

Spinsights Presents...

Creating a brand with impact

All you need to know to build a strong brand foundation



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What is branding?

Branding is the practice of actively shaping your brand. It encompasses all the ways you can establish the image of your organisation in your customers' eyes. It is a way of distinguishing yourself from the competition and clarifying what it is you offer that will make you the brand of choice.

There are many components to building your brand including your logo, visual architecture, messaging, tone of voice, reputation, and customer service. All of these elements work together to create your unique and attention-grabbing professional profile.



Why is branding important?

In a crowded marketplace, breaking through the noise has never been more challenging. Grabbing your customers' attention and transforming your first-time buyers into lifetime customers is what it takes to stand out, make an impact and take your organisation to the next level.

Essentially, brand is the foundation of your organisation's story, encompassing everything from your logo to how your team answer the phone. A strong brand generates new leads and customers, while simultaneously providing direction for your employees.

Brand improves recognition

A brand is essentially your route to familiarity for customers. Where instant brand recognition is concerned, a logo can be the most significant element of your branding and its design should be appropriate, authentic and memorable.

Brand increases value

An established brand can increase an organisation's value by giving more leverage in the industry. This can open doors when it comes to investment opportunities and generating future business. Your brand can also sit on your balance sheet, providing a tangible financial asset.

Brand builds team pride and satisfaction

Working for a professional and reputable brand gives employees a sense of pride and job satisfaction. A brand that is held in high regard by its customers and contacts, can also make working for that company more enjoyable and fulfilling. When employees truly stand behind your brand, they are more likely to take pride in the work they do for you and go the extra mile.

Brand creates trust

A professional and well considered brand will help build trust with potential customers and clients. Looking like you mean business gives the impression that you do, and people are more likely to associate themselves with a brand they perceive to be aligned with their own values and aspirations.

Creating a powerful brand identity

We caught up with **Spindogs Director, Daniel Lewis**, for some top tips on building a brand from the ground up. With more than 15 years' experience as a brand strategist, he is well placed to share why branding is central to business success.

Why is a brand strategy important?

Brands are integral in today's consumer society and are used to market everything from products and services to people, whether that's urban footwear that appeals to an individual's sense of rebellion like Dr Martens or pop culture icons like Kim Kardashian.

A brand, however, is more than a product or service. It represents the unique identity and values that define a business, organisation or individual. It is a promise to consistently deliver that experience every time the customer connects with them, forming lifelong relationships.

Whether it's a logo, choice of office furniture or the way you answer the phone to customers, everything contributes to the perception of your business and its values, which is why it's important to get it right with a successful brand strategy.

Where should you start?

When undertaking a brand project with our clients, we start by learning as much as we can about their organisation, the people within it, the services or products they offer and who their audience are to uncover and understand what makes them unique.

We typically give internal and external stakeholders a platform to openly communicate their thoughts about the organisation, its story and what sets it apart from competitors. By looking for common threads, reading between the lines and joining the dots, we come up with a unifying brand strategy document that encapsulates the big idea, core purpose and tone of voice.

The process is no different if you're conducting the process internally, but the biggest challenge for senior stakeholders is separating themselves from their brand and taking an unbiased and realistic view. A third-party facilitator ensures you don't dominate the process and will get genuine responses from your stakeholders!



How important is getting the brand name right?

A brand name is an important element of brand identity, but it's not the be all and end all. Choosing a memorable name is always preferable, but make sure it resonates and says something to your audience. A successful brand naming strategy is a fine balance. You need to believe in it 100% otherwise you won't fully commit to living and breathing the brand you build alongside it.

Remember to think big – would a FTSE 100 or Silicon Valley giant consider nondescript or generic naming conventions? Think PlumbNation as opposed to ABC Plumbing. Start by defining your 'Big Idea', the reason for your existence, and identify the values that underpin your organisation. Your name should simply become an extension of that.

What's the relationship between logo design and branding?

