

THE REBRAND REVOLUTION

Co-Authored By
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Mike Ermitage +
Ryan Begley

In this article, we discuss Roadrunner's entire rebrand and its positive impact on its business and customers as part of the company's comprehensive, ongoing transformation efforts.

While driving her Tesla, Nathalie de Champlain pointed her finger toward the 53-foot trailer emblazoned with Roadrunner's new logo as it traveled down Highway 95 in South Florida. Her breath caught in her throat, only able to excitedly say a few words as commentary, she asked her friend to grab her phone and film the truck she was pointing at.

In a hurry, her friend captured a blurry video as they passed.

After months of idea generation, storyboards, image maps, executive feedback, and more, she finally saw her vision rolling in live action.

When Roadrunner hit its lowpoint, its brand communicated cheap, low-quality service, financial uncertainty, and untrustworthy leadership. Saddled with multiple low-performing acquisitions, a financial scandal, and industry-wide scrutiny, the carrier needed a brand renewal.

Enter Nathalie de Champlain with her L'Oréal credentials and big outside-the-industry ideas.

How does a new CMO rebuild a brand with a Net Promoter Score of 0 (a measure of how likely customers are to refer new business to you – negative numbers mean they won't recommend you; they'll tell their peers to run away)?

“Be Bold. Be Different. Be Transparent,”

said de Champlain.

While the organization undertook massive changes to its operations, technology, sales, and more, de Champlain constructed the plan to communicate to the shipping world that Roadrunner had been born anew. Supported by Chairman of the Board and CEO, Chris Jamroz who hired her and gave her full creative freedom, she felt emboldened and empowered.

“We didn't run away from our name or our past,” said de Champlain “Roadrunner spent many years as a respected and quality carrier. It was only recently that prior management put the company in a negative position. We embraced our roots. We kept the name. And we brought back the bird.”





The Roadrunner bird, not to be confused with the Warner Bros. wily escape artist although both have nimbly evaded disaster, served as the company's logo and de facto mascot for many years. de Champlain's team revitalized the idea with a bold new orange-and-black "R" with bird-like qualities.

"The deep black, flame orange, and white tones that we chose to use in personifying the new Roadrunner are truly unique and distinct in the industry and serve to reinforce our bold commitment to breaking from the past and advancing rapidly toward the future."

Those colors, resembling the real bird, were a direct relation with our desire to be both transparent in our communications and true to our deep roots.

Rebranding, of course, is more than a logo change and color choices. A lot of heavy lifting needs to happen when a major rebranding initiative is undertaken. The work itself is painstakingly arduous and the team leading the effort needs to be clearly aligned behind the objectives at hand and possess a comprehensive understanding of the company's evolution relative to its customers and other external stakeholders.

Fostering a supportive and collaborative team environment to accomplish the effort is critical to success and to be effective, the rebrand ethos must permeate the entire organization.

de Champlain worked with Nigel Beechey, a brilliant artistic director from the UK to design the Roadrunner brand and app logos. He was succeeded by Austin, Texas-based Ryan Begley as in-house Creative Director.

OLD LOGO



NEW LOGO



BUILDING A TEAM

When de Champlain first walked the floor of Roadrunner's Downers Grove, Ill. headquarters, she saw a lot of empty seats.

"It was like going to the cabinet to grab the ingredients for a recipe and finding it bare," de Champlain said.

"We had to build our team from scratch."

She focused on building a team of multi-skilled marketers, rather than specialists, knowing that the projects the team was about to undertake would touch a wide swath of marketing objectives. Branding. Lead Generation. Customer Service. Content. Nurture Campaigns. Furthermore, the team would need to select and prepare the supporting systems to capture the data critical to any successful marketing endeavors.

de Champlain tagged Mike Ermitage as the VP of Marketing and Communication to be the leader and author of the left-brained marketing strategy. A skilled and experienced data marketer, Ermitage infused a sense of order and organization to the team, burying himself in the nuance of content generation, analytical examination of the market, and omni-channel campaigns.

On the creative right, de Champlain brought on Ryan Begley. Begley expertly combines sexy creative work with brand discipline. His work tells a visual story.

