The key brand identity elements essential for strong and successful branding

Category: Branding
written by Stephen Peate | 11 April 2024
Every brand is different. Each company has its own vision, values, and unique value proposition. But leading organizations still need a series of core brand identity elements to make the right impact on its target audience. These elements of brand identity are what make your venture stand out.

The right blend of brand voice and design elements, such as your color scheme or logo, are how you help your customers understand your brand, and form a lasting connection with it.

Just look at world-leading company like Coca-Cola, it's not just company's elegant logo we remember as consumers. It's the red and white color palette, the friendly messaging, and even the jingle, "Always the real thing".

Based on our years of experience helping endless companies build a consistent brand identity, we've created this guide to the core elements of brand identity every organization needs.

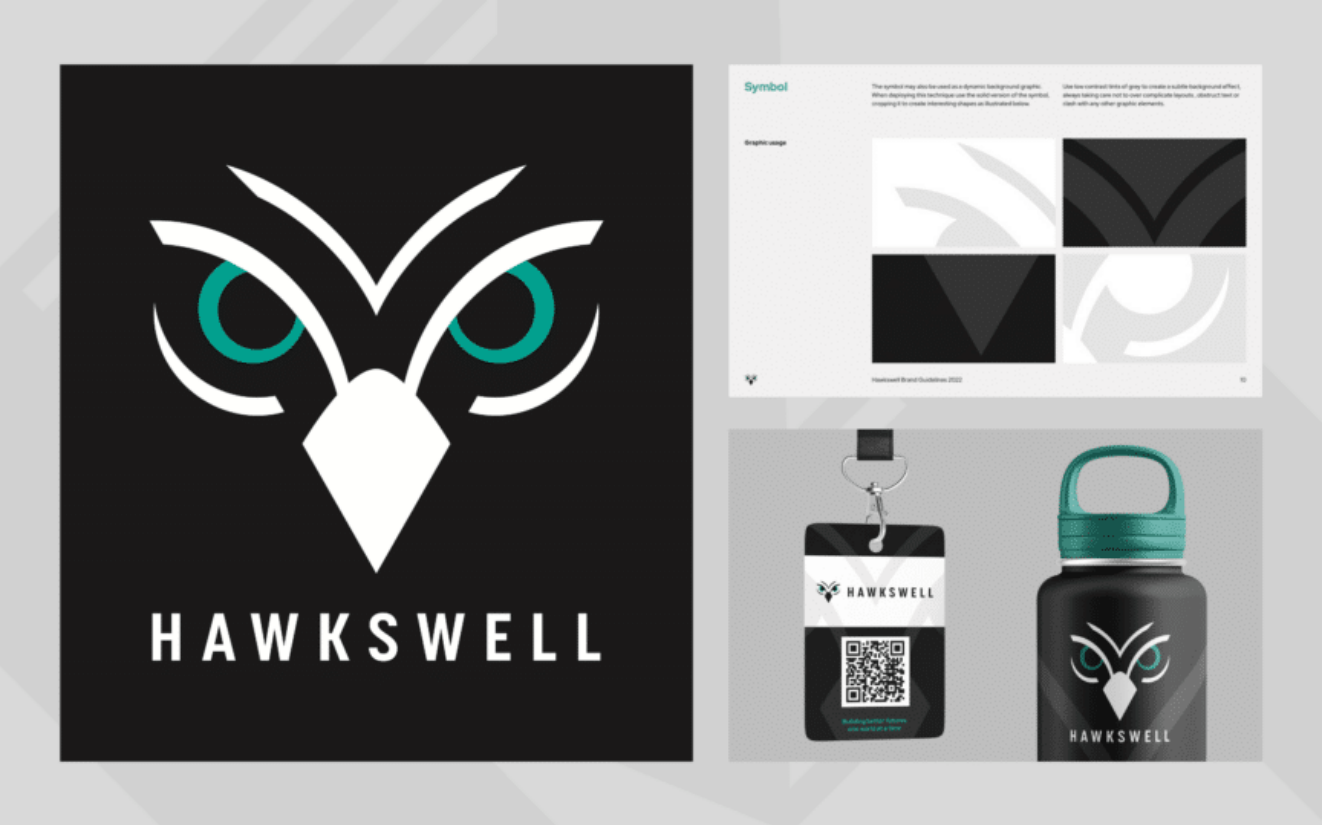
Let's start building your brand.

What are brand identity elements?

The elements of brand identity, or "brand elements" are the unique components of your brand that help to create a cohesive, recognizable image for your business. They extend into everything you create, shaping brand perception, and forging an emotional connection with your audience.

Each element of your brand identity, from your logo to your typography choices, plays a pivotal role in how people think and feel about your brand. These components are crucial for differentiating your company, and guiding how you communicate and connect with your audience.

As an example, let's look at Hawkswell, a company we helped build a cohesive brand identity. The group's impact on its customers is shaped by its evocative name, its minimalist and modern image, and its inspirational tone of voice.



The most important brand identity elements

The important thing to remember when defining the core elements of brand identity, is that the components don't exist in a vacuum. They all have to work cohesively together to clarify and strengthen the message you want to send to your audience.

Tesla, for instance, highlights its commitment to sustainability and innovation through a logo (derived from a motor rotor), a bold red color palette, custom fonts, and an ambitious tone of voice.

Let's dive into the most important brand identity elements you'll need for a consistent brand identity.

