



How to Build a Brand

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FROM HUBSPOT & REBRANDLY

HubSpot

Rebrandly

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Introduction

If you're in the marketing business, you might have noticed that a lot of things about the subject of branding have changed over the last decade. How you brand your business is no longer just a matter of implementing clever, creative, and timely ad placements.



The first step of the inbound marketing methodology is attracting new customers.

Let's take the first step of the inbound marketing methodology, for example: getting found by potential customers.

These days, a business is one of about eight gazillion results on a search engine. And if it's not one of the ones on the first page, they're essentially doomed. A building's super sweet sign is just one of the thousands of visual cues bombarding overstimulated passersby every day. And the promotional giveaway that once tickled entrants' fancies? Now it looks like nothing more than a spammy banner ad.

Making a brand stand out and appear trustworthy to the right audience is, needless to say, no piece of cake. Successfully managing your brand in the inbound age is about more than just connecting all the phases of the marketing funnel and creating content that attracts and converts leads. It's about doing all of that – but with pizzazz!

It's a tricky thing to get right, because branding encapsulates anything you do that contributes to your customers' opinions and feelings about your company.

Ultimately, the key is making “branding” into a quantifiable metric for which you can show concrete results.

This ebook will show you how to do that in an inbound context and create effective, recognizable brands in the digital age.

Chapter 1

What is a Brand?

In the inbound marketing age, branding refers to branding on the internet – and the internet moves pretty fast. Brands can be built up in an instant, and they can be destroyed just as quickly.

“Overnight success,” although tempting, is not a good goal for a brand to have. A successful brand should be built up over time. A slow, gradual buildup provides the opportunity to reach far more people than some flash-in-the-pan fad that’s here today and gone tomorrow. (Although, keep in mind that if you’re not careful, even a slowly built-up brand can still fall in an instant.)

The internet is the great equalizer, giving small companies the potential to have a big voice.

But to get to the point where your voice is big, you not only need to be good at getting found – you need to have a differentiator.

What Does a Brand Look Like Online?

Once a brand finds that differentiator, it becomes their calling card. It's how everyone recognizes them and the first thing everyone judges them by. So it needs to be consistent. No matter which channels your customers choose to interact with your brand – your website, blog, email, Facebook, Twitter, or whatever tomorrow's technology may bring – they should all demonstrate the unique experience that your brand represents.

For example, Southwest Airlines built a large part of its brand experience around those signature packets of peanuts that they serve on flights, the ones with the amusing little slogans on them. It may seem trivial, but it's a large part of who they are and what they represent to their customer base. Part of their brand is their reputation for being a little “nuts,” from flight attendants singing about how to buckle your seatbelt, to a contest-winning photo of smooching manatees on the Southwest Facebook Page (the airline is, after all, headquartered at Dallas' Love Field).

All of Southwest's branding, from their flights to their social media, is designed around that basic premise and it remains consistent throughout the company's marketing.. When creating your own branding, you should strive for that same consistency. Visually, a brand should include the same elements across all channels, such as logo, color, fonts, etc. But design consistency is just the first step. The most important thing is to set expectations for the experience that customers will have every single time they interact with your brand online. It should transcend each channel (and even the internet itself) to be instantly recognizable as yours.

Chapter 2:

Creating Your Brand Strategy

A brand strategy is a long-term plan for developing a successful brand presence in order to achieve specific goals.

First, let's clear up the biggest misconception about brand strategy: Your brand is not your product, your logo, your website, or your name. In truth, your brand is far more encompassing — it defines the visceral and frequently intangible aspects of your company identity. A well thought out and defined brand identity should be the backbone of any successful company, particularly for online enterprises that typically lack the physical brand components of brick-and-mortar stores. It's that hard-to-pin-down feeling that separates powerhouse and mediocre brands from each other, and a big part of that hard-to-pin-down feeling comes from brand consistency. Let's dig into that a little deeper.

The Importance of Brand Consistency

What should brand consistency involve? Here are some of the basic elements that should remain the same for all your online content, whether it's your website, your blog, email, social media, or some other platform, so that your audience can have the same experience, no matter where they go.

1) Logo

A logo is arguably the most memorable piece of a brand's collateral. Even if someone can't quite recall your brand name, they're likely to remember that visual cue associated with it. For example, when you think of Nike, can you see the swish? If you hear McDonald's, does the image of those Golden Arches flood into your mind? What about Michelin? We know you remember the tire man! These companies have spent a lot of time and money crafting their brand image, and their logos go hand-in-hand with this. Logos provide an opportunity for customers to automatically associate products or services with any given brand itself. Some logos don't need eye-catching graphics to stand out. Brands like Skype and Netflix created logos with their names in distinctive fonts that form visual cues.



2) Colors

You know branding is done well when seeing certain colors immediately calls to mind a particular brand – even when those brands' names are nowhere nearby. A good color scheme can go a long way. Take Facebook for example. Regardless of updates to its newsfeed and small tweaks to the logo, that medium blue tone is instantly recognizable. Speaking of blue, what company comes to mind when you see a Robin's-egg blue box? Tiffany has even gone so far as to trademark their specific shade of blue, using it seamlessly across their advertising and physical marketing materials.



Tiffany Box

3) Tone and Voice

What does your brand sound like? Are you irreverent? Silly? Professional? Academic? All of the above? This may actually fluctuate somewhat between channels. Emails may be more formal, and social media may be more casual. That's totally fine! But there should still be a unifying factor; a blanket mission statement or mantra that all content adheres to. Bear in mind that at some stage, you're going to need to address a controversial or otherwise difficult issue. It's up to you to make sure you remain true to your mission statement, both when promoting the positive aspects of your brand and when responding to negativity. It's up to you to determine how to incorporate those viewpoints into your overall brand voice- and sometimes to turn down opportunities to jump into certain conversations for the sake of your brand.

