# QUICKSTART GUIDE TO MARKETING: UNDERSTAND YOUR BRAND

**As a business owner or marketer, one of the paramount marketing tasks for your business should be to develop branding.**

You may not think about building your brand – *creating a logo, picking colors, defining your style* – as marketing. But it's the essential foundation for everything that comes after.

Your brand is how your business has decided to present itself to the world. How you want to look, what you choose to say, how you interact with people, what you value – all add up to your brand.

*How important is branding to your business? What determines which brands customers are loyal to and which ones they forget? How can you create a brand that customers want to support?*

**Gain control, confidence, and clarity around marketing your business when you take the time to develop branding.**



*Do you recognize which company this branding belongs to? How did you know? Strong consistency creates recognition, trust, and customer loyalty.*

Many new business owners are tempted to skip investing time and energy upfront in developing branding. *You'll get to it eventually. There's so much else to do to start a business!* But if you can put priority on it up front, you'll thank yourself for it later.

It's completely understandable – and totally common! – for business owners to launch without fully developing their brand. In fact, you may have been operating for years and are now reading this guide to address some framework that got pushed to the wayside while starting out. *Kudos!*

**Whatever stage you're at, developing branding can help you answer the always-relevant question,** *"How can I market my business most effectively?"*

**After reading this quick-start guide, you'll understand why developing good branding is crucial for your business, and how to start the process for yourself.**

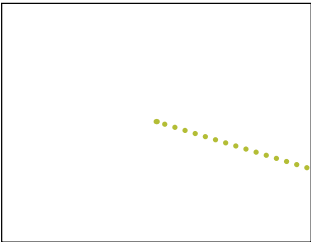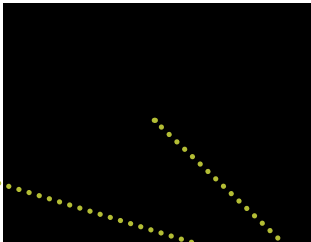# Why is Developing Branding Important?

**Developing branding is important for creating consistency and clarity in your marketing.**

A key factor to any successful venture is whether people trust in it or not. Another is being remembered. To build trust and recognition as a business, the way you communicate with people must be consistent and clear. Think of it as having one big conversation with your audience. When your marketing aligns with your branding, and your branding aligns with your business goals, every piece of communication you put out is driving towards the same outcome.

*'Developing branding'* **means determining the set elements of your brand that remain the same and how you want them to be utilized.**

Aspects like your logo, colors, fonts you use, and the aesthetics of imagery you want in your sales and marketing materials. Outlining these elements, and the guidelines for using them, helps your materials stay in sync, even when created by different people. This outline is known as a **'brand guide.'**

A brand guide acts as your north star to follow while creating your business and marketing collateral. Without a guide to reference when creating new materials, it can be difficult to know what's capturing attention and converting – and what's not. This can cause confusion and frustration for business owners and marketers alike. And it can lead to wasting money on marketing efforts that don't work.

**FULL COLOR LOGO**   **REVERSE-COLOR LOGO**

**FONTS**

**Main Font Family:**

**Accent Font Family**
(Use for titles, headers, & other short, visually impactful text)

**Alternate Font Family:**

**COLOR PALETTE**

**PRIMARY BRAND COLORS:**

| Color #1: | Color #2: | Color #3: |
|---|---|---|
| CMYK: | CMYK: | CMYK: |
| RGB: | RGB: | RGB: |
| Pantone: | Pantone: | Pantone: |
| HEX: | HEX: | HEX: |

**SECONDARY / ACCENT COLORS:**

| Color #4: | Color #5: | Color #6: |
|---|---|---|
| CMYK: | CMYK: | CMYK: |
| RGB: | RGB: | RGB: |
| Pantone: | Pantone: | Pantone: |
| HEX: | HEX: | HEX: |

This simple Brand Guide template *(to the left)* includes areas for the basic branded elements every business should have predetermined to help created consistency.

**At minimum, your brand guide should include:**

- Your primary full-color logo

- Your primary reverse-color logo (for use on dark backgrounds)

- Primary brand font families (Typically a "display" or headline font, and a body copy font for paragraphs.)

