4 COMMON MISTAKES

that can hurt your brand

(and how to fix them)

CREATIVE CHAMELEON
STUDIO®

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Why worry about branding?

A BRAND IS VITAL TO YOUR SUCCESS.

You've no doubt heard about branding, but perhaps you don't understand what the hype is about. Or maybe you know that you need to help your brand, but you don't know where to start. Worry no longer! A brand is an easy thing to understand, and once it's understood, you can find easy steps to follow to help your brand grow.

You've worked hard to build your business, so don't stand in the way of building your brand!

Before we can dive in, let's make sure we're both on the same page. Here's a quick review of what I'm talking about when I use words like brand, logo, and visual identity.

BRAND: The feelings and promises associated with a certain company or product

VISUAL IDENTITY: The graphics that support a brand and identifies one company from another

LOGO: The primary graphic attached to almost all company collateral

I'll also be dropping the words "brand strategy," and "brand positioning." Those are important, too!

BRAND STRATEGY: A long term path to grow and develop a company's brand. Includes actions that focuses on solidifying the emotions clients associate with the company.

BRAND POSITION: The verbage that explains what your brand is and how it differs from your competitors. Common examples are a tagline, slogan, or catchphrase.

Mistake #1: Being All Things To All People

I've heard a phrase that applies heavily to branding. It goes something like "if you're relevant to everyone, you become relevant to no one." I don't know where I heard it, or if it's even the correct phrase, but it is absolutely true. It's also such a common mistake that people run into when starting a business.

If you run a carpet-cleaning service, you're not going to be relevant to people who are looking to buy a set of headphones. Your audience isn't going to include 12-year-old kids or 20-somethings who are eating Ramen noodles in their dorms at 3 a.m. **So don't pour resources into reaching them.**

One of the first pieces of advice most entrepreneurs hear is to "find your niche." And it's such good advice, it deserves to be at the top of the list again! If you don't have an accurate understanding of who your business caters to, **your brand isn't going to be focused.** How will you know who your logo should relate to? How will you know what colors to choose for your visual identity?

Behind every successful company is a **solid knowledge of who they are relevant to and who they are targeting.** Successful businesses don't spend time and money trying to reach people that don't fit into their target demographic.

Solution #1: Create Your Own Perfect Customer

Hubspot, the king of inbound marketing, stresses the importance of understanding your ideal customer. If you go through their course, you'll walk away with a precise vision of who you want to buy your product or service. Even if you don't have the time to go through their course, you can still improve your brand by sitting down and brainstorming **who is the perfect fit to buy from you.**

For example, my ideal client looks like:

- Someone in their 30s – 40s
- Two years into their startup
- A background in business
- Seeking to expand their company
- Understands the importance of design

Now you might be saying, "That's not me at all!" It's very possible that a company reaches many customers that don't fit under the "ideal" umbrella. But they don't focus their resources on reaching the people outside the umbrella. Anyone who comes in from the outside is more than welcomed, but a **great chance of success is found by working towards the "ideal" customer.**

Having a thorough understanding of your ideal customer will give you the opportunity to improve your brand, because you can tailor your brand to match them. **It will make your**

Mistake #2: Lack of Brand Clarity

This is different than not having an "ideal customer." Many companies are started **without knowing what unique experience they're promising their customers.**

You might have a puzzled look on your face right now. Unique experience? You probably thought you were just selling t-shirts or running a dentist's office.

That might be what you do, but is it who you are?

The purpose of branding is to **identify yourself as a superior choice** from other companies like yours. In order to do that, you need to be able to point to what you bring to the table. Are your customers able to personalize their t-shirts in an easy-to-use interface? Do you have the highest customer satisfaction of all the dentists in the area?

I market Creative Chameleon Studio as "Your One-Stop Design Shop." Like I pointed out earlier, I'm targeting small businesses that are getting ready to expand. I've positioned my agency as a place that is ready to work side-by-side on their projects, from start to finish.

Solution #2: Identify Your Purpose

Once you've figured out what your thing is, you need to make sure your customers know it! That's the purpose of a tag line. People spend hundreds or thousands of dollars to develop strategy so their brand positioning is a clear day. It doesn't help **if you're the only one who knows why your company is special.**

Shout it from the rooftops!

Mistake #3: Scattered Visual Identity

Have you noticed that Coke cans are never purple? McDonald's doesn't use a script font on their burger wrappers. Successful companies have brand guidelines, which is a manuscript for how their visual identity is utilized.

A basic brand guidelines should cover when and how to use the logo, and the specific colors to be used on branded materials. The more specific you get, **the more unified your brand will be.** The more unified your brand is, the easier it is for customers to identify you.

A company that uses two different logos and looks different from Twitter to Facebook to their website is a company that is scattered. Even if you feel organized, your customers won't perceive you as organized if you aren't consistent.

Solution #3: Adhere To A Visual Standard

Believe it or not, this is one of the easiest things for a small business owner to do! And you don't have to hire a designer to get started.

The two aspects you can focus on are your logo and your colors. If you don't have a logo already, then you should hire a designer. But let's assume you've already gotten that piece.

The first step is to make sure your logo is apparent on all your platforms, from your website to your Google listing. If you have the option to upload a profile pic to something, it should be your logo.

(If you have a logo variation for such purposes as profile pics, that is even better to use, just make sure you stick to one!)

Based on your logo, you should have some brand colors. It could be one, it could be seven, but there should be at least one or two primary ones. The primary logo is the most prevalent one in your logo, and this is the color that you want people to associate with your brand.

If you've worked with a designer, then there should have been some reasoning behind the color choices. This reasoning is why you want your color to be consistent. If you have a crown in your logo and purple is your color because it means royalty, then it wouldn't make sense to have green everywhere.

When you enter a company's presence, whether physically or digitally, **you should be able to immediately find its logo and identify the primary color.** This gives the customers a sense of security and continuity.

Mistake #4: Constant Changing

Many business owners aren't fully settled on their purpose or identity, so they are constantly "rebranding" or "refocusing." It makes it **near impossible to establish a brand if you don't stick with what you've got.**

Now, if what you've got isn't working, then that's a great reason to change. But if you're changing more than once, then **you're not identifying the real reasons** why things aren't working.

Solution #4: Be Settled In Your Decisions

Before spending time and money into establishing a brand, **make sure your business model is effective** and you are solid in your company's purpose. This goes back to Solutions #1 and #2. And once you've done that, stick with it!

I've seen so many people spend money on a logo before they even know what they want. That's the equivalent of burning hundred dollar bills.

A logo and visual identity are only effective **if you give them time to grow.**

This also means you should be really happy with them before you release them into the wild. Every time you redo your look, you're throwing away some time and money.

A rebrand is warranted when:

- Your brand isn't working, and you're committed to understanding why
- You've made massive overhauls and your brand no longer reflects the company
- You're lost in the crowd and you've determined it's because your look is too generic

If you're at the point of a rebrand, **it would make sense to hire an experienced designer** to make sure it's done right the first time. If you're not quite there yet, you can still help yourself by better identifying your purpose and position so you can make choices that reflect them, instead of constant changes.

Ready to rock your brand?

YOU HAVE THE TOOLS, SO START BUILDING!

A brand is a living entity, and it can never be put on the shelf and forgotten. Once these four steps are taken, a brand needs to be maintained through client interaction, designed materials, PR and social media, and constantly keeping up with your growing business. It's not an easy job, but it can be so rewarding!

I wish you the greatest of luck on your journey, and hope to see you around the jungle at Creative Chameleon Studio!

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