4) Images

The images you share, regardless of the platform, should take into account all of the above points. This means they should reflect the tone your brand has set out for itself, follow a color palette and include your brand's logo. It's simply not enough to haphazardly add images to your content and hope they look good. Instead, you should be methodical in your selection to guarantee that your visual identity is just as strong as your written one. Would cartoons or graphics suit your brand, or are you better off using high-quality photos? In the digital age, when consumers are facing a constant barrage of material, it's important to stand out for the right reasons, not for an inconsistent or poorly thought out image that takes away from your overall message.



We Work (<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/instagram-best-brands>)

5) Domain Name

This one seems simple right? But you'd be surprised how often domain name selection can go wrong. Your domain name should be well aligned with the brand itself, and it needs to be easy for your customers to find. Great domain names are intuitive, they're short and they help your customer to get access to the information about you they're looking for immediately.

For example, "reallylongbusinessnamegeenowicannotrememberwhati-wanted.com", is very tiring to write as a link or in a search engine. What's more, that customer will probably have made a spelling error or two, sending them straight back to square one. So, make sure you spend a bit of time coming up with a domain that's easy to remember (and spell) to drive more traffic to your website.

6) Branded Links

A branded link is a shortened URL built around a brand name (or related term) that helps associate the company with the links, content, and information they share online. Simply put, it's a shorter version of a URL that showcases your company name. Unlike generic short links that are made up of a random string of numbers and letters, branded links reinforce brand awareness and increase trust.

They're completely customizable and have been shown to [increase click-through rates by up to 39%](#). You can also use these custom short links for tracking purposes, attributing the clicks to your various marketing campaigns and analyzing which of your efforts produce the best results. Branded links provide a strong quality signal about the content you share, and aligning your content with your brand will establish authority in any industry. [Learn more about how you benefit from using branded links here.](#)

Get your first Rebrandly branded domain for free

To Recap

Brands need to be extra conscious when actually building their content that the average consumer is only paying it a very small amount of attention. Make sure to get right to the point without overly wordy text, include eye-catching images and if you're using a link, make sure it's a branded link that indicates where the user will go if they do indeed click on it. Taking some extra time to really concentrate on the quality of the material you're sending out will go a long way to make sure that potential customers have meaningful interactions with it.

Remember, in spite of all your best efforts as a company to shape your brand identity to fit a certain mold, you need to understand how your audience and customers perceive your brand will ultimately determine how successful your efforts are. At the end of the day, it's consumers that build brands- not companies.

Components of Great Branding

As we said earlier, somewhat jokingly, you can't exactly tell your boss or coworkers that your team is working on "pizzazz" and not expect some raised eyebrows. To a lot of people not in the know, "branding" as a job description can seem vague. It's such a generic term that, when you get down to it, can mean just about anything you choose it to mean. How do you quantify branding enough to fit it into a job description?

But think about it:

Branding encompasses just about everything you do as a marketer, to some degree.

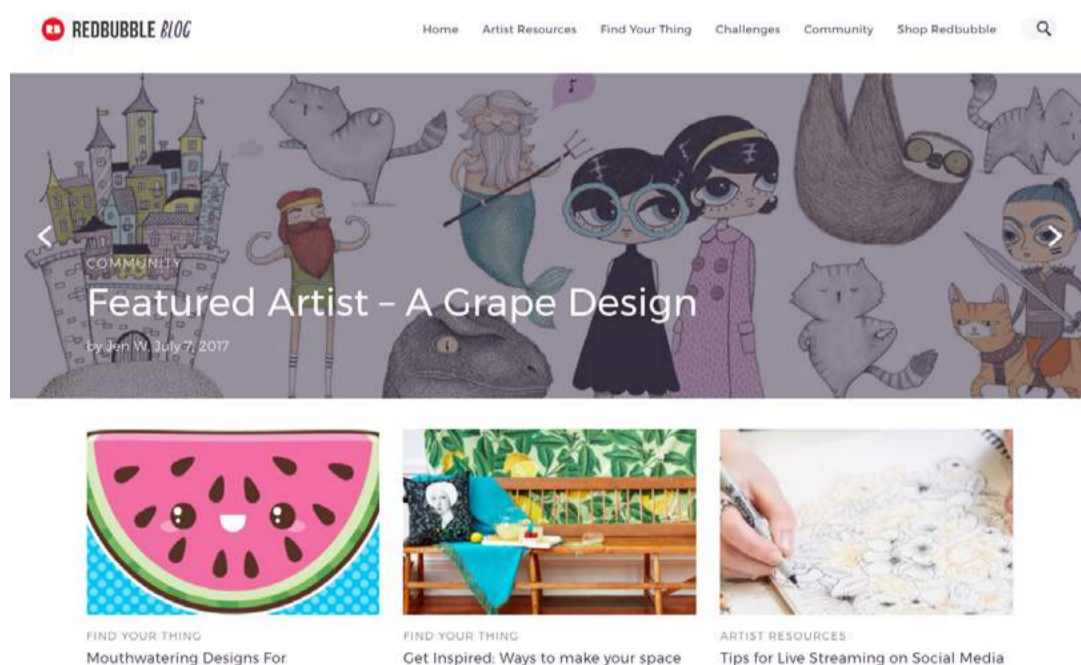
Here are a few specific branding essentials for you to implement in the inbound age.

1) Website Design

Your website is the face of your company. While it's true that every public mention or appearance has an impact on your brand, your website is what you're specifically showing to people. If your brand is a house, the website is the front room where visitors gather. It's your job to make sure that room is clean and neat, visually appealing, and comfortable for them. Make sure your site is simple to understand and navigate, your logo transitions seamlessly from page to page and that the little details like the font and color palette remain constant. Those design elements, however small they may seem, are an essential part of the brand.

2) Content Creation

Content is how you showcase the knowledge your business has mastered. It can include things like blogs, videos, whitepapers, ebooks, case studies, and much more. Your content allows your customers to get to know you. It can offer advice on an issue, provide commentary on recent news events, give a step-by-step guide to solving a particular problem, or just tell an anecdote that your customers will find interesting.



