10 Branding Mistakes To Avoid

DURING YOUR NEXT

REBRANDING STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

The Need for An Identifiable Brand
Globalization and increased internet coverage have led to a more competitive marketplace. Resultant cheap labor and low cost products mean that companies are searching for other ways to gain a competitive edge that will allow them to maintain and grow market share. Many are aware that this competitive edge can be achieved through marketing. The need to create a recognizable brand is more significant than ever been before.

A brand lives and evolves in the minds and hearts of your target audience and prospective clients. Branding creates a set of emotions and ideas that individuals associate with your company. With so many choices available to consumers, a company must find unique ways to distinguish themselves and connect with their audience on an emotional level. While products come and go with clearly-defined life cycles, a brand endures as the symbol of an organization.

Fat Atom's Branding Expertise
The past 10 years has seen us encounter a vast array of branding situations in a range of industries. We've partnered with organizations in finance, telecommunications, healthcare, construction and many more. Our experience has inspired us to devise a list of 10 "must-avoid" mistakes that companies often make when going through the process of branding or rebranding.
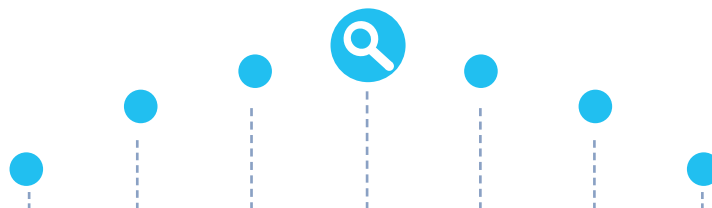
Companies so often misunderstand the dynamics of a brand. It's important to note that "your brand is not what you say it is, but what they say it is." Our guide builds on this notion, providing information that can help any organization to adjust their brand to become more relevant and relatable through the eyes of the target audience.

Where Does Your Brand Stand?
There are several questions you should be asking yourself in designing a brand strategy?

- What are your values?
- Who is your audience?
- What is in your special sauce that makes you unique?
- What is your brand's personality and voice?
- How do your logos, taglines and messaging connect emotionally with clientele?

In this guide, we cover specific marketing tactics for branding and rebranding. We consider how including developed marketing strategies as part of your brand can add value. So without further ado, here are 10 Branding Mistakes to Avoid: During Your Next Marketing Strategy.

Lacking an Up-to-Date Corporate Brand Guide

> " Consistency is important in maintaining a strong brand. Having clear rules and guidelines ensures that any content or creative piece has a familiar look and tone, making your brand easily recognizable. Without a guide, there is no substantial material to influence content and creative.
>
> Time can be wasted on amending designs, while projects may go off in an unintended direction, weakening the overall brand. A brand guide gives designers something to align with and a tangible resource to check against, ensuring the brand is being utilized and adhered to correctly, even if it's outsourced.

Steven Musngi

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Team Creative Director
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Whether you have a small enterprise or a rapidly expanding organization, a brand guide is a necessity to communicate with a consistent company voice. Brand guides are the basis for company interactions for everything from social media and print designs to employee communications and digital advertising efforts.

Finding a balance of consistency and originality in your brand guide is not something that happens immediately. While building a brand or even rebranding, it's wise to set aside plenty of time to complete your guide and keep it up-to-date in order to reinforce a consistent vision of your company.

Lacking an Up-to-Date Corporate Brand Guide

(continued)

Fat Atom utilizes some of the following tools to envision what we believe your brand should be.

4D Brand Map

A 4D brand map seeks to define the meaning of a company by looking at four dimensions: social, mental, spiritual and functional through the mindset of your audience. The center of the map boils down the driving force, or essence, of your company. This mapping process helps guide the direction of your messaging.

Mood Board

A mood board establishes the aesthetic feel of your brand. It fits into the process before design mockups and explores photography style, color palettes, typography, patterns and overall look and feel.

Developing Personas

Personas are representations of different people within your target market. We use personas to examine the behaviors, attitudes, pains, needs and wants of specific demographics you should be appealing to. This information helps us develop messaging and devise tactics that resonate with your audience, through methods of communication that they prefer.

Quantitative VS. Qualitative Analysis

There is a lot of discussion regarding the importance of big data, how to measure it and how to use it.

There are two types of data: ***Quantitative and Qualitative.***

▪ **Qualitative** data typically consists of descriptive data that is difficult to measure using facts and figures.

▪ **Quantitative** data is expressed numerically and is most commonly associated with methods of statistical analysis. Although there are some clear, fundamental differences between the two types of data, both have advantages as well as disadvantages.

