

# NAKED DESIGN

There's a lot of talk these days about 'branding', but what is it really and can it make any difference to your bottom line? After all, isn't it enough to just deliver a great product or service? Are customers really that interested or influenced by what you look like?

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## BRANDING BY DESIGN: IS YOUR BRAND COSTING YOU BUSINESS?

According to Al and Laura Ries, the father and daughter authors of a number of definitive marketing texts, branding from a business point of view is very similar to branding on the ranch. In their book, *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, they say that at its core the purpose of branding is to differentiate your product from all the other cattle on the range – even if all the other cattle on the range look pretty much alike. And in a competitive marketplace where it has become virtually impossible for any business to sustain a genuine point of difference over its competition for long, making sure that you stand out from the herd is essential for business success.

So, what is a brand? A brand is nothing but a name that is given to an individual, a company or a community to represent it. Every name is a brand. You are a brand; the Sydney Swans are a brand; the Cross City Tunnel is a brand; Telstra is a brand.

Brands offer consumers shortcuts to understanding your product or service that help them to make purchase decisions. If you've ever found your favourite brand of toothpaste out of stock at the supermarket, you'll have experienced the paralysis that comes with suddenly having to make a new brand decision in an overcrowded marketplace – suddenly all the cattle in the herd look alike.

Likewise, we've all had the experience of meeting someone new, when interviewing a new job candidate for example. We read their CV and based on its presentation, the type of paper used, the typeface chosen and the words selected we develop certain impressions of that person – impressions that will determine whether or not they reach the next stage of the interview process. How many candidates that could have transformed your business have slipped by simply because they were unable to create a positive brand impression with their CV? When we meet the candidate face-to-face for the first time, within seconds, we intuitively 'know' so much

about that person by the way they dress, the way they walk, the type of bag they carry, the shoes they wear, their hairstyle, make up, clothing, jewellery, facial hair, tattoos, piercings...we make an enormous range of assumptions about them – both positive and negative – before they've even said hello. That's branding for you.

And it's the same process that your potential customers are going through every time they see your website, office, business card, e-newsletter, business stationery and so on. Are the branding shortcuts you are creating for your customers helping you to win more business?

# BRANDING

## TEN KEYS TO CREATING A WINNING BRAND

Whether you're just starting out or already have an established brand, making sure that your brand represents your business properly is essential.

Your identity is one of your most valuable business assets, so even established brands need to take the time to conduct a regular brand 'audit' to ensure that they are communicating the right messages, to the right audience.

### 1. RESEARCH THE COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE –

put yourself into the shoes of your consumer, and look at what they see when they research you and your competitors. Gather samples of your competitors' logos and lay them out on a page (along with yours if you already have one) to see where the opportunities are to stand out from the crowd.

**2. KNOW YOUR TARGET MARKET WELL –** in an evolving business environment your target market can change over time, as can their preferences and tastes. Keep in touch with your market, know who they are and what appeals to them.

**3. BE PREPARED TO INVEST IN THE EVOLUTION OF YOUR BRAND –** just like any fashion, brands can become outdated and irrelevant. While a complete re-brand is a radical step that signals an entirely new beginning and approach, brand evolution can be done to subtly keep your brand moving with the times.

**4. INVEST IN MARKET RESEARCH –** put your brand out there and see how people react to it. Does your logo portray a small or large company? Does it say 'stable and conservative' or 'young and funky'? A simple survey or questionnaire is an easy and cost-effective step to some interesting perspectives.

**5. REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT BRANDING FOR YOURSELF –** this is a challenging one because we are all ultimately influenced by our own beliefs and preferences, but it is imperative to remember that your brand is communicating to your target market, not to you. The look, feel and colours might not even be personally appealing to you – remember, it's not about what you like, it's about what appeals and speaks to your target market that matters.

“The objective of branding is to create in the mind of the prospect the perception that there is no other product on the market quite like your product.”

THE 22 IMMUTABLE LAWS OF BRANDING

**6. KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE –** be aware of who your key competitors are and make a point of keeping an eye on what they are doing, as well as making sure that no new competitors catch you by surprise.

**7. TRUST YOUR ADVISERS –** we're used to trusting our finances to our accountants and taking legal advice from our lawyers, but when it comes to design, many people try to do it themselves. Professional designers have expertise in translating your business objectives into visual communications. Involve your designer in understanding your business and objectives and they will help you to realise your vision.

**8. A STRONG BRAND IS A CONSISTENT ONE –** that means applying the same look, feel, colours and logo again and again, and again. It can get a little monotonous for you because you see it every day, but your target market doesn't, so resist the temptation to make changes just to keep it interesting for you!

**9. DEVELOP YOUR BRAND WITH YOUR FUTURE IN MIND –** a good brand identity must be developed so that it can be applied not only to all of your existing materials, but it should also anticipate future developments, such as new products, promotional merchandise, shop fronts and so on.

**10. DARE TO BE DIFFERENT –** not just for the sake of it – but because ultimately it's the only way to stand out from the rest of the herd.

“ We were looking for three things when choosing our name:

- something that could be trademarked
- something that had an available web domain
- something that was different and had a unique statement about the product.

