



THE BULL-FREE GUIDE TO
BRAND
STRATEGY

**Build a Unique, Powerful, Durable Brand That
Will Knock Your Competition Out of the Water**

FREE EBOOK

WHAT'S COMING

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY BRAND?
2. BRAND CHECKLIST, FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.
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INTRODUCTION: WHY BRAND?

On a balmy April morning, in Los Altos, LA, 1976, one of the world's greatest brands was born. Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne incorporated Apple Computers, later known simply as Apple Inc.

Fast forward to 2017, and Apple has permeated every continent, every time zone, every religion. With one simple brand statement, people aspire to have a part of that feeling, that quality, that statement. They aspire to Think Different.

But perhaps we are jumping ahead.

By the time you've finished this e-book, not only will you understand WHY branding can transform your company, you will also know HOW to put together a strategy and WHAT your company is really selling.

Branding can get a bad rap. If you listen too carefully to the haters they'll have you believing that it's only colour schemes, logo versions and typography. Of course, that's why branding has never worked for them, and why they think it's bullsh*t.

So why brand?

A brand gives your company a personality, it makes you trustworthy and it helps people identify with you. Your brand is how people feel about you. Given the choice of two similar products with roughly the same price point, the stronger brand will always win the customer.

Sounds simple, right?

Well, it should be.

Every successful brand IS simple. But getting to that beautiful, distilled point takes time and expertise.

This beginner brand exploration e-book will give you the basic tools you need to understand what your brand is, and to make sure it's central in absolutely everything that you do.

BRAND CHECKLIST: FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN

So here's the thing. I don't like to be a bossy boots, but you really need to pay attention to this part. There are rules. Not the kind of "rules are made to be broken" rules. But rules that will help you shape your brand, so that it's just right.

The following checklist should be a part of every stage of your branding journey. Your North Star, your Yellow Brick Road, your Guiding Light. Check in with it along the way and not only will you have a strong, recognisable brand, you'll be doing it right.

#1: MEANINGFUL

What's your promise to consumers? What are the core values of your brand? Write them down. Focus in on just a few. These must underlie every business decision you make.

#2: UNIQUE

At the core of a powerful brand is uniqueness. Originality. We notice what is different about something, not what is the same. Stand out. Be memorable.

#3: EXPERIENTIAL

What does the consumer feel when they experience your brand? What emotions are conjured? Your brand essence must capture these.

#4: RELEVANT

Don't pull your brand identity out of a hat. Is it relevant to your target audience? Is it a desirable? It's what matters to *the customers*, not what *you* say matters.

#5: CONSISTENT

This is key. Your brand values and personality must consistently ooze out across all marketing mediums, with every design detail, every word of copy, every touch-point, every business meeting, every social media update etc.

#6: AUTHENTIC

Your brand personality must be believable. And honest. Don't promise the moon if you can't deliver. Your audience won't buy it.

#7: DURABLE

You need a brand personality which lasts. Forever. Even if your logo and packaging gets reworked along the way, the essence should remain there. Solid. And powerful.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BUSINESS

For anyone else to understand what makes your business stand out, you need to understand what makes it stand out yourself. To truly recognize and define your unique selling points.

Over the next section, we'll reveal a few general models you can apply to your business to gain a broader understanding of where you sit. And then move into the more brand specific breakdowns.

It's tempting to jump right ahead into the branding section, I know.

That's why you're here, after all.

But trust me. The groundwork needs to get laid before you build your brand on top.

Go lay your foundations. You'll thank me later.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Ah, the good old SWOT analysis. You may have done more of these than you care to remember, but there's a good reason for that.

They work.

For those of you that haven't had the pleasure, let me introduce you. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity, Threats.

The Strengths and Weaknesses are the internal assessment of your business, so how your set up, team, product/service stack up. The Opportunity and Threats are used to assess your external environment. What is happening outside your business that could have a positive or negative effect on your company and brand?

