Branding tips for small businesses: Strategies for success

Category: Branding
written by Stewart Hodgson | 8 June 2023
The right branding tips for small businesses can be extremely useful when launching a new company or growing your existing presence.

Investing effectively in small business branding ensures you can connect with your target audience, differentiate your company, and boost your chances of success in your chosen industry.

With limited budget, time, and resources, it's easy for many small business owners to assume successful branding is only for larger brands. After all, worldwide companies like Google, Apple, and Coca-Cola are known across the globe for their phenomenal brands.

However, they also have larger budgets, bigger marketing teams, and plenty of tools to help them.

The thing is, you don't need a Nike-sized bank account to cultivate an effective brand. Any company can benefit from a strong brand identity, whether a solo operation, a budding mom-and-pop store, or a simple store. All you need is the right strategy.

Today, we will cover everything you need to know about building an eye-catching, engaging, and lucrative brand for your evolving company.

Let's get started.



Why is small business branding important?

Before we dive into our branding tips for small businesses, it’s worth explaining why small business branding is so crucial in the first place. Often, entrepreneurs assume all they really need to make a profit in any industry is the right product or service and a little marketing.

However, the reality is without a brand, you’re unlikely to go very far.

Branding for small businesses is an opportunity to tell your customers a story about who you are, what you do, and why they should choose to purchase something from your company.

After all, we don’t just make purchasing decisions based on logical information, like how much an item costs or how easy it is to access. About 95% of purchasing decisions are emotional. They stem from how we feel about a brand, its

purpose, mission, and personality.

Your brand is how you develop a relationship with potential customers. It tells your clients what your core values are, how you're positioned in your industry, and what makes you different from competing brands.

Your brand story and identity influence everything from the logo and visual assets you create to your brand voice in marketing materials.

Used correctly, your brand will:

Attract new customers

Branding helps companies to attract consumers by giving them a consistent, engaging presence on a host of channels. Every time you create a new campaign on social media or promote new products, your brand is what captures customer attention.

The voice you use, your visual identity, and other brand-building tools enhance your presence.

Help you find talent

Good brands don't just make you more appealing to customers; they can also strengthen your chances of attracting talent. Today's employees want to work for companies that share their values.

Your branding efforts will show future staff members why they should want to advocate for your company and help it grow.

Improve the value of your company

Brands have equity. The way you position and present your brand determines how valuable your company appears to be. This strengthens your chances of attracting investors as you grow your company.

The better your brand, the more you can potentially charge

customers for products and services too.

