



What is a brand and why should you care?

If you're a bland brand you're just another invisible business trying to survive.

There's nothing to distinguish you from all those other brands selling the same stuff to the same customers.

It's depressing!

The basics

Branding usually involve five common components *(in no particular order)*

these are:

- **Positioning** – this means defining in the mind of the customer what a brand stands for and how it compares to competing brands. Positioning is everything in branding.
- **Storytelling** – Everyone likes a good emotional story and brand stories are no different. When we buy brands we buy their story – good or bad. Great brands make us willing participants in and ambassadors of their story.
- **Design** – design refers to all the individual visual and physical elements of the brand. It is the liquid as well as the label.
- **Price** – is a vital, though less obvious aspect of a brand. Surprisingly under pricing a product can have disastrous long-term consequences for a brand image?



It has been proven that if two cheeses in a supermarket look and smell the same, most customers will take the more expensive one.

- **Customer relationship** – we all know this one from experience as customers.

Your brand is not a product, it's not a service and it's not a logo. It is the total experience a person has with a business, organisation, product, service and even a person or country.

Ignore this and you have nothing more than a commodity.

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

Without a strong brand you don't have a sustainable business.

Yes you may limp along and survive but you won't thrive without building a great brand.

What does brand actually do?

- Reinforce a good reputation
- Encourage loyalty
- Assure quality

Convey a perception of greater worth, allowing a product to be priced at a premium above competitors selling the same commodity product.



All in the mind

In truth a brand exists in the mind of the customer and is all too often synonymous with reputation.

Your brand is quite simply what your customers think it is.

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.



Start with the customer

Brands that ignore people – people ignore

Remember: you cannot appeal to everyone no matter how desperately you want to.

An audience of 'everyone' is not a strategy for success it is a recipe for failure.

The more clearly you can define your audience in the beginning the more chance you will have of effectively communicating with them.

Who is your key audience?

One of the most important early lessons you can learn in branding is that your audience is not who you think they are!

Who are they?

Are they male, female, young, old, do they have certain tastes, expectations, problems, and dreams. How do they feel, what do they want, and what keeps them awake at night.

Understanding who your audience is and is not and why they should come to you is critical to building a successful business and brand.

If you don't know who your customer is you can't sell to them.

When defining your audience Make sure your key 'core' audience is where the money is? After all we are in business to make a living not to starve.

If you know what your customers want most and what you do best, then the point at which these two meet is where you build your brand.



For example:

Say you have small business selling surfing lessons on the beach in Spain.

You've been going for 3 years and you think your customer is anyone between the age of 8 and 80 who likes water.

You've been doing ok but nothing special and you're not getting any closer to your real dream of building a global adventure business.

So what can you do?

Define what you do best -

For the purposes of this example you've done a bit of scuba diving, paragliding and a little skiing in your time but your key passion, knowledge and expertise is '**surfing**'.

That is what you do best and you build your brand from there.

Define your audience

You think your audience is everyone but in fact when you look closely they have been mostly males between the age of 25 and 35. They spend their days in an office environment and they are coming to you to escape and taste a bit of life on the edge.

That is your key audience and you build or rebuild your brand from there.

Remember: You can't be a global adventure business overnight you have to build up to in slowly and strategically.



How?

Define your key message or strapline.

If we go back to our surfing example there are probably thousands of small companies selling surfing lessons and probably several on that very beach in Spain, **so why would they come to you?**

Because you now know your 'key audience' is 25 -35 year old single male young executives.

You can build a strapline and a brand story that emotional connects with them and at the same time sets you above your 'surfing lesson competitors

For example instead of 'surfing lesson in Spain" we try 'live life on the edge'.

Instantly this new statement appeals to that core audience seeking a bit of excitement. We can then go on to explain that you specialize in surfing lesson and you're located in Spain.

The power behind this new statement is that you are no longer just another beach outfit selling surfing lesson.

You are now something much more exciting and memorable.

You have now positioned yourself for the future - as a global adventure business in line with your long-term goal.

You also now have the start of **a much more exciting brand story.**



Q1. Define your key audience

For example:

Say you want to build a global adventure business and your key audience (where the money is) is 25 -35 single males who want to escape the office and taste 'life on the edge' then you build your brand from there.

Primary audience group 1:

Age:

Gender:

Income profile:

Interests:

Ethnic make if relevant:

Why would they be interested in your new product or service?

Can they currently get your product or service elsewhere?



Primary audience group 2:

Age:

Gender:

Income profile:

Interests:

Ethnic make if relevant:

Why would they be interested in your new product or service?

Can they currently get your product or service elsewhere?



Wider more general audience group 3:

Age:

Gender:

Income profile:

Interests:

Ethnic make if relevant:

Why would they be interested in your new product or service?

Can they currently get your product or service elsewhere?

Remember: If you know what your customers want most and what you do best. Then the point at which these two meet is where you build your brand.



Q2. Who is NOT your audience?

Understanding who your audience is not will make building a loyal following so much easier.

Answer



Q3. Define what do you do best

For example:

If you want to build a global adventure business but your key passion, knowledge and expertise is 'surfing', that is what you do best. You build your brand from there.

Write down what you do best. Don't write a CV here, I want you to be hyper critical of yourself.

Answer



Q4. Your result

For example:

Key audience - 25 -35 single males

What do they want? - To escape the office and try something a little different.

What do you do best? - Surfing

Description - Surfing lessons - Spain

Key message - 'Taste life on the edge'

Long-term goal - Build a global adventure business

Fill in your result below:

Key audience:

What do they want?

What do you do best?

Business/Service/Product Description:

Key message:

Long-term goal:



Yes there is much more to it than that: but that is your core business and from there you can build a compelling brand story that will grow as your business grows.

Customers want to do business with you because you help them get what they want.

They don't do business with you to help you get what you want.

Finally

If you understand how your brand works, how it generates value for your business, how it helps you sell and your customers buy, you will create passion in your employees and loyalty in your customers.

Get that right and you grow revenue, increase market share, re-inspire your employees and re-engage with your customers.