

# BUILDING YOUR BRAND



# Introduction

The importance of the brand to business doesn't only concern multinational corporations. It can just as easily be a local café or food producer, restaurant or delivery service company. What all businesses - big and small - have in common, is the desire to be successful, which ultimately is determined by repeat business, which in turn is dictated by brand.

Your brand is your most important marketing tool. It is your brand that will ensure repeat business. Building a brand gives your customers assurance of what they can expect from your business concerning products or services. This is where you connect to your customers and where you secure their loyalty so they come back to you. This is where you gain new customers and increase your business as loyal customers tell other people about your business. This is what distinguishes your business from others.

It is worth investing time and money to develop your brand as this is critical to your success as a business entity.





# Brand Identity

At a tangible level, your brand identity is reflected in your company name, logo, advertising slogans and marketing materials. These identify your offering or product. The strength of your brand goes beyond imagery, as your brand is about your product and customer service. To build a strong brand identity, it is essential to know your values and be clear about your business, both what it is and isn't.

From the name Rationale Windows it is fairly obvious what this company does; but now think about Apple or Avonmore. From name alone, it is almost impossible to determine what either sell, yet in Ireland they would be two of the most recognisable brands in the country. They have done that by knowing their market, connecting with their customers and building on that connection to generate repeat and new business. They have created a world where their customers trust them and so choose to buy from each of them, even though similar products exist that are less expensive. This type of brand loyalty allows a business to demand a higher price for their goods or services.

But remember that the converse applies too. Letting customers down, either through selling bad products, offering poor customer service or simply not following through on what you've communicated your brand to be, can have a negative impact on your market share and turnover. Once an image has been tarnished it becomes very difficult to change the perception.







# Brand Values

The values you established when creating your company and which have developed as you've grown your business, define your purpose and brand. They are a set of ideals in terms of purpose, culture and ways of doing things that permeate your company structure.

Whether you are selling a product or service, you must think of the impression that you want your customers to have of you. Once you have decided what you stand for (for example, you could be a store selling electronic goods and you have decided that your values will be built around offering quality products, keenly priced for the market, with exceptional customer service) then the emotional connection to your customers through your brand becomes easier to obtain and maintain.

Value	Tangible expression	Result
Quality, keenly-priced products	Extended warranty at no extra charge	Repeat business; increased sales
Exceptional customer service	Courteous staff in-store or on the telephone	Happy customers; positive 'word of mouth' marketing
Exceptional customer service	Setting a target to respond to all queries within 24 hours of receiving them by email or through social media	Eliminating dissatisfaction and minimising query backlog

You could consider market research to help you understand the market you are targeting. Apart from customer questionnaires, if you have a customer service department you could utilise it to correlate feedback by contacting existing and potential customers. Such business intelligence will help you know your customers and what will encourage them to buy into your branding. It will also help you decide if your brand will have an impact in a particular market, region or country.







# Brand Communications

Raising awareness of your brand among your target market(s) is essential to driving sales. Once your values have been clearly identified and established, you can then decide on the platforms to utilise to communicate your message.

You need a clear vision and strategy appropriate to your vision. For example, why should someone purchase your product or service? Are you targeting a niche market with a high-value item or is it a mass market, low-cost value for money item? You might be selling a new product to an existing customer base, or you may be entering a new market, thus seeking a whole new set of customers. What your objectives are will ultimately determine the brand strategy selected to achieve these objectives.

Once you have set out the 'how, what, where, when and for whom' your brand messages are intended, then you can decide on the tools and communication channels to achieve your goal(s).





# Brand Awareness

Once your brand is defined you are ready to raise awareness of your brand. You can spend 50€ or 500,000€ communicating what your brand means. Where you fall on this scale partly depends on the nature of your business and your target market, as well as your expectations and market penetration.

