

Purpose

Perception is everything.

Every business has a brand, whether it's created intentionally or is just a random by-product of your market's assumptions. Proactively creating your brand is far more powerful than passively allowing whatever perceptions to form in a customer's mind whenever they come in contact with your company. That is how you can gain control of how your brand is perceived.

And that is the key to whether your market decides to buy.

Process

The branding process establishes a set of conceptual guidelines which will drive consistent messaging and design direction as branding tools are developed. The first step is to begin to answer the questions on the following page.

- 1. Organizational Assessment** — Working from your answers, your organization's foundational attributes will be enumerated: the mission and purpose of your organization, its core values, its goals and audiences, any obstacles to its mission, and any other questions with a bearing on how your brand could be perceived.
 - 2. Brand Personality** — Based on the results of Step 1, we will explore and define your brand personality through a discussion of your essential story and voice, a review of your brand promises, and exercises that will reveal personality traits to be reinforced through your branding's communication tools.
 - 3. Audience Identification** — The markets for your brand will be identified, and their characteristics and the benefits they seek will be defined.
 - 4. Competitive Understanding** — We will inventory your competition and review their brand positioning so we can understand the competitive environment where your organization's brand will exist. We will define the reasons why your market should go to you instead of to your competition.
 - 5. Brand Positioning & Messaging** — We will define the unique aspects of your brand, use them as a basis for positioning your organization in your market environment, and explore ways to craft these aspects into compelling messaging.
 - 6. Branding Brief** — The results of these explorations will be distilled into a Branding Brief. This will summarize the findings from all the steps, resulting in a guide to be used in communications, marketing and design development. This deliverable will guide all subsequent design and communications.
- The extent of each step is subject to the scope of individual projects. Projects complexity/simplicity is a spectrum, and this is defined during the proposal process.*
 - When the client is a group or a board, we recommend that the group create a sub-committee authorized to develop the project, go to meetings, evaluate the design concepts, render approvals and report back to the larger group.*

Important to Know: The Difference between Logos, Identities & Brands

These terms are often used interchangeably, causing confusion about their place in marketing. They have different purposes and relate to each other in this hierarchy:

1. A **logo** is a symbol, a wordmark or a combination of the two that represents an entity visually. It should be used as consistently as possible to reinforce immediate recognition (think McDonald's Arches).
2. An **identity** is how the logo is deployed on an organization's materials to create continuity among all the marketing and communications of the organization. Consistent application reinforces familiarity with the organization and builds trust.
3. A **brand** is the set of promises that your organization makes to its customers. It is conveyed anywhere the public has contact with your organization. All the impressions that accrue from those interactions add up to your brand. It exists in the minds of your audience and functions as your reputation.

Getting Started

These questions should be considered before the onset of brand development. The answers will provide the preliminary basis for further exploration. "I don't know" is a valid answer and will help to move the process forward by identifying a need for more thought.

1. What is the purpose or mission of your business or organization?
2. What do you offer to your clients or audience?
3. What makes you unique? What sets you apart?
4. What sort of image do you want to have?
5. How would you would like to be perceived by your market/audience?
6. Who is your competition? How do you want to be positioned against them?
7. Have you decided on a name for your organization?