

# A Comprehensive Guide to Building a Brand that Converts

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You don't need to spend millions of dollars to build a quality brand—all you need is a thorough branding plan.

## In this guide, we'll cover:

- ✦ Creating a plan and conducting research
- ✦ Nailing down key components of your brand
- ✦ Reinforcing and measuring your branding efforts



# Building Your Audience and Returning Customers List

Building a brand for your online business consists of more than just choosing your store's name and crafting a logo. Great brands have a visual and emotional impact that is able to attract an audience and keep them coming back for more. To achieve this, many business owners rely on creating a brand identity to guide the way they approach the look and feel of their business.

Your brand identity affects every part of your business, from the products you sell to choices you make about your site's design. Your brand identity should

showcase who you are as a company and convince your audience to buy from you instead of your competitors. You don't have to spend millions to build a brand—you just need a good branding plan.

Luckily, we've created this guide to give you an in-depth, step-by-step walkthrough for building your own brand. Work along with our guide on paper or in a digital document, and you'll be well on your way to establishing a conversion-focused brand.

## GUIDE OUTLINE

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### **Part 1: Creating a Branding Plan**

- a. Perform Competitor Branding Research
- b. Fill Out a Competitor Brand Attribute Checklist
- c. Create a Brand Attribute Checklist for Your Business

### **Part 2: Determining Your Target Audience**

- a. Think About Who Uses Your Products
- b. Map Out Specific Audience Traits
- c. Use Google Analytics to Create Accurate User Personas
- d. Test Your Target Audience With a Focus Group

### **Part 3: Creating User Personas**

- a. Get to Know Your Existing Audience
- b. Fill In Demographic Details
- c. Dig Into Psychographic Information
- d. Know When to Refer to Your User Personas

### **Part 4: Establishing a Tone of Voice and Brand Persona**

- a. Build Your Brand Positioning Statement
- b. Craft Your Tagline
- c. Find Your Brand Voice
- d. Make Your Messaging Consistent

### **Part 5: Building Your Brand's Visual Design**

- a. Get Inspired
- b. Consider Color
- c. Create Your Logo
- d. Choose Your Typography
- e. Think About Imagery

### **Part 6: Creating Your Brand's Mission and Values**

- a. Write a Mission Statement
- b. List Your Company's Values
- c. Create a Brand Story

### **Part 7: Identifying Your USPs & Crafting Your Value Proposition**

- a. Unique Selling Points (USPs)
- b. Value Proposition

### **Part 8: Reinforcing Your Brand on Social Media**

- a. Choose Your Channels
- b. Update Your Social Media Profiles
- c. Create a Content Schedule
- d. Make Your Feed Consistent
- e. Craft a Good Story
- f. Adopt an Overall Theme
- g. Update Your Style Guide
- h. Design with Each Channel in Mind

### **Part 9: Keeping Up with Brand & Reputation Management**

- a. Understand What Your Online Reputation Is
- b. Decide How You'll Respond to Negative Reviews
- c. Choose Your Online Reputation Management Tools & Services
- d. Protect Your Brand Name
- e. Leverage Positive Reviews

### **Part 10: Measuring the Results of Your Branding Efforts**

- a. Get Started with Google Analytics
- b. Use A/B Tests to Boost Your Branding
- c. Set Up Social Media Metrics

### **Build Your Conversion-Focused Brand**

# Creating a Branding Plan

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What is branding? According to the [American Marketing Association](#), “A brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” It forms your identity in the marketplace through three things: your purpose, your position, and your personality. The goal is to assess these three factors of your business and build around them so you’ll have a well-defined voice that resonates with customers. It tells a story that draws people in, makes your brand unique, and has your voice built around it.



## a. Perform Competitor Branding Research

The first step in building your brand is to do some research, and a good place to start is by researching your competitors. Because one of the most effective and powerful branding approaches is to try to stand out from your competitors as much as possible, this will give you insight into what is already being done in your industry.

If you're starting a business selling a specific product, try Googling other businesses that sell the same product to give you an idea of what your competition looks like. You can also take a look at brands on Facebook to get an idea of how they are talking to their customers and representing their company on social media. Try to identify at least three competitors, and then use the Competitor Brand Attribute Checklist on the next page to record your observations about them.



## b. Fill Out a Competitor Brand Attribute Checklist

For each of your three (or more) competitors, list out the brand elements to the right and on the next page. Make a note of any similarities across your competitors—are all of their sites predominantly blue? Are they all trying to sound professional?—and what makes them unique.

During this research phase, note what you feel you should incorporate into your brand identity. What do you like that your competitors have, and what do you dislike? This will help you create a unique brand identity as you move forward.



### Brand Voice

**Brand Name:** Is the brand name descriptive (makes it clear what products or services are being offered), or is it more inventive? Is it unique and easy to remember? Does it fit the overall feel and theme of the brand and its products?

**Brand Slogan or Tagline:** Does the brand use a slogan or tagline (like Nike’s famous “Just Do It”)? What message are they trying to convey using their tagline or slogan?

**Tone of Voice:** Look at each brand’s website and social media accounts and see what sort of language they’re using. Are they trying to sound trustworthy and authoritative? Playful and fun? Down-to-earth?

**Products:** What sort of products does each brand offer, and how do they describe them? Are they emphasizing their products’ value, fashionableness, or quality? If your competitor offers a variety of products, try to restrict your analysis to just those products that compete against what you offer.

**Social Media Presence:** Is the brand active on social media? If so, what sort of content are they sharing, and how do they interact with their customers? For some brands, this may be very similar to their core brand voice. For others, it might be quite different, like the famously sassy Twitter account of [Wendy’s Hamburgers](#).

## Brand Image

**Imagery:** What sorts of images does each brand use on their site, and what emotions are they trying to convey? Outdoor products may want to convey a sense of adventure, while an interior design site may want to convey feelings of warmth and coziness.

**Color schemes:** What colors are prevalent on competitors' sites? Color has an [important \(and underappreciated\) role](#) in a site's look and feel.

**Logo:** What sort of logo are they using? Does it intuitively tie back to their brand or products, such as a fishing company using a fishhook in their logo?

**Mascot or figurehead:** Do your competitors use a mascot, spokesman, or other figurehead?

**Site Layout:** Take a look at your competitors' product categories, what they feature on their homepage, and their overall site design. Is there one product in particular they're trying to drive traffic to?

## Brand Story

**Brand History:** Check your competitors' About Us pages and read their brand story. This will tell you why they're doing what they're doing. Do they have a hundred years of experience in this industry? Are they an up-and-coming young startup with bold ideas or new technologies? Are they a husband-and-wife team pursuing their passions?

**Mission Statement:** Your competitors' mission statements are a great place to get a summarized view into their overall goals and values.

**Brand Values:** Check out your competitors' value statements—in essence, what sorts of things they believe in. These will sometimes be written in their About Us page or other copy, but sometimes you'll need to figure them out for yourself. Does your competitor support a philanthropic cause? Are they dedicated to providing the most durable products in the industry?

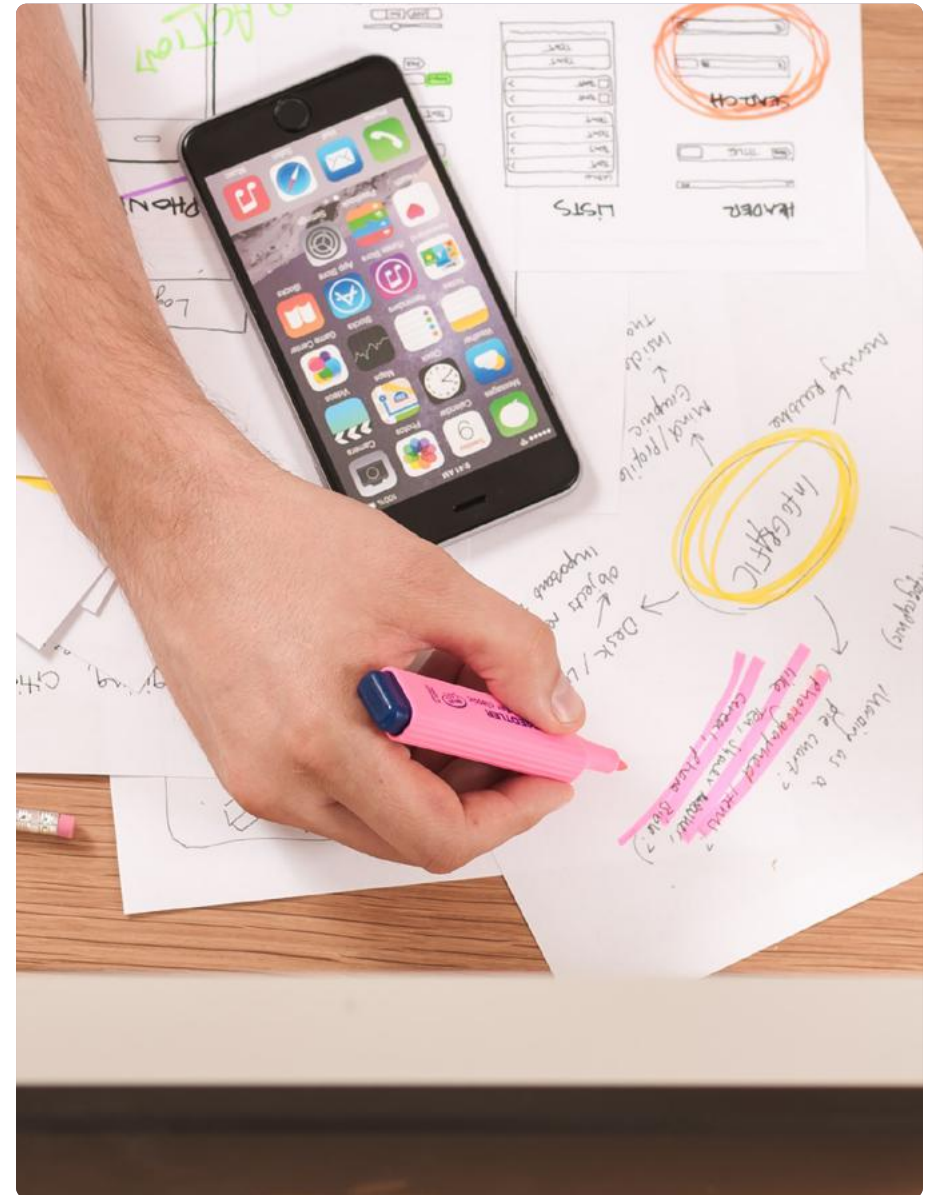
**Brand Consistency:** Is the brand reinforced everywhere that customers can interact with the brand? Are they using similar language, imagery, logos, color schemes, etc.? Being inconsistent in your branding can confuse customers, and will make it more difficult for them to form a coherent picture of your brand.

**Authenticity:** Nobody likes a faker. Does the brand stand by the values it claims to have? Do they seem to genuinely care about the products they sell, or are they just looking to make a quick buck?

## c. Create a Brand Attribute Checklist for Your Business

After you've listed these elements out for your competitors, write one for your own store (even if it doesn't exist yet). Identifying where you want to go with the flow and where you want to stand out will help you decide on your overall brand position.

Don't worry about making it perfect the first time—you can use this as a working document that houses your brand's main points as you continue your research and implementation. Sometimes you learn things along the way that you didn't expect.





# Determining Your Target Audience

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With the vast selection that consumers have online these days, companies need to do more to gain customers. Think about it from your own perspective—are you more likely to buy from a store that tries to be everything to everyone, or a store dedicated to your personal needs and interests? Consumers reward the effort that companies put into understanding and serving them as individuals. To garner attention and favor, you need to put some extra effort into your marketing. A big part of that is determining your target audience and figuring out how to cater to their needs and desires.



## a. Think About Who Uses Your Products

Once you know who you are focusing on, your company's marketing decisions will come much easier. What one consumer loves, another may hate, so you want to make sure your design, wording, imagery, and overall brand is in line with the needs and tastes of your precise target audience.

Try to think about the motivations or needs of the people buying your products. For example, if you're selling alarm systems, you're not really selling equipment—you're selling the feeling of security and protection. If your online store sells nail polish, you're not selling just the polish—you're selling a sense of fashion and style. If your product solves a particular pain point or customer need, you'll want to take that into account in your audience targeting.

It's important to think about who will ultimately use the product, but often it's even more crucial to make a connection with the person who will be buying it. For example, teachers get a lot of apple-related gifts, but they don't purchase them for themselves. If you're selling teacher gifts, you should appeal to the kids and parents looking for an item to express their thanks at the end of the school year.



## b. Map Out Specific Audience Traits

When thinking about your target audience, you'll need to list out two different types of information: demographic information, which includes the physical and personal characteristics of your audience, and psychographic information, which includes the personality, values, and interests of your target audience.

### Demographic Traits

**Age:** A rough age range of the people that might be interested in your product. The standard age ranges are 12-17, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. Your own age ranges may be much more specific or much broader than these—just use whatever age ranges make the most sense for your particular product. If your product appeals to people of all ages, it might be more useful for you to think in terms of life stages, such as students, new moms, or retirees.

**Location:** If your product is targeted at people living in a certain area (such as merchandise with the Texas flag on it), you'll want to take this into account in your marketing materials. Similarly, if your product is only useful to people who live in certain types of locations (for example, a fold-up bicycle designed to fit on the subway), make sure to take that into account as well. In sum, if there are any geographical factors that affect whether or not people will want your product, list them here.

**Gender:** If your product is targeted at members of a specific gender, list it here. If this isn't relevant for your products, skip it.

