

*Brand
Builder's
Guide*

10

**POINT
BRANDING
STRATEGY**

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To understand branding, it is important to know what brands are. A brand is the idea or image of a specific product or service that consumers connect with, by identifying the name, logo, slogan, or design of the company who owns the idea or image. Branding is when that idea or image is marketed so that it is recognizable by more and more people, and identified with a certain service or product when there are many other companies offering the same service or product. Advertising professionals work on branding not only to build brand recognition, but also to build good reputations and a set of standards to which the company should strive to maintain or surpass. Branding is an important part of Internet commerce, as branding allows companies to build their reputations as well as expand beyond the original product and service, and add to the revenue generated by the original brand.

Branding is also a way to build an important company asset, which is a good reputation. Whether a company has no reputation, or a less than stellar reputation, branding can help change that. Branding can build an expectation about the company services or products, and can encourage the company to maintain that expectation, or exceed them, bringing better products and services to the market place.

There are 10 core steps to building a branding strategy. The steps outlined below will help you streamline your vision, create the foundation for your brand's tone and message; and understand the importance of a brand's positioning.

Strategy 1

- Have A Purpose -

What is the vision for your brand? A brand has to have a reason for being. It should make a difference in the world in some way. Moreover, a brand has to have an organization that power it -- an original that is passionate and committed to bring that brand to life in all facets of the company. The power of a brand starts from the people who create the experience every day. And the purpose the brand represents needs to come through at every possible touch point. Purpose drives employees engagement, which is intuitive -- people feel great about working for a company that is making a difference in the world. My view is that brands that are not driven by purpose will have a tougher time acquiring purpose isn't just good for your soul; it's good for the bottom line. Studies over the years have shown that organizations driven by purpose and values outperform that general market 15-to-1 and outperform comparison companies 6-to-1.

Branding Facts:

- Just under 90% of consumers want more value than just the transactional value from a brand/service and yet just under 20% feel that brands deliver on that value - a huge opportunity gap for business.
- 80% want that brands they buy to have a clear vision and purpose beyond that functional benefits of the product or service.
- Over 50% want to be able to participate with their brand in storytelling, product development, etc.

Strategy 2

-Your Brand Needs Messaging & A Voice-

Achieve commercial success in a way that honors ethical values and respect people and the natural environment. Not only is it the right thing to do, a meaningful corporate responsibility strategy has an enormous impact on a company's reputation and brand perception.

Create a "voice" for your company that reflects your brand. Brand voice is the purposeful, consistent expression of a brand through words and prose styles that engage and motivate. The personality of your brand is determined, in large measure, by the words you use and the sentences you create. The voice should be applied to all written communication and incorporated in the visual imagery of all materials, online and off. Your brand should be friendly. Be conversational. Your voice can be authoritative, informative, fun, or just plain witty, but whatever it may be, it's important to be authentic.

What are the key messages you want to communicate about your brand? Behind every great brand is a fundamental core brand message: a company statement that declares why the brand matters and what it stands for. A core brand message communicates the values and key differentiators that defined the brand. And above all else, it makes people in a firm's target audience sit up and care. The core brand message will shape all of the firm's subsequent brand marketing strategies. A firm's tagline or slogan may closely match the words in its core brand message, or they can take a different form. What's

important is that all brand messaging described aspects of the brand that are relevant to the needs of the customers.

Strategy 3

-Create Your Brand's Attributes-

Brand Attributes portray a company's brands characteristics. They signify the basic of brand development. Brand Attributes are a bundle of features that highlight the physical and personality aspects of the brand. Attributes are developed through images, actions, or presumptions. Quantifying your attributes help in creating brand identity. One list of attributes that define your company or product and another list of attributes associated with the dominant trend within your industry.

A strong brand must have the following attributes:

1. Relevancy - Strong brand must have relevant. It must meet people's expectations and should perform the way they want it to. A good job must be done to persuade consumers to buy the product; else in-spite of your product being unique, people will not buy it.
2. Consistency - A consistent brand signifies what the brand stands for and builds customers trust in the brand. A consistent brand is where the company communication message in a way that does not deviate from the core brand propositioning.
3. Proper Positioning - A strong brand should be positioned so that it makes a place in the target audience mind and they prefer it over other brands.
4. Sustainable - A strong brand makes a business competitive. A sustainable brand drives an organization towards innovation and success.