1. The brand name: Your starting point

Amazing branding starts with a distinctive name. Your name is the first resource you'll use to identify your company, and tell your customers what your organization is all about. Choosing a name might seem simple at first, but it's often more complex than it seems.

As an example, look at "Sight Scotland," Its original name "Royal Blind," seemed perfect at first, but the company quickly discovered that this title alienated some of its target audience. After all, the company wasn't focused exclusively on supporting the blind, but anyone with visual impairments.

Switching to "Sight Scotland" helped the organization send a more positive, holistic message about its brand mission to its target audience.



In some cases, a brand name can become so powerful, that it enters everyday vocabulary. Just look at how you don't tell someone to "search" for something online if they need more information. You tell them to "Google" it. Or how about when, instead of asking for a bandage, you ask for a band-aid?

A great name needs to be evocative, descriptive enough to tell your customers what you do, and versatile enough to grow with your brand. It should be unique, memorable, and deeply infused with your brand personality.

Used correctly, a name is a powerful tool, capable of highlighting your brand's personality, and carving a crucial space for your company in the minds of potential customers.

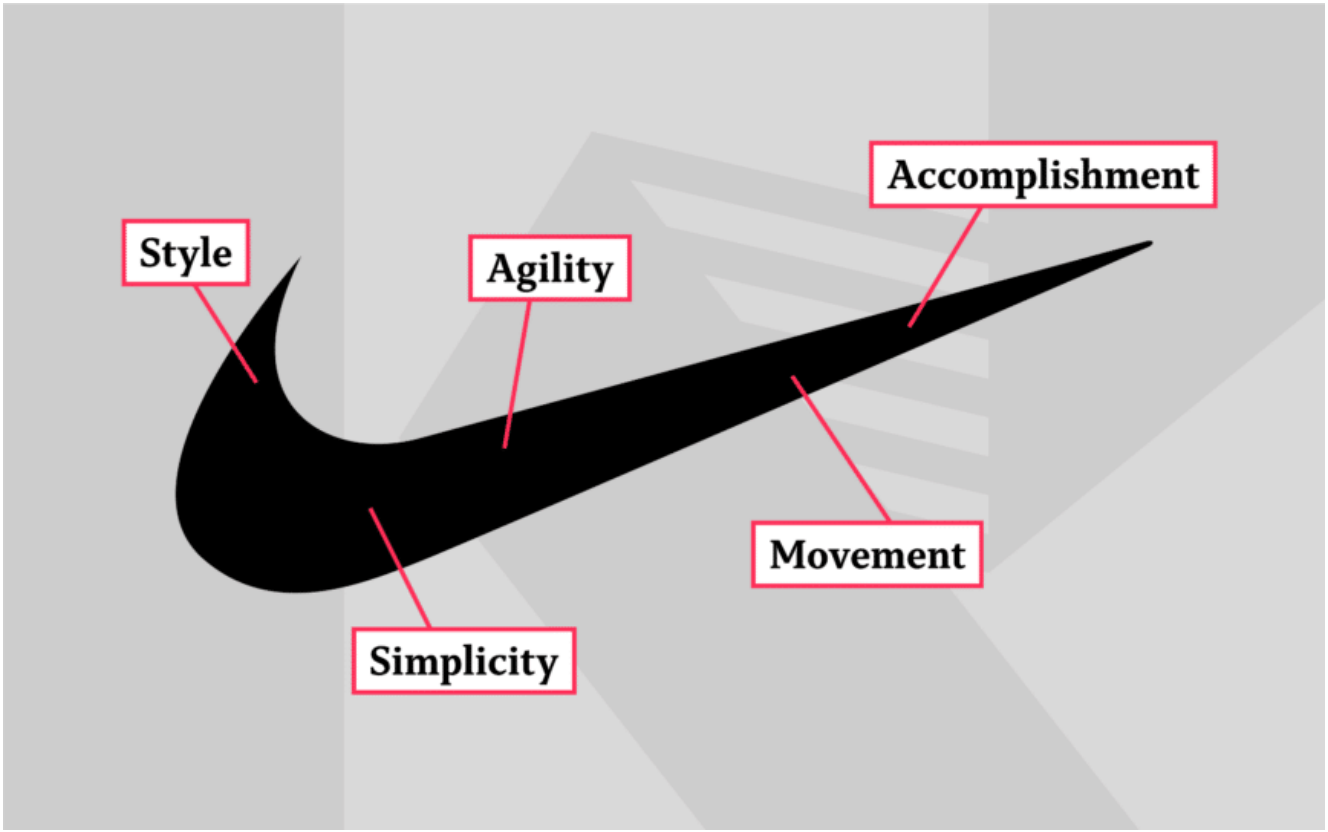
2. Visual identity elements: The logo

The logo or "brand mark" is often the first thing people think about when exploring brand identity elements. Your logo is one of the most recognizable aspects of your brand. It's the tool you use to condense all the things you want to say about your brand experience into a simple graphic.

Aligned with the other visual elements of your brand, your logo allows your target customer to quickly identify your brand. Whether you're producing packaging, advertising campaigns, or even a powerful website, your logo acts as your company's signature.

To design an effective logo, you need to understand your brand's ethos or essence, your target audience, and the core message you want to send.

