



# The Ultimate Guide to *Beautiful Branding*

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# The Ultimate Guide to Beautiful Branding

Want to build a solid business? Start with branding.  
Want your company to be financially successful? Start with branding.  
Want to feel personally fulfilled by your work? Start with branding.  
Want customers who can't get enough of you? You guessed it: Start with branding.

You might be asking: Branding? Isn't that just about a company's logo and theme colors? How can that help me feel more fulfilled and build a great, successful company? I mean, I like green and all, but...

The first thing you must understand is that **branding isn't just skin deep**. It's not just about your colors and logo. Branding is everything your company stands for and everything that looks and feels like.

Branding is about getting 100% clear on the mission of your brand, WHY you're doing what you're doing, and WHO you're trying to serve. It's about really understanding what drives your ideal customer and what problems you're solving for them.

Branding takes those factors and translates them across every medium you use to communicate: your spoken words, the text on your website and materials, and your visuals.

Visuals, while not the foundational aspect of your brand, are the most immediately obvious, especially to new visitors who aren't yet acquainted with your brand. **They are the messenger that translates your mission into a language that passersby can easily understand.**

That means your visuals play a very important role! It's essential that they properly represent your personal brand and what it stands for. They also must be attractive to your ideal client (we'll talk about how to do that a bit further down), and they **MUST** be consistent. Nothing makes your brand look better than consistent visual branding. (And, nothing makes it sound better than having a consistent voice!)

## **Start with WHY**

WHY are you doing what you're doing? What is personally driving you? The answers to these questions don't directly matter to your customers (they probably don't care too much about your personal reasons why), but they will have a serious impact on your business decisions, which affects branding.



If you don't know WHY you're doing what you're doing, then you won't know who you want to serve, how you want to serve them, or what you're trying to gain. You won't feel fulfilled and your customers won't be as satisfied as they could be. Your company won't be as successful as if you had a strong WHY.

So, what is your why? Do you want to provide for your family better, gain personal applause, or change the world in some way? Get specific: not just WHAT you'd like to do, but WHY.

If you want to be financially successful, ask yourself, "Why?" Is it because you want to be powerful, or because you think this will make you great? Do you think having a certain number in your bank account (or buying a certain item) will bring you happiness? Is it because you want to travel or entertain friends? Why do you want to do those things?

It's okay to start with WHAT you want, but then you must ask why. And then, ask why again. Keep asking until you get down to your root desires that are really driving you to want to grow your develop your brand and grow your business.



## **The Mission of Your Brand**

Now that you've figured out your personal reasons why you're doing what you're doing, it's time to hone in on the mission of your company. WHY does your company exist in the world? WHAT is it seeking to do?

For example, one business I own is a local music academy, Northwest School of Music. At NWSM, our mission is, "To inspire musical excellence." We don't just teach people to play a few notes or sing a couple songs. No, we INSPIRE them to make great music. Inspiration comes largely by positive example, so our teachers really take the time to model to the students, so that they feel the desire to create beautiful music themselves.

I could go on, but I think you get the idea! Here are a few more examples of brand missions:

"To improve lives." -- TOMS shoes (For every pair of shoes purchased, TOMS gives away a pair of shoes to someone in need.)

"Spreading the power of optimism." -- Life is Good (Seeks to improve people's lives by spreading the message that "Life is Good.")

“...to use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.” -- Patagonia (Strives to create high quality outdoor clothing products that benefit both the consumer and the planet.)

**What is the mission of your brand?** Your mission provides the foundation for everything your company does, so until you get this really solid, your brand won't stand up.

## **Clarity of HOW**

So far, you've developed clarity on your personal why and your brand's mission. Now, let's get really clear on how you'll be going after those things. You need to know exactly who you're serving: stats on their external circumstances, as well as what drives them, their wants and needs, how you plan to help them, and what their lives will look like after they've experienced your product.

Really getting to know your customers will guide every aspect of your branding (and marketing) process. It will help you understand what will appeal to them (and why) and how to best communicate with them.

## **Clarity on Exactly Who Your Target Audience Is (Demographics)**

First of all, who are these people anyway? Chances are, there's more than one type of person who would be interested in your product, so break it down.

