



Online Accounting Software

# BUILDING YOUR BRAND GUIDE

### A guide to building your brand

Building a brand is about connecting with your customers emotionally. Your brand is your promise to your customers. It creates a level of expectation about your products or services.

A strong brand will make your customers more loyal, encourage them to tell other people about you, and ultimately increase sales, so it's worth taking the time to develop the right brand identity. Ultimately, it's your most powerful marketing tool. It sets you apart from other businesses that offer the same or similar products or services.

#### Brand identity

To build a brand identity, it's important to have strong brand values and a clear sense of what your business is and isn't. Think about brands you identify with and what sets these brands apart. For example, attributes you might identify with Apple include innovation and design, The Body Shop – ethically sourced products or Lidl – value for money.

A strong brand is a result of doing something well, from customer service to the language and style used in your marketing materials. Your brand identity is reflected through your business name, logo and slogan. But don't think about your brand just in terms of look and design – branding isn't just about imagery and logos. People buy from brands they trust. Building a strong brand may allow you to command higher prices due to the perceived value that customers attach to it. On the other hand, letting customers down or not following through on what your brand stands for will weaken your brand.

#### Brand values

Values are an indication of the purpose of your business and will help you develop your brand proposition – how you describe what you do to potential customers. Your values and what you stand for define your brand and culture. These are a set of ideals, attitudes and a way of doing things.

Think about the impression you would like to give your customers by working out what you stand for. This will lead to your values and invoke an emotional connection with your brand. This might be value for money, good customer service or quality.

Next, think of how you can demonstrate these values. Are you clear on what makes you stand out from the rest? What are your unique selling points – your points of difference? What impression would you like to give? What do you want people to associate your brand with? Do some research on your target market to understand what makes them tick and what will compel them to buy into your brand. You can do this using a simple survey or questionnaire, asking for comments or just talking to them.

### **Brand communications**

The ability to develop a brand vision and to engage with your target market is at the heart of an effective brand strategy. Be clear on your long-term and short-term goals. They might include increasing market share, growing your customer base or targeting a particular group of new clients.

Your brand strategy sets out how, what, where, when and to whom you plan on communicating and delivering your brand messages. This includes the tools you will use to achieve your aims, your distribution channels and what you communicate visually and verbally.

### **Brand awareness**

Once you've defined your brand, the next step is to raise awareness among your target customers. Use images and words that evoke the right type of feelings and capture your purpose. Is your product expensive and high-quality or a low-cost, value for money option? What are the benefits and features of your products or services? What does the customer get out of it?

You don't need a big budget to communicate your brand. In fact, there are a huge number of ways you can build awareness of your brand, such as:

- advertising, e.g. in a local newspaper, directory or even local radio
- direct mail, either by post or via email
- PR, e.g. writing a blog or sending press releases to relevant publications or journalists
- sponsorship, e.g. of a suitable event, team or occasion
- events or seminars at your own premises or a local venue
- promotional items, such as pens or USB sticks
- Google ad words or search engine optimisation
- social media (see below) or 'viral' marketing online
- telesales or 'cold calling' potential customers.

It's also important to determine how your employees (if you have any) can act as your brand 'ambassadors' i.e. how they talk about the business to other people. If your values inspire your employees, you're more likely to grow a great business and brand. A strong brand will attract talented people and encourage staff to stick around.

### Building your brand through social media

An increasingly important way to raise your brand profile is through social media platforms, such as Facebook or LinkedIn. A powerful way of building brand awareness is through creating useful information and publishing it online. It doesn't matter how big or small your business is, by creating interesting and useful content you can set yourself apart from your competitors.

Depending on what your business does social media channels to consider include:

- **Facebook** – a great medium for creating brand awareness for any company.
- **LinkedIn** – particularly effective for business-to-business companies.
- **Twitter** – ability to connect with your marketplace in real time and build meaningful relationships
- **Instagram** – a good option for brands that rely heavily on images.
- **Pinterest** – especially good for brands selling products such as clothing or jewelry.

Give your brand more opportunities to be discovered by including your company specialties and descriptions of your core value propositions on these sites.

Content you share and create should support your brand image. Due to the power of social media it's important to align your brand proposition and image with what your customers actually experience.

## A checklist for building your brand

Take the time to develop and build a brand identity.

Have a clear sense of what your business is and isn't.

Establish what you stand for and find ways to demonstrate your brand values in action.

Think about the key messages you want to communicate about your brand.

Make sure your name, logo and 'look and feel' support your brand.

Put together a brand communications plan and be clear on your long-term and short-term goals.

Raise awareness for your brand among your target customers through the most appropriate tools e.g. through advertising or social media.

Help your employees to act as your brand 'ambassadors'.



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## WHO WE ARE

Big Red Cloud is a leading supplier of online account's software to the SME market.

Our online account's software is simple and easy to use and takes only minutes to set up. It is designed to enable smart business people get on with doing what they do best which is to sell their products or services.

We believe in giving exceptional value by including multiple users, unlimited transactions, telephone, email, live chat support and free access for your accountant and bookkeeper, all for a low monthly fee.

Join over 35,000 businesses that have already made the smart move and get your business up and running with Big Red Cloud's online accounts software.

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