

How to 'Reframe' Nebraska (as Well as Every Company and Community in the State)



Economic developers will tell you the truth: a state or a community is a 'product' just like the products that beckon shoppers from the shelves at a grocery store. Shoppers' choices are slightly influenced by features and ingredients—logical considerations, yes. But everyone knows that imagery and packaging are what really matter. Emotion, first impressions and psychological associations 'drive the bus.'

That brings us to Nebraska, the 'product' that is 'purchased' by any college graduate who decides to stay in the state as well as the companies that must hire "high skill" talent after relocating. These firms are the 'grocery shoppers' entering the store...

This is when 'reframing' is crucial. Reframing is the key to helping us learn to communicate with ourselves and others. On a personal level, it's how we choose to put meaning on events. On a broader level, it's one of the most effective communication tools available. Think of selling. The person who sets the frame, the person who defines the turf, is the person with the most influence. Think of the political debates that dominate the media. The candidate who wins is the one who reframes a policy or economic trend in a way that helps voters feel or act differently.

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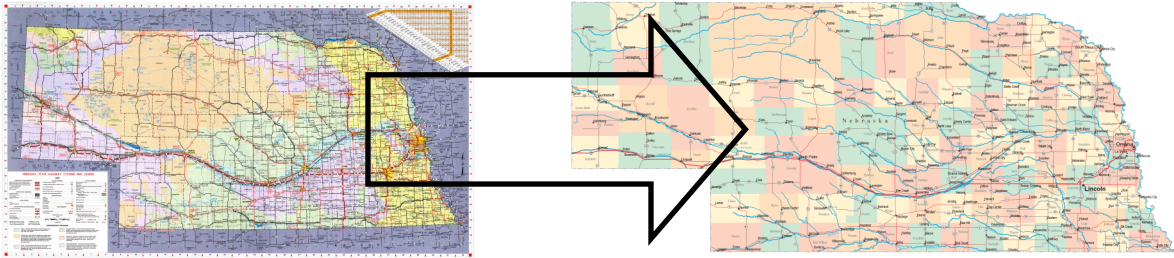
One of the greatest examples of reframing was the way PepsiCo beat Coke 20 years ago. Coca Cola was always the preeminent cola drink. Its history and standing in the marketplace were unchallenged. There was nothing Pepsi could do to beat Coke on its own turf. If you're up against a classic, you can't say, "We're more of a classic than they are." People won't believe it.

Instead, Pepsi turned the game upside down. It reframed the perceptions people already had. Pepsi started talking about the 'Pepsi Generation.' They said, "Sure, the other guys have been king, but let's look at today. Do you want yesterday's product or do you want today's?" In essence, they turned their weakness into a strength.

This is a classic example of reframing because the whole issue was over image. It was simply a matter of whose 'frame' would stick in people's brains.

The state of Nebraska needs to reframe how it thinks about itself and make enough changes to make the reframe real and persuasive. The young folks who are leaving think of the state and the companies in it as too conservative. They want to step outside the box, to lead digital innovation projects for companies that are determined to think like start-ups even though they may be 10 or 20 years old. They want 'NEW.' Newness could stop brain drain and intrigue employers from outside Nebraska.

How to 'Reframe' Nebraska as Newly Attractive to High-Skill, High-Demand Talent



A new Nebraska would include businesspeople who think in a 'boundaryless' fashion. By minimizing the boundaries from the map on the left, we illustrate the symbolic openness that is key to becoming more creative, more open to new ideas, more permeable to bold innovations. That is how the state will attract more people.

Reframing is everything for Nebraska. Fortunately, the youth who insist on newness make it easy to redefine the core idea: "new." By simply inserting a new letter, W, in the first syllable of the state's name, a new phrase is born that empowers every mayor, Chamber executive, economic developer, business owner, investor, talent recruiter, workforce strategist and PR specialist:

"Newbraska!"

Instead of competing against another state brand, we first have to compete against a brand that is even more dominant. Ourselves. We may have to discard the perceptual baggage that has kept us from moving forward with new business ideas, more venture capital and more respect for experimentation, research, prototyping and strategic alliances. Creativity is at the heart of this reframing because new projects, new leaders, new processes and new attitudes depend upon a new mindset. That new mindset must be shared and rewarded to kickstart momentum for NEW.

Becoming more new is a learning and unlearning process. Standard business models must be reexamined. People, process and perceptions must be reexamined. This is a matter of **training and coaching**. Virtually every established company in the state must consider what it means to become more attractive to high-skill talent. It begins with intense training in culture ("higher purpose"), leadership, digital transformation, change and several more topics. Alliances and coalitions must be formed. Boundary spanners must be cultivated and challenged to step outside tradition.

The reality and the perception surrounding Newbraska are more important than many realize. Iowa, a primary competitor for people and jobs, has recently created an alliance with Accenture, an international consulting firm, to develop a digital innovation hub known as "The Forge." It will generate huge publicity for the state and attract many potential employers. The concept of Newbraska could be critical to the state's long term competitiveness. ***Newness is now!***