10 steps to the ultimate brand development strategy

Category: Strategy
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A brand development strategy is something every company should have, regardless of their size, niche, or target market. Every organization needs to understand their place in their industry, how to reach their target audience, and how they can grow and expand over time.

A strategic brand development process goes beyond initial "brand building", to determine exactly how you're going to build brand awareness, and gain market share.

Used correctly, this strategy can consistently contribute to your brand image, help you convey your core values to your target customers, and boost your profitability.

Based on my years of experience developing brands with the Fabrik team, I'm going to show you how you can create a brand development strategy that works.

What is brand development?

Brand development is the process of creating your company's image, personality, products, and services to distinguish yourself from the competition, and connect with a specific audience. Brand development strategies aren't just a one-off initiative.

A success brand development strategy needs to be a continuous process. It leverages insights into your overall business strategy, competitive landscape, and market to drive your company in the right direction, year after year.

While you will set goals for brand development, they typically

act as benchmarks, or crucial steps you'll take towards cultivating customer loyalty and building brand equity.

As your business grows, your market evolves, and you learn more about your industry, your brand development strategy will change too.

That's why, when we initiate a brand development strategy with a company at Fabrik, we often provide our clients with frameworks, templates, and guidelines for the future.

Why you need a brand development process

So, why do you need a brand development strategy? Can't you just wing it, and roll with the punches as you go? Simply put, without a strategy, you're putting your brand at risk.

Brands aren't just logos, they're everything that distinguishes a company from its competition and forges an emotional connection with a specific audience. For a brand to be effective, it needs to be built and developed with care.

Companies with the reach and profitability of organizations like Google, Coca-Cola, or Nike don't happen by accident. They're meticulously crafted.

Investing in branding development, whether you build your own strategy, or work with a professional brand developer ensures you can:

- Increase brand awareness, spreading into new markets and categories.
- Improve revenue, and profitability, by introducing new product lines.
- Capture the hearts and minds of your customers consistently.

- Maintain a competitive edge, even in a crowded industry.
- Stay relevant and forward thinking.

How to build a brand development strategy: Step by step

The brand development process can vary from one company to the next. Here at Fabrik, we use a proven framework to help guide our clients from one step to the next. However, we also adapt constantly to the needs of each client.

Here are some of the key steps you'll need to take to build your brand's identity, and develop a strategy for consistent growth.

Step 1: Examine your overall business strategy

The first step in developing a successful brand is examining your business strategy. Essentially, this is your overall plan for the kind of company you want to build, and what you want to achieve. As an example, our client HRA Pharma didn't just want to produce a new contraceptive pill.

They wanted to empower women around the world, simplify the path to better health, and eliminate the roadblocks in the current market. That focus defined how they named their products, positioned their brand, and even built their visual identity.



Here are a few questions to ask yourself when defining your business strategy:

- What's your mission statement and vision? What do you want to achieve?
- How do we want customers to see our brand?
- What are the adjectives we'd use to describe this company?
- Which values are most important to our brand, and customers?
- How will we speak to our audience (what's our brand voice)?
- What makes us different to the competition?

These questions will not only help you to build your initial brand, but they'll also help you make decisions on how to grow and develop your identity.

Step 2: Identify and research your target

customers

Over time, your “target market” will evolve, as you introduce new product lines, and extend your reach into different landscapes. However, whether you’re building a brand for the first time, or working on the “next step” in your brand growth, you need a clear view of your target market.

Start with a narrow focus. Don’t just decide you’re a skincare company targeting anyone interested in beauty. Look at the customers most likely to fall in love with your brand, such as people focused on sustainability, natural products, or ethics (like Lush).

Your target audience should share your values, and benefit most from the “vision” you’ve established. Once you’ve identified who you want to reach, learn as much as you can about them.

Read market reports published by companies like GlobalNewswire, and Fortune Insights. Host focus groups and studies. Analyze your customer’s psychographics, demographics, and behaviors, and remember to update your knowledge frequently (people are constantly changing).

Step 3: Analyze your competitors

Once you’ve chosen your ideal customers, you’ll need to find out which other companies are already competing for their attention. Even if you’re focusing on a very specific niche, there will be other competitors with similar solutions to yours.

For instance, our client Seraphine produces clothing and accessories for parents. There are plenty of other companies that do the same, but by analyzing their competitors, they discovered they could differentiate themselves by focusing on both style, and comfort.



Like your target audience, your competitors will change over time, particularly as you continue to produce innovative products. Make competitive analysis an ongoing process in your brand development strategy.

It helps to guide your marketing strategy, your brand message, and your approach to product development.

