

BRAND DEVELOPMENT FOR SUCCESS





INTRODUCTION

In today's market, a consistent brand can make or break a business. Even with a top-notch product or service, you can still find yourselves slipping behind the competition if your brand falls short. **BUT DON'T FRET!** With the right outlook and knowledge, you can create a brand that will captivate your customers and create a story that will secure them for years to come—and here are the first steps.

YES, CREATING A CONSISTENT BRAND IS IMPORTANT!

Branding your small business involves projecting a strong, consistent image throughout every aspect of your marketing efforts, from traditional to online mediums. A consistent brand will maximize your brand presence, enabling potential customers to fully understand the value you provide them. This is all done by projecting what makes you... You! Branding involves projecting your business' unique personality and ensuring that the message of what your business and values are all about is clear.

Unfortunately, as online marketing becomes more and more crucial, many small businesses have fallen off the wagon when it comes to marketing best practices, or they didn't create a clear strategy before launching their online presence. Part of branding includes optimizing your Web presence to ensure that you are consistent across your various Web properties. This way, no matter where someone finds your business online, they are left with a compelling, lasting impression.

If your business has been in operation for some time, it's inevitable that you will experience periods of growth and development. During this time, the 'brand' transforms into one of your most important assets as it becomes associated with your products and services. While the quality and pricing of a brand's products and services are critical to its success, many companies arguably rely more on strong branding and customer loyalty to keep profits flowing.

With competitors in each industry, companies must strive to differentiate themselves from one another and promote their products and services in a way that successfully connects with customers. Businesses also have to generate awareness and maintain a good reputation to keep their brands strong, which goes far beyond simple distinctions such as the brand name, logo, or package design.

In an increasingly globalized world, protecting your brand's value is not always simple. To succeed, you must understand how to protect your brand equity, both legally and competitively.



CHAPTER

There are two parts to every brand:



A VISUAL IDENTITY AND YOUR BUSINESS PROMISE.



1. Visual identity encompasses all the visual elements of your brand – logo, fonts, colors, images, and taglines – that make your business recognizable.



2. Business promise is what you guarantee to consistently deliver to your clients. It also refers to the value of the company.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF MAINTAINING BRAND CONSISTENCY?

A consistent online brand helps your customers clearly differentiate you from the competition, since a brand signals a level of quality that grows as your brand becomes more recognized. A brand also establishes the personality of your business, attracting ideal clients. If you associate your brand with high standards such as trust and quality, clients and prospects will associate your brand image—logo, colors, and message—with that value emotionally.

This inevitably increases customer trust, loyalty, and familiarity. A strong, focused brand consistently projected across all of your Web properties makes your business more credible and desirable.

HOW DO YOU CREATE BRAND CONSISTENCY?



1. Start with your company name. This sounds logical, but many businesses become too attached to a name before evaluating it. Focus groups and surveys are key in determining if your business' name truly evokes to emotion you hoped it would.

2. Grab a domain name consistent with your business name. If you can't get a domain that matches your business name exactly with no hyphens or other special characters, brainstorm for a different one that works for your business. Just make sure that what you pick is easy to say and spell and is intuitive.



3. Claim your business' name on social media. Most social media sites allow you to personalize the web address for your profile. Try to use the same one on each social site to assure customers that there is no doubt that the profile belongs to your business. This will also come in handy when promoting social media on your marketing materials.



4. Use a consistent logo on all web properties. If you have a logo, make sure it's on everything you do. It doesn't have to overwhelm the space, and you should have varying logos to choose from—the original, stacked or not stacked, full color, and white and black versions.



5. Ensure that the imagery suits your brand. When uploading cover photos or social media posts, each photo should be chosen carefully. Does the photo evoke the right emotion? Is it offensive or boring? Do the colors fit with your brand? These are questions you need to answer.



6. Create an excellent product or service, which leads to a strong brand with brand loyalty. Your brand is useless if it renders no relevance to consumers and cannot be differentiated from the competition!

It's hard work, but it's this kind of hard work that creates a brand that will remain successful for a lifetime.



CHAPTER

HOW TO CREATE A COMPELLING STRATEGY FOR YOUR BRAND!

First, let us say that your brand is more than your logo, name, or slogan—it's the entire experience your prospects and customers have with your company, product, or service.

Your brand strategy defines what you stand for, the promise you make, and the personality you convey. And while it includes your logo, color palette, and slogan, those are only creative elements that convey your brand. Instead, your brand lives in every day-to-day interaction you have with your market:

1. THE IMAGES YOU CONVEY

2. THE MESSAGES YOU DELIVER ON YOUR WEBSITE, PROPOSALS, AND CAMPAIGNS

3. THE WAY YOUR EMPLOYEES INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS

4. A CUSTOMER'S OPINION OF YOU VERSUS YOUR COMPETITION

SO WHAT'S THE VALUE OF CREATING A DEFINED BRAND STRATEGY?

