



From Nice Logo to Strong Brand

- Becoming known for who you are

As entrepreneurs we might find ourselves up against competitors who are better known than we are. They have a better *brand* that is able to attract more customers and gives them the possibility of setting higher sales prices. But how do we create an authentic and credible brand for ourselves?

When you start your company, branding is always one of the first things that you work with, even when not doing so consciously. The first branding of the company happens the moment you decide on a company name, get your first logo made or decide what typography to use for the company name.

The branding of the company continues all by itself, even if you are not actively trying to brand your business. You will yourself always be the brand that the customers perceive, no matter if you have tried to influence their perception or not.

But how can you change your brand, as a new and entrepreneurial startup company, to that of a professional and attractive supplier in the market?

Branding or marketing?

Branding is not the same as marketing although there are some overlaps. A way to define the difference is that marketing is about *how to spread* the knowledge of the company and its brand, while branding is about defining *what to spread*. You can create a lot of marketing activities without creating a strong brand.

The word *branding* really stems from the branding of cattle. It refers to what to 'brand' the company with and how to make everybody know where the company 'belongs'. Compared to marketing, branding is more about defining what the company stands for and how it - so to speak - can be recognized among all the other cows on the prairie.

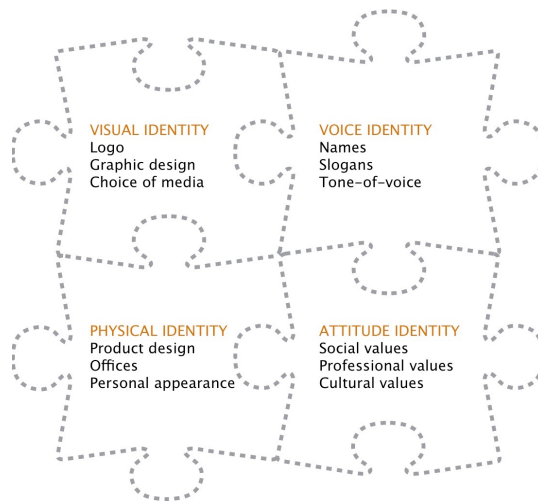
“When you have a strong brand, you create a company to be even more proud of.”

Emotional barriers

As always when developing your business, it is not just professional barriers you might encounter, such as learning how to work systematically and professionally with branding. You are also up against some emotional barriers.

When it comes to branding, some entrepreneurs might feel that their company is “too small to work with branding” and that they “can’t afford that type of thing.” But branding is not about big budgets and television commercials. Rather, it is about the small details that the customers experience

Branding Opportunities: Choosing branding activities to build a strong brand



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every time they come in contact with the company. A little reflection goes a long way, and looking at the numerous alternatives for branding that exist is well worth it.

Another barrier for working with branding might be that you do not feel “creative enough” to create a good brand, and most likely you probably are not. Especially, when it comes to designing your own logo. Not even if your friends and family think that the logo you have made in your word processing program is nice. Developing a professional identity takes the professional skills of a graphic designer. It is not a question of whether you can afford it, but more a question of whether you can afford not to. At the same time, branding is not only about logos, which means that there are many other branding jobs to do while the graphic designer works on the logo.

“You are always a brand, no matter if you work actively on creating one or not.”

A final emotional barrier faced when working with the brand might be that you think that everything is “alright” as it is. You might not be the type of person who cares deeply about how things look on the surface and thus perhaps assume that others do not either. The thing is though that most people are very influenced by first visual impressions, even if they are not aware of it. You might not notice that something has an excellent design, but you will notice it immediately if it is poorly designed.

Many paths to the strong brand

Creating a strong brand is not only about having a nice logo, even if it begins there. Creating a strong brand is like solving a puzzle that has many different pieces, as the illustration “The Pieces of Branding” shows. You have to consider the visual identity the voice identity, the physical identity and the attitude identity of the company, The *visual identity* of the company is about deciding on everything from company logo to all the various elements in the graphic design profile of the company. For example, which colors and typographies are the best to express what the company stands for? And what types of photos or illustrations are to be used to support the brand? The type of media that the company chooses to market itself through says a lot about who the company is. Do you use ads in traditional media, podcasts or poster campaigns?

The *voice identity* of the company is in direct continuation of the visual identity. Sometimes, it is also called *tone-of-voice* and it is about the words that you use and the way that you express yourself, e.g. in brochures and on your website. Are you the

conservative, experienced company or the young and alternative company? And what is the general key message in your slogan or headlines? Part of the voice identity is also the names you give your products. Do they have technical names, are the names similar to the company name, and do you use English or foreign names?

