nonprofit hub
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BRAND BOOT CAMP

THREE-PART GUIDE

PART 1: BRAND PERSONALITY
5 Questions to Help Uncover Key Insights about Your Brand

Personifying your brand.

One powerful insight-gathering tool is an exercise to help you examine your brand's personality. When engaging in this exercise, you'll want to go beyond getting a read on the current state of your brand personality. You'll also want to decide whether or not it matches your desired personality.
You can pinpoint these insights in several ways, but here are a few key questions to make this exploration easy and fun.

1. If your brand were a famous person, who would it be — and why?

From my experience, this question tends to unlock great insights because it allows you to "personify" your brand (or, in laymen's terms, project a personality that paints a strong picture of your brand). You can get even richer insights when you ask/answer a few follow-up questions. Why? What characteristics of that famous person are dominant traits of your brand? What traits might be considered "character flaws?"

2. Now that you've defined your brand as (blank) famous person, is there another famous person you would like your brand to be instead? If so, who — and why?

Obviously, if you or your leadership group likes the current personality of your brand, you can skip this question. Frankly, though, I have not found an organization in all my years of using this material that didn't want to have a slightly different personality.

Before moving on to even more insightful follow-up questions, here are a few examples of how other organizations my firm has worked with have answered these questions. While the organization names are generic, the examples are real.

Organization	Current Personality	Desired Personality
Small, private Christian college	Taylor Swift, because she is innocent, young, emerging and talented.	Carrie Underwood, because she is more mature, more confident, more accomplished and more serious.
Food distribution organization	Abe Lincoln, because of his honesty, integrity, vision casting and humility.	Tom Hanks, because of his confidence without being arrogant, track record for success, competency and relevancy.
Senior services organization	Ward Cleaver, because of his calm and dependable demeanor, helpful attitude and perception of being a dated personality.	Rachael Ray, because of her energy, creativity and diversity, and she is seen as contemporary.

Digging deeper and striking insight gold.

Once you've determined who your brand is and who you might like it to be instead, dig deeper to uncover more golden insights.

3. What is your brand personality's emotional appeal?

- How does your organization make people feel?
- How would someone working with you benefit?

4. What words best describe your organization's work?

- What deliverables or services does your organization provide?
- What impact do you make on the people, community or world around you?
- Who do you serve and get support from?

5. What are you really good at doing?

- What do you do that's the best of the best?
- What do you do that is clearly unique to your organization?
- What do you do that's much like the rest? (Be honest—these probably aren't the attributes to high-light when describing your brand)

Crafting an insightful brand statement for your nonprofit.

To wrap up this exercise, take a look at the list of words you've used in each category and see if you can com-bine them into a short phrase (ideally, no more than nine words) to develop a memorable brand statement.

Here are a few "nine-words-or-less" brand statements we've worked with:

Youth Camp: Equipping future leaders through fun, meaningful experiences.

Faith-based Legal Alliance: Defending people's rights to live out their faith.

Child Welfare Agency: Rescuing children from the cycle of abuse and neglect.

My goal is that nonprofit organizations like yours can use these ideas to develop more effective nonprofit mar-keting programs and generate even greater ROI.

PART 2: WHAT'S IN A BRAND GUIDE?

A great name is like having extra horsepower.

Having a complicated, boring, and generic name generally won't stop a brand from achieving success, but it definitely can impede growth and be a drag on potential.

Obviously, if you're starting a new organization or providing a new service, naming should be one of the first branding components you consider. It's a great (and inexpensive way) to create differentiation.

If your product, service, or brand has a name that you believe is undifferentiated or not memorable, you may want to consider modifying it or changing it. While your current name may have some equity with certain audiences, it may be costing you more than what you could gain with a new name.

Great names have certain qualities. Those include:

- **Memorable** — sticks in your brain and stands out in the marketplace
- **Meaningful** — aligns with what you do or provide or with the personality of your organization
- **Readable** — easy to spell and certainly easy to pronounce
- **Distinctive** — unique and creates separation from other similar organizations

Name. Brand.

If you have a big marketing and branding budget, you can overcome a bad or dull name with compelling messages. But most of us don't have that luxury. As such, having an unforgettable and unique name is a strategic advantage and increases the efficiency of your messaging.

Here are some things to consider when developing a distinctive brand name:

- Literal or descriptive names are easily copied and imitated, which can lead to market and audience confusion.
- Obscure and emotional names create separation and natural interest in your brand (think Google, Yahoo, Apple, etc.)
- Generic and copycat names cost more to build, aren't compelling, and will likely drown in the sea of sameness.

Generating a name that lasts for generations.

You want your brand name to make an impact that contributes to your organization's legacy. When it comes to picking a name that's just right, there's a distinct process that can help. This approach works well for Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, and everything in between. Use the following seven-step outline which details the best practices for generating a strong and lasting brand name.