RedBubble's blog is colorful, vibrant, and visually pleasing – which makes perfect sense, as a design blog for artists.

Check out our collection of 38 great blog designs

However you choose to present your content, there are a few things it needs to do: it should establish your personality, provide value to your customers, and helps build up their trust in your brand. Again, take your time developing a strategy for how you capture readers' attention and make sure you're presenting your knowledge in a way that's easy for your readers to quickly access.

3) Social Media

One of the things that sets online marketing apart from traditional marketing methods is the opportunity to create a two-way conversation with the customer. You can actually connect with them, respond to feedback, answer their questions in real-time, help them resolve an issue, or just check in and let them know that your brand values what they have to say.

This is what social media is all about for brands! It allows you to communicate directly with your audience and establish your brand as trustworthy in their minds, creating an impression that will define how they think of you for years to come.

Your Value Proposition

“In space, no one can hear you scream.” No, this isn’t the start of a lesson on instantly identifiable branding. (Though it could be.)

Chances are, you immediately recognized that statement as the tagline to the 1979 movie Alien – even if you’d never seen the movie. But our focus here is on the statement itself. The vacuum that is outer space silences everything.

In cyberspace, on the other hand, the problem is just the opposite. Everyone is screaming. It’s almost impossible for anyone to make their voice heard. To make yourself heard above the online cacophony, you need to have the strongest, clearest voice.

At its core, that voice is your value proposition: the thing that makes them unique and better qualified than the competition.

Your value proposition is the core of your competitive advantage, and it is the most important thing people will take with them when considering your brand.

Therefore, it’s essential to get it right. It needs to be woven into your website, social media, paid campaigns, and of course, the value-add that every business provides their customers and clients.

What is a Value Proposition?

A value proposition is a promise of value to be delivered. It’s the main reason a prospect should buy from you, and not from your competitor. So what does one look like? A strong value proposition describes...

1) What You Do

First, define what your business does in very clear terms. For example, if you're a marketing agency, your value proposition might be: "Our agency develops marketing campaigns to improve SEO, generate leads, increase brand awareness, and drive traffic to your business."

2) How You Do It

Describe exactly how you do what you do. Carrying on the example of a marketing agency, you might write, "Our agency uses deep industry knowledge and cutting-edge methodologies such as blogging, email, and social media marketing, combined with state of the art analytics to ensure your business is search engine optimized and gets you found online."

3) For Whom You Do It

Businesses are much more effective when they practice verticalization: establish a niche, and become an expert in it. Your customers want to know that you understand their specific needs and challenges and that you're the right company to address them.

Continuing with the marketing agency example, let's say your client's niche is retail. You've handled dozens of retail clients and helped them build up great brands and increase sales. So when a small retail website comes along and wants to hire your agency, you know exactly where to start. When they tell you about their business and the challenges they face, you know what they need and how to help them. You know what their ultimate goals are, and how they can be achieved.

But then another client comes along – this one a travel website. On the surface, they seem similar enough: you're promoting a product and trying to get customers to make an online purchase. So you take them on ... and it's a disaster. The way they do business is completely different. You try to get into the technical ins and outs of their company, but you don't really understand what issues they're dealing with. Or, worse yet, you think you do, but it's actually a very different situation. You try to approach them the

same way you do with your retail clients and end up failing.

Every industry, age group and location on is different and your customers want to know that you understand theirs. Rather than being a jack-of-all-trades and master of none, it's better to find one industry to specialize in, and become as much an expert in it as your customers are. The better you know your niche, the better you'll be able to promote yourself within it.

It's important to apply this to your online marketing tactics. You're more likely to find success by focusing on just one thing and doing it better than anyone else. Specialization is what the internet is all about. It's not a coincidence that businesses are reaping huge benefits from long-tail keyword optimization. So it's critical that your specialty stands out.

4) What Makes You Different

A couple of hamburger patties and a slice of cheese on a bun are just that—until you add “special sauce.” Then suddenly it's a Big Mac: the biggest, best-selling juggernaut in fast food history. So what's your special sauce? In a world of Whoppers, what makes you a Big Mac? Identifying the “special sauce factor” is the key to building your brand.

How to Determine Your Value Proposition

So ... how do you identify that “special sauce” factor? How do you figure out what to focus on when promoting your brand?

Here are a few things you need to do:

- Have a deep understanding of who your customers are.
- Understand the customer’s needs and goals.
- Position their brand as the one best qualified to meet the needs of its target market.

Let’s go through a little exercise to determine a value proposition. We’ll use a marketing agency as an example again.

Who is your customer?

This brings us back to verticalization. Prospective clients want to know that the agency they hire understands their business. A building contractor, for example, wants to know that the agency he selects understands the process and subtleties that their customers go through when selecting a builder. You need to know that there will be a bidding process and that homeowners are anxious about the enormous expense, disruption, and time commitment that a building project requires. Be prepared to speak a contractor’s language to gain their trust—and their business.

What does your customer want?

Every prospective client wants their agency to do one thing for them: improve their bottom line. But how will you do that? You need to show them using the metrics that they are most likely to care about when it comes to inbound marketing:

- Increased traffic to their website.
- More high-quality leads from that traffic.
- Increased conversion of those leads.
- Overall improvement over time of your marketing endeavors through evaluation and analytics

If the niche you specialize in has other metrics that they're looking to move, it's important to be aware of what they are and how to move them. This is just one more way to show your prospects that you speak their language.

Little else matters if you can't convince your customers that you will outperform the competition.