Showcasing Your Brand With Poor Company Visuals

> " The visual identity found in your social media, on your website and on your print collateral represents your brand identity. Showcasing a poor visual identity will give a potential client a negative first impression of your business and professional capabilities.
>
> Photography should represent your identity in its tone and impression. Ensure the highest quality brand standards are upheld in all marketing pieces. Low quality, off-brand or pixelated visuals give the impression you don't care about your corporate image.

Lauri Shillings

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Graphic Designer
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Design is an integral part of your organization's success. It is always at the forefront of the creative process to establish a logo or perhaps a key phrase. However, such archaic attempts at penetrating your consumers' psyche will not have the branding impact needed in today's global economy. The question then becomes, 'How do you consistently and strongly impact your consumers' minds easily and effectively?'

The need, rather than luxury, for visual branding can be a hard pill to swallow. In the boardroom, the cost of creating a strong visual branding campaign is often seen as something to grudgingly accept. It can be tempting to downplay the importance of extending your brand's visual impact past a simple logo and basic color scheme.

What is important to remember is a well-executed visual brand can single-handedly propel your brand's impact and associated products into new territory. This can easily translate into profit and consumer loyalty. That said, think like some of the world's leading brands. Realize visual design as an asset to provide consumer guidance, brand recognition, growth and ultimately, return on investment. It is the foundation of every successful brand.

Misunderstanding of the Interdependence of Typography and Imagery

The visual language established when designing with typeface and imagery can bring not only emotions, but also physical responses, into play. Visual language is often used to inspire and shape design, imagery and typography in order to project a message, with the goal being to make the most of the viewer's reaction. Carefully blending a design's implication with literal meaning can lead to a memorable outcome.

Typographic treatment works alongside imagery to create, enhance and alter meaning. While the aesthetic value of design is always important, the significance of typeface and imagery working together to influence meaning should not be underestimated.

The role—and, in fact, the obligation—of the designer in establishing a tone that adds meaning to the verbal message is a subject of regular debate. Many graphic designers and academics argue that the designer has a responsibility to add "flavor" to their work, not only helping to convey and enhance meaning, but also making the message enjoyable and encouraging to "read." Remember, a brand is meant to be memorable and powerful enough to live on its own. Keep typography and imagery in mind when associating that with your brand identity.

"
Typography helps communicate your brand with its style, tone and personality. Using typography to enhance your visual imagery creates a memorable experience.

Consistently styled fonts in your digital and print collateral help consumers immediately recognize your brand. When used correctly it can help convey the proper feeling and message to your audience.

Jen Fox

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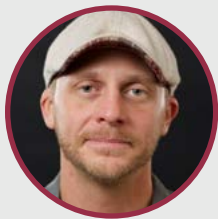Principal /
VP Marketing
FAT ATOM

Neglecting to Modify a Logo, Tagline or Messaging

What if upper management made this statement: "How did we end up being "branded" by the market? Or worse yet, simply ignored." To answer that question, your brand stems from every interaction within a marketplace, sales channel, promotional strategy and the underlying messaging being portrayed. By doing nothing you are just allowing your existing brand to be labeled. There have been tons of large companies that have gone through this same dilemma.

A company's brand is their visual identity, but there is much more than just cosmetics. Too often the visual aspect is the only concentration a company wants to focus on, but in actuality a brand is a personality and identity. When the decision is made to finally make a change, a company must consider all aspects of business.

Change should not be feared but embraced. Historically, some of the most powerful brands that exist today have traveled down this same road. Brand is the key to a company's long-term survival and drive towards market leadership. Rebranding can be a very complex process and, when handled badly, can be catastrophic for the business. But do not concentrate on negative outcomes. Be excited to change your brand identity because it can increase your company's competitiveness, showcase you as innovative, improve your reputation, reposition your brand in the market and, above all else, increase your brand's relevancy.

| 1971 | 1978 | 1985 | 1995 |

> One of the biggest branding pain points I encounter with businesses is resistance to change. They focus on what they have to give up, instead of what they have to gain.
>
> A new company logo, new taglines and enhanced messaging could showcase the company as an industry thought-leader, attracting attention in a crowded market. For example, Nike evolved their patented logo several times to stay relevant and memorable to consumers.

Chad Sims

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Forgetting to Educate Employees about the Brand

> So you've realized you need a brand revamp. You've found a marketing agency to partner with and the changes that are in progress have you jumping for joy! You're excited for what the future will hold for your company's image, reputation and balance sheet. We wonder though, if anyone else in your company is as excited? Does that scenario sound familiar?
>
> "All too often we see an excited client assume their employees and co-workers are on board with the new direction of a company brand. Unfortunately, when an entire team is not on board with your refreshed brand, it will collapse because your brand is your culture. Your entire company represents your brand in what they say and do. If they feel surprised by the new direction or don't agree with it, your brand essence is divided.
>
> "Our recommendation is to have the stakeholders of your company in conversations about your new brand from the beginning. This leaves no one in the dark and ensures complete buy-in from those in the company who will be your brand advocates.