"To get rebranding right, we knew we would need to fully commit to supporting one another, be highly flexible, and have the courage to try some new things. Ours was a new team that hadn't worked together very long when we started the effort," says de Champlain.

"The fact that we each came to the table with new thinking based on our distinct experiences at different companies in various industries and an eagerness to apply our knowledge and best practices was key to driving a successful process."

From the start, with a diligence and viewpoint through both an internal and external lens, the team knew that job #1 was going to be all about creating and nurturing a culture where transparency was valued above all else. Based on what had transpired at the company in the past, open communication and trust would need to be squarely built into the foundation of everything the company did moving ahead. This, of course, would require working closely with a number of peers across the company.

When an organization is transforming itself, employees and customers alike can sense authenticity intuitively. In today's sophisticated marketing, sales, and customer service environment, reshaping stakeholder opinion about a company through a rebrand requires far more than fancy marketing materials and refreshed tag lines.



Mastering Digital Transformations and Strategic Communication

Mike Ermitage stood in front of Roadrunner's eye-catching orange and black booth display, with company-branded swag carefully arranged on a tabletop and a brand video looping on a mounted tv display behind him. The busy thoroughfare of the Freightwaves Future of Freight event in Chattanooga, Tennessee, marked the first convention space for Roadrunner's renewed brand. In a show filled with logistics veterans, many of whom use the show to launch businesses after lengthy careers at logistics stalwarts, Ermitage wondered if anyone would recognize Roadrunner.

He smoothed out his black-and-orange Roadrunner polo and waited.

"The rebrand had to reflect what we call 'change with intent,'" explains Ermitage. "Without an overarching, big-picture architecture, we would have never been able to effectively engage everyone across the entire company, infiltrate every level of operations, and achieve the meaningful change we needed."

Of course, shifting internal culture is just part of the equation and it needs to happen alongside efforts specific to reinvigorating the external-facing brand as well. When successful, the final manifestation of these parallel and interconnected efforts is a new, modern, and compelling way of expressing the values of the company.

A Comprehensive Approach

de Champlain's jumpy car [video clip](#) of the passing trailer complete with her shouts of excitement graced the boardroom television set as part of a larger brand video. The customer in the room smiled, sharing in de Champlain's joy, and with a nod, commented, "We've seen the rebrand. It looks fantastic. We've noticed improvement everywhere else too."

"In order to achieve wide-scale engagement with our new brand, we had to efficiently be everywhere," said Ermitage, while tossing a Roadrunner-branded baseball from hand to hand. "We asked ourselves, how do we do that, how do we break through all the noise out there and change perceptions of this company that have existed for a very long time? To start answering that question, I looked at the data."

Through internal and external interviews, reviewing historical customer data, and analyzing website and ad traffic, the new Roadrunner marketing team learned who the primary decision makers were and how they consumed information.

