

JSL MARKETING & WEB DESIGN | E-BOOKS



BRANDING 101

*The Complete Guide to Building
Your Brand Online and Off*



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Brand Recognition & Your Business

When it comes to your business' marketing budget, you have many options available to you – so many, in fact, that it can be difficult to choose which ones will give you the best ROI.

Savvy business owners and marketers alike are usually more focused on using their marketing budgets for things like:



**IMPROVING SEO
RANKINGS**



**BETTERING SOCIAL
MEDIA PERFORMANCE**



**INCREASING THEIR
WEBSITE TRAFFIC**



GENERATING MORE LEADS

Each of these goals comes with key metrics that allow you to quantify performance. Social media can be corroborated with likes and reach, website traffic with unique page views, and video marketing with completion rates.

However, there's another marketing factor that isn't quite as easy to measure but is still incredibly important.



BRANDING

Branding is a compelling option for anyone. Powerful and effective branding is a marketer's best friend and allows your business to be on the minds of your customers 24/7. To give you an example, try associating these tag lines with their respective brands:

“Just do it.”

“The Golden Arches.”

You don't need to be an expert in the sportswear and fast food verticals to know we're talking about Nike and McDonalds. That's how effective branding is! Without anything more than a phrase, you were able to visualize the companies we were thinking of.

That's the magic of effective branding. While it takes time and some startup investment, clean and professional branding separates your business from competitors, creates and cultivates an identity for your business, ensures repeat business, and keeps your business dominate within your industry.

Powerful and effective branding can do a lot for any business, but it's often hard for business owners to commit to improving their branding. Other marketing efforts seem easier to understand and appear to pay off sooner.

However, developing a solid brand is foundational for all other types of marketing.



It has been proven time and time again to increase product recognition, enhance customer retention and loyalty, and multiply your return on investment in other marketing efforts.

You need compelling branding to compete in 2020, but it needs to be done correctly. It requires a delicate balancing act of art, business strategy, marketing messaging, and positioning to brand a business effectively. If done incorrectly, your new branding effort could decrease client retention, lower product recognition, and hurt your business's public image.

With all of that said, let's explore one of the most common misconceptions about branding to help get you started!



The Biggest Misconception About Branding

“Ok, so my business needs a better logo.”

It's not quite that simple...

Yes, a crisp, beautiful logo is a significant first step for a business that doesn't have one. We'll never try to dissuade a business owner from pursuing a better logo for their brand, but it needs to be done correctly.

Creating a logo is more than just choosing imagery and colors, although those are both critical elements. Your logo needs to fit cohesively into the overall branding strategy used across all of the marketing platforms that your customers will recognize and love. For this reason, using cheap or free online logo generators or Clip Art to create a logo will not suffice.

Your customers are savvier than you think – a shoddy logo will make your brand look unprofessional and sloppy, which could be fatal to your customer’s perceptions of your brand.

And there’s always the risk that your Clip Art-inspired logo will be so forgettable that it won’t even be remembered by your prospective clients. The whole point of a logo as a part of a greater branding strategy is to sculpt a niche for your business in your customer’s mind and create an association between your business and a recognizable symbol. A poorly designed or forgettable logo won’t do that, which is why choosing the right graphic artist or branding consultant is so crucial.

Your business’s mission is unique, and the point of branding is to highlight what makes you unique. The right branding team will listen to your story, ask questions to better understand

your competitive advantage, review your past branding and graphic design efforts, and tie your logo and branding materials together into a comprehensive, full-scale marketing strategy. You just can’t get that from a free logo generator or a 15-minute logo mockup.

We want your logo to be memorable. (That’s the whole reason that you’re investing in branding!) Your new logo will be incorporated into all aspects of your marketing, and while a computer generated or hastily designed logo might look nice when printed, it likely won’t work well for web or other online needs. And that’s not even including other things you might have need of a logo for, like store signage, employee uniforms, trade dress, and product design.

And then there’s the fact that branding is more than art!





We'll talk about this a little more in-depth later, but it's important to note that your business has its own distinct personality. Good branding considers the tone and style of your business to make a logo that's consistent with how your customers view your brand.