I've dropped in an example SWOT analysis for your perusal below.

For those of you that have walked this path before, think about how long it's been since you did your SWOT. It's possible, even plausible, that your company's strengths and weaknesses have changed. And it's almost certain that your external environment has shifted. I'd recommend carrying out a new SWOT for anyone who's undertaking a brand exercise.

Yes, that includes you.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Advantages of proposition? Capabilities? Competitive advantages? USP's (unique selling points)? Resources, assets, people? Experience, knowledge, data? Financial reserves, likely returns? Marketing - reach, distribution, awareness? Innovative aspects? Location and geographical? Price, value, quality? Accreditations, qualifications, certifications? Processes, systems, IT, communications? Cultural, attitudinal, behavioural? Management cover, succession?</p>	<p>Disadvantages of proposition? Gaps in capabilities? Lack of competitive strength? Reputation, presence and reach? Financials? Own known vulnerabilities? Timescales, deadlines and pressures? Cashflow, start-up cash-drain? Continuity, supply chain robustness? Effects on core activities, distraction? Reliability of data, plan predictability? Morale, commitment, leadership? Accreditations, etc? Processes and systems, etc? Management cover, succession?</p>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Market developments? Competitors' vulnerabilities? Industry or lifestyle trends? Technology development and innovation? Global influences? New markets, vertical, horizontal? Niche target markets? Geographical, export, import? Market need for new USP's? Market response to tactics, e.g., surprise? Major contracts, tenders? Business and product development? Information and research? Partnerships, agencies, distribution? Market volume demand trends? Seasonal, weather, fashion influences?</p>	<p>Political effects? Legislative effects? Environmental effects? IT developments? Competitor intentions - various? Market demand? New technologies, services, ideas? Vital contracts and partners? Obstacles faced? Insurmountable weaknesses? Employment market? Financial and credit pressures? Economy - home, abroad? Seasonality, weather effects?</p>

PESTLE ANALYSIS

Here's another model of analysis to get your noggins working.

[Wikipedia](#) describes it as “a framework of macro-environmental factors used in the environmental scanning component of strategic management. It is part of an external analysis when conducting a strategic analysis or doing market research, and gives an overview of the different macro-environmental factors to be taken into consideration. It is a strategic tool for understanding market growth or decline, business position, potential and direction for operations.”

Phew! That's quite a mouthful.

Simply put, it's another well established tool that you can use to understand where your business sits alongside outside influences. You'll find it helpful when we come to establish your brand position a little later.

PESTLE stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental. There are a range of questions below to give you some food for thought. If any don't apply to your business? Just skip over them.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC
<p>Current legislation? Future legislation? International legislation? Regulatory bodies and processes? Government policies? Government term and change? Trading policies? Funding, grants and initiatives? Home market pressure groups? International pressure groups? Wars and conflicts?</p>	<p>Home economy trends? Overseas economies? General taxation? Taxation specific to product/services? Seasonality issues? Market/trade cycles? Specific industry factors? Market routes trends? Distribution trends? Customer/end-user drivers? Interest/ exchange rates? International trade and monetary issues?</p>

SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL
<p>Lifestyle trends? Demographics? Consumer attitudes and opinions? Media views? Law changes affecting social factors? Brand, company, technology image? Consumer buying patterns? Fashion and role models? Major events and influences? Buying access and trends? Ethnic/religious factors? Advertising and publicity? Ethical issues?</p>	<p>Competing technology development? Research funding? Associated/dependent technologies? Replacement technology/solutions? Maturity of technology? Manufacturing maturity and capacity? Information and communications? Consumer buying mechanisms/technology? Technology legislation? Innovation potential? Technology access, licensing, patents? Intellectual property issues?</p>

PERSONALITY, VALUE, CULTURE

Now we start getting into your brand workshop. The first port of call is to think about your brand personality, your brand values and your brand's culture. They are all closely linked and you might find them spilling into each other at times, but it's important to separate them out.

