



Unit 1

What is Branding?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Define what a brand is (particularly a strong brand) and what branding is about
- ✓ Define various types of brand architecture and brand extension
- ✓ Identify your brand's products, the features of those products, and their values

Unit 1

What is branding?

What is a Brand?

There are many definitions of a brand, but our favorite comes from Simon Middleton, a British brand expert. In his book *Build a Brand in 30 Days*, he says, “**Brand is about meaning.** Your brand is everything that your customers and prospective customers think, feel, say, hear, read, watch, imagine, suspect, and even hope about your product, service, or organization.”

(Here, the word **customers** refers to both the external clients who bring business and the internal clients, such as the employees, stakeholders, and suppliers that support your business.)

Why a Brand?

People use brands to help them navigate today’s marketplace of overflowing choices. If you’re in a hurry and you just want a hamburger, will you choose the familiar golden arches or the no-name burger stand? If you want a certain style of shoes, will Nike’s trademark swoosh help to make the decision a little easier?

What’s in a Brand?

Your brand can include:

- A catchy name
- A logo (an image) or logotype (words associated with an image)
- Trademark colors
- Characters
- A particular style, look, and feel
- An attitude
- A set of feelings and values
- Anything you want it to!

What is Branding, Then?

The word **branding** encompasses the entire process of creating, managing, and evaluating that brand. It’s how you build relationships with people through the image that the brand gives out. Your brand should therefore always be integrated into all facets of your organization.

Why Branding is the Most Important Investment a Company Can Make

Branding can be a costly project and a big investment. Many business owners are reluctant to invest their time and money in a full branding project, particularly since branding and graphic design experts can come with a hefty price tag.

For one, branding doesn't have to cost a lot of money. If you know what questions to ask, you can work through the process yourself. (That's what we'll focus on in this course.) Then, you can work with a graphic designer to bring your vision to life. (Although we can't make you a graphic designer in this course, we will give you some tips on choosing a graphic designer, as well as a primer on graphic design elements.)

What advantages might come from having a strong brand?

Characteristics of a Strong Brand

Name some brands that you are familiar with.

What makes these brands stand out?

What Are You All About?

Identifying Your Products and Features

Before you begin, you must know what you're branding. If possible, keep your product (or a sample or picture of it – this works particularly well if it's a service) near you as you work through the branding process. **You also want to understand what your product does, what it offers customers, and what you want it to mean.** Let's begin by identifying its features and benefits.

Products and Features

To keep you grounded, take a blank sheet of paper. Write a few short lines about what your product or service is, what it does, and what benefits it brings to customers. You want to focus on the things that are key to your business.

Example: Acme Widgets Inc.

- We sell four types of widgets and provide widget repair service.
- Three of our widgets are for home use.
- The base model provides basic cleaning services and saves customers about one hour each day.
- The middle model provides better cleaning services as well as laundry duties. It saves customers about two hours each day, plus all maintenance fees are waived for three years.
- The top-end model performs all services of a traditional butler. It saves customers at least four hours each day, plus all maintenance fees are waived for its lifetime.
- Our industrial widget is custom-built and is designed to integrate with any assembly line. On average, businesses save \$1,500 per day in labor costs by using our widgets.

Identifying Your Values

Now that we know what our product is, let's explore what we want it to stand for. Earlier, we learned that brand is about meaning, so let's see what meaning you want to have for your brand.

Step One: Brainstorming

To start, draw a grid on a sheet of paper, or a group of circles. You want to have 50 to 60 individual spaces that are all equal.

Now, write one value that you would like your brand to represent in each box or circle. Think of words you would want guiding decisions for your brand. Be as creative as you like – there are no rules; just stick to words that represent values.

Tip: If you're having a hard time getting started, think of a brand that you would not want to be like and describe their values. Write the opposite down for your brand.

Here are some ideas:

Accountability	Excitement	Nature
Achievement	Expertise	Order
Adventure	Fame	Power
Affection	Freedom	Public service
Authority	Friendships	Purity
Change	Growth	Quality
Commitment	Honesty	Responsibility
Community	Independence	Security
Competence	Influential	Self-respect
Cooperation	Inner harmony	Serenity
Creativity	Integrity	Sophistication
Decisiveness	Intellectual	Stability
Democracy	Involvement	Status
Ecological awareness	Knowledge	Sustainable
Effectiveness	Leadership	Tranquility
Efficient	Meaningful	Truth
Ethical	Merit	Variety
Excellence	Money	Wisdom

Step Two: Narrowing It Down

Now, a values statement that is this broad just doesn't make sense. Our next task is to narrow it down to just a handful of values; even one is great! (**Wal-Mart** has three: respect, service, and excellence. **HP** has five: passion, respect, honesty, diversity, and teamwork.)

Try using these guideline:

- First, go through and cross out any values that just don't seem to represent the brand, or to be something that you would want the brand to represent.
- Next, cross out any values you don't think the business could embody. For example, if you own a fast-food burger franchise, you probably shouldn't aim for sophistication.
- Now it gets a little tougher. Cross out anything that won't compel employees or have meaning for customers.

Some things to consider outlining can include:

- Who will you have as customers, competitors, employees, and shareholders?
- What will the product look like?
- Where will you be selling it?
- How will your brand look?
- What reputation will it have?

Here is a quick example for our fictional company, **Acme Widgets**.

One Year

Our household widgets will be in the top ten of Innovation Magazine’s annual Time-Saving Devices list. Our sales focus will remain in North America, although we will begin expanding to Europe at the end of the year. During this process, we will ensure that the product lives up to its current high standards of efficiency and saving customers’ time.

Three Years

We will expand our industrial widgets line to two standard models, while keeping the custom model option. We will continue to sell three types of household widgets. We will establish a strong market presence in Europe and begin establishing contacts in Asia. During this process, we will ensure that the product lives up to its current high standards of efficiency and saving customers time. We will expand the focus to include money-saving options, such as our lifetime service plan.

Five Years

We will focus on improving our product line through customer feedback, industry studies, and intensive research in development. These efforts will support strengthening our global presence and make the anticipated line of four household widgets and three industrial widgets the preferred brand worldwide.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Anselmo, Donna. Marketing Demystified. McGraw-Hill, 2010.*
- ✓ *Godin, Seth. All Marketers are Liars. Portfolio Hardcover, 2009.*