How to Create a Brand That Sets Your Business Apart

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A brand is to a business what a personality is to a person.

Your brand represents the entire essence of who you are, allows customers to connect to your "why," and differentiates you from the competition.

A critical component of branding is your visual identity, or the consistent design aspects that represent your new business. Your visual identity includes your logo, color palette, typography, and more. When done right, a strong, cohesive visual identity attracts and resonates with the right customers. It also guides a variety of other decisions—from the interior of your brick and mortar to the content you post on social media.

When developing your visual identity, details matter. It's a process that requires reflection, creativity, and, typically, collaboration with a graphic designer. Whether or not you decide to hire a designer, this guide will kick-start the creative process and share insight into what it takes to build a powerful visual presence.

Set the foundation

Consider your mission statement

Your mission statement is your North Star. It highlights the "why" behind your brand. Every business decision you make—including the components of your visual identity—should reflect these values.

It's important for everyone on your team to know and understand your mission statement, including your designer.

Know your target audience

Next, consider your target audience. Refer to the first section of your marketing plan or revisit these questions:

Who are they? How old are they? What do they value?

By understanding your customers, you'll be able to make the right choices for your visual identity. Even seemingly simple decisions like what font(s) to use should be made with your customers in mind. For example, if your target customers are seniors, you'll likely avoid any script fonts and opt for easy-to-read type in your marketing.

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Develop your visual identity

Now that you've defined your brand personality, it's time to develop the core components of your visual identity. Throughout the process, you'll need to ask yourself:

Will this appeal to my target customers?

How will this make my customers feel?

Does this align with the "why" behind my business? With my brand personality?

Logo

Your logo is central to your brand identity and serves as the foundation for all of your marketing collateral. What can often be the first impression of your business, a well-designed logo will identify your business in an unforgettable way.

Ready to make an impact with yours? Start with the dos and don'ts on the next page.

Primary logo

Secondary logos

Additional colors

Logo (continued)

Do:

Bring in the experts. Because your logo is the face of your business, it's well worth the investment to hire a graphic designer to create a custom design. You can hire a freelancer or work with an agency. If you're having a hard time finding someone, try a logo bidding site where graphic designers compete for design opportunities.

Create a mood board. Using websites like Pinterest or Adobe Spark, or simply adding images to a folder, mood boarding helps organize visual styles that inspire you. If you decide to work with a graphic designer, a mood board will help facilitate collaboration from the very beginning and give them a sense of what you like. Any context or inspiration is helpful to make sure you're on the same page.

Consider your various applications. Will your logo need to be printed on shirts or hats? Will you need horizontal or vertical orientations (or both)? How will it look as an icon on your social media accounts? Is it easy to read on your signage? Create a list of the ways you'll use your logo to share with your designer. That way, they can ensure the design suits all your needs.

Design in black and white. It's important to see what your design looks like sans color. Once you've confirmed it looks crisp in black and white, add in your branded colors (we'll cover this topic shortly) to make your logo stand out.

Choose your typefaces (or fonts) wisely. When it comes to your logo, readability is essential. Prospective customers should be able to quickly glance at your logo and understand what your business is. You'll also want the typefaces you use to convey your brand personality (more on that later, too). And don't worry if you don't know which typefaces to choose—this is exactly why you've hired a professional!

Ask for a brand guide. Once your logo is complete, make sure your designer provides a document detailing best practices for its use. This will be important to send to any future vendors or freelancers who may need to adapt your branding.

Tip: Not sure where to look for a graphic designer? Ask for referrals from other local business owners with logos you love—and take the pressure off of finding a great freelancer.

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Logo (continued)

Don't:

Overdo it. Avoid using too many words, colors, fonts, and other details in your logo. For a memorable and clear logo, simplicity is key.

Be afraid to be different. While your logo should be simple, it should be as unique as your business. A graphic designer will be especially helpful in creating an original design.

Micromanage. Trust your designer! It's more helpful to provide mood boards with bigger picture ideas and let them figure out the details from there.