Nike's logo, is an abstract "swoosh" shape based on the wing of the goddess Nike, who inspired the company's name. It represents movement, agility, and fluidity, supporting Nike's focus on motivating people to be more athletic.



Great logos are simple but powerful, they separate you from the competition in your target market, helping customers to remember what you stand for. Notably, there are times when your logo may need to change or evolve, as your business grows.

When Customer.io evolved from an email automation company into

a comprehensive communication platform, it updated its logo to highlight its holistic portfolio of products, and focus on customer satisfaction.



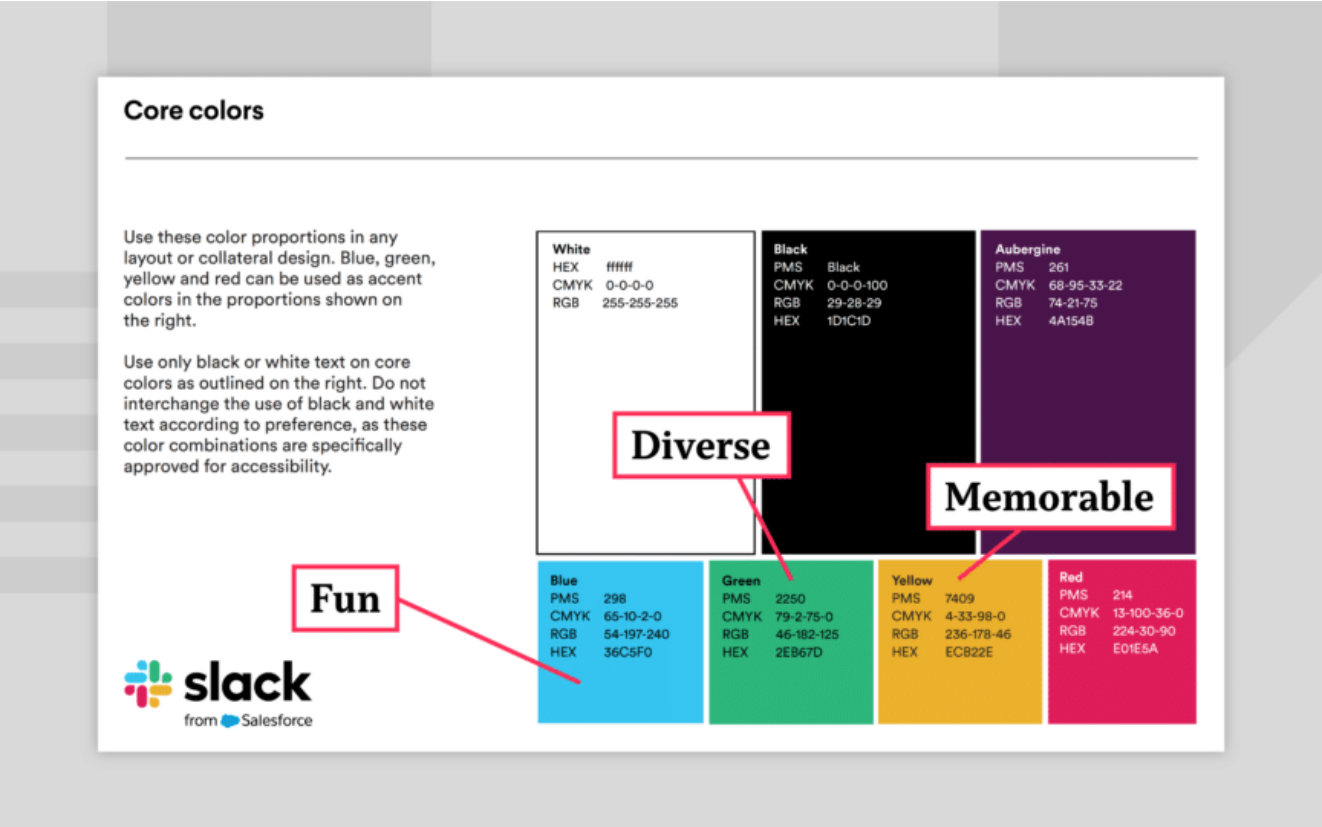
3. The color palette: Visual impact

The colors you choose to represent your brand are another of the most valuable brand identity elements. Color isn't just an aesthetic choice for your brand image. Color psychology tells us that different colors evoke different emotions in consumers.

Mayhew's bright and colorful palette highlights their compassionate nature, and their warm, generous approach to supporting the animals of the world.



Slack’s color palette, which appears across all of the company’s assets, from its website to its social media presence and email campaigns, conveys an idea of diversity. Using numerous distinctive colors together is how Slack shows customers that its app unifies people from different backgrounds.



The colors you choose for your own brand need to resonate with your brand's personality, and send a message to your customers about what your company really stands for.

Incorporating a consistent color palette into your brand guidelines ensures you can deliver a universal and holistic experience across all touchpoints. It helps to support instant brand recognition, and contributes to your overall messaging strategy.

For example, a company focused on sustainability might use colors like green and earthy neutral tones, to constantly remind its customers of its focus on the planet.

4. Imagery: Complements to your visual identity elements

You've probably noticed that companies don't just rely on colors and logos to create a cohesive visual identity. Most organizations also take their own unique approach to other graphical components too, such as illustrations, or brand photography.

Imagery is one of the foundational elements of brand identity, used in everything from your marketing campaigns to your social media pages.

