’t be in our best interests to stray too far from our current identity in terms of our name or anything “core”. However, I am not a stick in the mud and this conversation has made me see what the challenges are. We need to show our impact and do it in a modern way. Just don’t make it look like MIT, too techy.”

“WHOI should represent itself as an exploration-driven institution. It currently comes across as an academic institution or data collecting group mostly. Exploration gets people excited (like NASA).”

“The prospect of having a collection of marks that work in different circumstances (ships, equipment, shipping containers, digital media, merchandise, etc). A way to manage the system with this big unwieldy name.”

“Modern, adventure, sense of wonder, but we need to play well with other institutions. Just not too far down the modern path, keep it feeling stable.”

“Current brand is associated with older white people on the Cape by having a little boat as our logo paired with the perception of our little place on the Cape. Don’t want it to seem like a small operation anymore.”

## 14. If your organization were a car, what would it be and why?

### External Responses:

Not applicable to external audiences. Did not ask.

### Internal Responses:

- Mercedes: innovative, reliable, a little expensive
- Tesla (the future concept)
- Mercedes G550 fuel cell (represents the future)
- Autonomous driving cars (Artificial Intelligence)
- Model T with a Mercedes engine (what you see is not what you get)
- Jeep Wrangler: big tires that can get through anything, can get places other cars can't. It can explore and doesn't have trouble getting there.

# BRAND ATTRIBUTES

## 15. How do you want the new brand to feel?

### Brand Attributes:

#### Top Attributes

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- **Influential (6)**
- **Visionary (5)**
- **Prestigious (5)**
- **Leader (5)**
- **Adventurous (5)**
- **Worldly/Global (4)**
- Innovative (3)
- Trustworthy (3)
- Sense of Wonder (3)
- Modern (2)
- Cutting edge (2)
- Bold (2)
- Future-oriented (2)
- Communicative (2)
- Credible (2)
- Educational (2)
- Timeless (2)
- Authentic (2)

#### Others Selected

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- Hip/Cool
- Professional
- Inventive
- Vibrant/Vivid
- Graphic
- Sophisticated
- Expansive
- Clear
- Capable
- Active
- Fluid
- Simple
- Analytical
- Meaningful

### Brands we admire:

- SpaceX
- Blue Origin
- OceanX
- NASA
- VOSS water
- Svedka Vodka
- National Geographic
- Scripps Institution of Oceanography
- Apple (*the way they adapt and continue to evolve*)
- Patagonia (*expedition type companies*)
- Beauty Counter (*appreciate what they stand for*)
- Arc'teryx
- Yeti
- Redwing
- IFL Science
- Wired Magazine
- Nautilus
- Netflix

### STAFF QUOTES:

“The history shouldn’t go away, but the new brand should feel “new” and reflect the new science, technology that is happening here.”

“It should feel like it’s an outside-of-the-box place.”

“Lively, cutting-edge science. Exploration. Discovery.”

“Not too flashy. (we are still 90 years old) Keep it prestigious and don’t lose the history.”

## What We Heard

### 1. What does the Institution do? What is most important to know about us?

Externally, of those who knew WHOI, most didn't know the depth and breadth of what WHOI does. They had a very limited understanding beyond knowing it has "something to do with the ocean". To generate more awareness globally, educating the public through PR/marketing, media, and campaigns could ultimately help WHOI's funding initiatives. Internally, the "synergy between science and engineering" was voiced most often. However, it is also known that this is not necessarily a unique differentiator. It is one of several differentiators that need to be promoted.

### 2. What name(s) are used, or do you use, for the Institution?

Both internally and externally, there are several variations of the name being used, depending on the audience. Most of the shortened versions are a result of people not wanting to say the full name because it's long. This is to be expected, and not necessarily an issue, as the use of nicknames, acronyms, or shortened versions of long names is commonplace in conversation. The issue lies more in a lack of awareness of the Institution vs. not saying the full name. Externally, most people used the word 'Institute' vs. 'Institution' and feel it's fairly interchangeable. The acronym 'WHOI' is generally unknown externally and rarely pronounced correctly. Internally, 'WHOI' is used extensively.

