



BRANDING & CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

A GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS

ABOUT ME



Sue has over 20 years of experience working with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), where she helped countless businesses with their business strategy and digital marketing needs. Now, she has embarked on her own venture with *Just Sue Creative*, a business that focuses on **website design, SEO services, branding, content creation, and comprehensive marketing solutions.**



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Just Sue

“

I've spent years advising businesses on how to strategically align their digital and business strategies, only to watch them not fully execute it. Now, I want to not only do it for them but ensure strategy and education are woven into every step.

”



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WHAT IS BRAND?

DEFINITION OF A BRAND

- A **brand** is more than just a logo or product—it is **the perception people have of your business.**
- It includes your **values, voice, visuals, and the emotional connection** customers feel.
- A strong brand builds **trust, loyalty, and recognition.**



BRANDING VS MARKETING

Branding vs. Marketing: Understanding the Difference Branding defines your identity, while marketing amplifies that identity through strategies to gain attention and drive sales.



- Answers "Why do we exist?"
- Establishes Business Identity
- Defines the big picture (Mission, Values, Culture)
- Ensures long-term customer relationships

BRANDING



- Answers "How do we spread the message?"
- Focuses on campaigns, tools, and tactics
- Generates immediate results
- Focuses on measurable actions
- Captures attention in the short term

MARKETING

NIKE

Branding ensures customers stay with you for years. Marketing gets them to notice you now.



- Represents Inspiration and Performance.
- "Just Do It"

BRANDING



- Their marketing uses celebrity athletes and emotional storytelling to reinforce this.



MARKETING

BREW AND BLOOM

Brew & Bloom, a local coffee shop, markets itself as a cozy, artistic space, but its brand is built on community, sustainability, and high-quality, ethically sourced coffee



Logo & Brand Identity:

Logo: A minimalist coffee cup with a blooming flower inside, representing growth, warmth, and sustainability.

Brand Colors: Earthy greens and warm browns to reflect nature and coziness.

Tagline: *"Where Coffee Meets Community"*

Core Values: Sustainability, ethical sourcing, creativity, and community-building.

Brand Personality: Friendly, welcoming, and artistic.



Campaigns: Weekly "Live Music & Latte" nights featuring local artists.

Tools: Social media, email newsletters, and a customer loyalty program.

Tactics: Seasonal drink promotions, influencer collaborations, and limited-time discounts.

BRAND FOUNDATION ELEMENTS

The 10 Key Elements of a Brand Foundation

1. **Brand Purpose & Mission** – Why does your brand exist beyond making money?
2. **Core Values**– What values define your brand and how do you show them?
3. **Target Audience** – Who are you serving, and what problems do they need solved?
4. **Voice** – What key messages define your brand?
5. **Brand Messaging** – Story, tagline, etch
6. **Visual Identity & Brand Aesthetics** – How does your brand look and feel?
7. **Brand Experience & Customer Journey** – How do you make customers feel at every touchpoint?

If you can't explain what you do in one sentence,
you're overcomplicating it.

BRAND PURPOSE AND MISSION

Your **brand purpose** is the deeper reason your business exists beyond making money.

- Your **mission statement** defines what your company does, who it serves, and how it creates impact.
- A strong mission guides **decision-making, marketing, and company culture**.

Why Does This Matter?

- Helps customers connect with your **values and beliefs**.
- Differentiates your business from competitors.
- Drives long-term **loyalty and trust**.

Your mission should be clear, inspiring, and customer - focused.

Defining Your Business Mission

- Why did you start this business? (What problem are you solving?)
- What change do you want to create? (For customers, the industry, or the world?)
- What motivates you beyond profit? (Passion, impact, innovation?)

CORE VALUES

- Core values represent the problems you solve for your customers and the principles that guide your business in delivering value.
- They shape how customers experience your brand and define the impact your business has on their lives.
- Your core values should answer: What does your brand stand for in the eyes of your customers? What Is Brand Personality?

Your brand isn't about what YOU think it is. It's about how your customers experience it

CRAFTING YOUR BRAND VALUES

- What are the biggest problems my customers face?
- How does my brand improve my customers' lives?
- What impact do I want to have on my industry or community?

CORE VALUES

Example Core Values (Problem-Solving Focused)

- **Convenience** – We make life easier for busy professionals.
- **Trust** – We provide transparent, honest communication.
- **Sustainability** – We create eco-friendly solutions to reduce waste.
- **Empowerment** – We help customers feel confident and capable.
- **Personalization** – We tailor our services to meet unique customer needs.

At [Business Name], we solve [customer problem] by providing [value], ensuring our customers always experience [feeling or benefit]

CRAFTING YOUR BRAND VALUES

Problems They Solve:

- Customers want unique, high-quality food without high prices.
- Shopping should be an enjoyable and engaging experience.

