Does Your Brand Work?

9 STEPS TO UPLEVEL YOUR BRAND

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Does Your Brand Work?
9 Steps to Uplevel Your Brand

Welcome

Does your business look as good as you know it is? When I work with businesses
on their visual branding, I see remarkable effects. Of course, the businesses look better after
undergoing a visual branding process, but I even see great effects on the owners themselves!

By getting the "look" of their business in order,
their MINDSET changes and their SELF-CONFIDENCE grows.

The consciousness of their businesses' enhanced visual appearance makes the owners
straighten their backs and walk with firmer steps into the next meeting or presentation.
They give themselves permission to set higher and more ambitious goals
and expose themselves to bigger prospects (contracting authorities), and, as such, they get more of
the exciting clients and customers which their businesses really deserve.

Many business owners shrink back from taking on a total branding or rebranding process.
It seems like an overwhelmingly big task when everybody already has their hands full.

There are, however, a lot of small, but very important, steps you can take
to prepare for your visual branding process. These tasks do not require
any graphics software or design skills.
You will, in fact, get very far with paper, pencil and some clear heads.

In this e-book, I will guide you through these steps. I'll use my own system BRAND BOXES,
which is the tool I use in my work with my own branding clients. Follow these steps, and you'll be able to
make well-planned, clear, and outstanding briefs for your graphic designer or visual brand strategist.

You will find that the branding process will be smoother, faster, and much more fun!

A professional visual appearance is a valuable asset for your business.
It will resonate with your ideal clients and make them recognize and trust you.
It will make your business look professional, trustworthy, authentic and unique.

Having a consistent professional visual branding will enhance your client attractiveness.

Have a good read and do not hesitate to send me an e-mail
if you have questions or comments on the content!

All the Best,
Hanne

Are you ready to change lives? Let's do this!

Brand Boxes: from recipe to a proprietary system

Brand Boxes used to only be my personal work tool, a sort of recipe that I followed
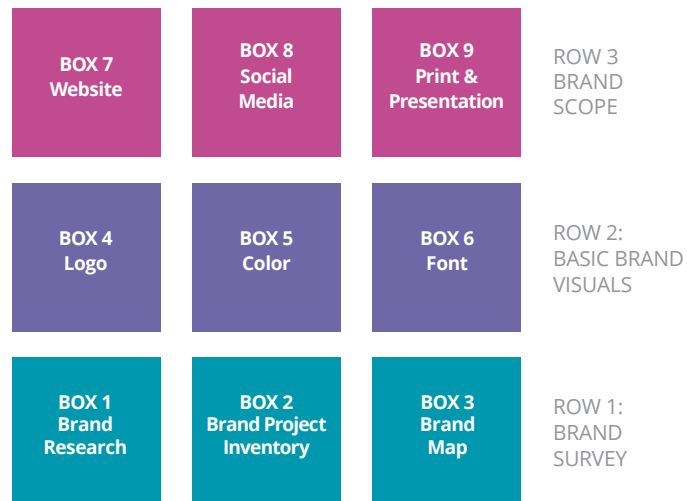when working with clients to create their visual branding.

However, sharing the system actively and inviting my clients to participate proactively
gives them much bigger ownership in the process—and results in better results!
Our work together goes smoother, gets done faster, and is a lot more fun for everyone involved.

Brand Boxes has a very simple structure

There are nine boxes in total. If you look at the Brand Boxes logo, you see
a turquoise row, a purple row and a pink row,
each representing a different field of visual branding.

When reading this e-book, you should follow this order
as there is a natural progression through the process.

Shall we begin?

BOX 7 **Website**	**BOX 8** **Social** **Media**	**BOX 9** **Print &** **Presentation**	ROW 3 BRAND SCOPE
BOX 4 **Logo**	**BOX 5** **Color**	**BOX 6** **Font**	ROW 2: BASIC BRAND VISUALS
BOX 1 **Brand** **Research**	**BOX 2** **Brand Project** **Inventory**	**BOX 3** **Brand** **Map**	ROW 1: BRAND SURVEY

BRAND SURVEY: Brand research

To be able to brand anything, you need to find the core identity of your business.
To do this, you have to figure out what and "who" your business is.
This is necessary for many reasons.

If you cannot describe to yourself what your business is, it's very unlikely
that you will be able to describe it to others. Also, it is important to know
who you serve—your ideal client—so that you can address this person in a way that
speaks to him or her.

