

Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Irish Sea Fisheries Board

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A step-by-step guide to bringing your business to market

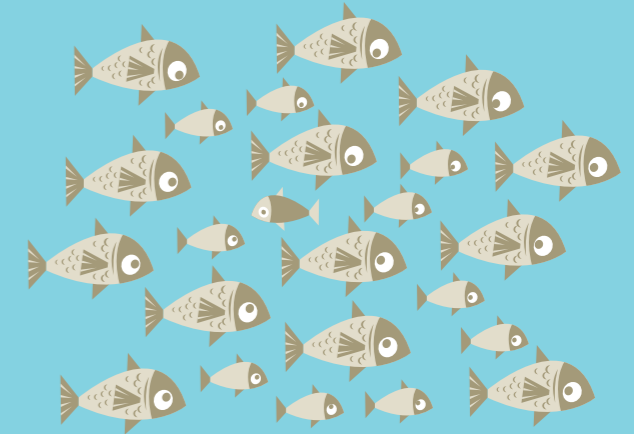
Introduction

For all businesses, it's vital to create a strong brand. It will make you stand out from the competition, add value to what you offer and connect with your customers.

To help you define your brand, we've developed this step-by-step guide, which provides some sample worksheets on how to develop a more effective brand for your business. You'll be more focused on the best way to present your business, and when you get to the stage of selecting a design and marketing company, they'll be able to develop a unique visual positioning for you.

Branding your business provides direction, focus and purpose. It will create the foundation for everything that you do to drive your business forward and give you a clear strategy to connect better with your customers.

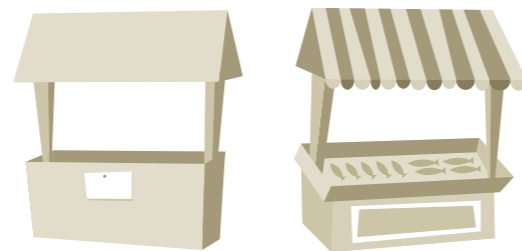
Without a strong brand, you'll be swimming aimlessly in crowded waters...



What is branding?

Branding simply represents the relationship between you and your customer - it's those direct and indirect activities undertaken by your business to both inform and influence them.

Design is simply the visual relationship between you and your customer.



Customers are more likely to choose the one with the compelling brand

External:

Internal:



Some of the areas where your customer comes into contact with your business:

Logo, Marketing Literature, PR, Online, Promotional, Vans, Packaging, Signage
 Reception, Delivery, Accounts, Salespeople, Phone, Directors

A great brand is more than just an image, a product or a service; a great brand is the sum of all the experiences that your customer has with your business. Your customer forms opinions about your company at every point of contact; if you don't look after your reputation, you'll leave yourself open to them forming negative opinions. Whether you're involved in the retail, supply or hospitality sector, developing a strong brand strategy can build and maintain a successful reputation.

An effective brand strategy should take into account every point of contact that your customer has with your business; developing a consistent visual image for your business can go a long way towards making it easier for your customer to choose you.

How can branding increase my sales?

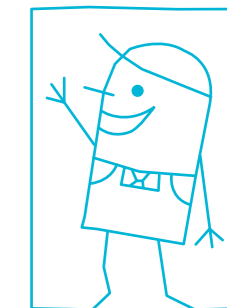
The appearance of your business plays a big part in influencing your customer. It's that all-important first impression and often the earliest indication of how you actually run your business. It effectively offers a shop-window into your company.

