

Redesigning the look of your brand in ten easy steps

When you first set-up your business, you probably rushed to create a logo, a few business cards, and a handful of brochures – but now you're ready to grow, the time's right to become more professional in the way you promote yourself to the wider world.

Lots of growing businesses struggle when trying to get design work right. It can be hard to know what's going to work and often owners think branding and logos are for bigger companies, not for them.

Good design can be an important part of helping your business grow as packaging, in-store displays, the look and feel of a website, are the things that help customers recognise products - and that's true for companies of all sizes.

In this article, we're going to take you through a simple ten step process that will help your business come to life through design. By the end, you're going to be in a strong position to redesign the look of your brand, because we'll have worked out the values and messages that are unique to your business.

Samantha Worsey, who runs Southsea Bathing Hut, has just taken her soap business through a similar process. So, to make things easier, we'll be checking in with Samantha as we go to see how she approached parts of the exercise.

Ok, let's get started...

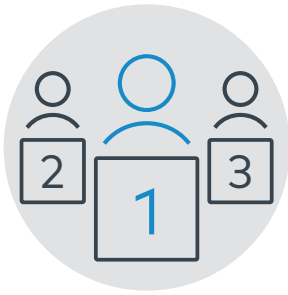


1. Ask yourself a key question about your business and products

Why is your business important to you? It's a simple enough question, but you'd be amazed how many owners can't communicate this easily.

Task one:

- a) Ask yourself that question. Write down all the things that come into your head.
- b) Now, ask yourself what you think your business does well. Add those things to the list.
- c) Now, put the answers to one side (you're going to need them in a moment).



2. Examine the competition

It's time now to look at the competition. Our next task is about establishing some facts about your market.

Task two:

- a) Make a list of things your competitors do well. Write down everything that comes to mind.
- b) Using your list from Task One, scrub out all points where your competition does things better.
- c) You should be left with a list of ways your business is unique and better than others.
- d) You might want to add to this list any areas where the competition is currently better, but you hope to surpass them through introducing new ideas.
- e) Put this list to one side.



3. Find out about your customers

It's a simple fact that not everyone will be interested in you; but if you can find out what your customers like, why they buy your products, and what sort of people they are, this information can help establish a lasting connection with those people to whom your products appeal.

Samantha says:

"Initially, I wanted everyone to buy our product, but that's too universal," says Samantha. "So instead, I talked to customers, I conducted surveys – all this helped get inside their psychology.

"We were able to establish who our customers were, why and where they shopped. That allowed us to be more effective in our communications."

Finding out customers had disposable incomes, but were also focused on health and local products, helped Samantha be clearer in her targeting. Like Samantha, can you find out information about your customers and what it is about your products that they like?

Task three:

- a) Think of all the points you'd like to know about your customers – things like age, gender, wealth, shopping habits, general attitudes, why they buy your products, etc.
- b) Write a list, then highlight the seven or eight points that are most important.
- c) Design a survey with simple questions to help elicit the information highlighted in Point B – it might be easiest to think of multiple choice questions.



Here's an example:

Which of these factors most closely describes why you buy Product X?

- Price
- Product quality
- Production conditions (this could be: is it made in the UK, is it produced ethically?)
- Other (please specify...)

d) You now need to put those questions to customers. This could be through any combination of email, online, or face-to-face. These are the options:

- Use an online survey tool to create a digital version, then email this to customers
- Using the same tool, place a version of the survey on your website for visitors
- Or spend time in asking customers questions directly, one-to-one

e) Once you've gathered the survey information, write down the key findings on i) what sort of people buy your products ii) why they like them.

f) As with the details gathered in the previous stages, put those findings to one side for later.



4. Find out what people say about you

Now we know what your customers think, it's time to find out what the wider world knows by reviewing press coverage and looking at comments made online.

Task four:

- Gather any print clippings of pieces written about you in newspapers and/or magazines.
- Using Google, search in the News section to find any online news mentions.
- On Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, other social channels, and online review sites, search using your name, your company's name, and your products name to find mentions about you.
- Using this information, create a list of themes that emerge when others are taking about you and, again, put this to one side for later.



5. Establish your business values

So far, we've gathered information on your business, your competitors, and what customers think. It's time to put some of that to use. We're going to undertake an exercise to create a series of key business values.