The images you use can showcase some of your brand's personality, and also help you build a deeper emotional connection with your audience.

When we updated the CBC visual identity, we used authentic photos of real students, to help prospective students imagine what it would be like to attend the campus themselves.



The imagery you use in your brand identity can consist of everything from photos to quirky illustrations, like the ones used by Dropbox, and even shapes.

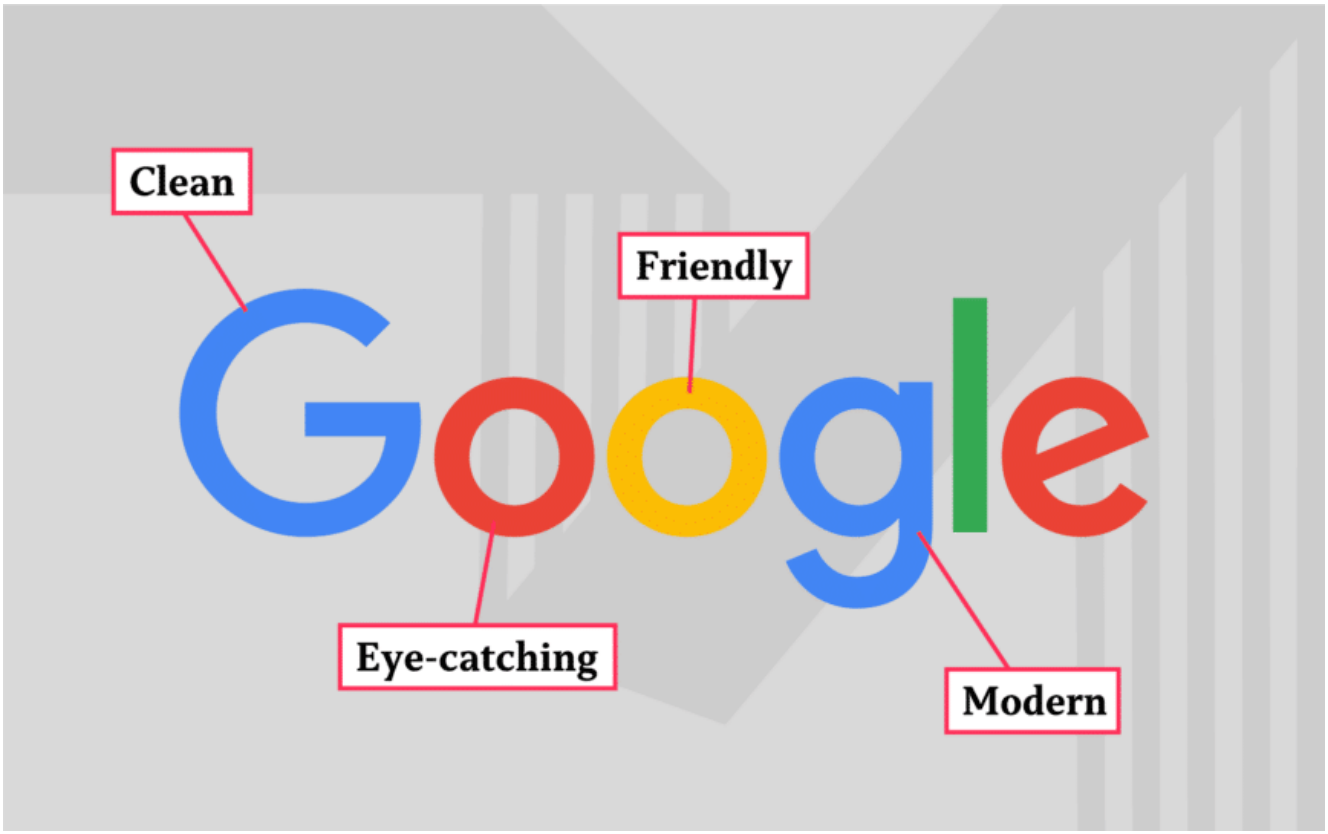
The key to success with imagery is consistency. The more consistent you are about the style of your visual assets; the more familiar people will become with the core elements that shape your brand.

5. Typography: The unsung hero of visual design

Typography is one of the key elements of visual identity that doesn’t always get enough attention. It’s easy to assume fonts don’t have as big of an impact on brand awareness and equity as other things, like your brand color palette, or the graphic elements on your website.

However, just like brand colors, the right fonts have an emotional impact on your audience. Over the years, human beings have learned to associate certain fonts with specific ideas.

We see serif fonts as authoritative and traditional, and sans-serif fonts as modern and clean. Just look at Google’s logotype. It immediately showcases a modern, friendly, and straightforward brand.



Alternatively, Disney’s memorable logo font, based on the signature of its founder, feels creative, imaginative, and human.



When you're building a unique identity for your logo, you might end up using multiple fonts. The brand fonts you use on your website for body copy and headers might be different to the typefaces you use for your logo.

