

Brand Strategy Guide

What and why?

The brand *is* the business and the business *is* the brand.

Sometimes it can seem confusing where brand and business strategies begin and end. The answer is that they are much the same thing. It's just the focus and the detail that differ.

The brand strategy is important to give direction and point the way ahead. It's fundamental to the business and should be created before actioning any new marketing, brand identity or communications.

Step 1: Where is the brand today?

Brand values audit

A strategy is simply a plan for getting from where your are (A) to where you need to be (B). So the first step is to clarify where the business and the brand is today. For that we need a brand values audit.

Begin by asking colleagues which values they identify with the brand - even better, if you can get the view of some outsiders - valued clients, suppliers, and friends even. The more responses you can get, the better.

The next task is to refine and organise these results. Group the values, remembering that people will probably be using different words for the same feature. Be ruthless in narrowing down to no more than five values that define the brand in each category.

Critical Success Values - <i>qualities that every brand must have for success in your sector.</i>	
Concealed Values - <i>hard truths, apparent to outsiders but not to you and your people.</i>	
Ambitious Values - <i>the ones you don't have but will be necessary to your success.</i>	
Defining Values - <i>the most important qualities you believe distinguishes your brand</i>	

Step 2: Where should the brand to be?

Strategic considerations	
Purpose <i>What is the brand 'for'?</i>	
Ambition <i>What is the brand's vision - where does it want to go?</i>	
Values <i>What are the five key qualities the brand stands for?</i>	
Actions <i>What is the brand going to take to achieve its ambition?</i>	
Value proposition <i>Why does the audience need the brand - how will they benefit?</i>	
Positioning <i>Where does the customer see the brand in relation to its competitors?</i>	
Personality <i>What is the brand's character?</i>	
Audiences <i>Who should be interested in the brand?</i>	

Tip : It may be difficult to be detached and the help of an outside advisor, consultant or mentor may help achieve an independent and objective strategic view.