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Eldorado Stone:
Evolution
of a **Brand**

StudioConover is a cross-discipline design studio specializing
in Integrated Brand Strategies, and Product and Architectural
Consultation for the Built Environment.

Capabilities include:

Brand and Product Consultation

Integrated Branding Strategies

Packaging and Collateral Design

Corporate Identity

Online Design

Taglines and Naming

Architectural Color and Materials Specification



The Crafting of a Successful Building Product Brand

In 1995, StudioConover had been producing marketing campaigns for StoneCraft, then a successful Eldorado Stone franchise in Southern California. StudioConover was instrumental in helping StoneCraft achieve the product believability that was soon to become Eldorado's brand promise. Because StudioConover is a cross-discipline firm that also specializes in exterior architectural consultation and materials specification, they worked closely with StoneCraft to produce more realistically-shaped, colored, textured and blended stone profiles that would be specified for the developments StudioConover was working on. This duality of expertise – knowing what makes a good building product and how to market it accordingly – made StudioConover the logical choice to help Eldorado Stone build its brand nationally.

In 1999, Graham Partners, a private equity firm located in Philadelphia, orchestrated the formation of a platform business with enough capital to consolidate 13 independent Eldorado franchises. Eldorado Stone had to be transformed into a single entity and the plan was to formally present the new brand at the 2000 NAHB International Builders Show.

A Diamond in the Rough

In 1969 John Bennett founded Eldorado Stone, a manufacturer of a nascent siding product in the building materials marketplace. Eldorado's initial focus was to develop a national base of stonemaking franchises that would buy their molds of natural stone to produce a cementitious architectural stone.

Eldorado's franchises grew rapidly in the latter half of the '90s because they were able to produce a product that was less expensive than natural stone while utilizing their proprietary process to produce a stone veneer that was more realistic than similar products from the past.

At that time, StoneCraft, Eldorado's franchise in Southern California, grew exponentially, far surpassing the revenue Eldorado generated from its mold manufacturing business. And, in 2000, Mike Lewis and Parker Mahnke, owners of StoneCraft, proposed a new strategy for the Eldorado Stone brand that would require a dramatic change.



“Based on the tremendous success we experienced with the StoneCraft, I understood the potential for the product on a much larger scale,” Lewis states. “It was apparent that we needed additional capital, and partners with operational and marketing expertise to help Eldorado grow from a loosely organized group of franchises into an international brand.”



“The website heeds the needs of its audience with an uncomplicated, understated interface that’s an easy-to-use alternative to leafing through product brochures. It never upstages the content and incorporates a simple navigation, a clear information hierarchy, beautiful movement, a consistent voice and a usability factor that sets it apart from most (if not all) building product sites on the Web.”

—Communication Arts Magazine

The brand launch of 2000 involved the strategy and implementation of a unified website. Utilizing Adobe’s Flash framework allowed Eldorado’s product line and installations to be presented more attractively than the competition which tended to look and feel too technical and unimaginative. It was important to project Eldorado Stone as an aspirational brand that would influence a wide scope of influencers in the A&D marketplace — the Architects, Masons, Builders, Developers, Designers and Colorists who wanted to see beautiful installations and a coherent product presentation.

2010 AVERAGE MONTHLY WEBSITE TRAFFIC

UNIQUE VISITS	61,600
BROCHURE REQUESTS	1,300
DISTRIBUTOR SEARCHES	13,875

Google Analytics

The Brand Promise, The Value Proposition and The Corporate Tagline



Until the building boom of the late '80s, manufactured stone veneer — a relatively obscure niche siding product — had been ridiculed and considered a poor and shoddy imitation of natural stone. After StoneCraft’s colorization and mold reformulation success (with the help of StudioConover) specifiers were becoming increasingly confident that manufactured stone could appear real. Now — and especially since Eldorado Stone had just become a national brand — a tagline that championed their newly launched corporation was needed. Instead of the usual platitudes proclaimed by the competition, (“largest manufacturer”, “leader”), Eldorado felt it important to state their point of differentiation; the differentiation now embraced by the A&D community.