Whether you are a start-up or a well-established seafood business, you'll need to consider how you present your service or products to the outside world. Given a face-to-face with a potential customer, you'll be confident that you'll be able to persuade them to do business – it's much easier to communicate values such as honesty, professionalism, trust and friendliness when you are one-to-one with them. However, when you are not around to do this, you'll need to rely on your business image to do the work for you. **Branding your business can, therefore, play a much more strategic role than being simply about pretty pictures.**



Good Branding:

- Makes you more visible to your customer and forms a connection with them
- Makes you more credible to your customer and motivates them
- Inspires your employees and creates confidence
- Keeps you ahead of the competition
- Increases sales



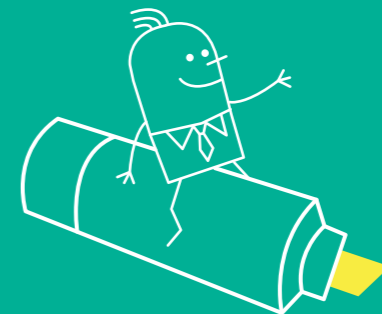
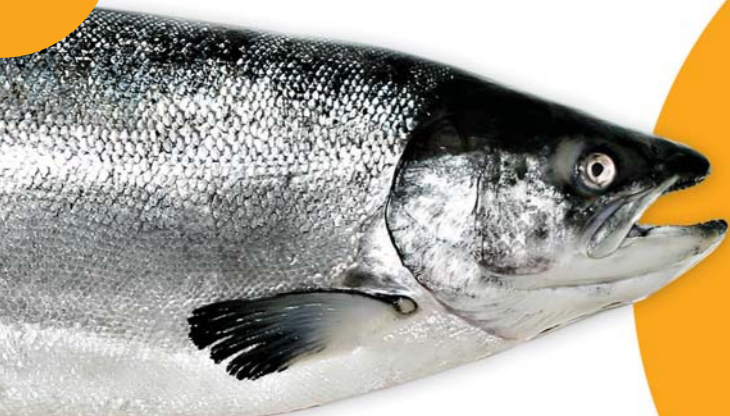
Let's get started

Let's define what you really offer to your customers. To develop the right brand for you, you'll need to explore three vital areas: who you are, what the marketplace looks like, and who your customers are. Then you have some concise, valuable information to progress to the next step.

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Who you are

What does the business offer and what is it that makes you different? There are potentially hundreds of businesses that are in direct or indirect competition to you, with similar products, so what is it that makes your business unique? Let's establish your core values, those key strengths that individualise your business. Draw out the important characteristics of the business that represents what you stand for, those codes of practice that ultimately attract a customer. Examine your strengths and weaknesses, and see how they can be improved.



Worksheet #1 *

In this simple exercise, compile a list of words that reflect what you stand for – write down any words that come to mind. If you have a business partner or other key personnel in the business, get them to do it also. Then take a look at all the words and remove the ones that are similar. Are some of the words too generic and too obvious? Perhaps some of the words could also be applied to your competitors, so how do you set yourself apart?

Keep narrowing down the options until you are left with and agree on, **four key words** that sum up your business.

These are your core values, those inner strengths that will drive your brand for years to come.

* Use the worksheet pages at the back of this booklet to compile your results.



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Who are you up against?

Where are you in the marketplace? Are you the market leader, with more vibrantly marketed businesses snapping at your heels? Are you the small fish in a big pond, or vice versa? Do you have a wider range of products or services than your main competitor?

Take a look at those competitors, see what they are doing right or wrong and explore what you could do better. Analyse where your competitive advantage can be sought, whether it is in **price, range, quality, taste, service, provenance, added value, loyalty, flexibility, experience** etc.

This forms the basis of how a designer can make you stand out from the crowd.

Worksheet #2

Ask yourself:



Why do people choose our business?

What do our customers really think of us?

How do we know what they think of us?

Where do we want the business to go?

Who are our competitors?

What is it about our competitors that makes them strong?

Who are you targeting?

Don't say that 'everybody' is your target market! Some businesses hope that a generic marketing message will appeal to a wider audience, but research indicates that targeting a specific group with a more focused message is much more effective.

Knowing the profile of your target customer is vital to the success of any business. Explore such questions as where those customers come from, how they find out about your business and what their profile is (age and gender, location, spending habits etc). You will need to know exactly who you are talking to, so that the business image speaks to them in a tone and language that they can relate to. **This puts you in the shoes of your customer and gives you an insight into what they are looking for.**



Worksheet #3

Ask yourself:

Who are our current customers (in detail)?

Where do they live?

How do they find out about us?

Where do they buy our product?

Why do they buy our product?