Having this internal talk about who and what your business is
is called a brand identity conversation
(Source: Majken Schulz and Mary Jo Hatch: Taking Brand Initiative 2008).

Find the words to describe:

• What you do?
• Why you do it?
• How you would like your business to be perceived.
• What is your brand's "personality?"
• Who your ideal customer is.
• What value you give to "your people."

Use a journal or notepad for this exercise.
You will probably do a lot of writing and rewriting before
you are able to extract a simple one-sentence answer to
each of these points.

Questions/exercise:

1. Can you verbally describe what expression you want your business to have and why?

2. Who is your ideal customer? Do you know what visually attracts him or her?

BRAND SURVEY: Brand Project Inventory

The Brand Inventory is the great cleaning out, counting up, and tidying up your visual touchpoints.

What is a visual touchpoint? A visual touchpoint is any instance of visual communication that represents your brand. It can be anything printed or on the web, from a business card to an outdoor banner spanning several floors. Many times, we may be unaware of the look of things that are supposed to represent us. Maybe the items were made by different providers at different times, or maybe by different people in our company who did not have visual guidelines to support them.

In the old days, if you had a logo, is was all you'd need. It would go on your letterhead and business card and viola! you'd be done. Today, your brand's touchpoints are numerous—just think of your presence in social media.

Gather as many of your current visual touchpoints as you possibly can. Document them.
Print them. If the touchpoint is a car wrap or a sign over your shop door, take a picture of it.

CHECKLIST OF POSSIBLE TOUCHPOINTS:
- Website
- Social media images
- Social media ads
- Printed ads or banners for advertising on websites
- E-book, IFO, or Free Report
- Brochure or Product Sheet
- E-mail newsletter templates
- Business cards
- PowerPoint or KeyNote presentation templates
- Course materials and certificates
- Branded graphics for print or web
- Visualization of your proprietary system (logo/icon)
- Branded illustrations for your blog or newsletter
- Branded Cards for Christmas, holidays, or client's birthdays
- Programs and Packages sheets
- Rate sheets, Invoices, and Proposals
- Rollups and other materials for trade fairs
- Signs and posters for shops
- T-shirts and branded merchandise
- Coffee Mugs
- Car wrap
Other_____

Print images of all the touchpoints. Lay all the print outs on your dining or conference room table.

This serves two purposes:

1. Helping you decide which touch-point to keep and which to retire.

2. Determining how consistent you are with your branding across all touchpoints.

These touchpoints are going to be the best visual ambassadors for your brand!

Question/Exercise:

1. Make a list of all the visual touchpoints in your business today.
   Look at the list that I have made to get some ideas on items that you may forget.

2. How do they look? Are they consistent?

BRAND SURVEY: Brand Map

A Brand Map is a visual overview of your entire business/brand. It shows how and where the brand works. What is your brand promise? Who is your target audience? How do you deliver your product or service? What tools do you use? Which channels do you use for marketing?

A Brand Map can show the top-level structure or be quite detailed.
You may ask, "Why would I need anything like this?"
That's a great question—and one you'll be able to answer with crystal clear clarity soon enough!

You're humming along in your business—we all know that entrepreneurs love to start things.
Then you add a new product or a product line. You launch a new course. You partner with someone on a service or program.

Suddenly, your brand isn't being used consistently. In fact, it's all over the place, and you don't see how all these different parts come together in a structure or hierarchy that is your brand. I have had clients come to me in a state of mild schizophrenia with an urgent need to tidy up.

Sticky notes are excellent for making brand maps because you will want to rearrange items throughout the process.

Important: There is no "correct" way to build a Brand Map. The most crucial aspect of this process is that you can see the structure in your business in a way that allows you to clearly describe it to yourself and others. Apply the KISS principle: Keep It Simple Sweetheart.

As you move the Post-It Notes around, a clear pattern of your products and how they're delivered and marketed evolves. Hang your completed Brand Map on the wall.

Question/Exercise:

1. What is your brand promise?

2. How does your brand (product) hierarchy look?

BASIC VISUALS: Logo

The logo is the most visual symbol of your business. Your logo should be the representation or the "visual version" of your values, vision, and brand promise. It must convey clearly "who" your business is, what it stands for, and what your offer is. Maybe you have a logo already, but it needs to be refreshed.