Task five:

- a) Using your list from Task Two and your findings from Task Three and Task Four, write a list of all the key points about your business. The list (which could be long) should be a mixture of why you love your brand, why customers and the wider public also do, and the reasons why you're different.
- b) Now, refine that list. Select four vital sentiments that most closely represent what your business is about.
- c) Now, congratulate yourself, because you have just established your four principal values.



6. Create a key message

Designs carry important messages to customers about your values, so it's important to get those messages right. When Samantha established her business in 2015, she was worried about losing out on sales and therefore, she didn't refine her message. That soon changed.

Samantha says:

"The concern is that if you're not communicating every detail about your business, you could be missing the one element about it that the customer buys into. That's not helpful. It's much better to be clear and concise," says Samantha.

"Now, if you ask what is our elevator pitch, I'd say we're a natural skincare company from the seaside and everything is made by hand, by us, in small batches, and we use no nasties."

Taking Samantha's advice, we need to establish a message that's unique to your business. So, it's time for our next task:

Task six:

- a) Using the values established in Task Five, draft three or four messages about your business. Each message should be one or two sentences reflecting the values you have worked hard to establish.

(This is a tough task, so it might be an idea to refer to Samantha's elevator pitch – see how she has encapsulated her values in a succinct message)
- b) Once you have these messages written down, select the best one.
- c) Now, give yourself a pat on the back. By selecting a message, you now have an elevator pitch to call your own! What's more, you also have a message that's ready to use directly as part of your design work.



7. Gather images

Until now we have focused on establishing what's important about your brand. Next, we need to use all the work you've put into this process and start to translate that into a visual identity.

Task seven:

- Take the list of key points created at the start of Task Five, and search each term on Google.
- For each term, click on the images tab and save pictures to create a collection of images appropriate to each of your terms.
- Now, use Google to search for images related to your competitors, their products, their communications and create another collection.
- Repeat the process, this time searching for images of products in similar categories to those you produce - then products that share your brand values.
- Gather these four collections of images together and save them.



8. Research tones of voice

After establishing the visuals you'll use to inform your new designs, you need to take what you have learned so far and think about an appropriate tone of voice.

For Samantha...

"...it was important to focus on a straightforward, friendly tone. However, a solicitor might want a tone of voice that's perhaps more formal and professional."

Task eight:

- Just like the image search in Step Seven, Google around your key terms, products in similar categories, or products that share your brand values.
- Make a note of the types of words used in the promotion of these products and the way in which they are conveyed (Is the tone fun? Formal? Friendly? Posh? Professional? Or relaxed?).



9. Gather together all your work

There you are, you have been through the branding process. Just like Samantha, you now have all the materials you'll need to translate your values and messages into a new look.



So, how did Samantha use all the information she had gathered?

After applying a similar branding process to the Southsea Bathing Hut, Samantha altered her business cards, website, and social banners. In doing so, she created a new look and feel by removing descriptive text to instead reflect a lighter visual identity focusing on natural, brighter, pure scenes and incorporating thematically-appropriate wording.

In addition, Samantha radically altered the imagery she was using. Her new images incorporate herself at the centre of her business identity. Through benchmarking against larger competitors, Samantha found those businesses she wanted to emulate often had the owner front and centre. So, she adapted her visual identity to reflect this trend.

Task nine (don't worry, it's a quick one):

a) Gather together:

- Your set of unique business values
- The key message (or elevator pitch) that neatly sums up your business
- The collections of images related to all your customer and competitor insights
- The collection of words related to your tone-of-voice insights



10. Start the design work

You have created a series of documents that represent a strong, new brand identity, so it's time now to think about the new look of your brand.

So, final task:

a) Pass your documents to a designer as part of the brief to create a new look (in fact, you might now want to look at this article on 5 tips on working with a designer before you start).

Or:

b) Use the materials as the starting point for your own design work.

c) Work through your images, slowly discarding those you don't like and/or don't fit your values or message.

d) Do the same with the tone-of-voice collection of words.

e) Repeat steps C and D until you have a core set of images and words from which you can draw inspiration and start putting pen to paper for your new look.

We'd love to know how you get on, so feel free to share your new look with us on our Facebook page.