

Superfast Business Wales



Business Guide

Developing Your Online Brand

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Llywodraeth Cymru
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A successful digital brand is a powerful combination of elements summed up in your customer's eye by your company name, its products and services.

From your business's perspective, it promises qualities and values that are often inextricably linked with visual elements such as a logo, packaging and even the look and feel of the website.

From your customers' point of view, the brand arises from their perceptions of those promises, as well as their expectations of how your products and services will perform – all of which add up to a recognition based on what the market thinks it knows about your product or service.

This combination of factual and emotional elements can be hard to pin down. But if you are building an online brand, the more accurately you can identify its strengths and weaknesses, the more agile you will be in exploiting its value.

A successful brand doesn't arrive overnight, and certainly not by magic. Get it right and you will have a compelling proposition which makes the right promises to the right people: your customers.

So your development strategy will need to be based on customer recognition, competitor knowledge, your virtual location (not just a great website but also appropriate social media channels), consistent messaging and of course the products and services themselves. It will also depend on having access to the skills and technology that will support your strategy as it evolves.

In today's Superfast Broadband enabled world, it is vital that businesses understand how, why and where their core messages and values are being created, challenged or, potentially, destroyed.

Understand

How Technology Supports Online Brand Development

- A reliable broadband service is the essential foundation for all the elements of a 360-degree digital brand development plan. Communications with customers, suppliers and business partners, and every kind of digital interaction from web development to managing user-generated content depend on it.
- Unified communications provide a holistic approach to engaging with customers, business partners and employees, together with a framework for a consistent, proactive and knowledge-based approach to online brand management.



- Website development, search marketing, measurement tools, mobile content, social media, e-commerce tools and email marketing are just some of the technology skills, platforms and applications that will enable a flexible online brand development strategy.

Adopt

Getting Started

Take a step back from your business and ask yourself the following questions:

- What if my brand was a person?
- What are they like?
- What can you expect from them?
- How do they behave?
- What kind of reputation do they have?
- Why should you listen to what they have to say?

Think of brands that are important to you, and apply some of these questions to them. The answers should give you a foundation on which to start building your online brand, provide an idea of strengths, weaknesses and gaps, and help you to start formulating some specific goals for your strategy.

Exploit

Ten Business Benefits of Developing a Digital Brand

1. **Build a community**

Digital technology helps you to build an online community around your brand. Use it properly and your focus will remain on your business goals – providing products and services with long-term relevance to your market. Tools and analytics are there to support your strategy, not distract you into worrying about how you should be exploiting the latest Google algorithm.

2. **Add value and equity**

Digital brand management isn't different from traditional brand management – it's just more flexible, more responsive and a lot quicker. It allows you to focus on your customer community in real time, with the emphasis on meeting their expectations and requirements. Not only will that help you to refine and improve your products and services, but you will find out a lot more about how your business interacts with your customers – and how efficiently it



operates. That, in turn, will help you to improve systems and processes, adding value and equity to the public perception of the business.

3. Boost online brand recognition

Whether or not you have a strategy in place, you probably already have some kind of online brand involving the creation of website content and possibly one or two social media platforms. By formalising a strategy, you can turn these often occasional or unquantified activities into vehicles for discovering exactly what your business represents to the market – and how you can adapt your online branding to differentiate your company from the competition.

4. Grow online brand loyalty

There is plenty of truth in the notion that online customers are untroubled by loyalty, and will switch their allegiance at the click of a mouse. But this also represents a great opportunity for any business to focus on developing a brand that is relevant, and all about improving customers' lives in some way, rather than chasing the latest elusive trend. And there are plenty of customers who will identify with that and remain loyal – if they can see no good reason to back a different horse.

5. Higher conversion rates

Building a solid digital brand depends on a mixture of factual and emotional elements. Above all, it has to give your visitors an irresistible reason to visit your site, to stay there, to come back, to share it and to give you their contact details. The more you can provide this, the greater the conversion rate is likely to be. But success depends on the quality of your content, the appropriate functionality of your site and the perceived value to your customers of engaging with your business at every touch-point.

6. Add authority

Building a digital brand is an opportunity to present your business as an authority. You can exceed your customers' expectations – a key brand consideration – simply by showing that you are listening to them, taking part in their discussions about your products and services, and interacting with them wherever they happen to be. The key to differentiation and competitive edge could lie in the way you offer a rich, relevant and personal online experience, which will help to generate long-term brand awareness as they share it further afield. Word-of-mouth – or its digital equivalents – has never been more important.

7. The benefits of integration

A successful online branding strategy combines email marketing, digital advertising and social media, helping to increase inbound traffic to your website and improve search rankings in a constant, self-fulfilling cycle. By taking an integrated approach, you will find ways to improve and streamline branding consistency across every channel and platform – another important contributor to customer recognition.

8. Save money

With the right branding strategy in place, you will be able to make more effective use of the tools and technologies that can help you measure its success, and realise a better return on



any initial investment in new platforms, skills, services and infrastructure. A short presentational video on your business's YouTube channel would cost a fraction compared with a television commercial – and will reach a global audience, if that's what you want, reinforcing your brand in an infinitely shareable way. Good digital branding is the key to lower marketing costs.

9. Get creative

A strong digital brand will invite feedback from customers. They will talk about their experiences, ask questions, post reviews and verdicts, share content across their social media and effectively open up a completely new marketing channel – in which they are doing much of the hard work for you!

10. Get closer and improve profitability

If you build a successful online brand, you will engage your customers – and potential customers – in a constant exchange of information about their needs, expectations and desires. By combining this knowledge with metrics, you will be able to assess the effectiveness of different campaigns and strategies – and turn it into profit.

Top Tips

Once you have established the strengths and weaknesses of your brand, you will be ready to take it digital. If you are looking to build a digital brand from scratch, here are three basic tips to keep in mind:

- 1. Give your customer something of value** – which they won't be able to find anywhere else. Brand loyalty is based on a sense of personal connection, and keeps us coming back for more. The digital world allows infinite personalisation and anticipation of the customer's next question or move. Your brand should exploit this opportunity to the full, across your website, social media channels and all forms of digital communication.
- 2. Build an exclusive community** - If you want your customers to become your brand ambassadors, you need to get the marketing mix right. Customers who feel that they are part of an exclusive community will share their experiences, and market your products and services in the process. Give them every opportunity to get involved by posting reviews, ratings and feedback. If you have a blog, make sure it's not all about you. Invite discussion and interaction at every point.
- 3. Stay focussed** - Don't allow yourself to be panicked or distracted by fleeting trends. Keep focused on the relevance and long-term benefits of your brand to its target market – and revisit all the elements regularly to make sure they share that focus and remain effective.



NEXT STEPS

1. Register to attend a fully-funded Business Development Workshop.
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/events
2. Make an appointment to see a Business Advisor who will help you create a personal action plan to grow your business.
www.business.wales.gov.uk/contact-us

For further information on Brand Development take a look at:

See how other businesses in Wales have exploited Superfast Broadband
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/superfast-success-stories

Find out how much your business could save with our
www.business.wales.gov.uk/superfastbusinesswales/savings-calculator

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