Key factors to consider before hiring a brand consultancy agency

Category: Branding
written by Steve Harvey | 1 September 2017
What do people say about your brand? According to the founder and CEO of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, “Your brand is what other people say about you when you aren’t in the room”.

In other words, it’s the gossip that goes on behind your back, the conversations that are happening all around you, and the perceptions that customers get when they try to do business with your company. If you want to be successful in your branding efforts, then you need to not only listen to the chatter in your industry, but also understand it. That’s where brand consultancy comes in.

Entrepreneurs and business owners are infamous for feeling as though they can do everything alone. However, the sheer presence of brand strategy and brand consultancy in London alone is enough to outline how important a little help can be from time to time. Sometimes, you simply need to step outside of your comfort zone, and borrow the expertise of someone who can examine your company from a new angle.

Brand consultancy is more than just a way to improve your brand recognition or awareness. The right brand consultant can surgically dissect your business, and determine how everything from your logo design, to your brand voice, and social presence works to support your goals.

When it comes to threading consistency, personality, and purpose throughout your business – both online and offline, brand strategy consultancy is key. It’s the plan for sustainability that will help you to transform your company

into something truly unforgettable, and maintain your position in your industry for longer.

So, what do you need to know before you hire brand consultancy in London?

The difference between brand consultancy and brand management

Let's begin with an important differentiation.

Brand consultancy and brand management are terms that are often used interchangeably in the online space. However, they are not the same thing. A "brand consultant" is a perceptive, creative professional who conceives and implements your overall brand identity. A brand strategy consultancy in London, for instance, will work with you to:

- Design a blueprint or template for all the components of your brand (including a manifesto).
- Define your target market and goals.
- Research your market, competitors, and industry.
- Discover your personality and communication strategies.
- Execute unique components of your brand, such as your logo, marketing plan, and messaging.

Remember, your logo and website are only parts of your brand. Brand consultancy agencies work alongside you to design every element of your brand blueprint – ensuring everything matches your unique concept and voice. Brand consultancy is a plan for sustainability, and it's often essential at business inception, as it outlines the first step in a brand's life. Additionally, brand strategy consultancy services can be effective when a company needs to rebrand themselves.

On the other hand, a brand manager is a professional who understands the concept and identity of a brand. They lead a

team to ensure the appropriate execution of your brand strategy throughout the life of your company, overseeing the way your company is represented in countless different platforms. These people can help you to maintain consistency in everything you do, managing:

- Market research according to current trends.
- Developing monthly “brand objectives”.
- Giving you access to ongoing talent like content writers, marketing and digital strategies.
- Designing seasonal content and campaigns.
- Tracking results with analytics to determine what’s working.
- Adjusting elements to improve your brand success.
- Managing your brand assets and ensuring correct implementation.

Brand managers are the people that maintain the health of your brand over the years. They’re a long-term strategy to ensuring that you always have the right impact on your target audience, regardless of how the online and offline worlds might adapt and change.



Why you need brand consultancy in London

Brand consultancy can be an essential element of building a future strategy for your company. The right brand consultancy in London can help you to figure out exactly what your brand is going to become over the years. This will help you to maintain a consistent face in everything you do, from your website, to your integrated marketing campaigns.

The value of brand consultancy begins to grow more obvious when you recognise that branding is about more than adding a logo to your product. It's about creating an identity for your company, and a position for yourself that helps you to stand out from your competitors.

With consultancy from a brand strategy agency, you can:

1. Identify your brand

No two brands are alike – or at least they shouldn't be. Working with a brand consultancy company allows you to identify what you want your brand to become in the eyes of your competitors, peers, and customers. It's about finding a strategy for differentiation that you can use for the life of your business, or until you choose to rebrand.

2. Understand your clients and customers

A brand strategy consultancy company will help you to understand your clients and customers so you can respond to their needs and preferences accordingly. Ultimately, one of the main elements that will inform everything you do as a brand, is which clients and customers you're trying to appeal to. A brand consultancy will help you to create a user persona that should make your branding campaigns and marketing communications more effective.

3. Recognise your strengths and weaknesses

The fresh perspective that a brand consultancy team can offer is essential when it comes to re-designing or developing your brand. A consultant can give you an impartial insight into what you truly need as a business, as these professionals are more equipped to recognise the needs of your business. They can even offer you suggestions on how you can expand your target markets, and improve your position in the industry.

