

BRANDING YOUR BUSINESS

HOW TO MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF YOUR BUSINESS
IMAGE

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“How do I make sure that my company literature is sending out the message I want it to?”

Whether you like it or not, every business has a brand. From Nat West to Natalie’s nails. Your brand is your company’s personality. A strong brand differentiates your products and services from your competitors. It engages with your customers and your target market and creates an emotional connection.

Is your businesses brand well planned, effectively executed and well designed? Has it just ‘emerged’ over time and lacking in pzazz, or is it out-dated? Or do you just not know where to begin?

Your brand is about more than just your logo. It’s about you dress, how you and your team answer the phone. It’s about your products, your office, your car or van and how you communicate to the outside world.

I hope that this article should, at the very least, give you confidence in the effectiveness of your brand. It’ll take you on a journey of discovery and force you to think about the image that you want to start projecting. Then all you need to do is get out there and make it happen!

We’ll start by identifying your core business values. I’ll give you some tools to evaluate your current logo and marketing literature, and we’ll finish with my top ten tips to improving your branding.

YOUR BRAND PERSONALITY

Let's start with your brand personality. On the next page you'll find a questionnaire full of prompts to fill out and think about your business. What you're trying to do is identify the image and key benefits of your business.

Think about:

What you do

What you *really* do (ie, what are the benefits of your product or service to your clients?)

Who your target market is (it's ok to have a few, but define them as precisely as possible)

Why they buy from you

Who your competitors are

Why you are so much better than your competition

The image she wants to portray of her company

Let's take Karen Skidmore of CanDoCanBe as an example. Karen, amongst other things is a coach. She coaches women to be successful. But what she actually does for them is empower them to grow their businesses; she gives them strategies to organise and take control of their lives, and she gives them confidence. Can you see how that is more powerful than simply telling people she's a coach? How would you communicate the benefits of what you do?

Any time we take a brief from a client this is a process we'll go through because it helps us understand what you're trying to achieve. So whenever you're working with someone creative, or preparing some marketing yourself. If you can articulate these points you'll find that the creative output is much more aligned with your image. You'll also find that you can evaluate your work against this 'brief', to make sure that your work is sending out the right messages. And that's what we're going to do next

YOUR BRAND PERSONALITY

Company Name

Strapline?

What do you do?

Who are your main competitors?

Who are your customers?

Why are you so much more brilliant than them?

What are the benefits of what you do? Why do your clients buy from you?

What impression would you like clients to have of your business?

If you had to summarise your company/ image in 3 words what would they be?

EVALUATING WHAT YOU HAVE AT THE MOMENT

Design can be a very personal, very subjective thing. My feeling is often that there is no wrong or right in design, but sometimes fonts or colours are inappropriate or send out the wrong signals.

Focus on the brand messages, rather than its effectiveness as a piece of marketing. So look at the fonts, the layouts, the colours, the images used, the text – the 'tone of voice' it's written in and what it says.

Go back to your notes on the image your partner would like to portray. Do you get that same sense from what you see? If not, can you explain why not?

What do the fonts and colours say to you?

Does what she's saying on the literature tie in with what she told you earlier?

If not, how can you bridge that gap?

Is her image consistent? If you put two pieces of literature together, can you see that they come from the same company?

SOME SIMPLE THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR BRANDING

Evaluate everything you do against your brand personality

Create a set of brand guidelines, however simple, and give them to anyone who has anything to do with your company (graphic designers, printers, copywriters, marketers). Graphic designers can help you to do this, as can marketing companies.

When briefing anyone make sure you have communicated the look and feel you're going for. You don't need to tell them how you want it to be laid out, just the image you want to portray.

Keep control of your brand! If you're happy that you're brand is where you want it to be, make sure everything supports that design, and if it's moved too far from there; make sure you tell your designer.

Keep a consistent look across everything you do – website, emails, letters, printed marketing literature, even your offices and car.

If you have staff, get them involved in the process of creating your brand personality

Look at what your competitors are doing – what do they do that you like?

Talk to a friendly design and print company about how they could improve your branding (printing.com in Guildford are very good! 01483 401 818).