



Setting the Spirit in Motion

Helios' track record of successful brand assessments, including the Olympic brand, led the International Paralympic Committee to our doorstep in mid-2005. The objective was clear: repositioning the Paralympics in a manner that would identify and align their core values with the dreams and aspirations of a larger mass audience, as well as generating long-term support and appreciation for Paralympic sport.

A program of qualitative stakeholder interviews was employed using the Helios Brand Model. The methodology assessed the Paralympic Games from every conceivable angle and across numerous variables. Through our research, we gained a clear understanding of the Paralympics relative to other major sports and humanitarian organizations, and extracted a set of core values that would inform future communications campaigns that targeted mainstream audiences. We identified the primary barriers to success from the perspective of athletes, officials and sponsors. And we established the foundations for future sponsorship platforms which, when marketed correctly, would position the IPC to increase its share of sponsorship revenue.

As both a sports property and the vanguard of a social movement, the Paralympic Games are unique. Among our most important findings was an understanding that the IPC must find that fine line between a sports-oriented marketing property and a cause-related interest group. Ultimately, it continues to become an organization that fully honors the considerable athletic capabilities of its participants while preserving the messages implicit in the social contributions of sport for people with disabilities.

It was an inspiring assignment for all of us. To a certain extent, all sports properties have a story to tell, and that story very often transcends the boundaries of the playing field, tapping into values and emotions that are part of our spirit and soul. In the case of the Paralympic Games, those stories are in the forefront of our perceptual field throughout the competition. Unlike any sports experience, the "spirit" of the athletes is predominant in their pursuit of excellence, but like all great athletes, they are there to win.

For Helios, the small part we played in helping current and future athletes gain access to those stories of inspiration was itself a "win" that we'll never forget.