4. Leverage sustainable long-term solutions

Brand consultancy companies have years of experience in branding – which means they know what works. These experts use analytics and data to outline their findings, and offer

sustainable solutions that will help you to achieve your goals as a company. Brand consultants don't focus on "fast" quick-fix results. Instead, your brand consultancy in London (and beyond) will help you to access real, authentic strategies for growth and development.



What to ask before you hire a brand strategy consultant

Hopefully, you know that brand consultancy can be an important investment for your business – but how do you figure out which brand consultancy is right for you?

Before you can start assessing the different offerings on the market, you'll need to make sure that you're prepared to work with a branding group first. Though some companies will be able to assist you with the following questions, you'll find that things go much more smoothly if you have a general answer in mind.

1. What do you want your brand image to be?

Remember, your brand image isn't just your company logo – as important as that might be. While branding can be used as a very broad term, it generally comes down to the perception that customers and potential clients have of your company. For instance, do your consumers see you as reliable? Are you affordable? Do you have a unique personality?

Your brand image is key to building awareness in your space, and you'll need to make sure that it's consistent if you want to make an impact. Try to brainstorm a list of a few key terms that you'd like your brand to be associated with. If you can bring those terms to your brand consultancy team, they'll be far better prepared to begin working on your strategy.

2. What's your current brand strategy?

As we mentioned before, it's not just new brands that can benefit from working with a brand strategy consultancy, but companies that are undergoing a refresh or rebranding process too. With that in mind, you'll need to think about if you have any existing branding strategies in place or not.

For example, have you designed a brand manifesto to help govern your brand? Do you know how you're keeping your messaging consistent across different channels? Are there any documents that you can give your brand consultancy team to show them what you've accomplished so far?

3. What do you want to improve or achieve?

If you're considering hiring a brand strategy consultancy, then there's a good chance that you have some goals in mind. If you're rebranding or updating your brand, then you might

want to achieve better saturation across new channels, or appeal to a different type of audience. If you're just getting started in your branding journey, then the chances are you'll want some of the following things:

- Brand awareness
- Brand loyalty
- Consistent marketing strategies
- Brand engagement
- A stronger brand image

Ultimately, if you can narrow those goals down into something that's measurable, such as increased hits on your website pages, lower bounce rates, and better overall customer perception, then you'll find it's easier to track your success.



Which features should you get from brand consultancy services?

Just like companies, groups that offer brand strategy consultancy in London come in many different shapes and sizes. However, if you want to make sure that you're getting the right solution for your needs, then you'll need to know what kind of standard services you should be looking for.

Some of the most common brand consultancy services include:

1. Website auditing

It's impossible to build a strong online presence without a powerful website, that's why many brand consultancy companies will offer website auditing solutions as part of brand strategy review. A website audit will help your branding consultant to better understand your current position online, and make suggestions that will help to push you in a positive direction for the future. They'll look at:

- Basic functionality such as navigation, load speed, and any errors
- The presence of low-quality content that might affect your ranking
- Broken links, and link-building solutions
- Compliance factors like terms of service, privacy, and sitemaps
- Basic SEO optimisation features, and opportunities to increase rankings
- Places where content and imagery can be added to improve the experience.

2. Market analysis

As we mentioned above, a brand consultancy service will look

at your current market in depth to help understand your position and any opportunities that might be available for your company. Market analysis includes a close evaluation of your competitors, your customers, and various other important factors that might go some way towards identifying and building your brand. During market analysis, brand consultants might:

- Assess your keyword and ranking strategies in comparison with your competitors.
- Help you to create a series of user and / or buyer personas
- Establish your differentiating factors, USPs and positioning
- Examine your overall strategy and position on social media
- Focus on implementing consistency across multi-channel marketing strategies

3. Research and suggestions

Part of the reason why so many companies turn towards a brand strategy consultancy in London, is that they simply don't know how to start building their brand alone. Consultants can examine the marketplace on your behalf, and offer suggestions for how you can improve your current strategies, or build new ones from scratch. For instance, they might help you with your keyword research, or tell you whether your logo mark is less than perfect.

The important thing to remember about brand consultancy companies is that they aren't there to tell you your current activities are amazing, and make you feel good about your brand. These professionals are focused on helping you achieve success, by making changes where they're needed. That might mean completely re-designing your website, changing your

marketing strategy, or even re-naming your business or brand.

