



THE small BUSINESS SUPERPOWER

What if I told you that your small business could do something that corporate giants can't?

by Lidia Rumley

It's easy to feel like a very small fish in a vast ocean when you run a small business, but technology and the brand revolution of the past few years have come together to open opportunities for founders of small and independent businesses to stand out without the need for mega-budgets.

Before launching my own brand consultancy in 2013, I spent almost 20 years working in PR for some of the biggest entertainment companies and mass market entertainment brands in the world. It was great fun, with a tonne of opportunities to do the kind of creative work that comes with big brand budgets.

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But the bigger the business, the bigger the handcuffs, as I came to learn. Working with licensed brands came with rule after rule, which is understandable, as businesses have to protect their brand integrity. However, it meant the list of creative ideas that never got to happen far outweighed the ones that saw the light of day.

It wasn't just working with licences that came with constraints. Communication in big corporates came via official press releases, and carefully managed interviews with senior level leaders, where toeing the corporate line was everything. Even 30 years ago, I yearned to bring out the human side of the businesses I represented, but it so often wasn't to be.

Today, things are different. I now work with founder-led businesses to unleash what I call their 'small business superpower'. Quite simply, it's the ability to communicate from the heart, and tell a human story. When you're not constrained by corporate ties, you choose how you want your brand to be seen and heard, and I love getting under the skin of brands from all kinds of industries to help them pin down what they're all about.

The way we communicate has changed. In a noisier world than ever before, it can feel hard to make an impact, but the secret to success is understanding that people are craving more human connection. Your brand is the tool that arms you with the ability to create that connection.



As well as outlining what your business does, your brand captures your passion and purpose to show your audience how and why you do what you do. We've become more values-driven consumers, looking to buy from businesses that align with the things we care about and believe in. Next time you're browsing online, just take a moment to look at the 'About us' section of a business' website and you'll notice more companies than ever sharing their values, because they know that they need to find a way to connect with their customers on an emotional level.

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The world of brand has boomed in recent years and navigating the terminology can be confusing, as can knowing what to do and when. Let me take it from the top. Your brand consists of three core elements: brand name, brand strategy and visual identity.



Brand Name

Fairly self-explanatory, but there are some watch outs for anyone naming (or renaming) a business. Make sure the name you choose is easy to read, write, speak and spell (thanks to my buddy and naming expert, James Newell, from Clear Sales Message for this unforgettable mantra). And check your chosen name has a sensibly matching domain available for your website, to make things as connected as possible. Think also about future-proofing your name as best you can. Any business can develop in unexpected ways, and names can be changed, but it's easier if you have a name that will sustain you for the long term.

"Nailing your brand will equip you to harness your small business superpower."

Brand Strategy

Your brand strategy is what I call the 'words and meaning' part of your brand. It captures everything that's meaningful about your business via five key pillars:

- Mission, vision and values
- Target audience
- Tone of voice
- Brand personality
- Brand messages

The first four pillars are all about understanding what makes your business tick so you can position your brand messages take the story your strategy creates and roll it out into the world. Whether it's via your website, social media, PR, marketing, networking or speaking at events, your brand messages should inform EVERY way you communicate.

Visual Identity

Branding has long been synonymous with logo design, but I always tell people, start with your story. Having this deep understanding of your brand will better inform your visual identity, which should tell the story of your brand through your logo, brand colours, typography and other graphical images or patterns that work together to make your business look professional and connect visually with your audience. (And let me tell you, brand designers LOVE having brand strategies to work from as it gives them so much more insight into how your brand should look than simply what you like).



And that's your brand. It's not your website, your copy, your photos, your social media or your marketing. These are a vital part of bringing your brand to life out in the world and should absolutely be invested in, but not before you understand the very essence of what you're all about. Nailing your brand won't just equip you to harness your small business superpower, it will leave you feeling reinvigorated, empowered and itching to get out there and share your story. •