Forget to ask for feedback from the people who matter most: your customers. And, of course, make sure you love the logo, too.

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Color palette

Colors are powerful. They have the ability to increase brand recognition, elicit emotion from customers, and impact purchasing decisions—making it important to pick the right ones for your business.

The colors you choose will be used in your logo, on your website, in all your marketing materials, and can even influence your interior design.

So, how do you decide?

Think about your brand personality. For example, if your brand is friendly and young, bright colors may be more fitting than muted tones. Similarly, if your brand is contemporary, strong, and masculine, you may want to rethink pastels. It's recommended to stick with one to three brand colors. Your designer will have insight into what might work best for your business.

Tip: When you decide on your colors, your designer can provide color types, such as PMS, CMYK, RGB and HEX. These color types will help other designers and vendors maintain color consistency for your brand, both digitally and in print.
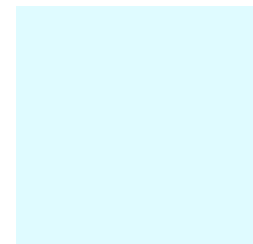
balance
yoga studio

Teal

Hex: 36b4c7
RGB: 54, 180, 199
CMYK: 70, 7, 21, 0

Blue

Hex: 0088c9
RGB: 0, 136, 200
CMYK: 80, 35, 0, 0

Light blue

Hex: dffbff
RGB: 220, 250, 255
CMYK: 10, 0, 1, 0

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Typography

Like colors, typography has the ability to convey your brand's tone. Whether printed or online, your typefaces will either positively or negatively impact how customers perceive your business. Again—think about your brand personality and whether or not the type represents it well. You'll also want to consider the following factors:

How many?

To keep your aesthetic clean and consistent, don't use more than three, cohesive typefaces: one for headers, one for sub-headers, and one for body text. Ask your designer to help decide the three that make the most sense for your visual identity.

Are they easy-to-read?

You should be extra selective with your typefaces. Above all, make sure they're legible, to avoid confusion with your name or any other important information.

Serif, sans serif, or script?

Your designer may use terminology like "serif", "sans serif", and "script" when discussing typefaces. There's no wrong answer to which style you prefer; just remember each conveys a different tone. Here's a quick breakdown.

Serif: Has a small line attached to the end of a character. Serif fonts are generally more traditional and formal, like Times New Roman.

Sans serif: Doesn't have the serif lines coming off its characters and are more modern and clean, like Arial, or fun and playful, like Gill Sans.

Script: Looks like cursive, but shouldn't be overused. Script typefaces can sometimes be hard to read. If you choose a script, try to use it sparingly for large headers, and pair it with a serif or sans serif for more legible body copy.

Aa

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz

I am sans.

I am serif.

I am script.

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Photography

Photos are an important part of your visual identity. Whether on your website, Facebook Page, or a promotional postcard, your photography should be consistent, compelling, and evocative of your brand personality. Photos should also be representative of your customer demographic.

Whether you hire a photographer or take photos yourself, prospective customers should be able to recognize the services you offer and the clients you serve through your high-quality imagery. Conversely, low-quality photos reflect poorly on your business and might deter new customers from trying your services.