New media and technology demand that logos be designed and crafted differently than they were in the past. Old-fashioned logos were often more full-fledged illustrations than logos and descendants of a heraldic style. They did not have any flexibility; being indivisible, entangled shapes which needed to be rendered in its totality— or not at all.

Today, we think in terms of a "logo ensemble," which comprises two or three parts that, if needed, could do the job singlehandedly (think of the Nike swoosh, logotype, and payoff, which can be used interchangeably).

Here are three important questions to ask yourself and your graphic designer before starting work on a new logo or redesigning an old one:

1. Will the logo appear crisp and clear even in small sizes on a screen?

2. Will the logo lose impact or information by being rendered in only one color?

3. Can the logo be "divided" into parts that can do the job alone if need be, for instance, on social media?

Questions/Exercise:

1. Does your logo fit into the profile image box on Facebook, or will it look helplessly small if you try to see the whole thing?

2. Do you have a vectorized file of your logo? Where is it?

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BASIC VISUALS: Color

Colors are divided into two areas: emotional and technical.

Emotional: Colors have a strong impact as a conveyer of atmosphere and information.
From childhood, we have learned that some colors "mean" something special or are connected to certain things. However, this is conditional. What colors "mean" varies greatly among cultures.
To western people, red is the color of Christmas, while in South Africa, it is the color of mourning.

Personal context matters. People tend to favor the colors of the things they like.

Some niches are dominated by certain colors. You will hardly see a bank or an insurance company sporting a pink website, or a toy shop branded in black and grey.

The most important thing when you choose brand colors is that they will be pleasant and attractive to your prospects. You are NOT to choose your favorite colors, but theirs. You are not making your brand for yourself, but for your people.

This is where businesses and entrepreneurs fail the most regarding colors.

Also, remember the "personality" you decided on for your business in BRAND SURVEY: Brand research? Think about what colors enhance the impression of this quality.

Technical: Having found the colors for your brand, you need to describe them in technical terms in order to communicate with designers, web designers, or printers (those on two legs) who will use your colors. Each color can be described using three sets of codes, each of which you'll need to share your brand across mediums

• CMYK colors translate to Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Black, and are for print.

• RGB colors translate to Red, Green, and Blue, and are used on screens.

• #WEB colors are hexadecimal colors that are used by browsers to render your color correctly online.

Question/Exercise:

1. Do you know which color your ideal customer absolutely dislikes?

2. What are the color codes for your brand's colors?

	COLOR 1	COLOR 2	COLOR 3
CMYK			
RGB			
#WEB			

With the term "font," we mean a set of letters in a certain style.
There are thousands of fonts with different attributes regarding readability style and atmosphere.
Fonts, like colors, can communicate more than themselves. They have meaning beyond the words
that have been set with them. It is important to choose a font style that doesn't clash
with the personality you've decided on for your brand.

DO NOT LET THE FONT STEAL ATTENTION FROM THE CONTENT, LIKE HERE.

Fonts can be divided into many different categories and sub-categories.
The two big main groups are seriffed and sans seriffed fonts, which have quite different attributes.

Serif fonts: Serif fonts have different thicknesses (weight) in strokes and "feet" (serifs) to stand on.
They look formal, serious, academic, and somewhat old-fashioned.

Example of a serif font:

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Sans serif fonts: Sans Serif fonts have (almost) no difference in thickness or weight of their strokes and no "feet."
They look modern and more informal than seriffed fonts.

Example of a san serif font:

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

When creating a new logo, look at using the same font for your logo that you will use everywhere else:
for running text in marketing materials and in your KeyNote or PowerPoint presentations, for on stage,
and webinar use, etc. This makes your brand appear consistent.

However, the font you choose for printed materials and presentations may not be available for the internet.
Fortunately, selecting a Google Font eliminates that problem. Google fonts print clearly and crisply and are
commonly available in most modern WordPress Themes.

[View Google Fonts and download them here.](#)

Some software, such as e-mail marketing programs, have a limited selection of available fonts.
Be as consistent as possible. If your usual font in print and web is a sans serif, choose a sans serif
in the e-mail marketing program as well.

Exercise

• What associations do you get from these fonts?

quiatem	quiatem	quiatem	quiatem	QUIATEM
quiatem	QUIATEM	QUIATEM	quiatem	quiatem

BRAND IMPLEMENTATION: Website

Your website is the storefront window of your business. Visually and verbally it must,of course, be on-brand.