For example, if you have a product that teaches customers how to train their dog, some different interested audiences could be:

- >> Single, working adults who don't want their dog to destroy their house while they're at work
- >> Families with young kids who want their dog to be gentle and well-mannered.
- >> Men who enjoy camping and need their dogs to be well controlled

If you offer web design services, audiences could include:

- >> Small business owners who have outdated websites
- >> Entrepreneurs who are starting new companies
- >> Photographers who want to display their portfolio to attract more clients
- >> School administrative workers who want their students to have easier access to schedules and other important information



Obviously, these lists could go on and on. It's enlightening to recognize how many different sets of people are potentially interested in what you have to offer. However, for the sake of your branding, it's important that you focus in on just one group. Branding that appeals to a start-up focused entrepreneur isn't necessarily the most attractive to a wedding photographer or an elementary school administrator.

**How do you decide?** Go back to your why. Which customer set best fits? If your why is focused around feeling powerful through having riches, then choose the customers who have the most money and biggest numbers. However, if your why is all about spending more time with your family and "living the good life" then choose the customers who would be the easiest to work with.

Select a customer group that matches your why, your company's mission statement, AND who you will enjoy working with the most. At the end of the day, if you don't enjoy your customers, then you won't enjoy your work.

### **Clarity on Your Ideal Customer Avatar: Beliefs, Fears, Desires**

Once you've narrowed your target audience, it's time to get really personal. You need to figure out what your ideal customer actually like: what drives them, what problems they're facing, what inspires them, etc.

Evaluate your ideal customer in five key areas:

What are their goals and values?

Where do they get information?

What are their demographics?

What are their challenges and pain-points?

What are their potential objections to buying?

### **Goals & Values:**

Think about what is most important to your ideal customer.

What is he/she trying to accomplish? What does he/she want the most? Why does he/she want these things?

### **Information Sources**

What are your customer's preferred sources of information? Books, movies, news channels, blogs, webinars, social media...? Specifically which books? Which movies? Which news channels? Etc.

### **Demographics**

This includes age, gender, marital status, number of children, location, occupation, income, and level of education.

### **Challenges and Pain-Points**

Challenges are goals your customer is struggling to accomplish: losing 10 lbs, training their dog to be calm around children, growing their photography business.

Pain-points are fears: What keeps your customer up at night? Lack of body confidence, dog being too rough with the kids, not enough money to make ends meet, etc.

### **Potential Objections**

Why wouldn't your customer buy? Maybe they can't afford the time to complete the training, or they aren't sure they'll get a good ROI. They might be concerned they won't be able to stick with the diet, or that their dog is just untrainable.

### **Clarity on Exactly How You Want to Help Your Target Audience**

Once you're super clear on your "who" it's time to move on to the "how." How do you help your ideal customer?

This isn't as simple as, "I provide them with weight loss products," or "I help them train their dog." It has to go deeper than that to really influence your brand.

Specifically what goal are you helping them reach, or what pain-point are you helping them with? If you are selling a diet product, the answers here could be, "I help new moms lose "baby fat" and regain their confidence," or, "I help seniors get in shape to stay healthy during retirement."

If you were selling a course to help people train their dogs, then your statement could be, "I help families keep their



kids safe,” or “I make it easier for men to enjoy camping trips with their dogs.”

You’ll also want to develop statements about how your product delivers these values. **What is unique about your product?**

“My product makes it easy for new moms to lose weight because they aren’t required to count anything for it to be successful.”

“My product ensures that seniors get a full range of important nutrients that keep them healthy.”

“My product enables families to train their dogs and keep their kids safe without having to even leave the house to go to a class.”

And finally, make sure you’re really clear on what your product is. For some businesses, the answer to this question is obvious. If you sell a commodity good, for example. However, if your product is more unique or complex, then you must make sure that you know its specifications inside and out.

If you’re a web designer, you’re not selling websites: you’re selling artistic, intuitive websites to creative entrepreneurs, or high-converting websites to marketers that include features X, Y, and Z, etc. If you’re a photographer, you’re

not selling pictures: you're selling beautiful memories to brides, and your package includes X number of hours and X number of prints.

The more specific you can be about your product offering, the easier it will be for you to determine the best way to brand your entire company.

