

A group of four young people are gathered around a laptop. The laptop lid features a logo that says 'KEEP CALM' in a stylized, hand-drawn font. The group consists of a woman with long blonde hair wearing a white t-shirt with a rainbow graphic, a man with a backpack wearing a white t-shirt with the word 'DELAYS' in red, and a woman in a green hoodie. A fourth person is partially visible on the left. The background is a corrugated metal wall.

5 Things Everybody Gets Wrong About Branding



A quick guide to the most common mistakes small business owners and entrepreneurs make when creating their brand, and how to avoid them.



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Introduction

It's hard enough to run a business without worrying about branding. So, it's no surprise that many young entrepreneurs and first-time business owners completely ignore the brand development phase when starting a business.

Often, this happens due to common misconceptions about what brand development really is and a lack of knowledge about the fundamental role a brand plays in the long-term growth of a company.

Underestimating the true value of branding or not knowing what creating one actually entails will not only cost your business in the long run. It will also siphon resources in the short term by causing you to invest in the wrong things in the wrong order.



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Eventually, those misplaced outlays of cash will come back to bite you down the line, when your marketing falls flat or nobody's ever heard of you after ten years in business.

Brand building is a process that happens over time, but it must be built on a foundation of solid market research and relevant insights in order to get the most from your brand over the long haul.

In the following pages, you'll learn about the **5 most common mistakes** small business owners make when launching a new brand. Once you know what these mistakes are, you will know how to avoid them and will be able to transform your brand into one of the most powerful assets you will ever own.

1. Brand Identity



A brand is more than a logo

MISTAKE #1

Placing too much emphasis on the logo.



A lot of people commission the design of their logo before anything else, because it's an easy way to get the energy flowing and gives the sensation that you're making things happen, when you're actually throwing money down the drain. By far the most common mistake, and the most expensive.

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Your brand identity, which is industry-speak for logos and all the graphic assets tied to a brand, is a relatively small part of your brand. If we were to quantify its importance in the larger picture, your logo, and all the elements that comprise your brand identity, such as colors, fonts, and iconography, would only represent around 10 to 15 percent of your brand.



More importantly, you should never embark on the design phase of your brand identity before you know who that identity is meant to attract. Which brings us to the second most common mistake people make.

2. Brand Voice



Top brands know their audience

MISTAKE #2

Poor knowledge of your customers.



Knowing your target market goes beyond demographics, and when it comes to branding, it is imperative to know as much about your potential consumers as possible before you decide on the best way to present yourself.

In high level brand development, it is standard practice to create what is called a consumer persona during the preliminary stages. This is a detailed profile of your potential customer based on real people, who would be interested in buying your product or service. At least one, but often two or three consumer personas are created to allow companies to determine the best direction for their brand.

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Although this kind of research can tax your pocket book, you should weigh its costs against the benefits that even the most minimal research on who your customers are can have on your branding's effectiveness. Once you have a decent idea of who your brand is talking to, you'll have a good chance of steering clear of the third mistake most people make.

3. Brand Research



Smart brands live longer

MISTAKE #3

Lacking a brand research strategy.



Once your brand has been rolled out, having a research strategy in place to track its performance will allow you to spot evolving market trends and manage consumer expectations.

Markets are volatile and unpredictable, especially today. Brands that want to stay relevant have to be flexible, and the only way to do that successfully is by implementing a brand research strategy that can provide you with timely insights. Learn more about how to develop a brand research strategy that works for you in RD Medina's [in-depth article](#) on this topic.

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A brand without a research strategy is like a sailor without a compass, and by keeping tabs on your brand's performance, you'll avoid leaving your brand stranded and less likely to fall for the fourth mistake.

4. Brand Messaging



A strong brand makes you believe

MISTAKE #4

Inconsistent brand messaging.



A mismanaged viral moment or an ill-considered piece of marketing has been known to ruin a brand's reputation. But, at least they had a reputation to ruin. Most brands never get there because of inconsistent brand messaging.

When customers know what to expect from your brand's vibe and tone, they remember you the next time they come across it. If they don't, your brand might as well not exist. Your logo could be plastered on bus stops all over town and they still won't know or care.

Inconsistent brand messaging makes people think twice about what you have to offer, and inhibits the kind of brand recognition and awareness that builds brand equity. Consistent messaging will put your brand in prime position to succeed if you have managed to avoid the fifth mistake people make.

Inconsistent messaging makes people think twice about what you have to offer.



5. Brand Positioning



Great brands know their place

MISTAKE #5

Incorrect brand positioning.



Brand positioning is critical to your brand's success and getting it right requires solid market research to know where you stand relative to your competition, and the ability to identify gaps you can fill in order to develop a differentiation factor that draws people to your brand.

Consider that of all the things that make a brand, this may be the best answer to the question of what your brand really is. So, before considering brand name options, commissioning a logo, writing catchy taglines or making a vision board, you must know where your brand will stake its territory.

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Unlike the previous four mistakes, the wrong brand positioning is not always the result of your own actions, and can be due to changes in market trends or other external factors. That's why it's a good idea to have a brand research strategy in place to help you monitor these trends and give you the chance to adjust to changing circumstances, and avoid costly rebranding projects or systemic issues with your company.



You don't build your brand, your customers do

It's vital to understand that your brand should embody what your customers are already looking for. Effective branding answers to the needs and desires of the market it seeks to serve, and achieves this through brand propositions modeled on those very needs and desires.

In this respect, **narrative branding** provides the kind of holistic approach required to create brands that are responsive to the customer, and helps guard against the mistakes described in this guide by establishing a solid foundation for branding that is aligned, consistent, and most importantly, set up to build brand equity – a fancy term for the value a brand has managed to accrue by sticking around for a while.



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You don’t have to be a Fortune 500 company to take advantage of these principles and make your brand into a highly valuable asset that can drive growth. And you don’t need an army of ad agencies, marketing departments and PR firms working round the clock for you, either. All you really need is a good story.

Once you’ve done the research and gleaned the critical insights you need to find a story that resonates with your specific target market, you will have the tools to create a strong brand that will do much more than just decorate your stationery.



Visit rdmedina.com to help you create consumer-focused brand narratives designed to enrich customer journeys, that foster brand loyalty, recognition, and awareness.

