



# The Brand Guide

A few years ago, companies had the opportunity to develop, test, and iterate their product, service, or brand in a secure environment. Today, for almost every idea there are 100 other competitors who are either already further ahead or learn faster from your mistakes.

The point of these exercises is to make the abstract idea of “my brand” into something concrete. After doing the exercises, you get a common language to describe what the company is about — all decisions about visuals, voice, and identity become way easier.



I did not invent these ideas or exercises. Instead, It is borrowed from great thinkers on branding: Emily Heyward author of the book, [Obsessed](#), and partner at the ad agency [Red Antler](#), Steve Jobs’s [1997 internal meeting at Apple](#), Stewart Butterfield’s essay [We Don’t Sell Saddles Here](#), [The Three-Hour BrandSprint](#) from Google Ventures, and the work of the excellent identity agencies [Design Studio](#), [Pentagram](#), and [Collins. Tinloof](#)

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**The Brand Guide consists of six exercises.**

[15-Year-Roadmap](#)

[What, How, Why?](#)

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In the end, you'll have a set of simple brand values that you can use to make decisions.

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## **15-Year-Roadmap**

Most people focus on what they're doing now. But if your company is successful, your brand will last a long time. Nobody will expect you to stick to the 15-Year Roadmap—that's not the point. The point of the 15-Year Roadmap is to get your team thinking about the lifetime of your brand. A great brand will last until the year 2031 — and beyond.

**Now**

**In 5 years**

**In 10 years**

**In 15 years**

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## **What, How, Why?**

What, How, Why is an exercise based completely on Simon Sinek's "[Golden Circle](#)". Sinek's premise is basically this: You need to know why you're in business — and talk about it. When a company has a strong motivation and that motivation shines through, customers buy the product.

Plus, knowing why you're in business can be motivating for you.

### **What does your company do?**

A phrase or sentence describing your primary business for the next five years.

Examples: "Make toothpaste", "fix cars", etc.

### **How do you do it?**

What's your secret sauce? What technology or approach sets you apart from the competition? Examples: "Made with all-natural ingredients", "best-in-class friendly service", etc.

### **Why?**

The why should reflect the core reason your company exists, and it won't change much over time. You may pivot the business, launch new products, and enter new markets, but your why remains the same. E.g. "Promote healthy living", "help people get where they need to go", etc.

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## **Top Three Values**

Next, you'll make your why more specific by listing and ranking your company values.

### **▼ Company values are often things like:**

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Sustainable
- Affordable
- Luxury
- Data-driven
- Service

- Simple
- Trusted
- Reliable
- Accessible to everyone
- Etc.

Lots of companies list their values, but very few do the hard work to reduce and prioritize. And prioritization is essential — you’ve got to cut down to just three values and rank them so you have one single most important value. If you have ten or twenty values, anything you do can be considered “on brand”. Knowing your most important value makes decisions easier, clarifies your message, and sets you apart from the competition. It’s hard work but worth it.

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## Top Three Audiences

Values are helpful for brand decisions, but they’re not the whole picture — you need to know who you’re talking to. In this exercise, you’ll list all your possible audiences, then figure out who’s most important.

### Who will love you most?

If you get them, the rest will follow

### Whose opinion do you care about?

When you answer that, you may realize your brand matters not just to customers but also to other businesses, reporters, advertisers, employees, potential hires, and heck, maybe even government regulators.

### **Why do you really matter?**

The problem that you're solving is not that your product, organisation or service doesn't exist

### **What are the great reasons why people should choose?**

You've got to cut down to just three benefits and rank them so you have one single most important Benefit.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **What should people feel?**

No matter whether in B2C or B2B, you interact with people who are supposed to buy from you. You need to deliver real added value that is better than what is already out there, and then elevate it to an emotional level that connects with your customers.

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## **Competitive Landscape**

Keeping an eye on your competitors helps you anticipate shifts in the market, spot new trends and successful tactics, and stay on the cutting edge of what's working within your niche.



A competitive analysis is the analysis of your competitors and how your business compares. By evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your competition, you can begin to formulate how to give your company an advantage.

Competitive analysis helps a business determine potential advantages and barriers within a target market around a product or service, and generally helps brands monitor how direct and indirect competitors are executing tactics like marketing, pricing, and distribution.

### How a competitor analysis can help your business:

- Make more informed decisions about your marketing strategy
- Identify industry trends
- Create benchmarks for yourself
- Determine your pricing strategies
- Unearth new ways of speaking to customers, or even new customers to speak to
- Finding a gap in the market, but also ensuring there's a "market in the gap"

You need a good mix of 7-10 relevant competitors that:

- Sell similar types of products
- Have a similar business premise
- Market to similar and slightly different audience demographics
- Are both new to the marketplace and more experienced



#### Competitor Analysis

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## Brand summary

this summary is designed to help you understand and reveal the context of your brand.

**In one sentence, how would you describe your service and/or products? Then narrow it down to 2-3 words.**

**What market are your products/service in? (industry)**

**How do people learn about your product, organisation, or service?**

**What one reason, above all others, causes people to buy from your business?**

**Who are your main competitors? What do you think causes people to buy from your competitors?**

**Who is buying your product/service? How would you classify this group? (Audience)**

e.g. entrepreneurs, bored rich kids, mothers, teachers, business owners, etc.

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## Sources

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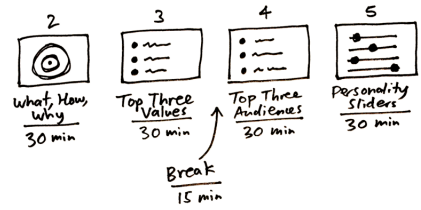


## The Three-Hour Brand Sprint

Warning: This is a post about branding, but I'm no brand expert. For most of my career, any mention of the word brand made me uncomfortable. I figured it was a fine line between "brand

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