

GUIDE

# Branding 101

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When many people think of branding, they think of their company's logo. After all, that's where the word comes from—the brands that ranchers used to put on their cattle to be able to tell them apart. But the important thing to remember from this example isn't the "brand," the mark made on the cattle, it's the ability to tell them apart. Good branding is all about differentiation. A good logo can help with that but, as you'll see below, a logo is really just one element of many that you need to consider.

## Why You Should Care

A successful brand gives your business a competitive edge. It makes your business easier for customers to understand, remember, and choose... and that builds your business. This is true whether your company is large or small, retail or B2B.

## What Is a Brand?

We've put together a few of the key things for you to consider about your brand; and here's the first one: your business has a brand whether you have given it any thought or not. That's because a brand is the sum total of interactions and perceptions others have with and of your business. It begins with the first time they see or hear your name and continues through every touch point. It includes the way you answer your phones, greet customers or approach perspective clients, to the way your business presents itself in advertising.

## Start with Understanding

**The more you understand your customers, existing and potential, the stronger you can make your brand and the more effective it can be.**

- Who are you trying to reach and what do they really want or need?
- What are their goals and how can you help them achieve those goals? Those goals can be as simple as "I want a cheap cup of coffee, fast," or extremely complex: "We want to leverage our international marketing expenditure to drive sales conversions through data aggregation and analysis that delivers high-potential prospects and the insights required to make our services not just compelling but essential."

**The next step is knowing your own business, including the competition.**

- What are your strengths and weaknesses and how do they differentiate your business from the competition?
- What are your competitors' strengths and how are they speaking to your potential customers?
- What are they doing right and what are they missing? Is your business taking full advantage of opportunities that exist, such as your customers' unmet needs?
- What is your business doing right? What is working that you can build on?
- What areas are a waste of time and resources?
- Do you have clear goals and benchmarks to measure your success?
- Do you have a road map for how you would like to grow your business?
- Answering these questions gives you the knowledge you need to build your brand strategy.

## Brand Strategy

**Armed with the insight from your research, you can now assess the effectiveness of your company's existing brand.**

- What is the promise your business makes to its customers?
- Is it clear and coherent? Is it consistent across all touch points and every interaction? Is it believable?
- Does it meet your customers' needs?
- Is it compelling?
- Does it differentiate your business from the competition?

Once you have answered these questions, you have the knowledge you need to create a brand strategy that targets areas of weakness. We live in a dynamic universe, so no matter how strong your business is and how well it is doing, improvement and planning for the future are not just possible, but required. Your business can always do better. A clear brand strategy can help you define your goals, set the benchmarks of effectiveness, and achieve that success.