The first three steps of this process outline the criteria for the ideal name.

1. Define the essence (meaning, spirit, heart and soul) of the organization, product, or service to be named.

2. List the qualities (traits, personality, distinctiveness) the name must represent.

3. Identify the perceptions and expectations the name should create for those who will come in contact with it.

4. Create a range of possible directions guided by the above considerations. This step can be done as a group or as individuals who then reconvene as a group to share ideas. The efforts of step four should generate anywhere from 50 – 100 names.

5. Screen each potential name through the following:
   The first phase of the screening process will require a group to discuss the denotative (literal meaning) and connotative (suggested meaning) of each potential name. From this list, there should be no more than 25 names for which you will conduct legal and linguistic checks. So, these are the steps in the initial screening process:

   - Denotative meaning
   - Connotative meaning
   - Legal check
   - Linguistic check (for brands with an international presence)

6. Use a score sheet like this to evaluate names. The names that make it through the first screening process (usually 10 – 15) should then be further challenged, with the remaining names going through a scoring process based on the "great name qualities" listed above:

   - Memorability
   - Meaningfulness
   - Readability
   - Distinctiveness

   This is usually done by having each member of the group score each individual name on a scale from 1 to 5 (one being the lowest), then calculating the highest scoring names to arrive at a "Top 5 or 10" names.

7. The final step includes talking with sample members of your target audience — conducting primary research on each existing/potential name to test if the name:

   - Is in sync with overall objectives and goals of the organization?
   - Commands attention?
   - Is in sync with the organization's image/key messages?
   - Has any negative/positive connotations?

While your name is important, your brand cannot survive on your name alone.

How your brand is executed and the strength of your name are both vital components for a successful and sustained branding effort. A great brand name can serve as an anchor for your mission, a symbol of your story, a point of difference, a memory trigger, or just an element that provides an "extra kick" for your branding program.

PART 3: WHAT SIGNALS ARE YOU SENDING?

Six elements of an effective visual identity

An effective visual identity is one that sends reinforcing visual signals for the perceptions your brand wants to own. For example, if your brand wants to own a perception of trust, blue reinforces that signal; red sends different signals — danger, strength, power, and passion. By being intentional about the use of these elements, all of your communications will reinforce your brand instead of undermining it.

Symbol: Be sure to make your mark.

Your logo is the embodiment of your brand identity. Your logo is your brand's face: the unique and instantly recognizable expression of who you are. It's the cornerstone for the rest of the building.

Typography: It's not just what you said, but how you said it.

The type you use says as much about your organization as the words you use — and sometimes more. Designers today have to choose from hundreds of thousands of typefaces that range from crisp and proper faces like Didot to grungy and distressed like Urban Jungle.

The fonts you use should accurately communicate the personality of your brand and signal its degree of formality and approachability. Typefaces are like human voices: they can be gruff or gravelly. They can be graceful, musical, and light. Make sure the typefaces you choose convey the proper tone.

Finally, be mindful of the application. Have a font family that works well for display: short, visually impactful uses, like video title cards or brochure headlines. Have a different, more legible family for longer communication, such as brochure body copy or content on your website.

Information System: Where everything falls into place.

In simple terms, an information system is a clearly defined structure for the visual elements of your communication. The information system provides the logic for where elements appear, how big they are, and how much mount they have around them. The information system is the framework that provides consistency across countless documents created by countless people. This repeatable look-and-feel creates recognition among your messaging, increasing the frequency of impressions.

Color: When it comes to your brand, hue is huge.

What color is McDonald's? What color is Lowe's? What color is Target? Chances are pretty good you said something like, "yellow, blue, and red." These brands have defined a key color to represent their brand, and they always use it.

Start with the color (or colors) found in your logo and use them consistently and accurately. For example, at DO MORE GOOD, our logo uses PMS 640 for the "MORE" portion, and PSM 8401 for the gray portion. Our

communication, from postcards to business cards to PowerPoint decks, always includes these colors.

Be careful, though… if you set all 40 pages of your annual report in the sunshine yellow from your logo, it will not only be illegible, it will likely give readers a headache. So it's helpful to define a few acceptable complementary colors that can be used (sparingly) in conjunction with your primary brand colors.

Finally, when it comes to color, make sure you are exact: no guessing, no eyeballing. Use specific color formulations based on your execution: PMS or CMYK for print, RGBA or hexadecimal for onscreen use. When it comes to getting your brand right, avoid "close enough" thinking.

Imagery: Picture people not reading any of your copy.