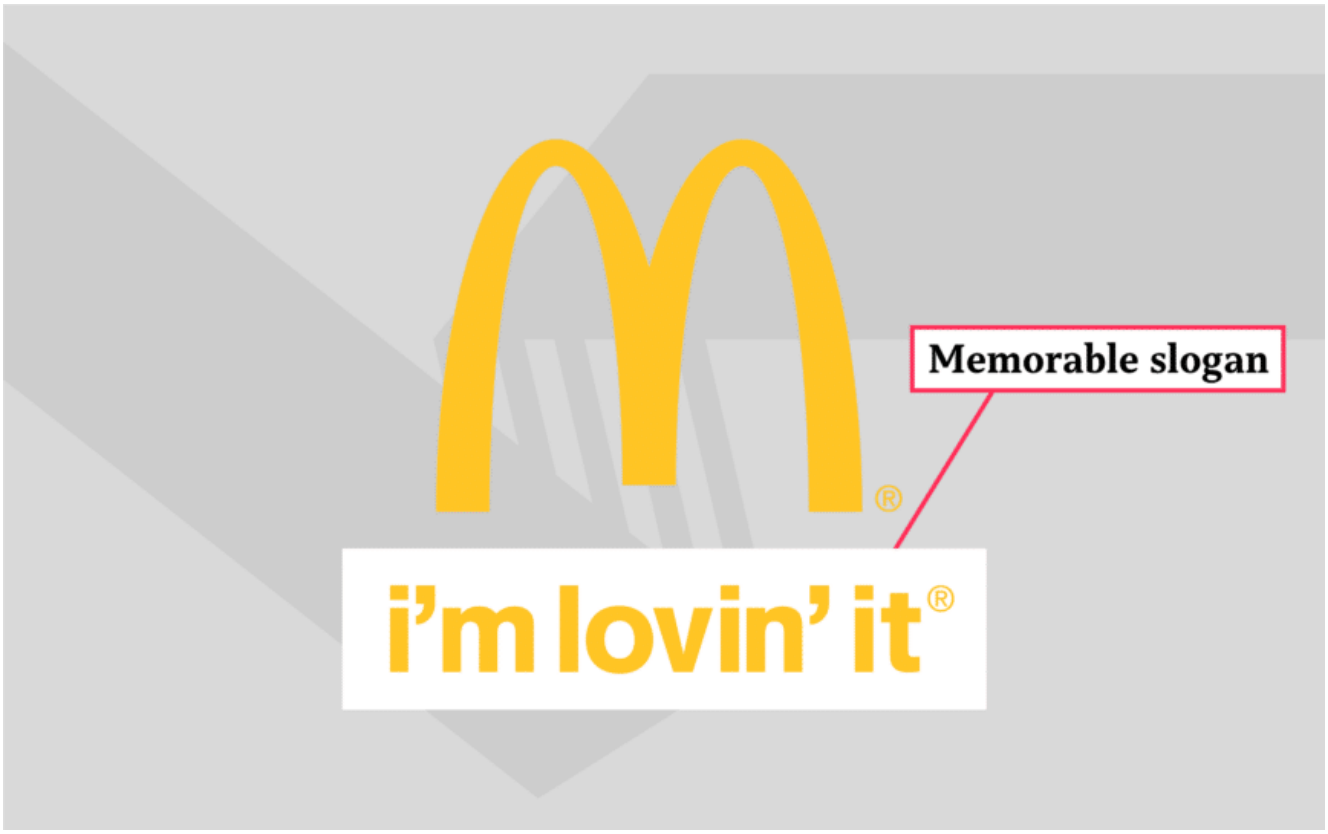
Just remember to keep it simple. Too many fonts, just like too many colors, can dilute the impact of your brand's message, and make it harder for customers to recognize your company.

6. The slogan or catchphrase: Your first brand message

These days, not every company will have a slogan or catchphrase. But slogans are so common among major brands, that they still encompass one of the most valuable brand identity elements.

Your slogan, tagline, or catchphrase is the concise and memorable message you use in marketing campaigns across a range of communication channels. They're short and catchy snippets of information, that help to convey your brand's promise to your audience.

More importantly, slogans make your company memorable. It's almost impossible to see the McDonald's logo without also hearing the phrase "I'm lovin' it" in your mind.



Coming up with an effective slogan can be tricky. You need something simple and straightforward that also conveys your brand's values, and highlights what makes your business unique.

However, once you find an effective slogan, it can become a valuable marketing asset, appearing on your business cards, your product packaging, and almost every marketing campaign you create for the physical, and digital world.