If WordPress is used (or any other Theme-based Content Management System), or you have your website custom-coded by a programmer/web designer, make sure that your visual guidelines are being followed. This is where you will be glad that your logo can be rendered in various sizes, that you know the web codes for your brand colors, and know how to use consistent fonts.

Your website must be clear and tell visitors—within seconds—how you can help them. Many website owners make the mistake of having their website be all about themselves. This is the same error as choosing YOUR favorite colors for your brand instead of those that appeal to your audience.

It is, of course, important that when a visitor enters your site, he or she recognizes the feel, look, and personality of your brand. Or, when they see something else from your brand, in print or on social media, they recognize your brand from your website.

Having a collection of consistent and compelling marketing materials is what we want to achieve through visual branding. However, some important branding takes place "behind the scenes" of your website.

Many entrepreneurs and businesses seem to think that SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is something that can be bought and administered to your website like a magic pill, suddenly ranking their website as number one on Google. However, SEO is mainly accomplished by offering great content consistently and selecting powerful keywords. SEO and branding both concern themselves with the core content of your business. Thus, good content marketing is the best SEO there is.

Yoast.com is where you can learn everything about SEO.

Question/Exercise:

1. How is your website maintained today?

2. How long will it take a new visitor to your website to figure out how you can help him?

LOGO

MENU•ITEM   MENU•ITEM   MENU•ITEM   MENU•ITEM   MENU•ITEM   MENU•ITEM

Website structure.

Before working in Wordpress or any other CMS, first design the site layout with pen and paper. A simple prototype can be drawn on paper, with each sheet representing one page. Will you need sub-items in your menu? Go through the linking and see if it makes sense to the user. When you have a clear idea of the structure, the building your website is easy.

BRAND IMPLEMENTATION: Social Media

Do you have the touchpoint list that you filled out in BRAND SURVEY: Brand Project Inventory?
You likely own some social media "real estate" that you put on that list. Cover images, profile images,
posts, ads, and pins—diverse and important visual touchpoints Are they consistent?
Or do they look more like a tossed salad?

The parameters for each social media platforms change frequently.
You can use Google to determine the most up-to-date information.

I suggest making a recurring assignment for your virtual assistant (VA) or other team member (even you!)
to keep the covers, profile images, posts, and pins on-brand. This can be done by making templates featuring
your brand colors and fonts, the logo, and website URL.

Also, you want your photographs or illustrations in the posts to be on-brand. Set aside time on your marketing
calendar to decide on and start gathering images in a certain style that fit the personality of your brand.
You can use photos, cartoons, drawings or computer-made graphics, but stick to this style and stay consistent in
your posts and pins.

A graphic designer can create a collection of images or illustrations in a certain style and on-brand for you,
which you may also use as illustrations for your blog posts, in your presentations, in your e-mail newsletters,
and on other marketing materials. If the task of maintaining the visual brand across your social media platforms is
assigned to a team member or VA, be sure to document the style clearly in a visual brand handbook,
and use examples in the correct style to model.

Tools that can be used to make images are:

• **Canva:** Be conscious that the branding will be for you and not for Canva. It is very easy to see when Canva is being
used because of the elements that are being chosen over and over again by different people. Try to import your
own images to Canva and not look like everybody else. That is NOT what we are looking for.

• **PowerPoint:** If you are good at PowerPoint (PPT), you can make great images in this program.
You can create a document in PPT that matches the size of the image you want to make.
When you are ready, save it to a jpg. file, which can be uploaded to social media.

• **Photoshop:** This is a professional tool for creating and adjusting images. The learning curve may be a bit steep,
but the possibilities are endless. In Photoshop, you can literally create art if you want to. Some people prefer the less
challenging version, called LightRoom, to create their images. Both are Adobe projects.

• **InDesign:** This is a professional page layout tool that has a lot of features and possibilities that most people do
not know about. The basic principle is the same as in PowerPoint. You create a document in the size of the post you
want to make and import photographs and graphic elements to your file. One HUGE difference though is that
InDesign is a professional typesetting tool and you have access to features that let you be totally in control of your
p's and q's. As such, you can make stunning pieces of typography that is not possible in PPT.

Question/Exercise:

1. How does your business Twitter background look?

2. Which image on Facebook is always rendered in connection with your activity?
   How many sizes can you find of this image?