### 3. What name(s) are acceptable to you, or unacceptable?

We heard that the most acceptable version is the full name, for credibility and awareness purposes. The word 'Oceanographic' was tagged as the most important word in the name because it gives context. Internally, the use of the acronym 'WHOI' is widely accepted.

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY & TAKEAWAYS

### **4. How do you feel about using the acronym WHOI (as name or as a visual)?**

We heard, both internally and externally, that if the acronym ‘WHOI’ were used more regularly (or formally) in language or as a visual, that it should be used in context to the full name in some way so that people know what it stands for. Externally, people don’t know the acronym now, but say they would begin to recognize it over time if promoted.

### **5. What visuals come to mind when you think of WHOI?**

The most common visual stated among both internal and external audiences was the ocean/sea water. Beyond that, the answers were more varied and specific. The challenge, which was discussed in many of the interviews, was that there is no one image, besides the common denominator of the ocean, that could represent everything that WHOI does.

### **6. How do you feel about the current wordmark logo? (like/dislike?)**

Internally, many people are neutral about the wordmark logo. They don’t love it, or hate it. Many prefer the seals over the wordmark, because they find those more visually interesting, but they understand the reason behind its existence (readability, name recognition, etc). Most commented that they liked the word “Oceanographic” being the focal point of the wordmark. Some say they aren’t happy when they need to use the wordmark instead of the seals on materials. Our takeaway is that they feel it’s somewhat boring.

### **7. Do you recognize the WHOI seals? What do they represent to you?**

Externally, 2/3 of the those who knew of WHOI did not know the seals. The overwhelming response from all external interviewees was that the seals look like they represent a yacht club or sailing organization of some kind. Other responses were varied and mostly unrelated to ocean research. None knew the sailboat was the original research vessel.

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY & TAKEAWAYS

### **8. Do you feel the seals represent WHOI well? And why?**

Externally, about 75% of people did not feel the seals represent WHOI well because they don't symbolize what WHOI does and three people weren't sure. The small group who did feel the seals represent WHOI well stated it was because they either knew the seals (and liked them) or that the sailboat represented being on the ocean to them. Our general takeaway is that most external audiences aren't seeing a good connection between the seals and the Institution.

Internally, most are so used to seeing the seals, they just accept them as they are. When asked if they represent WHOI well, most are saying no because what they do is broader than what these seals show. However, most feel comfortable with them (or really like them) because they are neutral and don't offend any one department and focuses on the history vs. specific areas of work.

### **9. Which seal do you prefer (original or current)? And why?**

Externally, while most people didn't feel either seal represented WHOI well, when asked if they had to choose one, about 2/3 of people preferred the original seal. Reasons were varied for this choice, but most liked the detail it displayed because it gave more context to the ocean, and because it felt more stately, historical, or official. Those that preferred the current seal stated it was cleaner, easier to read the name, and more modern.

Internally, there is a great divide among those who prefer the original or current seal. People have strong opinions on this topic. Those that preferred the original seal stated its historical value and official 'look and feel' as the number one reason. For those that preferred the current seal the majority gave the same reasons as the external audiences, but most also recognized the historical nature of the original seal. *continued on the next page...*

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY & TAKEAWAYS

Our interpretation is that the main reason for their choice is based on their own experiences using the seals and what they want to accomplish with either one. For those that prefer the original seal, they want to showcase the longevity and history of WHOI. For those that prefer the current seal it's often because they want the name to read clearly from a distance, their application requires a simpler design, or they feel it's more modern, so they have become fond of that version.