Who is our ideal customer and why?





The next step - using your brand effectively

Now that you've discovered your core values, examined the marketplace and considered your customer's needs, you should consider what are the most effective and suitable forms of visual communication for your business.

At a time when people's attention spans grow shorter, a meaningful message can often be communicated very effectively through packaging, vans, shopfronts, uniforms, business cards and other forms of marketing. There needs to be a visual consistency across these items that allows your core values to be displayed strongly at every point where the customer encounters your business.

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Getting online

The first point of contact that a potential customer has with you is often online, as more and more people turn to the web as their primary source of information.

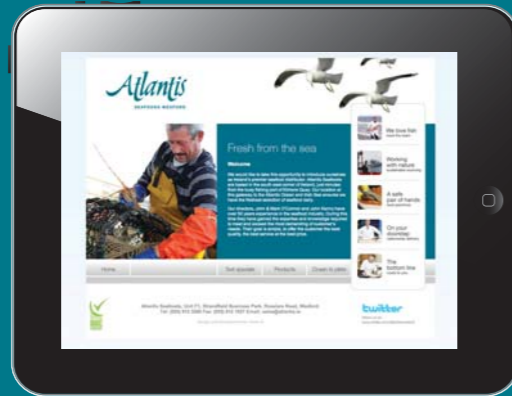
Some form of online presence is essential and a good website and social media strategy offers a cost effective opportunity to market both large or small companies. The visual design is essential to inform, persuade or retain the user and careful consideration should be given by your designer to interpret your unique brand message.

A site should be instinctive, simple to navigate and easy to identify where you are. Text should be concise, easy to read and understandable. The site shouldn't be a dumping ground for technical information and lengthy descriptions. Images should be relevant to the customer and of good quality, while moving graphics should be kept subtle and not distract. Users may be viewing the site on mobile devices, so rule out applications that aren't compatible with these.

The website should load quickly and should display evidence of being up to date with news items etc – if the site remains stagnant over a period of time, customers will have no reason to re-visit your site or feel that it is a vibrant, forward-thinking business.

Consider if your website exists mainly as an online brochure, or if it is a dynamic resource with constantly updated information.





Case Study: Atlantis

Objective

Atlantis Seafoods Wexford have state-of-the-art facilities, offer a huge range of services for the seafood industry and offer great value for money. It was important to design a modern professional and relevant brand message that highlighted these.

Solutions

The tagline 'Fresh from the Sea' was used to highlight the freshness of their product. Real people were used to show the hands on approach. Their brochure and website highlight their offer in a clear and professional manner.

Results

Just a few months on and the website's activity is up 87%.



How do I pick the right designer?

Investing in good design will make a huge difference to your business. How do you decide on which designer to use and more importantly, how do you go about briefing them correctly so that they are clear about the requirements?

Choosing a designer may often be influenced by what the budget is and how much experience the designers have, but most importantly, they need to fully understand your company's core values and goals. The whole process from start to finish will meet expectations if both parties clarify the brief and working methods at the beginning. This will lead to a more successful and cost-effective solution.



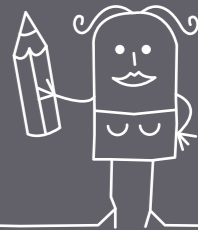
- 1 **Quality of work**
Is the standard of work sufficiently high for you to feel confident in their abilities?
- 2 **Level of experience**
Have the designers a strong track record and can they add value to your project?
- 3 **Level of Creativity**
Do you feel confident that they will be able to communicate your values in a creative way?
- 4 **Quality of clients**
Are the designers working for reputable companies?
- 5 **Referees**
Have the designers provided contact details to people who will give you honest appraisals of them?
- 6 **Facility**
Are you confident that the designers have enough time and personnel to devote to your project?
- 7 **Cost**
Are the prices quoted within your budget, and appropriate to what the designers offer?