Sinikka Rohrer

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Marketing Manager
FAT ATOM

The influence of employee word-of-mouth marketing is undeniable. When employees talk about their company's brand, they make the brand more human which adds a level of trust to the brand for consumers.

Employees should be involved in the brand in every way possible to increase their emotional connection to it and their belief in its promise. Their daily efforts should be tied directly to the brand, so they fully understand that the work they do impacts the brand, consumers and the business.

Companies regularly assume that their employees know everything about their brand. This is a common mistake. If employees have to read articles online to understand the brand image, they may perceive themselves as an unnecessary, unloved component of the organization. This could lead to disputes and serious issues in the future.

MISTAKE NUMBER
6

Building off of a Templated Website

The glitz, the glam, the glorious design elements that a template could make any company website look like a million bucks... When contemplating a website redesign, it's easy to focus on potential features that are appealing to the eye. But to ensure the new site will truly resonate with the target audience, and to prevent some major headaches down the road, web development needs to be ingrained in your redesign strategy from the very beginning.

When planning out a redesign and brand strategy, be sure to take discoverability and accessibility into account. A custom creation is the simplest way for a brand to stand out from the crowd. Templated websites are created to cut time and constrict creativity. Be original. A website is a key component of an organization's brand identity.

A template prevents individuality, meaning companies with similar templates can get bunched together and easily forgotten. Avoiding confusion and creating a unique website is essential to developing a bold, individualistic brand. It is worth customizing the layout of a website to provide customers with what they need immediately while creating a memorable experience.

Dan Waltz

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Sr. Web Developer
FAT ATOM

" Templates were created to be used over and over again by everyone. A company who utilizes templates in their website designs or redesigns restrict their ability to differentiate themselves. Unless you pay the "Exclusive" price for the template, the template website is going to keep selling that same template to anyone that comes along. Keep in mind, even if you pay the exclusive price, there are others who have bought the template prior to you and they still have the right to use it.

"Also, a huge misconception is time and money. Without web page coding skills, you are still going to have to either spend the time and money to learn how to code a web page or hire someone to help you. Some templates are laid out very specifically, meaning if you incorporate your own graphics or have extensive content, the template could break. You probably should have hired someone to begin with.

Ignoring the Importance of Tracking Branding Efforts

Before preparing the wrecking ball and demolishing an outdated and soon-to-be-forgotten brand, it is essential to find out what has been working and what has not. Brand tracking tactics are a vital tool to marketers and brand managers alike. By collecting quantitative data from consumers on a regular basis, marketers can not only monitor their brand's health, but can amend their strategy to compensate for weaker areas. Because the nature of each company differs greatly, all tracking need to be customized to suit the campaign. But as a general rule, there are a few key components that should be tracked...

Here are some key metrics to consider when auditing a brand:

- Customer awareness
- Usage of consumer behavior and market share
- Brand attitudes or perceptions
- Customer purchase intent
- Competitor brand health

Be warned, tracking brand efforts can prove ineffective if there is not a defined target market and brand positioning strategy or goals tied to branding or rebranding efforts.

Kevin Muffley

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Digital Marketing
Strategist
FAT ATOM

" Are you going through a branding or rebranding process? As with all marketing strategies, you will need to track and measure results or your efforts will fall flat. Brand tracking provides insight into how well you're performing in the marketplace relative to your pre-defined goals. Through regular tracking, it is possible to see how well or how badly a company is doing compared to previous performance.

Omitting the Use of Custom Photography to Project the Brand's Image

Custom photography ensures that you will have photos that are perfect for your website and brand message. While the cost of utilizing custom photography will be higher in the short-term, the benefit of a custom portfolio of images will far outweigh the cost in the long-term. Stock photos will only ever be "good enough," filling a gap but failing to accurately represent the brand and messaging. This can certainly impact the success of any company and its objectives.

Today's consumers actively seek authenticity in the products and services that they purchase. Using custom photography and illustration will not just set you apart visually, but will help to establish a solid base of customers through consistent and believable messaging and visual tone. Relevancy and memorability should always be key when selecting images to use to represent your company.

This will go a long way to help establish your brand and unique identity and in promoting a desired perception of the company. Stock photography prevents this as it is created to be used in a range of environments by a range of organizations and individuals.

Rob Chinn

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Director of Video and
Photography
FAT ATOM

" Stock photography is easy and cheap these days, with any number of services providing a seemingly unending stream of photos. But are they right for your business? Hiring a professional photographer means being able to control everything—the subject in the photo, the lighting, the color scheme, the environment around the subject— these are all very important in relaying the message of your brand.

