



# Branding 101

A quick and simple guide to what it is, what it isn't and why you need it

---

by Jessie Ford Coots (of)

untethered  
[THE STUDIO]

# WHAT BRANDING IS

Branding is a foundation and a future, a never-ending process that you will keep evolving for as long as your brand and business are around. Your brand is everything from the visual style that you create around your logo, website, stationery, advertising and other collateral — to the tone, voice and language that you choose to use through the messaging that you share with your audience — to the overall personality that it represents across a multitude of platforms and mediums.

A brand is like a body that needs all of its parts connected and communicating in order for it to function correctly —and brand(ing) is the actual implementation, strategy and support of those parts.

# WHAT BRANDING ISN'T

Branding isn't just a logo, a website, social media graphics, a tv commercial, billboard or email campaign. It isn't just messaging, your specific services or strategy alone. It isn't advertising, marketing, PR or constant promotion.

Branding is never complete, just because you might have a bangin' logo, new website and some Facebook advertisements.

It's an ever-evolving and changing process — and a brand will only grow bigger, better and stronger with time. Branding isn't just a collection of material things, either. It's the experience someone has when they come into contact with your identity.

# WHAT MAKES UP A BRAND

A brand can consist of the following (and still more):

- vision & mission statement
  - logo
  - color palette
  - typography
  - website
- digital imagery & photography
  - stationery & collateral
  - tone & voice
  - messaging
  - overall style
  - personality

It is a mixture of “all of the things” — and still so much more. A brand is the overall expression that you make, the impression that you leave on your client and their experience and reaction to it.

# WHY YOU NEED A BRAND

Branding is one of the most important pieces to your business puzzle — it helps you in major ways to look professional. The more consistent a brand is (with all of its elements working together) — the more trustworthy and legitimate it will appear to clients.

You need a consistent and legitimate brand so that your reputation is strong — and you are positioned as the expert that you truly are. Clients will believe that you are the right fit for them — and dependable.

You need to know who you (as a business owner) are, what your business stands for, who your audience is, what you want to deliver to them (service/product-wise and experience-wise) and how you plan to stand out from the crowd. You should know these things first, before you even begin to develop the look and feel of the brand. Once values, strategy and messaging are in place, visuals can follow.

# BRANDING IS NEVER-ENDING

Branding is a process, its growth and you will always be continually developing it. It will never be finished or perfect — and that's okay!

Even a year from now, there will be new outlets that will compete with Facebook and Instagram in the social mediasphere. Videos (like Facebook Live and Periscope) are super popular at the moment and therefore, more people are video blogging vs. written blogging to reach their audiences. There will be new design software developed and more modernized methods for creating content. To stay relevant and to be taken seriously, a brand must stay current.

The reason a brand is never perfect and branding is a process that will never be truly complete is because like with anything, times change and the way people receive and interpret information (whether digitally or printed) will always evolve or improve.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

As an initial brainstorm and to get the creative juices flowing, it's important to ask yourself some questions as you begin thinking about your overall brand identity, how you plan to sell your services or products and what you want your customers to experience when they work with you. Print, cut and paste these questions somewhere in your office, with answers that you can always tweak and evolve.

- 1) What style of logo do you see yourself using on all of your materials?
- 2) What colors, fonts and imagery best represent the look and feel of your business?
- 3) How do you plan to stand out from your competition?  
What do you offer that is different from anyone else?
- 4) Are you selling services or products? Will you run your business entirely online, need a physical storefront or a mix of both? Will you be able to maintain an online shop?
- 5) What emotional experience do you want a customer to have when they come into contact with parts of your brand, think about buying from you and after they do?
- 6) Who is your dream customer and what is the best way to reach them? Are they on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, all over the world or right next door in your hometown?

# DIY OR HIRE A PROFESSIONAL?

When you are ready to launch a new brand identity, it's a BIG task! The number one question that you should ask yourself as a business owner is, "am I truly doing my business justice by handling everything myself or do I need outside professional help?" Everyone is at different stages and budgets. It's perfectly okay to design social media graphics in Canva, customize a free website template and write your own content. You might think that you don't have the money at the moment to hire someone. But, remember, having a designer handle your branding will help you grow your business and gain customers quicker when you really look the part. It's just as important to invest in it, as it is any other aspect of your business. You might be able to temporarily fix a leak under your sink, but if you're not a professional plumber, you're going to spend more money down the road fixing it again later, rather than having it done right the first time. The same principle applies to visually appearing professional and making a good impression on your clients — do it immediately.

# NEED HELP? JUST ASK ME!

Now that you've gone through this guide, how do you feel? Do you think that you have the time, skills and resources to manage all aspects of branding your business yourself? Do you realize and understand the importance of looking super professional, legitimate, consistent and relevant? And with that, do you realize that creating a memorable identity and materials that all match and flow together, in digital and printed formats, can come together much easier, quicker and better with the help of a professional designer? It's like trusting yourself to diagnose and treat your child when they're severely sick instead of just making an appointment with the doctor or replacing the brakes in your car yourself, instead of taking it to a mechanic to correctly fix.

If you do choose to make a smart business decision and invest in professional branding, I offer two package options to my clients! See different ways to contact me on the next page. I would LOVE to help you grow your business by standing out from the crowd!

# THANK YOU!



Thank you for downloading my free guide “Branding 101: A quick and simple guide to what it is, what it isn’t and why you need it.”

My name is **Jessie Ford Coots** and I own and operate **Untethered**, a boutique branding + design studio creatively elevating identities for small businesses, female-driven brands and nonprofits

If you have any questions or comments about this guide or are interested in working with me (I offer monthly design services, branding and logo packages) here is how we can connect:

e: [jessie@untethereddesign.com](mailto:jessie@untethereddesign.com) // [www.untethereddesign.com](http://www.untethereddesign.com)



Untethered  
Design Studio



@untethereddesign



@untethered\_ds