Tip: If your budget allows, host a photo shoot at your business. What better way to represent your brand than with photos of your actual staff and clients (with their permission, of course)?
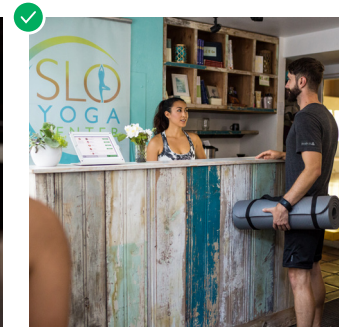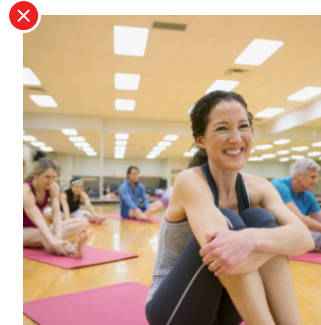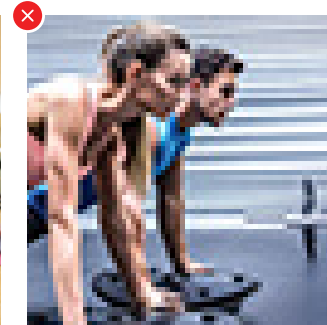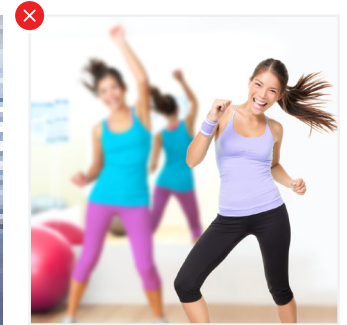
Do:
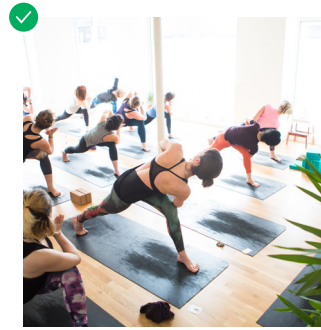
Hire a professional
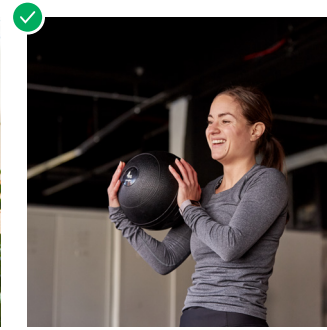
Be authentic

Showcase your brand

Try to avoid:

Bad lighting

Low quality

Too stocky

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Define your brand's voice and tone

Your brand personality is the set of characteristics that both existing and prospective customers associate with your business. Often, your brand personality matches that of your target customer and may evolve as your business does.

Start by thinking about how you'd describe your business if it were a person. Is it silly or serious? Youthful or mature? Down-to-earth or glamorous? Start with three adjectives that capture the essence of your business and the customers you serve.

What's your brand's voice and tone?

Personal	Cheeky	Serious
Humble	Fun	Respectful
Honest	Adventurous	Passionate
Direct	Energetic	Conversational
Human	Informal	Provacative

