

The BRAND behind the logo



It's difficult not to get caught up in the shiny parts of branding and business. As an entrepreneur, there are so many dull and difficult tasks on our plate! Who wants to map out business plans and finances when there is a logo and website to design?!



So you start to dream. You're thinking hot pink, to match the blooming garden outside your window. No yellow and turquoise, it's so beachy and inspiring. No red, people always compliment you when you wear red. Or maybe orange and blue, your favorite team colors. Then you jump on Pinterest or Google and start collecting images. The larger the collection, the more disjointed it becomes. If you lived at the beach, it would be this kitchen, and the mountains, this porch. And all the fonts, and all the colors. And all the confusion. Oh wait. And this recipe for chocolate cake.



Can we have a breather and a little heart to heart over this morning's coffee? This is not the way to build a brand...or a logo. There are hard questions to be answered, business plans to consider, services to think through, identities to construct. Your logo design is a tiny part of your overall brand. Let's not lower its importance, we all know the logo is your business identifier, and might be the reason you acquire (or don't acquire!) new clients. Instead, let's properly place it in the brand identity process, after everything else.

We've designed lots of logos, and we've even been guilty of using or allowing the same processes mentioned above. But let's move past that and start something great today.

I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.

-Maya Angelou

Intentionally set aside some time in this week's schedule for planning and brand development.

Look over some colleagues' websites as mentioned below. But not too many, lest you fall into comparison quicksand.

Separate your personal preferences for interior design, fashion and hobbies from your business. With every answer, remind yourself that this is less about your love for blue or the beach, and more about a cohesive brand.



Once you've answered the following questions, separate yourself and come back next week to revisit. Make changes, then ask a few knowledgeable and honest friends for their opinion. Pin this final draft to your desk area. Let it inspire and lead as you make business decisions. And understand that with growth comes change. Let's look at this again each year.

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1. What services or product categories do you offer or plan to offer?

2. How do these fit together? Is the business cohesive? Or is it confusing? In college I worked for a thrift store that was also a wedding boutique. We sold last year's sweaters and brand new wedding dresses, invitations and tuxes. Confusing! A confused mind says NO.

3. Why are you selling these products or services? What do you believe about life/people/business that drives this end product? This is how potential clients connect with your brand.

We sell consulting, logos & websites, that's our product. But we do this because we believe in empowering entrepreneurs and helping them succeed. We find value in helping business owners create a cohesive brand. We know this is a firm foundation that will give them confidence and professionalism, and ultimately a place to thrive in business. Wow, that sounds a lot bigger than just a logo, doesn't it. So what's your "WHY?"

4. Who is your ideal client? How old are they? What's their income? Taste? Social Media personality?

5. What's your business personality? Everyone should desire "professional," but what 3-4 words describe your business? Are you an artist with cheerful reclaimed wood signs? Then you might say words such as cheerful, vibrant, colorful, handmade.

6. Do your answers from questions 4 & 5 gel together? Is the personality of your business in line with the personality of your client? If not, why? What do you need to re-think in order to appeal to your ideal client?

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7. What moods do you see from the words in question 5? The artist might see, happy and encouraging.

10. Navigate to a few colleagues' websites. How are they meshing together the ideal client and the business personality? Do you see the "why" in their business? Do you see what they believe? Make a few notes about the good and the bad you find on each site.

8. What colors are you drawn to based on the words above?

9. What colors and motifs should be avoided based on rival sports teams, geographical location or personal and religious preferences? Also consider product packaging of lines you sell, seasonal colors and super trendy patterns and palettes.

11. Repeat this exercise with related industries. A spa might also research a yoga studio.

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12. Create a Pinterest board or desktop folder with inspiration images. Look for mood and color according to the questions above. Write below each photo or “pin” the reason you like it, and how it applies to your questions above.

13. Create a second board or folder of things that you love personally. Give yourself freedom to add the chocolate cake recipe and the signature-colored scarf to this board as you search.

Continue to remind yourself that you and your business are separate, just as these boards are separate. File this board away for browsing later.



Once you’ve answered these questions, separate yourself and come back next week to revisit. Make changes, then ask a few knowledgeable and honest friends for their opinion.

Pin this final draft to your desk area. Let it inspire and lead as business decisions are made. And understand that with growth comes change. Let’s look at this again each year.



Relax, now it’s time for the glittery fun part, the visual designs. You’re ready to interview and hire a designer who can translate these notes into your perfect identifying mark...your logo.

Happy Branding friends!

BONUS TIPS: how to find & work with a designer

Find someone you trust. Look into their process and references, send an email, find them on social media. Hire them, and then let them lead you through a pleasant design experience.

You pay people for things because they know what they're doing. LISTEN to them! The best thing for you may be different from what you WANT.

-Laura Roeder

Custom comes with a cost and you always get what you pay for. But finding a designer that “gets” your business will save time and money longterm. Put effort into good communication and let them teach you about branding.

Give feedback not corrections. Refrain from hijacking the creative process by directing your designer. Instead, tell them what is off-putting and WHY! “I don’t like this house, try this one, no this one, no this one, no this one,” {draft 15, 16, 17, 18...} is a lot different than, “This house feels like a cottage, and looking over my notes, I think more modern would better suit my ideal client.”

Don’t rush the process. Relax and do it right. If you don’t have time to do it right the first time, how will you find time to do it again?