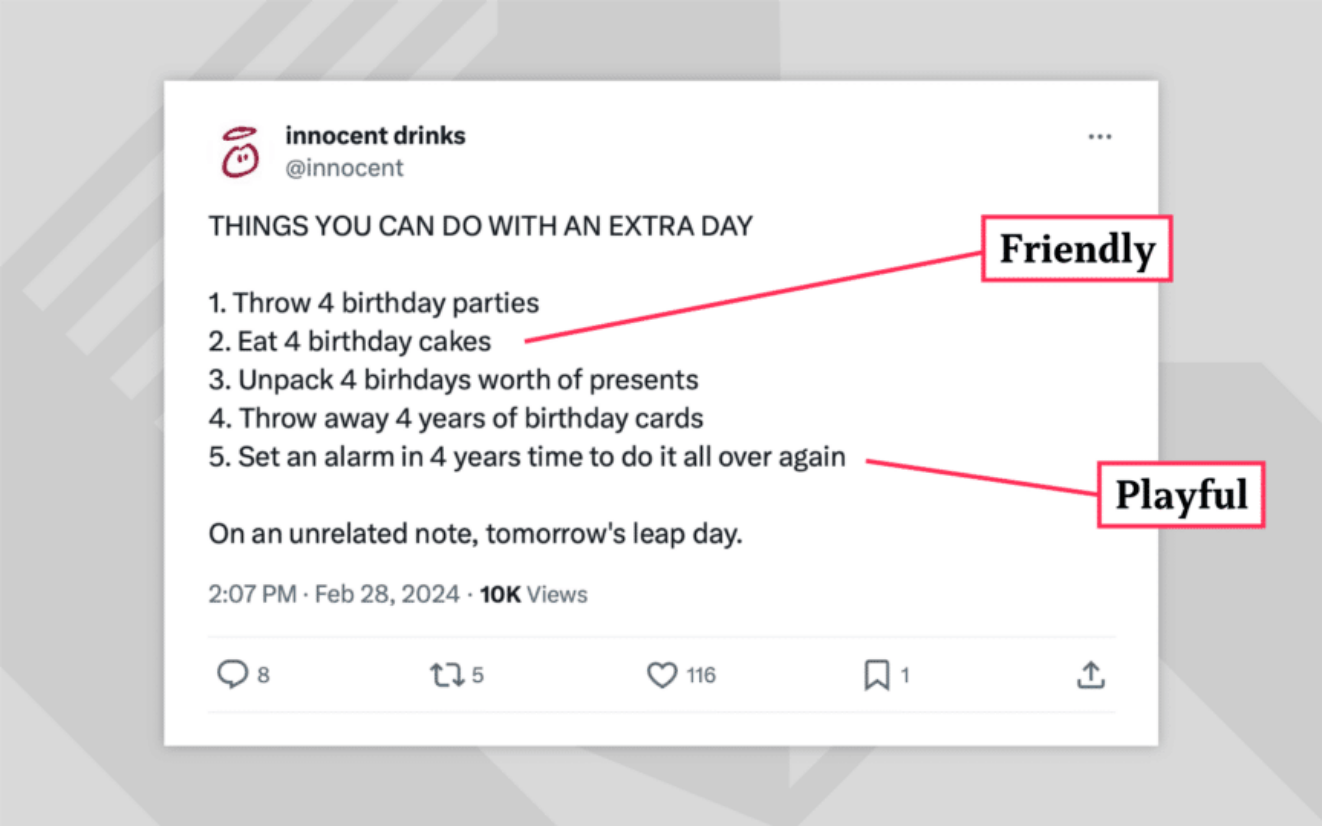
7. Tone of voice: Your brand's sound

A lot of the most important brand identity elements you'll create for your company are visual, from your logo design to your color palette. But there's more to making a lasting impression on your customer's than just catching their eye.

A strong brand presence also requires a memorable tone of

voice. That’s basically the language you use to convey your attitude and brand personality to your customers.

If you want to show your customers that you’re fun and playful, you might use a friendly, humorous tone of voice, like Innocent Smoothies does.



If you’re trying to earn the trust of your customers by appearing authoritative and knowledgeable, you might use more formal language.

Like with most branding elements, the key to success with a great tone of voice is consistency. Once you identify what kind of language your customers will respond best to, you need to use the same tone across all of your consumer touchpoints.

You’ll need the same messaging elements across social media, your website, and even included in your customer service strategy. That’s why we recommend creating editorial guidelines you can use to guide your marketing and sales teams.

8. Packaging: Your physical brand presence

If you create physical products, and ship or sell those products to customers, your product packaging will also play a crucial role in your brand's identity.

Great packaging is about more than just adding a well-crafted logo to your products. It's about creating an experience for your customers that encapsulates the essence of your brand. Your packaging can show off your personality, in the content you use, as well as colors and shapes.



It can also help to validate your position in the market, and your unique selling points. For example, the Zero Waste Cartel company, committed to selling sustainable products, forgoes plastic in all of its packaging, in exchange for biodegradable and reusable materials.

Designing packaging isn't just a great way to stand out on supermarket shelves. It can contribute to creating a specific image for your brand, a solid brand identity.

Creating the core elements of brand identity

Now you know what the most crucial brand identity elements are for your business, the next step is figuring out how to create these components yourself.

Of course, you can always work with the experts on this process. In fact, we recommend getting a little extra help if you're new to brand strategy, or graphic design. However, once you've sourced the right support, there are a few steps you can take to start bringing your identity to life.

1. Conduct thorough market research

We know research is time-consuming, and often boring, but it's also critical to building a memorable brand. No successful brand (that we know of), has ever just jumped into the market without doing a little homework first.

Ultimately, your brand's visual identity and messaging strategy should be based on two things: your target audience, and your competition. Conducting market research into your ideal customer is how you identify which values and core ideas you need to convey to resonate with the right customers.