### **10. In today's world, is the seal relevant? Why?**

This question was only asked of external audiences. This was split down the middle, approximately, when you combine those who said the seal was relevant with those that thought it would depend on how it was used. Those that said it wasn't relevant in today's world were mainly focused on the fact that the sailboat doesn't represent what WHOI does today or that the seals felt 'old-fashioned' and not modern enough to take the organization into the future as their main mark. This is congruent to many of those who thought the seals were relevant because they represent the history of the Institution and felt 'established' or 'official'. Our interpretation is that the synergy here is all about the context of how the seal is used. None of those asked felt like it should be the only mark to represent the Institution.

### **11. Do you feel there is historical value for keeping the seal?**

This question was only asked of external audiences. When combining the people who said 'no, there is no historical value' with those who said 'it depends on how it is used', there was about a 55/45 percent split in favor of keeping a seal for historical purposes. Our takeaway is that many people (in both categories) felt that the seals had relevance

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY & TAKEAWAYS

mainly as a recording of WHOI's history. But, beyond that, it was about how the seal was going to be used that determined its relevance. Most felt the seals do not represent the future and therefore should be used in specific ways, when you need to convey the history/longevity of the Institution.

### **12. In your opinion, what should we do with the seals going forward?**

This question was only asked of internal audiences. While there is a divide on which seal the staff prefers, most said they wanted to keep a seal (or both) because it represents WHOI's history and they think it is recognizable in the outside world (which we determined in our external interviews is not true). At the same time, most also recognized the need for consistency, as well as using the seal(s) for specific purposes, and spoke about having rules around how and when to use one or both of them. Most hold one of the seals dear, is a source of pride for them, and don't want to lose them. Some were open to moving forward with one seal only and some thought it would be ok to keep both for different uses. Many also recognized the need for something more modern in the brand to complement the seal(s). Our takeaway is that as long as we don't eliminate the seal(s) entirely, and make a case for what we are doing with it/them, that the people we interviewed would be open to a new approach.

### **13. What is your vision for the new brand identity? What would excite you?**

This question was only asked of internal audiences. Responses to this question were varied. However, a common theme we heard was that there is a desire not to stray too far from WHOI's roots and history, but that adopting continuity and a bit more of a modern approach to the identity would be welcomed. People want WHOI to be known in the world and recognize some things need to change to alter external perceptions.

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY & TAKEAWAYS

### **14. If your organization were a car, what would it be and why?**

Internal audiences who were asked this question mostly came back with more ‘future-oriented’ cars as their choice. They mentioned innovation, the future, and artificial intelligence. The other angle discussed was ‘exploration’ or cars that could go anywhere, or do anything. These car types align well with the brand attributes most widely selected (see next question) by staff. This begins to set a consistent tone for the ‘feel’ of the new brand identity.

### **15. How do you want the new brand to feel?**

This question was only asked of internal audiences. Much to our surprise, and delight, there was quite a bit of synergy, and consistency, among the responses around the top brand attributes. The top six attributes were each selected by 1/3rd of the participants and the remaining word choices were fairly close companions to the top six words. Our interpretation of the brand attributes is that there were two main ‘themes’ that came out of the exercise:

- **Theme 1 — Future-oriented:** being forward-looking, visionary, modern, cutting-edge, innovative, adventurous, bold, vibrant, expansive, inventive, hip/cool, and active.
- **Theme 2 — Prestigious:** being a leader, influential, worldly/global, authentic, credible, educational, meaningful, timeless, capable, professional, and sophisticated.

These two themes will inform and inspire the overall look and feel for the new visual identity for WHOI.