**Income Level:** Is your product a luxury, a convenience, or a necessity? If you're selling luxury or boutique products, you'll want to target customers who can afford them. If you're selling value-focused products, you'll likely want to target budget-conscious customers. The "luxury or value" question is more important than the overall price of the item you're selling.

**Education Level:** Your customers' education level doesn't always equate to them having a Master's degree—instead, it often refers to how familiar or educated they are about your products as a whole. If your content is too technical for your audience, they'll be confused. If it's over-explanatory, your audience may find it useless, or worse: condescending.

**Marital Status:** If your product is only relevant to married or single people, list that here. It's no use selling engagement rings to the already married (hopefully!).

**Occupation:** Some products are focused around occupations, such as fashionable scrubs for nurses or comfortable non-slip shoes for restaurant workers. If your product is particularly useful or appealing to those with a particular job or type of job, include that info on your template.

**Ethnic/Linguistic Background:** If your product is marketed for particular ethnic or linguistic groups (for example, bilingual Hindi-English books for children), take this into account when deciding on your target audience.



## Psychographic Traits

**Personality Traits:** What personality traits do your customers have? Are they focused or disorganized? Caring or callous? Optimistic or pessimistic? The more you can get into the head of your target audience, the easier it will be to speak to them in ways they'll relate to.

**Attitudes:** What sort of attitudes do your potential customers have, particularly in relation to your products? Is your product something that excites and engages them, or is it just a routine daily purchase? Are they skeptical about your brand-new technology? Do they hold positive or negative attitudes about this type of product as a whole based on past experiences?

**Values:** What sorts of things does your target audience value? Are they family-oriented? Concerned about the environment or social justice issues?

**Hobbies/Interests:** Does your product support a particular hobby or interest?

**Lifestyle:** What sort of lifestyle does your customer value? Are they an always-on-the-go traveling executive who prioritizes efficiency above everything else? Are they fitness-focused? Segmenting your audience by lifestyle will help give you a closer look into the way your customers make their daily decisions, and can help you make the sale.

**Purchase Behavior:** What sorts of behaviors do your target audience engage in when deciding to make a purchase? Most particularly, what are the key obstacles you'll need to overcome when persuading a buyer to make a purchase? Does your customer need proof that your product works before buying? Do they only buy if they know they can easily return your product?

## c. Use Google Analytics to Create Accurate User Personas

Google Analytics can provide a wealth of information about your customers. For more information about setting up Google Analytics, check out Part 10 of this guide: [Measuring the Results of Your Branding Efforts](#).

### Explore Demographic Data in Google Analytics

The good news is that if you have [Google Analytics set up for your site](#), you already have a lot of demographic data to help you create your target audiences and user personas. Google Analytics collects much of this data for you without needing any custom tracking, although additional tracking will definitely give you more valuable information.

To access this information, open your Google Analytics account. On the left-hand navigation menu, click *Audience*, then *Demographics*, then *Overview*.

The Demographics Overview provided will give you a high-level breakdown of the age ranges and genders of your site's visitors. While this info can be useful, it only shows you who is visiting your site—not who is actually making purchases.



## USER PERSONAS



**Mark K.**  
Age: 25-34



**Angela J.**  
Age: 25-34



**Tom S.**  
Age: 55-64



**Elisa B.**  
Age: 55-64

### Using gender data to create user personas

To dig more deeply into gender data, click the *Gender* tab beneath *Demographics*. This is most useful if you've also set up ecommerce goal tracking within your Google Analytics account, and can give you very valuable insights into who is making purchases on your site. Make sure to look through the data carefully—for example, at first glance you may notice that women make up a larger percentage of sales. However, by looking closer, you may notice that men typically have larger average order values. This can make a huge difference in who you are planning to target.

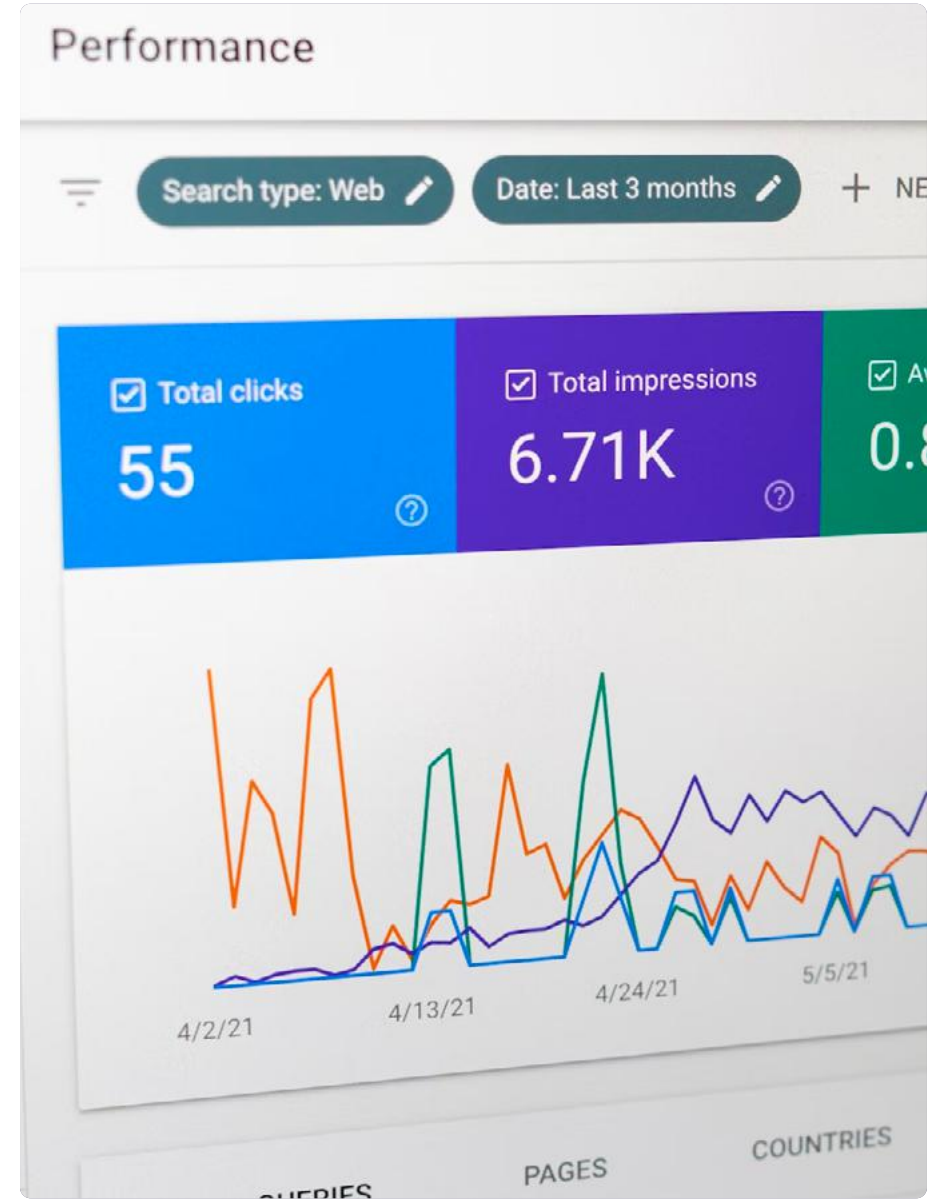
### Using age data to create user personas


To dig more deeply into age data, click the *Age* tab beneath *Demographics*. Similar to Gender data, digging deeper into Age data may show you some surprising results. For example, the majority of your users may be ages 25-34; however, the age group of people most likely to make a large purchase may be ages 55-64. This means that targeting younger people might be effective to drive visits to your site, but if you target the 55-64 age group, you'll be much more likely to actually make high-value sales.

## Explore Interests & Affinities Data in Google Analytics

When creating your user profiles, half of the battle is learning the sorts of things unrelated to your products that interest your users. This will tell you what kind of people engage with your site and products, and how to best market to them. To see interest and affinity data in Google Analytics, navigate to *Audience*, then *Interests* in the left-hand nav.

To access this information, open your Google Analytics account. On the left-hand navigation menu, click *Audience*, then *Interests*. You should see data broken down into three areas: *Affinity Category (reach)*, *In-Market Segment*, and *Other Category*. We'll break each of these down and tell you what they mean, as well as how to use this data when creating your user persona.





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### Using Affinity Category (reach) data to create user personas

Affinity categories in Google Analytics tell you what other sorts of things your customers are interested in. This information is most useful when trying to make people aware of your products or services—these categories may not have much to do with the products you’re selling, but the people who are interested in your products are also interested in the topics listed here. This info will help you fill out the interests and hobbies portions of your user personas, which will help you find new ways to get the word out about your products. These are the same affinity categories used by Google ads, so if you’re planning on doing any paid advertising, this information will be invaluable.

To dig more deeply into this data, click the *Affinity Categories* tab beneath *Interests*. Digging deeper into the data tells us what sorts of hobbies and interests are most likely to correlate with sales. However, getting this level of data requires you to set up custom conversion tracking in Google Analytics.





### Using In-Market Segments data to create user personas

In-Market Segments data tells you what customers who are lower in the funnel (more ready to make a purchase) are interested in. These users differ from Affinity Category users in that they're more likely to make a purchase soon within the category they're listed in—for example, someone under the Hotels and Accommodations category is likely to book a hotel soon.

While it might seem like this data isn't terribly useful to you (who probably aren't running a hotel), there is still a ton of very valuable information you can gain from this section. Look at the categories listed within this section and think about the opportunities for cross-sales—for instance, if someone is about to book a hotel room, they're likely planning a trip somewhere and might need a travel charger, new suitcase, or a myriad of other products.

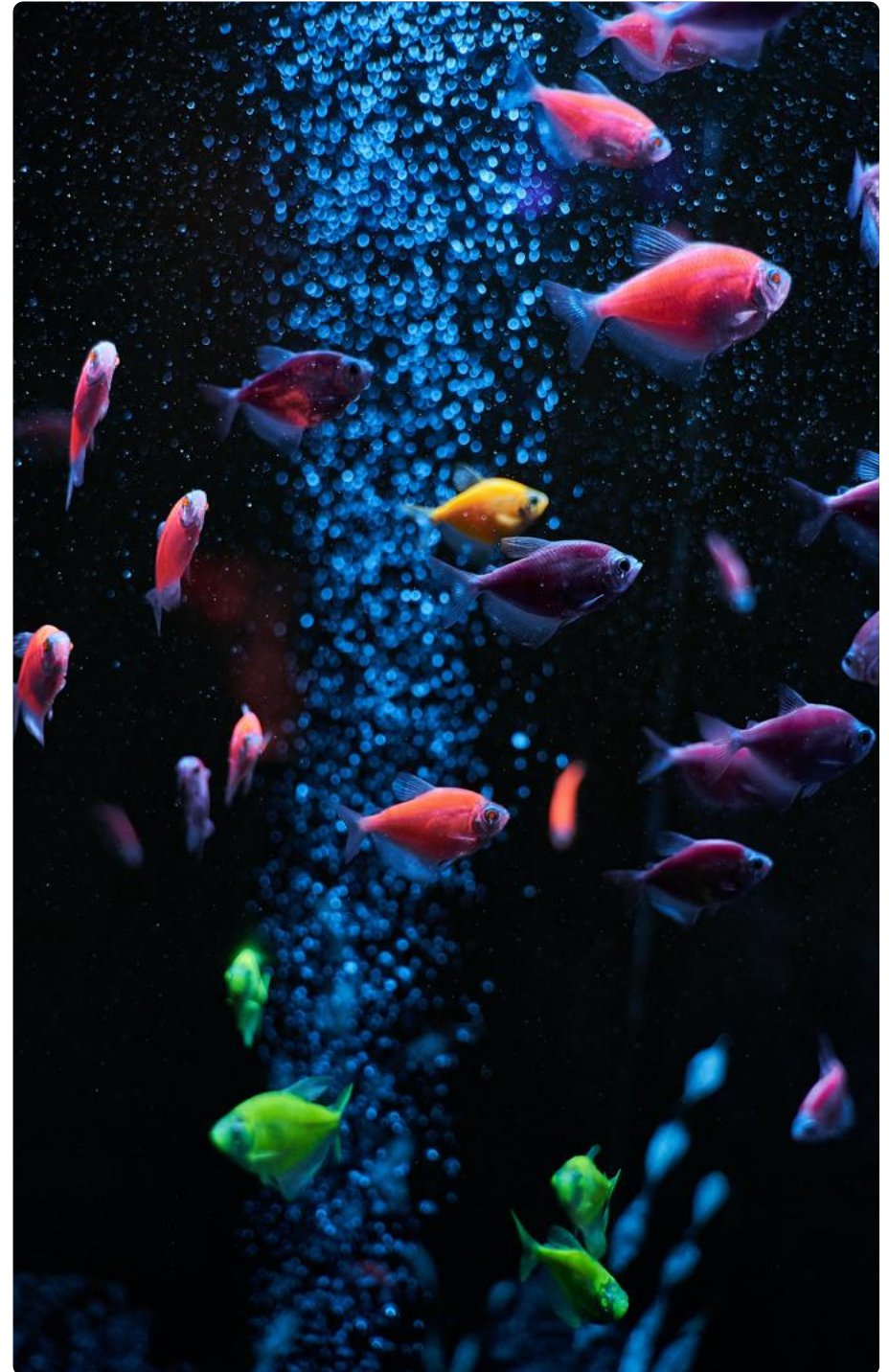
To dig more deeply into this data, click the *In-Market Segments* tab beneath *Interests*. This data will tell you the likelihood of a user purchasing your product at roughly the same time that they purchase a product in their respective categories. Of the three types of interest data available in Google Analytics, this is often the most useful. These users are prime for cross-selling opportunities, so if you see a category that's closely related to your own products, it might be a good time to start a targeted ad campaign towards that group.