It's important to understand that your brand is more than just a logo. You can have a strong brand without a particularly memorable logo. A successful brand strategy provides a recognisable experience for staff and customers alike; it's the way you run a meeting, the way in which you go about your business and how your staff live and breathe the culture.

A logo is a manifestation of all the things that make you unique, but a brand runs deeper than this. A logo without a unique brand proposition will look like window dressing and lack the authenticity to grow roots with your audiences.

What questions should you ask before embarking on the brand creation process?

- 1. What is our reason for existing?** Consider it abstractly. A house builder does not exist to simply build houses, they exist to give people a happy home.
- 2. Why are we unique?**
- 3. What is our personality?** Is it reflected in our materials (website, brochure, logo, etc.)? Is it reflected in the way we do business and the way we work with each other? Be honest!
- 4. Why do customers come back to us?**
- 5. Why do our team like working here?**
- 6. Have we documented and articulated our brand in a way that is easily understood by staff and customers?**



Mission Statement

Before you can build a brand that your audience trusts, you need to know what value your business provides. This is your opportunity to define the drive behind your company. Your mission statement is your reason for existing and should be clear, concise, and easy to understand for every person involved in your brand. This includes your employees and customers.

Consider:

- What pain points do you address?
- What can you do to inform and inspire your customers?
- What values do you stand by?
- Why should customers or clients buy from you?



To create a better everyday life for the many people.



To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy



Spread ideas.



To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighbourhood at a time.

Competitor Analysis

Assessing those competing in your space is one of the more important things you can do when learning how to create a brand identity. Not only will it inspire you and help to avoid the same pitfalls, it will help you avoid subconsciously creating something similar.

Start by choosing 2-4 competitors present in your marketplace and place them into a comparison chart for SWOT analysis. Consider benchmarking against familiar brand names.

Consider:

- Is your competitor consistent with their message and visual identity across all channels?
- What is the quality of your competitor's products or services?
- Does your competitor have customer reviews you can read, or social media mentions about them?
- In what ways does your competitor market their business, both online and offline?



Implementing Design

Once you have agreed the core purpose and fundamental values and aspirations of your organisation, you'll be ready to move on to designing your visual brand.

Logo

The most significant element in a visual identity will typically be your logo. A logo is your chance to convey the meaning of your brand in a simple form. Whether you choose to use graphics, icons, or typograph, your choice of logo should help to inform other elements in creating a brand identity, such as your colour palette, and use of fonts. Keep the following elements in mind:

Colours

When creating your brand identity, colour is crucial and can subtly alter the way that customers feel about your brand. We have psychological responses to different colours in different contexts e.g. orange can convey confidence, blue can signify professionalism etc. Choose colours that are appropriate to the personality of your brand and that will resonate with your audiences.

Consistency

Consistency will always be crucial to building a powerful brand. Repeating a specific message or visual image over time builds familiarity and trust. To keep your brand consistent, it's important to formalise a set of rules, known as brand guidelines, that everyone in your organisation can follow. This should include details on correct logo usage, brand colours, typography, image choices etc.

Consider:

- What colours do you want to align with your brand?
- Are there any colours you should avoid?
- What emotions and symbolism should your logo convey?
- Which five words should describe your logo?
- Are there any existing logos that you like, and why?

Fonts

Typography is a powerful thing. Just like colour, fonts can provoke different emotional responses. For example, sans-serif fonts are often perceived to be more modern or informal. Make sure that once you've chosen a font (or selection of complementary fonts) for your business, you stick to them consistently. Avoid 'fashionable' choices where possible and aim for something that will stand the test of time.

TOP TIP

Try to take personal opinion out of your decision-making process. You might not be the target audience of your own brand, and just because blue is your favourite colour, doesn't mean it's appropriate for your customers.