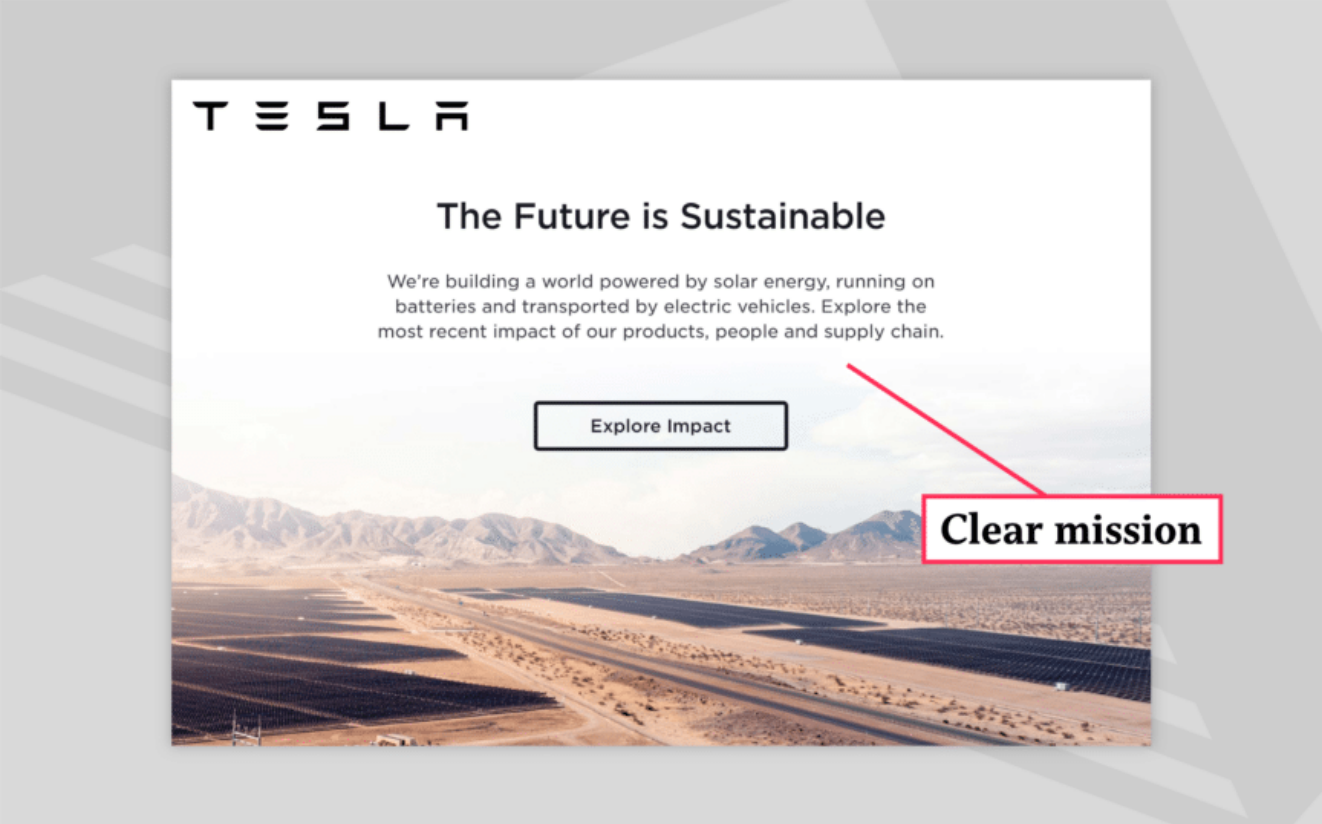
You can conduct online surveys, check out industry reports and even run focus groups to learn more about what will resonate with your customers on an emotional level.

Researching your competitors is how you ensure you can differentiate yourself from them. It helps you to refine your brand positioning, understand the "gaps" you can fill in your market, and identify ways to compete that don't rely entirely on offering products that are "cheaper" than the alternative.

2. Establish a clear purpose, and position

Nothing is more important to a strong brand identity than knowing the "why" behind your business. Your company's mission and core values should inform everything you do, from the main colors you choose for your color scheme, to your messaging strategy.

Ask yourself, what are you trying to accomplish with your company (aside from making money)? For instance, Tesla clearly highlights that its focus is on creating a future "powered by solar energy".



Determine how your brand sets itself apart from the competition, what goals you want to accomplish in the next ten or twenty years, and how you want customers to remember you.

How do you want to position yourself in your market? Are you an innovator? A sustainable champion? A friendly and customer-focused partner? These insights will help you to create a core "spirit" for your brand you can infuse into your brand

identity elements.

3. Craft a memorable brand personality

Once you have your market research, and a clear view of your brand's mission or purpose, the next step is to create a personality that conveys your core values to your customers.