### **What are you really selling?**

How much do wedding pictures cost? Well, we could add up the hourly rate of the photographer, the cost of supplies, and the depreciated cost of the equipment... or we could think about what the photographer is really selling: beautiful memories. What are those memories worth to the wedding couple?

Not only does this turn around the way we think about pricing our products, but it also has a significant impact over how we brand ourselves, design our websites, and look at our work.

If you think you're selling pictures, then your website and branding will be all about photo resolution, the number of hours you put in, how you edit, and how many pictures the bride can expect to receive.

However, once you realize that you're actually selling beautiful memories, the whole focus of your brand shifts.

Now your website will speak of capturing this once-in-a-lifetime experience, remembering the day forever, how many hours you'll put in to ensure they have a perfect day, and how beautiful the pictures will look hanging in their new house.

So, remember: you're not selling a diet product; **you're selling confidence.**

You're not selling a dog training course; **you're selling peace of mind.**

You're not selling a website; you're selling a marketing tool; you're selling clients; **you're selling security.**

You're not selling handbags; **you're selling prestige.**

## **Values**

A brand can only be as strong as the values it's based on. What values are most important to you? Transparency, honesty, freedom, love, family, innovation, intelligence...?

Your brand doesn't have to embody every value you hold, but it certainly shouldn't run counter to any of them. You might have values including freedom, travel, family, and equality.



Your brand can just be all about freedom and travel, never speaking of family. That's fine if that's what you want and it fits with your mission, ideal customer, etc. However, your brand shouldn't be about superiority, if you hold equality is an important value to you.

If honesty and "telling it like it is" is important to you, then your brand shouldn't be about making everyone feel good and not stepping on people's toes. Of course, you probably wouldn't do this intentionally, but if you don't get clear on the values your brand will be about before you brand yourself, then you might do it accidentally.

Why is it important for your brand to be aligned with your values? **Because whatever values your brand seems to represent will dictate what type of clients you attract.** If you tell it like it is, then you don't want to attract clients who just like to be made to feel good. You'll be frustrated and they won't be satisfied. Your business won't be fulfilling to you or financially successful.

With that in mind, choose values that you and your ideal customer have in common for your brand to represent. If you can't find several significant values that both of you hold, then you might want to reevaluate who your ideal customer really is (and perhaps find a new one).

## **What Do You Want Your Brand to FEEL Like?**

Now we are getting more into the visual elements of your brand, but still need to stay guided by all of the previous branding questions we've considered. The FEEL of your brand is where the purpose of your brand and the visuals of your brand meet to produce emotion.

Think in terms of opposites at first:

Will your brand feel open or closed?

Free or controlled?

Feminine or masculine?

Light or heavy?

Light or dark?

Round or angular?

Modern or vintage?

Black and white, or gradient?

Simple or complex?

Don't just pick what you think you like or want. Choose attributes that embody the values your brand represents, and which will give your potential clients the feeling that you would like them to buy.

Think of it like a sample at the grocery store. If the flavor is something you enjoy, then you're much more likely to want to buy a whole package of it.

So, if you have a dog training product and you're selling peace of mind and safety, then those are the feelings your brand should have: peaceful, safe, secure.

If you do web design for wedding photographers, then you're selling them a beautiful showcase for their work. Your brand should feel: successful, beautiful, fashionable. What STYLES appeal to you & your target audience? After figuring out what feelings your branding should invoke, you're ready to move on to specific imagery. At this point, you might already be pretty clear on what things should look and sound like, or you might still be in the jungle.

This is where Pinterest comes in so, so handy! Search the feelings you want your brand to give. For example, type "peaceful," "energetic," "successful" or "modern" into the Pinterest search bar. You might also try combining it with "art," "design" or whatever you are selling, such as "peaceful art," "energetic design" or "modern photography."

If you don't like the feelings of what comes up, then you might want to reevaluate the feelings you thought your brand should carry (or maybe you just need to try a different combination of words).

Now, start pinning! Don't worry about creating a cohesive board yet. Just pin random images that appeal to you,



would appeal to your ideal customer, and impart the feelings you're looking for.

Once you've pinned a number of images, go look at the board you've created. Which images are your favorites? From those that you like the best, select several that look good and cohesive together. They don't don't have to match, or even be similar, but they do need to compliment each other (and if they do match somewhat, that's fine too.)

