



BUILDING YOUR VISUAL BRAND

If you put four or five pieces of your brand's marketing materials in front of yourself, what would you see?

Would you see a clear, consistent theme and message that blends together and feels like multiple pieces of one whole? Or would you see a hodgepodge of confusing and inconsistent imagery, color schemes, and tones that don't fit in the same category or feel like they come from the same place? If you said the latter, you have a big problem. You don't have a brand identity.

WHAT IS BRAND IDENTITY?

A **brand identity** is the cohesive look and feel of your organisation. It's the name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.

A **brand** isn't solely the physical or visual elements that represent your organisation. It's also the feeling people get when interacting with your business, marketing materials, products, services, team members, and physical locations. Your brand is how your audience perceives your organization as a whole. Branding is what people say about you when you are not in the room. It's the lasting impression you leave on your customers and clients, and it's shaped largely by the visual identity that you present.

WHAT CREATES A BRAND'S VISUAL IDENTITY?

Visual identity is made up of the visible images associated with your organization. These are the elements that guide customers and clients to their perceptions of your brand. These include:

- Logo
- Colours
- Typography
- Imagery Styles
- Composition Styles

These elements make up your visual brand identity, but they are made up of more than visible qualities. The visuals represent a larger message and theme. They set the tone for your entire branding. It's important you match your visual identity with the overall identity of your brand.

FINDING YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

These steps will help you identify your brand goals and mission so you can connect your visual identity to your larger brand values.

1. Define Your Audience

Before you position your brand to connect with an audience, you need a level of understanding about your audience to appeal to their needs and wants. Identifying your desired customer base makes every part of your branding process easier. This step helps determine how to talk to your audience with the language, terms, and tone best relating to your primary buyer personas. Define your audience by looking at demographics and psychographics. Use your research to create multiple specific, targeted versions of your buyer personas. Consider the following:

- What is their age, gender, job description, income, and education level?
- What is their personality like? What values, hobbies, and interests do they have?
- What type of lifestyle do they live?
- What are their day to day concerns?
- What solutions are they looking for?
- What other brands do they like?



2. Define Your Mission - the WHY Behind Your Brand

Once you have spent some time digging into your audience, now its time to assess your company. What do you offer your customers and clients? You need to consider the products and services your offer, but you also need to think about the way you provide those offerings and why.

Ask yourself:

- Why do we provide these services and products?
- What do we hope to change for our customer?
- What improvements do we want to bring to their life?
- Why do we think it's important to do this?
- What do we stand for?

3. Identify Your Brand Personality

When you have a good idea about your brand mission, identify the brand personality that matches that position. What type of person would be a good reflection of your business? How would they talk? How would they look? A simple way to create a starting point for this imaginary brand representative is to ask yourself the question:

- If I could have any person be a spokesman for my brand, who would it be?

From there you can create a description of your brand personality. This is the tone and messaging to use across marketing channels, including social media and email. This personality needs to remain consistent across each outlet you use to communicate with your customers.

4. Develop Emotional Appeal

Infusing emotion into your brand is how you connect deeply with prospects and leave a lasting memorable image in their mind.

- How do you want your audience to feel when they see your marketing materials?
- What emotions are triggered when your customers and clients use your products/services or interact with your brand?
- What emotions lie at the heart of your brand story?
- Does it make sense for your brand to be connected with trust, fear, guilt, competition, belonging, or some other emotional appeal?

The answers to these question act as the building blocks for your brand marketing strategy.

5. Building Your Visual Brand

When you have the answers to these questions, you will start to naturally build an image of your brand and the visuals that support it. Use this information to build your visual brand.

- Choose a color palette. Use color psychology to pick a shade that matches your identity.
- Choose your typography. Choose two complementary fonts that represent your brand.
- Define imagery choices. Describe what type of imagery best represents your brand.
- Redesign your logo if it doesn't match. If you uncovered a brand identity that isn't represented by your current logo, consider a redesign.
- Create a brand style guide. List all of the elements of your brand identity in one guide that your entire team can access. This document will make sure every element of your branding follows the same consistent guidelines.



6. Keeping Your Brand Consistent

Consistency is one of the most critical strategies for marketing a brand. However, it's becoming increasingly difficult to maintain that consistency in our evolving world of multi-channel marketing.

Unifying all of these communication channels to present a clear, concise, and consistent brand identity revolves around brand style, substance, and story.

STYLE

If you've ever seen a TV commercial for an Apple product, you've likely recognized the stylised photography, upbeat music and youthful lifestyles presented, and guessed that it was advertising an iPhone feature long before the iconic logo appears at the end.

That's because Apple is hugely successful with style. Their simplicity, stark fonts, and neutral color palette immediately trigger visual recognition. And because their unique position allows them to use this look and feel across hardware designs, software interfaces, and immersive retail experiences, they've created a cohesive ecosystem centered around consistency of brand. Consumers respond to familiarity with overwhelming positivity, so let your visual identity create comfort, whether it's a feast for the eyes or stripped-down and simple.

SUBSTANCE

It isn't just the message that connects with an audience, it's the tone and attitude that speak volumes. If your visual identity is lighthearted and irreverent, but your copy relies on austere, direct statements, it can become confusing to the recipient of the message and work against your mission to build trust and comfort.

But how consistent is too consistent? Great campaigns build on a consistent idea, but offer just enough variation to keep viewers engaged and curious as to how they'll experience the campaign message next.