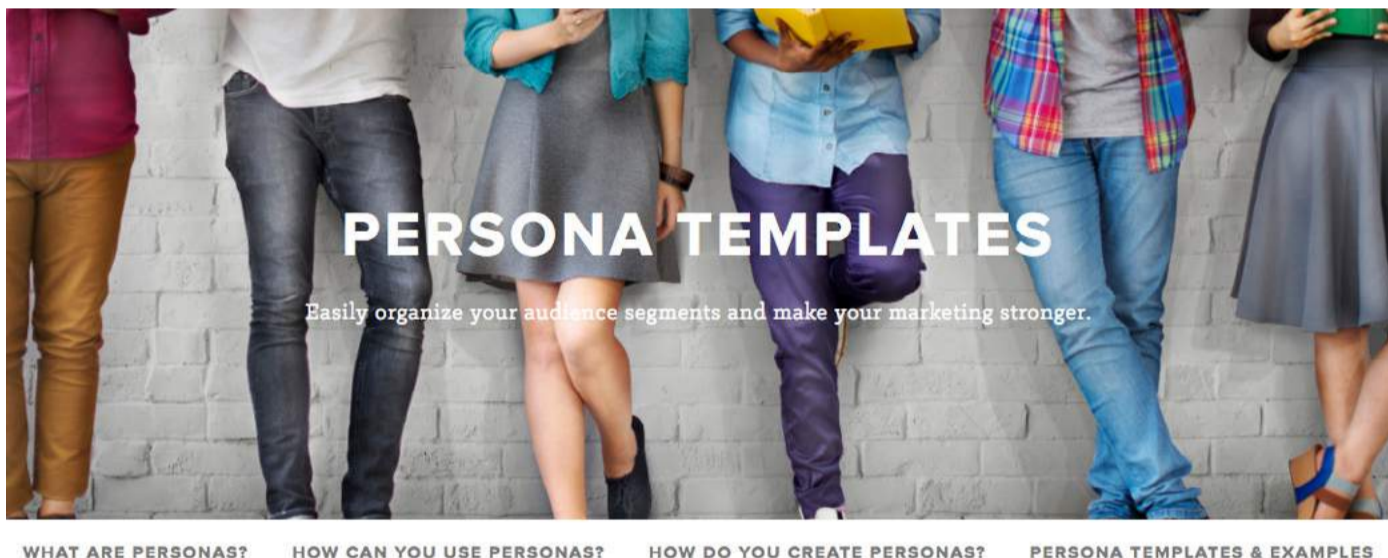
Anyone can say that they're the best. Instead, use case studies to show them. By demonstrating a successful track record for your own agency, and the successes of your existing customers, you will have evidence that you can get the job done.

Once you've answered all of these questions for your own business, you're ready to start crafting a brand that targets your ideal customers.

Creating Buyer Personas

We've covered determining who your customer is in a general way: what they do for work and what kind of product or service they're looking for. But to target them effectively, you need to know who they are as people. What kind of person is your ideal target customer? To determine that, you need a buyer persona.

A buyer persona is like a character profile of the customer: who they are, what they want, and what their life is like. It expands on the generic "what they want to buy" info and puts a name and a face to it (buyer personas tend to have clever, alliterative names like "Personal Trainer Pete" or "Freelancer Fiona"). It also helps you to understand their underlying motivations for engaging with your brand, and hopefully for buying your product.



Create buyer personas using our free templates

All blogs, white papers, and other inbound content should be written as if addressing this buyer persona. This makes it easier to target and connect with customers on a more personal, individual level, without having to tailor a different approach for every single customer. A buyer persona should include...

Demographics

By understanding some of the key demographics for your target market – e.g. gender, marital status, age range, or income level – you begin to get a sense of who your customers might be, and narrow down their range of interests.

Job Level/Seniority

This is particularly important for all you B2B marketers out there. Even though you're selling to a business, you're still dealing with a person within that business. Who are they in the company? What are their responsibilities? What authority do they have in the decision-making process with regards to making this purchase? The CEO of a small business thinks and acts differently than the marketing manager at a mid-sized company, and the same can be said for managers in enterprise organizations.

Of course, identifying the customer's job is important for B2C companies as well. A homemaker is looking for something different than a young whippersnapper salesperson straight out of college. Which leads us to our next piece of critical intelligence...

Typical Day

If you can piece together a customer's routine on a typical day, you'll understand many of the things that occupy their time, and what is and isn't important to them.

Detailing your ideal customers' daily routine is one of the most critical ways to "nail" in your branding strategy – because it gives you insight into the nitty gritty of what their customers actually care about.

If you can align your value proposition with what their customers care about and figure out how to communicate that value proposition to the customer, then you're a branding rockstar.

Pain Points

What keeps the buyer up at night? What problems do they need the most help solving? If you can get a handle on that, then you'll be even better prepared to position yourself as the brand that will help them solve those problems, so that they can rest easy day and night.

Information Sources

How is the buyer researching their problem? Where do they get their news? What do they read? Do they consume blogs? White papers? Infographics? What social media do they use, and how do they use it? Once you know where the buyer is going for information, you can put your information there for them to find.

Objections

No need to sugarcoat things. There are always objections. You know that your company is the best one for the job, but the customer isn't convinced yet. Why not? Figure out the reasons why the buyer is still hesitant to make a purchase and why they might opt not to make the purchase from you. Arm yourself and your team with answers to these objections that will alleviate their prospects' concerns – communicated in a fashion that will appeal to the specific persona you've created. That includes the right phrasing and format of delivery.

Putting Your Brand Into Play

What To Do With Buyer Personas

Once you've identified your buyer personas, use them to position their company, website, and social media presence to:

- Develop highly targeted content that appeals to buyers' needs, goals, and interests.
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- Place content in the channels where prospective buyers are most likely see them.
- Draw buyers in with well-formulated ads, strong images and branded links that contain a call to action.
- Attract better, more qualified leads that maximize ROI.
- Provide customer insight across business teams so that everyone understands the lead's needs, goals, and interests.
- Improve the quality of the persona over time by examining your customer base and refining the persona accordingly
- Design products and services that are better-suited to the target persona.

Let's dig in to how buyer personas will help you segment and personalize your brand experience.