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Integrating Your Brand

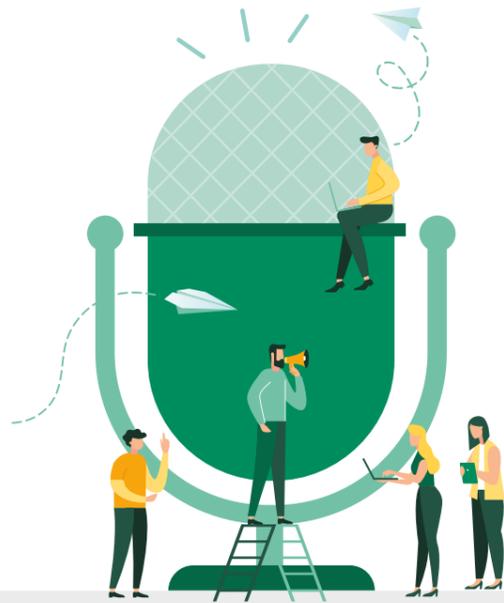
Once you've established what your brand should look like, it needs to be reflected in everything that your customer can see, read, and hear. At this stage you should review all your online and offline brand assets.

Today's consumers are looking for brands that make a connection with them on an emotional level, meaning that modern brands need to have relatable backgrounds, stories and values.

Consider the following elements when integrating your brand identity into your communications:

Tone of voice

Your use of language is essential when it comes to creating a brand identity. Choose a tone that matches your brand personality and that resonates with your target audience, and you'll have a stronger chance of connecting with your customers. For example, if you're a sophisticated formal company, then use professional language. On the other hand, if you're a laid-back business reaching out to a younger audience, you might be able to get away with a more informal tone.



Fill in these blanks and notice the tone you have used. Is it funny? Serious? Sarcastic?

I want my brand to make people feel _____. The brand _____ also makes me feel this same way. I want people to _____ when they come into contact with my brand. Three words that describe my brand are _____, _____, and _____. I want to take inspiration from the brand voice of _____. I dislike brands that sound _____. Interacting with my customers/clients makes me feel _____.

Personality

Your brand personality can be portrayed in everything that you do. Before you can let it shine through, you need to understand the essence of your brand. Without over-thinking, use the chart below and place a dot closest to where you think your brand personality fits on either side of the axis. This will provide a quick overview of where you currently sit, but a more in-depth and nuanced review is encouraged.



Appear mostly to the left?

Your business is more contemporary, and likely fast-moving, embracing the latest technologies. Show personality in your branding with energy and approachability. Be fun and trendy, but with a style that relates to your audience for the long term.

Appear a bit in both?

Not every business will fall more to one side. Sometimes, contrasting attributes can complement each other in unexpected ways. Embrace this and create the personality that best fits your brand style.

Appear mostly to the right?

Your business relies on process and planning, possibly for higher-end or established clients. Exhibit personality by communicating in a professional and authoritative manner. Share knowledge with a corporate voice, without being too unapproachable.

Emotion

Customers feel a sense of loyalty to brands they can build an emotional connection with. Humanising your brand is often a great way of making sure your audience can see and hear you. Tell your brand story at every opportunity and consider using video and podcasts in your content marketing to allow your audience to connect on different levels.

Communication network

The methods by which you choose to connect with your audience are just as important as what you choose to say. Take the time to find out what type of marketing your audience best responds to, from email to social media and even digital marketing campaigns.

The application of branding in digital environments

The playful and social nature of digital means that there are few limitations when it comes to brand creativity. Digital offers a platform from which to tell your brand story and convey your personality through immersive experiences that can change the perception of your brand and generate long lasting interest.

Multimedia

Branded digital media of all kinds have become an increasingly significant part of our everyday. We consume photos, audio and video clips, animation, games, interactive ads, streaming movies and more on a daily basis and even experiential marketing has recently gained cut-through with the rise of virtual reality and augmented reality.

Accessibility

The biggest benefit of digital branding is its accessibility and ability to reach people. Using social networks, websites and blogs, it is easier than ever to target specific audiences and attract potential customers.