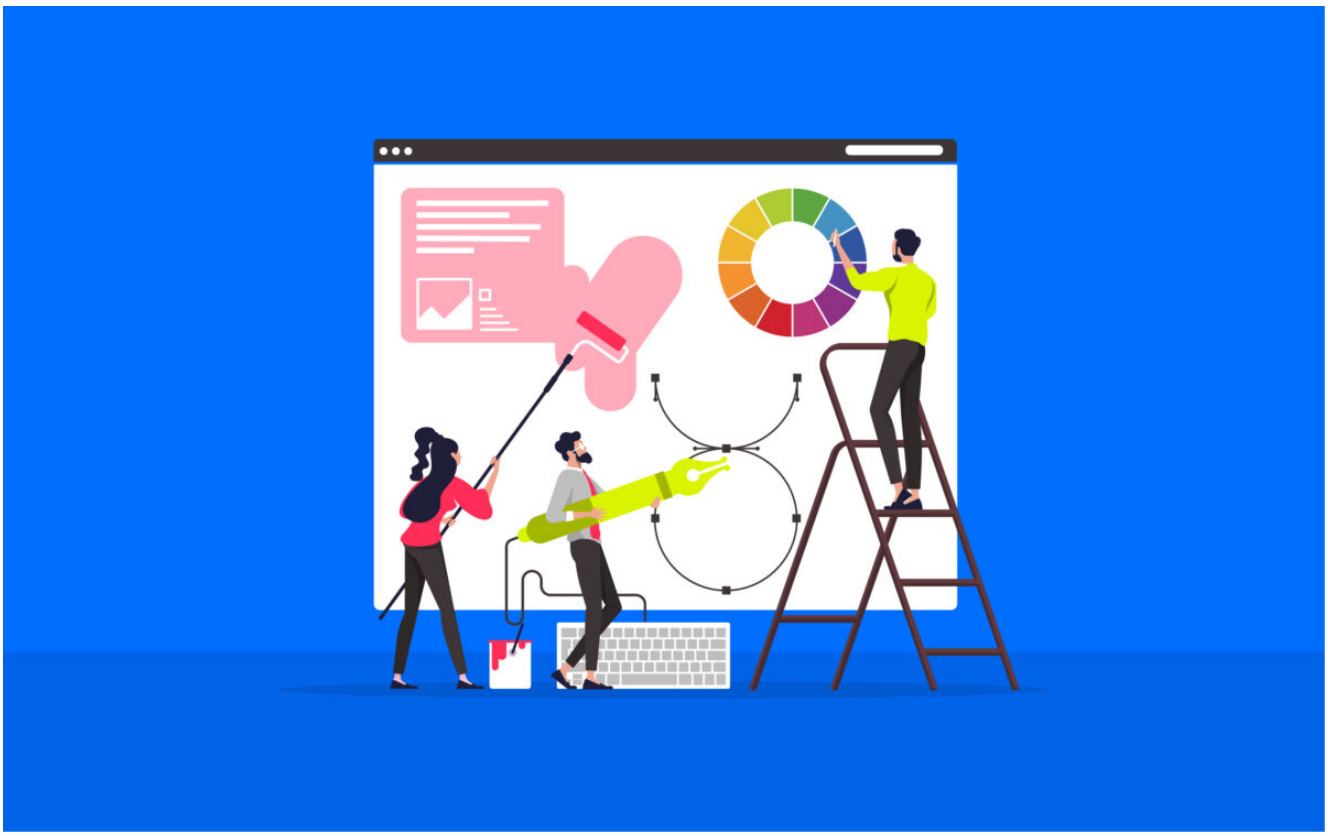
Separate you from the competition

Small business branding is an opportunity to show your customers what makes you different. Your logo design, voice, and marketing campaigns will all assist in separating you from other competing companies in your space. This ensures you can capture a larger share of your target market.

Build relationships with your audience

A powerful brand doesn’t just help you attract new customers; it also ensures you can retain existing clients. The brand you build will generate loyalty among your audience base and make it easier for your organization to grow.

It’s your chance to share values and visions that resonate with your customers.



How to design a small business branding strategy

Now we've covered why a successful brand is so crucial for a small business; it's time to think about how you can start building your own. When you're first getting started with the development of a new brand, it's tempting to jump straight into the fun parts, like designing a logo.

However, one of the top branding tips for small businesses to use is this: do your research first.

Collecting the right information will help you to develop a more powerful brand identity capable of growing and evolving with your brand.

Here's how you can get started:

1. Know your target customer

Easily one of the most important branding tips for small businesses, learning about your target customer will instantly make any brand assets you create more valuable. After all, successful branding isn't just about building an identity that's appealing to you.

You need to ensure you're resonating with the right niche or target audience.

As a small business, the chances are you have a relatively limited group of "ideal customers" you want to reach.

Local businesses may focus on customers from a specific region rather than trying to compete with larger companies worldwide. You may even focus on people with specific values and behavioral needs.

Ask yourself:

- Where are my target customers located?
- What are their demographics? (Age, gender, education level)
- What pain points do my customers want to solve?
- What are the goals and ambitions of my customers?

Creating a set of user personas, which transform the data you collect about your customers into a specific profile, can help you to step into the shoes of your potential audience when you're creating your company's products, investing in marketing activities, and building your brand.

2. Research the competition

One of the key elements of good branding is knowing how to differentiate yourself from your target audience. The chances are there are numerous other companies in your industry that also serve a similar audience with competing products or services.

Conducting a SWOT analysis to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors in your field will help you to define your unique selling points. Ask yourself what your business offers that your competitors can't.