Segmenting and Personalizing a Brand Experience

Online, a brand has the ability – nay, the obligation – to know enough about their customer’s history that they can automatically create segmented, personalized experiences for them. If, for example, a customer bought three fly fishing rods from a sporting goods website, that should inform the types of content you provide, which pages and products you show them, and which special offers you email them.

This is why it’s so important, when creating an inbound marketing campaign, to make sure that your site provides: 1) lots of content, and 2) targeted content.

Providing content on a wide variety of different niche topics that apply to your industry gives you greater opportunity to figure out what their potential customers are interested in, based on the content that they express interest in.

Continuing with our sporting goods website example, let’s say that, rather than buying fly fishing rods, the customer downloads a video that demonstrates the best casting techniques. You can then send them another video on the best baits to use, or the types of fish they might expect to catch. This would be a different response than if they had downloaded a video on baseball equipment – in which case you might send them another video profiling famous baseball players. The more content you provide, the easier it is to establish the customer’s interest and then nurture that interest.

And as a result, their engagement will increase. As you target customers more effectively, they’ll take more actions, share more readily with their social networks, and engage with your brand in a more cohesive experience.

Brand = Content and Content = Brand

In every way, a company's content is their brand online. It's their salesperson, their store, and their marketing department. It's their story. Every piece of content you publish online defines your brand. So, great content = great brand. Boring content = boring brand.

And it's more than just what's great and what's boring. Often, what you choose not to publish says more about your brand than some really snappy copy. When developing your content strategy, ask yourself:

- Is this topic interesting to the brand's target persona?
- Does this piece of the content address their pain points?
- Is this the format in which they like to consume their content?
- Do they trust the way you're presenting your content, or are they unsure whether they should click on your links in the first place?
- Is this tone appropriate for the subject matter and reader of this content?
- Does this content have a purpose? Or is it just wasted space?

You should be answering "Yes" to all of those questions (except the click-bait and "wasted space" parts, naturally) before you publish any piece of content. Otherwise, you're just diluting their brand with content that's unnecessary. That's right: Even if a piece of content isn't directly harmful to your brand from a PR perspective, it can still be harmful from a brand dilution perspective.

So ask these questions about every single piece of content you develop: whitepapers, social media updates, webinars, podcasts, blog posts, links, ebooks, FAQs, videos, social media photos – even that silly cat meme you're posting to your Facebook Page. Everything you release under a particular brand contributes to the audience's overall view of that brand and will affect it either positively or negatively. Therefore, every single piece of content needs to be vetted in

Social Presence

A social presence for your brand is essential in the inbound age. Brands need a variety of forums in which to interact with customers, not every social channel is right for every brand. Different target demographics frequent different social sites and use them for different things.

Since maintaining an effective presence on every single social platform simultaneously is impossible, it's important to determine which ones will best help you reach your target persona, and focus your efforts on building up their brand and presence on those specific channels. You're no doubt familiar with the most prominent social media sites, but here's a basic run-down on how best to use them in targeting customers.

1) Facebook

The King Kong of social media, with 1.2 billion users and counting, establishing a Facebook Page will help you develop and foster a sense of community between your and your customers. Facebook is best used for visual content, links, and community building/engagement. Practically speaking, no brand – no matter what their business – can afford to be without a Facebook Page.



[Read our full guide to marketing your business in Facebook here](#)

2) Twitter

Twitter keeps users connected in real-time, with short bursts of information, in 280 characters or fewer. While the recent update to the character count provides a lot more space, it still means that has Twitter has a more casual tone. This gives you a platform to communicate in an informal, personable way – even if that’s not how your brand usually operates. Brands that really understand twitter are ones that make their tweets humorous, that celebrate the brand or its customers, or that offer tips that will help customers with their pain points.



Here's a great list of funny tweets from real brands

Hashtags are also really useful for branding. Creating a hashtag specific to your brand(or an event/product associated with it) allows you to group all of the related conversations about it together on a single, easy-to-find page. Spread the word about your brand by frequently tagging your tweets with it and encouraging your followers to do the same. Since space is limited on Twitter, it's also important to ensure you're using a snappy, custom short link (branded link) as your call to action.

3) Instagram

They say a picture is worth a thousand words – and they're right: well-placed visual content can work wonders. Instagram fosters branding creativity and can be useful in grabbing users' attention, connecting with them, and even encouraging them to post pictures of their own related to your brand. And, like Twitter, it also uses hashtags to identify and group together content on a particular topic. With Instagram, many users take a long time to get to the 10k followers required for more frequent link sharing. If you've only got the one link to work with, [using a branded link in your bio](#) will allow you to update the destination URL you send customers to as often as you want. Even better, you can always stay on brand.



[Read our full Instagram marketing guide here](#)

4) LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an important platform for any B2B business. Not only is it a tool to help you forge connections, but it's also a lead generator and (most important for brand managers) a place to assert your company's thought leadership position.

By sharing content and participating in relevant discussions, you can use it to showcase what your brand has to offer about the topics that are important to your target audience. The bonds you form here between your brand and LinkedIn members will pay dividends down the road.

5) YouTube

Is YouTube a social media site, or a content platform? It's both. This Google-owned video sharing service is a valuable place to share content that is best demonstrated visually. Use YouTube for everything from broadcasting one-on-one interviews or roundtable discussions, to product demonstrations, to behind-the-scenes glimpses into your company and its inner workings, to short films, to entertaining newsjacks of pop culture events that will help elevate your brand.