5. Credibility - A strong brand should do what it promises. The way you communicate your brand to the audience and customers will be realistic. It should not fail to deliver what it promises. Do not exaggerate as customers want to believe in the promises you make to them.
6. Inspirational - A strong brand should transcend/inspire the category it is famous for.
7. Uniqueness - A strong brand should be different and unique. It should set you apart from other competitors in the market.
8. Appealing - A strong brand should be attractive. Customers should be attracted by the promise you make and by the value you deliver.

We create messages to address different needs. A firm that struggles to differentiate itself in the marketplace, for instance, may formulate a tagline or marketing campaign theme that contrasts itself with the rest of the industry. Messages often convey specific services or benefits ("Visa. It's everywhere you want to be."). A message can even be a call to action ("Got milk?"). Whatever form it takes, a brand message has to be authentic to the brand and customers' actual experiences.

Strategy 4

-Make Your Brand Part of Your Lifestyle-

In order to analyze who you are and what you are capable of offering your consumers you must look inward. By thinking of words that truly describe your brand will provide you with an anchor to ensure your values, mission, purpose, and messaging embodies attributes that will ensure branding success. Design templates and create brand standards for your marketing materials. Use the same color scheme, logo placement, look and feel throughout. You don't need to be fancy, just consistent and concise.

Things to Remember:

Know your audience. As an entrepreneur, you invest the time necessary learning as much as possible about existing and potential customers but the internet has made segmenting the market twice as challenging. Do not assume your on-air audience is the same as your current or potential clients.

Be innovative and think beyond what you know. To make young appearance worth watching, don't rehash what is already commanding TV shows, and social media. Come up with something people have not seen or heard anywhere else. If you capture their attention, you will convert those listeners into viewers who may very well follow your brand's call to action.

Time is everything. While daily shows will spend three to eight minutes on a segment, a viral video should not exceed two minutes and 30 seconds. Practice your timing beforehand with the goal of covering three main talking points. Always lead with the strongest information - this will grab and keep their attention. Speak at a moderate pace, smile a lot and make sure to sound and appear genuine and enthusiastic.

Strategy 5

-Audit Your Brand-

In order to analyze who you are and what you are capable of offering your consumers you must look inward. By thinking of words that truly describe your brand will provide you with an anchor to ensure your values, mission, purpose, and messaging embodies attributes that will ensure branding success.

The purpose behind a brand audit is plain and simple: to gain a fundamental understanding of where your brand stands in its current state. In today's increasingly complex market, there is a hyper-focus (and rightfully so) on return on investment (ROI). Of course, ROI isn't just a tactic to keep the bean counters satisfied-weighing the financial benefits of your branding decisions throughout the process will help guide difficult decisions.

The majority of business go through the process of auditing their brand when they have a vested interest in making a change within their organization. Maybe they're rebranding, or refreshing their current look. This would be a perfect time to take a look at your current brand and see where it has shifted since its inception. Perhaps an organization is unhappy with their internal communication and employee relations. A smart CEO or CMO might take that opportunity to judge what their brand stands for, who they are as a company and what they need to do from a communications stand point to fix the internal problems or issues.

Areas to focus on when auditing your brand:

Internal Areas of Focus:

- ✓ Positioning
- ✓ Brand Values
- ✓ Unique Selling Proposition (USP), brand promise, or brand essence
- ✓ Voice
- ✓ Culture
- ✓ Product / Service positioning

External Areas of Focus:

- ✓ Corporate Identity – logos and other brand elements
- ✓ Collateral-brochures, print materials, trade show displays, etc.
- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Website
- ✓ SEO
- ✓ Social Media
- ✓ Sponsorships/civic-involvement/memberships
- ✓ News/PR
- ✓ Content Marketing and other assets – blogs, white papers, case studies, articles, books, etc.
- ✓ Testimonials
- ✓ Videos

A brand audit is a holistic way of looking at a business. The brand audit examines all the areas in which your business interacts with the world. Before

your business can prepare any effective marketing strategy or campaign, it must first understand where your brand is currently positioned and how that position is perceived by your employees, customers and market.

