

From Brand X to Brand Wow!

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A brand is not just a logo, a website, or a business card. It's an experience.

GOOD BRANDING IS:

- **Simple:** You should be able to tell a smart 8-year-old what you do and have them understand it.
- **Emotionally compelling:** It should make people feel something and want to act on that feeling.
- **Authentic:** Your brand should be true to your mission and what you actually do.
- **Possible on a small budget:** Even minimal investment of resources and time can be very impactful.

What's your brand?

Think about the current state of your brand—your strengths, your weaknesses—and set goals before launching in. Think about these questions.

1. **What's your mission?** It's important to be able to express your mission clearly, succinctly and in a way that connects with people.
2. **What do you do that you're most proud of and what's most distinct about your work?** We all think our cause is the most important, but there are so many competing asks flashing in front of people every day, you have to stand out from the crowd.
3. **Who are your audiences?** Are they all donors? Adopters? General animal lovers? Specifically pet lovers? Do they know a lot about pets? Are they local or national? Your appeal and how you speak to them should be governed by where they are—their knowledge base, their degree of engagement, and even where they are physically.

Stories allow you to tell people who you are and what you do without lecturing them—it's the power of the classic rule: "show, don't tell."

A GOOD STORY IS:

- **Visual:** The audience should be able to picture it.
- **Emotional:** The audience should feel compelled to act.
- **Dramatic:** It has some element of tension in need of resolution.
- **Audience-appropriate:** Adjust your storytelling based on what you know about your audience.

What's your story?

Authentic animal stories will come naturally out of our work. Telling your stories may empower you to help more animals.

1. **Who are the hero and villain?** The hero doesn't have to be a person; it could be an institutional cruelty you are working to prevent.
2. **What is the conflict?** And how are you going to resolve it?
3. **What are your individual stories?** What are the animal and human stories that will resonate with your supporters?
4. **Make it memorable!** If your story doesn't make people feel something—whether it makes them sad or angry or happy, or make them laugh—they will forget it and forget you.

IDENTIFY YOUR PERSONALITY TRAITS

Your brand personality is how you would describe your brand if it was a person. What are its primary characteristics?

- **Think about your organization.** What kind of person would it be? Is it bold, smart, etc.?
- **What famous person comes to mind?**
- **How will you speak to people?** Once you have some basic personality traits in mind, you can start to think about the different ways you'll speak to your supporters.

DEFINE YOUR TONE OF VOICE

You have something to say; tone of voice is about how you say it. Do you sound fierce, funny, sad, hopeful?

- **Think about what issues your organization deals with.** Are you working on spay/neuter? Are you primarily focused on adoptions and placement?
- **What is the subject?** You'll want to make sure that your tone is appropriate to who you are and the subject you're communicating about.
- **Varying your tone?** It can be appropriate to vary your tone, but you should always sound like the same organization.

What's your tone of voice?

1. **List the words that describe your organization.** And words that describe what you are not. Ex: You are fun, but not childish. You are smart, but not complicated.
2. **Develop your brand's persona.** What famous person would your organization sound like?

Just as you want to be consistent in your tone and storytelling, you also want to be intentional and consistent in your imagery and design.

VISUAL IDENTITY

How do your logos, colors, fonts, and imagery all come together? No matter how or where people engage with your work, they should be able to tell it's you.

How effective is your logo?

Even though there is so much more to a brand than a logo, your logo is still important—it's often the first visual point of contact people will have with your brand.

1. Does it stand out amongst your competitors?
2. Where is it used most?
3. Is it legible when small?
4. Are you and your team using it consistently?
5. Does it differentiate and speak to what you do?
6. Is it already known in the field; does it have equity?

If it doesn't stand out, or speak to what you do, or it's not legible where it's being used, you should think about a new, more effective logo. Before making a change, weigh the pros and cons and think about how well it's known in your field.

COLORS

Do your brand and logo colors match your personality? Is your brand personality peaceful or more bold? Does your brand embody wisdom or growth? Do your brand personality and colors match up with the meanings below?

- Excitement, Love, Boldness
- Friendly, Cheerful, Confident
- Happiness, Optimism, Energy
- Peace, Growth, Health
- Trust, Strength, Dependability
- Noble, Imaginative, Wise

FONTS

Fonts carry meaning like colors do. What does your font say about you? Here are a few places to download free fonts.

- FontSquirrel.com
- FontSpace.com
- 1001FreeFonts.com
- Fonts.google.com

IMAGERY

Images and videos can be powerful pieces of your brand. The right photo can be the difference between someone making a donation or skipping past your ad or social graphic.

- Choose images that show the soulfulness of the animals. Eye contact usually helps the viewer connect.

- Think about how graphic you should be. What do people find motivating vs. off-putting? You don't want to be so graphic that people turn away.
- People want to see themselves helping animals. Use images that highlight the human-animal bond.
- Be careful about using too many different styles of graphics and images. If your brand is cute and fun, fine, but be careful about using graphics and images that convey a tone that competes with your brand and messaging. Here are free stock photo resources. Some websites ask you to credit the photographer; check the guidelines before use.
 - Pexels.com
 - Unsplash.com
 - Canva.com
 - Pixabay.com

Remember, all of your communications should look and feel like your organization and clearly tell your story.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Having professional-looking design doesn't have to be expensive. You can do some design on your own, or hire a designer to help with larger projects like your website and other marketing pieces. Colleges may also have students who will work with you for course credit. Here are a few websites that make it easy to design something yourself or hire a freelance designer.

Do it yourself

- Stencil.com
- Snappa.com

Hire a freelancer

- Fiverr.com
- 99Designs.com

Top 5 takeaways

1. **Focus on what makes you different.** Communicate these unique qualities.
2. **Create a mission statement.** Make sure your representatives know your mission and can tell a stranger in the street what you do the same way that you would.
3. **Tell emotional stories.** Include specific animal stories and tie their stories back to your overall mission.
4. **Be consistent in tone of voice and your visual identity.** Read and look at everything together from your brochures and website to your logo and physical space. Try to see it as an outsider seeing it for the first time. What does it say about your brand?
5. **Remember that your brand is more than your logo.** It's every interaction you have with people and their experience across all of your communications. "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
— Maya Angelou

