



How to Create an Effective Corporate Brand

Every company, large or small has an image and it is important to manage this correctly and effectively. A strong corporate identity says that a company is professional and well-organised. It enables a company to stand out from the crowd and gives the outside world a clue as to the personality of a business. A strong corporate identity is also an easy way to convince the world that you really do mean business.



A brand can be a valuable tool that allows you to communicate with your customers and encourage their loyalty to your product or service. A well-managed brand is clear, distinctive and appropriate to your target market. Brands are just as important for small businesses as for big multinational companies. Small businesses still need to operate in a competitive market, whether local, national or even international. A small specialist company can become a leader in its field, and a strong brand can help them to be more successful regardless of their size.

Branding is like a big iceberg where the tip is 15% and the visual identity visible through for example a logo or the packaging. The remaining 85% which is under the surface is the company's philosophy and brand values. Your reputation and how people see your company can be different to your identity which is about your company's values, decisions and DNA. The difference between the two is called the strategic gap and the challenge is to bring this gap closer together.

Corporate identity - brand values

Branding is how people experience your company and getting your branding right is not just about designing a new image and heavy advertisement. Before any effective and appropriate marketing communication can be done it is essential to define what your corporate identity is by looking at the real nature of your business.

Creating a good corporate identity must be based on some degree of truth and reflect the true personality of the business. A corporate identity is associated with a combination of values, beliefs and behaviours and seen by people as having considerable worth. Your unique selling point (USP) defines why you are in business and what you can offer customers that are unique.

You won't create the corporate identity you want unless your entire company is aligned and real brand reputation is created at the point of delivery. If your own people don't know the strategy and agenda and understand the central role they play in building your brand it won't be delivered. To execute a brand that



remains recognisable and rewarding it needs to communicate in ways that are clear, consistent and co-ordinated and the messages, tones and personality need to be matched with a consistent approach. It is important to go through an internal process which inform and involves building your business presence around core brand values. If these are true values they should be consistent and work as guides in the four corners of your business framework.

People today are overwhelmed with information and opportunities and have more choices than ever before. The brands they select and build relationships with are those who treat them as intelligent adult partners and not just witless mass of consumers. People need to feel that companies are providing them with products and services that deliver real benefits and consistently meet the promise that it makes to the customers.

Your vision of where or who you want to be is the most powerful asset your company possess. If you have got a great business, let your values, talents and expertise be reflected through all of your business activities. Once the facts from your corporate identity have been established, themes from the identity will begin to emerge and the creative part can begin to take shape.

Visual identity - brand image
A brand image is a name, term, design or symbol which should be distinctive, memorable, and unique and conveys

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information about your company, product or service. Your logo also identifies the current values and direction of your business and it can be used to build recognition an increase familiarity and trust amongst your customers.

Whether your logo is text, illustrative or graphic it will aim to symbolise your company name, product, function or ethos in a visual appealing way. A logo made up of text uses a specific font and colour to convey the company name or acronym. An illustrative logo uses pictures and a graphic logo use more abstract images. Both illustrative and graphic logos often still contain text elements.

You can add a statement or a tagline beneath the logo to communicate the distinctive quality of your brand. This is particularly useful when the company name doesn't describe what the business does.

Your logo needs to suit your business and appeal to your target market as well as help to create a positive professional and consistent image of your business. Colours play a

big part in conveying this message because they evoke imagery and impression. Cool colours as dark blues, greens, purples, browns and grey can be used to convey traits of being traditional, respectable, trustworthy, secure, reliable, corporate, and professional. Warm colours as reds, yellows, oranges, pinks and bright blues and greens can convey messages of being modern, innovative, young, funky, vibrant, lively, creative and fun. To imply luxury and class gold and silver can be used where silver is more futuristic and hi-tech and gold more warm and exotic.

Your logo should be used everywhere and take the steps to set the branding style of your entire business operation. Giving your marketing a consistent look and feel is just as important as your logo and in this way your message will instantly be recognised as coming from you.

Communicate your brand strongly and effectively

Your brand image and values can be extended further into your business, and be communicated by way of your stationary, PR, newsletters, advertising and networking. At this level, branding is not just about the brand name or logo – it is about the sum of the customer experience.

Develop appropriate marketing materials and develop a website to help build awareness of your brand and customers will remember you when they are ready to buy. It is important to take advantage of new technology. Websites are strong marketing tools that drive traffic and offer an alternative to traditional media.

By taking communication to a higher level through strong marketing communications as the Internet your word spread quickly your brand is recognised by loyal consumers and viewers who direct others to your site.

Internet is a tool to improve cost and efficiency. Through the Internet you can also improve the supply-chain operation and the ability to build business partnerships with business customers and suppliers. Internet will

play a larger role in customer relationship management (CRM) where businesses should try to attract customers to their website by offering them useful information and services.

Email is widely used and should be central to the business's Internet marketing strategy as it helps you into meaningful and rewarding relationships with people and your customers. Email marketing through regular newsletters also helps develop mutually beneficial relationships through regular contact. Remember your customer service is a key part of your company's brand, enhancing trust and building sales.

