

Branding Checklist:

10 Essentials Before Launch

Are you ready to launch? Before you press go, check through this list of 10 branding essentials.

1 Know Your Target Customer

Identifying your target customer is one of the most important exercises you will do before launching your business. Know as much as possible about your customer (gender, age, purchasing power, what they like to do, what they like about you, etc).



2 Name Your Business

A descriptive name (Sara's Sandwiches) will be easier for customers to identify with immediately, but will be hard to "own." Check with the USPTO to see what you can trademark (not every small business needs to trademark). Also, do several Google searches for your proposed name and see what comes up.



3 Buy Your URL

You must own the domain name for your business. While naming your business, consider the availability of the URL. Your URL should match your business name as closely as possible. Ideally this will be a .com extension, but .org and others are gaining popularity.



4 Define Your Brand Identity

Choose your colors, fonts and images. Take your time on this and really understand how each of these elements work together to give your customers a certain feeling when they frequent your business. Start with the Brand Genie (free automated branding tool on Bplans) to get a feel for your brand. Keep a brand guide close at hand as a reference manual so you're never out of sync with your identity.



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5 Create Your Logo

This is the symbol of your business. It doesn't have to be fancy. In fact, simpler is usually best. Create something that will look good in a small space on social media and as a large sign on your door. Make sure you have the proper files for online (PNG) and print (PDF, etc).



6 Gather Your Contacts

Pull together a list of your contacts. Organize them into buckets: influencer, customer, press contact, etc. Reach out and let them know about your new business. Ask them if you can add them to your email list, or ask for introductions to other contacts who may be helpful.



7 Create Marketing Materials

Make sure to have the basics in place. Define what these are for you. For most businesses this would include: website, business cards and signage.



8 Set Up Google Analytics

This is a free resource from Google that just keeps getting more robust. You need to track the impact of what you do online.



9 Start Social Media

You don't have to be on every social channel, but know where your customers spend time. Claim those pages and begin interacting in these online communities.



10 Optimize for Search Engines (SEO)

You need to be found in search results. Make a list of the keywords your customers may use to search for you. For many small businesses this would include location, service and name. Make sure these words are included on your website. Create title tags using these words. Start writing content around these key phrases as well.



Presto!

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1

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2

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3

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