TIM PETHICK, FOUNDER – NUDIE JUICE, IN SECRETS OF MALE ENTREPRENEURS EXPOSED

## TEN BRANDING PITFALLS TO AVOID

**1. COLOUR-MATCHING CHALLENGES** – even today, printing and colour-matching is challenging and can be difficult, make sure you know how your chosen colours will reproduce in both PMS and CMYK.

**2. SEE THINGS IN BLACK AND WHITE** – not all applications of your logo can be in your corporate colours, make sure you know how it will work in black and white, and on white and black backgrounds.

**3. COLOURS AND COSTS** – more colours means more cost when it comes to printing; a one-colour logo will be a lot more cost effective than a three-colour logo when it comes to producing printed material, such as business stationery.

**4. SIZE DOES MATTER** – think about how your logo will work when it is reduced and enlarged in size...does it work small on a business card and large on signage?

**5. BEWARE FALSE ECONOMIES** – it's not uncommon for people to invest in their initial logo development but then cut corners when it comes to extending their brand, which can just end up diluting the whole visual message. Even if having a professional design agency look after all your design needs is beyond the budget, you can have them develop a range of templates for brochures, proposals and even advertisements so that you can get them produced internally while maintaining the integrity of your brand look and feel.

**6. LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF COLOUR** – your choice of colour says a lot about you – it's why we don't see banks choosing hot pinks, or pretty pastels. While it's great to differentiate yourself, you have to do it with a colour selection that is appropriate, relevant and not too radical.

**7. USE YOUR PALETTE** – don't lock yourself in to a too-limited colour selection that won't always be available or practical, select a secondary colour palette that works well with your new corporate colours to provide flexibility.

**8. TYPEFACES HAVE PERSONALITIES TOO!** What is your typeface saying about you? Choose something that is appropriate, that communicates your brand personality, make sure it's easily readable both in print and online, and unless you're in the cartoon business, avoid 'quirky' typefaces.

**9. WHAT'S IN A NAME?** At the end of the day your brand name will be 'heard' more often than it is seen, so it is important that it is easy to say and easy to spell so that potential customers have no problem finding you online. It's also important that you don't limit your future business development by being too product specific. For example, if you build your brand around the name 'Bob's Shampoo for Blokes' it becomes very difficult for you to convincingly launch new product extensions for kids or women under that brand name. And finally, make sure that you haven't inadvertently chosen a name that someone else already owns, and that you take

steps to protect your name once you've settled on it. A registered business or company name isn't enough to ensure that you can continue to trade using your chosen name, you need to look into protecting your name, logo, and any other special properties such as product names or taglines with a trademark. You can easily check which trademarks have already been registered at [www.ipaustralia.gov.au](http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au) as well as download useful trademarking resources.

**10. FOLLOW THE RULES** – develop guidelines for the use of your logo, colours, typefaces, imagery and so on to ensure consistent use across all materials. Consistency builds recognition and familiarity, which makes it easy for consumers to recognise you. We all know McDonald's by its distinctive 'golden arches', but even as one of the most well-recognised brands on Earth, McDonald's never allows its logo to be represented differently – this is a company that understands the power of consistency in branding.



“ Consumers these days are well-educated and experienced when it comes to interacting with companies, and they expect certain standards of presentation as part of the product offering.”

REBECCA GIGLIA, FOUNDER – BOUNCE TOURS

## BRANDING IN PRACTICE

At the core of your brand is its identity – the look and feel, your logo, your corporate colours, the images you use. These create the first impressions that tell customers so much about who you are and what you are all about. Scope Design Group client Rebecca Giglia, founder of Sydney’s Bounce Walking Tours, harnessed the power of branding to create perceptions in the minds of customers when she launched her brand. With three or four well-established competitors, Rebecca wanted her brand to differentiate her product offering as well as to help her attract the right type of customers. The brand is designed to be ‘young, fun and funky’ and to appeal to that same type of person. Recognising that even as a small walking tour operator she was interacting with savvy consumers also led Rebecca to realise the value in developing a smart and sophisticated brand from the get-go. “Consumers these days are well-educated and experienced when it comes to interacting with companies, and they expect certain standards of presentation as part of the product offering. For me, not bothering to invest in a strong, professional and appealing brand would almost be like an insult to my customers,” says Rebecca.

## SO IS YOUR BRAND COSTING YOU BUSINESS?

Why not take our brand diagnostic test and find out. It’ll guide you through the process of looking at how your brand measures up in the competitive environment, see just how well you are creating effective shortcuts for your customers and give you practical recommendations for how you can leverage your brand to build your business.

Simply send us your suggestion for topics you’d like to read about in future issues of Naked Design or tell us what you thought about this issue and we’ll send you our free brand self-assessment tool.

Email [nakeddesign@scopedesign.com.au](mailto:nakeddesign@scopedesign.com.au)

## RECOMMENDED READING

### Branding

- The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding  
Author: Al Ries and Laura Ries
- What Clients Love  
Author: Harry Beckwith
- Lovemarks  
Author: Kevin Roberts

### Inspiration

- Losing My Virginity  
Author: Richard Branson
- Winning  
Author: Jack Welsh
- Secrets of Male Entrepreneurs Exposed  
Author: Dale Beaumont

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