Branding is crucial for products and services sold in huge consumer markets. It's also important in B2B because it helps you stand out from your competition. Your brand strategy brings your competitive positioning to life, and works to position you as a certain "something" in the mind of your prospects and customers.

Think about successful consumer brands like Disney, Tiffany, or Starbucks. You probably know what each brand represents. Now imagine that you're competing against one of these companies. If you want to capture significant market share, start with a strong brand strategy or you may not get far. What ideas pop into consumers' heads when they see or hear your brand name?

In your industry, there may or may not be a strong B2B brand. But when you put two companies up against each other, the one that represents something valuable will have an easier time reaching, engaging, closing, and retaining customers. Successful branding also creates "brand equity:" the amount of money that customers are willing to pay just because it's your brand. In addition to generating revenue, brand equity makes your company itself more valuable over the long term.

DOES YOUR COMPANY FOLLOW A DEFINED BRAND STRATEGY? WHICH CASE WOULD YOU FALL UNDER?

1. BEST CASE SCENARIO: Prospects and customers know exactly what you deliver. It's easy to begin dialogue with new prospects because they quickly understand what you stand for. You acquire customers quickly because your prospects' experience with you supports everything you say. You can charge a premium because your market knows why you're better and is willing to pay for it.

2. NEUTRAL CASE SCENARIO: The market may not have a consistent view or impression of your product and company, but in general you think it's positive. You haven't thought a lot about branding because it doesn't necessarily seem relevant, but you admit that you can do a better job of communicating consistently with the market. You're not helping yourself, but you're not hurting yourself, either.

3. WORST CASE SCENARIO: You don't have a brand strategy, and it shows. It's more difficult to communicate with prospects and convince them to buy. They don't have an impression of your product/service or why it's better. What you do, what you say, and how you say it may contradict each other and confuse your prospects. Competitors typically have an easier time acquiring customers.

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CHAPTER

ESTABLISHING YOUR BRAND AND YOUR BRAND'S PERSONALITY

Creating a brand is as much about science as it is an art. The process involved in crafting your brand will be uniquely different from that of another business. The art of branding starts with the science behind marketing.

So what's the first step? Asking the right questions. Ask in-depth questions to reach the right information. The better the question, the better the answer! With expectations and preconceived ideas on the table, it reduces the chance of creating a brand identity that does not embody your business value or belief.

Here are a few questions you should ask yourself before building your brand:

- 1. WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE SELLING POINT?**
- 2. HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMER TO FEEL AFTER USING YOUR PRODUCT/SERVICE?**
- 3. WHAT VALUES WOULD YOU LIKE TO INSTILL IN YOUR BUSINESS?**
- 4. HOW CAN YOU SET YOURSELF APART FROM COMPETITORS?**
- 5. WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?**

These things take time, and if you're busy, we understand. You're running a business after all!

However, it's still important to go through this discovery phase and force yourself to answer these important questions and more. This information will be what's used later to conduct your market research on the target audience, as well as competitor analyses. You want to make sure from the beginning that every color, design, and strategy will set you apart.

Once you've created your branding materials and established your design, it's time to establish the rest of your brand's personality. By forming a personality across all marketing materials, your mission and sales voice will remain consistent. Start with your website and, most importantly, your most informational page.

1. ALL ABOUT YOU

On a company's website, the About page is often the most important. This information will lay the groundwork for your marketing team and the rest of your marketing collateral, both online and offline.

2. START WITH YOUR ABOUT, MISSION, AND VISION. WHO ARE YOU?

How did the company come to be? You can even include

an anecdote about an important moment early on in your company's history. Your mission and vision should be clear and concise; no more than three sentences each. From there, move on to employee bios and showcasing the best of their skills and personalities. Here's where you can get creative and show off your company's talent.

3. LET'S GET SOCIAL

Social media's casual atmosphere makes it another great avenue for creativity and showing a different side of your company. Don't be afraid to show personality through behind-the-scenes photos and extra tidbits about the company. Not every post here has to have a sale in mind. Instead, promote your company's brand recognition and introduce yourself to potential new customers.

4. TRADITIONAL BRANDING MATERIALS

A brochure isn't just a piece of paper. For many companies, a brochure or direct mail piece may still be a great way to introduce your company, so make sure it's a great first impression. Get creative with your designs to set your company apart from the competition. Even something as simple as upgrading from a traditional trifold brochure to a bi-fold can update a company's look.



