

rusty monkey

BRAND LIKE A PRO



What is branding?

Your company's brand is its identity. It's what makes your company stand out from your competitors, and it's what potential clients and customers will notice first about you.

Branding and communication are vital to how your clients perceive you. If you maintain consistent branding standards and communicate effectively, your clients will trust in your ability to provide the best possible products and services.

Moreover, if you establish a brand that really connects with people and offers them true value, you will earn customer loyalty that can last a lifetime.

More than just a logo

It's a common misconception that the most important aspect of a brand is the logo. In actuality, your logo is a by-product of your brand. While some potential customers might notice your logo and think it's cool, the majority of newcomers to your company will focus on other aspects of your brand, and your logo won't be important at all.

Think about what attracts you to certain brands. Is it really just their logo? Or is it more about what they do, how they communicate, and the values they stand for?

So what else is there?

Branding is more about who you are than how you look. While visual branding elements are vital, there's more to it than just throwing together some snazzy graphics.

In order to really inspire customers to pay attention to you, your brand has to be based on a solid foundation and follow a certain logic.

- Your whole brand should be underpinned by a strong **core value** (or set of core values).
- It should be supported by a well-considered company **vision**.
- It should be considerate of your **audience**.
- It should be measured against a criteria of important **goals**.

Most brands are made up of the following elements:

- Typography
- Colour palette
- Image style
- Slogans and tone of voice
- Logo

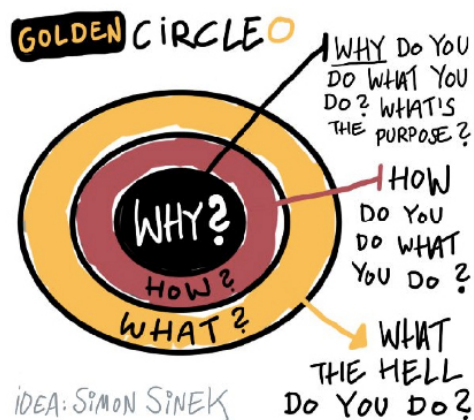
In this guide, we'll take a look at all these elements in more detail to help you put together your own brand guidelines.

Your core values

Every aspect of your branding and communication should be driven by the values that lie at the heart of your company.

Customers aren't attracted to companies that are only interested in making money. Profit is a by-product of your company – there should be deeper reasons for why you do what you do, otherwise you're in the wrong business!

Take a look at Simon Sinek's 'How great leaders inspire action' video, which talks about 'why', 'how' and 'what' statements.



Why > How > What?

Sinek explains that most companies start by telling prospective consumers what they do. This is a natural impulse, because you're proud of your products and services and you want people to buy them. But having a great product or service is not always enough. What consumers really care about is the centre of the Golden Circle: **Why do you do what you do?**

Thinking about this can help you to define your core values (a.k.a. your 'why' statement). This might all sound a bit abstract, but understanding this is key to creating effective branding.

For example, if your core values are to challenge market standards but you have really conservative-looking branding, that conflict will be confusing and off-putting to consumers. If you're invested in ecological issues but your branding is hard, mechanical and unfriendly, then it won't be communicating the right message.

So the first thing you must do before you start thinking about anything else is to establish your core values, and then decide what is the best way to communicate them through your branding.

Your vision

Your vision is essentially your aspirations for your company. Again, this can't be just about making as much money as possible. Do you want to be an industry leader and inspire people to improve services and practices in your sector? Do you want to help as many people as possible with your products? Do you want to achieve humanitarian goals such as supporting charities overseas? Do you want to innovate practices to make your sector more sustainable and responsible?