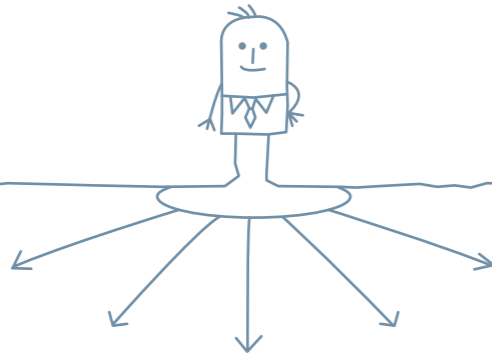


Weighing up the proposals

Once you have received proposals back from prospective designers, use the checklist on the opposite page to help assess the suitability of each design company.

Criteria	Comments	Marks out of 10
1. Quality of work:	Excellent, strong imagery used throughout	8
2. Level of experience:	Only three years established, one other seafood client	5
3. Level of creativity:	Very dynamic, perhaps a little too 'cool'?	7
4. Quality of clients:	Some heavy-hitters, good reputation	8
5. Referees:	Excellent feedback, 'easy to work with'	8
6. Facility:	Four full-time designers, access to photography	7
7. Cost:	A little expensive, but could be worth the investment	7
Summary:	Very personable young designers, a good track record in a short career - may be a little risky as an investment, but could add an edge to products that may be perceived as being a little dated...	Total: 50/70





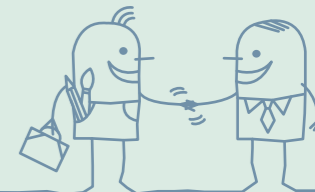
Beginning the design process

Even with all the information that you have gathered about the designers, it can be difficult to make an informed decision about who to go with.

One solution may be to provide a fixed fee for some initial design concepts for each of the candidates. This covers the time and expenses for the designer (while ensuring that they are dedicated to the task) and will provide you with a much clearer idea of which designer is the most suitable for your particular needs. A good designer will also provide details of how they will approach the project and indicate what you can expect to see in their first presentation to you.

Once you have selected the successful candidate, a further meeting will be necessary to clarify specific details. This will prove essential to the designers, as they will be able to glean more information about your business from a one-to-one meeting.

It takes careful planning to successfully commission professional graphic design. The steps indicated above will lead to a trusting partnership with your designer, visualization of your brand and help to add value to your business.





Frequently asked questions

How do I locate suitable designers?

Many designers showcase their work online on their own websites, and search results will often point to the most up to date candidates. A track record in designing for the seafood industry is a bonus but look out for other related and unrelated design work that may indicate professionalism or creativity. BIM and other agencies such as the Enterprise Boards will also have a good idea of suitable candidates.

How long does it all take?

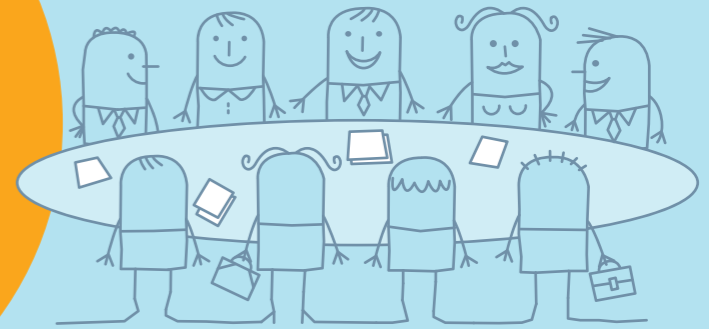
The designer will answer 'how long is a piece of string?! Of course it depends on the project but, for example, a logo identity development should take between 2-4 weeks from start to finish and a brochure-style website should be designed and developed in 4-8 weeks.

How much will it all cost?

This will depend on whether you employ a freelance designer or full-service marketing agency, and on the design elements involved. Confirm the exact terms of the payment schedule before commencing any conceptual work and ensure there are no extra hidden charges involved.

Worksheet #1 Results

Use the following pages to compile your results from the worksheets on pages 9, 11 and 13.



A large, light-colored rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines, intended for writing the results of the worksheets.



Worksheet #2 Results

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing, filling the main body of the worksheet.



Worksheet #3 Results

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing, filling the main body of the worksheet.