

FIX YOUR  
WEBSITE  
**NOW**



Dunkin' or Starbucks? iPhone or Android? Verizon or AT&T?

If you drink coffee or use a smartphone and need service for that smartphone, odds are that you're a customer of one of the providers above. It is likely you at least knew of their *brand* before you knew *them*. Perhaps you wouldn't have realized it at the time, although they're well-known brands. But, what does that mean exactly?

The concept of a brand is not deep, but wide — wide enough to govern your customers' and prospects' perception of your business and you. To your customers, perception is reality, and that perception is the crux of what makes them want to do business with you.

Branding is an extremely important element of your professional success, thus maintaining a consistent perception of it is crucial. Without consistency in the look, feel and overall presentation, your brand will be undefined and sporadic.

There are both tangible and intangible elements that comprise your brand. Below are just some of the things which contribute to it:

- Your logo (most importantly since it brings everything else to mind)
- Your website
- Your collateral
- Your mission statement
- Your email signature
- Your voicemail greeting
- How you answer the phone
- How you correspond with clients/prospects

None of these pieces lives in a vacuum; they all should work together to define your business.

If it's time to make a change and reevaluate your brand, visual association is always the first step. Consider the company names mentioned above. When you think of Dunkin' Donuts, what first comes to mind? Odds are it's their logo, which is your visual association of that brand. That logo is the basis of everything else you see from that company: website, signage, ads, etc. If their look wasn't consistent, the recognition of the branding effort would be lost.

When creating – or recreating – your company brand, consider the following:

**Keep it simple.** A simple name, logo and tagline all add up to a simple solution for any prospect who may be considering your product or service. Save the complications — you already have plenty of those!

**Own it.** Whatever you choose as a name, logo, and tagline, you absolutely need to love it. If you don't love it, it will be difficult for you to embrace the ideology behind it, resulting in you failing to realize the brand you created.

**Be consistent.** Above all else, this is the most important practice. Your logo, company colors, even the same fonts must be used everywhere, across the entire visual realm of your business. Consistency breeds familiarity from which your visual identity is born.

As a small business owner, you're most likely wondering how to justify the price of updating all aspects of your brand, which is completely understandable. Yes, you may have perfectly good business cards, brochures, etc., so why recycle them and start all over?

Remember, it's not how you perceive your brand, it's how your customers and prospects do.

Look at it another way: A brand that is inconsistent can also send a message about how you may serve your customers, which inevitably reflects on sales. If you've been in sales long enough, you know quite well that the price of branding is one thing, and the cost of not branding is another.

Speaking of sales, while revenue may be your goal, it's important to remember that the sale is the end of the journey for your customer; your clear and consistent brand is the beginning.