Your reputation, after all, is more than just imagery, and any branding consultant or firm worth their salt will make sure that art and tone align across all aspects of your marketing.

With that being said, branding is so much more than just logo development – which is why we always recommend utilizing a comprehensive branding package when developing your brand.

Imagine a friend who dresses business-professional but suddenly starts wearing leather jackets and studded belts.

That's a bit surprising, right? The same thing happens with businesses who don't take the time to correctly develop their brands.

And that's where a comprehensive branding package can be truly beneficial. By making sure that all of your marketing and branding efforts are perfectly synchronized, you're preventing your customers from experiencing any surprises next time they encounter your business!

What Goes Into a “Branding” Package?

IT STARTS WITH YOUR “WHY?”



**WHY DO YOU
DO WHAT
YOU DO?**



**WHAT IS THE
MISSION
OF YOUR
BUSINESS?**



**HOW DID
IT COME
ABOUT?**



**WHAT
IS YOUR
STORY?**

Your profession is personal. And getting personal is how you connect with your target market.

You take care of the “why,” we’ll handle the “what” and “how.”

AND THAT'S WHERE RESEARCH COMES IN.

The main goal of branding, after all, is to create and cultivate a persona that is distinct from competitors. Because of this, it's imperative that your branding is done in a way that highlights the uniqueness of your company – which is where the research comes in! After all, it's hard to advertise the uniqueness of a business without knowing what makes that business unique.

A few key questions to answer before an artist ever puts paint to paper:

WHO IS THE TARGET MARKET?

What's the persona of your target customer? How old are they? Where do they live? What's their education level, socioeconomic status, and behavior?



WHAT COMPELS YOUR CUSTOMERS?



Why should your customers care about your product or service? Good marketing and advertising will highlight the benefits of your product and service, but at the end of the day, the story isn't the product or service. It's what that offering can do for your prospective customer! Remember, the average American sees hundreds of ads in a day (and that's on the conservative side!) Knowing WHY your clients should care helps your brand cut through all the advertising noise and make a clear and compelling value proposition that your customers will remember.

WHAT'S THE COMPETITION DOING?

We also need to gather information about your industry, market, and competitors before we finalize your personalized branding strategy. Is there a way branding is done in your industry? Who are your closest competitors and what do their logos look like? The more information we can get, the better!



LOGO, COLORS, AND TYPOGRAPHY

Your designer(s) will work side-by-side with you to create a simple, straightforward image that encapsulates your brand and the values, history, and style that define it. But we'll be honest – there's no right way to design art.

Some elements are universal and work more frequently, but a lot of design elements are based on personal preference. That's one of the fun parts of working with a team of designers rather than a logo generator or a far-off artist. You'll have a team that can help you work through all those creative ideas and really flesh them out as effectively as possible.

Of course, there ARE, however, industry and branding-specific trends that a knowledgeable designer can speak to. For instance, a bar might benefit from using vintage 1920s and 30s style script and black-and-white photography to conjure up nostalgia for a bygone time. And while this is a popular design choice for bars, a remote artist can't walk you through the benefits and disadvantages of staying with what is tried and true within your industry versus forging a new path. There's a lot of context and ambiguity in that argument, and only a seasoned team of professionals can help you make that call for our fictitious bar. (And it's a tough one!)

But again, as stated earlier, it's more than just an image.

Your business's brand must speak to your customers in a compelling way.

And that's why we need to talk about....



tone of voice

Take the hypothetical bar we mentioned above. Should this bar use a recognizable and profitable industry trend in their branding, or should they take a new path?

Well, the answer will probably depend on the overall marketing strategy. Is this bar a speakeasy that's aiming to create a chic and cultured niche, complete with cognac, cigar smoke, and obscure liqueurs? Or are they looking to be known as a fun and lively neighborhood dive and have the pool tables and dart boards to match?

Those are two completely different angles to consider, and the actual tone of the business will heavily influence that bar's choice in logo.

JSL Marketing will work with you to determine how you want to communicate with your customers. If your logo and colors are your brand's "look," then your tone of voice is your brand's "personality." And just like every person has their own personality, businesses often follow suit.