Step 4: Establish your brand positioning

Analyzing your target market and competitors should give you a clear view of your current unique value proposition (another thing that can change with time). This should help you to establish your "position" in your current market.

In other words, where do you sit compared to your competitors? Are you a company that offers exceptional customer service and support? Are you the business that offers more affordable products, or more luxurious items, made with high-quality materials?

Your positioning statement will outline that information. It

will help you to establish how you're going to develop marketing materials to reach new customers, and cultivate brand loyalty.

As an example, our client Salad Money positioned itself as an alternative to toxic and unfair payday loan providers. It wanted to change an exploitative market, and give consumers access to small, affordable loans, regardless of their credit history.

This positioning strategy helped us to create a strategy for Salad that reflected its position as an honest, authentic, and compassionate brand.

Step 5: Create your messaging strategy

The next step in your brand development strategy is figuring out how you're going to convey your brand promise and message to your various target audiences. Notably, you shouldn't just be thinking of your ideal customer base here, but also future employees, stakeholders, partners, and investors.

Often, at Fabrik, we start by establishing a single, core message behind the brand. For instance, with Abri, the housing group, we identified the phrase "Let's talk over a cuppa", to epitomize the company's accessible, friendly nature.



Many other companies also create “straplines” or “slogans” that help to convey their messaging, like Nike’s “Just Do It”, or Coca-Cola’s “Always the Real Thing”.

Other elements that will help your messaging strategy include:

- A clear set of editorial guidelines, outlining your tone of voice, the type of language you’ll use, and the personality you want to convey.
- An elevator pitch that condenses your unique value proposition, mission, values, and the benefits you offer customers into a single statement.
- Example messages that help to guide new staff members on how they should (and shouldn’t), convey your brand’s voice.

Step 6: Develop a powerful name and logo

When you’re building a brand, your name and logo will be two of the first things you’ll focus on. When you’re investing in your brand development strategy, you may need to alter your

logo, and even your name from time to time.

Many companies invest in a logo refresh occasionally, to keep their image "up to date". Just look at examples like Dunkin' or Starbucks. Name changes are less common, but they're sometimes necessary after a merger, or when your brand isn't resonating with the right audience.

For example, our client Lumeon needed help creating a new name and logo when their existing identity (Qinec), failed to convey their unique value proposition effectively.

Following extensive research, we discovered that the evocative name "Lumeon" was far more effective at inspiring consumers, and highlighting the company's focus on innovation. We paired this with a new logo, focusing on modernity, and a compassionate graphic.

Step 7: Create or update your website

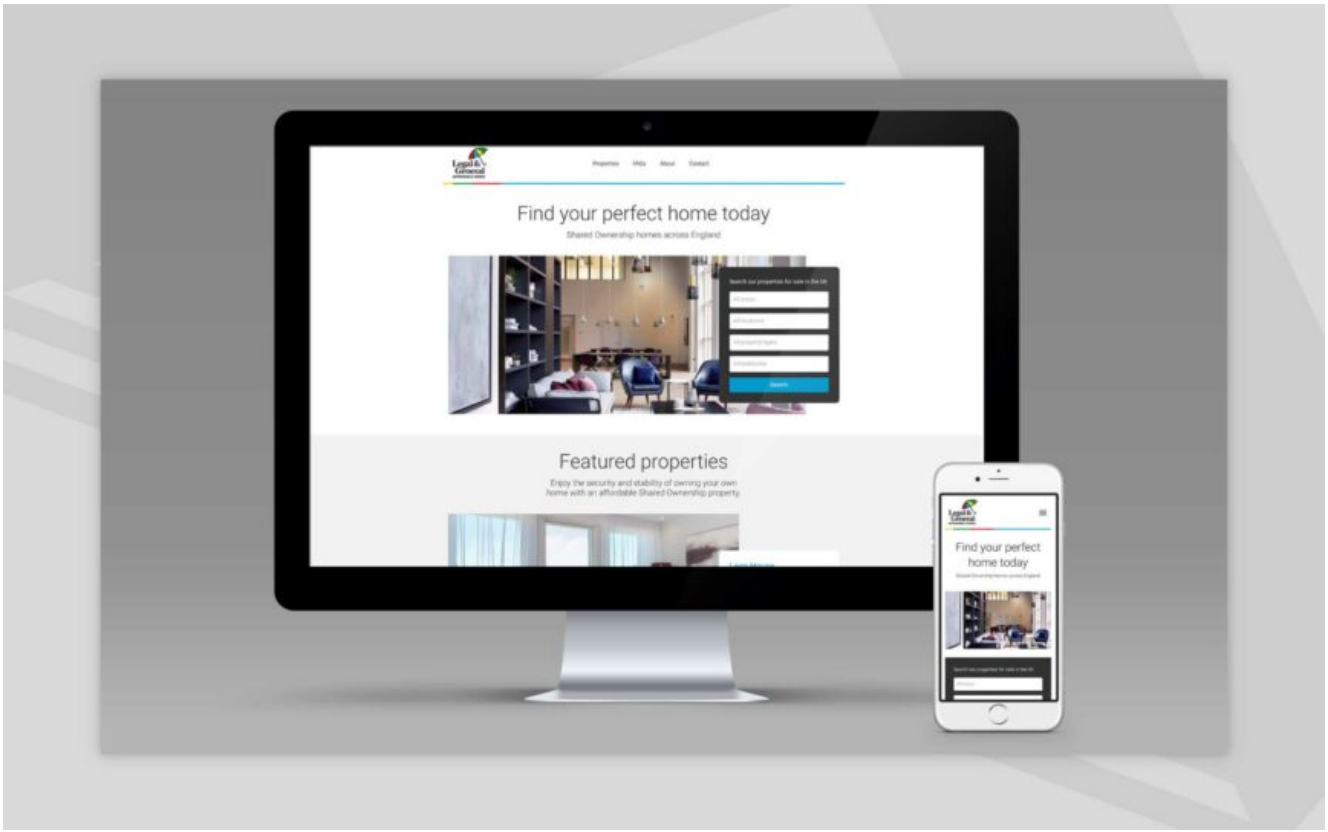
Your website is a critical part of your brand development strategy. It's not just how your customers learn more about your organization. It's also how you keep your customers up to date on the changes you're making to your product portfolio, and services.