More affordable than offline promotion, customers can access information about your brand around the clock and in a matter of seconds. Brand reputation is regularly discovered and defined by online content and (thanks to social media) can experience a rise to fame or be tainted in a matter of hours.

Of course, you have to commit to your online branding in terms of making sure your images render across all platforms properly, and your content is always up to date and current. Ensure you are ready to respond to and interact with your audience on a timetable that suits them (we all hate unmanned live chats or unresponsive customer service!).

Tone

Although Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter tend to be grouped into the same general category of 'social channels', they are all very different and can serve very different functions. Each audience and platform call for slightly different types of writing or forms of content.

Take Twitter for example; you have 140 characters to get your point across, so your tone needs to engage and entice people to click on your link within a split second.

Fluidity

Once a brand is established enough to be instantly recognisable, you can afford to play with its assets. Fluid trademarks are an example

of this and play out to great effect with brands such as Google and its 'Google Doodle', Absolut and Channel 4. All have toyed with their logos and recast them in different colours, added movement; and in Google's case, merged with different images to add personality and interest in a digital setting.

Similarly, there are distinct differences between online and offline communications. Digital communication is highly reactive, whereas you tend to get one shot at the offline collateral as it is much harder to edit and evolve. It also has to appeal to a much wider audience. Resist the temptation to simply post the exact same content on all of your channels as your audiences will very quickly disengage.



The application of branding in non-digital environments

The more traditional offline brand appearance is something we can all relate to as we are used to seeing billboards, hearing radio ads and holding a branded mug full of coffee. Although these brand assets each have their place, they are typically more expensive to execute, and harder to control or change once they are at large in the marketplace.

Creative playing field

Incorporating non-digital concepts to enhance messaging within a digital campaign can create more avenues for people to experience your brand. It also creates an opportunity to deliver adverts that are not limited to a digital platform, so you can reach your customers in any environment.

