

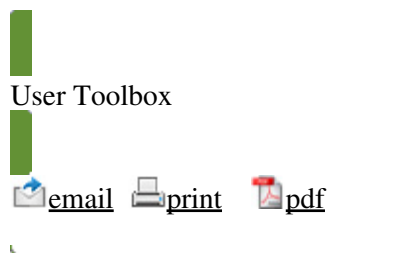
## Rebranding isn't About Changing Your Message

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**Budweiser** is no longer the King of Beers—at least temporarily.

Starting May 23<sup>rd</sup> right through the November presidential elections, it will be rebranded as America's beer.

That's right. **Anheuser-Busch InBev**, who owns Budweiser, the country's largest selling non-light beer, is redesigning its 12-oz. bottles and cans. Where once the popular and ubiquitous brand name "Budweiser" was writ large across the can now will read "America".

And not to deprive Bud beer guzzlers of an even greater patriotic buzz, the new design substitutes "US" where it would normally read AB (for Anheuser-Busch), and "King of Beers" for the time being becomes the more lofty and nationalistic **"E Pluribus Unum"**.

How ironic, since America's King of Beers is now owned by a Belgium company. But, hey, this is 2016. Who cares!

Make no mistake, however, despite all this jingoism, the Bud bottle or can you'll be drinking from will still contain the same watery-thin, innocuously flavored, headache-inducing swill it's always been.

But the entire marketing ploy dovetails nicely into this entire election cycle.



For the first time ever, the **Republican** and **Democratic** parties are stuck with two very unpopular presidential front-runners with strong unfavorable ratings?within their own parties, no less.

Hence, party establishment types are beside themselves as to how to rebrand, or remake these candidates to be more acceptable to the electorate come November.

What they need to keep in mind, however, is that **rebranding at its heart is not about changing a candidate's message; it's about changing their mindsets, their behavior, how they do business over the long haul.** Or in Budweiser's case, changing the formula it uses to make its beer.

It's about getting people to trust them, not because of what they say, but because of what they do over time. Fact is a brand screams out **TRUST ME!** And a good brand *always* fulfills that pledge.

As a branding professional, my take is that solid brand creation, whether it's an organization, political party or personality is far less about marketing, advertising and public relations, and far more about quality leadership and staff, accountable and ethical behavior (imagine that!), and the willingness, ability and commitment of he, she or it to live up to whatever they say.

But the key ingredient, or course, is trust. Trust is the rock-solid foundation of any good brand. And for political parties, trusted brand loyalty means a great deal.

?Party ID is still the best predictor of how people will vote,? says **Joe Rothstein**, editor of **EINNEWS** and long-time Democratic strategist and consultant. ?Exit polls and most other indicators show that roughly 90 percent or so of registered Republicans will say they plan to vote or voted for the Republican candidate. The number is slightly less for Democrats, more like 85 percent, with few exceptions,? he adds.

The problem for both parties, however, is the surge in voters who identify not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Independents.

Even if they tend to ?lean? Republican or Democratic on the issues, at least 4 in 10 Americans identify as politically independent, according to a recent **Gallop poll**. Only 3 in 10 identify as Democrats and the other 3 in 10 identify as Republicans, which the Gallup polling organization calls a ?near historical low? for both major parties.

Why is this happening?

Some would argue that communication technologies and social media have dissipated the power of the parties. Others say that **Millenials** just aren't committed to the party system the way their parents were.

But with **Congressional job approval ratings** in the low teens there's just no denying that the American public simply doesn't trust its politicians to do right by them.



And when trust is lost, it's hard to reclaim.

If the Rs & Ds haven't learned that lesson this election cycle, it's hard to believe they ever will, and all their rebranding efforts will be the equivalent of bad beer in a newly designed bottle.

Yep, this Bud's for you!

Larry Checco

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