The website you create will also be critical to your brand development in marketing. It's where you'll share the content that helps to drive up your rankings on the search engine results pages, and establish thought leadership with your audience.

One point to keep in mind is that as your business evolves, you may need more than one website to attract, engage, and inform different customer groups.

As an example, we worked with the leading UK company, Legal & General, on a website for their "Affordable Homes" team. This website shared the core branding and identity of the other

sites in the company's portfolio, but focused on the needs of a specific audience.



Step 8: Define your marketing strategy

Branding development and a comprehensive marketing strategy are closely connected. Over time, as you try to reach more potential customers, and expand your presence in your market, your marketing strategies will evolve.

Typically, when we work with the marketing team of a client investing in brand development, the first thing we recommend is building a strong approach to content marketing. Studies show that content marketing increases lead generation for 74% of customers.

It's also the best way to share your personality, vision and values with your customers, generate trust, and establish thought leadership. Ideally, the content you create should support customers through every stage of their buyer journey.

This means creating pieces that not only advertise your

products to consumers, but also help them make purchasing decisions, and assist them in getting the best return on their investment.

Once you've built your content marketing strategy, you can start building on that with more marketing campaigns.

You might invest in:

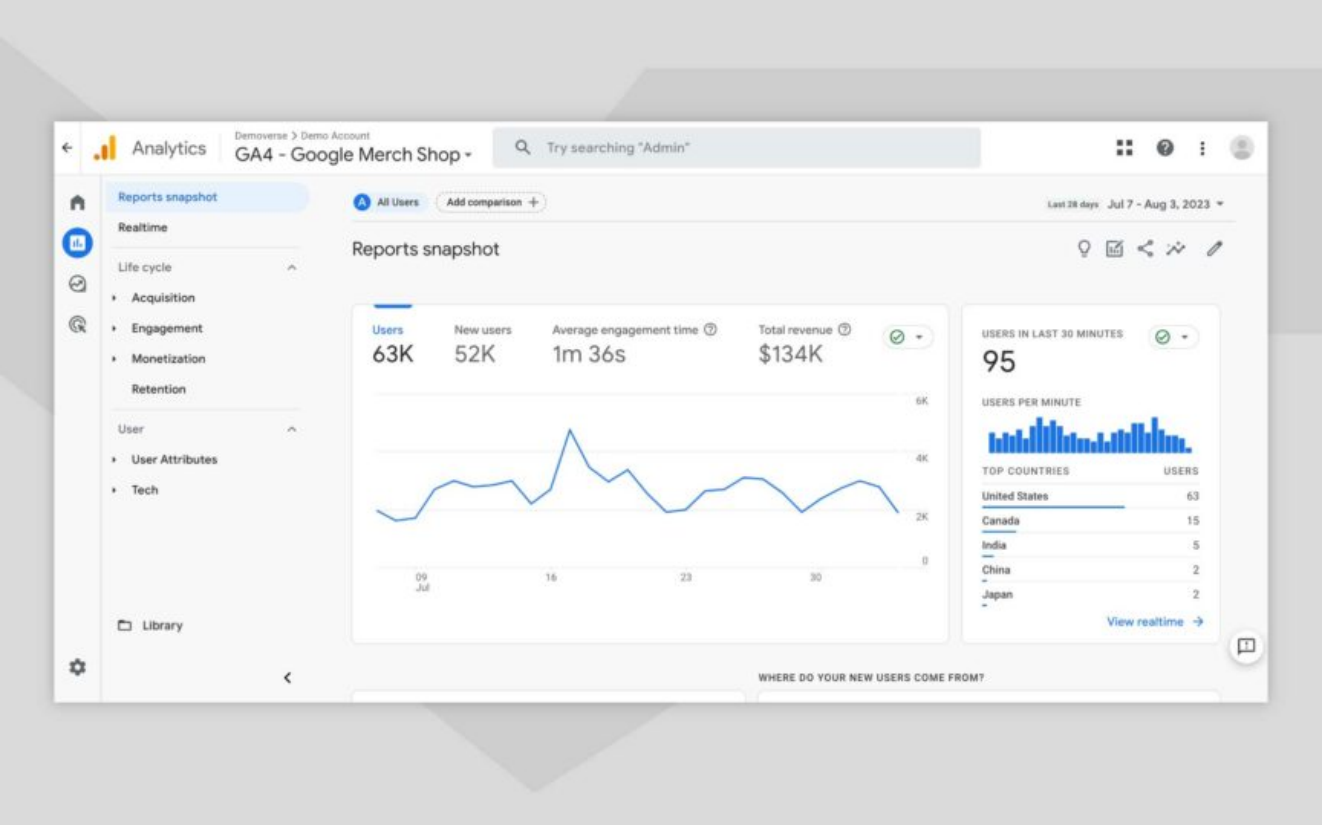
- Traditional marketing strategies like radio and television ads.
- Social media marketing and working with influencers.
- Newsletters and email marketing to help nurture your audience.
- Paid advertising to promote line extensions and new products.
- Earned advertising opportunities, like working with public relations teams.

Step 9: Implement, monitor, and improve

