



ELLE & CO.

BRAND CHALLENGE

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATING
A ONE-OF-A-KIND BRAND



LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

DAY 1 | CONDUCT A CURRENT BRAND EVALUATION

You wouldn't renovate a house without inspecting it first and evaluating the work that needs to be done. The same goes for your brand.

For those of you who have an existing business, it's important to take some time and evaluate your brand to pinpoint what you've been doing right and what needs to be improved upon.

You may not need a huge overhaul, and you may not uncover some underlying problems with your brand until we dive further into this challenge over the next few weeks.

But take some time to answer these questions to the best of your ability:

What kind of clients/customers have you been attracting? Are they your ideal clients/customers? If not, what type of clients/customers do you want to attract?

What are your brand's core values and beliefs? On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think these beliefs are being communicated to your audience?

What problem does your business solve? On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think you're communicating this to your audience?

What promises do you make to your clients/customers? On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think you're communicating these promises to your audience?

Why do your current clients/customers choose your business over other businesses in your industry?

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Why do certain prospects choose other businesses in your industry over yours?

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What do your clients/customers say when they recommend your brand to others? What do you want them to say when your business is recommended to potential clients/customers?

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On a scale of 1-10, how loyal are your current and past clients/customers?

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How is your business different from your competitors? On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think you're highlighting these differences in your brand?

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It's important to take the time to identify the message you're trying to communicate to your audience and evaluate the effectiveness of your current brand.

But it can be hard to take an objective look at how your business is performing (I know from experience). So once you've answered the questions above, ask three people who are familiar with your business and your industry to answer the following questions:

BRAND INTERVIEW #1

What are this brand's core values and beliefs?

What problem does this business solve?

Based on their brand, website, and marketing efforts, what promises does this business seem to be making to potential clients/customers?

Why would clients/customers choose this business over other businesses in its industry?

What words would you use to describe this business to others?

How is this brand different from others in the industry?

BRAND INTERVIEW #2

What are this brand's core values and beliefs?

What problem does this business solve?

Based on their brand, website, and marketing efforts, what promises does this business seem to be making to potential clients/customers?

Why would clients/customers choose this business over other businesses in its industry?

What words would you use to describe this business to others?

How is this brand different from others in the industry?

BRAND INTERVIEW #3

What are this brand's core values and beliefs?

What problem does this business solve?

Based on their brand, website, and marketing efforts, what promises does this business seem to be making to potential clients/customers?

Why would clients/customers choose this business over other businesses in its industry?

What words would you use to describe this business to others?

How is this brand different from others in the industry?

Remember, the goal of this evaluation is to reveal areas that need to be improved. Don't take any of the feedback personally; instead, look at it as a learning opportunity and let any weak spots drive you to make improvements throughout these next few weeks.

DAY 2 | BRAINSTORM YOUR FUTURE GOALS

It's all too easy to become short-sighted when you're creating your brand and focus on the present: what the trends are, what type of clients you want to work with next month, etc.

But I always tell my design clients that the goal isn't to brand their business for the here and now; we're branding their business to get them where they want to be 5 years from now.

This means a couple things:

- 1 | Don't switch your brand up every year or two. It's important to maintain consistency with your brand so people begin to recognize it, remember it, and form a connection with it.
- 2 | You need to know what your goals are in order to create a brand that helps you reach them.

So go ahead and write down your 1-year business goals and 5-year business goals on page 7.

Consider these questions to help you make your goals more specific:

- *What type of clients do you hope to work with?*
- *How many employees do you hope to have?*
- *How much money do you hope to make?*
- *Are there any new products or services that you hope to launch?*

Yes, your business might change directions or new opportunities might present themselves a year from now. But it's important to have these goals in mind as you approach your brand because they might affect the decisions you make in the weeks to come.

1-YEAR GOALS

5-YEAR GOALS

DAY 3 | WRITE YOUR MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of branding is to communicate the right message through your business's visuals and other intangible brand components (like tone and terminology).

If you communicate that message well, you'll increase the likelihood of attracting the right kind of clients and customers.