Below is a list of some of the more commonly used tones of voice and a few companies that utilize them in their branding. Pay attention to the industry-specific trends within each personality!

(After all, not many people want to invest with a "funny" investment firm or spend money with a "funny" credit card.)

- **Professional personalities:** Wells Fargo, Visa, Edward Jones Investment
- **Nurturing personalities:** Hospitals, Johnson & Johnson, Subaru
- **Casual personalities:** Old Navy, Target, Coca Cola
Funny personalities: Allstate, Old Spice, Doritos
- **And more!** Your brand can be whimsical, sophisticated, kind, or even strange. (For some brands, it works!)

Getting back to our hypothetical bar, the answer to whether or not it should utilize industry trends or something new within its branding depends on the overall tone of voice of the business.

Vintage script and classic colors won't do a local college bar justice. However, a 1920s-influenced logo would perfectly compliment the atmosphere and niche of a craft cocktail lounge.

A respectable branding team will establish this professional tone with you before they ever put pen to paper and begin crafting a gorgeous, powerful, and exciting logo for your business!

BRAND GUIDE

At this point in your branding process, we've set the foundations for your new brand. That's exciting! And while we love the process of building your brand, we also recognize that your business will need to protect its brand in the future. That's why we also offer a "brand guide" – and any competent branding firm or artist should do the same.

What's a brand guide, you might ask?

Simply put, it's a style guide that sets expectations and stylistic consistency for your brand.

This could include things like fonts, images, and colors that are approved for use within any branded products – both online and off.

The key here is establishing consistency for your brand. A good designer will work with you to choose the perfect script and color, but the most crucial element moving forward is that all aspects of your brand are harmonious for your customers. Remember, your business has an image, and it needs to be consistent to make sure your customers can quickly recognize your mark. That's why we'll make sure to send you away with a clear and specific brand guide.

This brand guide will become the proverbial "bible" of your company's image.

The more detailed we can get, the better.

At this point in the process, we've designed your perfect logo, set the tone for your business's marketing voice, and researched what the competition is doing to ensure that your logo stands out. Now it's time to implement this new branding on one of the most important mediums your business represents itself on – your website.



BRANDING & YOUR WEBSITE

If your logo is the first impression, then your website is the second. And in some cases, that website is the deciding factor in whether someone wants to give you their business.

Your logo is a great first step towards developing a solid brand, but it also needs to be correctly applied across all aspects of your business. That's particularly true of your website.

82% of smartphone users research products online before buying in store, which means that your digital presence is just as important as your logo.

You can have an immaculately designed logo, but your sales will still fall flat if your website isn't user-friendly, beautiful, and helpful in the eyes of your customers.

As part of your branding package, we might recommend taking a deeper dive into your website. The artwork and trends that we utilize within your branding should be applied to the headers, footers, and banners of your website, but there may also be issues that need to be addressed within the site itself.

Slapping a new logo on a website that's using old product shots, shaky welcome videos, and inconsistent tone of voice won't make much of

an impact on your website traffic. If anything, it might just confuse your website visitors. That's why we recommend that "branding package." In this approach, your design team pairs your new logo with your desired tone of voice and then applies it to all images, videos, writing, and visuals to create a coherent and unified brand message.

This usually means that multiple elements of your website will need to be adjusted so that new logos, fonts, and color schemes are easily identifiable to your customers. While this transformation takes place, our team can also identify areas of your website that need improvement.

Remember, a stunning logo might impress your users, but your website also needs to impress Google and other search engines. That amazing new branding will never show up on search engine results pages (SERPs) if Google dings your website for a poor linking strategy, terrible load speed, and mobile incompatibility.

To really make the most of your branding efforts, we need to make sure that the website is firing on all cylinders, and we're happy to discuss that opportunity should a client be interested in a new, brand-consistent design for their website.

Branding vs. Rebranding

Everything we've stated above is all well and good, but what if you have an existing logo or other brand materials?

If that's you, then you might be wondering about the difference between branding and rebranding.