Core Values in Action:

- They offer affordable, high-quality products with fun, quirky branding
- Stores are designed to feel welcoming and personal.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- **Demographics:** Age, gender, location, income, job, education
- **Interests & Behaviors:** Hobbies, values, lifestyle, buying habits
- **Pain Points & Needs:** What problems do they need solved?
- **Preferred Communication Channels:** Social media, email, ads, word-of-mouth

Key Elements of Personas

What is a Customer Persona?

A detailed representation of an ideal customer based on data and research.

DEFINING YOUR TARGET MARKET

A clearly defined audience helps you:

- Create marketing that **speaks directly to their needs**
- Develop products/services that **solve real problems**
- Build a brand that **connects emotionally**

Tiny Tots Play Café Example:

- **Target Audience:** Busy moms who need a space to work while their children play.
- **Pain Points Solved:**
 - Parents struggle to balance work and childcare.
 - Traditional cafés aren't kid-friendly.
- **Brand Positioning:** A **safe, engaging, and productive** space for both parents and kids.

DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

- **Ask Yourself:**
- **Who benefits the most from my product or service?**
- **What problem am I solving for them?**
- **Where do they spend time online and offline?**
- **What influences their purchasing decisions?**

BRAND VOICE

Sets the tone for customer relationships.

- Creates consistency across social media, website, emails, and ads.
- Helps customers feel connected and engaged.

Ask Yourself:

- If my brand were a person, how would they talk?
- What three words describe my brand's personality? (E.g., fun, professional, authoritative)
- How do I want my audience to feel when they engage with my brand?
- What tone works best for my industry and audience?

VOICE TYPES

- **Friendly & Conversational** – Casual, engaging, warm (*Ex: Wendy's Twitter interactions*)
- **Professional & Authoritative** – Direct, knowledgeable, formal (*Ex: IBM's tech-driven voice*)
- **Quirky & Playful** – Fun, witty, unexpected (*Ex: MailChimp's humorous marketing tone*)
- **Inspiring & Motivational** – Uplifting, encouraging, visionary (*Ex: Nike's empowering messaging*)

BRAND VOICE

National Brand Example: Dove

- **Brand Voice:** Supportive, empowering, positive.
- **How They Use It:**
 - Their campaigns focus on **self-confidence and natural beauty**.
 - They use **uplifting, human-centered storytelling**.
 - Their messaging is always **inclusive and inspiring**. **Small Business Example: The Local Pet Spot (Pet Grooming Business)**

• **Brand Voice:** Friendly, caring, and knowledgeable. Pet Care Business

- **How They Use It:**
 - Their social media posts **use humor and warmth** to connect with pet owners.
 - Their emails **focus on pet care tips**, not just promotions.
 - Their website copy is **lighthearted and conversational**.

“Your voice should feel authentic—your customers should feel like they’re talking to a real person, not a corporate script.”

BRAND MESSAGES

- Brand messages are the **core ideas** you want your audience to associate with your business.
- They include your **brand story, tagline, value proposition, and elevator pitch**
- Consistent messaging makes your brand **recognizable, memorable, and trustworthy.**

People remember stories, not facts. A strong brand story builds trust and emotional connection.

- Helps customers **quickly understand** what you do and why it matters.
- Builds an emotional connection through **storytelling.**
- Guides your **marketing, advertising, and sales conversations**

BRAND STORY

Brand Story: Why Your Business Exists

- Your **brand story** should:
- Show the **problem that inspired your business.**
- Align with your **customers' journey and struggles.**

Feel **authentic, personal, and engaging.**

Brand Story Formula:

"I started [business name] because [problem you saw]. Now, I help [audience] by [solution you provide] so they can [benefit]."

Example:

"I started The Cookie Jar after struggling to find homemade-style cookies that felt nostalgic. Now, we bring the warmth of homemade treats to busy families who crave comfort in every bite."

VALUE PROPOSITION

Your **value proposition** is a clear statement that explains:

- **What problem you are solving**
- **Who you are solving it for** (your target audience)
- **Why you are different** from competitors

A strong value proposition should be:

- **Clear** – Customers should understand it immediately.
- **Customer-focused** – Focus on the **benefit to the customer**, not just the product.
- **Unique** – Show why you stand out from the competition.

Value Proposition Formula:

"We help [target audience] solve [problem] by providing [your solution], unlike [competitor], we [what makes you different]."

Small Business Example: The Local Pet Spot

"We help busy pet owners keep their pets happy and healthy by providing stress-free grooming and daycare. Unlike big-box pet services, we offer a personalized, caring experience where every pet is treated like family."

TAG LINE

Tagline: Your Brand in a Few Words

- A **short, catchy phrase** that captures your essence.
- Reinforces your brand personality and mission.