## Using Other Categories data to create target audiences and user personas

The *Other Categories* data is the most granular, and splits users up into distinct interest groups. This can be great for really narrowing down your customer targeting, especially if you see a category that's closely related to what you're selling.

For example, say your Affinity Categories showed "Pet Lovers" as an important category—Other Categories may break this down even further to dog owners. Since someone who owns a pet fish will buy completely different products than someone who owns a dog, this info can give you the details you need to make much more targeted marketing decisions.

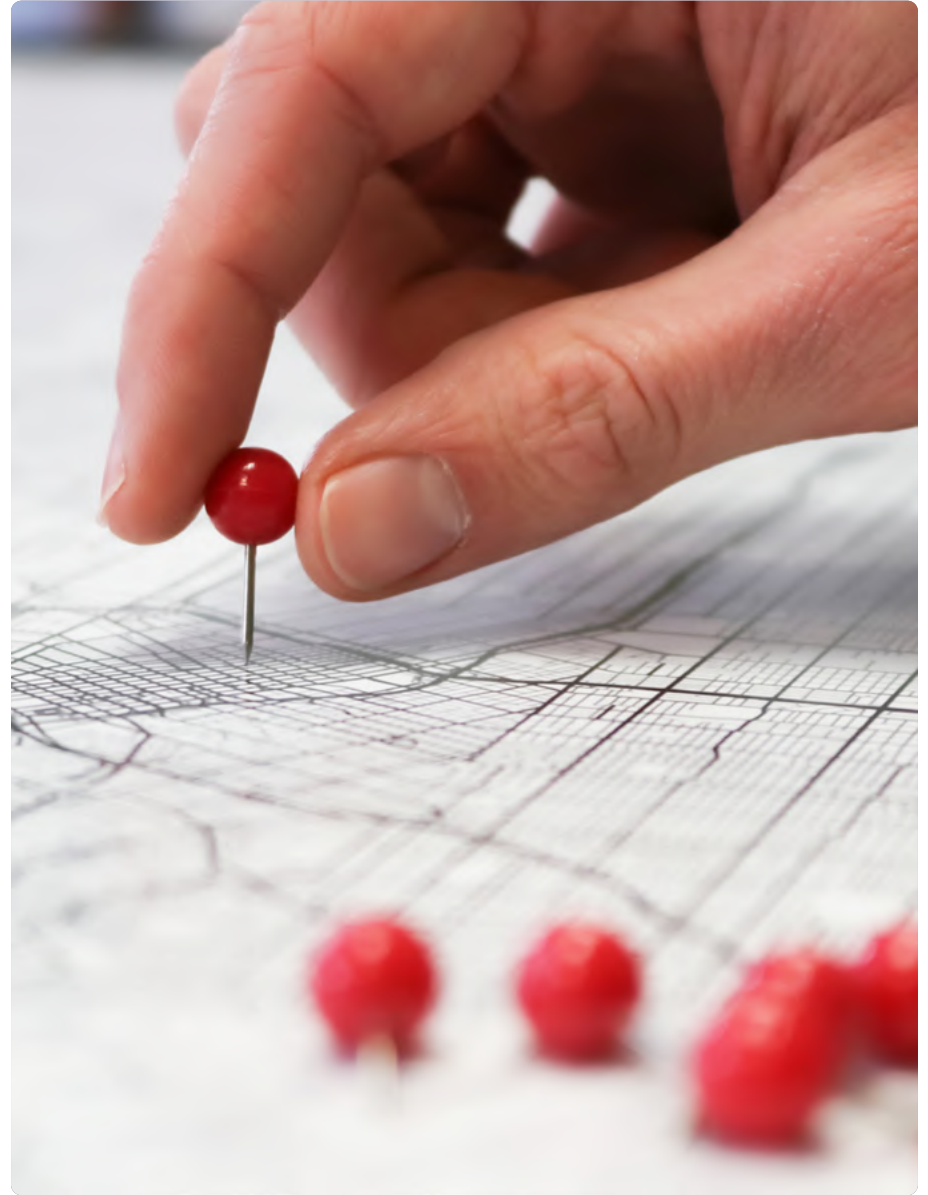
Make sure to play around with a few date ranges to get a better overall picture, as well as to identify seasonal trends.



## Explore Geographical Data in Google Analytics

When choosing a target audience and creating user profiles, you'll want to know where your audience lives and what languages they speak. For most brands, these answers are simple, but for more nationwide (or international) brands, it can be a little bit more complicated.

To access this information, open your Google Analytics account. On the left-hand navigation menu, click *Audience*, then *Geo*, then *Location*. This tab will give you a global heatmap of where your traffic is coming from. You can dig deeper into what countries, states, and cities are driving the most traffic.



## d. Test Your Target Audience With a Focus Group

Once you have your target audience defined, it's time to test how well your marketing works.

One way to make sure you're on track is to test your assumptions on real people. The best way to do this is to create a focus group of 5-10 people meeting your target audience profile. These testers can check out your site's journey from homepage to purchase so that you can get some good feedback on what you are doing right and where you need to improve.

If you don't have your site or any marketing materials (advertisements, social media posts, etc.) created yet, you can either create some samples for testing or find a website that very closely aligns with what you envision for your own site.

Here are a few examples of what you could ask your focus group:

- *Is it clear what this website sells or offers?*
- *Are the products organized in a way that makes sense to you?*
- *Are the product descriptions clear and descriptive?*
- *Is there any information left out of the product description?*
- *Is the site well-organized and easy to navigate?*
- *Would you purchase the products offered on this website? Why or why not?*
- *Is there anything you didn't like or would change about this website?*

Take this feedback to heart. If the group you gathered didn't seem as interested in your site and products as you thought they'd be, it might be time to go back to square one and reassess the audience you are marketing to.

# Creating User Personas

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User personas (also called buyer personas or customer personas) are semi-fictional characters that are used to help aid business decisions. Your user personas help you categorize the users of your site and products into more relatable groups, and will ensure that you understand who's buying from you and what motivates them.



## a. Get to Know Your Existing Audience

Begin by gathering as much practical research and data as you can, from your Google Analytics account to past purchases to industry research or competitive data. Nobody will help you understand your customers better than your actual customers. We recommend using the following avenues as ways to find information about your customers:

- Run a customer survey post-purchase to understand who is shopping on your site. You can do this by sending a link to a survey in the order confirmation email, and use a survey creation tool to create your own
- Conduct focus group interviews with a group of loyal customers
- Review existing analytics, login details, email, or social media research to gain additional insights into who is visiting your site or buying your products

By this point, you should have a good idea of your target audience—the people most likely to purchase your products or engage with your content. For each of your target audiences, you'll want to create at least one user persona to help you focus on the different types of people that make up your audience.

For example, if you're selling coffee products, think about the different types of people who might drink your coffee. One user might be a mom who drinks a cup in the morning before the kids wake up—for this user, coffee is more about a comforting routine and relaxation. Another user might be a young student who needs extra energy to finish that big project—they're motivated by energy, not relaxation. Another user might only care about taste, while another may want to impress their guests with rare and exotic coffee blends.

All of these people purchase the same products, but for very different reasons. Marketing to the needs and desires of each group is key to making the sale, so segmenting your target audience into user personas is incredibly useful. Start by creating 2-4 separate personas to internalize the way potential customers perceive the brand and how the brand can solve problems.

## b. Fill In Demographic Details

From a demographic angle, you should know the following details for each user persona:

### A Name

Give your persona a personality, and assign a name. You can also give it a nickname, like “Blake the Techie.” This makes it much easier to remember the details of your personas and distinguish between them. You can also add a photo to help you keep track of who’s who.

### Demographics

These details are the basis of your persona:

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Marital Status
- Number of Children
- Occupation
- Annual Household Income
- Education Level

### Values & Beliefs

Define what your persona cares the most about. Expand on what they value most in life and how her behaviors coincide with these beliefs. At this level, you have the opportunity to make a brand connection that’s not possible at the demographics level, which is the true value of a user persona. Here is the information you’ll want to include:

- Personality Traits
- Attitudes
- Values
- Interests or Hobbies
- Lifestyle

## Goals & Motivations

At the end of the day, all purchases are driven by an underlying goal or motivation. Customer goals will vary widely depending on the products they're buying, their own personality, and much more. Understanding a customer's motivation for buying a product is the key to unlocking sales—to put it simply, if you don't *know* why your customers are buying your products, you can't *convince* them why they should buy your products. Think about the coffee example from before: while all four of those user personas are purchasing coffee, they're all doing it for much different reasons. Under your goals and motivations tab, include the following information:

- **Goals:** Why someone would want to buy your products
- **Frustrations:** What might prevent someone from buying your products

Understanding your customer's goals and motivations is the most important part of creating a buyer persona. If you're uncertain where to start, try asking existing customers or people you know who have purchased similar products in the past.





## c. Dig Into Psychographic Information

To really put the final polish on your user personas, think through the following questions for each. Keeping your persona's behaviors, values, and goals in mind, start with the following information:

**Preferred methods of communication:** Does your persona hate the phone and prefer to ask questions online, or would they rather “speak to a person” than send an email? Understanding your user persona's preferences will help you maximize marketing efforts by sticking to platforms they actually use. Some ways to find a customer's preferred methods of communication include adding and analyzing communication preferences outlined on any onboarding documents, sending out surveys, or having your customer service team ask when they have them on the line. You could also do a deep dive into research studies about preferred communication types. For example, millennials overwhelmingly prefer text and messaging apps, whereas Baby Boomers are much more receptive to phone conversations.

**Favorite items that aren't from your shop or a competitor's shop:** You might sell apparel, but it's helpful to know if your persona is a health nut who loves Apple products, reads fanatically, thinks organic food is a waste of money, sometimes makes “ironic” or humorous purchases, or loves school supplies. All of these tastes can shape the look and feel of your online store, how you engage with your users, and how you can help them fit your products into their life. For example, if you're fairly convinced your audience is comprised of Apple fans, you might consider adopting Apple's design aesthetic with a sleek, minimalist, and trendy website design.

**Whether they take risks or play it safe:** Did your persona move across the country for college or stay close to home? On that note, have they ever moved to a new city on their own? How often do they try new things? Have they ever been on a blind date? Do they order the sea urchin off the sushi menu, or do they steer clear of sushi entirely? In general, the more risk-taking the audience, the more risks you can take with your products or marketing (within reason). For the more faint of heart, they're far more likely to do extensive product research before buying, so make sure you provide plenty of content, pictures, dimensions, reviews, etc.

**Their motivations for using social media:** Or if they use social media at all. While this veers into demographic territory (it's extremely helpful to know what platforms your persona uses), there are some bigger motivations at play here that you can speak to. Some people only use social media to converse with their closest friends, while others are comfortable striking up online conversations with complete strangers. Some use it to share every detail of their life, while others use it more sparingly. Some use it to debate, share opinions, and generate awareness about a politician or cause, while other people use it to share funny memes, insightful blog posts, or their current Spotify playlist. Some people just use it to be seen or to connect to other people. Each of these motivations can impact the way in which you interact with your audience on social media, the things you share, and the posts you write.

**Their dreams or higher aspirations:** It's one thing to know the technical or practical specifications of what your audience wants from a product. But there's usually a bigger motivation at play, and it's that motivation that often leads to the purchase. People who buy trendy clothes may do so to connect to other trend-seekers, just like people who buy college sweatshirts take pride in belonging to a community or "team." People who buy professional photography equipment may hope for a breakout career in photography, while people who buy less expensive equipment might just want to pursue an interesting new hobby. Uncovering your persona's higher motives will impact everything from the images you share on social media to the story you tell about your products.

