



StartupFactory brand planner

Quick Tips:

- Define your brand early
- Identify key differentiators
- Create a corporate “personality”
- Establish core brand values
- Be consistent and repetitive
- Live up to your brand promise



Your brand promise must be a clearly articulated declaration of what you pledge to deliver at every employee and customer touch point.

Every business—small or large; start-up or well established, must chose to either focus on a unique brand or permit their brand to aimlessly evolve by default. Start-up is the time to make sure you and your employees are crystal clear on who you are as a brand, what you stand for, and what you promise to deliver to your customers. More than ever, now is the time to define, build and protect your brand from the inside out by aligning your leadership, culture, and processes. At the end of the process you will have established your unique brand

Building a brand, is a concept that many companies struggle to understand because they do not fully understand how the process of branding is integrated into their overall marketing effort. Businesses often look to marketing for a quick fix to an immediate problem. By making branding a key driver in the marketing mix, you will get better customers, keep them coming back for more, and transform them into loyal, brand champions. What compels your customers to come back is your brand’s ability to deliver a consistent, distinctive and relevant experience.

To create the desired brand experience, you must first define the specifics of your brand then articulate it to your prospects, customers and employees so that they are crystal clear on it. Consistency is key.

The following brand audit questionnaire is designed to help StartupFactory partner with your company in the process of defining, creating and defending your unique brand. The process may be as complex or as simple as you wish. The most important step is to act proactively on your brand before it is defined by factors beyond your sphere of influence.

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Notes

1. What perception does your brand want to own in the minds of your stakeholders (employees, shareholders, analysts, prospects, competitors and customers)?

Examples: Disney (fun, magical family entertainment), FedEx (on-time overnight delivery), Ritz Carlton (refined ambience), Volvo (safety), and Southwest Airlines (low-cost and friendly)

These brands own a perception in the minds of their stakeholders. They have created products, processes, behavioral expectations and attitudes that enable their employees to deliver on their brand and to build on the desired perception. And you don't have to be on the list of the most valuable and prominent global brands to take control of the perception you want to create and hold in your market space.

2. What is the distinctive style of your brand? In other words, how would you describe your brand's personality? Is your company culture hip and confident; bold and eclectic; customer-centric? Consider how you could develop and frame your style into a distinctive, experiential level for your employees and customers.

Example: The Google culture has embraced a core value of spontaneous creativity. One way they emulate and foster their style is by hanging white boards throughout their campus offices. Their employees jot down creative concepts, visual ideas and brainstorm on these boards to collaborate and share information.

3. What core values guide your brand, your behaviors and business practices? Values are guiding principles that form the basis of what is important to you as a company. They give meaning to the intentions behind your brand, products, business practices and interactions with your community and neighbors. Strong brands have enduring values and they don't waver from them.

Make sure you can live up to your brand values. Consider the nega-

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tive affects to Enron and Arthur Andersen. Your core values are most critical in two strategic business areas; reputation and relationships.

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4. What are your unique differentiators that help create and leverage brand advantage? What are the things that make you stand out and set you apart from all others in your industry category/market space? Consider your point of difference in the products, services, and solutions you provide your customers. Consider your proprietary intellectual capital such as your trade secrets or unique processes, or service delivery.

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Example: Amazon.com added materially to the concept of online sales and distribution. Their differentiators are in the online experience where they provide selection and price, but feature a unique mechanism for analyzing search results and deliver qualified product suggestions to the purchaser.

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5. What standards of performance excellence will you adhere to across your brand scorecard: employees, customers, processes, and financial? Companies that have clearly defined standards of performance significantly increase their ability to manage and deliver on their business goals and strategies. Channeling employee behaviors, having established standards for product quality or service delivery, implementing processes that are followed in accordance with clear financial practices guide everyone within the company to support the brand.

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Example: Ritz Carlton Hotels have their ‘Gold Standards’ that set the guidelines for what they will deliver to their guests and what they pledge to their employees. These standards are a way of life and are reflective of their values and operating philosophy in action.

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6. How will your brand reinforce who you are and the desired perception you want to create in the minds of your employees and customers? Implement a recognition program that reaffirms behaviors consistent with your values and the desired brand experience you want to deliver. Get your employees involved in developing the program and ensure everyone has the opportunity to recognize one another.

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Example: Ritz Carlton's motto or "brand mantra" is famously known as, "We are Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlemen". It has become a collective internal perception continually reinforced among all its employees and expressed consistently in how they interact with guests as well as colleagues.

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7. Does your brand have a strong point of view? Do you clearly stand for something different or special? What is it?

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Example: Brands like Harley Davidson have a strong point of view. They continuously deliver the experience of freedom to avid cyclists and kindred spirits across the world.

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While competitors have succumbed to design trends over the years, the power of the Harley Davidson brand is expressed consistently in all their product lines, including maintaining the look and feel and even sound of their motorcycles. The result is a loyal base of customers, fans, trade journalists and market influencers. They are an authentic brand attracting and sustaining customers who share their values and experience of freedom.

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8. What is your brand promise to your employees and customers? Your brand promise must be a clearly articulated declaration of what you pledge to deliver at every employee and customer touch point. It's reflected in every action and interaction. It is reflected in your products, processes and service delivery. It drives company decisions and the brand experience you desire to create. Brands with clearly articulated brand promises can better reinforce a culture that is inspired, passionate and energized.

Questions, comments, need help planning a successful branding effort?
Contact us: robert@startupfactory.biz • www.startupfactory.biz