

Guide to Personal Branding Online

What is Branding?

According to Investopedia, branding is “a business and marketing concept that helps people identify a particular company, product, or individual.” A brand is more than just a logo or how your website looks; you can’t touch a brand, or even see it. Rather, your brand is how you *present your company* to the public. As such, branding helps shape people’s perceptions of you, your company, and the products or services you offer.

What is Personal Branding?

Personal branding is the process of presenting yourself and your personal brand in a way that builds trust, loyalty, and most importantly - an audience. When you are the face of your business (as it is with most small to medium-sized businesses), Personal Branding is a key piece in the puzzle of success.

What Can a Strong Brand Do for Your Business?

A strong brand will help you to differentiate yourself from your competitors. With a well-thought-out branding strategy, it will be easier for customers to remember and identify with your product or service. After all, your brand tells customers exactly who they are dealing with and what to expect. (If your branding doesn't tell them these things, it's time to go back to the drawing board!)

Brand Identity

Your brand identity includes all the visual elements you use to identify your business: logo, colors, fonts, etc. These elements all come together to present the image you want to portray to the customer. You’ll sometimes hear this referred to as Visual Branding or Visual Identity.

Brand Personality

Brand personality refers to the characteristics and emotions that customers associate with your brand. While brand identity is about what you want customers to see, brand personality is about how you want them to feel and what you want them to think. Some brands have a stoic, professional personality, whereas others have a more playful, approachable personality.

Brand Mission

Your brand mission tells *what your company actually does*. This is usually an internal message meant to inspire and motivate your employees (and yourself!). A strong brand mission can also act as a magnet for new talent with whom the message resonates.

Brand Purpose

Your brand purpose is *why your company does what it does*. This is not the place for fancy words that don't mean much – keep it short, simple, and (ideally) easy to remember. Short doesn't mean vague though! You want customers to understand what you do AND why you do it.

Brand Vision

Your brand vision is *what your company aspires to be*. It's not necessarily what you do right now, but what you want to be doing in the future. Your brand vision doesn't just send a message to the customer – it should also help drive decision-making and goal setting within your company.

Brand Values

Brand values are *guiding principles* that shape your company culture while also supporting your vision. Unlike your brand mission and vision that tell *where* your business is going, brand values tell people *all about what you are*. What features define your company? What beliefs drive your operations?

Brand Promise

Often confused with brand mission, a brand promise is *externally focused*. It is crafted to hold your company accountable for delivering a consistent customer experience. In short, it's what you promise to deliver to your customers.

Creating an Attractive Brand Strategy

First, you need to have a clear understanding of who your ideal customer is (we'll talk more about that below). Once you've figured that out, the next step is to determine what is important to those individuals. Do they care about superior, hands-on customer service, 100% money-back guarantees, high-quality video content? You want your

brand strategy resonates strongly with your ideal customer, like it was crafted just for them. Which is easy to do when you put it together when them in mind!

If you want to create a brand strategy that influences customers to choose you over the competition, it's time to dig in and do some research. Find out what the competition is doing poorly, markets they aren't serving, gaps in their product line, areas they could improve, etc. Search for reviews and comments that give you clues as to what those potential customers really need and craft your brand strategy with all of the insight that you gather.

Defining Your Ideal Customer

As mentioned above, defining who your ideal customer is can be a great first step to crafting a compelling brand strategy. Start with these questions:

- What problem does your product or service solve?
- What need does it fill?
- Who would benefit from your product or service *the most*?
- Where can you reach those specific people?

And one of the **most important** questions to ask yourself: Who would *pay money* for what you have to offer?

To make this process easier, we've simplified it down into an acronym: PAM.

Pain – people with specific needs that your product or service can solve

Access – a group of people large enough to market to/where to find them

Money – people with enough money to pay for a solution for their problem

Reaching Your Ideal Customer

We mentioned this briefly above, but let's get into it a bit more, shall we? Most business owners begin with social media when they are trying to figure out where to reach their ideal customers. Considering that more than half of the world's population uses social media, that's not a bad idea! But which social media platform(s) should you use?

Just as with your brand strategy and messaging, it all depends on who you want to reach. We've put together an overview of the major social media platforms below to help you figure out where you are most likely to find your audience.

Facebook

Largest age group 25-34 (26.3% of users)	Gender breakdown 44% female/56% male	Avg time per day 38 minutes
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- Most-used social media platform
- Most engaged-with social media platform
- Great place to reach Baby Boomers and senior citizens

Instagram

Largest age group 25-34 (33.1% of users)	Gender breakdown 57% female/43% male	Avg time per day 29 minutes
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- Second largest social media platform
- Great place to reach motivated shoppers

Twitter

Largest age group 30-49 (44% of users)	Gender breakdown 32% female/68% male	Avg time per visit 3.53 minutes
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- Well-educated users (42% have a degree)
- Great place to reach middle-aged men

LinkedIn

Largest age group 46-55	Gender breakdown 49% female/51% male	% of monthly users 63%
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- 1/4th of users are millennials
- Higher education and income levels
- Great for reaching international professionals (70% of LinkedIn users are located outside of the U.S.)

Pinterest

Largest age group
40-49

Gender breakdown
78% female/22% male

Avg time per day
14.2 minutes

- Largest percentage of female users compared to other platforms
- Heavily-product focused
- High-earning user base
- Great place to reach Gen Z and millennials

TikTok

Largest age group
18-24 (27.5%)

Gender breakdown
59% female/41% male

Avg time per day
45+ minutes

- More than 57% of users are between 25-54
- Most dedicated user base of all platforms
- Users spend an average of 21.5 hours a month on the app
- Great platform for trendspotting

Snapchat

Largest age group
13-34 (75%)

Gender breakdown
58% female/40% male

Avg time per day
26 minutes

- Highly engaged user base
- Users open the app more than 30x a day on average
- Another great platform for trendspotting

YouTube

Largest age group
15-25

Gender breakdown
72% of all internet users
(both male and female)

Avg time per day
41.9 minutes
(among viewers 18+)

- More than 60% of users log in every single day
- 2nd largest search engine behind Google

Figuring out where to find your ideal customer all comes down to getting to know them – who they are, what their life is like, what their pain is, and what they value most.

Personal Branding Best Practices

Logos – keep it simple and scalable for various applications

Colors – choose colors that evoke the emotions you want associated with your brand

Fonts – limit yourself to 2-3 complementary fonts that create a visual contrast

Brand Name – choose a name that signals the key objective of your brand promise

Website – use a clean design that incorporates your colors, fonts, and logos

Social Media Presence – be consistent with your visual appearance and tone

Email – be consistent with your tone and talk to subscribers like they are a friend

Customer Service – have processes in place so that no matter who a customer speaks with, they always get the level of service defined in your branding and messaging

Tips for Creating a Winning Brand Strategy

1. Pick your niche(s)
2. Define your business and marketing goals
3. Conduct brand research
4. Spotlight what makes you different
5. Think of your business as a person
6. Craft an exceptional customer experience
7. Get involved with the community you would like to do business with
8. Create and maintain a high-quality blog
9. Develop your visual identity strategically
10. Unify your social media accounts