You might even choose one picture that really speaks to you, and use it as the focus of your branding. Choose a few other pictures to compliment it and build on the idea (just so you have more to work with), but basing everything on just one picture is fine!

(To be clear, it's wouldn't be good to base your entire brand on one random picture, even if you really liked it. However, if you've gotten this far and taken all the previous steps then this picture isn't random at all. It's fully grounded in your why, mission, ideal customer, product clarity, and the feelings your want your brand to make your customers taste. Because of this, it really is a fine foundation for the visuals of your brand.)

## **Elements of Consistency**

Once you've found some imagery that represents what

you want your brand to look (and sound) like, you can select the specific elements that will make up your brand. You want to choose them intentionally to make sure that they really compliment each other well, and so that you'll be able to be consistent in the future.

**One attribute that all brands need is integrity. Your brand needs to hold it's own, and potential customers need to know they can trust you. If they don't trust you, they won't buy.**

By creating a consistent brand, you'll create the appearance of integrity. Since looks are all visitors to your website or store will initially have available to judge you on, it's essential that you make their first impressions as positive as possible. You might not think fonts, colors, and logos are very important, but that's all your customers will see at first.

Think about it: if you met a new friend, and you thought you really liked her, then the next time you saw her she looked and sounded like a completely different person, you'd probably be a little put off, or at least confused. You'd probably wonder if you could really trust her or rely on her. After all, she seems pretty inconsistent...

So don't make the same mistake with your brand! Showing up consistently (in appearance, voice, values, and

message) is the only way to make your customers really trust you and build meaningful relationships with them.

## **Colors**

Choose the prominent colors from your inspiration artwork that appeal to you and fit with the values your company stands for. Colors play a large part in the feelings your brand will convey.

When you look at the inspiration artwork, what are the first two colors that stand out to you? Those are probably your best bet.

Unless rainbows are part of your branding (and they certainly could be), it's generally easiest to create a cohesive brand by limiting things to one or two colors, plus black, grey, and/or white. For example, you might choose: red, black, and grey; teal, blue, black and white; pink, yellow, black and white; green, grey and white.

For ideal consistency, make sure you're choosing specific colors (that you have visual swatches of), not just names of colors. (Not just "red," but a specific shade of red that you have a picture of.)

## **Fonts**

Again, base your font selections on the images that you



found on Pinterest. It's generally best to choose two fonts: one that is more artistic, and one that is very simple. Of course, make sure you choose fonts that you like and that look good together.

One more consideration on fonts: please choose something relatively unique, especially for the more artistic font. The simple font could be Arial, Open Sans, or Times New Roman, or anything you like. But for the main, logo font, please, please don't pick something that's overused! Do not pick Papyrus, or Comic Sans... Just don't!

I'm not saying you need to pick something that looks more creative or more artistic, or "stylish." It can be simple or complex, elegant or plain, script or print: just don't pick something recognizable. Especially if it's a more "artistic" font (like Papyrus), don't pick something that everyone else is using.

## **Logo & Logo Variations**

While your logo should follow along with the feel of your brand, it doesn't necessarily need to "look like" your inspiration artwork at all. It will be inspired by it, since the colors, fonts, and feel will all be aligned, and so they will look good together (and feel good together). But that doesn't need that they actually need to match.

**Logo variations** are a part of branding that often gets overlooked, but it's an important little piece of the puzzle. Your logo will normally be on a certain color background (probably white), and will be designed to look good in that context. However, sometimes, your logo will have to be displayed on a different color page (a dark shade, perhaps), or will need to be a square instead of a rectangle. If you don't have some logo variations thoughtfully (and skillfully) designed for when these situations arise, then you'll find yourself slapping something together that doesn't necessarily look 100% professional.

As for actually getting the logo designed, if you're working with a branding specialist or a graphic designer, they'll be able to create something beautiful for you with just a few words of direction about the feel you want the logo to have, and the colors and fonts you're using for your brand. The wonderful part about this is if they're working on your whole branding project, they'll really understand what you're looking for, and will be able to design you a logo that will fabulously tie your whole brand together.

