Elizabeth McCarty – background in marketing/branding/product & software. Has marketed WorldCon & regional cons
Sara Felix – Designer/artist. Has worked on a number of conventions, but background in marketing.

Marketing/advertising/branding are similar but not exactly the same.
Marketing – need to develop a relationship with audience (members or people you want to be members). Unified way that people can form an attachment to. Community/belonging in fandom.

Good branding = emotional connection & loyalty, then word of mouth spreads.

If you do something well and have a great/popular convention, it will not stay that way w/o progress/change. If you change too dramatically, you alter who you are to the people who are already attending (don't leave the members you already have).

We want to talk about how to avoid pitfalls. Assumption is that you have a regional convention that you want to promote or a long-running convention that has dropped in attendance. Refresh the message. Will use WorldCon as an example, but focused on smaller conventions.

Brand Failures
- Position Amnesia – Forgetting who you are (e.g. New Coke)
- Deception – Lie about what you are. If you have problems or do not follow your own code of conduct. You will appear to be lying (e.g. VW emissions)
- Icarus Paradox – If you've done something successfully, and never change it. Don't get new members. Don't change look or feel at all, and people age out or find it boring. Kellog's did a roll-out in India, with the same marketing as in USA.
- Lack of Change – Similar to Icarus paradox. (e.g. Nokia)
- Paranoia – Knee-jerk change of everything in fear of failure. (Often 1-2 people in a committee, and others expect it to fail, but don't successfully shut them down). Also, knee-jerk avoidance of mistakes others have made. Or, hear that someone had a hard time with something at your con, and you try to avoid it.

You can change the way you present the things at your convention in a new way, but also tied to the past.

Overall Convention Branding
- Why are we here?
- What do we do and why do we do it?
- What makes us different?
- Who are we here for?
- What do we value most?
- What is our personality?

Fandom is similar, but… Your convention may be more playful, more literary, more anime.
Good example: joco cruise (jococruise.com). They answer all these questions in a bullet list on their front page. Very clean. Everything fits their theme. All very clear.

Conventions

- Branding: think of everything that touches people outside: logo, social media presence, pre-con communication, fan tables, flyers, website. At con: badges, signage, publications. Whatever your message is, should remain consistent across all platforms. If you have a recognizable logo, people will feel comfortable, related. Maintain the relationship. If you change your branding, you will lose audience unless you connect the two themes.
- Social Media: interaction with a brand is a triangle. Person interacting with your brand is hitting 1 touch point. The social media connections will color your reputation. Manage consistency. You don't want someone to google your convention, and see bad stuff on twitter.
- Logos: A lot of times you start with the logo. Sarah explains evolution of the Dublin logo. Shows how it is now able to be used in parts in different areas of the convention. You can manipulate the images without losing the consistency.
- Perception: Boskone does an amazing job every year honoring the artist guest of honor by using that person's art on all their materials. Their font remains the same, but the art changes. There is a relationship between the convention & relationship. Artist has a stake in showing up, bringing their art, running panels. They will speak well of you in other venues. Now Boskone has a great reputation for having great art.
  It doesn't look the same every year, but the continuity is the artists. It's in emails, social media. It's a way of sticking with your niche. It goes to a sense of community, integrates artists. Boskone has also done books of artist's work.
- Tone: Cohesiveness (eg. Emerald City Comic Con). When you load their site tIthe space girl is their loading screen. You know at a glance where it is, when it is. It's playful. The tones fit together. The Seattle background matches tonally with the background.
  You can have a more somber/serious tone, if that fits your convention.
  If you're going to change your tone. It used to be a relaxacon that evolved into something more…
  If you do have a problem with your branding and you want to change it, changing tonally is fine, but don't need to reinvent the wheel. Start with your logo, or something that you like, and work from there, instead of panicked change. People may not recognize you unless you're great at social media (which most of us are not). Change tone slowly but surely. Conventions may have a different logo every year (e.g. different armadillo every year). We have that with WorldCon, as well. Branding WorldCon is very different because of the different committees, etc. This is why some people don't recognize WorldCon.
  FenCon – header stays the same every year, but has a different overlay every year.

Q&A / Comments

- Can we get a digital copy of the presentation? Yes.
- Boskone issues. Has been around for a lot of years. Ups & downs. Changes in tone. Right now it's 1 of 3 major conventions. Balanced between regional convention & small/serious convention. Not as literary as it used to be. Full of older people, but not as many as there used to be. 1-2 people have been pushing the change. One thing we do well, that our audience likes (and the convention): the art (not just the art show, but also programming, exhibit of older art). Also, really good programming. 70% of attendees are in a program item at any one time. We do not have a green room, because we want our program

participants to mingle with the membership. But some people in the organization want to go back to the old ways. Or copy other conventions.

- Word of mouth is one of the best marketing methods. Look who is reaching people on social media, invite those people (e.g. John Scalzi). Have all of your touchpoints be consistent. Don't bait & switch people.
- Another example: Gallifrey. Beautiful website. Sells out every year. Would be worried about stagnation. But the name tells you what it is. Everything that touches the outside world is a consistent theme unless you want people to get confused. Understand how many points of contact there are. The people in organizations need to be taught that there is one voice of the convention. You don't want people going off brand. If you want outreach to another group. That should be planned, (e.g. "BobCon" is for Furries/Gamers/Anime on separate flyers).
- Survey of 250-300 people: why do you come to Boskone? #1 answer: referred by a friend. Keeping your current people happy is critical. You can go beyond that, but don't turn off your existing membership.
- If a convention decides they need to broaden their scope to attract more people, you need to provide what you are promising. Don't bait & switch. You have to buy in to what you are promoting. If your team isn't on board, you will have a problem. Create a unified vision that continues to satisfy the existing audience.
- Boskone: transition from featured filker to featured YA author.
- Honoring where you've been, but moving forward. There is a convention I'd like to go to. They are small, localized, & snobby. It comes across on their website. It makes people feel unwelcome. This is not just ineffective, but the opposite of what is attractive about fandom.
- Consistent and deliberate voice on social media.
  Dog-piling. People can take your brand down by repeating rumors online.