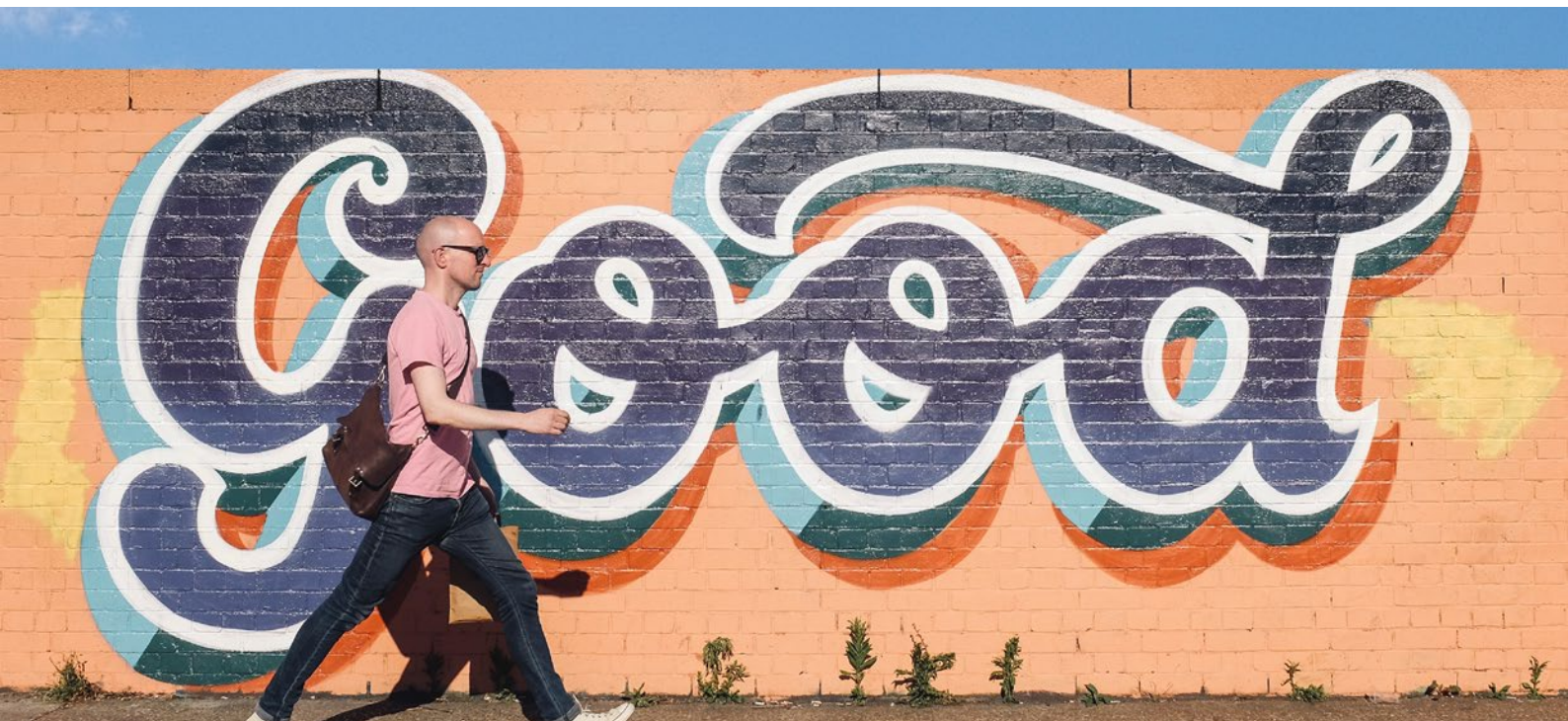
As with your core values, your vision is an important thing to consider when putting together your branding, because you don't want a brand that contradicts or limits your vision.

Your audience

Understanding your audience is just as important as understanding your core values and vision.

If the people you want to sell your product or service to are mainly middle-aged couples who live in rural areas, you don't want a brand that screams trendy urban street culture. Images featuring loads of graffiti will jar with your audience's taste and aesthetics. But if you're aiming to target students living in university accommodation, graffiti might be just the ticket.