It's also important to mention at this point, that you should involve all of the key stakeholders in these discussions. If you've never laid out the who, what, why and where of your company, it's likely that there will be several different opinions. Perhaps even heated arguments.

Better to battle it out now and come to a considered resolution.

It would be a shame to put in a ton of work, only to find out that the CEO fundamentally disagrees with all your amazing ideas.

Ideally you would involve senior team members from all your key departments. It doesn't have to take an age, and you can even send some of these questions through beforehand if people are really pushed.

But I can't state the importance of involving the decision makers of your company enough.

Go grab 'em by the ears, pull them into the meeting room and let's get to work.

PERSONALITY

The personality of your brand is how the external world will see and engage with you. It will run consistently through all of your communication, design and customer interaction – at every touchpoint, in every moment.

People trust *people* – more than they do faceless corporations. With a distinct, recognisable, authentic, memorable, consistent, durable brand personality, your audience will feel like they are interacting with *a person*. With character. With feelings. With emotions.

So think about how you would describe your brand. Is it vibrant, intelligent, creative, brave, genuine, trustworthy, geeky?

List them all down, you might find that you end up with groups of very similar personality traits. For example, you could describe your brand's personality as adventurous, fearless, outgoing, risk taker, pioneering. If this happens to you, we would urge you to choose the trait that stands out the most from the group.

I know it's not easy, and you might ask "why can't I keep them all?"

But it's important to remember that the most successful brands are extremely simple at their core. These exercises are here to help you distil *who* your business is. What is your easily identifiable essence?

It might be tough, and cause a few disagreements. But I never said it'd be easy. And the rewards will be plentiful.

Let's take a quick look at Starbuck's personality traits:

- Dynamic
- Genuine
- Ethical
- Trendy
- Traditional

Here's an example of a completed personality trait branding exercise for a client of ours.

OUR EXAMPLE COMPANY IS:

Clever, Canny, Rational, Agile (**CLEVER**)

Enthusiastic, Passionate, Open (**ENTHUSIASTIC**)

Adventurous, Fearless, Outgoing, Risk Taker,
Pioneering (**ADVENTUROUS**)

Thrifty, Prudent, Aware, Resourceful (**RESOURCEFUL**)

Youthful, Interested, Inspiring, Hopeful, Positive, Equitable (**POSITIVE**)

Easily Bored, Impatient, Keen, Eager (**EAGER**)

All of these personality traits were identified during a branding strategy workshop. Although the team came up with different words, you can see that they all identified very similar groups.

Which means? They all already had an inherent understanding of their brand. Which made it fairly easy to work through each group and agree on the winning trait.

So our example company is:

**CLEVER, ENTHUSIASTIC, ADVENTUROUS,
RESOURCEFUL, POSITIVE, EAGER**

See how it's done? Then have a crack at it yourselves, using this approach. We'll revisit these all-important personality traits when we move onto your brand statement, promise and essence.

VALUES:

If you and your team have gotten the hang of that, then these next two bits are going to go swimmingly. To define your brand values, think about this: #

What makes you as a company tick? What are you passionate about? What do you value more than anything? What drives you to do the things you do, in the way you do them?

Your company values are less customer facing than your personality traits, but they will bleed through into all of your external communications. It's part of your brand checklist that will solidify whether you are authentic, consistent and meaningful.

Now, if you have a diverse group of key stakeholders you might find that people have a different set of values connected to their own role. For example, your Finance Director might say that they believe the company values fiscal stability. Your R&D Director might decide that a key value is product development. Your sales guys might value growth most of all.

But make sure you reign it in.

While these could be completely valid values, it's *really* important that everyone agrees. Ideally, you would come up with values that aren't necessarily connected to your day-to-day role.

That's why an external brand strategist can help you manage this process. There's a natural tendency to defer to the most senior member of the group, especially if the MD or CEO is involved. While completely understandable, it means that you might not always get to the core of your brand. An atmosphere of equality is essential.

