



Episode 68
Why Your Brand is
Important



**Maria: [00:00]**

Welcome to Designer discussions with Jason, Maria and Mirjam. Today we're going to talk about how does your brand fit into your business.

Intro: [00:08]

Welcome to the Designer Discussion Sessions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Are you ready to get serious about your marketing? We're opening the Designer Discussions Marketing Studio, a monthly series of in depth actionable content to guide your marketing, PR, and business development. We want to help you transform your business and elevate it to work with your dream clients.

Maria: (00:46)

Mirjam, there are so many questions around branding. What is your brand? How does it fit into your business? What is brand awareness? And I would love for you to teach me how to understand how the brand plays into my business.

Mirjam: (01:03)

Now the pressure is on, but I like this topic, actually, so that works out perfectly. As we're talking about brands, I think the best way to get into it is like, what are some think of some brands you like? Right? And for me. For instance, I'm an Apple Girl. My computer is Apple, actually. I have a Fitbit and not an Apple Watch, you know, so I strayed a little bit, but over. I would never buy another PC as a computer, for instance, on my phone, I would never buy an Android just because I'm an Apple Girl. And there's some other brands that everybody has certain brands that they like for certain product categories. Especially, like, my children are probably not subscribed to this because I buy off brand cereal and they swear it's not as good as the brand cereal, which is complete nonsense. But that's because they like the brand, they would rather I buy the brand cereal. Right? And honestly, that's the whole purpose of a brand, to make you want to buy the product that is branded over everything else. But that being said, what is a brand? So I went and looked up some definitions.



Mirjam: (02:23)

The Merriam Webster dictionary says a brand is a public image, reputation or identity conceived as something to be marketed or promoted. So it's an artificial thing that you create. I did like that definition. I found another one that I really liked that said, a brand is an intangible marketing or business concept that helps people identify a company, product or individual. And that made a lot of sense to me. But then I went back to something that Maria, you told me a while ago, and I can't remember where you picked it up, but you said a brand is a memory. And I think that is so spot on, because the brand really is the personality of the business, and what you remember of it is what draws you. If it's in a positive way, it could also be in a negative way. But if it's in a positive way, the memory that you have of the personality of that business makes you want to buy whatever it is, right? So I love that a brand is a memory. Thank you for teaching me that. So you're teaching me, actually. So now that we know what a brand is, I just want to clarify than what branding is as opposed to brand and how it ties into marketing, right? So branding is the process of creating and disseminating the brand name, its qualities, and its personality. It's basically just the action that you take to get your brand name out there. And the purpose of brand marketing is it's really the process of establishing and growing their relationships with your clients and customers. And PR, obviously, is part of that marketing bucket. Now that we're hopefully clear about what those concepts are, you hear people talking about brand identity, the brand promise, really, the brand tells you who the business is and what they can do for you, and hopefully also why they can do it. And I think that's one of the most powerful aspects of any brand. Because if you think about brands that you really like, for me it would be like Patagonia or Tom's Shoes, right? And the reason I like those brands is because they stand for something more than just the product that they are selling. And we'll talk a little bit more about that later on. But I think it's really important to build that into your positioning when you think about what type of brand you want to be. So when you have a brand, it's like, how do you know that?



Mirjam: (05:23)

How good is your brand? Right? How do you know that? So there's a way to measure a brand is called brand awareness. And it's very difficult to measure, actually, because it's somewhat intangible. And most smaller companies, they can't afford to measure because to do a brand awareness study cost tens of thousands of dollars. And when I worked for Kohler, obviously, Kohler is definitely a big brand in this space, and brand awareness was a very, very important metric within the company. So I think it was every other year that the brand awareness studies were done. But it's very elaborate and I don't know, it cost so much money. But then it gives you a number, so it spits out a percentage. Right. And there's two different ways to measure brand awareness. There's what we call aided brand awareness, which is also called brand recall. That just means, like, if you see the caller logo, do you know what it is? Do you know what brand it is? And then there's unaided brand awareness, which is more brand recognition. That means if somebody asks you what is the first brand that comes to mind? When you think of kitchen and bath products, that is the next step, right? And that's really where you want to be. I was doing some research and I found that the brand awareness of Coca Cola around the world is 94%. Okay? That's insane. That means basically everybody knows the code logo when they see it. And that, of course, is like in our space, that's not where people want to be. You want to have the awareness within your target market. It's like if you're selling products in the United States, it's not really that important to have brand awareness in Europe, right, because nobody can buy your products. But that is what brand awareness is. And brand awareness is directly linked to what we call brand equity. That means the worth of your brand. And if you're a big company and maybe you're in the market to sell your company, you can get more money for your company if you have higher brand awareness. I found an interesting pyramid. I love pyramids. You know, I just think it's very helpful to think about the progression of things. And there's four levels of brand awareness. There's where you have basically zero awareness, so no awareness. Then there is recognition. That's what we said, the aided awareness.