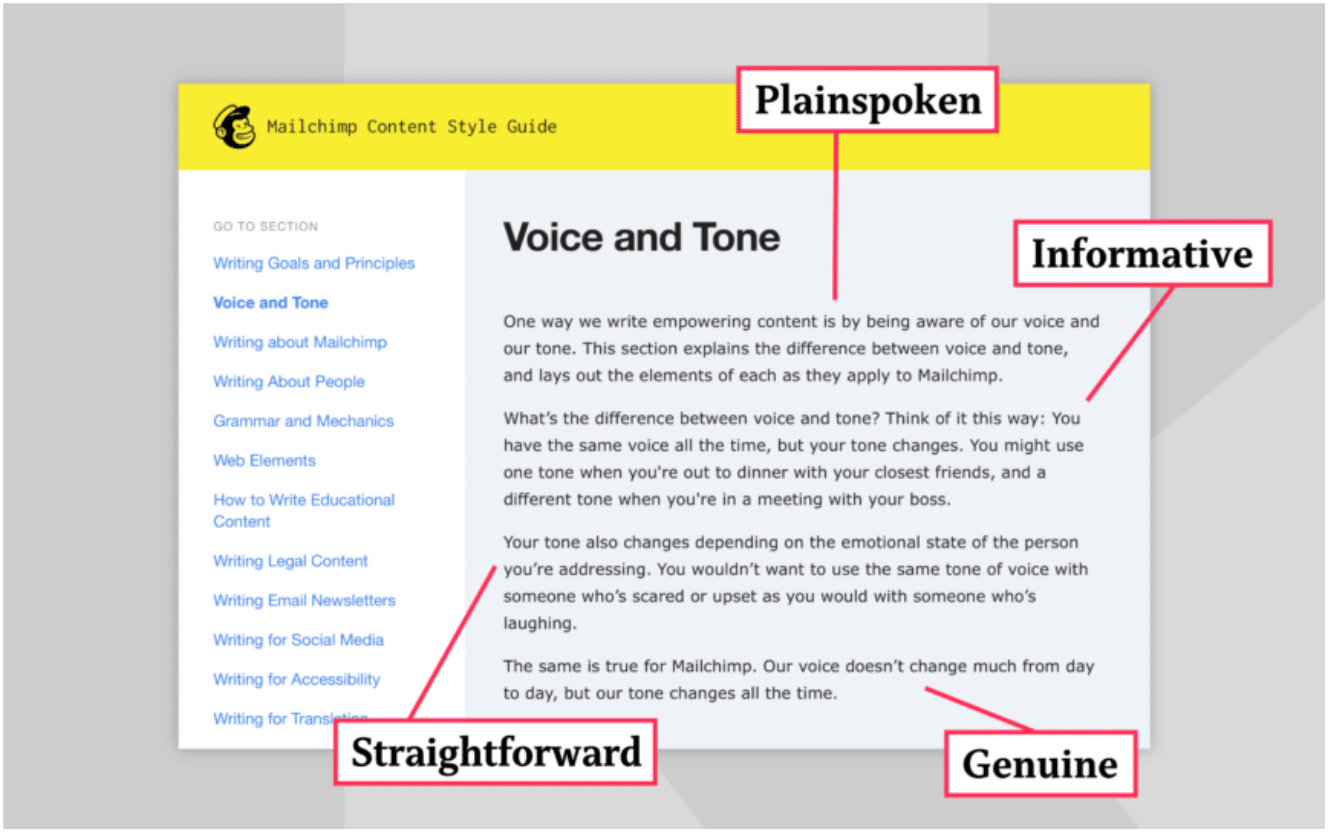
The best personalities are the ones that convince your audience you have the same values as them. 89% of customers say they're loyal to brands that share their priorities.

So, if your customers are eco-conscious climate warriors, who appreciate transparency, honesty, and a commitment to planet, you need to show all of these things in your marketing materials. If your customers are business leaders that value thought leadership, show your expertise.

The challenging part about building a great brand personality, is making sure you use it consistently across all of your marketing materials and other communications.

Nobody trusts a brand that sounds different every time they interact with it. So, create brand guidelines that remind your employees of the language to use in all of your messaging.

Here's a great example from Mailchimp to guide you.



Notice how it's informative and educational, while also showing off Mailchimp's own unique use of language and straightforward personality.

4. Design your visual brand identity elements

Here's where working with the experts really comes in handy. While you can always use free color palette generators to find the "primary colors" for your brand, or logo creators to build a brand mark, experts will give you a competitive edge.

They'll be able to help you choose the main colors that will resonate with your target audience. They can guide you through the process of selecting effective fonts, and ensure your logo stands out from the crowd. When we built a brand for Network Homes, we didn't just design a logo.

We ensured they had all of the elements they needed for a consistent visual identity. That included a color palette, an extended palette, typography insights and more.



When [designing your visual brand identity] elements, focus on:

Your color palette

The core hues you'll use to connect with customers on the basis of color psychology. Avoid using too many different shades and be sure to add hex codes to your brand guidelines, to give future designers more direction.

The logo

The fundamental component of your visual identity. Your logo should be simple, clean, scalable, and instantly recognizable. Ensure it conveys a clear message about what your company stands for and works across multiple mediums.

Typography

Pick fonts that resonate with your brand personality (serif fonts for sophistication, sans-serif for modernity, etc). Stick to three fonts at most, and make sure they're clearly legible.

Graphics and photography

The brand identity elements that will support your visual impact. Think about photos, illustrations, shapes, and icons (or favicons).

5. Maintain your brand identity elements

Once you've designed all of the crucial elements of brand identity you need, the next step is making sure you use and manage them consistently. Create a clear set of brand guidelines your employees can use to create a consistent image and tone for your company.

Most importantly, be ready to evolve and adapt if necessary. While consistency is crucial, brands aren't static things. They're dynamic, living entities that can evolve over time.

After you've shared your brand identity with your customers, pay attention to how they respond. Listen to your target audience to find out whether they're getting the message you want to portray from all of your brand elements working together.

Use social listening tools, surveys, and feedback to determine when and how you might need to refresh your brand over time. This will ensure your brand elements don't lose their value.

The crucial elements of brand identity

A great brand isn't just a logo. There are numerous brand identity elements that make up the spirit and essence of your company. Think of these elements like the "DNA" strands of your company, defining how your organization looks, sounds, and interacts with customers.

With the right brand identity elements, you can create a

cohesive experience for your customers that ensures you'll stand out from the competition.

If you need help designing the essential elements of your brand identity, contact Fabrik today, for guidance from a leading branding expert.

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