

BUSINESS SENSE

Next Level Tools for Entrepreneurs & Small Business Owners



MARKETING SERIES

What is Brand Marketing – and How Do You Create a Brand Marketing Strategy?

Why is this important?

Branding is more than just a logo on your website. Your branding is who you are as a company; it's your values and your mission, it's the way you treat your customers, it's the look and feel of your visual assets. So, before you can move forward with the more tactical steps in your branding strategy like designing your logo, take time to get clear on who you are as company, or in other words, your brand identity.

No matter what your business does, or what your product is, chances are, there are other companies doing the same thing. So, if you want your business and your product to stand out, you need to figure out what makes it distinctive and special. The more clarity you get on who you are and what you stand for, the more you can infuse that identity into your branding—and the more your brand will stand out and grab customers' attention as a result.

To truly stand out in today's hyper-competitive market, it's not enough to talk to the talk—you need to walk the walk, too. It's about what you do once you've connected with those customers. The reputation you gain—and what customers say behind your back—is the most important part of your branding and your business' long-term success.



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What is a brand?

A brand identifies and represents your product or service and the attributes and values of your business. A brand helps your customers to position and distinguish your product or service from your competitors and is a promise of what your customer will experience by doing business with your company.

Your point of difference/point of distinction (POD) is what makes you special; it's what makes a customer choose your company to do business with over your competitors—and it should be infused into every part of your branding strategy.

Brand Marketing

Brand marketing is a way to promote your product or service by promoting your brand as a whole. Essentially, it tells the story of your product or service by emphasizing your brand in its entirety.

It's important that you understand the difference between branding and marketing so you can efficiently use

them together. In essence, marketing is how you build awareness of your brand and its products, and generate sales. While branding is how you express who your business is for, what it's all about and why it matters.

Think of marketing as your revenue-generating toolkit and branding as your overall approach to reaching your target audience. Branding is one of the primary building blocks of your marketing strategy, so it will always come first.

Take a company like Nike, for example. From its iconic "swoosh" to its powerful "Just Do It" messaging, Nike's branding is instantly recognizable and has inspired long-term loyalty among its fans. Nike's marketing is everything it does to engage, influence and activate athletes of all abilities, like TV and radio ads, billboards and social media ads. Nike's brand recognition and reputation were not achieved overnight but are the result of an ongoing and painstaking process of investing in its brand and showing up consistently across every customer

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touch point over many decades.

No matter what business sector you're in or how large you aim to grow, it's important to define who your business is as a brand before you create a marketing plan.

That means clearly identifying your company's personality by carefully creating your brand's logo, typography, color palette, illustrations, voice, tone and style to embody your brand's values.

Brand marketing is an all-encompassing, constantly evolving strategy that revolves around creating brand awareness, recognition, trust, and visibility with

the goal of igniting a distinct **feeling** that will stay with your audience forever. A brand marketing strategy defines a brand's approach to communications, customer service, sales and the products themselves by promoting products and services in a way that highlights the overall brand to clearly and consistently enhance affinity and reputation.

Here are three questions every business should answer when putting together their brand marketing strategy:

- Who is your target audience?
- What is your brand's primary goal?
- How does your brand define success?

While different for every brand, there are five simple steps to take in marketing your brand that will help define what your objectives should be, how you should talk to your audience and how you'll measure the success of your brand and your business.

When everyone has a shared understanding of the brand's importance, employees feel a deeper investment in their work. This fosters a sense of ownership that encourages them to take greater responsibility for the brand's success.



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Brand Marketing in Five Simple Steps:

1

Understand Your Brand Purpose

Understanding why your brand exists is core to your brand marketing strategy. These questions will help you articulate your brand's purpose.

- **Who is our target audience?**
- **Why would they trust us?**
- **How does our brand make them feel?**
- **What challenge does our brand solve?**
- **Who are our competitors?**
- **What is our brand's background story?**
- **Why was our brand created in the first place?**
- **If our brand was a person, who would she, he, they be and why?**

This first step is where you'll start defining how your brand will look and feel. This means choosing your brand color palette, typography and imagery to visually represent your brand persona and identity so as to be recognizable and distinctive.

2

Research Your Target Market

Understand who your customers are by creating customer personas. A customer persona is a comprehensive picture of your perfect purchaser that helps you create an emotional connection with your audience. Ask yourself questions such as:

- **How old is this person?**
- **Are they single, partnered?**
- **Where do they live?**
- **What is their job?**
- **What do they do every day?**
- **What's their educational background?**
- **What do they care about?**
- **What was their most recent purchase and where do they like to shop?**
- **What do they need from our product or service?**

A clear vision of your ideal customer persona can be used to inform and guide everything from your business name to the art style you choose for your logo to the best ways to reach them and when with your brand story and product attributes.

3

Define and Sell Your Story

To sell your brand's story you must create the right message. Your story should connect your brand with your target audience, encourage loyalty and trigger brand recall.

Often a simple, heartfelt story that captures your audience's attention is the most memorable, and creates an opportunity for engagement with your brand and loyalty over time.

Great stories on your website, packaging, or social media channels are often shared by customers whose strong networks can influence new customers to try – and buy – your products.

4

Get To Know Your Competitors

Getting to know your competition is as important as knowing your ideal customer. Research their story, know their products and determine how you're different from them, then focus on those differences in your marketing messaging.

For example, if your competitor is known for being the lowest cost, you may want to focus on why quality is more important than price in your brand communications.

5

Create Brand Guidelines and Governance Standards

Once you understand your brand and audience, think about how to connect them in your marketing. Creative brand guidelines are where you'll document and detail your logo, colors, fonts, tone of voice and more. These guidelines will help any designers and marketers you work with tell your brand's story and deliver your message in the best possible way, as well as ensure brand clarity and consistency.

Brand governance boosts collaboration and enthusiasm within your business too. At the heart of any successful branding strategy are the people who champion it, which is why it's essential to have brand champions throughout your business who truly understand your brand's essence and values. These ambassadors must possess a deep understanding of your brand's story and be able to seamlessly articulate its nuances to their colleagues, your current and prospective customers, the media, your board or advisors, etc. By equipping employees with the knowledge and tools to find and utilize different brand assets in their daily work through a centralized digital asset management system, you ensure the use of the right logos, images, videos, collateral, etc. and consistency in the delivery of your value propositions.

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Business Sense is a no-fluff source of information that gets right to the heart of what small business owners need: essential tools and informational resources to help their businesses grow. Written by our team of business coaches, this series shares their decades of experience in areas such as financials, operations, sales and marketing, human resources, leadership, and governance. Business Sense is designed to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners in various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, waste management, renewable energy, and environmental technology, with recommendations and practical advice to help their businesses not only survive but thrive.

Our business management coaching and Business Sense Resource Guide are designed to accelerate the growth of the enterprises we work with and expand the leadership capacity of the entrepreneurs who own and manage these businesses.

Let Us Help You and Your Business

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund provides tailored business management coaching, entrepreneurial support, and training to position Vermont-based entrepreneurs and small business owners in our designated market sectors for growth and long-term success. We partner with state government, private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations to build a thriving economic, social and ecological future for Vermont. Learn more at [VSJF.org](https://www.vsjf.org)



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