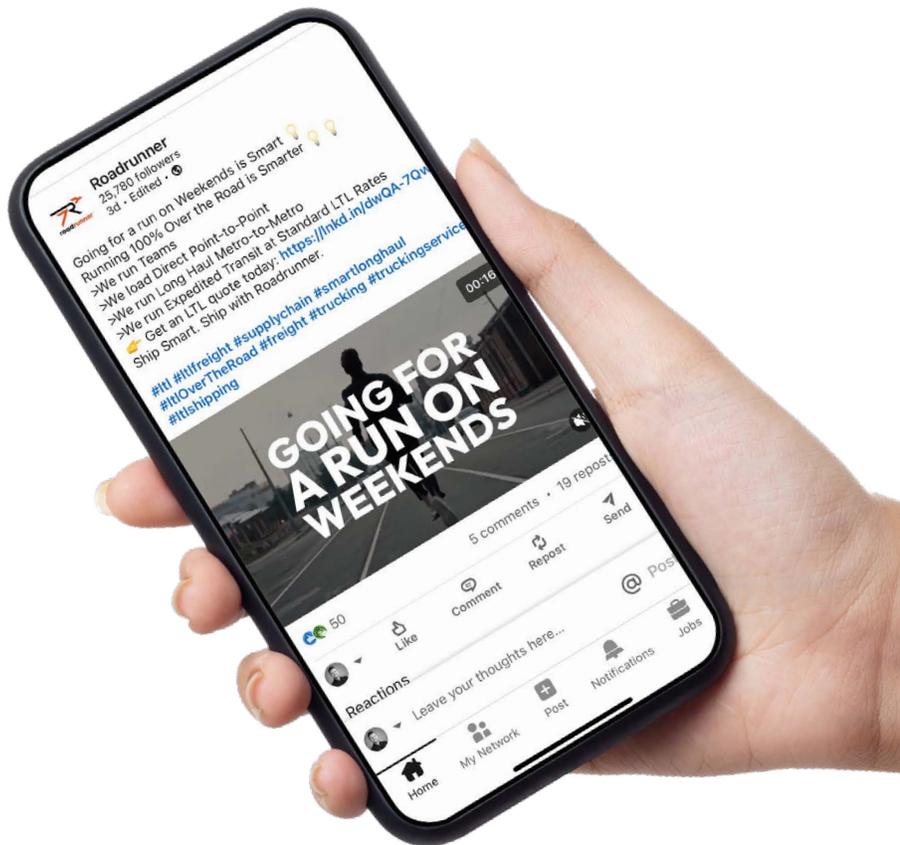
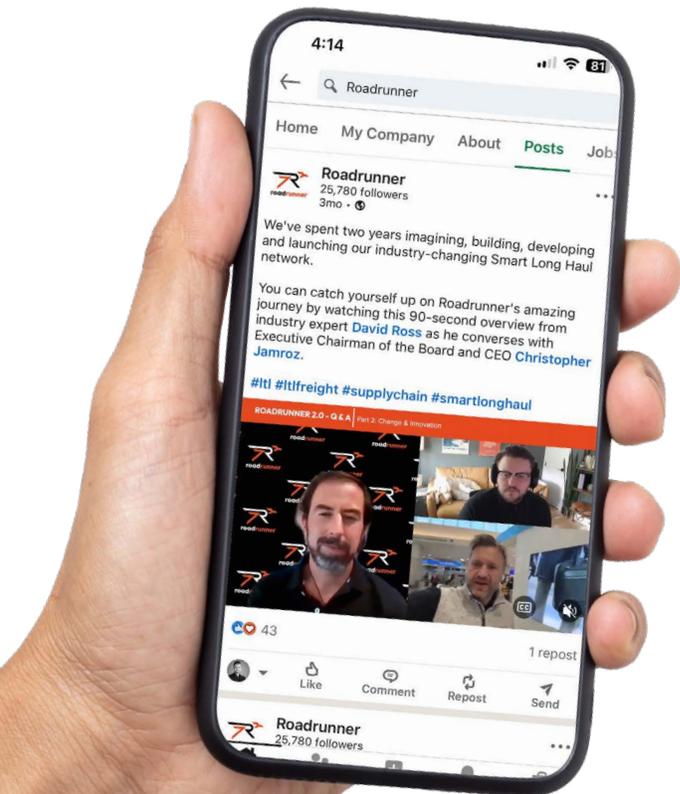
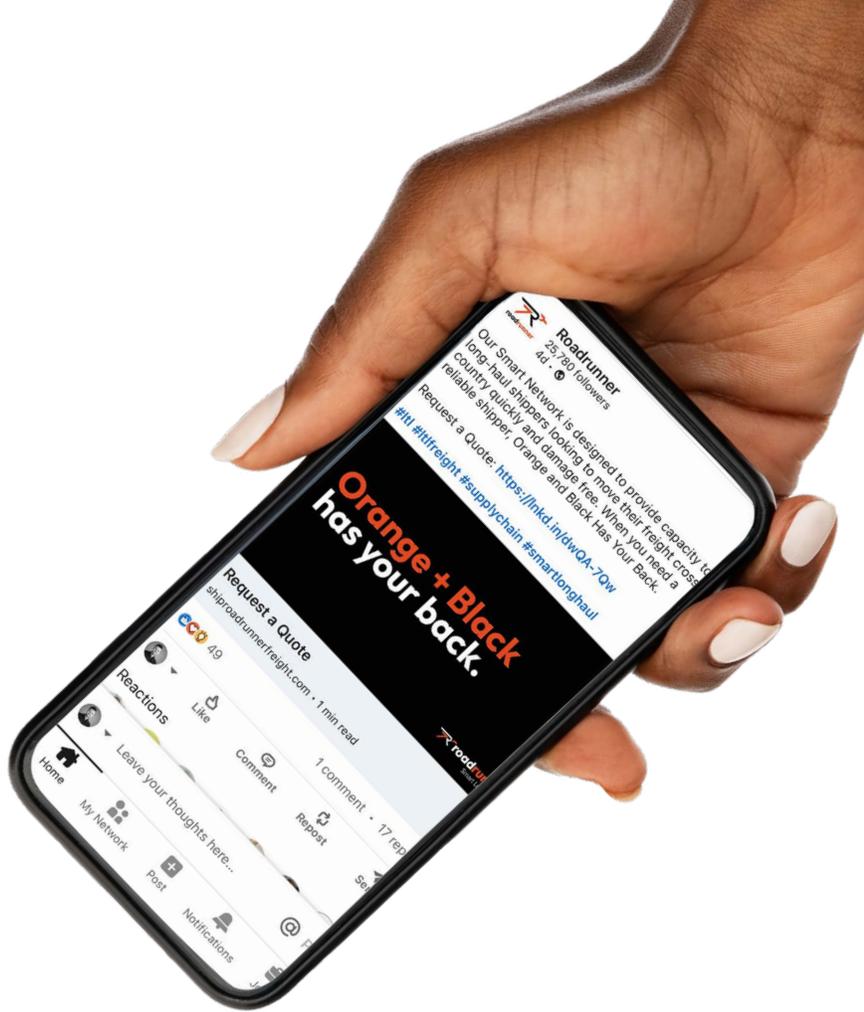
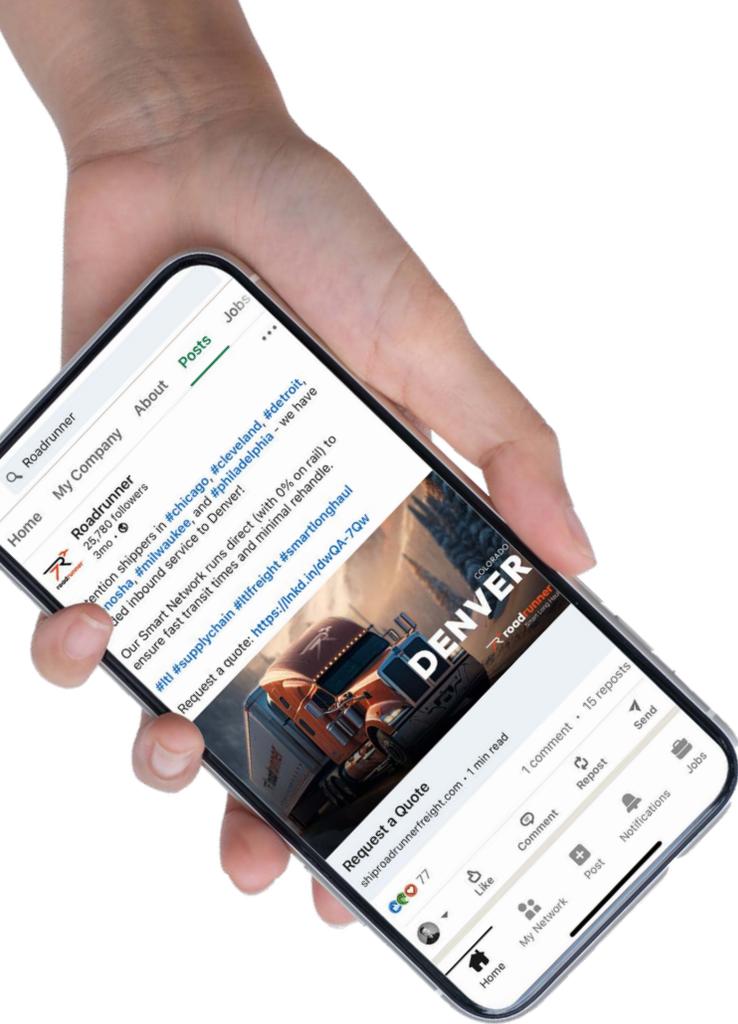
And from that, they built a plan to reach logistics managers, 3PL sales floor employees, and LTL specialists and procurement decision makers at large corporations. The team focused too on internal communications including newsletters, company-wide meetings, and terminal display monitors.