If you're operating on a business-to-business basis, a level of professionalism is required, but if you want to stand out from a crowd of other companies like yours, you'll want to put a personal stamp on your branding.



Measuring your success

When you're first establishing your brand, it's useful to have a set of criteria to measure all your brand elements against. Try to put together five or six concepts that sum you up as a company. Use your core values and vision as a basis, expanding on the most important aspects.

For example, if you're a small construction company invested in ecological issues, your criteria might look something like this:

- **Sustainable:** How well does the brand reflect our commitment to sustainable materials and resources?
- **Comfortable:** How well does the brand reflect a feeling of warmth and comfort?
- **Innovative:** How well does the brand reflect the technological innovations we've used to achieve our green building standards?
- **Affordable:** How well does the brand reflect good value for money?
- **Family-friendly:** How well does the brand reflect that our products are safe and suitable for all the family to enjoy?

Grading all of your brand elements out of ten against each of these points will help you gain more of an objective idea of whether your brand is representing your company in the right way.

Typography

Consistent use of typography is important for retaining a coherent brand identity.

Here are some things to consider when designing your typography:

- Fonts should first and foremost be **legible**. There's no point in choosing a beautifully scripted font if no one can read it.
- Fonts should also **complement the foundations of your brand**. If you're a forward-thinking, modern company, avoid old-fashioned fonts like Times New Roman.
- **Don't use too many different fonts**. One or two different fonts should be enough to communicate your brand. Using loads of different fonts just causes visual confusion. You can add formatting such as bold to create different effects within the same font.
- **Think about sizes and spacing**. Your smallest font size should really be no smaller than 6pt, otherwise it will be too small to read. Spacing around text should be consistent, and a good use of negative (blank) space can create visually effective typography.
- **Be consistent**. Set up a guide for all content creators to follow, detailing font name, pt sizes for headers and body text, and paragraph spacing above and below text. If you're using Adobe products such as InDesign, setting up paragraph and character styles is a really great way to ensure your typography is always consistent.
- **Use headers**. You will need two or three header styles which should decrease in size with priority. Use them consistently to depict hierarchies of information. Good use of headers can really help when communicating complex information.

Roboto Light

26pt/36pt/8mm

Roboto Light

16pt/24pt/6mm

Roboto Light

13pt/20.6pt/1mm

Roboto Light

10pt/16pt/4mm

Roboto Light

6pt/9.6pt/2mm

Colour palette

A good colour palette is just as important as all other aspects of a brand. Consistent colour usage is vital for presenting a coherent brand identity.

Here are some things to consider when designing your colour palette:

- Make sure your colour palette **complements your overall brand**. If you're setting up a farmer's market shop, you might want to use warm, earthy tones like yellows, greens and browns. If you're an IT company, you might want to use clean modern colours like blues and greys. But you might also want to challenge the conventions of your industry by using unexpected colours! This is totally achievable, if you know what you're doing.
- **Use colours consistently**. One shade of red is very different from another shade of red. Each colour has a CMYK, RGB and hex value that allows you to ensure you're using the same shade every time.
- **Contrasting** warm and cool colours can create great effects. A colour palette that is too homogeneous can be boring and difficult to digest.
- Including **accent colours** allows you to easily call attention to important things.
- Learn a little about **colour theory**. Understanding how colours work together can be a real boon when designing a new colour palette. [Tigercolor.com](https://tigercolor.com) has some good introductory guides.
- Create a guide with all colour values available so that everyone in your company knows which colours to use.

