

Entrepreneur Concept FAQ

— *“I Want to Start a Footwear Brand... Now What?”*



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It's easy to think a creative project is all about meeting design, time, budget and market needs. But there's more. All projects play an important role in the strategic direction of a brand, company or product. Not just product design. Not just giving "creative direction" for others to do the work, but being creatively involved in all aspects of the product to focus the direction of the brand.

This is The Directive Collective.

Unlike most footwear design consultants that only provide raw design, The Directive Collective offers integrated product and brand design services.

Because of our unique integrated approach to design, branding and development, our workflow can maximize the efficiency of resources to deliver a comprehensive package of results in minimal time.

We work with our clients to learn, understand and develop their brands through a strategic creative process. From initial strategic planning consultation to final specifications, the most important driver in our work is the development of a cohesive, branded approach.

A full selection of services are available either as a custom package or individually, depending on the specific client and project needs. What makes The Directive Collective unique, is the integrated and strategic approach to all aspects of the product creation process.

While many design offices have a set menu of services or pre-packaged solutions, we prefer to carefully craft a bespoke approach for each client to keep projects focused on key goals and targets. From start-up brand to multinational sportswear giant, we custom tailor each project brief to provide a balance of creative and strategic services that is in keeping with the focus and direction of the brand and individual project.

Working in tandem with existing in-house resources, suppliers and product lines, The Directive Collective will ensure a smooth product integration and hand-off of final deliverables and samples.

We can also develop brands from the ground up, establishing new business, creative, and positioning strategies and product.

For each unique problem there is an unique solution. ➤

Frequently Asked Questions

As a strategic design consultancy offering a wide range of creative services, The Directive Collective has extensive experience working with new brands and start-ups. In fact, the majority of our clients fit into this category.

If you are looking at starting a new brand, or have an idea for a new footwear product, please review this guide we have put together to help answer many of the common questions we receive.

For further information about the initial process, please also read our document THE DIRECTIVE COLLECTIVE – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

Q. Why The Directive Collective?

A. As a full-service consultancy, we can offer a complete selection of creative and strategic services from initial brand positioning right through to commercialization and production. This ensures a consistency of approach and also is a much more efficient, effective and economical approach compared to hiring a branding consultancy, graphic designer, shoe designer, packaging designer, etc.

Given our experience working with new brands, we also understand the long term needs and commitment required. It is our goal to work with entrepreneurs and start-up brands from initial brand concept development right through to production. We help manage all aspects from start to finish to get a consistent brand and product story to market.

Q. How can The Directive Collective help me?

A. We provide a wide range of strategic creative services, including but not limited to – strategic positioning (for new and existing brands), branding, identity design, footwear design and specification, technical development and commercialization, graphics, packaging, and POS design.

Q. I have an idea for a new shoe; how do I get it produced?

A. In reality, designing and developing a new product is only part of the story. To be successful, a new product has to be part of a larger brand story. It not enough to just have a "new idea". The Directive Collective can help create this brand story.

Q. Ok, I want to start a new shoe brand. Now what?

A. Great. The first thing to look at is the big picture of the brand and product. To help you get started, we've put together the following 10 question quick review –

1. What is the essence of the brand?
2. Who is the target market?
3. Why is your brand different than other brands out there?
4. What is the product concept?
5. Why is the product different than other products out there?
6. What are your estimated production volumes?
7. Do you have a business plan in place?
8. What is your budget for branding and positioning?
9. What is your budget for design and development?
10. What is your budget for commercialization and production?

For further information, please request our document
SAMPLE DESIGN PROCESS — COMPLETE COLLECTION
DEVELOPMENT.

Q. What does the process of bringing a new brand and product to the market involve?

A. There are 8 major phases –

1. **PLANNING.** This helps determine the correct position and strategy for a new brand and product with respect to the market and competitors as well as business goals, targets and key schedule milestones.
2. **BRANDING.** Branding involves the creation of a new brand story and position; the foundation for any new brand. It includes; the Brand Name, Identity, as well as Brand Platform, Position, Identity and Personality.
3. **DESIGN AND SPECIFICATION.** From initial concept design to complete technical specification, the Design phase is key to defining design intent and providing a basis for further development, costing and commercialization.
4. **SOURCING.** Sourcing finds a manufacturing partner that has the capability and interest in your project to work together with in development and production. Please note, however, for most start-ups we do not provide sourcing services because of the inherent difficulty and risk for both a potential supplier and start-up. For more on this, please see *“Can you find me a factory to produce my concept?”*. We can and do, of course, work with any supplier you might have already on board and can help evaluate and review potential factories to see if they fit your needs.
5. **DEVELOPMENT.** Development takes a design from paper to physical samples with the goal of preserving design intent while resolving technical, cost and aesthetic concerns.
6. **SALES.** This is where you, the client (brand) show your new product to the market, generate interest and production orders. This is typically done via trade shows and sales meetings. We can support this process with marketing and graphic design services as well as continued planning and strategic consultation.
7. **COMMERCIALIZATION.** Commercialization is the process of undertaking mass production and the steps required to bring your product to market. We can assist in ensuring specifications and QC standards are complete, production schedules are in check, and advise in areas from costing to order terms. We also can be a part of the costing negotiations with the supplier and advise on pricing, markups and manufacturing agreement terms.
8. **MARKETING.** With your product coming to market, people are going to need to know about it. We can continue to support a new brand with marketing and graphic design from catalog to web design, POS (Point of Sale), packaging design, etc.