...Unless of course your chief brand value is *inequality*. Although I'm not sure how well you'll fair as a brand.

So how would you describe your brand values? Straightforward, honest, ethical, professional, responsive, flexible?

Here's an example from IKEA:

- Humbleness and willpower
- Leadership by example
- Daring to be different
- Togetherness and enthusiasm
- Cost-consciousness

And an example of a completed value branding exercise.

OUR EXAMPLE COMPANY VALUES:

A Good Standard of Living, Extra Cash, A Bargain, Opportunities **(OPPORTUNITIES)**

Trustworthiness, Legality, Being Verified, Honesty,
Being Ethical (**BEING VERIFIED**)

Communication, Community, Networks, Conversation,
Interaction (**CONVERSATION**)

The Big Picture, Scalability, Vision (**VISION**)

Customers, Leaders, Staff (**PEOPLE**)

Transparency, Clarity, Straightforwardness,
Convenience (**CLARITY**)

Forward Thinking, Innovation, Creativity, Thought
Leadership (**CREATIVITY**)

Attention to Detail, Quality, Excellence, Perfection
(**EXCELLENCE**)

As you'll see, there are more than five final values
highlighted here. This isn't unusual when you run a
branding workshop. Oh if only life was so simple!

We still want you to chop these down to the final five,
and that means that you'll need to lose whole groups of
similar values.

This can be one of the most testing parts of a branding workshop. The best advice we can give you is to ask people to back up their choices (if they can), then take a democratic vote. It might not be a perfect solution for everyone, but it's more likely to create an authentic brand.

If you just steamroller through other people's opinions, you'll miss the mark.

So what did our example company choose?

**OPPORTUNITIES, VISION, PEOPLE, CLARITY,
EXCELLENCE, BEING VERIFIED**

Have a go at understanding your brand values, you'll need them for your position, promise and statement further along the workshop. These will underpin every internal and external decision you make moving forward, allowing you to work cohesively as a solid force.

CULTURE:

Distilling your culture is an inward facing exercise. It's your company working environment and the company mindset. However, your culture is closely aligned with your values and your personality. You can't really have one which doesn't align with the others.

"Greater than the sum of their parts" might be the suitable expression.

Again, it's important to be honest about your culture, and find examples when you work through it. If you say that your culture is welcoming and friendly, but you don't offer your visitors a cup of tea when they arrive at your offices, it doesn't really add up, does it?

We might all love to say that our company culture is like Google or Apple, but in reality few are. And that's the point. Your culture is unique to you, and it will shine through in your brand. If you make a product that is highly efficient, and part of your culture is that "everything has its place", that fits.

Remember the seven keys of branding we covered earlier? These apply here too.

Let's look at an example from Amazon's culture breakdown:

- Customer obsession
- Ownership
- Invention
- Leadership (they are right, a lot)
- Hiring and developing the best
- Delivering results

OUR EXAMPLE COMPANY'S CULTURE IS ABOUT:

Friendliness, Family, Teamwork, trustworthiness
(FAMILY)

Energy, Growth, Change, Dynamism, Forward Thinking, career development (**GROWTH**)

Free Speech, Transparency, Participation, Democracy (**DEMOCRACY**)

Ownership, Problem Solving, Attention to Detail (**PROBLEM SOLVING**)

Innovation, Ideas, Perception, Originality (**IDEAS**)

Environmentally Friendly, Resourceful, Economical (**GREEN**)

And their final top 5? **FAMILY, GROWTH, PROBLEM SOLVING, IDEAS, GREEN**

So have a go, come up with your top five. We'll be revisiting them, and their importance in the next section.

BRAND ESSENCE

Just when you thought it couldn't get any harder; it's time for even more distillation.

Here, you'll need to break down your chosen Personality, Values and Culture even further.