[Check our full guide on YouTube marketing here](#)

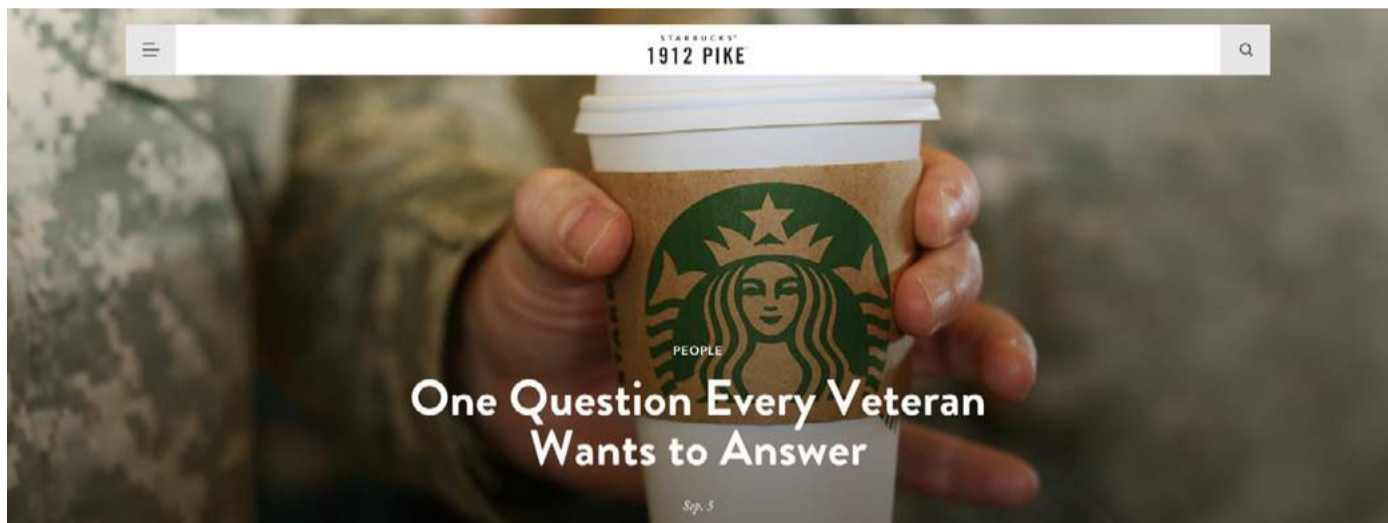
Building a Brand Voice

The voice or tone that a company applies to all their content – or indeed, their entire brand – is the equivalent of their brand's personality. The voice you establish for your own business is an integral part of your website, blog, social media presence, email campaigns, and everything in between. It's baked into everything that's done in the name of their brand, and as such, it must be consistent.

Things like striking the right balance between casual and serious, helpful and intrusive, or educational or haranguing, will determine whether people find a brand appealing or abrasive.

So how will you know when you've struck the right balance? Start with the buyer persona, and mix their expectations with your "special sauce." Then, adjust over time based on feedback and results, just like any recipe from your kitchen.

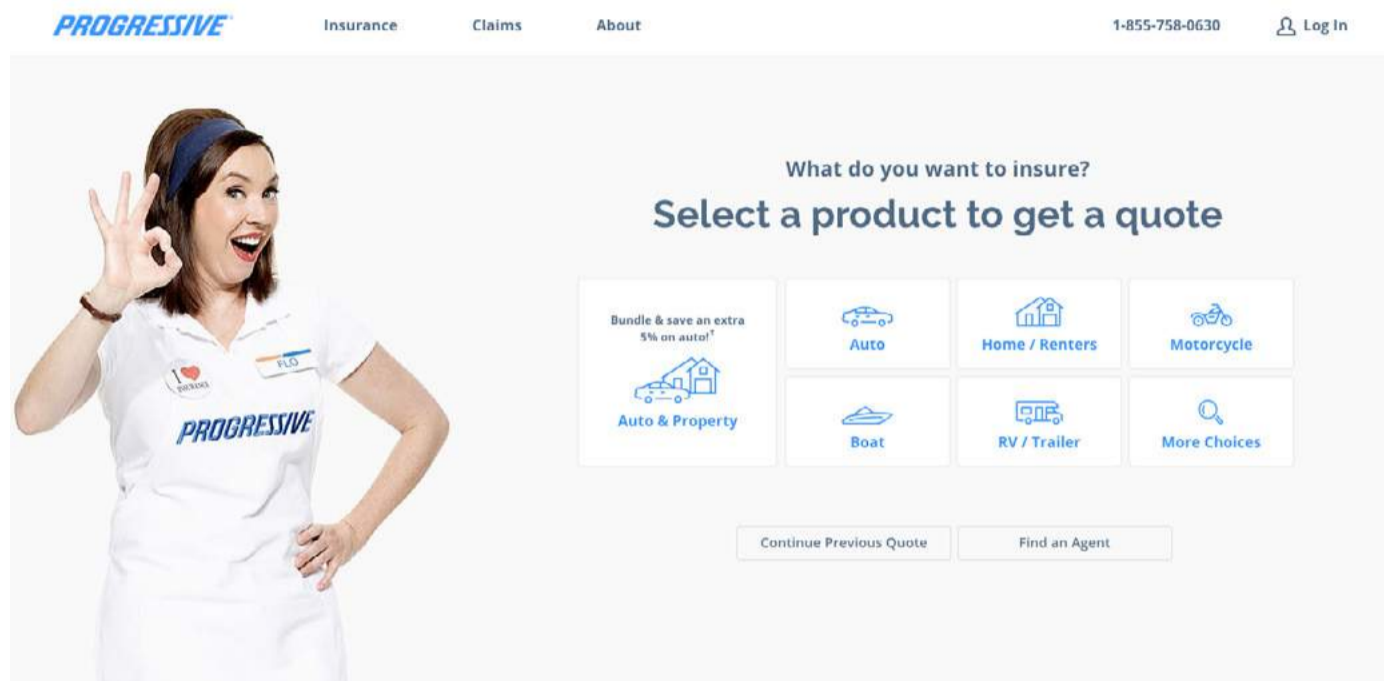
The voice in your content should reflect how you want your brand to be perceived. If their brand's voice is similar to Groupon, for example, the blog might take on a light, snappy tone. If it's more socially conscientious, like Starbucks, then the voice might be a bit more serious.



The Starbucks brand voice can be playful, but on its blog, it tends to lean toward talking about more serious topics like social movements.