If you can't afford a designer, you can either design something yourself ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com) is a great, free resource for this), or hire a freelancer. You could spend a few hundred dollars on a freelance graphic designer through [www.upwork.com](http://www.upwork.com), or submit a project to [www.99designs.com](http://www.99designs.com), which garner you drafts from a few

dozen designers (if you don't like any of the designs, you don't pay anything). This is a great option if you're not sure what you really want. You also can gold dig on [www.fiverr.com](http://www.fiverr.com). At \$5 per design, you can probably afford to buy several to get some different ideas. You definitely get what you pay for, and probably won't land on a winning design at such a low price, but it can be a great method of brainstorming if you are short on ideas.

## **Patterns & Textures**

Once you've chosen all of the elements mentioned above, this step will come like a breeze! Choose swatches of three - five swatches of different patterns and textures to further reinforce the feel of your brand. You'll be able to use these in border accents, as backgrounds, and as grounding for the style of your brand.

To find your patterns and textures, you can search Pinterest or Google images for "color" + "feeling" + texture/pattern/print. For example, you could search "blue feminine pattern" "magenta bold print" or "teal peaceful texture."

## **Shapes & Icons**

What shapes will be of primary focus in your brand? Once again, choose shapes that fit with the feelings. If you want your brand to feel fun, you'll probably focus on circles of



different sizes. If you're going for modern, long rectangles will be your friend. For a zen feel, squares with indistinct edges will work the best.

Think about what icons you'll need on your website. You'll probably want items on your menus (though these may just be text), you also could use different types of icons for different categories of blog posts.

The most likely place you'll want custom icons is for your social media links. While you could just use each of the various platforms own links, the fact is that these won't coordinate with each other, or with your branding! By going the extra mile to create some stylized icons for each platform that you're active on, you'll take your brand to the next level of design.

## **Stylized Social Media Posts**

Whenever you post an image, article, or other piece of content on social media, you want it to be recognizable. Brands aren't built on random google images! The pictures that you choose for your posts are important (ideally, they convey the same feeling as the rest of your branding, and even use many of the same colors), but what is even more vital is how you style them. How do you write the inspirational quote on the beautiful background? What font do you use for the featured image on your blog post?

When you post to Instagram, what shape are your pictures? All of these little elements add up to a cohesive brand that appears trustworthy.

Using a few blog posts you've already written, and a few images you've posted on Instagram or other platforms, create model post styles to use as templates for all your future posts. Of course, down the road you'll eventually decide to mix things up to keep it fresh, but day to day, consistency is vital.

## Create Your Brand Style Guide

Once you've selected all of the individual elements, it's time to collect them into a brand style guide. This serves three important purposes:

First, **it allows you to see at a glance if any of the elements don't fit.** With all of the elements arranged together on a page, any that don't match the feelings you're going for will stick out like a sore thumb. Replace those elements, then ask someone with an object opinion to take a look. Ask them, "Which thing doesn't belong." If they choose the item that you just replaced, then you'll know that you need to keep looking for a match.

Second, once you have your brand style guide all together, you'll be able to get an even deeper idea of the feeling that you want every aspect of your brand to embody. It's very

enlightening to see all of the pieces come together to form a whole.

Finally, your brand style guide will serve as a practical reference in the future. Whenever you think, “What was that font called?” “What shade of blue?” or “What should the frames on my blog post headers look like?” a quick glance at your guide will give you the answers you need.

As for how to create the style guide: it’s really quite simple. Start on Pinterest to take a look at those that others have created, then head over to [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com) to design yours. If you’re interested in more direction on this process, I’d love to help you out! Please “contact us” through [www.gillianperkins.com](http://www.gillianperkins.com) and let me know. Perhaps one of the next courses I create could be on this topic!

## **Stay True to Your Mission**

Finally, a word of caution. Be careful to not get distracted by the visual elements: they are a rabbit trail that can lead you further and further away from your mission and the feelings you really want to give your customer a taste of. Remember the whole point of each of these visual elements is simply to enhance/compliment/highlight the mission of your brand and speak to your ideal customer.

Your branding is not made up of logo + blue, grey, white + font. Your brand is the values you and your customers



share, and the results that you can give them. Remember that, and use your visuals to speak that message from the first second visitors stumble onto your site.

Now, use this guide to create your own beautiful brand that shows off your talents and highlights your unique personality! If you need help along the way, be sure to reach out. I can always be reached via email: [contact@gillianperkins.com](mailto:contact@gillianperkins.com)