

Is your brand costing you customers?

Energise Brand Guide

www.energise.net.nz

energise
Marketing Agency

Your brand is one of the most important business assets.

It's your competitive edge, it's the reason companies and consumers choose to buy from you (and not your competitors), it's your DNA on steroids.

So how do you begin to create this brand symphony?

We've put together a range of insightful articles to help get you started on your brand journey...

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A well thought out brand that deeply resonates with your target market can help build a loyal base of customers who will return to your business time and time again.

Your brand feeds into so many aspects of your marketing strategy that it is crucial to get it right.

We've put together some basic tips to help you build the foundation of a successful, enduring brand.



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BRAND

Your brand is so much more than your logo. Although your logo is the visual representation, your brand also provides the building blocks for your price strategy, customer experiences, industry position and so much more. A successful brand is a critical foundation for your business.

Having a brand that is on point for your target market helps build a strong base of loyal customers who will return to your product or service, even in challenging economic times.

So how do you start building your brand into a true Kiwi icon?

Work Out Who You Are and Stick To It

Make sure you have your brand story sorted. What makes your brand different? What emotions does your brand evoke in your customers? Once you have your brand story defined, ensure your brand's visual presence is simple and recognisable so it becomes memorable. Then the next step is ensuring everything from your letterhead and sales collateral to your signage and website are all on theme – both what you have today and what you produce in the future.

Be Yourself

Although it can be tempting to emulate success stories of big international brands, it's a trap for smaller NZ based businesses. Instead of trying to copy cat what the big brands are doing celebrate what makes your business different. Although big brands have big budgets to spend on marketing, local businesses are more responsive and agile, addressing consumers' needs and wants as they arise. Take advantage of your home grown appeal – with the ongoing trend towards locally made, artisan products, people are drawn to small independent operators with innovative interesting offers more than ever.

Get Your Team On the Same Page

Ensuring your employees have bought in to your brand story is critical. The way they dress and behave is a direct reflection of your brand – as far as your customers are concerned, they are not a representation of your brand, they ARE your brand. Make sure you ask employees for feedback. As the ones who have the most direct contact with customers, they may be able to provide valuable insights to help you on your way to becoming the next iconic NZ brand.

Share Your Expertise

Work out your areas of expertise and share your knowledge through blogs, social media, newsletters, speaking events, white papers and any other channel you can use to get your voice out there. Today there are so many communication channels available, make the most of them and position yourself as an industry expert.

Reward Your Fans

People love to feel recognised and valued. Make sure you know who your most valuable and loyal customers are and reward them with exclusive access to events and deals, advance notice of new releases and special offers. Treat them well and these loyal customers can turn out to be some of your strongest human billboards.

