9 Essential Steps for Branding!

So you want to start a business? Great! You’re not alone—over six million businesses, including social enterprises, are started each year, making it *crucial* that your business stands out in the crowd.

Branding is often overlooked by small businesses, but even though you might think your resources are better spent elsewhere, we’re here to tell you that branding is a huge part of distinguishing yourself from your competition and attracting (and maintaining) a loyal customer base.  
  
Brainstorm What Your Brand Stands For  
1. Define Your Brand’s Qualities  
Identify your core values, qualities, and experiences that you wish customers to associate with you.   
1. 2.  
3. 4.  
5. 6.

2. Define Your Brand’s Mission  
In 3-5 sentences, describe what your business hopes to accomplish for your customers and why. Every successful brand meets an ongoing need. What customer needs inspired you to start a company? What are your most important values? Use a refined version of your company mission statement if you like.  
**Brand’s Mission Statement:**

## 3. Determine Your Target Audience

Who is your average customer? Think about their lifestyle and habits. What are their hobbies? What defines their family life? Are they leaders or followers? Use the internet to research and find your target audience. Look for pictures, articles, videos—anything and everything. Pick one person to be your “average” customer and write a detailed brief of their lifestyle, habits, hobbies, family life, etc. Include pictures of this customer in their environment that you analyze. Print this out and attach to this packet.

## 4. Recognize your competitive advantage

What makes you different from your competitors? List all of the ways you possibly can. Be as creative and specific as possible!

# Think About What Your Brand Should Look Like **5. Perform an online image search for logos…**

…in your industry, and become familiar with the common graphics your competition is using in their branding efforts. Which logos are most eye-catching? Which are forgettable? By researching competitors’ logos you’ll also ensure yours won’t get lost in the crowd. If you can’t find any in your field, then you can pick from others. You can sketch or print and paste the images below. Then use the prompts just listed to evaluate each logo. If you like, you can do this on separate sheets of paper and attach to the packet.  
  
**Logo 1: Most eye-catching**

Evaluation of Logo 1:

What TWO things are you seeing that you like and why do you like each thing?  
1.  
Why?  
  
2.  
Why?

How can you incorporate (not steal, mind you) this into your logo design?

**Logo 2: Most forgettable**

Evaluation of Logo 2:

What TWO things are you seeing that you like and why do you like each thing?  
1.  
Why?  
  
2.  
Why?

How can you incorporate (not steal, mind you) this into your logo design?

## 6. Define your brand personality

If you were to describe your brand as a person, what characteristics would come to mind? Feminine or masculine? Playful or serious? Loud or quiet? Young or mature? Be creative, have fun—be detailed! 3-5 sentences.

What musical score would best represent your brand: Classical, Jazz, Country, Dirty South Rap, EDM, other? Skrillex? Is it more Taylor Swift or Nirvana; Josh Groban or Lil’ Wayne? Kanye or Yeezus? Beatles or Stones?

Pick one and explain how this music communicates the values, qualities, mission etc. of your brand in 3-5 sentences.

# Create Core Branding Assets And Keep Them Consistent

## 7. Create your logo, typography, colors, and imagery

Work with your designer to decide what logos, fonts, colors, and imagery will accurately represent your business’ values and the characteristics outlined above.

## Logo

Sketch the version(s) below or print out and attach the following sheet. You may have more than one. For example, you may have a logo with and without a tagline, or different layouts, depending on where it will be used (on the product, business letterhead, etc.) If you’ve already made a logo, put that logo here and create another one!

## Color

You can reference watches of your logo colors and complementary brand colors by hex numbers. A great place to find inspiration is the website platform you will use (Weebly, for example). List the hex numbers. Provide an approximated sample if you wish next to each number. It’s important that you provide a rationale for how your colors represent your qualities, values, mission, etc.

**Primary: Hex#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hex#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hex#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

How specifically do your primary colors communicate your values, qualities, mission, etc. ?

**Secondary Hex#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hex#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hex#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

How specifically do your secondary colors communicate your values, qualities, mission, etc. ?

## Typography

Your logo fonts and any other fonts that can be used on your website, printed materials, etc. See my DP for the article on picking the right font <<http://turnarounddesign.com/what-does-typography-say-about-your-brand/>> Then choose two fonts to use and explain how those communicate your values. You will use the fonts for your branding efforts rather than your business proposal—for that you should use a very professional, business-oriented font.

**Font 1:**

**How does this font communicate your values, qualities, mission, etc?**

**Font 2:**

**How does this font communicate your values, qualities, mission, etc?**

## Imagery

The custom designs and style of photos that support your branding. What images will communicate your values, qualities, mission, etc.? Think outside of the box here—these images can be anything—patterns, landscapes, symbols, anything. Pick 3 and sketch them or cut and paste them below. If you want, you can attach this as a separate sheet. You could use this as inspiration OR wholesale for product design, websites, letterhead, etc.

**Image 1:**

Specifically, how does the image communicate your values, qualities, mission etc.?

**Image 2:**

Specifically, how does the image communicate your values, qualities, mission etc.?

**Image 3:**

Specifically, how does the image communicate your values, qualities, mission etc.?

## 8. Get a website and start considering social media profiles…

After further reflection, each group should have a website—this is the 21st century afterall. This will take care of your multimedia component for your exhibition. Wee!! Make sure your website’s aesthetic is consistent with your brand personality and the visual elements you choose to represent your company (e.g. fonts, typography, colors, imagery). Additionally, what social media platform (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram do you think will help to engage your customers and grow your brand awareness?

9. Create Your Brand’s Style Guide

**As you might have discovered by now, the most important rule of branding is to be consistent.**

Be consistent in communicating your brand message, in the products and services you provide, in every interaction with your customers, and also in **the visuals** that represent your brand.

With consistency in the design elements of every image, **the visual connection to your brand will become stronger and more memorable.**

For example:

Your logo colors should be used in your website design and social media profiles.  
Your brand fonts should be used on your website and in your marketing images.  
Your business cards (or other advertisements and packaging) should use an approved version of your logo.  
Your sharing images should have continuity in content and style.

The easiest way to maintain that visual consistency is to create **a brand style guide**.

**A brand style guide is a document (it can even be one page) that references the specifics of your brand visuals**, so that every time you create a new image for your brand – or hire a designer to do so – the guidelines will be in place to maintain a cohesive look. Having completed this packet, you are now ready to make your brand style guide! Create a draft of this by using the template and creating your own from scratch in Word.

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