Who are you? How to create a brand identity with impact

Category: Branding
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“Know thyself.”

When it comes to brand building, that quote holds more weight than you might think.

Companies often jump into action within their industries with a view of what they want to create, and who they want to sell to. However, they forget about the key foundation that ensures strong, consistent growth for the future of their organisation: brand identity.

Creating a brand identity involves more than a compellingly brilliant logo design, or writing a manifesto. While each of those elements contribute to a brand identity, they don’t define it. Knowing how to create a brand identity means recognising that your identity is the full summation of your business – everything that makes your company the unique entity it is (or should be).

There are plenty of brands that have created incredible brand identities, such as Apple – the company defined by its devotion to innovation and simplicity, or Snapchat, a business focused entirely on fun, and temporary experiences.

In today’s article, we’re going to give you a head-start into creating a brand identity that works for you – something that you can use to influence and engage your customers at every business touchpoint. We’ll warn you – it’s not a simple task – but it is an essential part of beating your competitors, and succeeding in your business environment.

Without an identity, how can you expect your personality, your

marketing, or your image to resonate with your audience?

Let’s start your journey of self-discovery.



What is a brand identity?

Let’s start with the basics. A brand identity is just like a human identity. It’s the little quirks, personality traits, and even the everyday behaviours that define your brand. It’s what sets you apart as more than just a clone of competitors in your industry, and helps to build relationships with your target users.

Your brand identity therefore includes everything you use to position and market your brand, including your logo design, your communication materials, your website, and your social media presence. Discovering how to create a brand identity should help you to:

- Improve customer affinity with your company.

- Enhance the trust and credibility people place in your brand.
- Upgrade recognition by giving your business a personality.
- Generate new enquiries leading to clients and customers.
- Define the unique aspects of your business.

To find your brand identity, you'll need the following things:

1. A vision statement

Creating a brand identity begins with a vision statement – an exploration into what you'd like to achieve with your business in both the long, and short-term. The best vision statements are the ones that you can distil into a single sentence, and they should cover:

- The unique selling points (USP) of your brand.
- Where you want to be in the next 5, 10, and 15 years.
- What terms you'd use to describe your brand.
- What services and products you can offer.

Check out Nike's vision statement for inspiration:



2. A mission statement

A mission statement or brand manifesto is your opportunity to define the drive behind your company. Your mission statement should be clear, concise, and easy to understand for every person involved in your brand (including employees and customers). When creating a brand identity, ask yourself:

- What pain points does this company need to address?
- What can we do to inform and inspire our customers?
- What values are we going to use to guide our process?
- Why should clients and customers buy from us?

Check out “Life is Good” for their inspiring mission statement.

3. An “essence”

When learning how to create a brand identity, your “essence” is basically the collection of terms or characteristics you

would use to describe your company. Essentially, it's what you want your customers to feel when they interact with your brand. For example:

- Lush is "ethical"
- Apple is "innovative"
- Disney is "magical"

1. Value proposition or position

Finally, to help you begin your journey into creating a brand identity, you'll need to understand your brand position. This is basically your description of the unique value that your company can give your customers, and why your business exists. It should define your audience demographic, which market segment you're trying to connect with, what your brand promise is, and why you're different to your competitors. Since all brands need to be unique, a brand positioning statement will help to set you apart.



How to create a brand identity step 1: The research process

Creating a brand identity with impact means fully devoting yourself to the process of understanding your company, and sharing your perceptions of your brand with the world. This means that, much like any other aspect of brand-building, you'll need to do plenty of research.

Your research into your business will have started in the section above, when you began looking for your value, your mission statements, and your essence. Once you feel clear on those elements, you'll need to start diving a little deeper into the following things:

- **Your audience:** Though many businesses want to be able to connect with as many different customers as possible, the truth is that the best results come for companies who can define their ideal user personas. Track down the people who can benefit most from your company, and decide how you can appeal most to their needs and personalities.
- **Your competition:** One of the most important things you can do when learning how to create a brand identity, is examine the competitors in your space. Not only will a competitive analysis inspire you, it should also help you to avoid accidentally creating a brand identity that's too similar to someone else in your industry.
- **Your personality:** A business personality will come from your understanding of your "essence". You can portray your personality in everything you do, from your use of colour (gold and purple convey elegance), to the tone of voice you use in your social media and blog posts.

