

GET BRANDED

Some tips for creating a personal brand identity

Whether you're a budding photographer, filmmaker, graphics artist or sound engineer trying to break into the industry, one thing is certain: You need to sell yourself. Think of yourself as any other company or brand that provides a product or service. While it may be easy to be

a brand, it isn't very easy to be branded. Realistically, you're probably not the only one of your kind offering specialized services to a limited number of clients. In order to succeed, you need to stand out and make an impression on anyone you meet or reach out to. Even if you have built a reputation locally, if you

want to expand using the Web, you might not have the luxury of having that reputation follow you online.

At its core, a brand identity expresses your essence, what you stand for and what makes you different from the rest. An effective identity can even serve to refine your personal style and approach further, as it forces you to assess your work in a new light. The following is a brief overview of the steps that can help you develop a personal brand identity.

Define who you are

Begin by embarking on a soul-searching mission, with the goal of finding and expressing what your strengths are, what your particular style is and how your approach differs from other artists or standard practices. You need to identify whatever it is that sets you apart. Do you see things differently than most? Are you a DIY type who can solve problems with creative, low-cost solutions? In addition to your main skill, do you offer a full spectrum of supporting services? Have you gained specialized knowledge of a specific segment of your market that you can share? The possibilities are endless, but it's important to be honest and selective when defining your strengths. If you list too many, you won't have traits that stand out and make you memorable. So keep it to one or two key strengths—and make sure you can live up to them.

Verbal and Visual Translations

Once you can define clearly what you are about, the next step is to find the right words to express those ideas precisely. Keeping it short, write one sentence that conveys your results in a clear and concise way. Next, think about how those words can translate visually. You will need

those visual cues to create marketing materials that bring everything together in harmony. Use the following as a few thought provokers for this process:

Color

Colors convey the emotional aspects of your brand identity. Choose one that matches what you're about.

However, don't just take a basic color and run with it. Play with different shades: Darkening or softening a color

Although white is a completely inviting and friendly color, it also lacks character.



Gray is a neutral color that can be mixed with a main color in a brand identity to add style.



Black is a slick, powerful color that can portray exclusivity. On the other hand, it is not a very welcoming or friendly color. It can be used together with another main brand color.



Red conveys power, excitement and passion, but can also be associated with anger and danger.



Pink can be seen as soft, friendly, inviting and warm, though it is typically associated with femininity.



Purple can be quite a unique color, because it is used less in branding systems. It conveys luxury, royalty and finesse.



Orange is an energetic, friendly alternative to red that conveys warmth and progressiveness.



Yellow is associated with caution, but can also represent happiness, fun and expressiveness.



Green is well known for representing money and nature, but can also project growth, health and safety.



Blue is a trustworthy and reliable color with a feeling of measured progressiveness.



Brown is a grounded color that conveys trust and nature. It is generally associated with an antiquated or dated feeling.

can make it a better and more refined fit for your brand. It also allows you to stand out, rather than just choosing a color that has been overused in your industry.

Typefaces

Your choice of typeface will define the look and feel of your brand ID even further. Fonts can have subtle differences, but can provide a particular feeling for the overall brand.

1. Make sure the typeface is easy to read. No one likes to strain in order to read materials.
2. Selecting two different fonts can add flavor and uniqueness to your look, but pay attention to how the two fonts interact and ensure they are visually compatible. You'll also want to assign each typeface a role, such as using one for headlines and the other for body text.
3. Select a typeface that is appropriate to the feeling of the brand you're trying to build. There are respectable typefaces, and there are fun typefaces. Each has its place, but both would generally not serve the same intent of a brand.
4. Consider purchasing a typeface's font family, instead of the standard typefaces that come preloaded on your computer. Some font families offer a wide range of variations of the same typeface to give you more options.
5. Use size, color, shade, and typeface weight to distinguish your look. All of these factors can completely change the way a typeface looks in the context in which it's used.
6. If you're unsure about a typeface selection, you're better off keeping it simple. Having a generic look is OK, but an interesting typeface that works against your brand is best avoided.

Serif/Roman
Slab
San-serif
Script
DECORATIVE
Simulation

Logo

Creating a logo is a highly specialized area of design, but you shouldn't shy away from creating one if you have some basic design skills. A logo can be created for your personal name or your company's name. A logo can help define your brand better, making you more memorable. Keep the following points in mind when designing a logo:

1. Consider all of the places your logo will appear and test extensively for size, position and context.
2. Make sure the logo works as well in black and white as it does in color.
3. Creating a mark or symbol is an option, but not an absolute necessity. It can help make your logo stand out more. A unique type treatment can be enough for a strong logo and may not require an icon at all.
4. Avoid style trends and make your logo timeless.
5. Keep it simple. The best logos are ones that stand out but are not outlandish.
6. Make it appropriate and in line with who you are. You wouldn't want to create a strong, bold, powerful logo if you're a photographer specializing in portraits of newborns.
7. Create your logo in a vector-based program such as Adobe Illustrator so that it can be scaled to different sizes, as needed. Avoid using raster images in the logo.



Applying your Brand ID

Once you've selected your color(s), typeface(s), and designed your logo, you can begin to create the marketing materials that you'll need. This could be just a business card and website, but if you have a portfolio, it's a good idea to incorporate the identity you've developed to raise the level of professionalism. Even a resume can be included with the identity.

These are only the first steps to building your brand identity. An ID encompasses many more aspects than those covered in this article. As time goes on, you'll construct different facets of this ID, and the identity will continuously be refined. You might discover a tagline that conveys the core of who you are. Or you may decide you need another typeface to better suit the web. The key to making it all work, however, is to stay true to the ideals and concepts that you defined for yourself at this early stage in your brand identity.

— Brad Bitton

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