

5 Elements of a Successful Brand Messaging Strategy



1. Knowledge of Your USP

At the heart of every successful brand messaging strategy is an attractive USP: something that highlights what makes your brand unique, and illustrates to consumers why they should buy your products, instead of your competitors'.

Not sure what your USP is? Asking the following questions can help you establish it.

What makes you different? This is an obvious one, I know, but it's the biggest piece of the puzzle when it comes to figuring out your USP.

Take Subway. The playing field has changed substantially in recent years, but for a long time the brand's USP was that it was a fresher, healthier alternative to what was offered by the bulk of fast food franchises at the time.

A USP doesn't have to be feature-based.

Look at Zappos. Their product range isn't particularly unique (they primarily sell brands that can be purchased elsewhere) but they set themselves apart from the competition with their **utterly exceptional level of customer service**.

What problem (or problems) does your product solve? Does it help your customers complete something faster, make an element of their life easier, or allow them to carry out critical tasks with greater accuracy?

Why would someone choose to buy your product instead of a competitor's? Odds are, your competitors have USPs too. Take those into consideration and try to establish why your product is *still* the better choice.

2. A Solid Understanding of Your Audience

It's impossible to develop a successful brand messaging strategy if you don't know who your messages are aimed at.

This means that before you go any further, you need to know:

- Who you're marketing to
- What they care about and value
- The sort of language they use and will respond to

If you're already trading, accessing this information should be pretty easy. Google Analytics provides some pretty detailed demographic data within their "Audience" section, and if you have a Facebook page, you'll be able to gather data from there, too.

Want more data? Post-purchase surveys can help you create a more complete picture of your target audience (just be sure to keep them short, and consider incentivizing them). [SurveyMonkey](#) and [KeySurvey](#) both allow you to do this.

If you're still developing your brand, gathering audience data is understandably going to be a little trickier. You'll need to get data on your competitors' audience, instead.

You can do this using tools like [SimilarWeb](#) and [Follow](#) (their plugins are better than their websites – you can get [SimilarWeb's Chrome plugin here](#), and you can get Follow's plugin for [Firefox](#) or [Chrome](#)).

Bear in mind that brands often have multiple target audiences. If this includes you, you'll need to repeat the above for each audience, and adapt your brand messaging accordingly.

3. A Story



Every brand has a story; but a good story, told well, **can help customers connect emotionally with a brand**. It should also form a core part of your brand messaging strategy.

If you're not sure what your story is or how to tell it, or you believe your story needs expanding, try asking yourself questions like:

- Why does your product exist?
- How did it come to market?
- What does it mean to you?

And perhaps most importantly:

What does it mean to your customers? (If the product's totally new to the market, you might need to use market research to inform this bit).

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You can write your story when you come to pull all the elements of this messaging strategy together (something I'll talk about shortly). In the meantime, take a look at how other brands tell their stories. Just be sure to bear in mind how the audience you're targeting will impact the way in which you tell yours.

Here are a few brands with stories that are well worth reading:

[Burt's Bees](#)

[Innocent Drinks](#)

[Soul Cycle](#)

[GoldieBlox](#)

[Beardbrand](#)

4. A Clear Goal

It's not just great stories that help consumers form emotional connections to brands. Companies that are striving to do good things resonate with a consumer market that's becoming increasingly socially-conscious.

So if you hadn't guessed, when I say "goals," I don't mean financial goals. Sure, calculating expected turnover and revenue and setting monetary targets are essential to a business plan, but they're irrelevant when it comes to creating a brand messaging strategy.

When I say "goals," I'm talking about how you're trying to change things.

I'm asking you what you stand for.
I want you to look at the bigger picture.

Take Australian toilet paper brand, Who Gives a Crap. Not only is their toilet paper environmentally-friendly (it's made without the use of trees), but the company donates 50% of their profits to charities that help build toilets for those in need.

This ties into their core brand message, which is all about demonstrating that they do in fact, give a crap – to the point that they put improving people's lives above profit.

While you don't need to go to the extent of donating 50% of your profits to charity, having something you care about beyond making money, and voicing it effectively, can play a huge part in creating a successful brand messaging strategy (and building a successful brand as a whole).

5. Brand Messaging Guidelines

To execute a successful brand messaging strategy, you'll need to pull all of the above together to create the messages themselves. You'll also need to create brand messaging guidelines. I can't emphasize how important this is. It will help you maintain a consistent voice across all channels, including your website and in marketing materials – a fundamental ingredient in creating a brand that customers can connect with, and want to stay loyal to.

Your brand messaging guidelines should include:

- Your brand's USP
- A detailed description of your target audience (or audiences)
- What your company stands for and its goals
- Any slogans or taglines
- Any other messaging that might be used
- Your brand story
- The tone of voice that should be used when writing messages for the brand, including examples of it in use – i.e. snippets of web copy and sample social media posts
- Any words or phrases you *don't* want used in brand messages
- When these messages or tone of voice should be used – i.e. do you expect staff to adopt a particular tone of voice in emails? Or is it only something they need to worry about when creating content that will be shared publicly?

Once you've created these guidelines, they should be distributed to every member of your team, as well as to any agencies or freelancers you work with, and incorporated appropriately.