Why? Because we want to identify a simple, powerful brand essence that is immediately recognisable, both internally and externally. The idea now is to choose one from each of your previous selections.

When we think about famous brands, we don't describe them in 15 words. In fact, it's usually in just two or three.

Why? Because their brand essence is so darn prominent.

It's incredible how much a brand can be shaped by just a couple of words, but how muddled a brand can become if you throw in too many ideas.

Let's take a look at a couple of examples, and see if you agree:

Apple: Open, innovative, people

IKEA: Stylish, functional, economical

OUR EXAMPLE COMPANY CHOOSE:

Clever, Opportunity, Ideas.

This may involve a little or a lot of healthy discussion. And we'd recommend not rushing the decision. That being said, if you have a gut instinct that you just cannot shake, you should go with it.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Although you may have touched on this as a part of your SWOT and PESTLE analysis, it's important to focus closely on your main competitors. By analysing their position, you'll be able to make sure that yours is unique and that your brand statement and promise reflect what your customers expect from you.

You want to stand out in your industry like a diamond among gravel. Like a giant among elves. Like a flower among weeds.

But without knowing the strengths and weaknesses of your competitors, how can you position yourself in that winning spot?

Take a look at the competitor analysis grid below and try filling it out based on the information you can find. You might not have it all, but organising as much as you can in this way is much better than not having anything at all.

	Your Company	Competitor 1	Competitor 2
Overview & Profile			
Competitive Advantage			
Target Market			
Market Share			
Marketing Strategies			
Products & Services			
Pricing & Costs			
Strengths			
Weaknesses			

Once you've squared up shoulder to shoulder with your competitors, it's time to create your...

BRAND POSITION AND STATEMENT

Brand Position, Brand Statement and Brand Promise - What are they, how are they different, and what's the point?

All of these are based on the personality, values and culture that we have previously discussed. It's important to mention at this point, that the other elements of your brand personality will still be used in the broader tone of voice guidelines below.

BRAND POSITION:

Your brand position statement is a crystal clear understanding of where in the market you sit, and how your brand appeals to your potential (and current) clients. It's a super important statement that emphasises what you can do better than your competitors.

This is much more for your internal messaging, although you will find it throughout your brand because it is so central. In real terms, this is how you would describe your company to a new member of your team, in a nutshell, so they immediately understand the

central culture and driving force. It's a simpler statement than the brand description.

Unique position:

So where's the gap? Following your competitor analysis and team feedback, this is where you'll have to step in yourselves. However, we have a few examples to help you brainstorm:

Volvo: For upscale American families, Volvo is the family automobile that offers maximum safety.

Home Depot: The hardware department store for do-it-yourselfers.

Zipcar: To urban-dwelling, educated techno-savvy consumers, when you use Zipcar car-sharing service instead of owning a car, you save money while reducing your carbon footprint.

Remember to always follow the four key elements when creating your brand position:

1. What your product or service is
2. Who your target audience is
3. Why you are better than your competitors
4. What you promise to do

Take some time to think to mull these questions over. And then our best advice is to just put pen to paper. Or fingers to keyboard. As soon as you see it in black and white, you'll know if it's right for you.

If not, scrap it, and start over.

BRAND STATEMENT:

Your brand description statement is a clear message to your current clients and potential clients about your core offering. We call it the "Who/Why, How, What/When" statement.

The purpose is: to explain your service and engage your target audience. It can also be the start of a mission statement. Although that tends to also include financial information, too.

In real terms, this would sit on your site, on the What We Do page, and it would be recited when you talk to new clients (either via your salespeople, or in your written proposals).

It's a good idea to create a few different versions first, and although you might have your own personal 'fave', it's crucial that you all reach an agreement.

But before you dive in, here are a couple of examples:

Starbucks

“With our partners, our coffee and our customers at our core, we live these values: Creating a culture of warmth and belonging, where everyone is welcome. Acting with courage, challenging the status quo and finding new ways to grow our company and each other. Being present, connecting with transparency, dignity and respect. Delivering our very best in all we do, holding ourselves accountable for results. We are performance driven, through the lens of humanity.”