Examples:

Nike: *"Just Do It."*

Dollar Shave Club: *"Shave Time. Shave Money."*

Small Business Example: The Local Pet Spot –
"Happy pets, happy people."

State the Benefit

"Helping [audience] [achieve outcome]."

Example: *"Handmade candles. Pure comfort."*

Inspire Action:

"Get [result] with [your brand]."

Example: *"Bake memories with us." (Bakery)*

Position Yourself as the Best Choice:

"The [superlative] way to [solve problem]."

Example: *"The easiest way to organize your home." (Home organization service)*

Evoke Emotion or Identity:

"For those who [aspiration or value]."

Example: *"For coffee lovers, by coffee lovers." (Local coffee shop)*

VISUAL IDENTITY & BRAND AESTHETICS

- Creates **immediate brand recognition** (Think: Nike Swoosh, McDonald's Golden Arches).
- Helps build **trust and credibility** with customers. Reinforces your **brand personality** and **message**.
- Ensures **consistency across all platforms** (website, social media, packaging, ads).

Elements of a Strong Visual Identity

Logo/Element– The most recognizable mark of your brand. Should be simple, versatile, and timeless.

Color Palette – Colors evoke emotions. Choose shades that align with your brand personality.

Typography – Fonts should be readable and match your brand's tone (e.g., playful vs. sophisticated).

4. Imagery & Photography Style – Define how you use photos, graphics, and illustrations.

Design Consistency – Your brand should look cohesive across **all touchpoints** (website, social media, packaging, marketing materials).

Defining Your Brand's Visual Identity

Ask Yourself:

1. What emotions do I want my brand to evoke? (Luxury, fun, trust, warmth?)

2. What colors represent my brand's personality? (Bright and bold? Soft and calming?)

3. How should my brand be visually consistent across different platforms?

Example Visual Identity

Breakdown:

Business Name: The Cozy Bean
(Local Coffee Shop)

- Logo: A warm coffee cup with steam forming a heart.

- Colors: Warm browns, deep oranges, and soft creams for a cozy feel.

- Typography: A mix of elegant serif fonts and handwritten accents.

- Imagery: Inviting café settings, latte art, and people enjoying coffee.

VISUAL IDENTITY & BRAND AESTHETICS

Logo Don'ts

- Too complicated – Keep it simple for scalability.
- Trendy or not timeless – Avoid constant redesigns.
- Low-quality or pixelated – Always use high-resolution files that are VECTOR.

Color Palette Don'ts

- Too many colors – Stick to 3-5 max for consistency.
- Ignoring color psychology – Colors should match your brand vibe.
- Poor contrast – Ensure readability across all platforms.

Typography Don'ts

- Too many fonts – Stick to 1-2 primary fonts.
- Hard-to-read styles – Avoid thin, fancy, or overly decorative fonts.
- Ignoring mobile – Fonts must be clear on all screen sizes.

Imagery & Design Don'ts

- Generic stock photos – Use authentic, on-brand visuals.
- Cluttered design – Less is more (use whitespace).
- Inconsistent style – Keep a cohesive visual identity.

Brand Consistency Don'ts

- Constantly changing branding – Stick to a long-term identity.
- No style guide – A brand guide ensures uniformity.
- Ignoring audience expectations – Branding should resonate with customers.

The background features abstract teal line art. On the left, there is a complex, overlapping pattern of curved lines that resembles a stylized leaf or a cluster of fibers. On the right, there are several parallel, wavy lines that flow vertically down the page. The overall aesthetic is modern and organic.

CONTENT CREATION & BRANDING

Creating Content That Matches Your Brand

Creating Content That Matches Your Brand

- What is Brand-Aligned Content?
- Content should reflect your brand values, voice, and personality.
- Every post, video, and blog should reinforce who you are and what you stand for.
- Consistent content builds trust and recognition.

Content isn't just about selling —it's about building a relationship with your audience.



**BUILD
YOUR
BRAND**

CONTENT PILLARS

What Are Content Pillars?

- Content pillars are the core themes or topics that guide your content.
- They help create consistent, strategic, and relevant content.
- All your marketing materials should fit into at least one of your content pillars.

How to Choose Your Content Pillars

- What topics are most relevant to your audience?
- What knowledge or expertise do you want to be known for?
- What problems do you help solve?

Example Content Pillars:

- **Education** – Teach your audience something valuable.
- **Behind-the-Scenes** – Showcase your process and brand personality.
- **Customer Stories** – Share testimonials and case studies.
- **Product/Service Highlights** – Show how your offer solves a problem.
- **Industry Trends & Insights** – Position yourself as an expert.