- Brand color palette, with color data for the main color modes: CMYK, RGB, and Pantone.

- Secondary or accent colors that may be used in conjunction with your branding.

# Good Branding Avoids Confusion

## BRANDING HELPS YOU DECIDE:

**What your marketing materials will look like.**

**What your messaging is.**

**How you speak to your audiences.**

**The channels & places you choose to advertise with.**

**How to evolve your style while maintaining recognition.**

**What comes next.**

## Good branding helps you avoid feeling like you're throwing spaghetti at a wall to see what sticks.

Your branding includes the most important building blocks you'll use to promote your business. Without these decided, what will your marketing materials look like? What will they say? How will they say it? Who are you trying to reach?

For owners and marketers, **developing branding helps provide clear direction on which marketing activities are working** and which to invest in next. And for your audience, it helps connect the dots of each interaction with your brand and gain greater understanding of your message.

A lack of planning upfront often leads to creating pieces as they're needed. Over time, you end up with a mis-matched collection of marketing materials that don't make sense or work together. Inconsistent materials confuse prospects about what you are offering or asking them to do – or even which business they're engaging with. *This can lead to a lack of recognition.*

**Brand recognition is critical to your success.** If people don't recognize your brand when they see it, it's difficult to build trust.

**By putting priority on developing branding, you're supporting all your future marketing endeavors.**
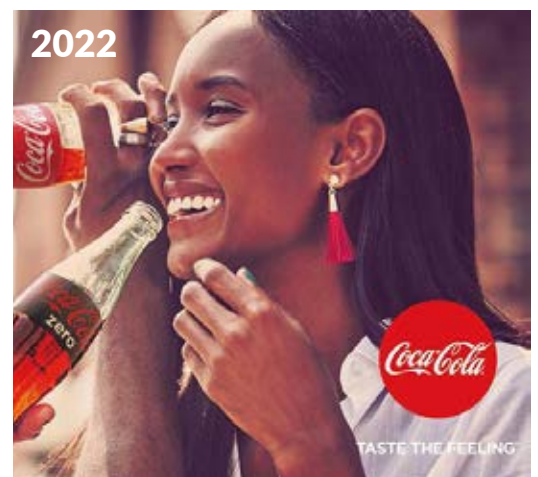


*These two ads for Coca-Cola were created 122 years apart – but the consistency of the brand is still strong and recognizable. The typography style of the logo, the primary red color used, featuring an attractive and healthy looking young woman, and even the directive "DRINK" and "TASTE THE FEELING" taglines used are all in alignment with the company's brand.*

# Recognition is Key to Building Trust

According to one international poll, *"81% of consumers need to a trust a brand to consider buying from it."* (2019, Edelman Trust Barometer)

Finding brands to trust is more important to customers now than ever before. Today, concerns about information sharing and privacy are high. People are acutely aware of companies' increased ability to track buying behaviors and target customers. In addition, the spread of misinformation and use of automated and AI-driven tools has created a general distrust of online content.

Position your brand as a trustworthy voice of authority by showing up consistently and cohesively. The more times people resonate with your message and recognize your brand, the more they'll start to trust what you have to say is worthwhile.

*"Once someone has recognized your message repeated across three different channels of communication, their trust in it strengthens."* (2019, Edelman Trust Barometer)

Developing branding and a brand guide will help you create consistency to build trust and recognition with your customers. Your materials shouldn't look exactly the same. But they should look like they belong together, as part of the same conversation. People should be able to spot a piece of your content and identify it with your brand on sight. This is especially important for keeping your brand top of mind with people who have already been your customers.

## Remember this important rule of marketing:

*It's easier and more cost-effective to get a repeat customer than it is to acquire a new customer.* This makes brand recognition very important to building your customer base. And your bottom line!

