



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

WHAT IS MY BRAND?



What is my brand - A beginner's guide

This guide/workbook is designed as a beginner's guide and to get your (branding) grey cells working. The document consists of a series of questions checklist, and a few tips, which will help you to define your brand.

At the end of the exercise you will have clearly and succinctly defined your new brand and you will feel great!

Completion time: approx 120 minutes.

Time saved by reading this: many months and much pain!

What branding is and what it is not!

Branding is one of the most important aspects of any business, large or small, retail or business-to-business (B2B). But what exactly does "branding" mean?

In plain English - a brand is the all-encompassing experience a person has with your company or organisation – nothing more nothing less.

Branding is one of those overused but often misunderstood words.

5 common branding myths:

1. A logo is a brand
2. A name is a brand
3. Products are a brand
4. A visual identity is a brand
5. A website is a brand

These are in themselves individual expressions of your brand.

Your customer experience

In the eyes of the customer a brand is an experience, whether good, bad or indifferent. The brand experience is much more than a product on a shelf, it is an asset that has to be managed. You have to manage that user experience with great care and sensitivity.

Branding starts with the truth about your company or organisation, how it behaves, how it communicates, how it delivers, how it operates.

Remember: A brand is not what you say it is; it is what others say it is – your customers.

Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room" – Jeff Bezos, Founder of Amazon

What branding does?

Brands have two rules – persuading outsiders to buy and persuading insiders to believe

Branding

- Reinforces a good reputation
- Encourages loyalty
- Assures quality
- Conveys a perception of greater worth, allowing a product to be priced above competitors selling the same commodity product.

“If your business is not a brand, it is a commodity” – Donald Trump

What can be branded?

In short - anything: products, services, organisations, places and people. You name it and it can be branded. Ask any cowboy!

Branding usually involves five common components *(taken from ‘What is branding’ by Matthew Healey)*:

- Positioning – this means defining in the customer what a brand stands for and how it compares to competing brands.
- Storytelling – when we buy brands we buy their story – good or bad.
- Design – the design is the liquid as well as the label, the self as well as the surface.
- Price – is a vital, though less obvious aspect of a brand. If to cheeses in a supermarket look and smell the same, most customers will take the more expensive one. It is a fact!
- Customer relationship – we all know this one from experience as customers.

The beauty of great branding lies in its ability to identify the truth, tell its story, make it look good, and build it into a valuable, emotional bond between producer and customer.

How do you define your brand?

Now I have mentioned what a brand is and what it is not and briefly what a brand does. But, I can hear you say, now what! How the hell do I create my brand? And where do I even begin?

Well the short answer is at the beginning. To do this I have put together a series of important questions you need to ask yourself. Some are easier than others but they all require some thought and a little research.

Feel free to print out this Eguide and its worksheets so you can pencil in your answers by hand.

Q1 - Brands you love

A good place to start is by looking at a few existing brands that you love and say why you love them. What draws you to those brands?

List 5 brands you love and why:

For example, is it their range of products, design, customer support, philosophy (their 'Why'), advertising, social conscience?

Brand 1

Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Brand 2

Why?

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Brand 4

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Brand 5

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Q2 - Brands you hate

Now, hate may be a touch too strong but, just to get a balanced view and give you the opportunity to let rip, I want you to **list 5 brands that really do wind you up**. (Don't worry this is all very educational do so give it a go)

Brand 1

Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Brand 2

Why?

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Why?

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Brand 3

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Brand 4

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Brand 5

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Why?

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Q3 - The 'Why'

Purpose - The **'Why'**. Every business and start-up knows what they sell and some know how they sell it differently to others. If you can define why you do what you do, why you get out of bed in the morning (and I don't mean for profit – that is a result), and if you can articulate that clearly and succinctly you have a powerful basis on which develop your business and brand.

'People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it'

Define your 'Why' statement. It should be short probably 3 to 5 words, no longer, and once you have defined your 'why' make sure you lead with it. It should be the first thing someone knows when they go to your website, see your packaging, read your literature, take your business card and meet you in person.

Don't rush on this one. In order to define your 'Why' it will help to first set out your 'What' and 'How'.

For example: **My 'WHAT' is:** Helping people in their 40's, 50's and even 60's who want to start their own business and build their brand but don't know where to start

What:

What statement version 1

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For example: **My 'HOW' is:** By sharing Insightful knowledge through posts and tutorials, driven by my own 30 years experience in branding and communications and my own start-up journey, so you don't make the mistakes I have made along the way.

How:

How statement version 1

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For example: **My 'WHY' is:** Because you are never too old or too late to turn your dream into a reality. (the long version)

Why

Why statement version 1

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Why statement version 2

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Why statement version 3

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Q4 – What makes my business different?

In order to define your brand who need to know what it is that makes your product/service brand different from everyone else's. What's the story? Think hard on this one as it can be a challenging question to answer.

Differentiation

Global companies are willing to pay millions to differentiate themselves from their competitors through branding or rebranding.

Successful branding is about the experience; it is engaging, intuitive, pleasing and memorable. If the user enjoys the experience they will return. They will purchase that product or use that service again and they will tell their friends and their colleagues about it. Without those experiences all you have at your disposal is price.

List 3 things that make your brand unique and different from your competitors

1
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2
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3
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Authenticity

True authentic brands 'matter' in people's lives.

Today brands strive to be 'real' and authentic. Authenticity is seen as a way of differentiating a brand at a time when many are seen as superficial, fake, or even dishonest.

However, this trend towards authenticity has seen all kinds of big brands, from fashion to food to automobiles to drinks and banking, marketing themselves as 'socially aware'.