This step is one of the most important in any brand development strategy. Once you've implemented your plans for everything from your visual identity to your marketing campaigns, you need to be ready to constantly learn, and adapt.

There's plenty of technology available today that can help you to monitor your progress over time.

Analytical tools like Google Analytics will show you how effective your website is at driving conversions. Reporting solutions built into marketing platforms will track your promotional results.



Don’t just pay attention to how many customers you get from your marketing campaigns, or how much revenue you’re making. Pay attention to the perception customers have of your brand.

Use social listening tools to find out what customers are saying about you. Compare your profit and performance benchmarks to your competitors. Examine how your results change when you introduce new products or marketing campaigns.

Step 10: Continue working and expanding

Finally, it’s important to remember that there’s no real “end point” to a comprehensive brand development strategy. You should be constantly looking for new ways to improve, tap into new markets, and better serve your customers.

As you continue to learn about your market, and review the results of your marketing and product campaigns, you might decide to explore various new ways to grow your brand, such as:

- **Brand extension:** Launching new products or services in a

new market, under your existing brand name. As an example, Disney World is an extremely successful brand extension from the Walt Disney brand, which opened the door to new revenue for the group.

- **Building a new brand or sub-brand:** Your brand and product development strategy might show you that you need to create an entirely new entity to promote a new product line, or simply create a "sub" brand, such as the Legal and General Affordable Homes brand.
- **Co-branding:** Sometimes, working with another brand can help you to expand your reach and increase revenue too. For instance, the Dairy Milk Company often works with other organizations, like Oreo, to create new products.

Use the research you gather over time to consistently experiment with new ways to extend your brand. Just make sure you don't "dilute" your existing identity in the process. Stay true to your values, your vision, and your target audience.