**Good Branding + Good Marketing = Brand Recognition = More Repeat Customers = More $$$**

*"81% of consumers need to a trust a brand to consider buying from it."*
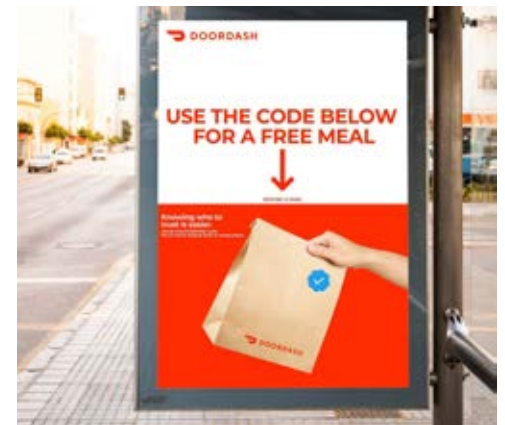






*Once someone has recognized your message across three different channels, their trust in it strengthens.*

# Set-up For Success

**There are a few steps you can take to help your branding be successful before you even begin thinking about what your logo will look like.**

## 1. Research the competition.

There are a number of good reasons to do a quick preliminary search on any similar brands out there.

Make sure your brand can't be confused with anyone else's. It's hard to build strong recognition if your branding looks too much like someone else's. *Especially* if they offer similar services or products. Do some research to see what others are currently using for their branding.

**Discover what the "industry standard" is for graphic design in your market.** Notice any trends, common imagery, colors, or words and how they're being used. These trends can be something you choose to align yourself with or go against intentionally to stand out.

Learn what your competition is doing to promote themselves. How they look, what their messaging is, their personality, where they're focusing, and more. You can use this info to help build your own brand, as well as determine your target markets and where to find them.

*These three brands are all in the same primary industry; coffee. But each has established a unique identity that sets them apart from their competitors. This makes it easier for their customers to immediately recognize their products and locations, which makes it easier for them to buy from their favorite brand.*

*"...steer your business towards finding a unique niche and building a loyal following..."*

The goal of researching your competitors isn't to mimic others, but to make sure you are aware of what is already being done. Once you know that, you can steer your business towards finding a unique niche and building a loyal following of your own.

Part of this work is discovering your own unique value proposition. In short, your value proposition is "a simple statement that summarizes why a customer would choose your product or service." Having this written out will help you find your niche in the market. *(More on that later, in Part 3: Your Verbal Identity.)*

## 2. Find a professional brand designer to work with.

Do your research and work with a designer who specializes in logo design and brand development. Not all graphic designers create the same types of graphics. Particularly with a logo, it's important that your design is versatile enough to appear anywhere you are – in-person, online, in print, etc.

*"They'll be able to help you avoid clichés, stand out from other brands, and dig deeper for a truly innovative and creative solution."*

Be sure to work with someone who is familiar with creating for a wide variety of production methods. Let them guide you towards making informed decisions that will give you an effective logo suite that can be reproduced in any medium you choose, from on-screen to screen-printed.

You may have an idea of what you want your logo to look like already. Be sure to convey any expectations or desires you may have to your designer upfront. Stay open to your designer's ideas, as well. They are professionals in their field and have seen more branding than most people have. They'll be able to help you avoid clichés, stand out from other brands, and dig deeper for a truly innovative and creative solution.

A good logo and brand designer will ask relevant and thought-provoking questions about your business' ***purpose, mission, and goals.*** They'll help you create a mark that not only represents your business well, but also appeals to your specific target audiences.

**Good brand design avoids "trendy" design elements.** Trends change quickly and using them will make your logo feel dated in a short period of time. It may be tempting to use a popular typeface or color palette you're seeing all over Pinterest right now. But it's important to think about how your brand will stand up over time. A trendy font or color pairing that's hot right now might end up going the way of the "avocado green + orange" trend of the 1970's.

**Plan for the future by sticking to classic design elements and principles that will help you create a timeless brand.**

## THE BOTTOM LINE:

**It's important to develop effective branding for your business to create consistency, build trust and recognition, and keep engaging with audiences for many years to come.**

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### Next Up: Your Logo & Visual Identity

In Part 2 of this series, we dive deeper into creating an effective logo, tips for choosing colors and developing other parts of your visual identity. Plus, an overview of the trademark and copyright laws you should know about your logo and brand assets.