STORY

Now that you've created a beautiful visual style and backed it up with the substance of a carefully-crafted message, consider your story.

The story behind your brand relates back to your mission. While your mission should orient your organisation in a particular direction, your story should illustrate how you enact that mission in your day-to-day operations. This story should be consistent with the type of brand identity you're trying to build. A beautiful visual identity is great, but at the end of the day, narratives are what people hold onto and remember.

SHOWCASE YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

Once you have a clear visual brand identity, you can start to expand on your visual marketing efforts. You can implement your branding into the following platforms to spread a consistent, clear message from your organization.

- Website
- Physical Marketing Materials
- Staff Uniforms
- Digital Signage
- Social Media presence
- Videos

Using strong, consistent, onbrand imagery produces higher ROI for your marketing efforts, more deeply resonates with customers, and creates a cohesive and memorable brand experience that makes clients come back for more.



VISUAL MARKETING & BRAND AWARENESS

From print materials and digital media to physical products and artwork on the walls, visuals are a major element in businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Images, graphics, and colors make customers feel a certain way, remember a particular message, and form opinions about a brand. Knowing how to use these visuals can benefit businesses as they control brand perception, spread brand awareness, and leave lasting impressions on customers. So if your business isn't leveraging visual marketing, it's time to get started.

WHAT IS VISUAL MARKETING?

Visual Marketing is the strategy of using visual aids to tell a story, communicate a message, and reinforce branding. The elements of visual marketing appear online and offline and include:

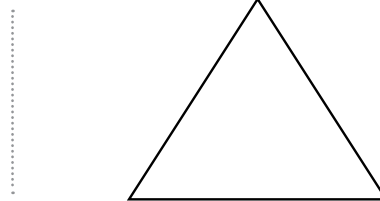
- Logo
- Signage and Print advertising
- Infographics and icons
- Videos and still imagery
- Social Media

Many of these visuals are fundamental parts of business so many companies see them as basic essentials, not opportunities. But that's because they don't realise how important the style, appearance, and existence of visuals can be to a business.

WHY IS VISUAL MARKETING IMPORTANT?

You can say a lot with words but you can say even more with a clear, graphical representation of an idea, feeling, or function. The best way to explain visual marketing is, not surprisingly, to give a visual example. If you were told to imagine one diagonal line that connected to two other diagonal lines to form one shape, it would take you a lot longer to imagine a triangle, than if you were just shown this image.

Imagine one diagonal line that connects two other diagonal lines to form one shape



It takes you longer to imagine a triangle with a text description because our brains process visuals faster than words, 60,000 times faster. We absorb and understand graphics quickly and remember their meanings more efficiently. While people only remember 20% of what they read, they remember 80% of what they see.

Because people quickly absorb, interpret, and remember visuals, it's no surprise that most of us respond well when presented with the opportunity to see and share them, primarily through social media likes and sharing, and by verbally recounting visual impressions to family and friends. Visuals encourage people to act, share, and purchase which is why they can play a significant role in marketing strategies.



and then
it came to me.

BRAND COMMUNICATIONS

HOW TO START USING VISUAL MARKETING?

A visual marketing strategy begins with a logo, as it is the most basic component of a brand's visual identity. But remember, visual marketing isn't plastering your logo on everything. It's using your logo to create brand guidelines that direct the creation of other visuals that represent the feel and appeal of your unique brand.

Define your branding elements

Create a Brand Style Guide that leads the direction of your other visuals based on your logo.

The guide should include guidelines for:

- Logo
- Color Palette
- Fonts
- Icon Styles
- Logo usage / mandatories
- Imagery / mood board
- Voice

Define your voice

While defining a **voice** for visuals might sound counterintuitive, it is actually an essential part of identifying your visual brand. A brand **voice** is more than the way your brand sounds or the words you use, it's the expression you use to engage and motivate your audience.

Your brand expression will translate through the images and visuals you use. So in your Brand Style Guide include descriptions and words of what feelings and emotions define the vibe and values of your brand. Make sure your brand is always represented. While your logo does not need to be on every piece of visual material, your brand does need to be represented so that customers and clients can associate your brand with the image.

All of your visuals should have a least one element that ties back to your brand. Whether it is a beautiful photo with an overlay of your branded font and designated hashtag or a logo on the corner of your free slideshow or interactive pdf presentation, the brand connection is what makes it marketing. Don't forget to tie your visual back to your brand. Use visual marketing on your website and social media channels. Once you have a clear direction on the voice and imagery associated with your brand, start using visual marketing on your online platforms.

- Create branded images for each of your social media posts
- Embed videos on your webpages. Videos are the perfect way to show a product in action, introduce your staff, or show off your business location
- Publish infographics that share complicated data or information about your brand or industry

Use visual marketing in-store. Bring elements of your visual marketing into the physical parts of your business. Add interesting visual elements to areas where customers wait. Add signage near checkout lines, sitting areas, and changing rooms. Put your stamp on everything that comes out of your store. Use unique visuals on packages, bags, boxes, wrapping paper, and whatever else leaves your store with your customer.

The opportunities and possibilities of visual marketing are plentiful, varied, and powerful. Once you begin creating visuals that accurately share your brand story and clearly articulate your messages, your business will begin to build stronger relationships with customer and clients, both new and old.