

YOUR WEBSITE AND BRAND

- How do you ensure your website reflects your brand and its values?
- Is it important?
- What does brand mean anyway?
- Does brand mean different things on the web than on TV say or other media like press?



Large companies spend large amounts establishing and supporting their brands, because it works. Brands bring customer recognition, trust, preference, loyalty, re-purchase, retention and thus future earnings. In these days of rapid change, people enjoy the sense of security that comes with a brand.

Lots of smaller companies know this too, companies like:

innocent <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/>,
Tyrells Crisps <http://www.tyrrellspotatochips.co.uk/>,
Hill Station Ice Cream <http://www.hillstation.co.uk/>.

Branding isn't just about logos, it's the entire "feel" associated with a company. As we say on our branding page, a brand "has to tell a story that the consumer wants to hear and can relate to, that can be encapsulated rationally and emotionally in a message that tells the story simply and quickly and that is then supported by the experience of the consumer". A brand is the whole experience.

On the web the experience a user has on the site is just as important – perhaps even more important than the design of the site. Experience includes usability, navigation, follow up customer service, feelings of trust and much, much more.

When people visit a website they have generally got there via a search engine. This means they have used a particular search phrase, which also means they have some objective already in their mind.

Other media – television, radio, press, door drops, direct mail and others – must first catch your attention but when visiting a website there is a good chance that the visitor already has that objective in their mind, so what is important is not (just) being "highly creative" but, probably far more importantly providing the information and service that they expect.



In addition to this, especially if you are a smaller company and can't afford some of the more expensive "above the line" media such as TV, your website will be the first impression of your company, its products and services.

Thus, it really is the most essential element of your brand strategy. It communicates who you are, what you offer and what you promise. Its content, organization, usability, added value (that "X factor") and appearance all play a part in ensuring that potential customers feel positive towards you and begin to associate your company with a particular product or service and return to your site when they need the product or service you sell.

Of course a well branded site just happens doesn't it? Well..... no! It is, like everything in business hard work.



There are some things you really need to understand first:

- Who will your visitors be?
 - What type of experience do they expect?
 - How internet experienced are they?
 - Do they know your products?
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- What stimuli do they respond to: emotional, intellectual or a combination?
 - What is their age, sex, nationality, religion, disposable income?
 - What do your competitors' sites look like?
 - What makes you better than them?
 - Why should customers buy from you?
 - What are the trends in your industry?
 - What is your company's personality?

Once you have got this information you need to analyse and sharpen it.

- How can you really narrow your focus to a specific niche, target audience, offer, benefits and product range?
- How can you divide your site into sections that will meet user needs and expectations and fill each section with the appropriate content?
- How do you help visitors quickly and easily find the content they're looking?
- What look, feel and tone of voice reflect your company and your brand?

Now you are "good to go", and we'd suggest: ready to brief a professional. If you'd like even more help and detail please download our Logo design and Web design questionnaires, they'll help you to fill in even more detail.