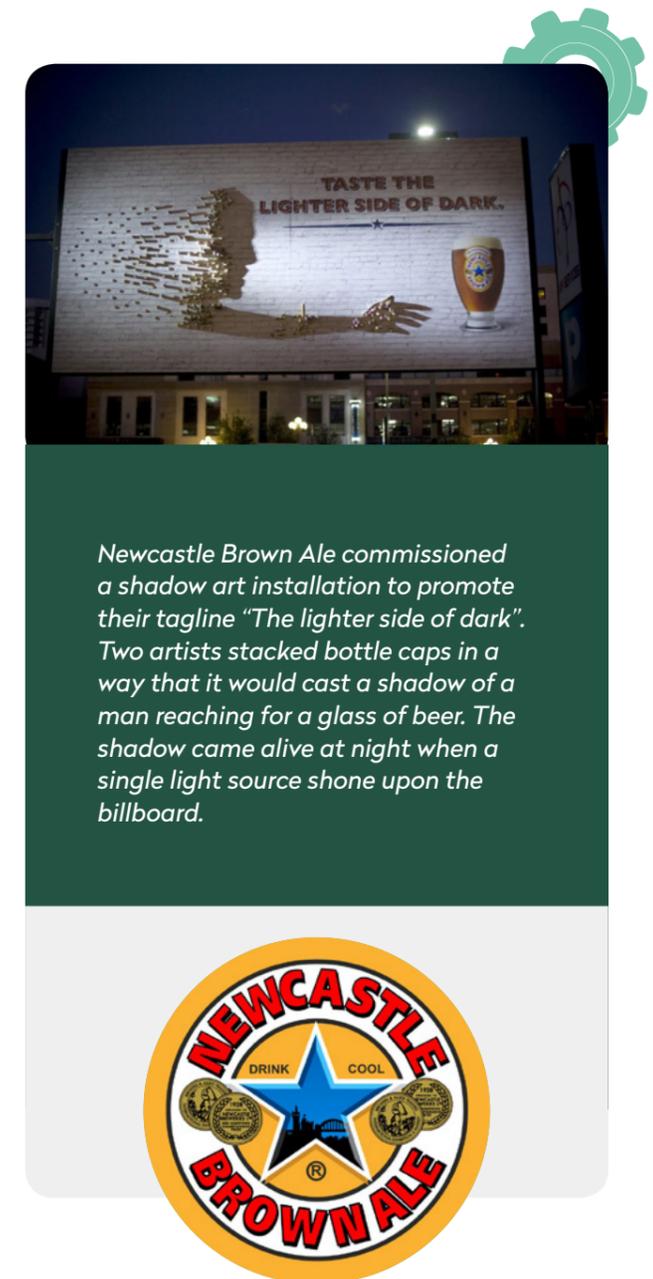
Print

Tangible assets in the form of printed brochures or branded pens have always been a credible way of brand building. They can be highly engaging, but quantifying success rate still remains a tricky business, and they don't offer the flexibility or have the highly targeted nature of digital advertising. Don't underestimate the value of receiving a tailored item through the post or the tactile experience of reading a company magazine.

Personal experiences

One of the advantages of offline branding is the personal brand experiences you can give to your customers. Lego shops and theme parks offer visitors free product and brand experiences without having to make a purchase, which always results in linger time and continued exposure to the brand.

From what your staff say to the environments you work in, feeds the subconscious of your audience and leave a lasting impression in their mind.



Newcastle Brown Ale commissioned a shadow art installation to promote their tagline "The lighter side of dark". Two artists stacked bottle caps in a way that it would cast a shadow of a man reaching for a glass of beer. The shadow came alive at night when a single light source shone upon the billboard.

Branding Do's and Don'ts

Building, maintaining, and protecting a brand can be your most important investment.

Let's take a look at some of the biggest do's and don'ts of branding, aimed at getting your brand on the right track and saving you from making some costly mistakes.



DO: Identify your potential customers

Building a picture of your target audience is key to branding success. Understanding exactly what makes them tick, from where they shop to which magazines they read can help to develop a strong brand and shape future marketing campaigns.

DON'T: Leave your employees in the dark

It can be easy to take a path of personal preference when it comes to branding, but your workforce lives and breathes your brand every day. Keeping them in the loop when it comes to brand strategy means that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet and their involvement is essential to the successful portrayal of your brand.

Stakeholder workshops can be a great way of consolidating opinion with the help of an outside intermediary and allow everyone the chance to be involved and express their branding views in a controlled environment.

DO: Develop a brand voice

The most enduring companies have a defined personality and clear sense of purpose. Tone of voice has a huge impact on how much customers trust and care about your brand. But in reality, this can and should be refined. By establishing and documenting the foundation of your organisational voice, you have a point of reference and example messaging for any future communication or branding.

DON'T: Get too hung up on the competition

Keeping a firm eye on the competition is only natural but be careful that it doesn't end up overly influencing your own branding choices. Building your brand in response to your direct competition means that you won't stay true to your own values, and as a result you will end up with a brand that lacks authenticity. Find a balance between paying attention and staying true to yourself.

DO: Maintain consistency

An inconsistent brand not only looks unprofessional but can also lead to confused customers. In order to instil confidence and maintain expectations for your target audience, brand consistency is key.

DON'T: Underestimate the value of good design

The sight of a logo is often the first branding experience for many, and if met with an outdated or badly designed one, it can quickly paint the wrong picture. A considered and appropriate logo never fails to exude knowledge and commitment and gives a lasting first impression. Investing in professional design is always money well spent.

DO: Focus on your core values

Your core values are effectively your corporate glue. They are the principles that guide your long-term goals and strategy and they should also form the core of your brand. If your customers believe they share the same values as your brand, they will ultimately reward you with their loyalty.