John Lewis

“Our purpose is ‘the happiness of all our members, through their worthwhile, satisfying employment in a successful business’, with success measured on our ability to sustain and enhance our position both as an outstanding retailer and as a thriving example of employee ownership. With this in mind, our strategy is based on three interdependent objectives; partners, customers and profit.”

IKEA

“At IKEA our vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. Our business idea supports this vision by offering a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.”

Apple – (REALLY long for a description, but they do like to be different!)

“We believe that we are on the face of the earth to make great products and that’s not changing. We are

constantly focusing on innovating. We believe in the simple not the complex. We believe that we need to own and control the primary technologies behind the products that we make, and participate only in markets where we can make a significant contribution. We believe in saying no to thousands of projects, so that we can really focus on the few that are truly important and meaningful to us. We believe in deep collaboration and cross-pollination of our groups, which allow us to innovate in a way that others cannot. And frankly, we don't settle for anything less than excellence in every group in the company, and we have the self-honesty to admit when we're wrong and the courage to change. And I think regardless of who is in what job those values are so embedded in this company that Apple will do extremely well."

So there you have it. By using all of the exercises above, you will have created a brand outline that can be applied in everything you do. By creating these guidelines you can quickly and accurately describe your business to new team members, customers, and of course; designers or writers that you work with.

With every internal or external decision you make as a brand moving forward, you can (and should) now look back to your statement, values, personality and culture – to make sure that decision is on-brand. To make sure that decision is strategically in line with the essence of your company.

Your bottom line will thank you for it. For many, *many* years to come.

BRAND RITUALS:

We should start this section with a quick heads up.

Brand rituals are NOT for everyone. We've added them here because they don't need to be a part of your basic brand set-up, but if they fit into your product or service landscape they are a really effective way to differentiate your brand and add perceived value.

If you've never heard of brand rituals before, fear not. It's simple. A brand ritual is a set behaviour that directly links to your product, service or even employee behaviour.

Some great examples of well-known brand rituals include things like adding a slice of lime to a Corona, halving and Oreo cookie before eating it, or Guinness's 125.27 seconds for the perfect pint.

Although HOW they come about is a little bit of a mystery. It's really important not to force a brand ritual. You could, but you risk jeopardizing our very important brand checklist. Authenticity is key, remember?

Take the time to watch carefully how your customers interact with you. Brand rituals are very much about the people that engage with your brand, the action itself is

almost an afterthought. Here's a quick checklist you can use to see if your brand ritual will "stick"

1. It's an existing behaviour, it isn't forced
2. It's happened more than once
3. It needs to be directly associated with your brand
4. It's easy to do - the fun of a ritual is in bringing your audience together
5. It feels 'right'.

If you can see a behaviour that fits these criteria, grab hold of it and run! As we mentioned brand rituals will help you naturally stand out and they tend to stand the test of time. Did you know the Oreo ritual has been going since 1952?

TONE OF VOICE

At this point, we get down to the nitty gritty of what all this brand exploration means and how it applies to the real tangible, touchable world.

How, in detail, should you communicate your company to the outside world?

Based on the PVC, brand essence, brand position and unique messages, this tone of voice can be given to any designer, writer, advertising exec, and they should keep your brand identity consistently yours.

The following exercises will help you clarify how you want to talk to the outside world. It's really important to be consistent, even if you use several different content providers. Why not take a run through some of these and see what you come up with?

Here are our suggestions:

1) Decide on 5 adjectives that cover the main tone for your company

For example: Clever, friendly, educational, clear, inspirational.

2) It's a great idea to use an "axis". By comparing two extremes you can describe the subtle differences in your tone of voice. Here's an example of how yours might look:

Formal-----X-----chatty
 Serious-----X-----humorous
 Detached-----X-----warm
 Professional-----X-----casual
 Tasteful--X-----unrefined
 Wordy-----X-----concise

3) Keeping the above in mind, let's now think of the kind of things you should and should not say/sound like. Yours will be different to the example below, but it's a good jumping off point.