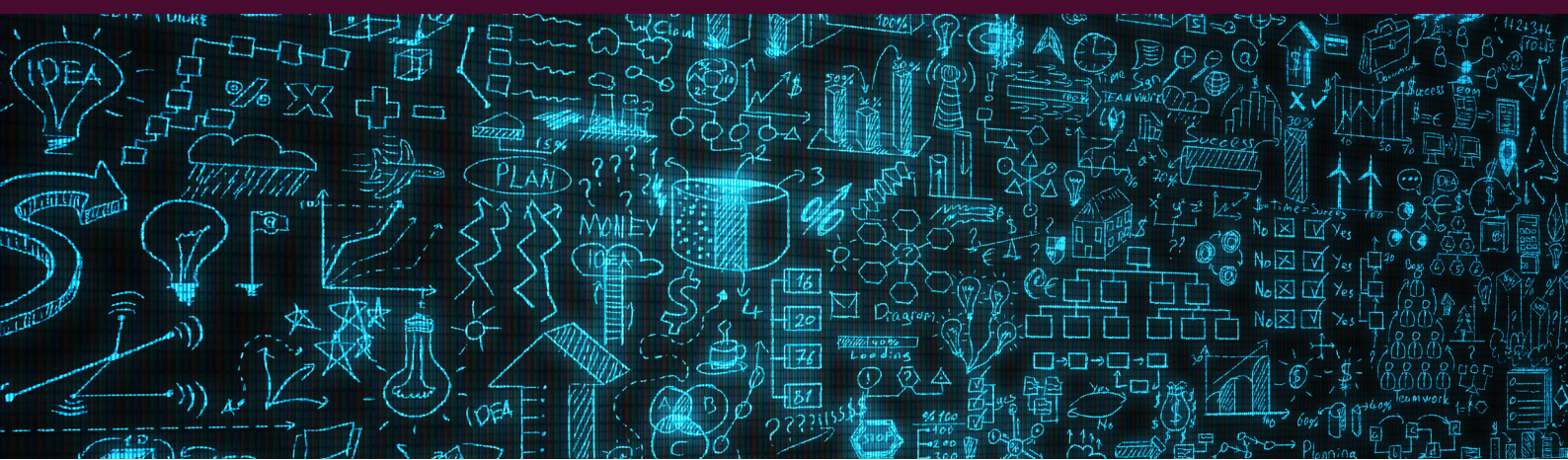
Be Responsive

Monitor your business's social media and respond to any customer queries or feedback immediately. The same goes for any communication received via phone, email or your website. Deal with any problems immediately. Be honest, acknowledge the problem, and let customers know what went wrong and what you are doing to fix it. Unresolved issues can lead to your brand losing value with your customers so don't sit around hoping the problem will go away – fix it today!

Keeping your brand up to date is an investment in your business's future.

But how do you know whether it needs a complete makeover or just a tweak?

Use our quick fire cheat sheet to discover whether your brand needs an overhaul or a nudge.



IS IT A BRAND OVERHAUL OR A NUDGE?

Having worked on a few brand 'revitalisation' projects, we are often asked by our clients whether they need a brand overhaul or a nudge. Unfortunately, 'IT DEPENDS.....' is never an answer they want to hear.

So, we have developed a quick-fire cheat sheet to help our clients answer this question:

• Has the sales growth of this brand stagnated or declined?

A good initial indicator that a brand needs some work is if sales have stagnated or declined. Year on year growth is what every business strives to achieve. If your sales have plateaued or gone down, you need to take a long hard look and try to work out why. Has your entire category declined or stagnated or is it just your brand?

• Are your distributors/retailers asking you to reduce or remove your range lately?

Retailers and distributors have limited space and are constantly reviewing sales figures to ensure that space is given to high performing brands that will bring them the most profit. If you have been asked to reduce or remove your range from some key retailers, you know your products are not performing as well as they used to.

• Are your competitors growing faster than you and looking better than you?

Competitors who are growing faster than you and taking a bigger share of your market are always cause for concern. If you have noticed your competitors are achieving better than you, chances are that it hasn't gone unnoticed by your retailers/distributors, your consumers and other companies competing in your segment of the market. What are the reasons that consumers are choosing to purchase the goods or services of your competitors instead of your offering? Success attracts success so make sure you're the one standing tall as an example of what others want to achieve.

• Are you facing new competitors for the first time and are their brands in stores that you would only dream of?

You might have noticed new players in your market segment who have established themselves as a viable competitor. They may have their products in the same stores or even in stores that you aspire to be in. How did they manage to enter your market and leapfrog you, landing key display space that gets their product or service in front of the right consumer?

- **Do your staff groan and head for the hills at the prospect of working on this brand?**

A sure sign that a brand needs some work is when employees who are dedicated and enthusiastic on other areas of your business suddenly become disaffected and busy when there is work to do on this brand. It is hard for anyone to be excited about working on a brand and talking to customers when all they can see around them are challenges and problems without any solutions.

- **Do you get more negative feedback than positive from your customers?**

Largely positive feedback is a good sign that your customers are generally happy and satisfied that your products and services are meeting their needs. It can be good to receive feedback from your customers on what isn't working so you can address the issues and ensure they don't keep happening. However, if you notice that the feedback you receive is overwhelming negative, it is a sure sign that something fundamental in your business is not working.

- **Do you want to attract another segment of the market but just can't get their attention?**

So, you've identified another segment of the market that you think your products could be successful in but to date, everything you've tried to break into that segment and make your mark has failed. Although there could be other reasons why you're not getting traction, a good place to start is your brand. How do potential customers perceive you? Do you measure up to competitors in this space? Is your message getting lost in the increasingly crowded market place? What can you do to stand out and get noticed?

These thought provokers are simple but an effective starter to answer **'Is it a brand overhaul or a nudge?'**

Branding and marketing are two terms that are often bandied about without any true understanding of what they are and when to use them.

They perform separate, equally important functions that should both be present in any good marketing activity.

A firm understanding of the differences and when to use each is essential to an effective, strategic marketing plan.

Do you understand the differences between branding and marketing?



BRANDING VS MARKETING

When you mention the word brand, many people automatically think “logo.”

A logo is a unique design, or symbol that pictorially identifies your product or service.

Over time your imagery and name become much more than just a logo. They become a brand – the aggregate of everything a company stands for – this includes its personality, drivers, ‘special-ness’, values and culture.