"When asked how to reach people who makes freight decisions, ?" Ermitage responded, "We sought out logistics media and sponsored conferences, built up our LinkedIn presence, cleaned our own data and built a database of new targets, hosted events, held contests, updated our website, and we used ad serving tools on major search engines to give us visibility."

Simultaneously, the team brainstormed an initial campaign, a hook to reel in curious shippers to the brand. After months of sitting in meetings with internal stakeholders at Roadrunner, listening and learning about the step-by-step data-fueled reconstruction of the business, the tagline came to de Champlain. *Smart Long Haul.*

"It's a simple explanation of what we are," explained de Champlain. "Roadrunner recruited the brightest minds from both inside the logistics industry and outside of it to rebuild this company. The network that our customers access is the result of that brain power – it's Smart Long Haul. Everything we do, we do with intelligence."

Smart Long Haul proved to be the perfect personification of what Roadrunner was just starting to become— a new breed of LTL carrier run by smart and dedicated people and featuring an optimized metro-to-metro network focused on fast, transparent, damage-free service. With the need for, and emphasis on, advanced logistics solutions growing and logistics departments at companies continuing to expand along with that need, the prospect of being able to partner with a truly "smart" long haul provider had the potential to be a highly appealing proposition for customers and a marketing advantage for Roadrunner in the market.



A Never-Ending Journey

Ryan Begley laid out the tri-fold brochure on his desk. A sneaky smile crossed his face. After hours of design work, photo sessions, research, and layout, he had created the first new Roadrunner brochure in years. And it was good.

With a stark new brand identity and tagline in tow, Ryan Begley took the concepts and pushed logistics creative marketing to places it had not been. Begley's eye-catching creatives communicated the brand proposition in every possible form. It adorned conference backdrops, appeared on email and web headers, was visible through ad placements all over the web, stood out proudly on 53-foot trailers, and popped off the page on transit maps.

"Brand consistency is paramount," said Begley from his home office in Austin, Texas. "We don't let a creative go to market if it doesn't grab you by the collar and demand that you look. It's bold and aggressive. We have a lot of good ideas that we have to let go. They have to fit. We want to be recognized immediately by our style."

Arming the Roadrunner sales team with the ideal tools and resources to be able to engage and/or re-engage with customers has also been a critical component of Roadrunner's efforts. Historically, this had not occurred at the company and was determined to be a contributor to past operational and reputational issues. In the new world of Smart Long Haul at Roadrunner, however, the team is working together with the sales and customer service teams to enable their success.

Efforts here have included reconfiguration of the customer database for accuracy and strategic outreach to those the company has not touched in years, as well as new players in the industry. Leveraging the new branding on social media increased Roadrunner's LinkedIn following by more than 30% last year and is keeping customers and prospects well informed of industry developments, the company's evolving capabilities, and highly relevant customer success stories that also serve to better familiarize them with Roadrunner's talented and experienced team.



A Work in Progress but Already Working Well

As the team shifts from implementing marketing best practices to becoming industry-leading marketers, it is encouraged by how embedded it's work has already become across the organization and the significance of its impact both internally and externally.

From sales and marketing to customer service and from the company's independent drivers to cross-dock personnel... the marketing team's hard work is paying dividends.

Well trained in their disciplines, armed with the right tools and resources, and more prepared than ever before to work collaboratively and effectively to deliver for customers. The Roadrunner team is running smarter than ever before.



Left to Right: Sharissa Kretsinger, Virginia Narramore, Justin Meyers, Mike Ermitage, Nathalie de Champlain, Ryan Begley, Allie Murphy, Soldie Miranda

Creativity As an Engine for Growth

Performance-based measures like improved transit times and on-time, damage-free deliveries are on the uptick. Sales and customer service teams continue to receive a tremendous amount of positive feedback. And the marketing team has seen steady interest from different divisions across the internal organization which are increasingly seeking partnerships to help grow their areas of the overall business.