If you're learning how to create a brand identity with the help of a professional branding agency, they'll often help you

to complete something called a "SWOT" analysis, which should assist you in finding your brand position. The acronym stands for:

- **Strengths:** Look at the strengths in your business proposition, and determine how they can give you an edge against your competition.
- **Weaknesses:** Determine where you're at a disadvantage, and think about how you can close the gap between you and your competitors.
- **Opportunities:** Which spaces could your business thrive in? What chances do you have to grasp success?
- **Threats:** Figure out which elements of your environment might cause problems for your project or business.

A SWOT analysis simply helps you to figure out exactly where you stand in your market, before you start implementing the design and communication elements of your brand identity.

How to create a brand identity step 2: Implementing design

Once you have a solid understanding around the core of your business, you'll be ready to move onto designing your "visual" brand. This will include an evaluation of both your online presence, and your offline media. Ultimately, the aim is to make sure that everything that's designed to visually enhance your brand, speaks to the brand mission, and values that you established in the "research" part of creating your brand identity.

Usually, the most important element in your visual identity will be your logo. A logo is your chance to convey the meaning of your brand in a simple image, whether you choose to use graphics, icons, or typography. Your choice of logo should help to inform other elements in creating a brand identity,

such as your colour palette, and use of fonts. Remember to keep the following things in mind:

- **Colours:** When learning how to create a brand identity, you should discover that colours are crucial. Your choice of colour can impact your reputation, and change the way that customers feel about your brand. This is because we have psychological responses to different shades. While orange conveys confidence, blue signifies professionalism, and so on. Choose colours that represent the key characteristics of your brand.
- **Fonts:** Typography is a powerful thing. Just like colours, different fonts can provoke different emotional responses. For instance, sans-serif fonts are often perceived to be more "informal". Make sure that once you've chosen a font (or small collection of fonts) for your business, you stick to them consistently.
- **Consistency:** Consistency will always be crucial to building a powerful brand. The more you repeat a specific message, or visual image, the more familiar it becomes to your audience. Make sure that you set out the rules of creating a brand identity into a "style guide" that everyone in your organisation can follow. This guide should include details on your choice of colours, typography, images, sizing, and more.

Keep in mind, though consistency is essential to any brand, that doesn't mean that your business should remain static throughout the years. The most powerful brands are the ones that can adapt with the needs of their customers, and the trends of the marketplace. Ensure that when you're learning how to create a brand identity, you implement enough flexibility into your guidelines to keep your audience engaged. No-one likes an outdated brand.

How to create a brand identity step 3: Identity integration

There's more to creating a brand identity than getting the visual side right.

Once you've established what your brand should "look like", you'll need to figure out what it should sound like when you're communicating with your employees, clients, and customers. Today's consumers are looking for brands that they can connect with on an emotional level. That means that modern brands need to have backgrounds, stories, and value.

Often, value is offered through the use of content marketing to interest customers and create brand awareness. However, before you can begin your content strategy, you'll need to integrate your identity into your communications with the following elements in mind:

- **Language:** Your use of language is essential when it comes to creating a brand identity. You'll need to choose a tone that matches the unique personality of your brand. In other words, if you're a sophisticated formal company, then use professional language. On the other hand, if you're a laid-back business reaching out to a younger audience, you might be able to get away with a more informal tone.
- **Emotion:** Customers feel loyal to brands that they can build an emotional connection with. Establishing emotion in your content means thinking about how you can make your business more "human". Consider using podcasts and videos to allow people to "see and hear" your brand. Think about how you can implement your tone into your content marketing, and make sure that you have a strong brand story.
- **Connections:** Since today's marketing is all about

building connections, how you communicate with your audience is just as crucial to your brand identity as what you choose to say. Do your research to figure out what type of marketing your audience best responds to, from email, to social media, and even digital marketing campaigns.

For creating a brand identity, few communication strategies are more effective than those that implement social media campaigns. 22% of the world's population uses Facebook, and your social strategies can help you to build stronger relationships with your audience, by communicating with them in real-time. Just make sure that your posts reflect your personality, and offer measurable value to your customers.

Once you've implemented the communication strategies that work best for you, and you're fully equipped with the voice, and image you need to represent your brand, remember to track your performance. Learning how to create a brand identity isn't a one-time experience. You'll need to monitor crucial metrics like engagement through Google analytics, surveys, and social media discussions, to decide when, and how you need to evolve.



Creating a brand identity: Simple steps for success

We've covered the essentials on creating a brand identity, but how can you take your company character to the next level and create loyal fans from disengaged customers?