Your voice and its cadence may also vary slightly from one medium to another. We already covered how Twitter calls for a more casual tone, even if you're more formal on other platforms.

For a more comprehensive example, let's look at Progressive Insurance. In their television commercials and homepage, both of which tend to interface with customers at or near the top of the funnel, Progressive's tone is light and playful. Their spokes-character, Flo, is hyper, bright, and cheery.



Progressive's tone is light and playful.

On Progressive's blog, however, the tone, while not heavy, is much more serious. Here, the company is getting into the nuts and bolts of shopping for insurance, offering safety tips for boating or bad weather, and the humor is scaled back in this channel geared towards the middle or bottom of the funnel.

Finally, on Progressive's Facebook page, the insurance carrier is a little bit of both serious and playful, the way any community might be. On Christmas Eve, Progressive ran a poll: "Christmas candy or Christmas cookies?" Just before New Year's Eve, the page offered a gentle reminder about the increase in auto accidents caused by drinking and driving.

The voice of your brand should naturally adjust to suit the medium in which the content is being published, as well as to the people you are attracting to those particular media.

Site Structure and Appearance

A grocer will place food staples such as milk and produce at the back of the store. Why? So that customers will have to pass by and view a myriad of other “excess” items before they get to the essentials – what they really needed in the first place. High-profit impulse items such as candy and snacks are placed in the checkout line for easy access while you wait.

Likewise, your website is their store, and your content is the inventory. It needs to be structured for maximum impact.

Getting the right structure and appearance for a brand’s content from call-to-action buttons to ebooks – plays a significant role in determining that brand’s success. For instance, at HubSpot, we actually style our ebooks differently depending on who is receiving them. Certain personas prefer text-heavy content, while others prefer images and visuals, and still others like shorter content that doesn’t exceed five pages. These are the same considerations you should have when structuring a website around a brand.

Keep these tips in mind when structuring websites and digital content to support a brand strategy:

Tip #1

Do your research. Perform A/B testing to see how prospects will actually use the site and content, and structure them that way. The content and the links between them should flow organically from Point A to Point B to Point C.

Tip #2

Prominent placement on webpages of content explaining higher margin products and services will result in more leads for those products and services.

Tip #3

Placing a CTA (call-to-action) button middle-of-the-funnel for premium content alongside content for higher margin services will increase qualified leads and move them one step further along the sales cycle.

Tip #4

Be certain that the value proposition is clear on every page and in all the content offered for download.

Tip #5

Include share links on all your blog posts, videos, and other shareable content and within premium content to help you to spread the word about your brand and content. That way, you can reach other, like-minded people who would also enjoy their brand.

Tip #6

Keep your site structure and folders organized so your page URLs don't get messy. Neat links look more appealing and search engines prefer them. But failing this, you can always make sure to shorten and brand them before sharing.

Monitoring Your Brand

People are talking about your brand beyond the pages for which you alone develop content. They're blogging about you. They're mentioning their experience with you on their own Facebook pages. They're discussing your brand in groups on LinkedIn and posting videos about it to YouTube.

There's a whole lot of conversation going on about your brand that you have no control over.

Some of this conversation may be good, and some of it may be bad. Some of it may even be outright lies. But for better or for worse, it will live in cyberspace forever. What you can do, however, is to monitor the conversation. Obviously, you can't catch every comment out there, but you can keep an eye on the larger and more obvious channels.

Create Google Alerts for your brand and words associated with it. Search Twitter for certain keywords pertaining to the brand, to see what people are saying. We'll talk more about what kinds of terms to search for later on. But there are all sorts of tools you can use to keep track of what people are saying about a particular brand online. Then, you can implement damage control when needed, or extend the reach of people's positive experience into your own channels.

Monitoring Your Brand on Social Media

To monitor a brand effectively in the inbound age, you need the first-touch attribution, the last-touch attribution, and everything in between. In other words, you need closed-loop analytics.

It's helpful to know that a particular customer closed after converting on an email offer. But where did the customer come from originally? Your blog? How did they find it? Social media? What network? Which content did they read? How long did it take them to convert? What other content did they download while they were a lead?

For all of this, you'll need multi-channel, closed-loop analytics (like HubSpot's Attribution Reports, for example) with in-depth reports to give you the full view of what efforts are supporting your branding initiatives and, most importantly, that your branding initiatives are driving real business results.

How to Track Your Brand on Social

You might think monitoring every mention of your brand online is a Herculean task. And you would be right. As we mentioned already, it's literally impossible to cover everything being said about a brand. However, we also mentioned that there are tools to help you.

Google has super-Herculean servers and web crawlers, which make keeping tabs on your brand online much simpler, with tools like Google Alerts or even HubSpot's social monitoring software. Input terms you need to track that are important for brand management. These are the terms that encompass:

- Company name.
- Names of key executives, public-facing employees, or other prominent people connected with your company.
- Branded names of products, services, or features.

Voilà! You now have a good handle on how, when, and where your brand is mentioned online.

BONUS TIP:

You can set up Alerts to monitor competitors' mentions, too. Enter their brand name, product names, and key executives. Who knows, you might even be able to exploit any knowledge you accrue this way before they do!

Responding When Things Go Wrong

In social media, as in life (and movies), there are three ways a brand can be mentioned: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Be prepared for all three.

Decide ahead of time which types of incidents constitute a crisis for you, and which are just bumps in the road. Then, develop a response plan and assign teams to handle each outcome. Which types of crises will which teams handle? For instance, a technical glitch would probably go to your IT department, whereas a dissatisfied customer might go to customer service.

Being prepared for these instances is critical for maintaining the good brand you've built up. But the key is timeliness. Any crisis or PR disaster can be smoothed over, but the longer you wait to respond, the longer the negative press has a chance to spread, with nothing to quench the flames. They say there's no such thing as bad publicity, but some events can seriously, even permanently damage your reputation if not dealt with properly.