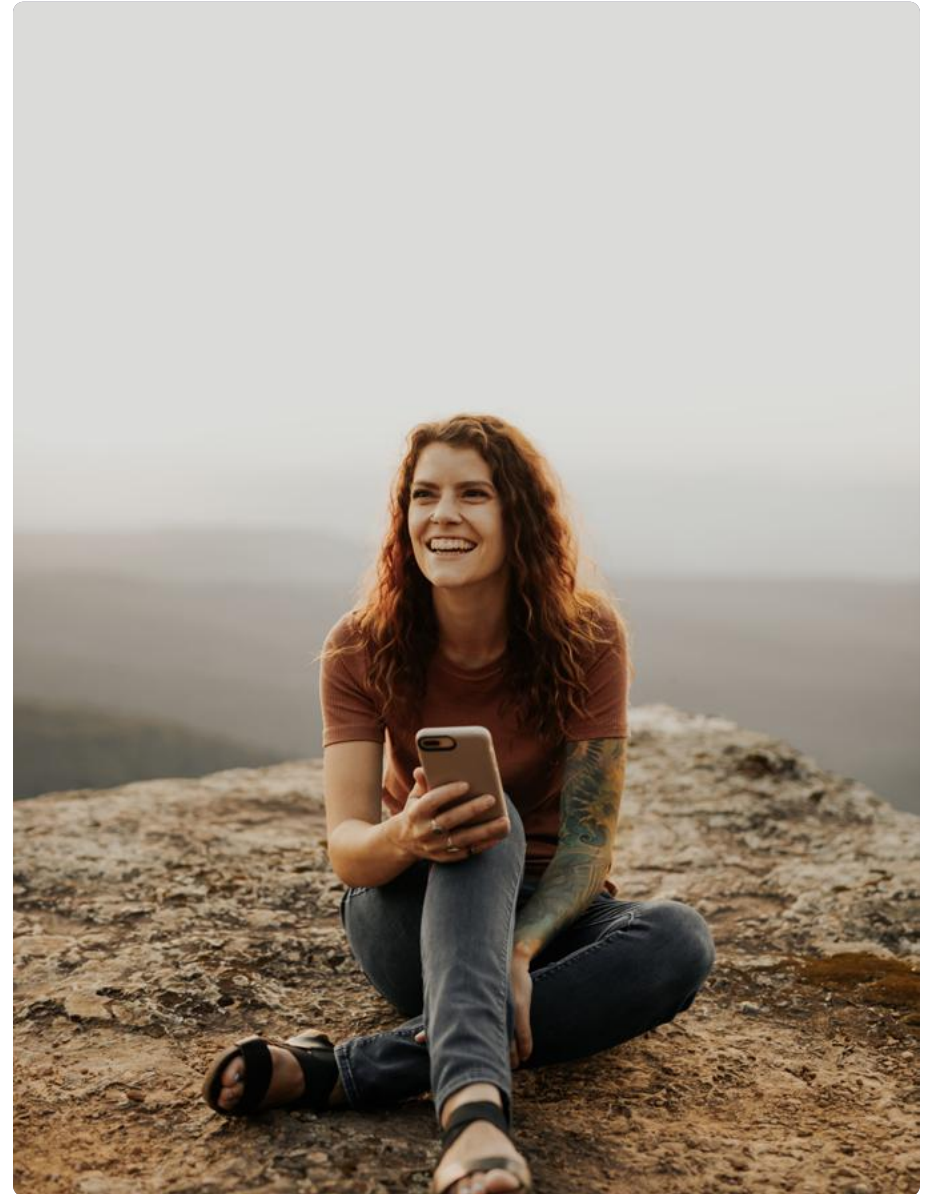
## d. Know When to Refer to Your User Personas

What's the benefit of all of this? It all goes back to understanding. The better you understand your customers, the better you can speak to them. By the time you're done, you should feel like your personas are close friends, and this will come across in your writing. Warm and friendly website copy and social media posts are refreshing and differentiating, and the more you can prove that you know what your audience values, the more they'll trust you for return purchases.

Another benefit is that you may discover a persona that you can't relate to at all, which means it's a great time to find someone who can before you make any mistakes.

The last benefit is that as your business grows and you hire marketing staff, introducing them to your user personas is one of the quickest and most effective ways to inform their writing, design work, photography, product selection, social media efforts, brand consistency, and much more. This is true if you plan on outsourcing any of your SEM work, too.

User personas are an absolutely integral part of any relatable, targeted, and cohesive marketing strategy, and the benefits will impact business goals ranging from conversions to repeat customers and brand ambassadors.



# Establishing a Tone of Voice and Brand Persona

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Once you have a solidified brand and a target audience in mind, start thinking about how you want to speak to your audience. This is where the personas we discussed in Part 3 will come in handy—when you feel like you’re writing for a specific person, it’s much easier to be persuasive and engaging. Creating a messaging portion of your style guide will help document and ensure your company’s tone and voice stay consistent. Here are some rules and preferences to outline while crafting your brand persona.



## a. Build Your Brand Positioning Statement

What exactly is brand positioning? Think of it as the perception your business takes in the minds of customers. In other words, positioning is how you want your brand to be perceived by others.

How does your brand position differ from your user personas? The former helps you determine your position in the marketplace. User personas, on the other hand, tell you about your ideal customers within that marketplace.

The first step of this process is to build your positioning statement. This is a sentence that defines the core of your company's brand. You'll recognize it as distinct from your mission and values statement because it addresses benefits to a specific customer base as opposed to how your brand aims to impact the world. You'll want to create a unique brand positioning statement for each of your target audiences with your user personas in mind.

**Sample Template:** For *(insert customer base)*, *(insert company name)* offers *(insert product and key benefit)* to provide *(insert competitive advantage)*.



**Example:** For *high-tech gadget lovers*, *Gadgets Galore* offers *the newest electronic products* to provide *the latest offerings to customers*.

One final note: your positioning statement should remain an internal guide to craft your overall business strategy. You can spice up the key features of the statement to use for sales and marketing tools, but it's mostly meant to help guide your own branding messages.

## b. Craft Your Tagline

Your tagline is a short and succinct promotional slogan that a company uses to describe who they are and what they do. Taglines can also be used for products to increase sales as well. Some examples include Nike's "Just do it" and Skittles' "Taste the Rainbow." It ultimately captures the unique way you serve customers.

Think back to your value proposition from your branding plan in Part 1. You don't have to have a tagline for your brand, but it can help customers understand what you sell or help reinforce your unique brand. Have this handy as you start ideating and let how you impact customers be the focus point.

At minimum, your tagline should be functional, personable, and memorable. Keep it to about three to seven words so it's potent and to the point.



## c. Find Your Brand Voice

Every brand's voice is unique, and serves as a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Defining the brand voice is a key component of shaping your brand's identity, and should reflect your company's personality in every communication medium, from your product descriptions to your social media posts.

### Define the purpose

To begin the exercise, define why your brand exists and whom it serves. What makes it different from every other brand out there? What is the one thing you want every customer to know, and why is it special? Most importantly, what does your brand stand for? Tying your brand voice back to the purpose of your organization makes defining your brand voice a much easier exercise.

### Think of your brand as a person

If defining your brand voice in a few words is difficult, take a step back and think of your brand as a person. What do they look like? What do they like? What are their dreams? Where do they seek advice? Once you identify someone to speak with, you can shape your tone and voice to their needs.

Try encapsulating your brand voice in three words. Sometimes it helps to define what you are and what you're not in the same sentence. For instance:

- Trusted, but not boastful.
- Clever, but not silly.
- Helpful, but not pushy.

## Clarify your Tone

Whereas your voice conveys your brand's overall personality, its tone is the attitude with which you say it. In other words, your voice should remain the same in every piece of content you write. However, the tone of each piece may need to change depending on what you're saying and who you're saying it to.

Are you:

- Friendly and informative?
- Concise and inspiring?
- Intricate and empathetic?
- Inclusive and straight forward?

Keep in mind that the length of each sentence also conveys tone. Shorter sentences are quippy and clever. The longer the sentence, the more authoritative and serious you'll sound.

## Write Down your Content Best Practices

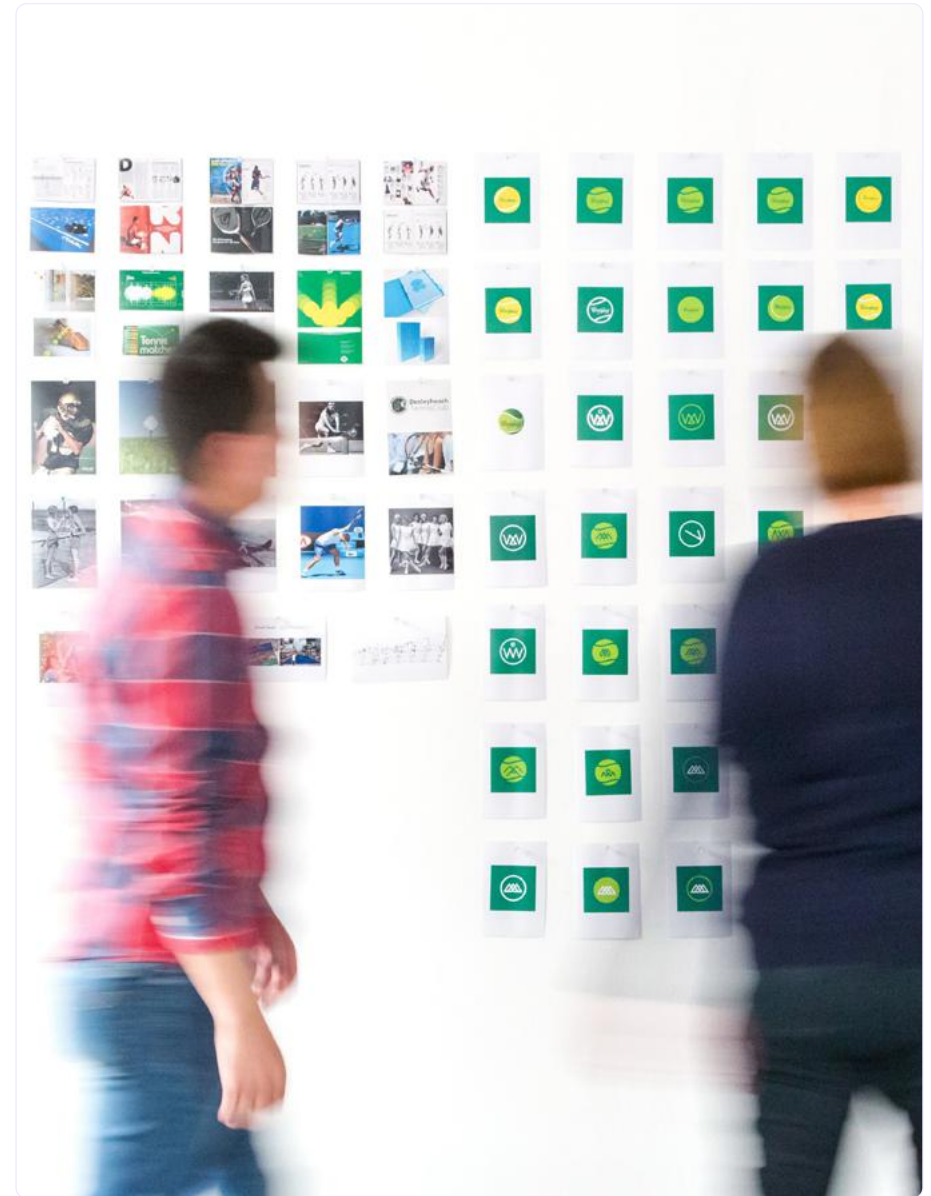
Get granular and specific about how you want your writers to represent your brand in written form. This will help you be consistent across all of your copy, which is especially critical if more than one person is writing on your website or social media accounts. Make sure your style guide addresses the following:

- **Use of contractions.** They can help a brand sound more informal.
- **Use of expletives.** Some companies get a lot out of the shock value, but others will want to steer far clear of profanity.
- **Use of emojis.** If using emojis, in what pieces are they permissible?
- **Use of slang and jargon.** Or is plain English your one and only?
- **How to cover information.** Concise or involved and detailed?
- **Paragraph length.** How much white space do you want to see? Bullet points?
- **Active or passive voice.** We usually recommend the former.
- **Use of hyphenation.** Some editors have really strong opinions about this one.
- **Words to avoid.** "Interwebs," anyone?
- **Capitalization.** It can be tricky for words like email (Email?)
- **Numbers.** Do you want them spelled out or written numerically?
- **Punctuation.** From colons to commas, make sure they're uniform.



## d. Make Your Messaging Consistent

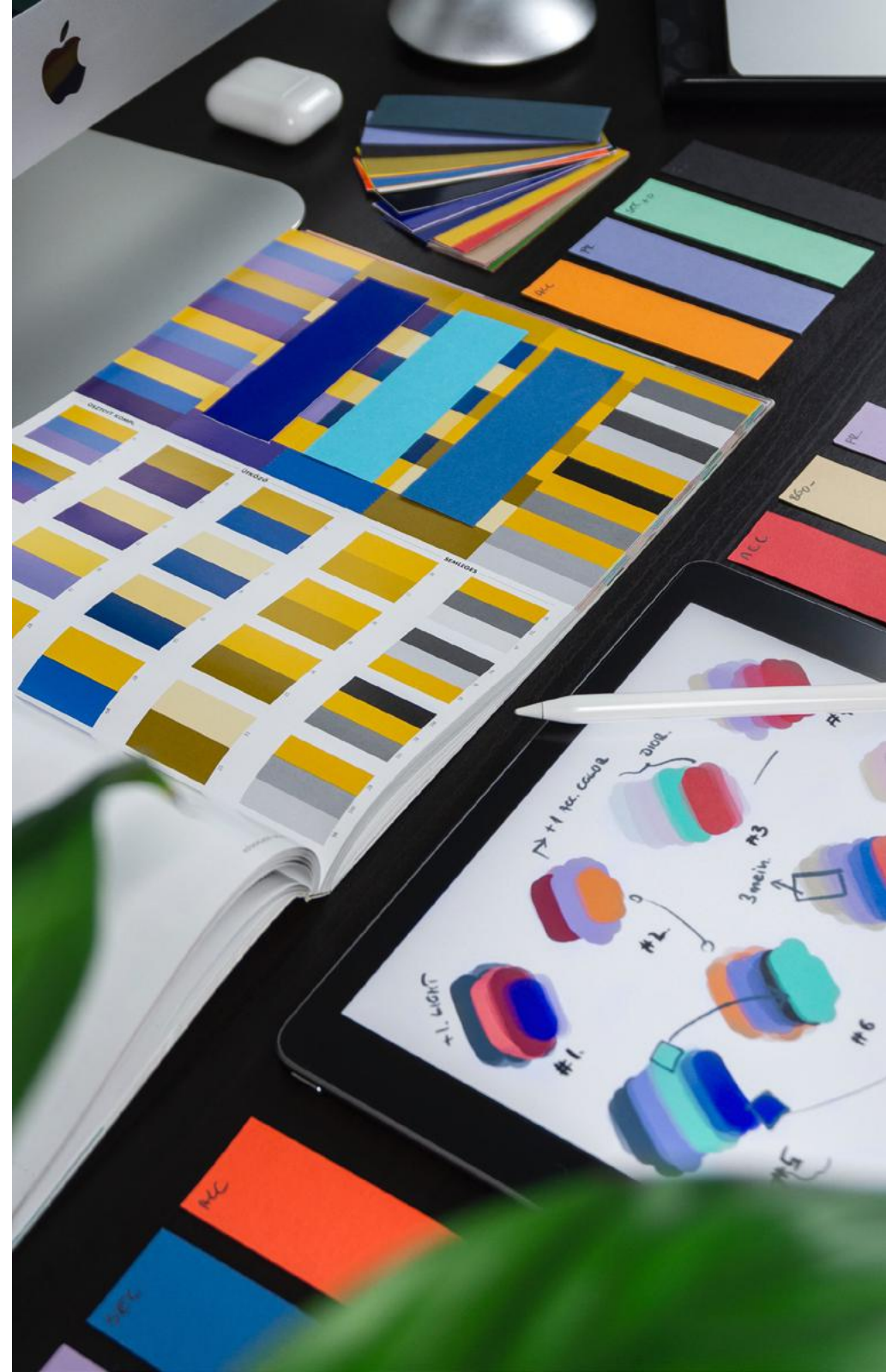
Effective messaging clearly communicates your brand and core values. Whether it's a tweet, a landing page, a webinar, or a blog post, your voice should be consistent across all channels. Don't create a jarring experience for your customers by having a relaxed, friendly tone in one communication medium and contrast it with a voice of sass and sarcasm in the next. Every "touch" you provide to customers should reflect the brand voice and who you represent as a company.