That message is often summed up best by a mission statement.

A mission statement is a one-sentence summary of your business that tells others what you do, who you help, and how you help them.

A common framework for a mission statement is:

"My business does to help do"

SPECIFIC ACTIONIDEAL CUSTOMERDESIRED RESULT

For example: "Elle & Company provides resources to help creatives turn their passion into a successful, profitable business."

Do you have to stay inside this framework? Of course not! You're a creative entrepreneur, so take the liberty to get creative with it and make it your own. But remember that making it as specific and actionable as possible will help you as you strive to communicate this message through your brand.

Take some time to brainstorm and write your mission statement below.

BRAINSTORM SPACE

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MISSION STATEMENT

DAY 4 | CREATE YOUR IDEAL CLIENT/CUSTOMER PROFILE

Years ago I had a design client who was starting a wedding planning business geared toward southern brides.

A navy and blush color palette and delicate feminine details swirled around in my head as she explained her target audience. But the conversation took a drastic turn when my client told me that she wanted to use her favorite colors - purple and teal - for her brand.

Unfortunately, this is a common mistake that I see a lot of business owners make as they approach their brand.

Instead of making brand decisions based on the taste of the clients and customers they want to attract, they make decisions based on their own personal taste.

I carefully explained to my client that while there were definitely ways to infuse her personality into her brand, the primary goal of branding is to attract potential clients and customers.

The same is true for your brand. Instead of focusing on your own tastes, you need to understand your potential customers and make brand decisions based on what would appeal to them.

A helpful way to do this is to create an ideal client/customer profile.

Take some time to fill out the profile below.



Name

Age

Gender

Marital status

Occupation

Education level

Current season of life

Hobbies

Interests

Duties

Highest priorities

Goals

Values

Biggest fears

What aren't they seeing that might be keeping them from their goals?

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What does life look like when they reach their goals?

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What challenges do they face? What are their top 3 pain points?

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What are their objections to the service you offer?

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What does life look like for them if they don't book your services?

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You'll refer back to this outline as you make decisions about font, colors, and iconography in the weeks to come.

P.S. In the end, my client and I went with navy and blush, along with some soft pastels for accent colors for her brand. The end result was beautiful, romantic, and very, very southern.

DAY 5 | MAKE A LIST OF 10 BRAND KEYWORDS

This is my favorite part of the "groundwork" process.

Now that you've written your mission statement and outlined your ideal client/customer profile, choose 10 adjectives that best describe your brand.

They should fit in well with your mission statement and appeal to your ideal audience (which is why I had you tackle those action steps first).

I often find it helpful to brainstorm a bunch of relevant words on one page and then go back through and circle the big contenders. A thesaurus can be very helpful for this step, too.

I left plenty of space for you to brainstorm adjectives below and list your top 10 on page 11.

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10 BRAND KEYWORDS

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These 10 words will come in handy as you build your inspiration board and make other brand decisions in the weeks to come.

And because we're often so visual when it comes to branding, I want you to take this exercise one step further by considering the following questions:

- *How does your brand feel?*
- *What does your brand sound like?*
- *How does your brand taste?*
- *What does your brand smell like?*

I heard an Annapolis wedding photographer share her results from the exercise at a conference once, and I loved her answers:

- *Her brand felt like the warm sun kissing her skin*
- *Her brand sounded like the ocean waves softly crashing on the shore*
- *Her brand tasted like sea salt caramel*
- *And her brand smelled like the salty ocean air*

Do you see how those descriptions made her brand feel much more like an experience?

I know that this exercise seems a little crazy, but I want you to get out of your comfort zone and give it a try. Your brand will be much more well-rounded as a result.

My brand feels like

My brand sounds like

My brand tastes like

My brand smells like

I can't stress the importance of these groundwork steps enough.

The hard work you do this week will pay dividends as you continue to build and refine your brand throughout the remainder of this month.

And remember to keep me posted on your progress! Share your progress on social media with the hashtag #ellecobrandchallenge (you can also tag me, @laurenelizhook, to ensure that I see it!)