If it is appropriate to your business list 3 things that make your brand truly authentic

1

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2

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3

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Be relevant

I would say with absolute confidence that your brand must 'be relevant' to succeed. Relevance comes from listening. It's obvious really!

- What are your target customer's interests?
- Where do they go online?
- What social media channels do they use – Is it Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest or Google +, or maybe Instagram?
- Who do they follow online, what online magazine do they read?

By listening you will know where your customers are, what interests them, and how to reach them with a brand story that is relevant to them and truly connects with them.

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." - Epictetus, Greek Philosopher

Remember: A brand is not what you say it is, it's what they say it is

List 3 things you can do to make sure your new brand and brand story connects with your target customers.

1
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2
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3
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Now before we hit the home straight. You are nearly there now! Here are a couple of fun questions to help you define that brand definition!

If you had to explain your product/service/cause, whatever it is to a 5 year old what would you say? (No big words or jargon here.)

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Describe what value it will bring to your potential customers. Think about the benefits.

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Ask yourself

What are the 5 most common questions you get asked about your new idea/product/service?
What are people curious about? (this will help you spot any weaknesses). Remember you already know what your business idea is and to you it is clear.

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Think about it like this

When someone taps out a tune to you with their fingers on a table and you have to guess what that tune is. The person tapping out the tune can hear that tune in their heads, they are tapping along to a silent soundtrack. You on the other hand have nothing to go on at all, no clues, no soundtrack in your head just some flat meaningless taps. Can you guess the tune?

You new brand idea is exactly the same, you know exactly what it is, how fantastic it is, how obvious it is. You know the story, you feel the emotion, but unless you can articulate all this to someone else, all they hear or see is 'just another product'.

Q5 – Your brand proposition

We have looked at what a brand is and what a brand is not. We have looked at what your favourite brands do well and what you think their weaknesses are. We have articulated the 'What', the 'How' and most importantly the 'Why' of your new brand. We have also identified what is potentially different about your brand.

Now we need to put all this together into a simple succinct brand proposition. This will be the foundation for everything you do with your brand as you go forward. It gives you the basis to develop a consistent brand story based on differentiation, uniqueness, authenticity and honesty. It will help you reach out and be relevant to your future customers.

'People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it' - Simon Sinek

Brand proposition

For example

What:

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How:

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Why:

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What is unique about it?

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My final brand proposition

What:

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How:

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Why:

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What is unique about it?

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Finally...

Over the years I have listened to many clients and friends (including if I am honest, myself) spend so long explaining their new business idea that, I wish I had stayed at home and washed the dishes, or the explanation was so dull that I wished I was at home washing more dishes.

Now I want you to write a short brand statement. Something that will explain, excite, enthuse and enlighten anyone who asks “So what’s your new business”?

Imagine your have to explain it to someone at a dinner party, someone who really only wants to talk about themselves (you know the type) and for them to leave wanting to invest in it themselves.

Come on, you can do it! I want you to come out of this with a brand proposition – a brand story that makes you smile every time you see it or say it. So keep it short and brilliant and put it down here.

Your brand proposition

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It's never too late!

Learn how to start your own business. Avoid making the same mistakes I made. Plus get the benefit of my 30 years experience in global branding. Remember, "I've got your back Jack"

Checklists

Brand name

- **Is it already registered as a trademark?** Is anyone else using it in your market sector? Do a bit of searching on Google to see.
- **Is the name used in any other sector?** Especially a product or business you would not want to be associated with, or that has a bad reputation. You don't want to be mistaken for them! For example; in 6 months time finding a sex toy on Google with the same name as your brand. Best do the research now rather than suffer the embarrassment later - not to mention cost and time of needing to change your brand name. Ouch!
- **If you are planning to sell your product abroad,** how does it translate in your potential key countries? Once again what if you find that in a key country like Italy it is the name of a sex toy? Make sure it has no negative slang associations.
- **Is your new brand name easy to spell?** Run it past lots of people first
- **Is your new brand name easy to pronounce?** Run it past lots of people first you may be surprised at what you find.
- **Does any similar name dominate page 1 of Google?** This is certainly worth checking and will only take a second. If it does, check out their website to see how active they are online. You don't want to be competing with a very high profile Google entry.
- **Is your new brand name available as a domain name?** If it is, are there any good alternative available such as .co.uk, .org, .net etc? If not, it may be a case of going back to the drawing board.

TIP: Don't use a hyphen in your domain name for example 'big-arrow.com'. Keep it simple. It should be 'bigarrow.com' or 'bigarrow.co.uk etc

- **Is your brand name available on social media?** Make sure your new name (or something very similar) is available across your key social media platforms.

TIP: Use www.namechk.com to check multiple social platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest etc all at once.

I will add more to this list as I find them and keep you posted.

Brand identity uses checklist

Now I know this guide is just about defining your brand but I thought I would add a quick checklist of the potential places your new brand will be seen. I will do another Eguide/workbook soon covering your new brand identity and how to apply it.

Put a tick next to all those you think might be relevant to you.

- Print
- Website
- Blog
- Business cards/letterheads/invoices/purchase orders etc
- Social media: Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Google +, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Tumblr, Vimeo etc
- Web ads: Facebook etc
- Print ads: magazines, newspapers
- Online magazine/blog ads
- Infographics
- Packaging
- Brochure
- Printed handouts/flyers
- Livery: Van, Truck, bicycle (remember those lovely old butchers bicycles)
- Carrier bags
- Advertorials
- Signage
- Banners
- Mobile apps
- Presentations

Any questions or comments?

I hope you found this Eguide/wordbook useful. I have intentionally avoided going into any great depth about branding, as at this stage you have enough to be getting on with.

Feel free you spread the word (good, I hope) about me to others by sharing the link below so they can get the Eguide and subscribe to my updates.

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