TYPES OF CONTENT TO PLAN AND CREATE TEMPLATES FOR

Social Media Posts

- Instagram carousels, Twitter threads, Facebook updates
- Templates for quotes, testimonials, product launches

Blog Posts & Articles

- How-to guides, educational pieces, thought leadership
- Templates for blog outlines and SEO optimization

Videos & Reels

- Short-form content (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts)
- Product demonstrations, tutorials, behind-the-scenes

Email Campaigns

- Welcome sequences, promotions, newsletters
- Templates for audience segmentation and engagement

Lead Magnets & Free Resources

- E-books, checklists, worksheets, whitepapers
- Templates for lead generation and audience engagement

✔ Infographics & Visual Content

- Quick, digestible information in a branded format
- Templates for social media and blog content



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USING AI TO HELP IN BRANDING

Clarify your brand messaging, develop content ideas generate brand voice examples, create a vision for visual identity.

ACTIVITY: DEFINE YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Write your value proposition using the formula.

Define 3 core brand messages (tagline, key selling points, or brand personality).

Identify 2-3 brand elements you need to refine or improve.

10 MINUTES

REFLECTION QUESTION

How does your branding influence customer perception?





SMART GOALS

AI TEMPLATE

AI Branding Template: Fill This Out & Use in ChatGPT

Brand Foundation Worksheet

Business Name:

[Insert Your Business Name]

Brand Mission (Why Your Business Exists):

[Describe the purpose of your business and the impact you want to make]

Core Values (What You Stand For):

1. [Value 1]
2. [Value 2]
3. [Value 3]

Brand Personality (How Your Brand Sounds & Feels):

[Describe Your Brand in 3 Adjectives: e.g., Bold, Friendly, Innovative]

Ideal Customer (Who You Serve & Their Pain Points):

[Who are they? What problems do they have?]

Value Proposition (Problem You Solve, For Whom, & Why You're Different):

"We help [target audience] by [unique solution] so they can [key benefit]. Unlike [competitor], we [what makes you different]."

Brand Story (Your Origin & Impact):

"I started [business name] because [problem you saw]. Now, I help [audience] by [solution you provide] so they can [benefit]."

Visual Identity Ideas (Colors, Fonts, Design Style):

[List color palettes, typography choices, imagery style]

Tagline (Optional):

[Write a short, catchy phrase that summarizes your brand]

How to Use This Template in ChatGPT:

Fill in the blanks with your branding details.

Copy and paste your responses into ChatGPT using prompts like:

1. "Generate a compelling brand story based on this information..."
2. "Suggest three tagline ideas based on my brand's mission and personality..."
3. "Describe my brand voice based on these adjectives..."

Brand Foundation Worksheet

Business Name:

The Cozy Bean Café

Brand Mission (Why Your Business Exists):

The Cozy Bean Café exists to create a welcoming space where people can relax, connect, and enjoy high-quality coffee. We believe that great coffee and a cozy atmosphere bring communities together and provide a much-needed break from the busy world.

Core Values (What You Stand For):

- 1. Community** – We create a space for people to connect and feel at home.
- 2. Quality** – We source ethically grown coffee and prepare it with care.
- 3. Sustainability** – We use eco-friendly materials and support local suppliers.

Brand Personality (How Your Brand Sounds & Feels):

Warm, inviting, and friendly

Ideal Customer (Who You Serve & Their Pain Points):

Our ideal customer is a **25-45-year-old coffee lover** looking for a quiet, welcoming space to work, read, or meet with friends. They appreciate **high-quality, ethically sourced coffee** and prefer an independent café experience over big-chain coffee shops.

Value Proposition (Problem You Solve, For Whom, & Why You're Different):

We help coffee lovers and remote workers find a cozy, community-driven space to enjoy high-quality, sustainably sourced coffee. Unlike large coffee chains, we provide a warm, personal experience with handcrafted drinks, locally sourced pastries, and a relaxing atmosphere.

Brand Story (Your Origin & Impact):

I started The Cozy Bean Café after struggling to find a comfortable space where I could relax, work, and truly enjoy a cup of coffee. I wanted a café that felt like home—a place where people could unwind, connect, and enjoy artisanal coffee without the rush of a corporate coffee chain. Now, we bring that vision to life by offering a warm, inviting space with handcrafted drinks, friendly baristas, and a focus on sustainability.

Visual Identity Ideas (Colors, Fonts, Design Style):

Color Palette: Earthy tones like warm browns, soft greens, and creamy beige for a cozy, natural feel.

Typography: A mix of elegant serif fonts for a classic feel and handwritten-style fonts for a personal touch.

Imagery Style: Warm, inviting café interiors, latte art close-ups, and images of people enjoying conversations over coffee.

Tagline (Optional):

"Where coffee feels like home."



GOOGLE DOCS BRANDING
TEMPLATE AND PROMPTS



[https://chatgpt.com/share/67d4beee-
eec8-8002-b314-c80346b8108c](https://chatgpt.com/share/67d4beee-eec8-8002-b314-c80346b8108c)

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