



NO. 4 | MARCH 2022

A Founder's Guide to how to build a knockout brand

MONEY



What makes a brand?

Everything you need to know

Build your brand framework

Starting with your why

When is the time to rebrand?

Find out how to go about it

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Featuring



James Hurst

Creative Director at [Pinterest](#)



Simon Sinek

Author and Founder



Scott Leonard

Founder of [Champion Agency](#)



Nick Graham

Founder of [Berczy](#)

01.

Introduction

If you've found your market niche, road-tested your product or service and are refining your proposition, now's the time to work on your brand.

Creating a brand from scratch may seem like a daunting task, but don't worry, we've got your back. Virgin has spent 50 years building business after business off the back of its irresistible brand, so we're here to help you; the next generation of founders, build a knockout brand.

In this guide you'll find everything you need to bring your new brand to life; from finding your purpose, articulating your vision, and understanding how to craft your proposition.

You can use this guide to refer back to you whilst you're building your brand, and remember that each brand is unique. It is the living embodiment of your business, so don't try too hard to create something that's already out there - you are unique and so is your experience as a founder. By staying true to yourself, your values and the principles of why you started up in the first place, your brand will shine.



Ready to **jump in!**

02.

What makes a brand?

A brand is more than a logo or a name. A brand is the tangible embodiment of your business, the manifestation of everything it does, its purpose, its values, its people and its products.

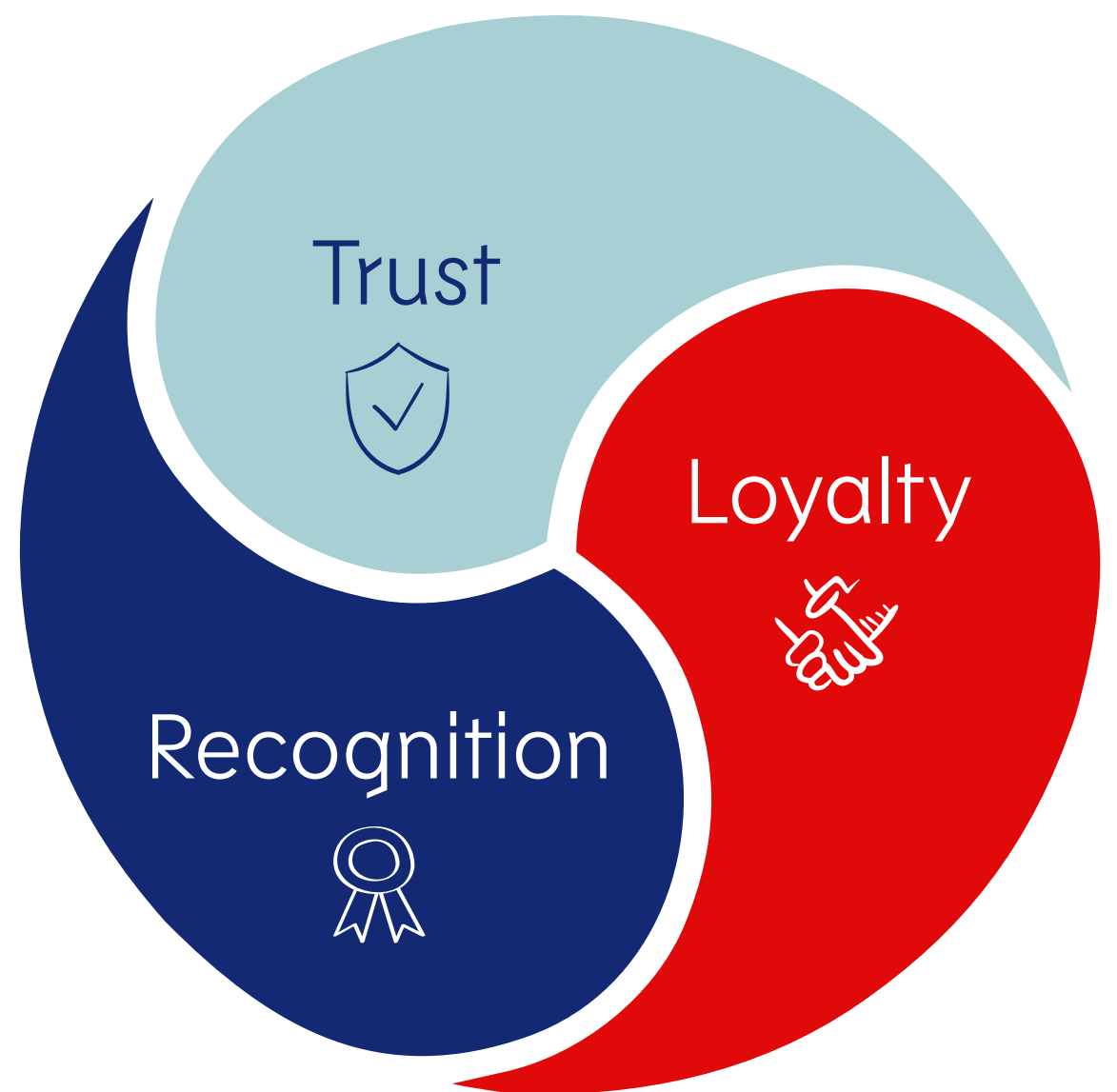
It is a thousand different touchpoints and more, and if someone is talking about your business they're talking about your brand.

