



THE BRAND ARCHITECT

*How to create a  
strong brand*

## Creating a strong brand

*Having a brand can differentiate your business from your competitors and drive loyalty. Branding isn't just for multi-nationals, small and medium firms can create an effective brand by examining how the business works, what it means to its customers and acting on the results.*

### **What is a brand?**

*A brand can be an identification or a mark that differentiates one business from another (through a name or a logo), it can also symbolise how people think about your business. Building a brand helps customers in their decision-making, creating a perceived knowledge of what they are going to buy – before they buy it.*

### **Do I need a brand?**

*Every business has already got a brand, even if it doesn't treat it as one. Your customers already have a perception of what your business means to them. Building a brand just means communicating your message to them more effectively so they immediately associate your business with their requirements.*

### **First Steps**

*Before you develop your brand identity, you have to assess your business, how it operates and the messages that you want to – and are able to – deliver consistently to your customers. You must be realistic right from the start. There are five key areas to consider.*

- 1. Work out your business, product or service's core competencies.*
- 2. Assess who your existing and potential customers are and find out what they like and what they don't.*
- 3. Find out how your customers and your employees feel about your business. Reliable? Caring? Cheap?*
- 4. Define how favourably your business is viewed by customers and potential customers – this is your perceived quality. Do they trust your business, product or service? Do they know exactly what it does for them? What do they think of when your brand is mentioned to them?*
- 5. Consider how far you can develop your business with its current customer perception without moving away from your core competencies. The amount you can change your offer is your brand stretch.*

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### ***Pulling the Elements Together***

*Once you have assessed your competencies and your positioning, define your identity. Discuss your competencies and values with employees and customers. What you think about your business is not necessarily what your customers or employees think. Your brand must reflect what they think to have credibility. Note your agreed competencies and values – these will form the basis of your brand.*

### ***Creating a Brand***

*Once you have worked out your core competencies, brand values, perceived quality and brand stretch, you can communicate them to your customers. Build the message into everything your customer or potential customer sees and hears before they have any direct contact with your business.*

### ***Managing the Brand***

*A brand will not work instantly – it will develop strength over time as long as your business consistently communicates and delivers your brand values to customers. Keep all your staff involved in your brand and your business. Monitor your customers' response to the brand regularly and continually review how your brand values are communicated. Once the brand is developed within your own business and your existing customers, you can use it to attract new customers.*

### ***Budgeting for a Brand***

*A brand can cost as much or as little as you like. If you keep it simple, it can be confined to the cost of the time you spend creating it and getting your staff to work with it. These are the things you could budget for:*

- Your time and the cost of your staff's time.*
- Reworking your company's stationery, signage and packaging.*
- Design and printing of sales-support material.*
- Advertising and PR.*
- A branding agency to create and manage the brand for you.*

*Even if you go no further than the first point and bring stationery and sales support material into line with your branding as you replenish them, you should feel some benefit over time.*

*Good Luck!*