Mirjam: (08:23)

Then there's recall, which is the unaided awareness. And then there's top of mind. It's what we call brand dominance. That means it's like Coca Cola. It's like everybody knows we are and when somebody says, do you want I don't even know what the generic word is for a Coke. It's like then you want a Coca Cola. Not a Pepsi Cola. But that's brand dominance is very, very difficult to achieve. Which then actually it brings me to something interesting. If you think about, like, language, there are brands that have become words. So there's like Bandaid, you know, really is a brand name. Kleenex to google something. You know, all those things, scotch tape. It's like these are brands that have become words and like, in the space that we're in. So people call bidet seats. Oftentimes they call them washlets, but that's the total name for a bidet seat. And in my old job, we really didn't like it when people called bidets seeds washlets because that's a term the competition owns. But if you can get to a place where people use the generic your brand name as the generic word to describe the product or service, that means your brand is very strong. Brand awareness really just indicates how familiar your target market is with your brand, your products and your services. That the great thing about it, is and Maria, you and I were talking before we started recording briefly, but it fosters trust and it creates connection. And that is super important. That means they're more likely to choose you. The goal is that you create brand preference. So you are the go to service product compared to the competition. So what does all of this mean for you and your business? We want to do this episode just to show you the importance the brand has for every business. And it's not about having a perfect brand, but it's about consistency. And that's really important. And because I like pyramids, so much. Here's my other pyramid. If you think about your business the brand is the identity. It's the personality of everything you do. So that's the foundation of it and all marketing efforts and PR efforts are built on that foundation. So if you don't have a solid brand identity it's really very difficult to do effective marketing or PR because people are not going to know who you are.



Mirjam: (11:23)

You're not going to know how to, how to craft your campaigns because you don't know who you are and what you want. So what are the elements that are included in a brand and to do branding and consequently the marketing and the PR? There are some obvious things. That's what a lot of people think of the logo. The logo is a part of your brand but the logo is not your brand. It's just one of the elements that constitutes your brand. You really want to think about before you even create the logo. Ideally you think about your positioning and the niche you want to be in and why you're doing what you're doing because that might drive how the creative elements that you develop for your brand. In the world of big corporations creating a brand is a massive, massive undertaking. I've been in rooms with teams from five different agencies doing brainstorm and development meetings for brands that go it goes on for weeks and months. It's a very very elaborate process because it's that important and I'm not saying you have to go to those lengths but just understand that it's important and you should spend some time thinking about it. So once you know your positioning you create your logo. You choose your fonts which are very important and always keep them consistent right? So you're going to have your brand identity kit and you want to make sure that you have your color palette defined, what types of imagery you use, what types of fonts you use. Your logo obviously. And the logo can have different treatments right? It can have a white background, transparent black background but it's got to be consistent. The entire look and feel of it is what's part of the brand. So you can't one day be like super colorful, happy and the other day I'll be like dreary black and white. Right? There's got to be consistency in how you show up and it's not just visually but it's also like your tone of voice that you use on your website, in your newsletters, on your social media, in your videos. The vocabulary used should be consistent with the appearance of your brand. Some brands have taglines but I think there's obviously Nike, just do it whatever it is. I don't think that's essential but that could be another element that you have.



Mirjam: (14:23)

Those are the main foundational elements that you need, that you need to define to create your brand and don't over obsess about it but just make sure when you choose something be consistent with it. You can iterate if after a couple of years you think, well, you know, I'm really not that really is not working for the way I'm feeling about it right now. You can change it, but rebranding is difficult. It's usually expensive. It's time consuming because of the consistency factor. You have to change everything everywhere to keep up the consistency. So it's really important to put time and effort into it at the beginning when you start. And if you have never thought about it, by all means, now would be the time. So maybe towards the end of the year, take a step back and look at your business and how it shows up in the market and in the world and come up with a brand strategy that works for you.

Maria: (16:01)

Awesome. Thank you, Mirjam. And to help everybody out, we put together a 24 video checklist where you can sit down and quickly and easily look at 24 ideas for videos that can be made. And each one of them is going to start to hit on some of these brand points. One, do you give something of value to your consumer? Are they familiar with what it is that you do and how you do it, reminding them in little doses that you do solve specific problems and you solve them in great and innovative ways. We also have you touch on compelling opportunities that they may want to contact you, so that they get used to contacting you and start building a relationship with you. And we also touch on ways you can start to work in financial awareness so that your clientele base can begin to see what they're looking at investment wise and why your value is higher than what they would have to be investing in you for. So we definitely want you to go over to Designer Discussions.com and join the email list to get that download so that you have a year's worth of video content that you could be using to help build your brand awareness.



Mirjam: (17:23)

I think that's a great tool for just making sure that you can consistently put your voice out there, because that's a big part of creating brand awareness, is to be present and to market and to show up in the media and all the different channels that we have at our proposal. So we hope that this has been helpful for you. Thank you for listening. Please subscribe to our podcast and share with friends if you've liked it. And we hope to see you again next week here at Designer Discussions.

Outro: (17:57)

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