Maybe your company's products are made in a certain way, with increased investment into research and development, like Apple products. Perhaps you're committed to a better level of customer service or follow specific best practices for corporate and social responsibility.

An effective branding strategy will help you to draw attention to the things that make your company more appealing to the specific group of customers you want to reach.

3. Define your brand story

Before you can start experimenting with branding tips for

small businesses, you'll need to define the core essence or story of your brand. In other words, what defines your company, how are you going to position yourself in your target market, and what do you want to achieve?

The most important factors of your brand story include the following:

Your mission or purpose

Start with defining the "why" behind your business. What motivated you to start your company beyond making a profit? What problems do you want to solve for your target audience, and which goals do you want to reach?

For instance, Nike's mission is to empower everyone to achieve their athletic targets.

Corporate values

What's important to your company? Are you heavily focused on customer service and building loyalty? Are you committed to compassionate care and personalized support? Do you have a strong focus on sustainability and eco-friendly processes?

Your brand position

Where do you exist in your chosen market? What differentiates you from the competition? Are you a luxury or affordable brand? Do you target a specific niche group of customers?



Creating a brand identity for a small business

Effective branding for small businesses starts with defining your identity or the core components that make up your brand essence.

One of the biggest mistakes business owners make when developing their presence is assuming a brand identity is all about choosing the right name or logo. However, while your visual presence is important, there's a lot more to developing an identity than you might think.

You need to define a core mission for your company, a vision, and a set of guidelines that will influence everything you produce, from blog posts for your marketing strategy to website pages.

So, where do you start?

Step 1: Find your voice

Once you've defined the primary elements of your brand identity, the next step is thinking about how you're going to convey that information to your target audience.

Before you start jumping into marketing campaigns on social media platforms, or content creation strategies, you need a clear idea of the voice that's going to resonate with your customers.

Think about how you would define your company if it was a human being. What characteristics would you use to describe it? Is your company fun, friendly, and youthful? Do you want to position yourself as an authority in your field with lots of thought leadership content?

Your tone of voice, or personality as a brand, will influence not just each marketing strategy you create but also how you develop other branding assets too.

After all, your visual identity, which is comprised of your logo, corporate photography, and even the uniforms your employees wear, will provide hints about the personality you're trying to develop.

Step 2: Create your visual assets

As mentioned above, while your visual presence doesn't make up your entire brand identity, it does play an important role in small business branding. The visual components of your brand will significantly influence how people think and feel about your company.

For instance, your logo should highlight the mission and values of your company in a visual format, using the right combination of typography, color, and iconography. Your website, social media accounts, business cards, and marketing campaigns should all share the same aesthetic.

Some of the most important visual assets to create when investing in branding for a small business include:

Your logo

Your logo is one of the first things your customers will interact with. It needs to tell your clients something important about your brand (not just your name). Think about how the colors, shapes, and positioning of your logo can highlight your unique personality.

Color palette

The colors you use as a business are extremely important to your overall identity. Different shades elicit their own distinctive emotional responses. Red is associated with power and passion, yellow with energy, and blue with trust and tranquility.

Style guides

Your style guides as a small business highlight some of the core elements you'll use in your marketing and branding campaigns. Think about how you can send the right message with typography, brand photography, icons, and images in your campaigns.