BRAND IMPLEMENTATION: Print & Presentation

This is the department for the good old stuff: business cards, stationary, templates for invoices and proposals, a brochure, or a magazine. Perhaps even a good old-fashioned POSTER!
In the past, print materials were the primary pieces used in marketing. Not so today.

Presentation templates in PowerPoint and KeyNote are counted here because even if they are viewed on screen, they are not designed with HTML, but with software similar to those used for print.

Often you will have a team, either a VA or external providers, designing and producing all of these types of market materials for you. If you do not have an in-house graphic designer or have teamed up with someone who can act as one for you, it is crucial that a graphic profile manual or a brand book exists. A brand book, or style guide, will ensure that the visual branding stays consistent, even if the materials are being produced by different people.

The worst cases of what I call "patch work branding" that I have seen happened because nobody was in charge of keeping branding consistent. Materials had been produced at different times and by many different people, each of whom added a personal "artistic" twist to the work. In briefing external designers and producers, it will serve you to speak some "graphic" to help you be understood, and that you have a Profile Handbook & Archive.

The profile handbook should at least contain guidelines on how your logo should be used, the color codes for print, screen and web (see BASIC VISUALS: Logo), and information about the brand fonts. Fonts should be installed on all computers used in the production of marketing materials and should also be kept as a zipped folder that can be e-mailed to external designers and printers.

The profile archive contains the logo archive, including all versions for print and web. Also, the profile archive is where you want to keep branded illustrations and photographs, icons, and other graphic elements frequently in use. Templates and examples to model also belong in this archive, which should be accessible for all team members and VAs.

Question/Exercise:

1. How does your business's PowerPoint template look today?

2. What information, apart from the content itself, would you convey to a graphic designer who is going to help you create a piece for print?

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You've Got This!

You may have finished reading this e-Guide and feel your heart beating much too fast!
You feel overwhelmed by all the ways you may have inadvertently been rejecting your ideal clients
because your brand was all about you, was used inconsistently, and feels slap-dash.

Are you wondering, "Are my fonts serif or sans serif?
Am I using too many fonts? What do the colors I chose mean to others?"

That's okay. Newsflash: you're normal!
Many of my clients come to me so I can support them in getting their branding in order
and representing them fully going forward.

If you'd like to know more, just shoot me an email at
hanne@yourbrandvision.com
and let's chat.
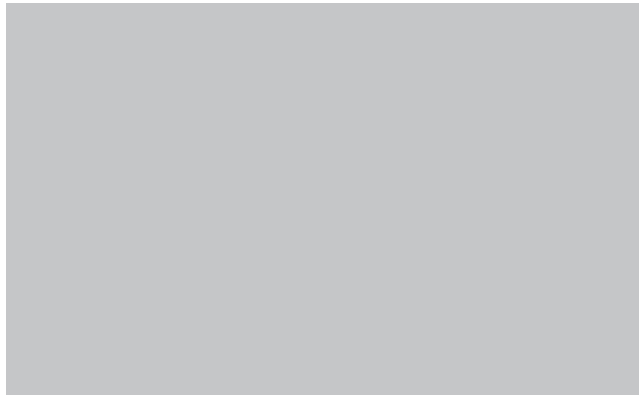
About Hanne

Hanne Brøter is a Norwegian graphic designer, strategic brand manager, and interaction designer.
Originally, she trained and worked as a classical flutist and flute teacher.
However, she decided to professionalize her other big field of interest in life: graphic design.

After working many years as an in-house graphic designer for a Norwegian media company,
she started her own business, Your Brand Vision, in 2013.
Her sweet spot is the intersection between graphic design and branding.

Besides creating visual identities, including all kinds of visual touchpoints,
for entrepreneurs and businesses, Hanne has a great educational calling and passion
for teaching business owners about the great importance of a consistent and professional visual branding.
She considers herself a graphic coach as much as a graphic designer.

Working with entrepreneurs on their visual branding, Hanne has made some important observations.
She has seen how entrepreneurs fail to take advantage of Visual Branding's external effects
to connect with their ideal customer while at the same time
being unaware of the internal effect of Visual Branding on their own mindset.

This is why this e-Guide and her book, which is available on Amazon,
Brand Boxes™: Your 9-Step Process to Creating a Visually Compelling Brand, came into being.

Hanne lives in Norway with her co-creator, a cocker spaniel who is appropriately called "Brandy."
She sees clients in her office and also virtually using Zoom.
For more information, go to www.yourbrandvision.com.