CHAPTER

KNOWING YOUR COMPETITOR WHEN BRANDING

A competitor analysis should be one of your first steps when creating or updating your brand, and should be an integral part of your branding strategy. Find out what businesses in your industry and area are doing and how you differ from them! So, what should you look for?

- What is their **BRANDING** like? Take a look at their logo, colors, etc. You won't want to make your branding too similar to a competitor.
- Do they have an online **PRESENCE**? See if they are on social media and have a fully functioning website.
- How's their **REPUTATION**? Check out Yelp, Facebook, and Google reviews to learn more about what their customers think of them. If they're positive, what are they doing right? If they're negative, what are they doing wrong?
- How **INFORMATIVE** is their website? While you don't want your website to be a never ending book, you still want to be informative. See what your competitors are up to and how you could improve your own website.
- Are they involved in their **COMMUNITY**? If a business is well-established, they will most likely (and should) have a community involvement aspect as a part of their branding.
- How is their **BRAND AWARENESS**? Do you see them in the media, winning awards, or the focus of your industry?



5 CHAPTER

SO, YOU'VE CREATED A BRAND AND DRAFTED A ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS. NOW WHAT?

If you've successfully made it here, you'll likely be surprised at how many items you didn't think about in the beginning. But hopefully, your branding strategy will have provided a solid plan for success.

Creating a brand is an exciting milestone in the life of a company. If it's an established business, the rebranding process itself is as challenging as it is rewarding, but it is just the beginning of an evolution. A company's name and logo lives on countless platforms, from its business cards to its vehicle fleet. And for an existing company, it's almost always unrealistic to "flip the switch" on a new brand and change everything simultaneously. Yet, it's important to roll out the branding within a reasonable timeframe to avoid confusion with your target audience and existing clients.

Rolling out this new brand to the world requires planning, strategy, implementation, and careful execution. With a prioritized checklist as a guide, your company can implement its new look in a manageable way, while still making a splash.

USE THIS CHECKLIST

AS A GUIDE WHEN CONSIDERING
HOW TO TACKLE THE CONVERSION:



WEBSITE

- Register a new domain name.
- Design and build your new website or change the brand name and logo on your existing site.
- If you have a new website, consider whether you will be retaining the old site and, if so, you might consider putting an announcement on your old site inviting users to click through to the new one.
- If you're changing your existing site, remember to update all your page titles, meta-descriptions, and meta-tags.
- Add a blog post or news item to your website to announce the new brand.
- Update your keywords for SEO.
- Update your listings in online directories.
- Send your updated brand to any other websites that mention you and link to your site



SOCIAL MEDIA

- Facebook will let you change the name of your page if you have less than 200 likes, but it doesn't change the URL. You might want to create a new Facebook page and link to it on your old one, encouraging followers to like your new page
- Create a new Twitter account and copy across your list of those that you follow – many of them will follow you back in return.
- Tweet about your new brand and link to your new Twitter account. It is worth repeating this step from time to time for several weeks, and then intermittently over the first 3-6 months.
- Be sure to update your links on your website to your new accounts.

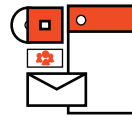
USE THIS
CHECKLIST

AS A GUIDE WHEN CONSIDERING
HOW TO TACKLE THE CONVERSION:



**INTERNAL
OPERATIONS**

- Update invoices, statements and Terms & Conditions.
- Employee contracts will need to be updated; you can probably do this with a supplementary letter rather than a completely new contract.
- Update contracts for suppliers and customers.
- Create new business stationery and other systems.
- Design new business cards, letterheads, and envelopes.
- Update email signatures.
- Update telephone voicemail, on-hold, and out of hours messages.
- Create new interior and exterior signage.



**OTHER MARKETING
COLLATERALS TO UPDATE**

- Presentations
- Any internal documents, forms, etc.
- Word document templates such as quotations, proposals, specifications, etc.
- Brochures, flyers, catalogues
- Trade show materials
- Case studies and customer testimonials
- Digital banner ads
- Training materials for customers



**ROLLOUT TO
EXISTING CLIENTS**

- Send an email to your customers using your existing brand ahead of the changeover to let them know about the change.
- Email them again on the changeover date with your new brand, announcing the switch.
- Inform and train (as necessary) your staff in the brand story and development.
- The first time you speak to them in person, either face-to-face or on the phone, take the opportunity to talk to them about the new brand; why the change and how it affects them.
- Hand out your new business cards to your existing clients when you next see them.