4. Content and marketing development

While it's often the brand manager that helps you to maintain a consistent and long-term content production strategy, there's still content to think about from a brand consultancy point of view. For instance, your brand strategy consultancy team might recommend which types of content you should share to best engage your audience, such as:

- Podcasts
- Videos or vlogging
- Blog posts
- Socialmedia marketing
- Email marketing
- Infographics
- Offline content

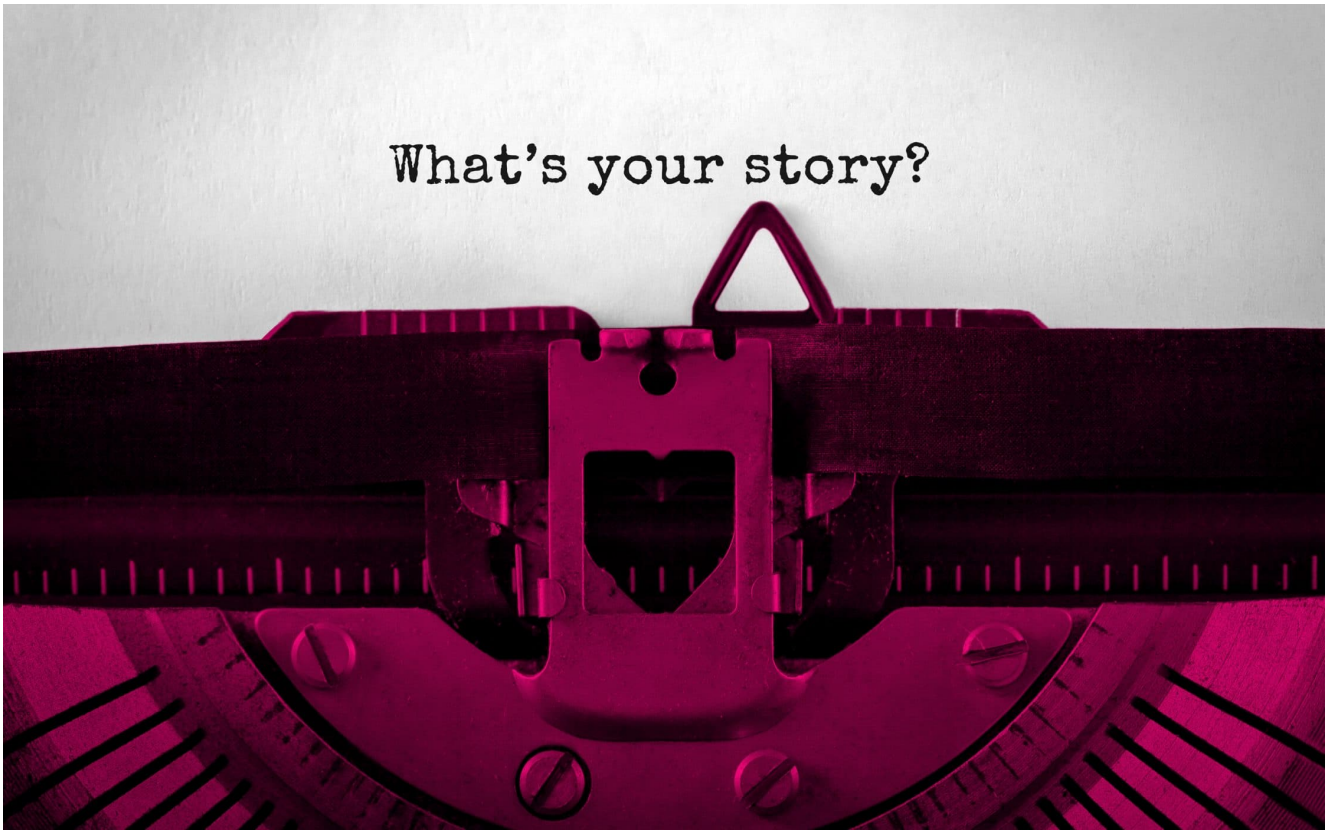
Your brand consultancy team might also help you to create your initial website content to best introduce your company. For instance, they could help with your "about" page, storytelling features, your homepage, and product page descriptions too.

5. Building your visual identity

Finally, a company that offers brand consultancy in London can also help you to figure out exactly how to present yourself through your visual identity. For instance, by looking at your business goals and personality, your brand consultancy team might be able to recommend a change in the way that you've designed your logo, or the colours that you use on your website. Remember, colours and shapes can have an emotional impact on your customers.

