



# Defining Your Brand

Use this as a discussion guide with key stakeholders in your company. Tear off the last pages and use them as a place to collect your final thoughts. Or use it as a guide to create your own. The point is, force yourself to agree on things as a group and write it all down in one place for all of you to see. Reference it when making any decisions where you'll be interacting with customers in any way. That's the first step in embracing brand as a business strategy.

## Section 1—Essence

What makes you, you? This is the “soul” of your brand and should be somewhat timeless.

Exploration questions:

### **Why do you do what you do?**

*This video is a great way to start the discussion.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3Sfl4>

### **What’s your story?**

*How did you get into this business? Were you drawn to it by a lifelong passion? Did you invent something? Any answer is okay. People care and want to know. Human beings relate to stories.*

### **What do you value and believe in?**

*This can be anything. Where you’re located. The types of customers you serve. The price point you insist on delivering. Any truth that guides actions and decisions in your company should be spelled out here.*

### **How would you describe your culture?**

*Your culture impacts the products or services you deliver and will attract customers with similar cultures. A strong culture clearly defined empowers employees to be their best.*

### **What business are you in? What service or product do you offer?**

*You’ll be surprised at the lack of consistency if you’ve never discussed it. If your answers are different that’s okay. It could be you’re just describing what you do in different ways. Try to strip away the language used by each person and zero in on the core of what your company truly provides.*

## Section 2—Personality

These are a set of human characteristics strongly associated with your brand. They should align with the essence explored in section 1. Defining your brand's personality will help you determine how your brand should look, sound and behave anywhere it's expressed.

### Exploration questions:

*Sometimes it's hard to do this out of context with your actual products or service. Try this exercise to get the group warmed up so everyone will think about your company's brand and not the stuff you sell to people.*

**If your brand were a car, what would it be and why?**

**If your brand were an actor, who would it be and why?**

**If your brand were an NFL quarterback, who would it be and why?**

*Now, boil it down to a few human characteristics that really summarize your discussion.*

*Remember, you should be using the same type of language you would use to describe an old friend or your spouse. If you need some prompts to get started try a few of these:*

**Are you particularly conservative or progressive?**

**Friendly or funny?**

**Community oriented/local or nationally/internationally focused?**

**The life of the party or the soft spoken guy who stays late and cleans up when everyone else goes home?**

**Traditional or trendy?**

*Make your final list with single words when possible, then elaborate with short descriptions as to why you chose what you chose. Here's an example:*

**Classic--We aren't old fashioned, but we aren't trendy either. We are a traditional company who presents itself in a contemporary way.**

## Section 3—Brand Promise

Your brand promise is what your customers should expect and experience from your company. Successful brands consistently deliver on their promise at all customer touchpoints. It should naturally align with your essence and be easily expressed with the personality you defined.

Exploration questions:

**What’s something of value you can always deliver on?**

*This should not be tied directly to a single product or service you offer? Instead, every product or service you offer should provide this value. It can be more than one thing as long as you can always deliver it.*

**When you’ve delivered what a typical customer expects, how do they usually feel?**

Emotion is vital to customer loyalty and decision making.

**Is the promise you’re making ownable and believable coming from your brand?**

*As you do a good job of understanding who you are and projecting that image into the market, your brand promise should feel “right” in the eyes of your customers. Will your customers say things like, “that’s what I would expect from them” or “that makes sense” or “I know they’ll be able to do this because a company like them should be doing this.”*

Writing your brand promise:

*Write it in your own words. Don’t worry about marketing jargon. The first draft of your brand promise is to keep your entire company in alignment. Taglines and messaging for customer-facing initiatives will come later. Simply put, when people think of your company or see your logo, what do you want them to expect? If brand is a promise, this is what you’re promising.*

**Tell them what they’ll always get from you and how they’ll feel as a result.**

## Section 4—Expression Elements

These are the basic elements that your band is most readily identified by.

### Visual Identity Checklist:

*Many people have the misperception that brand is a logo and graphic identity. But there's truth in the fact that these are the elements most associated with a brand. Therefore, once you've completed the previous three sections, it's imperative to have these elements nailed down. You probably have most of the following already, but you may need help from a friend, freelance graphic designer or agency depending on the size of your company and needs.*

- Logo
- Font
- Color
- Symbol or Character
- Basic Value Proposition and/or Tagline

# Our Brand

## Brand Essence

What makes our company, our company

### Why we do what we do

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### What we value

Value

Explanation

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Four horizontal lines for writing.

[Empty rectangular box]

Four horizontal lines for writing.

**What we do.**

Four horizontal lines for writing.

# Brand Personality

These are the characteristics that define how our brand would look, sound and behave.

Trait

Explanation

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## **Brand Promise**

What customers should expect and experience from our company.

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