

Are you interested in a brand break through?

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After chatting to several new clients this week we were in the car on the way back to the office discussing that maybe some small businesses do not fully understand (or perhaps it's that they don't value) the true role of brand and marketing in their business.

These words "brand" and "marketing" are in our everyday vocabulary, so it is easy to overlook or forget that it's not always clear to people, busy running their own business, what the difference is between the two.

Many business owners tend to make decisions, acting on their instinct and are driven by their entrepreneurial spirit. They may know they need help with promoting their business, but when it comes to marketing and branding we've heard them use both terms interchangeably, to mean the same thing. Or, because they have had a logo designed and its on a website, on their van and on the sign in reception - that's it - branding ticked. All done. Now all they need to do, is get on with marketing.

Most businesses want more sales, and are therefore are looking for more customers and repeat business. But it is more than just "doing marketing". It is a **process**.

If people who have heard of your company, engage with you and like (*really* like, not just *click-like!*) what they see, they start to pay more attention. And if your messages continue to chime with them, they begin to trust your brand. As the trust builds and your marketing is executed in a way that consistently upholds your brand values - then they are more likely to buy actual products and services from you. When their experience of you, fits with the ideals they bought into in the first place, then they are more likely become those golden repeat customers.

So, your brand is **who** you are and branding **builds loyalty**. Marketing is your **message** and marketing

generates a **response**.

We have learned that sometimes its our job to unravel this for our clients and often it is a case of asking "but first, do you REALLY understand your own brand?"

Your brand is not just your logo.

We like to use the concept of the 5 ps and the big R; your brand is your **purpose**, your **promise**, your **performance**, your **practice** and your **personality**.

It is your **Reputation**.

Below are some famous brands that help to highlight the importance of knowing this. When you think of them you cannot help recognise the feelings that are universally paired with their name.

Chanel's purpose is to exemplify sophistication.

Disney promises magic and family fun.

Amazon performs as the Earth's biggest selection, selling everything from A - Z

Apple practices Thinking Differently.

Nike's personality is to inspire and do something with your life.

Volvo has a reputation for safety.

Yes their logos / brand marks are instantly recognisable, but, the association between their name or logo and their reputation is also powerful stuff, and all part of their brand.

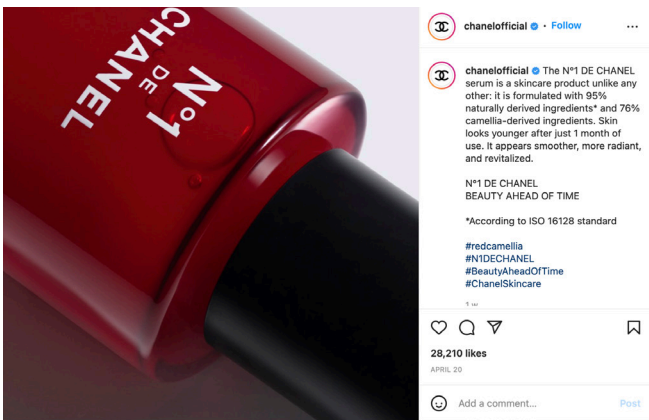
Most small / medium business owners envy that position but believe its impossible for them to achieve - It's easy to think that after all, surely it was a case of good luck, a genius visionary leader and big brands with big budgets have access to a magic bullet that automatically launches them into success.

Well they are big and successful, but they haven't always been. They all had to start somewhere, and in the absence of a magic formula, one of the reasons for their size and prosperity today, is that they are now crystal clear on certain elements of their brand. Brands build when everything that we do in our business, is informed by the clarity and understanding of our brand values. Secondly, they know how to unleash their brand's power.

If we take a look at the first example above.

Chanel's branding aims to postioning itself as the luxury

brand to be associated with if you want to project ultimate sophistication. Their tone and manner is refined and glamorous and apparent in everything they produce. Their photography and presentation style is discriminating and exclusive, confidently offering high quality, that has an unapologetically expensive price tag.



Once you have been convinced of that quality and prestige and have the desire to be associated with it, they have your buy-in to their brand. Everytime you experience Chanel you think elegance and style. It is then that they market their products and offers to you, with the brand values at the heart of their marketing messages which are designed to encourage you to respond with an enquiry or a purchase.

There are so many decisions to make in business; who we recruit into our team, how we train our people, the culture we encourage, the environment we provide to work in, the suppliers we use, how quickly we pay people, who we collaborate with, what technology we chose to invest in, what we should charge, and of course how we market our products and services.

These decisions can be difficult and daunting when there is a lack of direction. Being clear about your brand - and defining who you are and **why** you do **what** you do, will help you to provide that essential direction.

When a business does not understand it's brand inside out and cannot communicate what that is, decisions are made based on misinformed criteria.

Certainly, any marketing that you invest in can then be expensive, hit or miss, typically disappointing and less successful than well executed, informed marketing that's authentically representative of your brand values.

We cannot assume that people understand why we are trying to get them to work on their brand first, but interestingly, we have found that as soon as they get involved in defining and committing to working out **why** they do **what** they do (heads up it is not just to make money - that is a result of doing what you do) - the

process itself leads to clarity and confidence. They notice that the overwhelm begins to subside and is replaced with direction and some great ideas. And they become fired up about their business again.

When you have a well appointed or a healthy home-grown team in place - who are all fully fledged ambassadors for your brand - then those ideas take shape, gather pace and develop. And so does the trust of your customers.

We have found many companies have not truly defined their brand - beyond a vision or mission statement that noone can remember and that just gets shoved in the MDs desk drawer.

So we have developed a "brand definition" program. Designed to help you get to the very essence of your brand and then harness that knowledge to build on it, to inform your marketing, and to take action in a real way by executing your ideas in line with your brand.

As part of that process we have developed an online brand fact finding tool - that reveals what's important to you and helps you to get focused.

We are under no illusions - we think that you know most of this stuff already - you just don't know you know it!!

This tool will help to draw it out, to enable you to get clarity about your brand - which in turn will allow you to be confident in mapping out your marketing.

Mark Hurst, co-owner at Dirty Velvet Clothing was one of our early adopters and has used our online tool and commented:

"I found this absolutely fascinating, I mean some of it is a bit of a head scratcher - but it does make you think about stuff I hadn't even ever considered, you can really see how important this sort of thinking is to creating or building and growing your brand and its made me think about our approach"

We are now at the stage of rolling this online tool out to a wider audience, and would love it if you were interested in taking your business through the first leg of the process with us.

To celebrate the launch of this tool, we are offering it, free of charge, to the first five businesses that enquire.

Interested in a break through with your brand?
Just drop me or Matt a line: hello@ashby.co.uk

www.ashby.co.uk

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