Your brand consultancy team can help you to create a visual brand presence that can move with you through all online and

offline channels, portraying the values of your company in a unique and engaging way.



How to choose brand strategy consultancy in London

You know what a brand consultancy company can do for your business, and which services they might offer your brand. However, it's worth noting that choosing the perfect brand strategy consultancy group can still be a difficult experience.

While some people will approach a business, and feel a natural chemistry, others will need to invest in a great deal of careful research to help them choose the brand consultant that they feel compatible with. Here are just some of the things that you should think about, when choosing your brand consultancy group:

1. Do they understand your business?

While you'll obviously need to give your brand consultancy team a little bit of information about your company before you can decide whether they seem to understand your goals, a team that's naturally at ease with your ambitions and what you're trying to achieve will often be more appealing than one who seems overwhelmed or confused by your USPs.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution for branding, so it's important to choose a company that seems to recognise and respect the unique elements of your company. Try asking the business you want to work with how they might convey your points of differentiation through their work.

2. Do they have plenty of experience?

Experience is always important, no matter what kind of professional you're looking for. When it comes to finding the best team for brand strategy consultancy in London, make sure that the group you consider is well-versed across all the channels that matter most to you. Ask to look at their existing portfolio, and examine any reviews they might have had from previous clients. When it comes to brand consultancy, there's no substitute for experience.

The more the prospective consultant can show off their ability, the better. Try asking your consultancy candidates how they would respond to key problems in your business, and see what kind of answers they come up with.

3. Are they willing to offer guidance?

A great brand consultancy team isn't just there to do what you say. If you want to achieve incredible things in the world of branding, then you also need to be willing to listen to the suggestions that the experts might have to offer. A fantastic brand consultancy in London will be willing to lead you

through difficult problems with their own strategies and suggestions.

Find out whether your brand consultant can help you respond to your company issues with creative and innovate insights, or whether they expect you to do all the work yourself. Keep in mind that just because your brand consultancy group is asking questions – doesn't mean that they're not being helpful. In fact, the best brand consultancy agencies will always need to ask a lot of questions in order to create a customised strategy.

4. Are they easy to communicate with?

Whether you're a large, established organisation, or a relative newcomer, your brand is one of the most valuable things that you'll ever own as a business. With that in mind, when you invest in a person or group of people to make that brand more effective, you'll want to make sure that you can communicate with them as, and when you need to.

Ask your brand consultancy group how you'll be able to contact them, and how often they're available throughout the day. Most companies will be available throughout the working day, and provide a senior contact who's knowledgeable about most things, from your marketing mix to rolling-out and managing your new visual identity.

5. Are they adaptable?

Finally, you'll need to make sure that you choose a brand consultant who is adaptable to your needs. The right brand strategy consultancy will not only offer their own suggestions into the mix, but also listen to your feedback throughout the branding process to make changes that suit your needs.

Your brand consultancy should work to understand your audiences and goals. If your message isn't attracting the

right people at the right times, then your consultants should begin to think about ways to rectify that. Experience brand consultants can also adapt to the changing trends of the marketplace, explaining everything from digital marketing trends, to emerging communication strategies, and how each of these things will impact your company.



Find your brand consultancy

While brand strategy consultancy in London might not be the answer to all your branding problems, it's a good way to start transforming your brand into something that's consistent, measurable, and valuable. A sustainable brand is a successful brand – and that's what consultancy delivers.

Remember, stay away from any brand consultancy who claims that they have some kind of mathematical formula for brand strategy. The truth is that some things that work for one business, won't work for another, and a great consultant will know that they need to understand your company, your competitors, and your customers before they can begin to

implement a plan.

At the same time, remember that branding isn’t a one-time event. Rather, it’s an on-going process that you’ll need to consider throughout the life of your company, with the help of strategic brand consultancy.

Know how to find the right brand consultant, and you’ll be on the track to success in your niche. These experts are pioneers in giving your company the presence that you deserve, and cultivating the customer loyalty you crave. They work with you to understand who you are, what you need, and where your vision is going to take you, then articulate your plans in a way that pushes your message throughout every aspect of your plans.

Finding the right brand consultancy in London might not be a simple task, but it’s worth the time investment if you want to establish the strongest possible foundation for your company to build on.

If you enjoyed this article, you might enjoy these too:

– B2B marketing strategies to outsmart the competition

– Building a brand (new or old) on solid foundations

– Why you need a dedicated brand awareness strategy

– Brand loyalty: Building long-lasting relationships