Building national awareness with an Advertising Campaign that began with an undeniably small budget

The advertising for the 13 individual Eldorado franchises (prior to the consolidation) varied in sophistication from nonexistent to yellow page ads to local city magazines. Basically, each Eldorado Stone franchise fended for themselves often crossing paths with other franchises while trying to establish their own turf. This created brand confusion and necessitated promotion of the individual franchise rather than Eldorado's products. But in 1999, with the launch of the nationwide Eldorado brand quickly approaching, a concerted national advertising campaign was necessary to capitalize on the momentum the product niche (manufactured stone) was experiencing. And, Eldorado needed to increase their own newfound consolidated brand awareness. Market research indicated a growth rate of 17 percent per year for manufactured stone compared to the 3 percent growth estimated for the then \$7 billion US siding market. Being seen in important trade publications was a marketing imperative.

The challenge was, however, leveraging a miniscule ad campaign budget across many important publications so the brand would be seen multiple times. StudioConover's experience and research knew which publications specifiers of building products read. Accordingly, the first four years of Eldorado's ad campaign employed an astute insertion cadence with clever positioning to increase the probability of awareness. In other words, full page and double page spreads inserted in a greater number of magazines fewer times. This "spread-the-wealth" mindset created the appearance of being in many magazines all the time. The strategy generated thousands of direct responses; a remarkable amount of leads for a new product.



Maximizing exposure with a miniscule first year budget was a challenge for the new Eldorado Stone.

ACTIONS TAKEN	MORE FAVORABLE OPINION	GATHER MORE INFORMATION	VISIT ADVERTISER'S WEBSITE	VISIT STORE, DEALER, OTHER LOCATION	SAVE AD FOR FUTURE REFERENCE	RECOMMEND PRODUCT	CONSIDER PURCHASING PRODUCT	PURCHASE THE PRODUCT
Advertiser (EStone)	31%	43%	31%	9%	28%	8%	20%	3%
Issue Average	18%	18%	20%	7%	15%	6%	15%	2%
Category Average	19%	21%	22%	8%	18%	6%	16%	2%

Note: "Actions Taken" defined as respondents who took, or plan to take, action after recall of specific ads; i.e. Ask a distributor about the product, or view the advertised program / movie.

VISTA Print Effectiveness Rating Survey measured reader involvement, advertising effectiveness and editorial readership for the September 2010 issue of Architectural Digest.

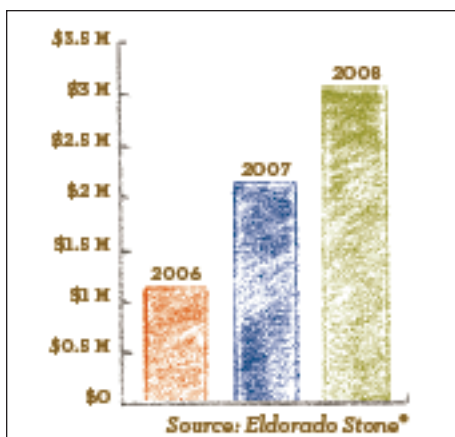
StudioConover's Product Consultation is Cash Money

The Irvine Community Development Company hired StudioConover to develop a series of three stone blends that represented the characteristics of Tuscan-inspired stone-built structures. The real *pièce de résistance* was the grout technique specified after close study of old-world applications. This grout, often slathered on with seemingly reckless abandon, was the model for the newly built Southern California structures.

When introduced, the custom profile's sales totaled in excess of \$1M+. Cypress Ridge then became a nationwide profile and sales increased 86%. Today, Eldorado's old-world profiles and grout techniques continue to be a popular specification.



StudioConover devised and coined the "overgrout" technique.



Eldorado Brands Everything

The customer-facing promotional brochure, the distributor display, the ordinary shipping container (generally thought to be unimportant and not worth being adorned) everything that any potential customer could see anywhere, was branded to look appealing.



The Allure of Permanence

With the help of StudioConover, Eldorado Stone foresaw the day when awareness of their brand and products in the Architecture and Design market would peak and traditional, continued response would flatline. Though robust, steady and consistent interest from the A&D community remains, market research revealed an expanding consumer interest in stone veneer. Encouraged by this response, Eldorado Stone embarked on an ambitious plan to produce a 160 page hardbound book that would appeal to end-users. *The Allure of Permanence*, intended to be a promotional vehicle for Eldorado, is not conspicuously promotional. Consequently, the book could be sold, the expenses could be recouped and Eldorado's brand awareness continues to increase.