Strategy 6

-Create Your Brand's Positioning-

Brand positioning refers to “target consumer’s” reason to buy your brand in preference to others. It ensures that all brand activity has a common aim; is guided, directed and delivered by the brand’s benefits/reasons to buy; and it focusses at all points of contact with the consumer.

A brand's positioning must be ambitious and point out a vision, however, above all it should be realistic and obtainable. When planning out the goals for your brand, it is best to think of obtainable markers in the form of six month increments. In the current market, where does your brand or brand's idea measure in comparison to budding brands, like yourself, and major global brands.

Brand Positioning involves identifying and determining points of similarity and difference to ascertain the right brand identity and to create a proper brand image. Brand Positioning is the key of marketing strategy. A strong brand positioning directs marketing strategy by explaining the brand details, the uniqueness of brand and its similarity with the competitive brands, as well as the reasons for buying and using that specific brand. Positioning is the base for developing and increasing the required knowledge and perceptions of the customers. It is the single feature that sets your service apart from your competitors.

There are various positioning errors, such as-

- Under positioning - This is a scenario in which the customer's have a blurred and unclear idea of the brand.
- Over positioning - This is a scenario in which the customers have too limited a awareness of the brand.
- Confused positioning - This is a scenario in which the customers have a confused opinion of the brand.
- Double Positioning - This is a scenario in which customers do not accept the claims of a brand.

Strategy 7

-Integrate Your Brand-

Internal Brand Integration: Branding extends to every aspect of your business--how you answer your phones, what you or your salespeople wear to meetings, your e-mail signature, everything.

External Brand Integration: the use of commercial products in the story line of a television show, film, etc. and involving the development of specific objectives, strategies, plans, and tactics to drive the business

Integrating your marketing is more than placing a social media icon on all of your materials. True integration is creating a consistent message across all mediums that builds a direct relationship with consumers. Consumers today are more connected than ever before. Embracing this connectivity by fully integrating your marketing efforts builds strong and sustainable brands. Consumers want and need seamless.

Creating a seamless experience for consumers seems easy. If it was that easy, everyone would be doing it. Why did Apple open their own stores? To compete against themselves? No. They created their stores to create a direct relationship with consumers by showcasing their products with their team, in other words, they eliminated the noise of other products and the reliance upon the sales teams at retailers to know and promote Apple products. They

also created a special place for “Apple-ites” to go and be part of an interactive and seamless experience.

Strategy 8

-Turn Your Voice into Visuals-

Time to use all of your branding foundation to create the logo, website, and other marketing material for your brand. Your brand's visuals (logo and other marketing tools) are the cement of your business. It is important to work with a graphic designer, brand manager, or communication's expert to create the design that reflects the current and future of your business. Remember, color is very important in logo creation. You want your logo to embody colors, shades, terms, and fonts that are specific to your industry. In its simplest form, a logo is there to identify but to do this effectively it must follow the basic principles of logo design:

- A logo must be simple. A simple logo allows for easy recognition and allows the logo to be versatile and memorable. Effective logos feature something unexpected or unique without being overdrawn.
- A logo must be memorable. Following closely behind the principle of simplicity is that of memorability. An effective logo should be memorable and this is achieved by having a simple yet appropriate logo.
- A logo must be enduring. An effective logo should endure the test of time. The logo should be 'future proof', meaning that it should still be effective in 10, 20, 50+ years time.
- A logo must be versatile. An effective logo should be able to work across a variety of mediums and applications.

- A logo must be appropriate. How you position the logo should be appropriate for its intended purpose.

Strategy 9

-Socialize Your Brand-

Having a viral presence is huge for companies to remain sustainability. Not every social media platform may fit your business. You want to look at social media as FREE advertising and an active community of potential consumers.

Your Online Presence is Your Viral Office

A virtual office can, and should, include many things such as a landing page and a contact page. Look at a virtual office like you would a brick and mortar office. It should be clean and look nice while providing clear directions to customers. Keep it simple, not so simple that it does not stick in the minds of those that see your virtual office; but simple enough that finding your way around is not complicated. Some things to consider while planning and developing a virtual office are:

- Authors and publishing content
- SEO and SMO
- Landing page
- Call to action
- Simplicity is key

SEO and SMO, search engine optimization and social media optimization, are critical to a successful virtual presence. Without them, customers will have a hard time finding your landing page so they can follow your call to action.