Rich black

c91 m79 y62 k97
r0 g0 b0
hex# 000000

Red 1

c21 m96 y100 k12
r179 g37 b24
hex# b22518

Red 2

c2 m95 y100 k0
r226 g36 b20
hex# e12313

Orange

c7 m49 y91 k0
r232 g146 b38
hex# e79225

Brown

c28 m53 y75 k9
r181 g123 b73
hex# b57b48

Near black

c72 m66 y65 k74
r40 g37 b34
hex# 282522

Grey 5

c71 m65 y64 k70
r45 g42 b39
hex# 2d2a27

Grey 4

c69 m63 y62 k58
r60 g56 b53
hex# 3b3735

Grey 3

c65 m58 y57 k37
r85 g80 b78
hex# 54504e

Grey 2

c55 m48 y47 k13
r125 g118 b117
hex# 7c7675

Grey 1

c19 m15 y16 k0
r214 g212 b211
hex# d6d3d2

White

Image style

Imagery is a vital aspect of branding. It's easy to think that all you need are some photographs of your products, but this can often create a cold and unengaging experience for your customers. Here are some pointers:

- Well-selected images can be a really great way to **make your audience feel a certain way**. Sometimes, communicating that feeling is more important than showing what your product looks like in loads of detail. A combination of evocative pieces and product images is a great method to cover all bases.
- Be careful when using stock imagery because it can sometimes be cheesy. If you can, arrange to have a **professional photography shoot** done – you'll be able to tell the difference.
- Images of **customers using your products** is a great way to develop engagement, as it helps potential users to imagine how that product would fit into and improve their lives.
- You can use imagery to **complement** or **contrast against** other elements of your brand. For example, if you're invested in ecological issues, beautiful images of green spaces will complement your core values. However, images of the effects of pollution and littering could be really effective, inspiring people to take action. Equally, if the rest of your brand elements are modern and clean, introducing some sepia tones and retro images can bring warmth and personality.
- As a general rule, **images that include people** are a really good way to create engagement with your audience, as it gives them a subject to identify with. This is often much more effective than simply showing images of your products.



Slogans and tone of voice

This aspect of your branding is all about verbal and textual communication. As with every other element of your brand, your language should support your core values, your vision and your audience.

Slogans

A carefully chosen slogan can invoke emotions, generate empathy and communicate everything you need to say much more effectively than long paragraphs of text.

Keep your slogans brief and to-the-point. Decide exactly what you want to communicate, and how you want the reader to feel, then use as few words as possible to get that message across.

Tone of voice

Tone of voice is how you generally communicate using language, and getting it right is an important process. For example, if your aim is to sell gardening equipment to retired people in the suburbs, you'll want to use different language than a company that sells skateboards to teenagers.

Once you've settled on the kind of language you want to use, write a guide for all your creatives to follow. List words and phrases that you want to use, and those that you want to avoid. Set up a style guide so that everyone is spelling and punctuating in the same way. As with all things brand-related, consistency is king.



Innovate. Communicate.

Logo

Last and in no way more important than everything else is your logo. Here are some things to think about when designing a logo.

- **Keep it simple.** Complex logos are not only hard to interpret and visually confusing, they're also difficult to make, recreate and position effectively.
- **Don't try to encapsulate every aspect of your company in your logo.** Think about some of the most iconic logos out there. Most of them are really abstract and have nothing to do with what the company actually does. Because all the other elements of their branding are doing their job, this doesn't matter. Everyone knows what the Nike logo symbolises, even though it doesn't itself involve anything to do with sports or athleticism.
- **Think about where your logo will appear.** Make sure it works equally well on light and dark backgrounds – or create separate black and white versions.
- **Set guidelines** that restrict how your logo can be used. It's a valuable piece of your brand identity and shouldn't be mistreated. Don't allow anyone to recreate your logo, change the colours or proportions of it, introduce new effects or display it at different angles. You have the right to dictate how your logo appears.
- **Think about spacing** around your logo. A good use of negative (blank) space around it can help it make a greater impact.

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We hope this guide has inspired you to start thinking about your branding. But we understand that in today's busy world it's hard to find time for anything other than your day-to-day tasks.

Rusty Monkey's team of marketing and visual communication experts are on hand to help. We specialise in developing branding strategies for all manner of business, from typography to logo.

Get in touch with us today to brand like a pro. Call 0115 950 0842.

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