A third piece of the branding puzzle is the *physical identity* of the company that is also part of creating the brand as a whole. Physical Identity deals with how your products are designed and packaged, but also with your and your employees physical appearance and attire. Part of your physical identity is also the location you have chosen for your office and how the office is decorated. What is on the walls that tells something about what the company is?

Values first

Finally, the fourth piece in creating a strong brand is the *attitude identity* of the company. This piece is not necessarily more important than the other pieces, but it should be the first one to set in place when solving the company branding puzzle. The values that you define within your company are the very ones to manifest in the visual, physical and voice identity to make the brand image completely clear.

Company values have various characteristics. It might be *social values*, such as environmental ethics or commitment to a social issue. Values like these are more relevant in some businesses than others. But all types of companies are able to define some *professional values* that express their attitude towards issues pertinent to the line of business that they are in. How do you define good quality?

FIELD	JOB	EXAMPLES OF ELEMENTS IN BRANDING
VISUAL IDENTITY	Logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice of color and shapes in logo Definition of rules of use for logo (design manual) Registration of trademarks on company and products
	Graphic design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Font and sizes to be used Color palette with chosen colors for print and screen Type of photos or illustrations to be used in materials
	Choice of media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed paper (brochures, posters, labels etc.) Types of merchandise (coffee mugs, gift items, etc.) Ad media (online & offline)
VOICE IDENTITY	Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company name to express the right thing Sub name to use in certain markets Independent product names for selected products
	Slogan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company slogan to emphasize who you are Product slogans to accentuate key messages Key messages for various client groups
	Tone-of-voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linguistic style and personality in the company texts Preferred choice of words - or words to be avoided Consistent metaphors
PHYSICAL IDENTITY	Product design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Packaging Choice of material Enclosed documentation
	Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office location(s) Decoration (furniture, pictures, colors, things) Orderly or 'creative mess'
	Personal appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own personal style Employee attire Customers who visit the 'shop'
ATTITUDE IDENTITY	Social values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical values (environment, human rights) Social and societal commitment Social mission of the company
	Professional values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional attitudes to conduct of work Definitions of quality and standards Manifest (philosophy, mission)
	Cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thoughts and feelings of the company Culture among employees Association with role models

Finally, you can also define what you might call a company's *cultural values*. They are the culture in your company and among your employees that your customers experience. The cultural values might also be found by deciding on well-known persons who represent the values of the company; a person who you would like to be associated with and therefore use in your marketing. You can find more examples of elements in branding in the chart.

Counter position

A brand will generally have a stronger identity if it is built not only on good common sense values, but also on values

that counterposes the company to other players in the field. --Values that provide a contrast and clarifies the possibilities of choice for the customer. This is important because customers choose, among other things, to buy brands when they feel a distinct identification with the company values. The more explicit the values and the stronger the contrast, the easier it is to attract customers.

However, you can't just pick a random area in which you would like an identity different from the competitors. To make a brand believable it has to be *authentic*. A brand is authentic when it is rooted in the real values of the company - and perhaps the identity of the founder - and not just based on the values that you say you have or want. One way to look

for the real values is to consider the behavior of the company and the employees from the day the company was founded and until now. Rather than *creating* an identity, branding is about *finding* the identity that you already have and ensuring that there is a consistency between what you express in all parts of the company communication. What is important is not that your brand says that you are the best, but that it expresses what you actually stand for. That you are who you say you are.

Live the brand

One of the best ways to “authenticate” your brand is to live it. Living your brand means trying to become the brand you say you are, by acting accordingly and maybe even by taking powerful actions that let the character of the company shine through.

You might ask yourself, what would be the ultimate way to express the brand. What would another company with your values do? By taking such a powerful initiative you will communicate effectively to your surroundings what you stand for as well as demonstrate that you believe in what you say. That is the way in which strong brands are created, and it is the way to begin the long, stepwise journey towards building a company with a strong and credible identity.

Making a difference

When you have a good reputation and the customers have a clear vision of what they are buying and who they are dealing with, they are more attracted to your products and your company. That means that you might be able to raise the prices and get more loyal customers who will not use other suppliers immediately.

But there is also another value when working with the branding of the company, and that is that when you have a strong brand, you create a company to be even more proud of: A company that not only has a clear-cut identity but also knows why it exists and how it is going to make a difference.

Suggestions for the next step

- Clarify your company’s values and decide what you want it to be known for.
- Make a list of activities, based upon the *Elements of Branding* table, that will make your brand spread through the company consistently.
- Do things in the everyday life that prove that you are your brand.

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