Having established the goals for awareness of your brand, you can decide on your budget and the platforms you will use to communicate your brand. You can do this in many ways, and they do not all require a large budget:

- Advertising – local, national or international newspapers, magazines or broadcast media (TV and radio);
- Direct mail – either printed collateral by post or delivered via email;
- PR– sending media releases to traditional media and social media outlets, or perhaps creating a blog;
- Sponsorship – charitable events, sports clubs or teams; or a programme aired on television or radio;
- Company events, seminars, conferences or expos – either on site or perhaps held at a well-known venue;
- Promotion items – branded notebooks, pens and USB keys, or something more innovative;
- Search engine – optimisation for an online presence, or utilising Google Ads; remember that over 80% of consumers use the internet to find local businesses;
- Viral marketing – online or social media platforms (see below);
- Cold calling customers or utilising a telesales department or company.

If you are more than a ‘one-man band’, it is important to ensure that your employees are positive ‘brand’ ambassadors for your company. When you hire people, make sure they not only have the skills and experience to fulfil the job at hand but are also inspired by your values and what your company stands for. A strong brand will help you cast a wide net when looking to hire new and dynamic staff, encouraging their loyalty to the company and in turn increasing loyalty to the brand from customers.





# Building Your Brand through Social Media

The importance of establishing your brand and maintaining its reputation is vital in today's digital age. With social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram connecting people in an instance worldwide, how your brand is perceived has never been as important in this world of instant communication. By using innovative and creative online content, your brand values can be communicated to an audience that previously wasn't possible and help you distinguish your company from competing businesses.

Several social media platforms to consider include:

**Facebook** - the largest platform in the world with over 1.4 billion active users; it allows individuals and companies to connect instantly.

**LinkedIn** - a business-orientated network that boasts over 360 million users worldwide.

**Twitter** - allowing two-way connections in the marketplace with real-time delivery, although content length is restricted to 140 characters; many companies use this platform to disseminate short messages that connect through to another platform (such as a website).

**Pinterest** - especially good for companies that require a significant visual presence, for example costume jewellery manufacturers and suppliers, clothing companies or photographers.

**Google+** - with over 500 million users, this allows Google users to share their identity and interests across all Google platforms, such as Gmail and Hangouts.







**Tumblr** - a useful site for posting multimedia content and blogs that can be shared between users; again, useful for photographers and jewellery manufacturers and retailers.

**Instagram** - a mobile phone-sharing and video-sharing site; similar to Tumblr, it would also be relevant to brands that rely heavily on the visual aspects of their identity.

Depending on the nature of your business, other online platforms to consider include: coupon sites, gaming sites, music sites, health-related platforms and recipe sites.

Given the prevalence of social media in our lives today, having a brand strategy is now very important. Your message and value must correspond with the platforms you've selected to promote the brand. And, to quote a very well-known tagline, 'it must do exactly as it says on the tin'. In light of this, remember too that bad news can travel faster than good news, so how you interact with customers at all stages of the promotion and sales pipeline is now of the utmost importance.





# Building Your Brand Checklist



Have I made time to consider, develop and build the brand identity relevant to my business?



Does my brand identity clearly state what I am?



What do I stand for and how is this represented through my actions?



Have I established the key brand messages to communicate?



Does my name and logo support the 'look and feel' of my brand?



What do I want to communicate through my communications plan, both short- and long-term?



What are the appropriate platforms for establishing awareness of my brand and building its external presence?



How should I encourage employees to be promoters of my brand?





# WHO WE ARE



Big Red Book is the largest and longest established Irish company that supplies accounting software to the small business market.

Big Red Book is designed for ease of use so you can spend more time running your business rather than worrying about the accounts.

We understand that doing accounts can be a challenge so we provide free training. We also have an expert customer service team ready to take your call and help you with any support issues.

In addition to Big Red Book accounts software, we also supply an easy to use payroll solution – Big Red Book Payroll. For those companies that want to use a cloud based accounts solution, we offer Big Red Cloud.



With over 20 years' experience providing accounting software and support to over 39,000 Irish businesses, we invite you to join our business community.

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