A brand is...

- how people perceive and relate to your business. Without a brand, your business is just a set of people and machines doing things.
- what people connect to. What they buy into. What they trust.
- greater than the sum of its parts. A brand is something that can be experienced, heard, felt, seen, tasted, touched and loved.

A knockout brand

will earn recognition for your business, create trust with your audience and foster loyalty with your customers.



How strong brands win

FEATURE

- Strong identity
- Builds relationships
- Has a strong purpose
- Consistent experience
- Is easily recognisable

BENEFIT

- Differentiation from your competitors
- Customer loyalty
- Provides a reason for customers to chose you
- Trust from your customers
- Will stand out in competitive channels

A short exercise...

Think of a product or service which you feel emotionally connected to. Maybe it's the device or app you're reading this on. The clothes you're wearing. The drink on your desk. Why do you feel connected? Tick all that apply.

WHY

- The design
- The user experience
- The function
- The form
- The values it symbolises
- How it makes me feel
- The cost
- The physical weight
- The founders behind it
- The brand story

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6 Questions to answer when building your brand

James Hurst, Global Head of Creative at Pinterest, says that all new startups need to answer these 6 questions to help you define your brand:

01. Why this company?
02. What's the context?
03. What's the category that we're in?
04. Who's our competition?
05. Who is your community?
06. What are your capabilities?



Watch the full video
to hear more from
James or listen to our
podcast



03.