## PART 5

# Building Your Brand's Visual Design

Consistent visual branding gives legitimacy to your company and keeps your business feeling consistent across all entities, including web, print, press, social media, and even your packaging and shipping methods. The best way to organize your branding principles is through a style guide. There are a handful of key elements needed to craft an effective design style guide, so let's jump right in.



## a. Get Inspired

Whether you're taking on site and logo design yourself or hiring a professional graphic artist, it is always a good idea to start getting some inspiration by looking at what other people and companies are doing. [Different sites](#) offer great insight into current trends, as well as an idea of where design is headed.

Take some time to absorb what's out there and consider why you like what you like, and dislike what you dislike. Use these as starting points in your brainstorming process, and you'll see how much better your final design product gets.

## b. Consider Color

The most important visual element aside from your branding is your color palette. Color is a valuable tool in crafting your brand because it plays a large role in how your brand is perceived, its memorability, and its potential to attract your target market to begin with. Think about the message you want your brand to convey:

- Who is your audience, and how do you want them to feel about you?
- Do you want to be seen as loyal and trustworthy, or carefree and fun?
- What kind of feelings do your competitors elicit?
- How can you differentiate yourself from similar businesses?

As a rule of thumb, select just a few colors for simplicity's sake.

## c. Create Your Logo

Your company's logo is one of the more important aspects of branding. A logo is consistently visible on all aspects of your offline properties: receipts, letterheads, T-shirts, banners, and every page of your ecommerce website. For something that can be so small, the impact that a well-designed logo has on your brand experience and online store cannot be overstated. Whether you're designing one yourself or paying a professional, it's a good idea to be familiar with some basic aspects of online store logo design.

### Make it Versatile

Versatility is paramount when considering logo design. Remember that your logo will be seen at many different sizes, and you will probably need to have copies in different file formats. You want to make sure that your logo will be visually readable at all sizes and colors. An effective logo is one that is crisp and simple, meaningful and evocative.

### Think About Longevity

Good design is timeless. Many of the most popular and most recognized logos have changed very little since their creation. Drastically changing your logo often can have adverse effects, such as creating confusion and decreasing memorability. Your goal should be to get it right the first time, and only make minor changes when needed. Opt for a clean, classic style to ensure your branding has some staying power.



### Avoid Busy or Complex Designs

Aside from issues with scaling, a busy logo can create visual dissonance in the viewer, and will likely result in negative associations with your brand. Keep your design clean and simple, with only a few key elements. Avoid using too many fonts as well, as this also adds to a feeling of unrest.

## d. Choose Your Typography

Most of the communications with your customers will be through type, which means you definitely want it to look good. Since type is such a critical branding element, it's important to choose the right font(s) that will not only make a great impression of your brand, but feel consistent with your goals and personality.

Use your style guide to identify the name(s) of the font(s) you're using and where to obtain them. [Google Fonts](#) is a great resource with lots of free fonts that are easily accessible and web-friendly. While considering fonts for your brand, remember that fonts inherently embody moods and feelings. For example, if you want your brand to be upscale and sophisticated, consider using a serif font. For a modern flair, try introducing a sans serif font. Ultimately, it comes down to what you want your company to represent and what feels right for it.

- **Understand the different font types.** There are tons of different font types out there, ranging from the extremely simple to the stupendously weird. Each has its own set of uses, so make sure you have a bit of background in each of the fab four: script, decorative, serif, and sans-serif.



- **Check that fonts are legible and readable.** Two things to consider when choosing your store's typeface are legibility and readability. While legibility and readability sound very similar, they're actually quite different. But together, they work to effectively communicate your brand's message. Legibility is being able to distinguish specific letterforms from each other. Readability refers to how text is arranged so that the eye can easily read the content.
- **Pick no more than two fonts and make sure they're consistent.** Outline 1-2 fonts maximum so that your brand looks polished and not busy. Dictate their placement and usage, such as body copy and headlines. Everywhere your brand goes, you want to make sure the type treatment is the same.
- **Make sure it works with your logo.** Many logos are so visually distinct that they do not use text at all, but if a logo contains text, it should be easy to read and complementary to the overall design. A font that dominates or competes for attention will take away from a logo, and at small sizes, an ornate font becomes increasingly difficult to read.

## e. Think About Imagery

Colors and fonts are wonderful and critical elements of your branding, but what's really going to add life to your brand is imagery. Identifying appropriate imagery in your style guide will help anybody who touches your brand understand what types of photography flatter and showcase your brand in the best way.

A good imagery design process usually takes numerous rounds of brainstorming, sketching, and conceptualizing to reach an idea that fits the message a brand wants to convey. Keep these ideas in mind as you kick off:

- **Create a mood board.** Compile a small collection of images that clearly convey what your brand embodies and present it in a mood board format. Perhaps your brand is minimal and chic, so you opt for simple images with solid colored backgrounds. Find some similar images and place them on your mood board.
- **Choose the type(s) of imagery you want to represent your brand.** Remember that you don't have to use images as your imagery. In fact, there are a number of options you may choose to incorporate, like photos or illustrations, representational or abstract, conceptual or literal, stock or custom.
- **Know your image types.** A raster image is an image that is made up of pixels. Common file formats are .jpg, .gif, .bmp, and .psd. The biggest issue with pixelated images occurs when the picture is enlarged, as this causes the picture to become grainy. Raster images also tend to have larger file sizes as well, which can slow down your computer—something to keep in mind when picking static imagery for your site.
- **Use stock images creatively.** Your imagery should be unique to your business. Since the whole purpose of a logo is to create an association with your brand, be sure to use stock images in creative ways that other entrepreneurs and business owners have not.
- **Avoid clichés.** Avoid imagery that is used ubiquitously—swooshes to represent innovation, gears for technology, blue smoke for e-cigarettes. Create a concept that is unique to your business. Cliché imagery is often the first idea someone has when they brainstorm.

# Creating Your Brand's Mission and Values

Your brand's mission, values, and overall purpose are a critical part of your larger branding plan. These are like a compass for your brand—when you're uncertain what to do, they'll point you in the right direction. They're the vision you have for your business, what you hope to accomplish with it, where you're headed in the future, and the true north that guides all that you do. Just as importantly, they'll tell your customers what your business stands for and why it is that you do what you do.



## a. Write a Mission Statement

The Harvard Business Review recommends three key components to an effective mission statement: verb, target, and outcome. If you're having trouble writing a mission statement, use this simple fill-in-the-blank mission statement template:

**Sample Template:** "At *(company name)*, our mission is to *(do something)* in order to help solve *(a need)*."

By listing what it is that your company plans to do, and why they plan to do it, you'll have a much clearer idea of the purpose of your business, which will help you create your branding plan. Make sure to include your mission statement on your About Us page to give customers a simple one-sentence summary of why they should care about your brand.

## b. List Your Company's Values

As for values, state as many as you want—just make sure they're clear, succinct, consistent, and honored. These may include providing high-quality products at the most competitive price, giving back to a community or charity, or providing industry-leading customer service. Your values are your way to state what your company believes in—an important first step towards getting customers to believe in your company.

Your mission and values statements should explain the reason your business exists in the first place. They should give you, your employees, and your customers a clear picture of what your company does and why you do it. Getting clear on this driving purpose will help you go beyond the products you serve and the people you serve them to.



## c. Create a Brand Story

Humans love stories. Maybe that's why all the most recognized brands have such great ones. Your brand story is the story you tell your customers about your business, and about why you do what you do.

Without a clear sense of your company's purpose and values, writing your brand story will be very difficult. However, especially for small brands, a brand story can mean the difference between life and death. Customers like buying from brands that they feel a connection to, and without a brand story, they'll have no reason to choose your brand over your competitors.

Elements that contribute to your brand story include:

- Your company's history
- Your company's founders
- Your company's values
- Why your founders started the business
- What problems your company hopes to solve
- Any philanthropic, charitable, or social issues that your brand supports
- Anything else that makes your brand unique, likable, or memorable

Some brand elements that help customers "read" your brand story include:

- Visual cues
- Tone of voice
- Your packaging
- Business cards
- Employees and internal company culture

Spend some time creating your brand story. If you can captivate your audience, you'll see the difference in sales.

# Identifying Your USPs & Crafting Your Value Proposition

With your audience, branding, and background nailed down, it's time to start thinking about why your customers should purchase from you—and let them know. This is where a solid Value Proposition and Unique Selling Points come into play.



## a. Unique Selling Points (USPs)

Your Unique Selling Points (USPs) can help you as you start to think about your value proposition. USPs are those special qualities that your brand or products bring to the table. Why would someone choose your product over another? What are you offering that no one else in the market is? Answering these questions can help you pinpoint your value proposition and define the special qualities that your brand possesses.

Examples of USPs include:

- **Partnerships with organizations or charities.** This can be a great way to show that your brand is willing to give back.
  - **Social enterprise policies.** This is a great way to show that your brand cares about the same issues as your customers, and is willing to show it.
  - **Excellent customer service.** If possible, back this up with testimonials or statistics.
- 
- **Unique product benefits or characteristics.** If your product offers a benefit over the competition, don't hesitate to tell people—or even better, show them.
  - **Awards or industry distinctions.** Including this information prominently on your website will help your customers trust you, which is vital to making a sale. If you don't have any of these, do a little research about the different awards or trust signals in your niche and how to get them. Even a positive review from another website or publication can generate a large amount of trust, especially if it's a publication that your user recognizes.

## b. Value Proposition

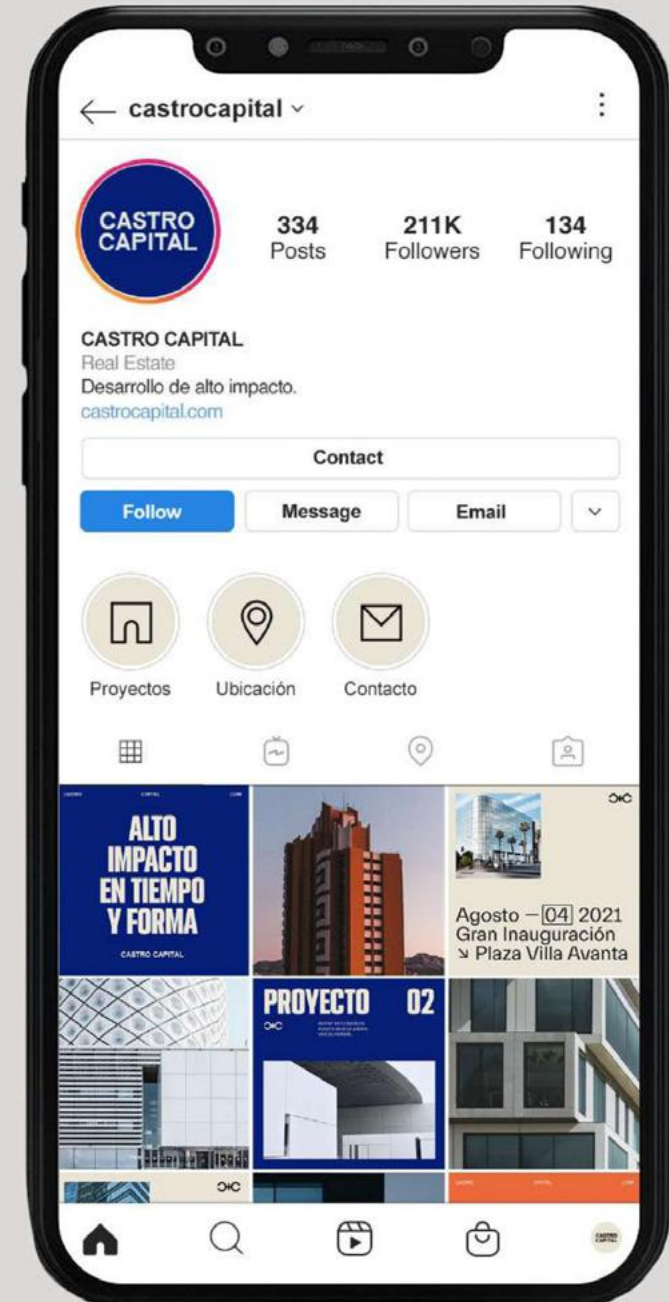
Your Value Proposition is a statement of assurance that your brand will use to guarantee customers a beneficial or quality experience from their services, products, or company values. Simply put, it is an explanation of why customers should buy from you specifically. Your value proposition will appear on virtually every part of your website, so it's important to take the time to create a good one. The right method to frame your product's value proposition is to put yourself in the shoes of your customers and think on the following lines:

- What benefits does this product provide me with?
- Why is this product a better choice vs. a competitor's?
- What proof do I have that this product does what it says it will?