While it took somewhat of a backseat initially, Roadrunner's operations leadership saw this as an underlying strategic objective of the rebranding effort from the start— to position the marketing team as a creative force for change and a critical resource for all areas of the business to achieve greater success.

“Our marketing team sees itself as more than a department in a company,” said de Champlain. “We can and want to be everywhere. We're on the docks.

We're in the trucks. We're inside the board room. Our work reveals opportunities that we didn't know were there.”

On the trade show floor, waiting patiently to interact with the logistics community, Ermitage is approached by a small group of smiling show attendees. A gray-templed man with a firm-gripped handshake looks up at the brand video jumping from one beautiful, branded image to the next, like a music video, and says,

“I've seen your brand out there. It's amazing! You have come so far.”

Ermitage smiles and accepts the compliment but before he can respond, he is tapped on the shoulder.

A tall woman in a crisp polo, skirt, and short heels, agrees, “yes, the brand looks great! I've seen it all around.”

Soon, Ermitage is speaking to a gaggle of industry veterans, all sharing stories of their past experiences with Roadrunner and how thrilled they are to see the brand renewed. The stack of brochures thins and then disappears while the swag items fly off the shelves. In the board room, de Champlain shares a laugh with the customers about her DIY marketing video. She can sense that they share her excitement for the new brand. The laughter dies down and the questions become more pointed about Roadrunner's recent improvements, and de Champlain is ready with answers. The client in agreement.

“Can't wait to see what Roadrunner does next,” says a woman leader in the room.

“Neither can we,” said de Champlain.



Nathalie de Champlain

Chief Marketing Officer +
Senior Business Advisor
to the Executive Chairman

Nathalie's expertise in brand management and business organization talents have proven to be an asset to the organization. Nathalie has made tremendous contributions to the re-branding of the Roadrunner that we see today.

Nathalie previously served as Global Senior VP, responsible for branding, marketing, and communications for over 35 M&A transactions. She has a decade of experience in acquisitions, integrations, and executing synergies for numerous companies. Nathalie spent time as an executive with the L'Oréal Group and has a solid track record of successful brand launches. Nathalie is an avid squash player and competes in tournaments.



Mike Ermitage

Vice President of Marketing

Mike focuses on marketing efforts that highlight Roadrunner's strengths in the LTL shipping space. Mike is excited to be part of building the "new" Roadrunner and spreading the word about all the great changes Roadrunner has made to be one of the top LTL companies in the U.S. He enjoys the "go-getter" attitudes of his fellow employees and working together to make ideas become a reality.

Prior to Roadrunner, Mike spent over 10 years at Hilco Global, marketing more than 20 operating companies that specialize in asset valuation, advisory, monetization, and disposition of assets. Mike received his Bachelor's degree from Purdue University and an MBA in Marketing Management and E-Business from DePaul. Mike is an avid Cubs fan and enjoys coaching his daughters' soccer teams.



Ryan Begley

Creative Director

Ryan oversees the brand strategy of the company. His focus is on creating a cohesive visual identity through creative assets highlighting Roadrunner as one of the top LTL carriers in the US. He brings an innovative and unique approach to the brand design.

Ryan previously served as Principal, Design and Creative Services at Levy Dykema. During his tenure, he oversaw branding, marketing, and architectural design, having received awards for his work in residential and commercial architecture. He has a strong background in brand video and photography with his work appearing in prominent publications such as Dwell Magazine. Ryan possesses a natural talent for bringing a brand's visual identity to life using digital and print media. Ryan enjoys spending quality time in Austin, Texas with his wife, Jill, and their dog, Lola Rey, when they're not immersing themselves in new cultural experiences.



“As our company rebuilt and reestablished itself, starting in 2020, through a more efficient network, faster transit times, and added technology to improve visibility and operational fluidity, we’ve become an innovative LTL platform delivering quality service. For Roadrunner to receive this industry recognition is a true honor.”

Nathalie de Champlain