Your competitive position

You can improve or retain your competitive position through high-level marketing design, strong graphics and bold brand identity. It is crucial that your branding reflects your business's goals and core values as this allows you to improve credibility and to create a reputation within your field. Put together a creative strategy that will use the right medium to get across the right message to the right audience.

About the Author

Sindy Birkelid came to UK from Norway in 1993 to study BA (Hons) Communication Media and Master of Arts in Time Based Media with Electronic Imaging. She has experience in brand development and creative solutions for the Internet and Interactive TV since 1998 and has run her own Design Consultancy called InMyShoe Ltd since 2004.

Sindy was kind enough to speak to Business Britain about how an organisation can build and strengthen a brand and corporate identity;

In your experience, have you found that organisations place enough of an emphasis on branding and corporate identity, and do you believe that organisations that do not are suffering as a result of not doing so?

"Businesses are often underestimating the importance of brand-management and maintaining brand value to succeed; where branding is all about how other people experience your company's services and products."

Do you feel that there is a specific problem with the culture within UK business in failing to maximise brand awareness and corporate identity, as opposed

to their American counterparts for instance?

"As 95% of businesses in Britain are SME they have a significant impact on society and the environment, and with lack of time and resources they often do not prioritise branding as a strategic asset for growing their businesses. Many companies find that as their business grows and by creating professional partnerships, their vision and values evolve to echo the development in culture and working practices. By adopting ethical codes of practice they also increasingly demand the same of their suppliers."

In your opinion, what should a successful branding system hope to achieve?

strategy, or those who are considering strengthening their brand, what key issues would you advise them to address and take into consideration before undertaking?

"It is important to analyse your values and these should reflect the real nature of the business and how you will achieve your vision for the company in a way that leaves everyone satisfied. Through your audit you will then be in a better position to brief a designer on the creative part."

In today's technology driven world, there are a wide range of mediums in which a brand can be built and established. Do InMyShoe specialise in any

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"A successful brand is a powerful, confident and carefully integrated brand that speaks with a single voice and vision which achieves an allegiance of loyalty."

For those who are interested in adopting a strong branding

certain area of brand communication and do you establish how to, and where to, build a clients brand?
"Your logo should take the steps to set the branding style of your entire business operation and InMyShoe can also help develop appropriate



Sharing knowledge & vision...



Strengthen your brand...

Have you got the competitive edge?

A strong brand lets you dazzle the competition. If you've got a great business, let your values, talents and expertise do the talking.

InMyShoe can add value to your brand image, and make sure that you are representing yourself as the best you can be.

Services include:

- Online & Offline Branding
- Conceptualising
- Website Design and Development
- Email Marketing
- Graphic Design
- Imaging & Illustrations
- Moving Images
- CD-ROM Production
- Interactive TV Design

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DESIGN CONSULTANCY

Visit our website www.inmyshoe.com



It is important to understand your market; trust and believe your business and know what 'key messages' to put across. When we work with our passion and strengths, we are inspired by our work which keeps us focused. InMyShoe takes the right steps to achieve greater ideas and results which will enable us to speak up and take the lead when appropriate

marketing materials and a website to build brand awareness."

When discussing branding, many people in business neglect that at every point of contact with a client there should be some representation of the brand and its' message. A growing amount of contact with companies today is online and interactive. How important have you found websites, and their presence in building a clients brand and how can InMyShoe achieve this for their clients?

"InMyShoe has specialist knowledge of digital branding and interface effectiveness to create a unique customer experience. Prominent navigation structure, accessibility and usability experience across the site works well where the site should deliver what it offers."

On several occasions, Business Britain magazine has highlighted to our readers the potential significance of a strong branding strategy and how in theory you can reduce costs and increase profits through

market communications, sales and customer service online. Can you give us some examples of how InMyShoe has achieved this for your clients?

"InMyShoe helps our clients in strengthening their brand by improving trade relationships and reducing cost of servicing online so they can directly increase efficiency and profitability. Our recent work redesigning Norwegian-British Chamber of Commerce website provides an easy-to-find resource to members and potential new members. Their CRM system is linked to their website and email-invitations to events are also sent out.

Should any of our readers be interested in learning more about InMyShoe (and unless they have one of the strongest and most effective brands around they should be!!) what would be the next step? And can you run through the process that would follow should a client undertake your service?

"We always refer potential clients to our website www.inmyshoe.com and when a client is interested in our service we go through a requirements analysis asking them to fill in a Project Design Brief to determine their goals, needs and targets. InMyShoe will then develop concepts and generate a wide spectrum of ideas."

It takes an amazing amount of energy and persistence to make a business take hold in the customer's mind. With more and more businesses competing for headspace, are there any specific 'devices' InMyShoe use, or any philosophy which you strictly adhere to in order to do so?

"It is important to understand your market; trust and believe your business and know what 'key messages' to put across. When we work with our passion and strengths, we are inspired by our work which keeps us focused. InMyShoe takes the right steps to achieve greater ideas and results which will enable us to speak up and take the lead when appropriate."

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