# Reinforcing Your Brand on Social Media

Social media allows businesses to tell their brand story in a creative and innovative way. Whether it's through a fun campaign or rich content, social media has the capacity to allow your brand to be seen from an entirely different angle—thus, allowing your business the potential to acquire more target groups than ever before. This section will cover how to extend your brand to your social media accounts.

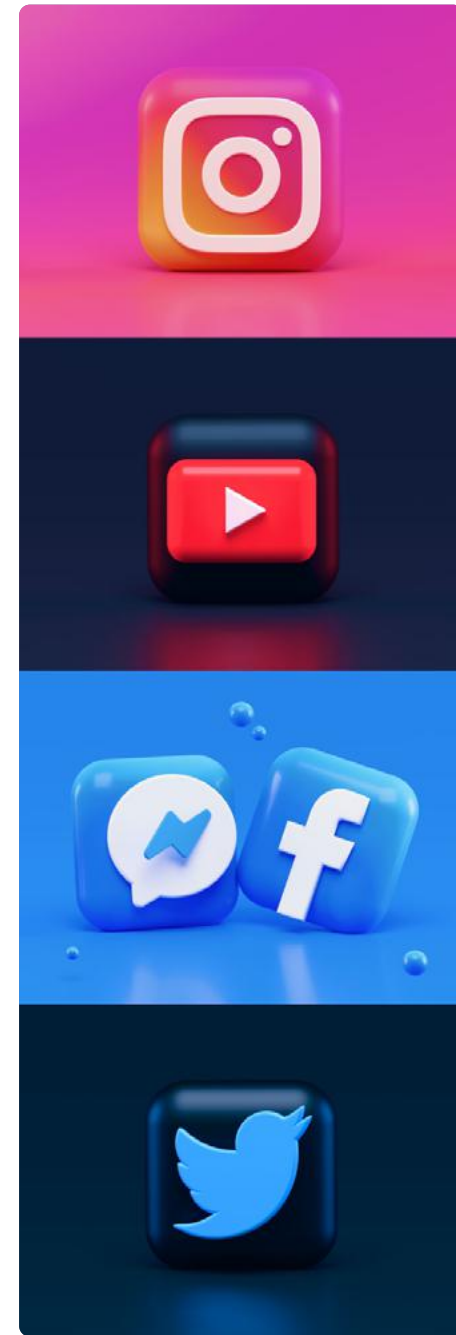


## a. Choose Your Channels

Should you even use social media for business? The answer is simple: yes. Nowadays, a social media presence is expected by most customers, and it's often one of the first places a customer goes to ask questions, sing your brand's praises, or complain. A good social media presence will help you build a following for your brand, as well as give you a valuable advertising platform.

Choose which social media channels are best for your business based on your particular target groups, industry, business type, budgets, and location. As you're identifying which platforms you want to use, be sure to consider all of them. Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest are good places to start, but don't sleep on YouTube, Twitter, and other platforms that may be a better fit for your brand.

Think about the general audience that you're looking to engage with, as well as the type of content that you plan on sharing. Are you going to be publishing tutorial videos? Quotes and sayings that align with your brand's mission? Blog articles? Who specifically is likely to engage with the type of content you plan on publishing? This approach will better inform which platforms you should be focusing on, as you certainly don't need to adopt them all.



## b. Update Your Social Media Profiles

Both profile and cover pictures should be changed periodically, especially with the change of seasons, holidays, new merchandise arrivals, and special events. Here's a brief overview on how to approach each one:

### Profile Pictures

First things first: start with a great, high-resolution profile image. The images and content featured on your social media profile are not only a direct reflection of your brand, but they can also be a good indicator of the quality of your offerings. You want to make sure that you are delivering a strong brand message, and nothing helps more than having high-quality profile images.

It's almost always considered a best practice for your business profile's main picture to feature your logo. Make sure that your logo is clear and easy to read, and avoid using any type of design or images on or behind the logo itself. Having a logo as a profile picture tends to give businesses (especially startups) more credibility. It's an easy way for people to identify your business as such, and differentiate it from personal profiles or even spam.

### Cover Photos & Headers

Cover photos offer a great opportunity to show on a broader level what your business is about. Since they are the largest images featured on your profiles, they can be the most distracting item for a viewer. For this reason, it is very important to use an eye-catching image that will portray the core message of your brand.

To ensure better quality and simplicity, avoid using text or any type of graphics on the image. The only occasion where it's OK to use text or clean graphics on the cover photo/header would be to promote a particular event or sale. Other than that, avoid it as much as possible.

## c. Create a Content Schedule

Next, you should create a content schedule. Just like it sounds, a content schedule is all of the content you plan to feature throughout a period of time, organized into a document of your choice. It's just like taking notes in college: everybody has a different style of doing it. If you aren't sure how to go about creating one, [here's](#) a great resource that provides templates for you to download. Organizing your content not only helps you plan a strategy, but also enables you to be consistent in posting.

## d. Make Your Feed Consistent

Make sure that your branding, products, and company info are consistent across all platforms. Before you start publishing, run through your profiles and ensure that all the elements of your business are presented in a consistent way. Your brand should be recognizable from one platform to the next, and that includes your product listings, profile images, bio, and general brand voice. While the content itself may differ, it's critical that each platform accurately calls back to what your brand is about so as not to confuse consumers.



## e. Craft a Good Story

The most successful brands are the ones that craft a lifestyle concept around the message they're trying to deliver. This gives people something they can emotionally relate to. With a little bit of grace, narration, and artistic value, you can use images to tell your brand's story. Refrain from only posting images about your services or products. Think on a larger level, and identify other things that relate to your business.

## f. Adopt an Overall Theme

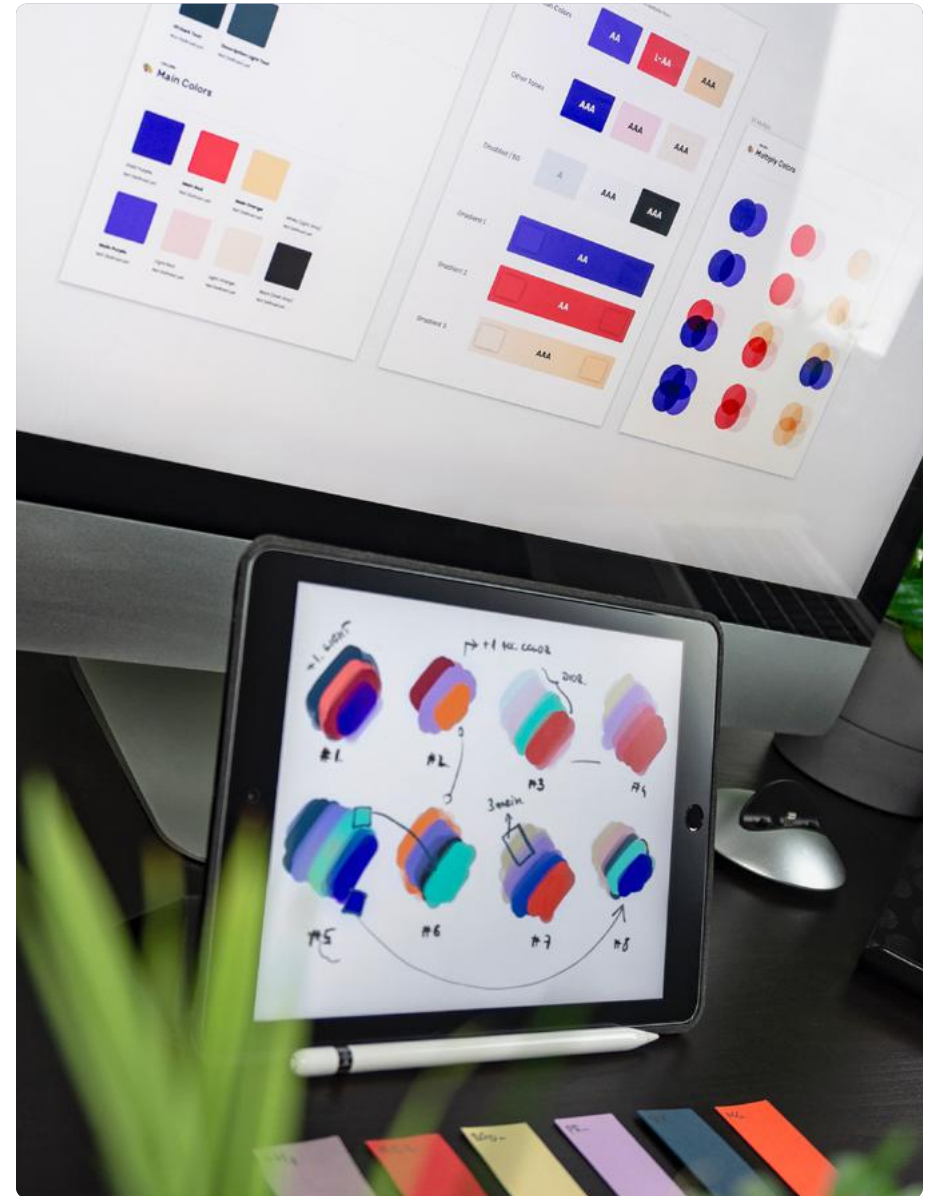
Creating an overall theme for your images can provide consistency and help reinforce your brand identity. It can also make it easier for people to quickly familiarize themselves with your brand. You can create an overall theme for your images in many different ways. For example, some people use the same photo filter, while others use a particular angle or color for all of their images.

## g. Update Your Style Guide

Many companies' style guides don't cover social media image posts in much detail, which is a big mistake. Without a section in your guide, the teams who design and upload your posts could miss the mark. Don't wait until a photo is posted before you realize it looks nothing like any of the other posts on the page.

The good news here is that your company style guide can include everything you need to craft a post that will look good and, more importantly, be consistent. Start by designating the color tones you want to stay within. For instance, if the majority of your store's posts use a blue hue, your new red post is going to look terrible. For most posts, using your company's suggested colors will work just fine so long as you're filter-specific. Use the same basic style for all of your posts—the font choice, layout, and style should remain the same.

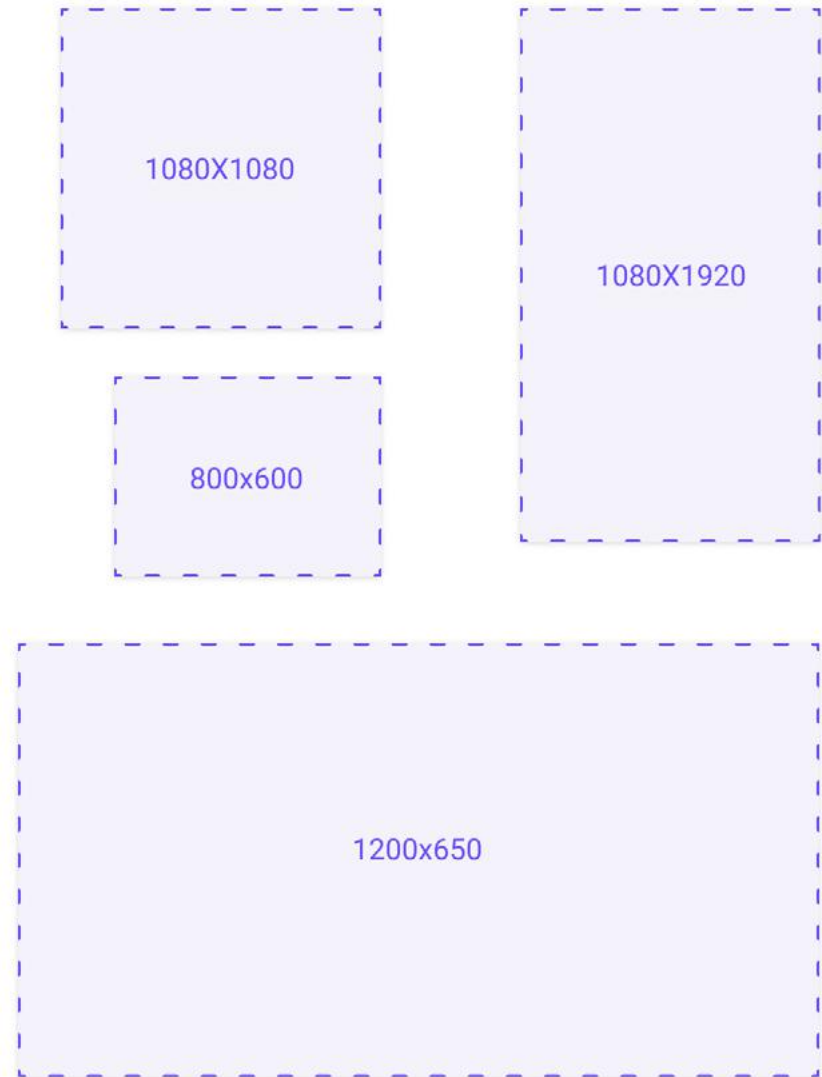
Generally speaking, graphics posts will have heavier use of text than image posts. A tip for social media posts on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook is to use text that is bold, big, and easy to read. This likely means a sans-serif font that can be digested within a few seconds of viewing the image. Make sure your style guide suggests a font that is not hard to read.



