

# BRANDING: MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE

Branding is the art of creating an experience through design, messaging, and all the details in between –



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**Banding can be a loaded topic** and, sadly, it is slowly becoming a lost art among new small businesses today. This is mostly due to some confusion around the topic when it comes to creating the visual identity of a company. Somewhere along the way the concept of branding and visual identity has become two separate entities, or at the least two entities that don't quite tie together.

This post is framed in a way that will help you to break it down from theory to practical, discovery to creative, and bring forth the overall integrity and legacy that defines a good brand.

***It is my wish that your branding and design be all it can be.***

## **A DEFINED BRAND MAKES A GENUINE IMPRESSION**

If you look back over time at some of the most memorable moments of a well-defined brand, you can't help but be inspired on some level. Whether you are a consumer of the product or not, it left an impression.

There are many examples but let's take Apple's Think Different Campaign as one. While that was advertising (or advertising transcended, some may say), it would not have come to pass if the brand itself wasn't defined in the way it was from the start.

Apple's brand was, and continues to be, the foundation of every brilliant nugget that comes through it. This is from the advertising and marketing side, product design, and retail spaces, to the innovation that brings products into our lives we never even knew we needed. In short, *it's an experience*.

## **SO WHAT IS BRANDING?**

**Branding is an authentic representation** of what you are offering, your vision behind it, and how you walk through it. It's a journey of self-discovery for your business, yourself, and how the two come together to best support and serve your desired marketplace.

It has the ability to inspire trust and knowingness if done right - or the opposite, if not. There is really no in-between.

### **Community:**

Branding is also the community you create amongst your marketplace and employees. This all trickles down from the seemingly small things to the bigger picture and ultimately becomes part of your brand, whether you intended it or not.

### **A Continued Conversation:**

Branding is a continued conversation. When a brand is well thought out and positioned at inception, it allows it to evolve over time. This evolution can be both enviable and imperative at different times.

## **TAKING DISCOVERY INTO THE CREATIVE:**

On the subconscious level, the aforementioned discovery conveys your values, character, mission, and promise to your marketplace, and how you go about delivering it.

On the visual level, it is a look and feel that is consistent and well thought-out.

When explored in just the right balance, the two come together to create a powerful brand on which to build upon. This is where design and messaging come in to support and unify your brand.

These aesthetics and messaging do the talking for you when you're not there to do it for yourself. This "conversation" lends greatly to the consumer's decision to purchase your product or service over another.

The creative side of this process starts with your logo.

## **WHAT'S IN A LOGO?:**

***A logo derives meaning from the quality of the thing it symbolizes, not the other way around.” Paul Rand***

Your logo is the foundation of your brand. It is the perfect opportunity to move the aforementioned discovery into creative and begin to build out your look and feel.

This process is one of streamlining and simplifying the discovery down to a clear, distinctive, and memorable icon (typography logos included) that can evolve and move with you over time.

It is important to know that while a logo needs to be aesthetically appealing, on message, and positioned to grow and evolve with you effortlessly, it does not bear the sole responsibility of your brand.

Where your logo takes on real meaning is through the association of all the other branding aspects of your business. If the company is sub-par, the logo will eventually be perceived as the same. It carries energy and you, and your brand, are the conductor of that energy.

## **DESIGN**

Through the logo is where you explore color theory, typography, icons, taglines, branding elements, etc. These elements will then carry through to your supporting pieces, such as your identity, online presence, marketing, collateral pieces, and more.

It is important to approach each supporting piece in a new and fresh way. Use these branding elements as a style guide rather than a paint-by-numbers exercise. This approach will result in the best design and layout solution for the specifications and messaging demands at hand.

### **Fonts, Copy & Color:**

Note: Color carries pituitary responses and trends. Fonts also carry trends and can become dated quickly. Certain fonts can also appear unprofessional and pedestrian, or have the potential to, after a while of being in the mainstream marketplace.

How your fonts and overall copy is set (typesetting) is imperative as well. It can single handedly differentiate a professional from a novice.

### **Working With A Designer:**

It is important to truly understand the choices you are making in the details of it all, and what they say about your brand. Work with a designer that is also a brander - not all branders are designers and not all designers are branders.

We all have different processes, as well. Do your homework and find the one that best aligns with you. It is a collaboration and both of you should be invested.

Do not ask a designer to work on spec. Beyond the fact that this is their livelihood (which could be a whole conversation within itself but we'll save it for another post; this one

is about you), if you don't have equal investment in this process, the end-result will fall short by a very long mile.

If you can't afford to, or simply do not want to bring in a professional to handle all this for you, I would recommend finding one that offers consultation services to help guide you through.

## **INTUITION AND A LITTLE MAGIC:**

The most important thing you can bring to this process of branding your company is your heart, passion, and intuition.

Branding is not marketing. Marketing is a push tactic and takes an exterior approach. Branding is the expression of the essential truth and comes from an introspective approach. It must precede marketing for marketing to be truly successful.

Brand development and evolution comes from that quiet place inside that is your reason for doing this business in the first place. This is the place you want to brand from. There will be plenty of time to go for the fun effects and tactics when you get into the marketing and advertising phase. The branding is your foundation that supports all that.

And lastly, allow space and time for the magic to come through. When you do, it always does.