Authenticity is key to this. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos famously said, "Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room.". Your brand will only flourish if it is built to be an authentic representation of who you are as a business as it will take on a life of its' own when released into the wild, so it needs to stand up to scrutiny.

DON'T: Make false promises

Your brand needs to be a true representation of your organisation. If it's not, it will quickly fall on its face. Don't waste time trying to be something you're not as it will only damage your credibility and leave you with very confused, and potentially unhappy customers.

DO: Write quality content

Publishing engaging content is an effective way of reaching new audiences, and it goes without saying that every website should have an outlet for thought leadership or interactive content. Well-researched, quality content can elevate your position in search engines, and it is the perfect platform to showcase your knowledge and expertise. As with any form of online content, once you launch a blog you need to be committed to keeping it up to date.

DON'T: Expect instant results

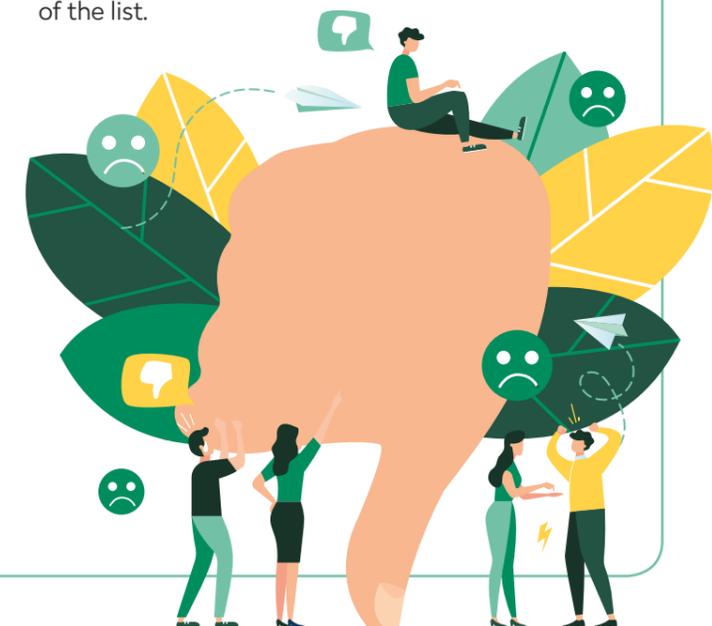
A strong brand isn't something that can be built overnight. Set realistic expectations for success and keep track of progress.

DO: Think about hiring a professional

If you are daunted by the prospect of branding or rebranding, then don't be afraid to draft in the professionals. Being close to your organisation can make it difficult to get a brand out of your head and on to paper. A brand strategist can work with you and your employees to develop a brand you are proud of, and that is best suited to your marketplace.

DON'T: Set yourself an end goal

There will be times when your brand will need more attention than others. Keeping your brand alive is part of the brand journey, and you will need to refresh brand elements as your business evolves. Establishing a defined brand strategy will ensure your brand thrives and never gets put to the bottom of the list.



About Spindogs

We are a full-service digital agency helping organisations with marketing both online and offline. We love delivering great website design & development, marketing and brand solutions for our clients, so whether you're looking to drive more value from your digital marketing budget or bring

your business to life with a visually stunning website, we have the full package to take your online presence to the next level. That's how we've built successful, results-driven relationships with clients for over 15 years.

Websites

- > Web Design & Development
- > eCommerce
- > Multiple CMS platforms including WordPress, Umbraco and Kentico
- > Intranets & Extranets

Creative

- > Brand Consultancy
- > Logo Design
- > Graphic Design
- > UX
- > Website Design
- > Print
- > Branding

Marketing

- > Outsourced Digital Marketing
- > SEO
- > PPC
- > Social Media Advertising
- > Analytics
- > Conversion Rate Optimisation
- > Email Marketing
- > Training & Workshops
- > Content Creation

Get in touch

To learn more about partnering with Spindogs for your branding project, get in touch with our Business Development team:

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