## h. Design with Each Channel in Mind

The biggest tip when designing a post is to be cognizant of the network for which your post is being designed. Likewise, if the post is being used across multiple networks, be aware that each network has different size and resolution requirements. Sprout's [Always Up-To-Date Social Media Image Sizes Cheat Sheet](#) is an easy way to find out if you are using the right image dimensions, and [Pic Resize](#) is a great tool you can use to resize any images you might have. You may also want to implement a rule that says you or someone on your team will test your post across all networks before going live.

Creating social media posts for your store can be difficult, and may seem a little overwhelming with so many options out there. The most important thing to remember here is to experiment with what works for your brand.



# Keeping Up with Brand & Reputation Management

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Your online presence—whether it be your personal social media, brand, or website—is shaped by your online reputation. It's how others see you. Since feedback from customers or anyone with internet access can be freely entered into a variety of websites and social media platforms, your reputation is online and public like never before. Therefore, it is critical that you have a process for online reputation management (ORM). In this section, you will learn some simple steps to measure and manage your reputation online.

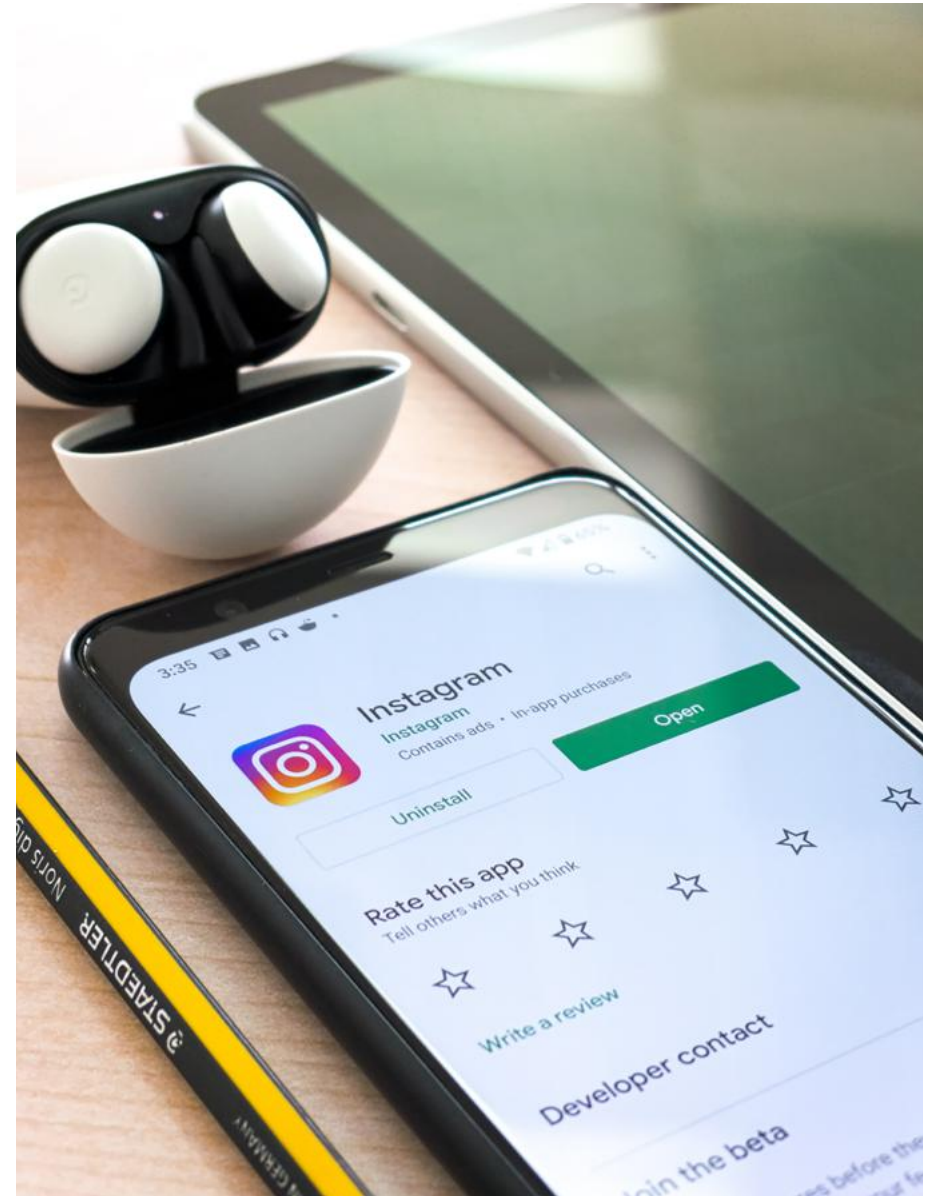


## a. Understand What Your Online Reputation Is

Online reputation management refers to the process of generating, maintaining, and promoting your company's reputation. Customers use a wide variety of sources to form perceptions of a brand's trustworthiness, including online reviews, social media accounts and posts, and the quality of the company's website and content. Building a positive online reputation is critical to making sales, since customers will only buy from sites they trust.

### Managing Company Reputation

Depending on the size of your company, online reputation management can be as easy as answering a few Facebook messages each week or as complex as organizing, evaluating, and responding to thousands of emails, messages, calls, reviews, mentions, videos, and more. We'll focus on the online reputation management techniques that work best for small- and medium-sized businesses, since most ecommerce merchants fall within this category.



## Managing Product Reviews

To start, put yourself into your customers' shoes and think about how you shop online. If you're on Amazon, chances are you look at the product reviews and the "Customer Questions and Answers" section to see what other people are saying about the product. Would you buy a product that has mostly 1 star reviews? Probably not.

One of the key components of maintaining a positive online reputation is ensuring that you're offering a high-quality product—it's much easier to get positive reviews and mentions if your product is noticeably better than the competition.

## Managing Your Online Reputation within Google and Other Search Engines

Let's say you're looking for a coffee maker and are interested in Nespresso. The reviews are good on Amazon, but the price is higher than most others, and before buying you want to do a little more research about the company. So, you go to Google and type in the brand name.

When you do so, you'll see that besides organic links to the Nespresso website, there is a Twitter feed from the brand as well as company social media accounts like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. All of this information is critical to a brand's online reputation.

If you see negative results when Googling the name of your business or your business' reviews, addressing these should become a top priority. Ideally, you'd like to solve the customer's problem so effectively that they remove the negative review and replace it with a positive (or at least neutral) review. At the very least, you want to show anyone else reading the review that you've responded promptly, politely, and have taken every reasonable step to resolve the issue.

## b. Decide How You'll Respond to Negative Reviews

The best way to answer negative comments or reviews is with a helpful, positive response. As a business, you should be respectful and sensitive to the poor experiences that your customers face and take every reasonable step to resolve the issue and ensure that the customer is happy. This is how you should communicate, especially if you want to build a solid online reputation.

Even if a customer review is grossly misinformed or misleading, you must approach it calmly and professionally. The surest way to damage your reputation is to be rude and lack empathy with your customers, or to be defensive. Show that you understand the source of the customer's unhappiness, and display that you've done everything you can to make it right.

If future readers see that a customer is still unhappy after you've bent over backwards to try to solve an issue, they'll usually side with the voice of reason. Also, you may often find that giving the customer the benefit of the doubt can turn into a positive experience—they may be having a unique problem that helps you improve your product, or you may be misunderstanding the source of their dissatisfaction entirely.

If your reputation takes a hit, you should act quickly. In most cases, you should be able to work through negative reviews with some elbow grease. If the negative publicity issues are too large, you may want to consider a reputation management company or a public relations firm. They can work on your behalf to manage reviews and online discussions with customers, and can also put out press releases and other positive media and help you make sure that both your content and your interactions with customers are high-quality and effective.

## c. Choose Your Online Reputation Management Tools & Services

There are several tools and services that can make it much easier to manage and maintain your company's online reputation.

- **Google Alerts:** One of the best reputation management tools is [Google Alerts](#). Here you can enter your brand, product name, or any keyword and choose how often you want Google to send you any mentions of your keyword. This is a great way to instantly know if someone has said something about you online, and can be key to finding and fixing negative reviews before they've been seen by thousands of potential customers.
- **Feature Reviews Directly on Your Website:** Collecting the bulk of product and customer review on your own website has a number of advantages. Customers have to navigate to your product pages to view them, increasing the likelihood of a sale (if the reviews are good, of course). Some great software programs for reviews include Yotpo, PowerReviews, Bazaarvoice, and TrustPilot. Besides offering social proof, these programs can also help with your search engine optimization.
- **Social Media Notifications:** Review your Facebook Notifications regularly. Since Facebook owns Instagram, you can see all comments, messages, and likes from both social sites for your company in one dashboard. Similarly, you should review your Twitter notifications regularly and respond in a professional manner.
- **If you sell on Amazon,** you'll want to remember to review it for your products or for any new shopper questions or product reviews. Additionally, Amazon's [Vine](#) program lets you send your products to professional reviewers who are screened by Amazon to give your product reviews. This is especially important if you are launching a new product and have few product reviews.



## d. Protect Your Brand Name

One of the most critical but commonly-overlooked forms of reputation management is copyright enforcement. To protect your brand, you should have your brand name trademarked with the [USPTO](#). Once you have the trademark, there are some protections provided by Google and Amazon for how your brand name is used on their platforms.

Be diligent about enforcing your copyright—knockoffs and imitators can do serious damage to your brand reputation. Furthermore, you do not want them to use your brand name in online ads—it creates confusion with customers and could be a huge headache for you.

## e. Leverage Positive Reviews

Reputation management isn't all about avoiding a negative reputation. Building your brand reputation gives you some of the best marketing opportunities available, such as testimonials, recommendations, and positive mentions of your brand on blogs, social media, or via face-to-face interactions. If you have positive reviews, a strong reputation management strategy includes leveraging them in your marketing:

- Retweet glowing reviews and positive shoutouts
- Create graphics to show in your social media marketing programs, especially Facebook and Instagram
- Include testimonials on your homepage and product pages

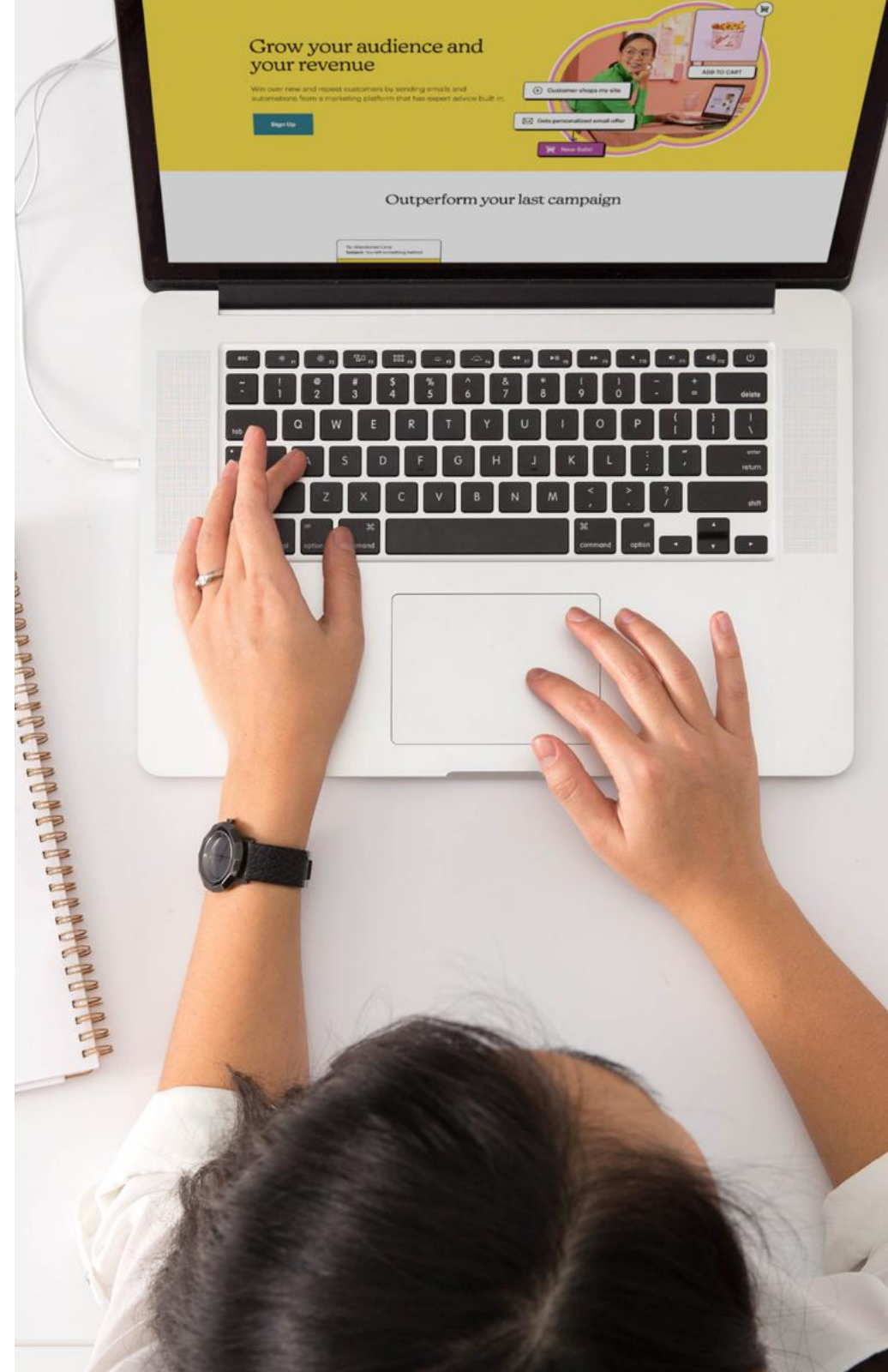
## PART 10

# Measuring the Results of Your Branding Efforts

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Your leads, customer recognition, and ultimately, sales will be the true tells about the success of your branding efforts.