OK!	Not OK!
Repetition,	Bossy, condescending,
"I made the same mistake"	Negative,
Write as you speak!	Lengthy

Clear, layman's terms	Bragging, cheeky, salesy
Metaphors, similes	Vanilla, bland,
Decisive	Sitting on the fence
"Expert", "experience"	
Short, punchy sentences	

4) It's important to be able to imagine a character speaking on behalf of your company. By visualising your tone of voice, it becomes much easier to explain. Some people choose to assign particular famous people or characters. We've had Don Draper, Richard Branson and Kate Moss come up in some of our sessions. However, you can also just create your own. For example:

Age: 28

Sex: Male

Profession: Project Manager /Formula 1 fan

Personality traits: Intellectual, individual, reliable, honest, friendly, quick witted, charismatic, confident, opportunistic.

5) What do you want your voice to help your customer with? Some may be to make them laugh, others will want to reassure. Choose up to ten purposes for your voice. Below there is an example of what we mean.

To assist
To simplify their decision
To light their path
To convert
To inform
To educate
To build trust

6) Finally, here's a checklist that we recommend for all copy. Marry this up with your strong, unique brand and you'll be off to fantastic start.

- **Talk to ONE person, not the masses.**
Really talk to them.... Use the words 'you' and 'yours', and I/we/us etc. Like you're sitting down and having a chit chat.
- **Avoid cliché's like the... swine flu.**
Especially those awful corporate, 'boardroom' buzzwords and phrases, it really turns people off. But if you replace a word or two in a cliché, it can be a refreshing, powerful change.
- **Be conversational.**
Do you talk like that at home?

If not, change it. Whoever your target audience, they are human. Like you. They will respond to conversational copy with open ears, and open wallets.

- **Ask questions.**

It makes you feel more engaged, doesn't it? You feel more like we're having an actual conversation right now, don't you? This will help breathe life into your brand identity.

- **Get inside their mind.**

It's a powerful place to be. Say things like 'I know what you're thinking', 'now, pause for a sec and consider this...', 'mull that over' and 'let me guess: you're wondering if...' etc.

- **Build rapport and trust.**

Be likeable. Don't dive straight into the hard sale, or the boring facts. Just like a face-to-face salesman, you'll need to establish that initial connection with your reader. That initial rapport.

- **Give your readers commands.**

Use imperatives. Tell them what to do and what to think (like I'm doing now). This works especially well if you want an authoritative voice. If you want to sound like an expert. A thought-leader.

- **Don't choose fancy words.**

Choose short, clear, direct words. And stay clear of industry jargon as much as possible.

- **Talk about benefits AND features (but mostly benefits).**

Sell a good night's sleep, not the mattress. Emotional benefits are especially powerful – but DON'T overdo it with B2B. Your readers are marketers too. They've heard it all before. And they're mostly interested in their bottom line. They understand the emotional benefits of getting richer.

- **Build imagination.**

Paint a picture. Make their mouths water. Use words like 'imagine' and 'picture this'.

- **Build anticipation.**

Tease them with what's to come. Tell them what amazing 'secret' they're about to discover. But throw in some more context or stories, before revealing it. Make them wait for it and read on. They'll be itching to get to the end! E.g. 'You're about to discover the secret to our expert review process and why half the world trusts Mindup to feed them knowledge every single day. But first, picture this...'

- **Repeat important points.**

Repetition is powerful. Repetition resonates. Repetition makes a point hit home. See?

- **Use the 'Jones Theory'.**

Everybody loves trends. Use this to your advantage, like Mailchimp does. Talk about how many people dig your service, and they'll be inclined to use it. Use the word 'everybody'. And

of course, testimonials are gold.