Essentially, it boils down to the way your customers view your brand. If you're going about branding for the first time, your customers (if you have any yet!) have not seen your logo and need to familiarize themselves with your business's persona. If you're rebranding, your customers are already familiar with your brand, logo, and business feel – they just need to see all of those brand characteristics in a new light!

Rebranding can be particularly challenging. When your brand materials and business image are not compelling and memorable, they need to be changed ASAP to help protect your business's image.

While rebranding is not simple, a successful rebranding campaign can mean the difference between profitability and failure. Some large-scale brands have even saved themselves from bankruptcy through a change in imagery and messaging.

Pizza Hut, AirBnb, and Harley Davidson are some of the largest companies to have improved profitability through strategic rebranding!

These types of full-scale rebranding projects are particularly difficult, as they require incorporating the history and traditional dress of the original brand into the company's new vision and presentation.

It's no easy task, but any respectable graphic artist or branding consultant will be sure to properly research the brand's historical imagery. This results in a logo, trade dress, and color scheme that is recognizable, but more compelling than past branding.

It's important to note that a rebrand is more than just changing a logo or slightly adjusting packaging. The most successful rebrands come with accompanying changes in the brand's marketing, tone of voice, and offerings. The business isn't just window-dressing their image: they're actually changing it!

That's one of the hardest parts of rebranding. Adjusting product packaging or adopting a new color scheme for an existing logo is a LOT easier

than remaking a brand's entire identity and tone of voice. That's why it's so important to have professional consultation when undertaking a large-scale rebranding project.

We mentioned some extremely successful rebrands earlier. It's worth noting that for every home-run rebranding endeavor, there's one that failed spectacularly. Radio Shack's decision to become "The Shack" in 2009 had no discernable impact on struggling sales and worsened the company's performance. This surface-level change made sense to the company's higher-ups, but it didn't change how customers related to the brand. With no new value proposition, tone of voice, or marketing strategy, "The Shack's" rebranding attempt was a failure.

Don't just move deck chairs around on the Titanic by only giving your logo a facelift.

You'll need marketing and branding professionals who can create a full package for you and your business. To truly change how your customers view your business, your messaging, tone of voice, trade dress, and logo need to be adjusted as well. This approach is a lot more intensive than simply changing a logo, but it's worth it!



HOW MUCH TO EXPECT TO PAY FOR BRANDING

How much should you expect to pay for branding? Well, like many things in life, it depends on your unique situation. If you're a startup, you'll probably have very different needs than an established brand that needs an image change. Again, every company's situation is different, but there is a rule-of-thumb we'd suggest:

Generally, never spend more than 5-15% of the total budget on a branding budget, regardless of the size of that budget.

The difference in budget sizes accounts for various levels of service. For example, a business that has no revenue or physical location yet may only have the funds for a logo while a >\$500,000 revenue brick-and-mortar store could use 15% of their budget for a new logo, website, and style guide.



IT'S WORTH IT!

You might be asking, “Can I afford to rebrand (or brand) my business?” That’s a fair point; marketing requires an initial investment of time and money.

But the follow-up question to that should be, “Can I afford not to?”

A full-funnel branding strategy will raise awareness of your product or service among potential customers, separate you and your competitive advantages from your competitors, and entice your existing customers to return.

As more and more companies turn to digital marketing to enhance their profitability, your business needs to be instantly recognizable to your potential customers (and your customers need to like the brand they recognize!)

Your current and prospective clients see hundreds (possibly thousands) of ads and logos in a day, and your competitors’ branding is among them.

Invest in a graphic design and branding team that will distinguish you from all that marketing and advertising noise and keep you at the top of your clients’ minds.

Call the branding experts at JSL Marketing & Web Design if you’re ready to begin your next branding project! Our team combines artistic expertise with marketing acumen to produce outstanding results for our clients. While we’re proud of our team, we’re also honored that we’ve won recognition within the industry as well!



Awards

Contact your branding team at 877.514.0276 to start planning and designing ASAP!





Want to learn more about JSL Marketing & Web Design?
Ready to get started on your next, big branding design project?
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