Keep it Social

Social Media allows you to reach millions almost instantly; a task that took decades to accomplish 20 years ago. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and the like are invaluable tools every business should leverage. Take advantage of the tools available online and start building your virtual presence today. You will reach more customers and remove some of the complications facing you on the marketing landscape. Remember to keep it simple and clean.

Capitalize on Your Resources

The most creative viral marketing plans use others' resources to get the word out. Affiliate programs, for example, place text or graphic links on others' websites. Authors who give away free articles, seek to position their articles on others' webpages. A news release can be picked up by hundreds of periodicals and form the basis of articles seen by hundreds of thousands of readers. Now someone else's newsprint or webpage is relaying your marketing message. Someone else's resources are depleted rather than your own. The power of a brand is much stronger than most realize. A strong brand empowers and inspires employees. It's the foundation on which a strong organization can be built. If the foundation is cracked in certain areas, it would be in the homeowners best interest to audit the situation and put the proper processes in place to fix it.

Strategy 10

-Strategic Communication is Key-

A communication strategy plan lays out how to handle the various forms of communication dispersed by the brand. Understanding the benefits and purpose of the plan helps to ensure consistent brand growth and viability. Detail specific activities you intend to undertake and identify the audience each activity is targeted to.

Key Considerations

Remember the Five Cs of effective messages: Credible, Clear, Concise, Connects with People, and Communicates Value. Social and new media are increasingly important tools for strengthening connections with stakeholders and disseminating messages that resonate. Strategic communication includes activities such as creating a communication plan, messaging, marketing, and engaging stakeholders in public events.

Consistent, strategic branding leads to a strong brand equity, which means the added value brought to your company's products or services that allows you to charge more for your brand than what identical, unbranded products command. You now have the brand's foundation make your company/product stand out within your industry. Every part of your brand should be coherent and executed to achieve the greatest impression. Use this outline to work with your team to develop bring your vision and aspiration into a

cohesive brand. To continue building your brand with Postured Media Group
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| About the Author |

Joshua "The Brandartisan" Hargrove is a published author, fashion aficionado, event producer, publicist, philanthropist, mentor to minority businesses, and the owner of Postured Media Group 5. Postured Media Group (PMG5inc). Founded in 2010, Postured Media Group 5 is a branding and media relations firm specializing in brand management, brand consulting & coaching, public relations, and creative design. Our goal is to provide creatives and spiritual leaders with the foundations and brand positioning needed for a global imprint. Our staff (and network) have a wide variety of backgrounds and skill sets. From award-winning publicists, to expert branders and a groundbreaking visual staff, we have it all. Postured Media Group 5 is a branding firm like no other, providing the necessary resources to bring innovative brands into global positioning.

As a brand strategist and publicist, Joshua provides a wide range of media related services to clients & consultants to help elevate their brand. As an entrepreneur and mentor, Joshua's first business venture was to create a network of men in the communication and public relations field known as "The Men of PR (Power and Recognition)". Joshua felt the industry was sprinkled with a phenomenal group of men making a difference, and his desire was to create an avenue for the gentlemen to network and collaborate.

As the owner of PMG5inc, Joshua works with a team of employees, interns, vendors, and partners to ensure each PMG5inc client is represented with the highest level of quality, morality, respect, and innovation. Joshua is the creator of the groundbreaking e-book series, "Brand Builder's Guide" (BBG). The BBG was designed to provide a structure to properly lay the foundation for a flourishing brand. The series will deliver markers for ensuring communication, tone, voice, messaging, brand positioning, and branding attributes are all in place for individuals and businesses seeking to expand into global entities. Joshua has also developed these same brand qualities for community based organizations and churches. The first installment in the series is entitled "Bringing Global Influence to the Kingdom". The second installment in the e-book series is entitled "Rebranding & Brandscaping". Joshua believes, "a well told story is the foundation of any profitable brand, and BBG will ensure your brand's story reads profit"!

Joshua currently splits his time between the east and west coast.