This tends to be a challenge for many organizations. The images you use on your website and in your collateral reinforce perceptions of your brand — but they can more easily undermine it. Just as you carefully define acceptable fonts and colors, it's important to define acceptable imagery. That includes appropriate subject matter, as well as the photographic or illustrative style. Even more importantly, the images you choose should define *your* organization — not any organization. How many times have you used a stock photo, and then seen that same photo in another brochure or on another site? While original photography is an expense, it also results in imagery that perfectly expresses your brand and belongs only to you.

Access: Brand knowledge is brand power.

Making sure that your team has an understanding of your visual identity will help keep that identity consistent. Most of the improper executions of visual identity are done through ignorance, not malevolence. So after you've defined the fonts, colors, imagery, and geometric structure that make up your visual identity, share that information. Thorough brand standards are a good thing — but not if they're sitting on a shelf in a three-ring binder that no one ever opens.

Take the time to explain to your team — and not just your marketing department—what your standards are. An hour spent explaining your visual identity system can eliminate days of misspent labor and thousands of misspent dollars.

When you've explained the system, make those standards easily available. Put a PDF on a shared drive or on your intranet. Build a web page and have everyone bookmark the link. Do what is most convenient for your team. If you make your visual identity system easy to use, your team can easily uphold your standards.

Make your mark. A good logo makes doing good easier.

A logo is like a face: it is a visual identifier that helps others remember who you are. And the easier it is to remember your organization's identity and name, the simpler it is for people to help you and and tell others about the good work you're doing.

Logos come in many shapes, sizes, and colors. They typically are formed using a mark, flag, symbol, or signature. Rarely does a logo visually describe what the organization does — its job is to identify your organization, not explain it.

What makes a logo good?

Most experts agree that a good logo is distinctive, appropriate, graphically simple, easy to work with, and easy to read.

To ensure you have a strong logo, put it through the five filters listed below.

1. Is it simple? Less complicated and clean logos help an organization stand out.

2. Is it memorable? Good logos are instantly recognizable, even when you drive by them at 70 miles per hour.

3. Is it practical? Your logo must work in a variety of sizes, mediums, and applications.

4. Is it meaningful? A good logo is one that fits with the organization's brand personality and, ideally, helps convey what sets the organization apart. Remember, your aim is to convey a distinguishing factor, not the product you sell or the service you provide.

5. Is it timeless? Trendy logos tend to get dated quickly. Keep yours simple and save yourself the need to update it too soon and too often.

Good logos are agile.

A logo may be a source of pride and beauty, but it should be practical and functional nonetheless. Before you select a logo, ask yourself if it is still effective when...

1. It is printed in one color?

2. It is printed very small?

3. It is printed very big?

4. It is printed in reverse (light on a dark background)?

5. It is printed in vertical or horizontal formats?

Do your best and learn from the best.

Fortunately, it is not very hard to do solid research on the subject of good logos. We're all exposed to many (more like thousands) every day. And while there may be differences of opinion as to what is a good logo and what is not, we can all learn from the top national brands with highly recognizable logos.

It's safe to say that many of the world's most recognizable logos have several things in common.

They include:

- Their shape — and sometimes even their name — does not indicate what they make, sell, do, or offer.

- Symbols are not used by many top brands; instead, the logos are often just a typeface, and the fonts used tend to be clean and simple.

- One word (at the most two) or an acronym is used in most of the world's top brand logos.

- By-lines and/or taglines are rarely included and featured with the logo.

- Key colors are red, blue, yellow, and orange. In each category, it seems competitive leaders each own one or a combination of these colors. Note: Green has come on strong recently as another key color used among brand leaders (probably because of its eco-friendly cues). But, use caution when choosing any color for your brand. In short, today's green may be yesterday's periwinkle.

Final Thoughts

By now, you might have a complete brand guide for your organization! But it's also okay if you are still working on some of the steps and figuring out some of the details. When it comes to doing more good, it's important to put your best foot forward — and that means taking the time to develop the best version of your brand. In every step of the process, make sure you're remaining authentic and keeping the ultimate goal in mind. You want more people to know about the valuable work your organization is doing. And that's exactly what we aspire to help you do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meet the man behind Do More Good

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A veteran marketer, speaker, and messaging expert for nonprofit causes, Bill is the founder and chairman of Do More Good as well as the founder and chief creative officer of HAVEN | a creative hub. Recognized in 1999 when he headed Hanon McKendry as the top professional nationally doing cause marketing work by the American Advertising Federation (AAF) and inducted into AAF's Hall of Achievement, Bill has cultivated a reputation as an expert in key success principles for nonprofit marketing and communications.

Did you know Bill is writing a book? It's titled Do More Good and is riddled with stories from his captivating career (including spending a day as a homeless man and shooting a commercial with Mother Teresa). This book contains the blueprints you need to magnify your brand's impact. With Bill's help, soon you'll be doing even more good.

Get the first two chapters for free!