Tooling and capital expense for mass production for a typical start-up may be anywhere from \$150,000 – 300,000USD depending on number of styles, sizes and volumes. These are costs paid to the supplier, not The Directive Collective. Note that these costs also do not include marketing and distribution costs.

We also get a lot of questions about Patents. In short, there are two types; Utility – which covers a functional innovation that serves a specific purpose, and Design – which covers the appearance of an object.

While we are not patent attorneys, and suggest you do consult with one if you are interested, our general recommendation in most cases is that patents are expensive and unnecessary. It takes a lot of time and money to file a patent, and even more to protect it. Unless the design or function is truly innovative and/or you intend to licence the technology patents may not be needed, especially in the case of start-up brands and entrepreneurs where budgets are limited.

Q. How long does this process take?

A. It varies. Generally speaking it takes 1 – 1.5 years from initial planning stages until product is on the shelf. It may take less, and may take more as there are a number of variables involved that affect timing. In our experience the number one reason for changes in schedule are delays in accessing capital.

Q. How much does the process cost?

A. Again, it varies. The costs associated with our services in Planning, Branding, Design and Development, are the smallest of the whole project. The greatest costs incurred are those that relate to Development and Commercialization. Keep in mind that you will need to pay for these costs in full (to the supplier) before you receive any money from your customers (retailers or end consumers) so a large amount of capital is necessary.

Q. I've heard a lot about Minimum Order Quantities (MOQs). What are these and why are there minimums?

A. MOQs are the minimum volume expected by a factory. They ensure that the expense in development and readying production a factory encounters returns a net reward. A factory may typically specify minimums per style and also per color. Additionally there may be minimums (per square foot or M2) for certain types of materials. Minimums vary depending on the product and factory. Guideline numbers you can consider are 6000 pairs per style and 3000 pairs per color. If you are looking to produce 100 pairs of shoes for you and your friends, it's most likely not going to happen.

Consider that a typical athletic footwear production line makes approx. 2000 pairs per day. It may take 2-3 days or more to prepare the production line (getting all the right machines in place, training the workers in the process, etc.). If you only want to make 1000 pairs of shoes, that is 3 days of preparations for 1/2 day of work. It doesn't make sense.

Q. I am worried about someone stealing my idea. Will you sign an NDA?

A. Yes, we have no problem signing a confidentiality agreement. You may provide your own or request our standard document by email.

That being said most entrepreneurs have an unreal fear of intellectual property theft. As mentioned in "How much will it cost?", it takes a large amount of investment to bring a product to market and an idea is worthless without the opportunity to capitalize on it. Hence it is rare that anyone would take someone else's idea and spend hundreds of thousand dollars to bring it to market to try to make money. There are a lot easier ways to profit, and ideas are free and plentiful.

It is not our business, but if you are interested you can search for Trading Companies or Sourcing Companies that may be able to help.

Q. Can you find me a factory to produce samples of my concept? Can you find me a factory for production?

A. Short answer, no. In general, we do not provide sourcing services for start-ups because of the difficulty in doing so. Most footwear factories develop new products as means to an end; production. Development costs factories a lot of time and money and most are not interested in start-ups because many do not go mass production, or if they do, have such low volumes that the return is not worth the investment.

That being said, with some long-term projects we are involved with, we may get involved with sourcing or introduce new brands to manufacturing contacts if we believe there is a solid foundation for success and benefit for all partners involved. Please keep in mind this is the exception rather than the rule.

Q. I have an idea for a new product; can you help me sell it to other brands?

A. Basically, No. We can design and develop new product concepts, however, it is generally the case that footwear brands do not accept or solicit new product concepts and ideas. Major footwear brands have many designers on staff, and have no lack of ideas. That's not to say that new technologies or ideas may not be valid, but rather that licensing ideas from external parties is often not worth it for a footwear brand when the majority of cost and risk is in the development, production, and marketing of any new product.

Q. How can I see more samples of your work and process?

A. Please go to our website and download our STUDIO SERVICES AND PORTFOLIO PDF.