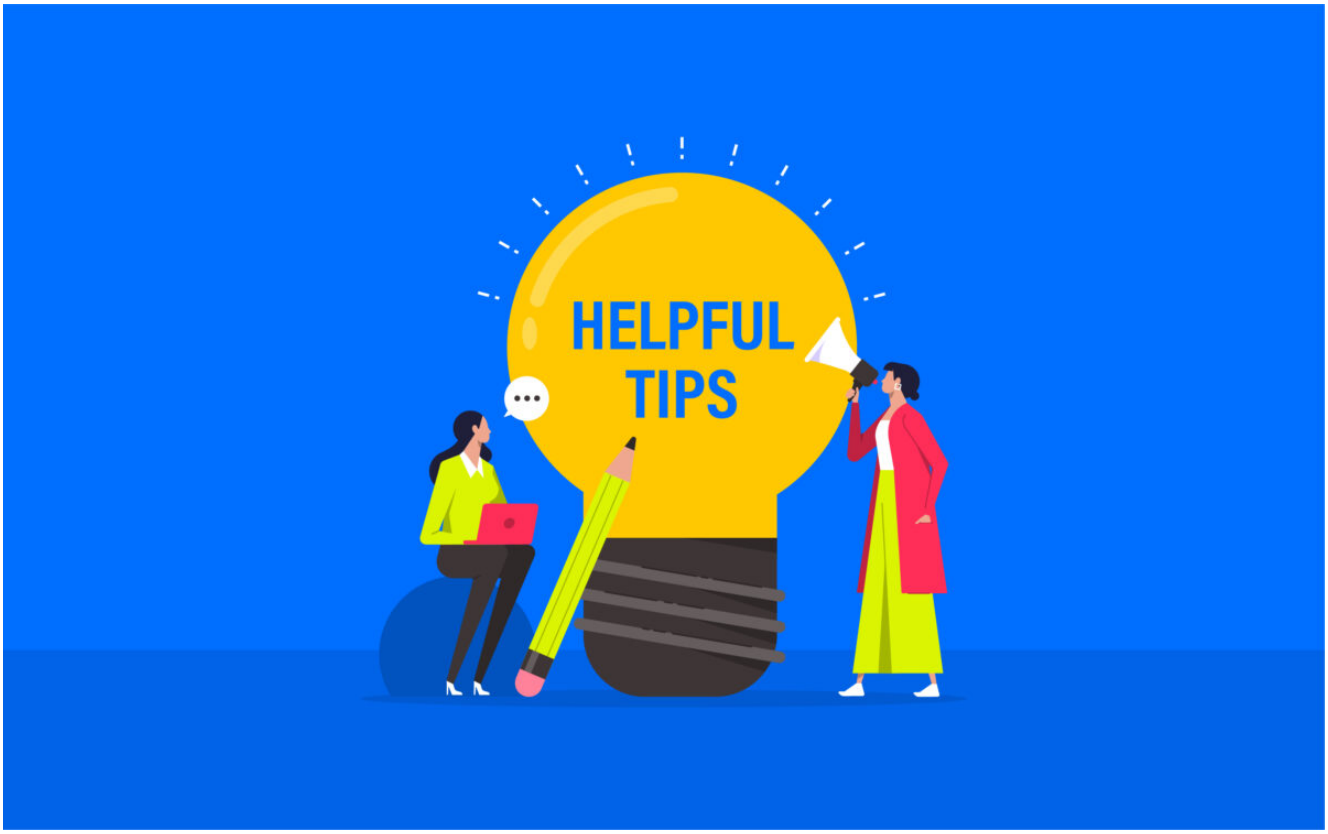
Step 3: Develop brand guidelines

Once you've defined the elements of your personality and visual identity, the next step is ensuring you can deliver the same message to your customers consistently. Consistency is crucial to successful branding.

It not only improves brand awareness, but it also helps you to build a sense of familiarity with your ideal customer. As your business grows and you connect with new employees and marketing teams, your brand guidelines will keep everyone on the same page.

With the right set of brand guidelines, you'll essentially have a compass available to help you make all the right decisions when growing your brand. Your guidelines should include the following:

- A brand mission statement and vision statement.
- An introduction to your brand values.
- A style guide for your logos, typography, and imagery.
- Your brand's tone of voice (editorial guidelines).
- Audience personas for the customers you want to reach.



How to brand your small business: Branding tips for small businesses

Now you have all the research you need to connect with your audience and a set of guidelines to direct your team, it's time to put your brand strategy to work.

While there's no one-size-fits-all way to ensure you make the

right impact with your brand personality, there are a few things you can do to boost your chances of success.

Here are some of the best branding tips for small businesses to consider:

1. Use content to build brand awareness

As mentioned above, your image, personality, and tone of voice are all core parts of what makes your brand effective. However, it's hard to show these components to your customers if you're not creating campaigns that help you to position yourself in your chosen market.

Content is one of the best ways to effectively showcase your brand personality and develop brand recognition. You can start by crafting powerful copy for your website, using your site to tell stories about your company's origins and values.

