



Creating a brand: a beginner's guide

What is a 'brand'?

A brand used to be just that, a mark made by a branding iron on the hide of your cattle! It marked ownership. Now, companies are often referred to as 'brands' because they have an outward persona that identifies them with a particular service or product characterized by a logo and a set of principals that is unique to the company.

Think about some of these brands

- John Lewis
- Easyjet
- Diet Coke

No doubt you are able to visualise the logo and colours for these brands, even without us providing them here for you. These visual markers or clues make up a visual identity that signifies a product or service. But, importantly, they do more than that. Think again of the 3 brands listed above.

Which of the brands above

- offer you excellent customer service,
- help you take a break,
- give you a basic service, but at a budget price?

This brand 'offering' is more than just the service or product itself; it also links with values, principles and in some cases an intangible element i.e. an association with coolness, glamour or desirability. This offering needs to be borne out by the brand 'experience'. If the name on the door suggests excellent customer service, but the sales person is rude to you, the brand is not living up to its brand promise and can be damaged, or if your child's trainers are no longer seen as 'cool' by the in-crowd then they may start asking for a new pair!

So brand is a multi-faceted thing. The most important thing is that the brand expectation you set is the one you offer, the one that customers experience. For companies creating a brand for the first time this means uncovering the values and principles that you hold dear (are you as a company friendly? exclusive? professional? budget? sleek? high-end? value for money?) and build on those foundations. Brands are not fictitious and they must deliver what they promise. Everyone's experience of brands will be different. Brand development and management is a process by which we try and unite experiences and perceptions of a company, its service or products. It is the process by which you try and create a similar experience for everyone that comes into contact with your brand.

If you are looking at your own brand for the first time it is valuable to research what other people associate with you or your service or product to help you in this process of discovery.

This document is designed as a starting point for those new to branding to help you find the right route to create the correct brand image for your company, whatever the size of your organization.



Do I need a brand or just a logo?

Ask yourself what your business needs. This normally depends on the size of your company but also on how you would like to be perceived. Your brand, once developed, can be applied to a number of different marketing tools, from business cards to websites. A common starting point would be a logo, stationery, and business cards. Next would be shop signage if you have a premises and / or a website. Following on from this could be literature (leaflet, booklet or brochure), advertising (from e-shots and web banners, to trade or consumer press to bus shelter posters and billboards, up to radio and TV). Don't get too carried away though - very few companies will need to do all of this! But it is important to look at what you actually need rather than want. What are your competitors doing? What does the rest of the market use?

Think about your target customers – where are they based, what media do they watch, listen to or read? If your customers are local, you might only need to advertise in your shop window or the local press. If your business is bigger and you manufacture products then you will also need to create a website and product literature and targeted adverts for trade press as well as mail-shots and trade stands plus other material. For some companies a logo, stationery and website is sufficient. Whatever you do, keep your target customers in mind as not all markets use the same modes of communication.

Other things to bear in mind are how you use and follow up all of this material, how are your staff trained/engaged in the whole process, who in your company has face to face contact with the client, what are realistic delivery times (don't set yourself up for a fall), how do you answer the phone – think of every touch-point that a customer or person might have and make sure you deliver the same experience at every stage.

With branding clear, consistent communication is king.

How do I create a brand and how much should I pay?

There are many places to go for brand design depending on your budget including (the prices below are approximate):

Do It Yourself

If you have a clear idea of what you want and how you want to say it and are confident of your creative skills you can create it yourself. For local artisans, gourmet food stalls, or sole traders this may be appropriate.

Expect to pay £0.00

Online/High Street Print/Design Companies

Better than creating it yourself and very affordable with a certain amount of comeback should things not turn out as you'd expect. However this option represents the lower end of the design scale in terms of creativity, pro-activity and quality, but would be fine for sole traders, local trades people etc.

Expect to pay £150-250



Local Design Agency

Local design agencies employ trained designers at varying levels of experience, creativity and quality. Engaging the services of more experienced designers in the agency will increase the costs, but also the quality of the work created. A number of small agencies will also be able to give a certain level of consultancy.

Expect to pay £500-1200 for logo and stationery only.

A local design agency will also be able to deliver a basic set of brand guidelines for identity usage, which can be as extensive or limited as you require.

Expect to pay £1500+ for a basic usage guide

Recognized Design or Creative Communications Agency

Usually with a focus on industry best business practice and possibly incorporating a wide range of services from design for print and web, marketing and PR, more resources, bigger client base and even bigger overheads. These people understand communications and marketing and will be able to deliver advice and a well-constructed brand identity, based on past market experience and market research. Consultancy and research may come before any creative work depending on the project.

Expect to pay £5000 - £30000+

Specialist Branding Agency

This is where you go to if you really mean business and you have the budget to pay for it. The agency is likely to undertake a complete review of your business from head to foot. They will conduct research on your company as well as competitors and possibly interview staff and clients. They may conduct focus groups and compile all their findings into a brand report document that takes you from where you are now to where you want to be and shows you how you are going to get there. They will also produce a comprehensive set of brand guidelines to cover a wide range of mediums from literature, to advertising, to web. Solutions will be bespoke which means prices will vary greatly depending on your brief, the nature of your business, what you are looking to achieve and what is required to help you achieve it. Consultancy and research will most likely come before any creative work depending on the project. To get the best from this investment you will have to know a lot about your business, your market and have a very clear and concise brief.

Expect to pay £10,000 - £250,000+

Golden rules:

- A brand is not a logo.
- Know your own company and what you want to achieve (what are your values, what is your product or service, what makes you stand out from your competitors, what do you want to achieve?)
- Only work with people you are comfortable with and that you know you can have a good working relationship.
- Do not be bullied into doing anything that you feel uncomfortable with or unclear about, if in doubt get a second opinion. If an agency cannot explain in clear jargon-free English what they are offering you must question their ability to communicate your offering.
- Be upfront about your budget.
- Sign off all costs and schedules before work starts so both parties are happy with what you are getting for your money, and when.



- Be aware that agencies will charge you for developing a logo, brand guidelines and any extra products such as stationery, websites, brochures etc separately and that these costs should all be quoted and agreed in advance.
- Be aware that your business activities can strengthen or weaken your brand (how do your staff answer the telephone, what is the 'house style' for emails, what font do you use for letters, what are your customer service policies etc). Be consistent.
- Your brand should come from the heart of your business!
- In all areas of business have clear objectives, without these you will be wasting your money so think and do your research on an agency before you appoint them. Do not be afraid of asking for references.
- Agencies bill on a time basis therefore make sure you are getting what you want at each stage of the project to ensure the project stays in budget and you do not occur extra costs.
- With all things in life you get what you pay for, but be careful there are sharks out there and they can bite!

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