Custom photography provides you opportunities to let viewers connect with actual employees, see your product in action and build images that can be used in all of your marketing materials to create a single cohesive look for your brand. You're also guaranteed that no one else is using the exact same image, preventing the watering down or application of a conflicting message to your brand.

An example of how custom photography usage should be outlined in your brand guide.

BRAND PHOTOGRAPHY: ARCHITECTURE

RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES

- Capture the entire building
- Use dramatic lighting (e.g. sunset and sunrise) in addition to daytime photographs
- Ensure that shadows are not heavy and take away from the structure
- Take closer detailed shots of the building's interesting elements (e.g. windows, engraved lettering, fabricated sections, fireplaces, etc.)

BRAND PHOTOGRAPHY: ARCHITECTURE

DO NOT TAKE THE FOLLOWING PHOTOGRAPHS

Building structures that have distracting elements (e.g. trash, vehicles and people). Everything should be taken intentionally. Be aware of your environment and surroundings. Be sure that the environment is clean and the limestone as well.

Straight on shots of the product. When taking closer and more detailed photography, be sure to capture more interesting angles.

Failing to Connect the Brand with the Audience

Customers want to do business with brands that they trust and have an emotional connection. In today's fast-paced environment, consumers have so many choices that it's difficult for brands to create a lasting relationship. A company must continually create attractive materials if they have hopes of showing off their personality.

Messaging, website imagery, social media posts and organization promotions should address potential questions or concerns a consumer may have. All of these tactics should lead back to ways they connect with your brand. Starbucks has mastered the notion of brand loyalty. It's why customers pay over the odds for coffee that they could get elsewhere for a more reasonable price.

Starbucks is just one example of a company carrying out their due diligence when learning how to connect with their target audience. Chairman and CEO, Howard Schultz spent years educating himself on the coffee market and how to position the brand to connect with people emotionally.

Paul Waltz

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Marketing Manager
FAT ATOM

" People often talk about their brand as if it is entirely within their control. What companies fail to keep in mind is that a brand is more than a winning logo, set of colors, content guidelines and photography standards.

"Your brand is what your customers, the public, even your employees perceive you as."

Recently, the CEO of REI Stores did an "Ask Me Anything" thread on reddit to promote the company's #OptOutside anti-Black Friday campaign. A former REI employee hijacked the Q&A session to call out the company's questionable customer membership policies.

Point being, at the end of the day you are not in control of your brand. Your audience is.

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Shunning the Importance of Relating the Brand to Core Competencies

Selecting core competencies is a fundamental marketing strategy that some owners think restricts their business when it actually has the opposite effect. Focusing on core competencies allows a business to be branded more appropriately. The more an organization can showcase themselves as an expert in their field, the more specialized knowledge they are able to accumulate. Customers look to hire experts, and being an expert attracts a desired group of customers. It's hard to convince a customer to choose a generalist over a specialist.

We have established that branding is connecting with your customers on a personal level. Specializing in a small number of core competencies enables a company to display a refined personality. Deviating from these areas could result in conflicting brand messaging. Instead, a streamlined approach to business facilitates a streamlined approach to branding.

Todd Muffley

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Founder / CEO
FAT ATOM

" Shining object syndrome. It can happen to the best of us, especially at small- to medium-sized companies. Their main product or service is the one that produces real revenue, but isn't fun and they don't feel like there is much you can do to "move the needle." So they do what lots of companies do; start a new brand, launch a new product. They spend time and resources on that launch, usually under the guise of "it's what the market wants."

What happens next is predictable. The time, effort and energy spent on that launch is wasted. The product launch plans stall somewhere before being fully implemented, or worse, they actually do launch and the product doesn't sell. Months, if not years of time, money and effort are thrown down the drain when that time could have been spent growing the one thing that makes them money. You might say I am cynical, I might tell you this is a true story...mine.

ABOUT US

Fat Atom is an "outside the box" marketing agency that is edgy enough to scare you and skilled enough to impress you. We are comprised of employees who are narcissistic, artistic, introverts, animated, wild, spiritual, geeks, obsessive, mature, modish and sometimes verbose.

Specialties: Competency. Adaptation. Making the complex simple.

Services we perform for our clients: Strategy and Consulting, Branding, Content Marketing, Inbound Lead Generation, Graphic Design, Web Development, PR, Content Writing, Social Media, Full Service Email Marketing, SEM (PPC, Internet Advertising Management & SEO) Photography and Video Production.

We have the in-house talent to be your outsource marketing company.

Fat Atom Marketing...Damn Good!

Get Your Very Own Free Brand Assessment
with a Marketing Strategist **Here**