# BOATHOUSE RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS

## What We Learned From Boathouse Research

### Target Audiences for the New Brand

“While the ocean is important to everyone our primary targets for WHOI are **high net worth prospects** and the **engaged public.**” ~Boathouse

Since the main goal of the rebranding initiative is to increase awareness of WHOI globally and therefore generate more support and funding for the Institution, the new visual identity needs to, first and foremost, speak to and attract these two audiences. (Of course, while maintaining a sense of pride and professionalism for the WHOI staff)

### What These Audiences Care About

Our audiences care most that WHOI:

- takes action and is a catalyst for change
- is the voice for change regarding our ocean and planet
- showcases their collective impact on our ocean and planet
- encourages an emotional connection around its mission
- is the backbone of environmental causes related to our ocean
- leads the way in protection and conservation of our ocean and planet
- delivers new knowledge, in service of society, to both the general public and the new generation of scientists

These insights are critical to the brand development work as the new visual identity needs to embody these values and bring them to life. To change perceptions externally, we need to offer a more impactful story, both visually and verbally.

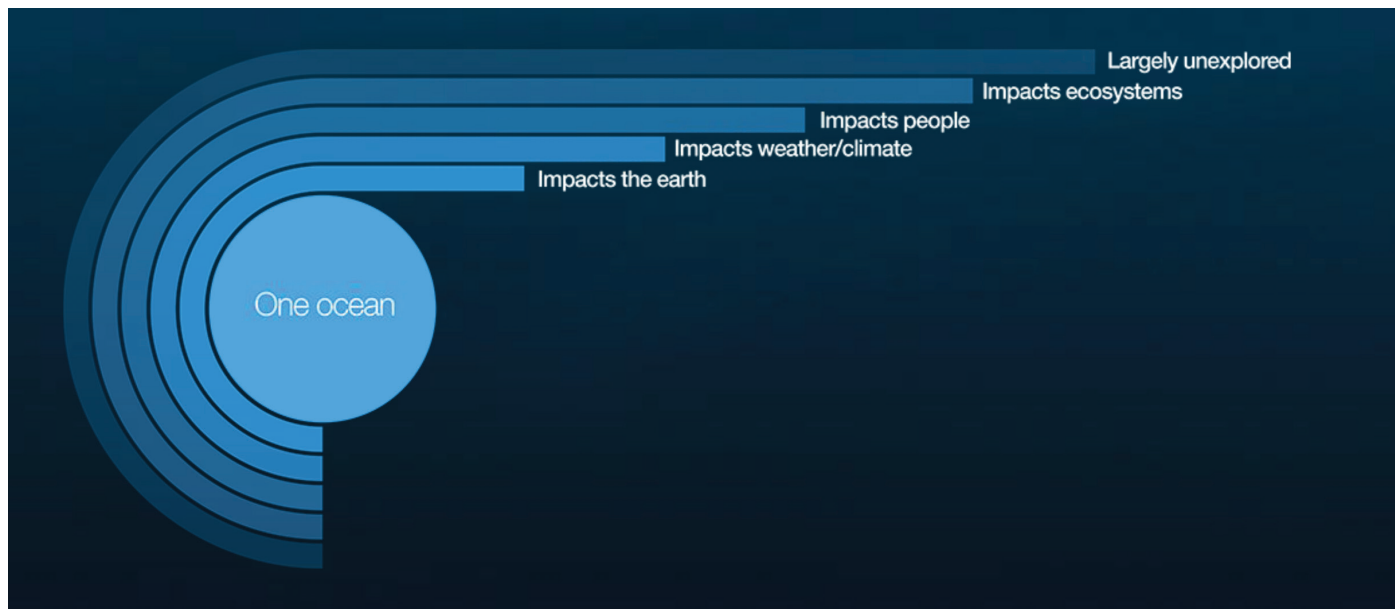
# BOATHOUSE RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS

## Transformational Change

There is a movement, within this brand development work, to shift WHOI's public-facing focus from science-based academic research to an issue-based impact agenda. Our learnings through our external interviews, as well as our own knowledge of the mission, support this movement.

The new visual brand identity should exhibit, and promote, this transformational change so that everything WHOI produces for public consumption is aligned with the target audiences' needs.

Since the likelihood of donors' funds going to lesser scientific/more media friendly brands is higher (more relevant) than WHOI, we must use this as a catalyst for change within the brand. Creating a more modern, impactful, bold brand will help to change perceptions and put WHOI back in forefront of donors' minds.