It's better to be right than fast. Time is of the essence, but not at the expense of accuracy.

That's what the holding statement is for—to buy you the time to get things right and respond in the best possible way, without making it seem like you're ignoring what's going on.

Leveraging the Good

The web is as neutral a territory as you're likely to find. It presents as many opportunities for good publicity as it does for, well, less-good publicity.

Use social media monitoring to take life's lemons and make some cool, refreshing lemonade. They don't even have to be your lemons. Look for opportunities to turn someone else's loss into your gain (tactfully, of course), and shine the spotlight on your marketing savvy.



Take a page out of JetBlue's book.

Learn how JetBlue uses Twitter for great customer service

For instance, if you are is a taxi company, and mass transit just went down, post from your Twitter account that cab rides are half off. Then promote the heck out of their generosity to every media outlet you can think of. Hey, it's a PSA! News networks would eat it right up.

If your company is a spa and your town is hosting a marathon, set up a chair massage station for the runners and crew members and give free five-minute massages along the route. Get lots of photos and videos of smiling, blissful faces (preferably that feature your logo in there somewhere) and post them on social media—and for any other outlets who might want to pick up the story.

Measuring the Brand

If someone likes your Facebook page, how much revenue does that translate to? If someone retweets a brand's tweet, does that make the cash register ring? When someone visits your website, reads your blog, and downloads your ebook, do you know if they ultimately bought what you are selling?

Without closed-loop marketing metrics, you cannot know the answers to any of these questions. They are isolated incidents which may be related, or they may not. Closed-loop marketing lets you see what happened from the first click at the top of the funnel to the "Buy Now" click at the bottom of the funnel, and everything in between. It tells you how your inbound branding and marketing efforts are paying off!

If you've ever asked yourself (or, worse yet, if your executives have asked you), "What's the return on investment for these branding efforts?" and you were unsure of the answer, or said something like, "To increase awareness," then you're not alone.

But awareness is not enough. You may be aware of the Rolls Royce brand, but chances are you haven't bought one. So how valuable is that brand awareness to Rolls Royce or its marketers? Zero. Zip. Nada. Awareness, unless followed at some point by consideration, intention, and purchase (the typical sales funnel model), is worthless.

Unless you can correlate the awareness you create to purchases people make, you will never understand the ROI of your branding initiatives.

And if you don't understand the ROI of your own branding initiatives, you'll never be able to demonstrate their value to executives and other teams at your company.

This is not to say that every Facebook Like needs to translate into a sale in order to matter. A large social reach means larger social amplification, which gets your content out there to the people who will eventually contribute to your bottom line. Additionally, maintaining an email list of evangelists – people who love your brand, will forward your content, but will never buy it – is similarly valuable.

Attribution

Understanding last-touch attributions is especially useful in optimizing landing pages, fine-tuning email campaigns, or any other content source that helped put the ball over the goal line to convert a prospect into a customer. It's great bottom-of-the-funnel information.

In contrast, understanding first-touch attribution is extremely useful in improving your top-of-the-funnel marketing efforts. Knowing whether a lead came to your website as the result of an organic search (and for what term) or because they were tipped off to one of your Facebook posts by a colleague will help you concentrate your marketing and its messaging where it will resonate best.

HubSpot's Analytics tool is excellent for measuring the overall impact of branding campaigns.

[Learn how HubSpot's Analytics tool works](#)

The Attribution Report tool lets you analyze:

- How the lead first found you
- What the critical touch points were that led to conversions
- Which marketing campaigns generated the most sales
- What actions generated the highest quality leads
- What to Measure and Analyze

To get precise monitoring conversations it's essential that look to your links. If you want to analyze the source of any conversion, the best way to do it is through link tracking. Monitoring which platforms your customers are coming from is simple with tools like Rebrandly that track each click on your links, giving you accurate information about the source, time, location and much more. We recommend tools like Rebrandly in tandem with Google Analytics or HubSpot's social monitoring software. This will allow you to understand every aspect of your traffic so that you really know what people do on your site and how they got there in the first place.

Here are some specific metrics you can use to measure individual aspects of your branding efforts.

- Determine which keywords, short and/or long-tail, result in the most click-throughs to your landing pages. If you're running paid campaigns, these are excellent venues to experiment with new brand elements, such as a new tagline, or a new value proposition, to see if it resonates and drives revenue.
- See which blog content drives the most comments, social shares, and inbound links. While leads are great, the content that is commented on and shared the most is often an indicator of success.
- Find out which email content drives the most forwards and reconversions, and to what segment of your list that content goes, so you can better align future email campaigns with other content that elevates your brand.
- Learn which landing pages result in the highest purchase volumes, and most lucrative average sales per customer.
- Test which links get the highest click-through rates on different platforms and make sure they're up to date, regardless of what campaign you're currently running.
- Determine the correlation between the number of Likes you generate for your Facebook Page during a given campaign and their sales results for the same time period—or subsequent months, in the case of businesses with long sales cycles.
- Find the type of social media content which results in the most engagement, and track whether that engagement ever leads to revenue-driving behavior in the future, and at what rate.

Conclusion

Everything you know about brands and brand management in the real world holds true in the inbound age. What's different is that now your brand extends far beyond the world over which agencies have traditionally had control. Before, when a customer had a complaint about your brand, only you, they, and perhaps a small circle of their friends and family knew about it. Now, anybody with an internet connection knows how to find – or memorialize – that complaint forever.

In the inbound age, there are so many moving pieces to managing a brand, from the website to the call center to the Facebook Page, to the LinkedIn group, to whatever that brings. As a result, you need to be more active, more vigilant, and more knowledgeable than ever to realize and prove maximum return on the investment of establishing a knockout brand.

Closed-loop marketing software, mixed with excellent branding created to drive the results you want, is the magic combination for a successful branding strategy.

Ready to take your marketing analytics to the next level?

[Learn about HubSpot's marketing analytics software](#)

[Learn about Rebrandly's link management solution](#)