However, this information won't just fall in your lap—you'll need to do a little bit of work setting up and configuring your analytics accounts. Also, if you really want to see results, you'll need to create and adhere to a branding plan for your store.



## a. Get Started with Google Analytics

Google Analytics is an incredibly valuable, free tool provided by Google themselves. Utilizing it gives you the opportunity to dive deeper into who your customer is and how they behave on the site.

It's important to understand this data because you can have all the information in the world, but if you don't know what it is and how to use it, it's worthless. By [becoming familiar with GA](#), you will have a leg up on the competition and help provide a better user experience for visitors.

Integrating your store with Google Analytics is a simple process that will give you tons of tracking and statistics regarding your store, like incoming web traffic, visitor statistics, and more.



## b. Use A/B Tests to Boost Your Branding

The ultimate goal of ecommerce is to earn and grow sales. Higher conversion rates typically yield higher revenue and gross profit. The way to achieve higher conversion rates is by optimizing your website's traffic. One way to optimize your site traffic is by running live, controlled experiments on your site visitors using two primary processes:

- **A/B testing**, also known as split testing, is when two versions of a page are tested against one another to determine optimal conversion rate. For most small- to medium-sized businesses, this is the way to go.
- **Multivariate testing** (essentially a more elaborate and often more informative A/B test) is where multiple variables within a page are changed and tested in different combinations to determine the impact of each variable on conversion rate and the optimal configuration.

These experiments allow you to test and measure the impact of anything and everything, from your email subject lines to the color of your “buy now” buttons to the price of your products. The tests help

you discover exactly which words, colors, prices, and other variables you are testing compel consumers to open, click, and buy more often. Once you know which versions convert best between two (or more) groups of site visitors, you can apply them to all of your visitors.

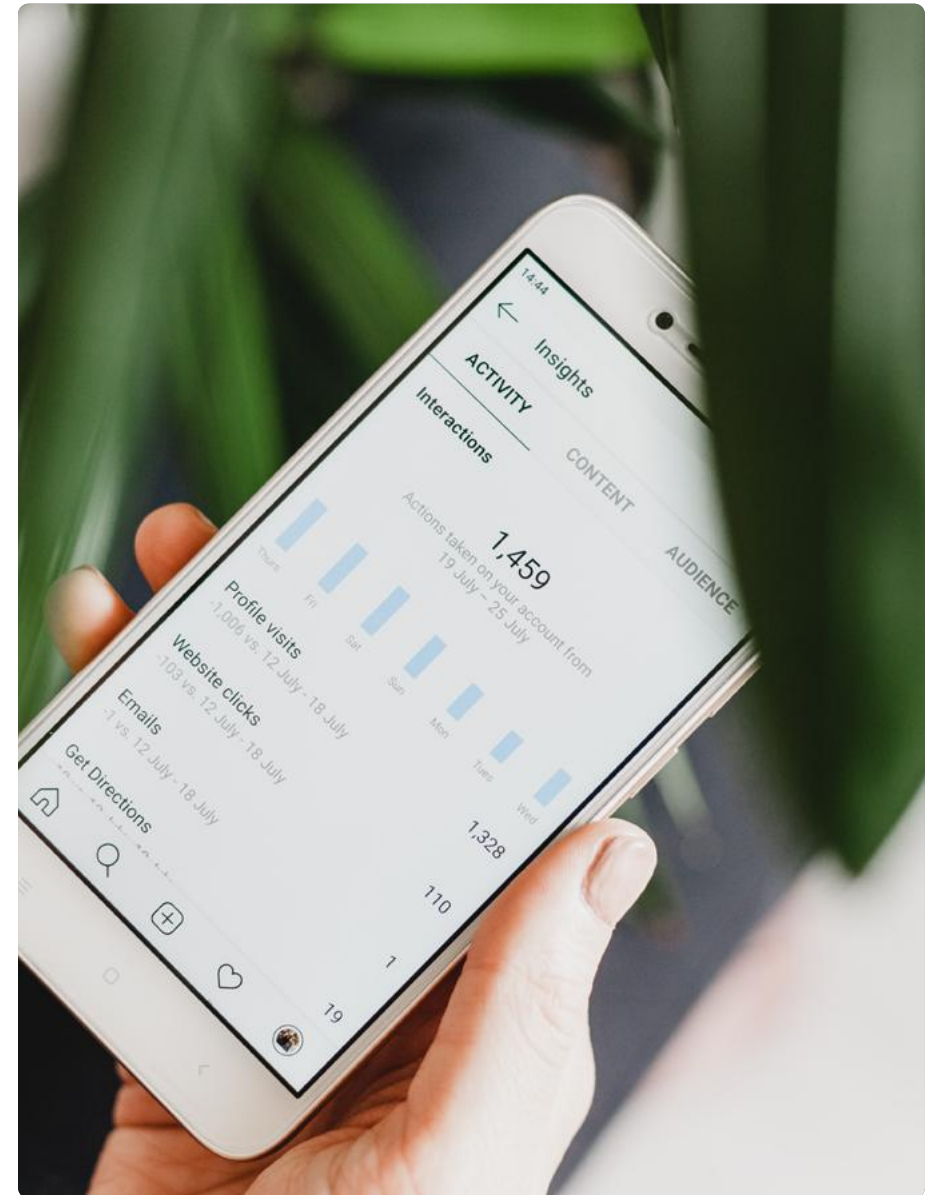
A/B testing has been around for decades. But thanks to sophisticated, low-cost online tools, it is easier and more affordable than ever before. Today every online merchant can—and should—conduct A/B tests to boost his or her conversion rates. After all, what online merchant doesn't want to make changes that are proven to boost sales?

## c. Set Up Social Media Metrics

It can be a bit overwhelming to review social media marketing metrics and decipher what is important and what isn't. While Facebook likes and Instagram followers are nice, large followings are easy to obtain via slimy tactics such as buying fake followers.

If there is one thing we suggest to merchants who are new to social media and are trying to make the most of their efforts, it's never buy followers. People are generally wary of Instagram accounts with 45k followers and only a handful of posts. Unless your brand has recently been on Shark Tank or you have a famous spokesman, instant success with numbers like these is highly unlikely.

So which social media reporting metrics should you focus on? Let's cover six that are key to measuring your success with Facebook and Instagram advertising, accessible through Google Analytics and Facebook Ads Manager.

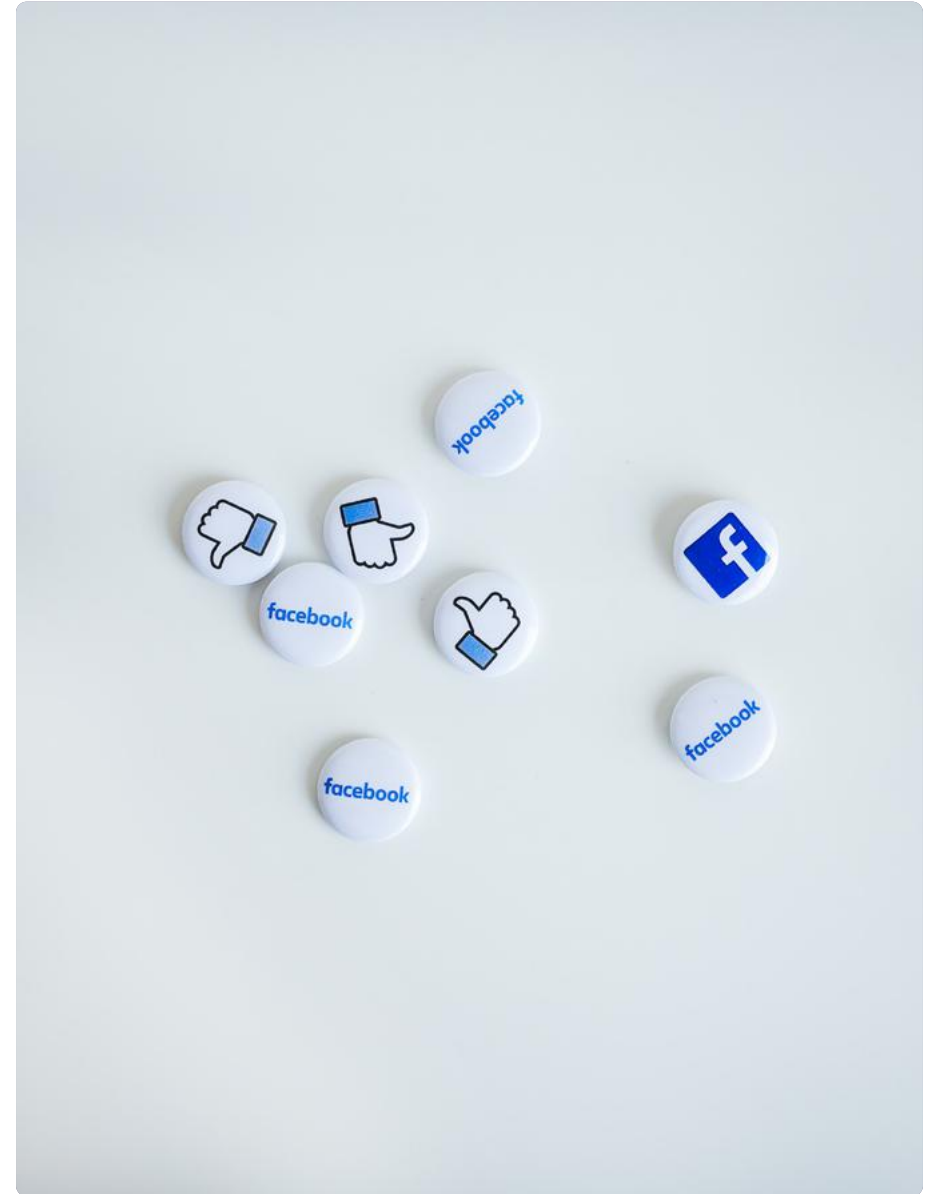


## Google Analytics Social Media Metrics for Ecommerce

**Network Referrals** are an essential social media metric for an ecommerce company. This will show you which social networks are sending the most traffic to your website and where you should be focusing your efforts. While it's important to have a presence on the big social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter), it is not mandatory to post on all of these networks regularly. We recommend picking 2-3 networks on which your audience is most active and engaging on and sticking to those.

Network referrals can be helpful in finding new networks to be active on. For instance, if Reddit is sending a large amount of referral traffic to your site, you should investigate why this is happening and see if there is a way to capitalize on it. Reddit is becoming a marketer's diamond in the rough, as the network is often overlooked by brands; however, when approached correctly, it can provide a boost to your bottom line as well as traffic to your site.

**Social Conversions** may be the most crucial metric for your finance department, as they help justify the amount of time you invest in social marketing. Google Analytics will show you how much money and how many conversions each network has contributed to. Often you'll see that audiences from different networks will interact with your website differently. Facebook may be sending more traffic to your website, and those who are purchasing may be making smaller purchases than those who are visiting from Instagram.



## Facebook Advertising Metrics for Ecommerce

If you are investing your marketing dollars into Facebook and Instagram ads—and nowadays this is practically a necessity—you'll want to keep an eye on several of the reporting metrics that are offered in Facebook Ads Manager.

**Amount Spent** will help you make sure that you are staying within your allotted budget. When you have multiple campaigns running, you'll want to see how well each campaign is performing and if budgets should be adjusted. Sometimes the campaign that you think will be your breadwinner ends up performing poorly. In those instances, you can choose to stop running the campaign or to lower the budget and move your campaign dollars to more successful campaigns.

**Button Clicks** are more important than the Cost per Result metric when running Website Click campaigns. This is the amount of people who clicked on your "Call to Action" button. The number will be lower than the Results number, and should be compared to your Network Referrals in Google Analytics. 99% of the time the numbers will not match up, but that's okay.

**Frequency** is important because you don't want to give your audience ad fatigue. Do you ever see the same ad day after day in your newsfeed and get annoyed that you keep seeing it? That's how your audience feels when they see your same ad multiple times a day for several days at a time. To prevent this from happening, set a frequency cap (like 3 impressions per week maximum) on your campaigns.

**Relevance Score** will show you how well your current ads are performing. A relevance score of seven or above means you're doing great; a score below that means you need to make some changes to your ad(s). It could be that the targeting is incorrect, your audience is seeing the ad too frequently, or the text and photo need to be revised.

Facebook Ads Manager will provide you with an overwhelming amount of data that may be hard to interpret unless you're a full-time social media advertiser. Focus your efforts on reviewing the above-mentioned metrics and compare the data monthly to see if your efforts are paying off.

## CONCLUSION

# Build Your Conversion-Focused Brand

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If you made it all the way through this guide, you know more about branding than 99% of ecommerce merchants, which will give you a huge leg up on the competition. Now it's time to put this knowledge into practice.

Any professional online merchant will tell you that getting your branding right is one of the most important parts of setting up an online business, and will make or break most online stores. Follow the steps in this guide and you'll have a unique branding plan for your business that will help you build a loyal customer base.



If you're ready to get started, [try a risk-free 14-day trial](#) of Volusion's award-winning ecommerce platform. From creating a beautiful storefront to managing inventory and accepting payments, Volusion is the easiest way for entrepreneurs to build the business they've been dreaming of.