A brand is the promise that a company will deliver to or that is experienced by its customer. It’s what your customer automatically thinks of when they hear or see your brand name.

Why is a brand valuable?

- **Creates value for you and your customers – for businesses it is the security of future earnings; for customers it is the promise and delivery of an experience or product.**
- **It is a business asset – like all assets it needs investment for the future.**
- **The more convincing and credible your brand, the faster people will trust your business, the more attractive you will be to employees, customers and investors.**

It’s important to understand your brand. A simple brand test can help you get your head around what your customers may think of your brand.

Evaluate:

1. 3 things that are unique about the way you do things compared to your competition
2. 3 values that are most important to your company
3. **3 things your team would say they love about your business**
4. **3 things clients would say they love about your business**
5. 3 things you hate about your industry that you promise your business will never do
6. 3 qualities that best describe the personality of your business

What is the difference between branding and marketing?

Branding and Marketing perform important, yet separate functions.

Branding is strategic. Marketing is tactical.

Ideally they should both come into play with any effective marketing efforts.

Branding is the essential truth of a product or service. It doesn't push. It says "This is who I am and why I exist. If you like me, buy me. If you really like me, recommend me."

Marketing "on the other hand is pushing mechanism" that says "Buy our product because it's best or buy our product because it will fill your need or because it's a cool product to own."

Marketing may encourage you to purchase a product or service. Branding will determine whether or not you become a repeat customer or an advocate to others of that brand. In short marketing encourages buyers. Branding encourages their loyalty.

Your brand identity is one of the most important aspects of your business. It gives your business a personality and helps foster a personal connection with consumers.

Once you know what your brand's core values, it is crucial that these flow through every aspect of your business from your logo and business cards to your packaging and retail presence.

It may sound like a lot of work but telling a consistent story that is in line with your brand identity can be what turns customers into loyal advocates and gives your business the edge over your competition.



ARE YOUR 'BRAND DUCKS' IN A ROW?

When I talk about 'brand ducks' we mean just about anything that a customer can see, touch, taste, smell or hear with your business stamp on it (or logo!). As 'Brand-ers' we call this brand imagery and identity which includes stuff like:

- Your logo and business name
- Business cards
- Company brochures
- Sales material
- Trade show collateral
- Your website
- Your newsletters
- What your reception area looks like (not forgetting your car park)
- Your recent marketing campaigns

These all need to reflect your **brand's** personality, values and competitive edge. They need to tell a consistent story.

So for example if your brand stands for quality and luxury all the above needs to ooze that.

By this I mean using excellent quality paper and embossing on printed material to give a luxurious feel. Choosing brand colours and imagery that reinforce quality - no neon brights! Ensure the language you use in all of your communications is professional – no slang, abbreviations or topics or wording that could be deemed offensive and 100% correct spelling and grammar.

Champagne brands such as Moët and Chandon or Veuve Clicquot are experts at this. Their brand colours are tasteful and refined; their imagery is aspirational and evokes a sense of glamour.

The language on Moet's website is formal and includes words such as legendary, success, elegance, dazzle and inspire.

Their packaging and other collateral is excellent quality from the cardboard box that the champagne comes in to the gifts with purchase.

All of these elements serve to reinforce the brand positions of quality and luxury.

Likewise if your brand stands for being irreverent, bold and edgy all the above needs to reflect these brand values.

Choose unexpected colours, use language that is current in pop culture, court controversy with your imagery and topics.

Hell Pizza does this extremely well. Their brand colours of black and red along with gothic fonts and consistent imagery of skulls, fire and bones all reinforce the bold edgy nature of the brand.

Language on their website is more chatty and colloquial, like talking to a friend. Words such as spawned, wicked, evil and damned all reinforce their brand identity.

They constantly court controversy with their campaigns which have included a billboard covered in dead rabbit skins and condoms being sent out with promotional material.

And finally, remember, it's not all about you. Although you know what you want your brand's personality to be and have worked hard to get your brand imagery and identity to match, your consumers, customers and prospects may not see things the same way.

The best way to find out whether your brand identity is getting lost in translation and what consumers, customers and prospects currently think of your brand is to ask them:

"What is the first thing that comes to mind when you picture our brand?"