A Tradeshow Design that Started a (R)evolution

In 1997, StoneCraft, then an Eldorado franchise, purchased a 20' x 20' tradeshow booth space. Previous attendance at building shows recognized how poorly other siding companies presented their products; most were merely laminate walls with framed pictures. StudioConover conceptualized a booth that mimicked the interior and exterior elevations with installed Eldorado Stone.

A trend was born. Today, rare is the manufactured stone company that doesn't present its product without the accompanying architectural element. Eldorado Stone, however, was the first.



ABOVE: The well-respected and effective Eldorado tradeshow booths began as a simple yet obvious strategy. **BELOW:** The School of Rock Binder produced for Distributors and Dealers helped transmit Eldorado's brand promise throughout this import channel.

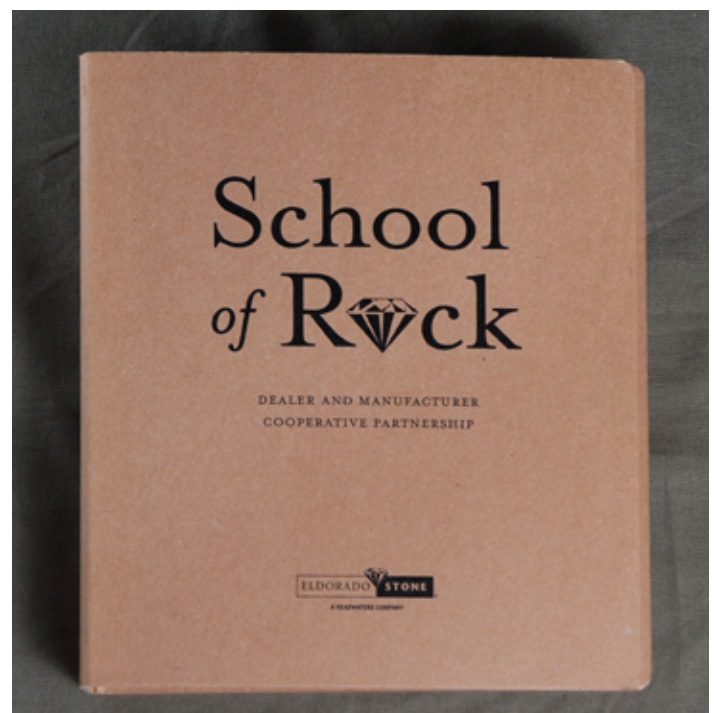
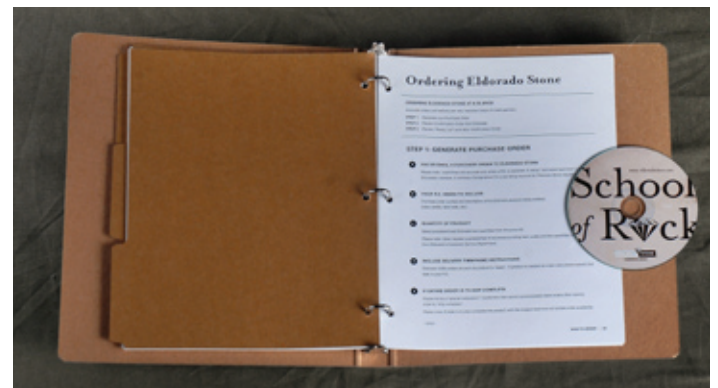
Manzanita CLIFFSTONE


A Product Naming Convention that Makes Sense for every Specification

Before the consolidation of Eldorado, product identification varied, often cryptically with both numbers and names that may have made sense to the internal shipping department but confused the specifier. StudioConover devised a simple, but effective naming convention that's effective for all involved. Color is always presented first and the profile is second. This creates an effective norm for everyone who deals with specifications.

The Distributors and Dealers are Customers too

Often, the first face-to-face contact with a building product is at the Distributor/Dealer stage of the buying process. At this level, educating employees so they deliver a faithful and dynamic brand promise is fundamentally important. StudioConover helped produce a program that included FAQs, Product Details, Technical Details, Color Recommendations and critical Ordering guidelines.





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