# BRAND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS

## How We Recommend Moving Forward

### The Wordmark

The new wordmark for Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution will be the primary mark for the organization in the new brand. The wordmark will be designed as a responsive system that is flexible for different applications and spaces. This logo system will be the foundational element for the brand.

### The Acronym 'WHOI'

Since the acronym 'WHOI' has been in existence for decades in internal language, and there is an interest in using it visually among many internal employees, we recommend introducing the acronym into the new responsive logo system. This version would not be the primary logo, but rather a part of the overall system. The WHOI acronym logo will have clear guidelines around its use, including the need to live within context of the full Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution name. This is important to building brand recognition among external audiences.

*Examples of specific uses for the acronym may include:*

(all examples would be in context to the full name)

- website on mobile devices (or after scrolling)
- merchandise
- small spaces

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# BRAND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS

## The Seals

Based on what we heard from both internal and external audiences, we recommend keeping one of the seals for historical reference purposes. Internally, there is a divide between the original and current seal, and externally the majority of people advocated for the original seal. We recommend reverting back to the original seal as the official version based on these findings. Visually, the original seal looks more ‘established’ which gives it more historical relevance than the current, more modern seal. This seal would not be the primary logo for WHOI, but rather a secondary mark to be used in certain applications with guidelines around its use.

*Examples of specific uses for this seal may include:*

- diplomas
- executive stationery
- special edition items/merchandise
- formal event invitations
- applications where the history (story of WHOI’s past) is conveyed



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# BRAND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS

## **The Overall Brand Identity**

We will use the information we learned in our interviews, as well as the research from the Boathouse agency, to inspire our visual identity work and the ultimate solution. Our approach will maintain the look of a credible, professional organization, yet with a fresh, modern attitude that reflects the impact of WHOI's mission on our ocean and our planet. Our work will be rooted in our findings with the goal of activating and enlivening the brand and increasing awareness outside the organization.

The top six brand attributes (and their companion words) selected by WHOI staff are bold, inspiring, and confident. Verbally, they put a stake in the ground and are joyfully aligned with the new messaging narratives. Now, we need to create an identity that brings these attributes and story lines to life.

Through systems, storytelling imagery, bold graphical treatments, and a refreshed set of brand elements we will develop the foundation for the brand going forward.

Once the foundational elements are in place, what needs to be done to activate all communications throughout the Institution, and externally, to align with this new identity? How do we approach the launch? What pieces need to be created or redesigned? What messaging needs to be developed to align with the established narratives? What stories need to be told to engage new audiences?

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# BRAND IDENTITY RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Brand Standards**

The goal with the development of new brand standards is to create a system of elements that are both consistently utilized throughout the WHOI scientific community yet is also flexible enough for the external marketing initiatives of the Institution. The brand needs to stay fresh and relevant to the outside world and therefore to be too rigid would be self-defeating.

We agree with the creation of an internal brand guidelines website for WHOI employees to access. This site could include the basic brand elements and guidelines to reference and download, such as logos, typefaces, colors, the seal, and example applications.

Included in these standards would also be a system that allows the various sub-brands within WHOI to better identify themselves within the parent brand.

Marquis will develop a separate brand guidebook for those in the marketing/graphics department that includes the above information, but also the flexible full brand identity system for external applications.

## NEXT STEPS

- WHOI evaluation of the recommendations within this report and either suggest refinements or approve to move forward.
- Marquis works toward first visual presentation that includes the wordmark, its responsive system, and the usage of the historical seal in context to various applications.
  - Typography styling will be introduced (in context)
  - Color palette will be introduced (as suggestions to be refined)
  - Additional brand elements may be introduced, such as icons, patterns, imagery style, as part of the larger visual library
  - Mood board(s) to showcase the image and spirit of WHOI and how it will inform the brand identity