Today's companies are beginning to realise that product-centric marketing is a thing of the past. The average customer is empowered, connected, and you only have 20 seconds to convince them that you're worth their time. Since you can't possibly show off all the incredible features of your product or service in 20 seconds, you'll need to rely on the instant impact of your brand identity to get the job done instead. With that in mind, consider the following tips:

1. Invest in your copy and visuals

Companies today are constantly looking for ways to cut costs and minimise their budgets. However, when creating a brand

identity that truly resonates, you can't afford to cut corners on the things that matter most: your visual and verbal presence. If people land on your website and see that it's years out of date, or discover your brand through an old-fashioned, ugly logo, your reputation instantly begins to suffer.

Capture the attention of your audience with visuals that engage and inspire. Check out the latest web design trends, make sure that your logo is up-to-date, and ensure that everything you produce looks as professional and refined as possible. Once you've used your visuals to earn your customer's attention, you can use your copy to keep it. Make sure that your content, from the messages on your website, to the blogs you produce, are brimming with insight and value. Don't just simply do whatever is cheapest. Invest in the immediate, and long-term impact your brand can have.

2. Make your brand meaningful

To some extent, creating a brand identity is about giving your company a soul. It brings your business to life with real values, ethics, and beliefs that your customers can relate to. With that in mind, you need to make sure that your identity is authentic, transparent, and powerful.

Decide what should truly matter to your company based on a thorough assessment of your customers, then create an identity that's enforced by action. For instance, if your consumers think that recycling is important, you can't just say that you feel the same way. For your identity to resonate, you'll need to make recycling a part of your brand, get involved in community initiatives, show off your actions on your website, and look for ways to connect with your customers.

3. Know when it's time to evolve

Everything changes – your customers, your industry, and your

brand. Eventually, whether you've followed all the right steps to creating a brand identity or not, you'll need to make some changes. It's up to you to decide whether you just need a brand refresh, or a full rebrand, but either way, don't be afraid of change.

Right now, the oldest vehicle company in the world, Ford, is undergoing a rebranding project to help them compete with some of the modern car service brands like Lyft and Uber. If you make the right decisions when evolving your brand, you should be able to keep hold of your existing customers, and attract new ones so that your company can start to grow. Just remember to grab some support along the way from a professional branding agency.

Tips for creating a brand identity with impact

Consumers interact with brands in powerful ways. Whether they're simply admiring your creative packaging choices, or laughing at your podcast on YouTube, they're engaging with your brand identity, and that's crucial for crafting long-term customer relationships.

Often, the best way to make sure you're creating a brand identity with impact, is to figure out how you can solidify your connections with your audience. Your brand identity should be a part of everything you do, from your brand recognition and awareness strategies, to your content marketing plans. So, how can you use a brand identity to connect with your audience on a deeper level?

1. Add a face to your identity

One of the simplest ways that companies make their brands more appealing, is by adding a face or image to the mix. You might have noticed that a lot of companies have "mascots" today that

act as a hero for their overall identity. For instance, the Mailchimp mascot is a cute, friendly, and relevant way for the company to add life to their identity. You could use the same strategy to further enhance your own brand presence.

2. Be authentic

While it's important to know how to create a brand identity that your audience can relate to, you shouldn't simply adopt a "me too" approach to branding. Make sure that you focus on values and goals that you truly believe in, as this will help to improve the sustainability of your identity. Plus, if you're faking it, today's astute customers will certainly pick up on it eventually – damaging your company's reputation.

3. Be seamless

Your brand identity is something that should remain the same no matter where your customer encounters it. Throughout your integrated marketing communications, your stores, and your social media accounts, your customers should get the same experience of what makes you unique. Remember, the more consistent your identity is, the easier it will be for you to earn the trust and loyalty of your customers.

4. Be different

Finally, remember to set yourself apart from the competition wherever you can. The world is chock-full of advertisements and brands that are all competing for the attention of the same consumer base. You need to show your customers that it's worth choosing you over your competitors. The research you did during your branding process should help you to find what makes you different.

Do you know your brand identity?

Figuring out how to create a brand identity that resonates with your audience is complicated, because every company is different. Strategies that work for your competitors might not work for you, and vice versa. One thing that you should always keep in mind, is that a brand is an evolving asset. Creating a brand identity isn't something you can achieve in a single day, week, month or year. It's something that requires constant attention, and frequent evolution based on the needs and preferences of your audience.

If you can use the strategies outlined above to determine what your company stands for, and what you want it to be perceived as in the eyes of your consumers, then you should be on track to creating a sustainable identity that stands the test of time. Just remember, you need to make sure that you consider every element of your brand identity in context if you want to create a truly seamless experience.

Every asset that defines your brand, from your logo, to your name, your website, and even your communication strategy informs your brand identity. Make sure that when you decide who "you" are, you do so with a thorough understanding of your position, your competitors, your customers, and your future.

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