Tip: Keep in mind that your brand personality isn't just for design assets; it should be consistent across all aspects of your business—from website copy to how your staff interacts with customers at the front desk.
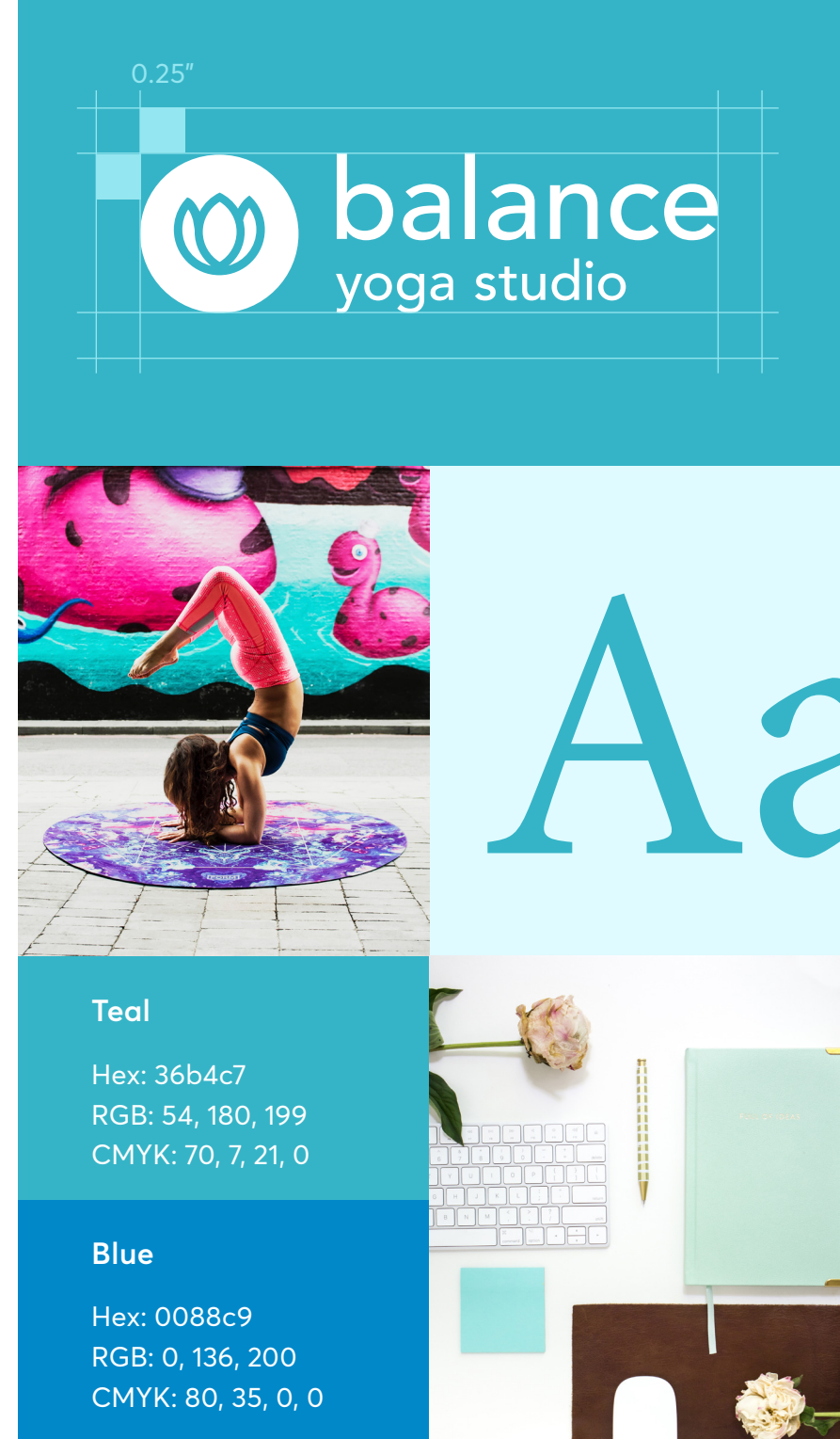
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Have a brand style guide

Once you've confirmed your visual and brand identity, ask your designer to develop a brand style guide for reference. A style guide defines best practices for using each of your design elements.

Your brand style guide should outline:

- Your logo, including different iterations (such as horizontal or icon-only)

- Inverse options, including on black, white, and transparent backgrounds

- Minimum sizing

- Spacing, including placement and size of text in relationship to the logo

- Colors, including Hex codes for each

- Typography, including files for each

- Photography examples

Now that you've developed your visual identity and have a brand guide in hand, stick to it. Don't let your team, or anyone working on marketing collateral, stray away from your visual identity. By sharing your brand style guide, you'll ensure that everyone, and every visual component of your brand, is cohesive.

0.25"

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Teal

Hex: 36b4c7
RGB: 54, 180, 199
CMYK: 70, 7, 21, 0

Blue

Hex: 0088c9
RGB: 0, 136, 200
CMYK: 80, 35, 0, 0

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Evolve your visual identity

Developing and implementing a strong visual identity takes work, but is well worth the effort—and investment. Keep in mind that your brand and visual identity will likely evolve as your business does. As long as you stay aligned with your mission statement and brand personality, you'll continue to stand out from the crowd.

For more educational resources, including webinars, guides, conference presentations, and online courses, visit business.mindbody.io/education.

To learn first-hand how MINDBODY can position your business for success, schedule a guided tour today at www.mindbodyonline.com/business-software, or give us a call at 877-755-4279.