- **Slice up chunky paragraphs.**
They're hard to read. Use itsy-bitsy paragraphs - 1,2 or 3 sentences each. And stagger the length of them, so they're not predictable. Bullet points and sub-headers make your copy look sexy. And are perfect for web copy as people like to skim-read and skip to the bits that interest them. See what we've done in this eBook? Like that.
- **Mix up your flow.**
Write short sentences. And place them gracefully next to longer ones like this. It'll flow nicely.
- **Don't be the grammar police.**
It ain't an English language class. Feel free to bend the rules if it makes your copy more conversational and gets your point across. Like this. Got it?
- **Make your copy tap dance and sing.**
Use analogies, metaphors, similes and sensory words. It really helps readers relate to your offering, vividly. People react more readily to the emotional than the rational, so create juicy metaphors which tantalize your readers' taste buds. Like that.
- **Create a sense of urgency.**
If you want an on-the-spot decision, then use the words 'now' and 'today' repeatedly. Limited

(time and quantity) offers are hard for our brains to resist.

- **Make a concession.**

If you're trying to sell something, give them a visible discount. Our brains are hardwired to exaggerate that discount. And by conceding, your target will feel inclined to reciprocate the favour (the law of reciprocity) – by purchasing! Think; Groupon.

PUT IT INTO ACTION:

Make sure your whole team sees the new brand vision. For example, if Jon from accounting needs to send an email, but it's cold and boring, a little of your lovely, engaging brand voice becomes diluted. We aren't asking for people to be perfect, but just understanding the communication tone will really help them. And really help your customers and prospects connect emotionally with your brand.

If you saw a person who dressed, spoke, or acted in a drastically different way from day to day, you'd think they were mad. The same is true for a brand.

Consistency is key.

After putting in all the hard work, it's now as much of a discipline to keep it going. In fact, some might say that implementing your new or updated brand into everything you do is the harder part.

But you're going to nail it, I can tell.

There are a few ways to make this happen:

Ensure you have at least one team member who is responsible for checking whether the new

product/service/website/marketing content is on-brand. This way there is direct responsibility and accountability. It also means that this team member will become your brand guru and the more comfortable and entrenched your brand becomes, the faster the team member will be able to make your branding decisions.

Also make sure that new members of team read your brand bible, or whatever you've called your document. By giving them all of the information they need on day one with you, they can get up to speed quickly.

Of course, new ideas are welcome, but they must be approved by the brand team to ensure that they are consistent, meaningful and relevant to what you've put together.

The primary goal of branding is to build trust and solidify a company's position in the minds of consumers through the creation of a distinct and consistent brand personality.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Finally, although we believe the next stage of your brand will be to develop a strong visual brand, it's not covered in this e-book. That doesn't mean you can't start to think about it. The more precise you have been able to be in your branding exercise, the better the results you will get from working with external agencies, or directing an inhouse team. You can start to think about the sensory expression of your brand.

It's time to get really conceptual, by finishing the sentences below:

If your company was...

- a colour - what would it be?
- a shape - what would it be?
- a texture - what would it be?
- a word - what would it be?
- a feeling - what would it be?
- a taste - what would it be?
- a sound - what would it be?
- a scent - what would it be?
- an animal - what would it be?
- a plant/flower - what would it be?

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS:

Well done, you.

You feel all-the-more wiser when it comes to understanding and implementing your brand strategy, don't you?

And more confident that your company can position itself as a key power player in your industry?

And excited about the brand transformation to come?

Good.

So why not feed yourself with even more bottom-line boosting knowledge from one of our other invaluable, free eBooks?

- [The Fluff-Free Guide to Content Strategy](#)
- [25 Customer-Converting Copywriting Secrets](#)
- [The Waffle-Free Guide to Social Media Marketing](#)

Or...

If you want to make absolutely sure that you nail this branding process, and carry that tone of voice across all your online and offline marketing material?

[Get in touch](#)