Building on this with a strong content marketing campaign, leveraging blogs, videos, and other online assets can be useful too.

Consistent content marketing gives you an opportunity to showcase your voice across multiple channels and enhance your online presence with SEO (Search engine optimization).

You can even expand outside of your own website with guest blogs, social media marketing, and email campaigns. The more you connect with your audience in the right way, the more your company will grow.

2. Get the right support when building your brand

As a small business, every interaction you have with your target audience is crucial. You need to ensure you're constantly making the right impression, whether you're connecting with customers on your website, on social networks,

or in person.

The right support can go a long way toward boosting your chances of success. While many small brands attempt to cut corners with their branding strategy to save money, investing in the right assistance will help to differentiate you from the competition and strengthen your presence.

Rather than just using a logo creator online to develop your visual assets, consider working with a branding professional. Through their brand design services, they can help you choose the right brand colors, choose the perfect collection of fonts, and design an incredible visual identity.

3. Consider powerful partnerships

Aside from working with logo designers, marketing professionals, and other creative experts on developing your brand personality, it's also worth looking for ways to use other partnerships to develop your brand.

If you're struggling to reach a wider audience, you could consider partnering with another non-competing brand to strengthen your offline and online presence.

Working with another company on a marketing or sales campaign can increase your access to new customers and enhance your credibility. If you want to position yourself as a caring and compassionate brand, you could consider looking into sponsorship opportunities.

Sponsoring local sports teams or charities is a great way for small brands to boost their recognition.

One of the top branding ideas for small businesses to consider could also be working with influencers. You don't need to connect with major celebrities to enhance your brand presence. Local experts, micro-influencers, and similar thought leaders can give your business a boost.

4. Put the customer first

When it comes to succeeding in small business branding, it’s worth remembering your voice, visual identity, and marketing campaigns will only take you so far.

Ultimately, the main factor that will determine whether you expand your audience and retain your customers is your approach to customer service. With this in mind, put your customers first.

Think about how you can deliver a better level of experience to your customers. This might mean training all of your team members on how to connect with clients or setting up a strategy to make returns easier.

Using social listening tools and analytics software can help you to learn more about what your customers really value when looking for smaller businesses to work with.

Remember, if you’re successful at connecting with your potential customers on an emotional level, you’ll not only benefit from increased sales but new opportunities too.

You could use your strong relationship with existing clients to set up referral programs and loyalty campaigns, which help to drive new clients back to your organization.

5. Constantly learn and grow

Finally, while consistency is important in building a strong brand reputation, that doesn’t mean your company should never evolve.

Look at some of the biggest established business owners in the world, and you’ll notice they’re constantly developing their identity based on market research, their buyer personas, and the trends in their chosen market.

Once you have a strong branding strategy in place, make sure you have the tools you need to optimize it over time. Pay attention to the changing patterns in customer behavior, and use reviews and testimonials to determine what really contributes to customer loyalty for your brand.

If you need to update your company's image or personality over time, think about how you can do so without damaging the underlying essence of your company.

While the Nike brand has changed significantly in the last few decades, its focus on serving its customers, motivating buyers, and developing innovative products has remained the same.

Creating the ultimate branding strategy for small business success

Hopefully, the branding tips for small businesses listed above have given you some useful insights into how you can build a unique identity for your company. Successful small business branding isn't just about developing the right marketing plan, logo, or brand name.

Your branding strategies should help you consistently build a stronger emotional connection with your audience.

Everything you do, from ensuring you provide a great user experience to launching marketing campaigns on social platforms, should help customers to understand what makes your organization special.

With the right branding strategy, any company, no matter how small, can boost its chances of success in a competitive market. Your brand can even help you to compete with big brands in your space by demonstrating your point of difference and generating a loyal customer base.

If you need help developing your brand for a small business, remember plenty of support is available. Branding experts like Fabrik can help you with everything from defining the key message you want to send in your marketing campaigns to building an effective visual identity.

Contact the experts today to take your first step towards better small business branding.

Fabrik: A branding agency for our times.