

# The essential guide to a strong brand.

from The Design Co.



## Your Reputation

Your reputation is a big part of your brand, it's the result of what you do or what you don't do. Your reputation can either be your best friend or your worst enemy when you're trying to grow your business.

A good example of a positive reputation would be, if you have a cake shop that has stood the test of time and you have orders coming in constantly. People love your cakes and trust that every time they order them they get the same great quality and service. Word travels fast and even people who have never had your cakes are saying to their friends 'we should go there at some point, I've heard the cakes are delicious'. This is a company having a great reputation and is the best foundation to build upon, your customers are marketing your business for you! A bad reputation is when your cake shop is known for being closed most of the time, or if people say 'the staff always look unhappy'. It's difficult to shake off a bad reputation but it can be done!



## The Employees

This is everyone who works in the business, the people in the business make the business. They all add their own character to it. If your business has an outgoing adventure ethos, you're less likely to have people who don't follow the same ideas and attitudes working with you.

Likewise, employees can make or break your business. Having an employee working with you that has a poor work ethic (especially in a small team) can create tension in the business. Making it a difficult place to work. Clients can sense this! If you're stuck in this scenario, talk to the member of staff and politely see if there anything you can do to make their job any better for them. The dream scenario is to have a work environment where everyone is working together in a job that they enjoy.

Knowledge of the brand is key with employees, they should be aware of the businesses goals and plans. It's great having an amazing ad campaign, however if your employees aren't aware of what it's about, how are they going to sell it or feel motivated for it? The last thing you want is it to end up making it feel inconsistent or half hearted.



## Products

Your product/service is the core of your business. It's the deliverable to the client and ultimately where the business gets its income. If you have a well developed product, that you have tried and tested proving it works, then your brand will amplify how great it is if all of these points are met. However again I must emphasise the importance of consistency, your client must be confident that they will always get the same quality product/service. Selling an amazing product but if your brochure is poorly designed will devalue the product.



## Customer Service

This is key to creating a trustworthy brand. Customer service represents the way that you interact with your clients. This isn't just on the phone, it also includes how you word your emails, the copy text on your website or even the way you greet your client when they come into your office - every little detail matters.

This isn't generic for every business, it all depends on the character & ethos of the business. You instinctively know that going to Google will be a different experience compared to going to BMW. Google will be a fun environment that's vibrant, bubbling with energy & ideas. BMW will be minimal and professional to the highest standard.

These businesses have crafted their ethos to match the offering to their client base. They have understood the importance of the correct use of language & environment, which also applies to your business. Being an e-commerce business will make people think differently to a bricks & mortar business. A casual environment will put off a certain client as a formal environment will put off another client.



## Expectations

We have all at some point stretched the truth, but in business you will be quickly found out when you don't deliver on what you promised. People prefer it when you're honest and describe it as it is. If your product really is great it should sell itself! If anything, you should slightly undersell it, this doesn't mean to make your product sound bad, but it's always great when you purchase something and it ends up being better than you expected. For example if your business is service based, give your client an extended deadline by adding an extra day compared to your internal deadline. Providing deliverables early than expected will instantly make the business look more efficient, even though you have planned it to be done early all along.



## Actions Made

Think of your business beyond the core service/product it provides. It will have a presence in the community. Whether this be for charity work or a talk that members of your staff do twice a month for example. Raising funds for a local charity will humanise the business, showing it in a good light. People buy off people and having positive PR will always aid your brand and reflect positively on your business.



## Logo

As mentioned previously, a logo doesn't make up the entire brand but it is a key element to it. It's the visual representation of what you do, so it really is a vital element to your business. This doesn't mean that you should list out everything that you do in your logo as it should be refined and clean. There are a set of rules that should be followed when developing a logo, these are as follows:

- 1 Good Logos identify, they should not describe what you do.
- 2 A logo can't solve all your problems
- 3 Your logo should be visually engaging
- 4 The logo must be able to exist in a variety of different media.
- 5 A logo should not be an illustration
- 6 Your logo is the foundation of your identity.

We must emphasise point 2, in some cases business owners think that giving their business a new logo will instantly change it, making people think differently of it. This isn't the case, if there is a tribunal or legal issues that have gone public, a new logo will not make this go away. As obvious as this sounds, some people do think this.

We like to think of your logo as the smiling face of your business. If your company is a family friendly activity organiser and your logo is a dark with an abstract concept that would be better suited in a Tim Burton film, this might not be doing you any favours. It's worth occasionally taking a step back and reviewing whether your logo and identity reflects the values and ethos of the business.



## Visuals

All of the visual elements of your business stem from your logo and the guidelines that go with it. The visuals for the business are items such as the website, brochures, advertisements, business stationery, email signatures - anything that has to be designed. If you're lucky enough to have a brand manual / brand guidelines it is essential that everyone follows these when working on any visuals for the business. This goes back to the consistency of the brand, having posters printed where the logo is stretched and none of the fonts match will instantly devalue the visual brand, which in term damages the business.

Having all the visuals matching with a seamlessly consistent look and voice will help your clients trust your business. In this scenario the fact they don't notice anything is different or out of place is of the incredibly important. The visuals should be recognised as being undoubtedly from your business. You'd notice straight away if McDonald's started using Comic Sans and wonder, 'what's happened there?!'. It's the same with your business.

So there we have it, these are the fundamental elements that make up a strong brand. If you follow and always considering each of these elements when making crucial decisions with your business you will be on the path to creating an effective brand people will trust and always remember consistency is key. **How well do you think your business performs in this guide?** Tick off any points you think your business performs well on. If there are any you haven't ticked there is always room to develop this area.

- Your Reputation
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