AND WAIT FOR THE RESPONSE

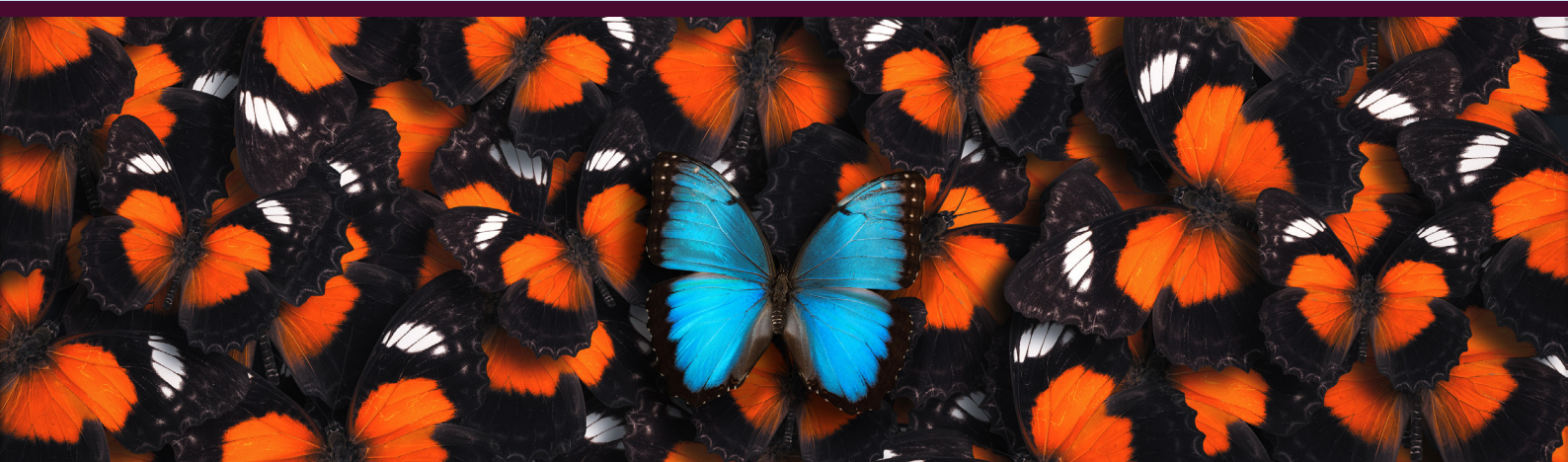
If it aligns with what you want to be known for, big congrats, all your ducks are in a row however if it doesn't you have some work to do.

What makes you special?

Uncovering what makes your business different is one of the most strategic activities that you can do.

Almost every market segment is highly competitive – customers are often faced with a seemingly limitless range of options. How do you make sure they choose you?

Make sure you don't fall into the trap of trying to copy-cat what your competitors are doing. It's not about being the same; it's about standing out and making your uniqueness shine.



YOUR BUSINESS WAS BORN AN ORIGINAL – DON'T LET IT DIE A COPY CAT

Too many businesses make the mistake of trying to copy-cat what their competitors are doing. A lot of marketing money is wasted trying to match up. It's not about matching competitors; it's about defining your difference – your uniqueness through your USP (Unique Selling Point).

It may take some soul searching, but if you can take the time to truly define your USP, you **will** stand out from the crowd and become a lot richer for it (LITERALLY!).

But where to start?

Your USP needs to clearly articulate the benefits of your product and services to your consumers. It needs to offer them something that a competitor's product can't or doesn't already offer them. And it needs to be compelling enough so they stay...

Keep your friends close but your enemies closer

A good starting point therefore, is to list the benefits or features of your product or service and then undertake a comparison with your competitor's offerings. Highlight those benefits your product or service offers, but your competitors do not, or cannot offer. It will begin to become obvious where your products are similar, and where they differentiate from each other.

Marketing Performance

Next, take some time to look at your competitor's advertising and marketing material – be it websites, brochures, TV ads, magazine ads etc. Understand where they are positioning themselves in the market – what benefits are they pushing, what angle are they taking with their marketing campaigns. What do they believe they are best at? There is obviously no point wasting time and money going head to head with them on the same sort of proposition. You need to ensure your proposition is unique to you.

This process should give you a clear indication of where your Unique Selling Point lies. Craft your USP into a short, concise statement. One that can be easily understood by your customers. One that you could easily communicate to them. And most importantly, one that you and your customers will believe.

Just Ask

The most effective way to find out why your current customers are purchasing your product is simply to ask! At point of purchase or at a follow up opportunity, ask them key questions. Can you rate our service? Can you rate our product quality and reliability? Would you recommend us? Why/why not.....

The information you glean from this sort of feedback will be invaluable in understanding the real reason that your customers are buying from you rather than your competitors and also importantly, if they are likely to return again and again for future purchases as opposed to switching to a competitor's offering.