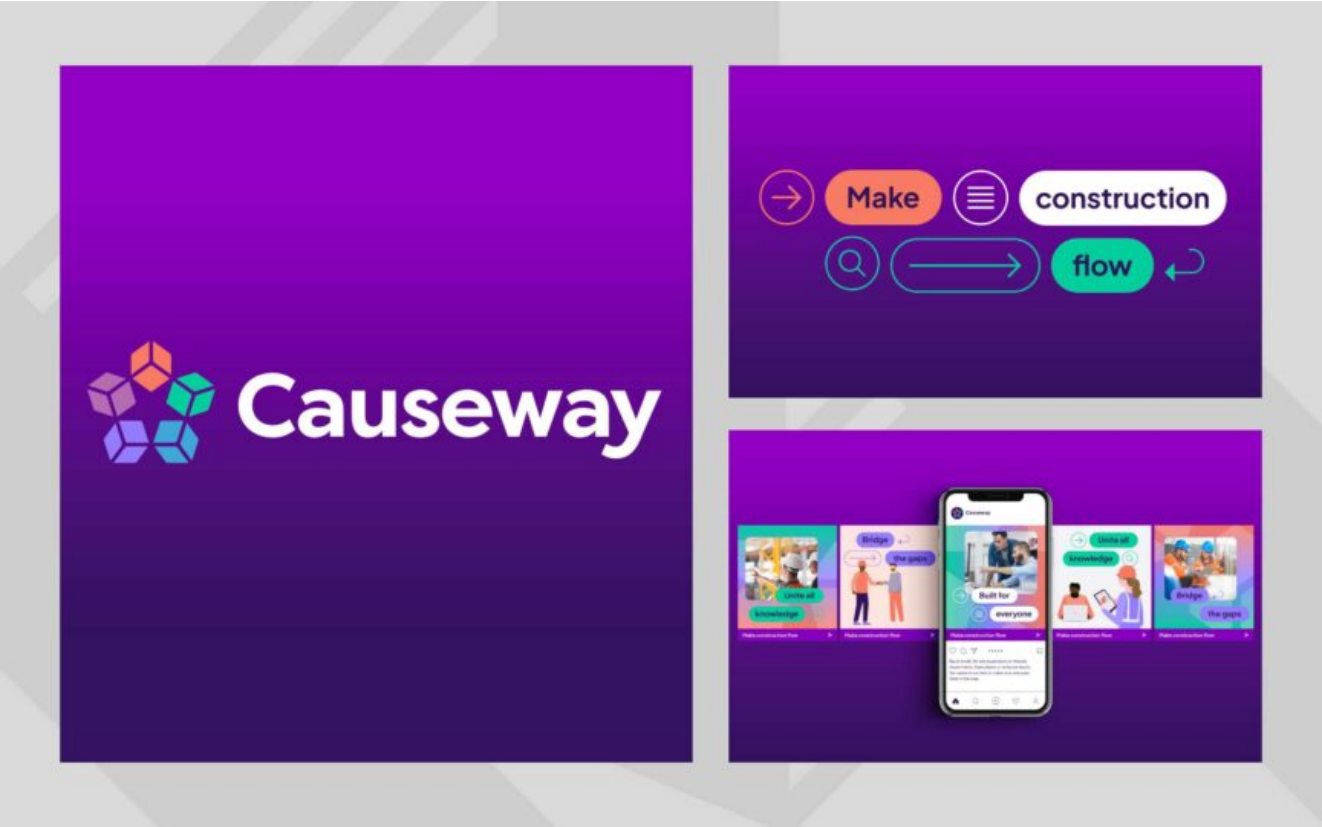
Creative brand development: An example

Let's end this guide with a comprehensive example of a creative brand development strategy. We've given a few above, but hopefully this will help to answer any lingering questions you have.

Causeway is an innovator in the "built environment" landscape, best known for producing solutions for local authorities, engineering consultants, and construction experts. Like many brands, Causeway has evolved over the years, introducing new products and services.

The creation of its new platform, built to streamline processes for its clients, was a ground-breaking moment in its branding development strategy. To ensure they could capture

the right clients, and optimize their return on investment, Causeway turned to Fabrik.



They needed to update and refine their parent brand, with a focus on highlighting their brand values through a refreshed visual and verbal identity. They also needed a strategy for how they were going to name and launch their new platform.

Working with us on a comprehensive end-to-end brand development strategy allowed Causeway to build the image, website, messaging and marketing strategy they needed.

Not only did the effort help to ensure the success of the new “CausewayOne” platform, but it further enhanced the equity of the existing Causeway company.

Work with a leading brand development company

Investing in a comprehensive brand development strategy is crucial for any company. Building a brand once isn’t enough.

You also need to determine how you're going to consistently grow and optimize that brand, to increase your competitive edge and earn new customers.

Unfortunately, branding development can be complex. It requires extensive research, a deep understanding of customer psychology, and a knowledge of how branding works.

If you're struggling to take your brand to the next level, or open the door to new opportunities, working with a brand development company could be the best next step.

An expert "brand developer" team will be able to give you the insights and expertise you need to not only build a stronger brand, but drive that brand into the future.

Contact Fabrik today to learn more about how we can help you navigate the complexities of brand development.

Fabrik: A branding agency for our times.