Once you have your USP sorted – **Own it. Believe it. Communicate it.** To your customers via your website, advertising campaigns and marketing material. Ensure all aspects of your business reflect your USP – including service, sales process, even the atmosphere or look of your store (if appropriate). Stand out from the crowd. Advertise what makes you special, and encourage customers to switch to you.

Fired up and excited about driving business growth?

But don't know where to start?

It's an issue many businesses face, so let's examine a couple of tips to help you get ready.

To focus your energy, get the phone ringing and help you generate sales!



READY TO FOCUS YOUR ENERGY & GENERATE SALES?

Tip One: Decide what your niche is – what your game is.

Define what your business is going to competitively offer, and to whom. We cannot be everything to everyone as realistically there is not enough resource, time or scale of business.

Examples of a niche could be:

- Focused on a particular geographic region and/or turnover eg Auckland with a turnover of more than \$5million
- Focused on a particular segment eg manufacturing or exporting – maybe B to B or B to C

If you are unsure of what your niches is, ask more questions. Undertake some research. Test your niche idea with the people you think may possibly be interested in buying from you – your target market. Ask them (in relation to your idea):

- What their problems in that area are now
- What they find frustrating, what keeps them awake at night
- How do they go about solving their problem now (this could potentially highlight your competition)
- How much they would be prepared to pay for a solution to their problem now
- How they would like to purchase this solution (eg face to face, online etc)

As an example, when I set up my company Energise, I decided a good niche to target was the professional services sector. That was where my corporate background and experience lay, and it was a sector that I enjoyed. I used my contacts, and my friends and colleagues contacts, who were in professional sectors – like lawyers, accountants, engineers, architects etc. I phoned them up and introduced myself and asked for twenty minutes of their time to bounce ideas off them. However, I always made it clear I was not going to try and sell them anything.

Everyone said yes. The resulting insights and knowledge gained from this exercise totally shaped and focused my business. A key insight from this 'research' was that what Energise had to offer was only relevant to professionals who did work with other businesses (Business to Business), rather than services that focused on the person in the street (Business to Consumer). This knowledge shaped the Energise offer, brochures, website, social media content and most importantly who we were targeting and therefore helped us to generate sales.

Tip two: Don't go duck shooting where there are no ducks

Ensure that the niche market you target has enough customers to return a profit. During your research process, ask probing questions to allow you to fully understand the target market you are focusing on:

- What do they read?
- How do they find information?
- What groups do they belong to?
- Who influences their decision making?

This information allows you to start marketing to them through those channels. If your target market attends a specific industry event – make sure you are there. If they are part of a group on LinkedIn – see if you can join. If they read a particular blog or magazine – make sure you contribute to it. Collectively, these activities will help you to speak, influence and build relationships and reputation with those that matter.

Never underestimate the power of research. It doesn't need to be expensive – start with your own contacts or those of colleagues or friends. The only cost to you is time. But the resulting research is invaluable in defining your target market, and in planning how best to approach that market. To utilise this approach will ensure you are ready – ready to focus your energy and ready to generate sales!

ABOUT ENERGISE

Energise is your partner to marketing success

Founded in 2009 by Rosina Webb, Energise's principle mission is helping small to medium sized New Zealand businesses achieve their goals by offering a one stop shop marketing solution.

Energise specialises in strategic brand planning, market research and digital strategy and implementation.

Free Brand Check Up

Your brand has the power to either hold you back or propel you forward. Are you unsure:

- What makes you stand out from your competitors?
- Whether your brand truly represents your company values?
- If your customers are experiencing your brand the way they should?

Contact us today for your free brand check up with Energise Marketing Director Rosina Webb (Value \$999).

Phone: **021 703 859**

Email: **rosina@energise.net.nz**

So what do you get out of it? A plan, - about what's working, what's not and some next steps that you can implement depending on whether your brand is in need of a nudge, a tweak or an overhaul.



About the Author

Rosina Webb – Founder and Marketing Director

Rosina epitomises Energise. She's the driving force that inspires individuals, teams and businesses to grow, compete and achieve. Before establishing Energise Rosina held senior marketing roles in a wide range of organisations including Sky City, Westfield, Telecom, AUT and Westpac and consultancies.

Her passion for motivating individuals, teams and businesses to grow, compete and achieve has made her a formidable facilitator and effective change manager. These are the skills that enable Rosina to deliver on her promise to energise and mobilise individuals, teams and businesses.

Elected as a Marketing Fellow and awarded Chartered Marketer status by the CIM United Kingdom in 2011, Rosina is the Deputy Chairperson of the NZ Marketing Association.

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