How to build a knockout brand

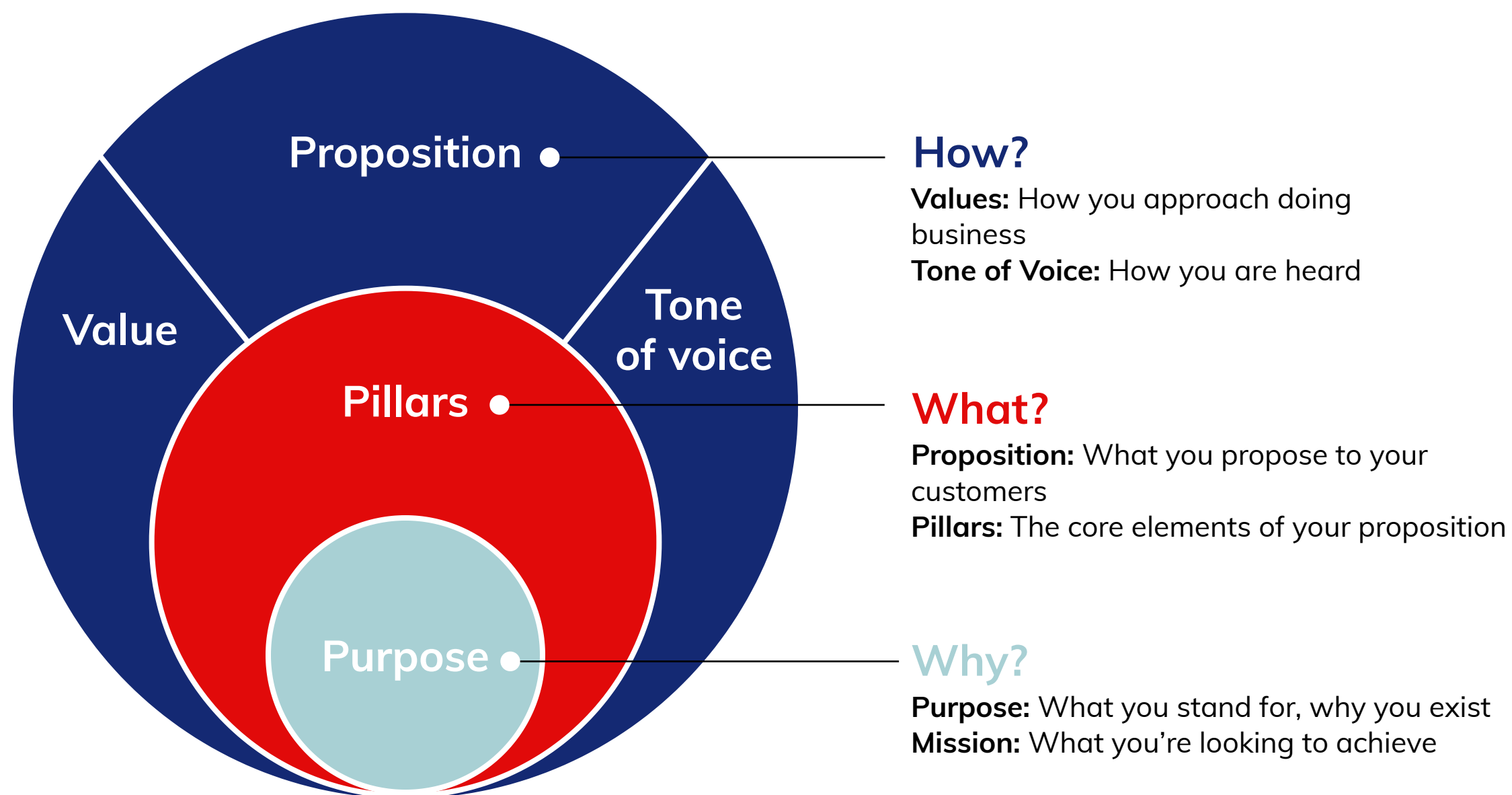
Your brand framework

Your brand can be broken down into core component parts, which together create the foundations of everything else you do. In this section we'll show you how to build your framework using our tried and tested models.

What is a brand framework?

Sometimes called models, frameworks can help you identify the different components of what goes into your brand, and separates them out so you can easily call on them when working on different

areas of your business. For example, your brand **experience** is different from its **values**, which is different from your **purpose**.



A real life example

Here's the Virgin StartUp brand, split up into the components which we've detailed above.



WHY	PURPOSE What we stand for, why we exist	EMPOWERING FOUNDERS TO START UP AND THRIVE					
	MISSION What we're looking to achieve	A WORLD WHERE BUSINESS IS DONE BETTER					
WHAT	PROPOSITION What we propose to the consumer	HELP FOUNDERS TO BUILD BETTER BUSINESSES					
	PILLARS The core elements of our proposition	ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT Being curious, agile & solving problems. Harnessing 50 years of Virgin business building	DIVERSE COMMUNITY Providing an engaging and thriving hub for our founders	SUPPORT Providing access to funding, advice, guidance, skills and inspiration.	CONVENING POWER Leveraging the credibility of the brand, bringing people and partners together to create new opportunities		
HOW	OUR VALUES	STRAIGHT UP	DELIGHTFULLY SURPRISING	HEARTFELT SERVICE	RED HOT RELEVANCE	SMART DISRUPTION	INSATIABLE CURIOSITY
	PERSONALITY/ TONE OF VOICE:	HONEST & STRAIGHT TALKING, EMPATHETIC, POSITIVE					

Purpose

We've produced a separate guide for helping founders find and implement their purpose. You can download that full guide here, and we'd recommend taking a look at it before diving into this section.

Let's remind ourselves why clarity of purpose is important. We've enlisted the help of Scott Leonard from the Champion Agency, to help.

Purpose is a proven human need since the dawn of time; it's something we all strive for everyday.

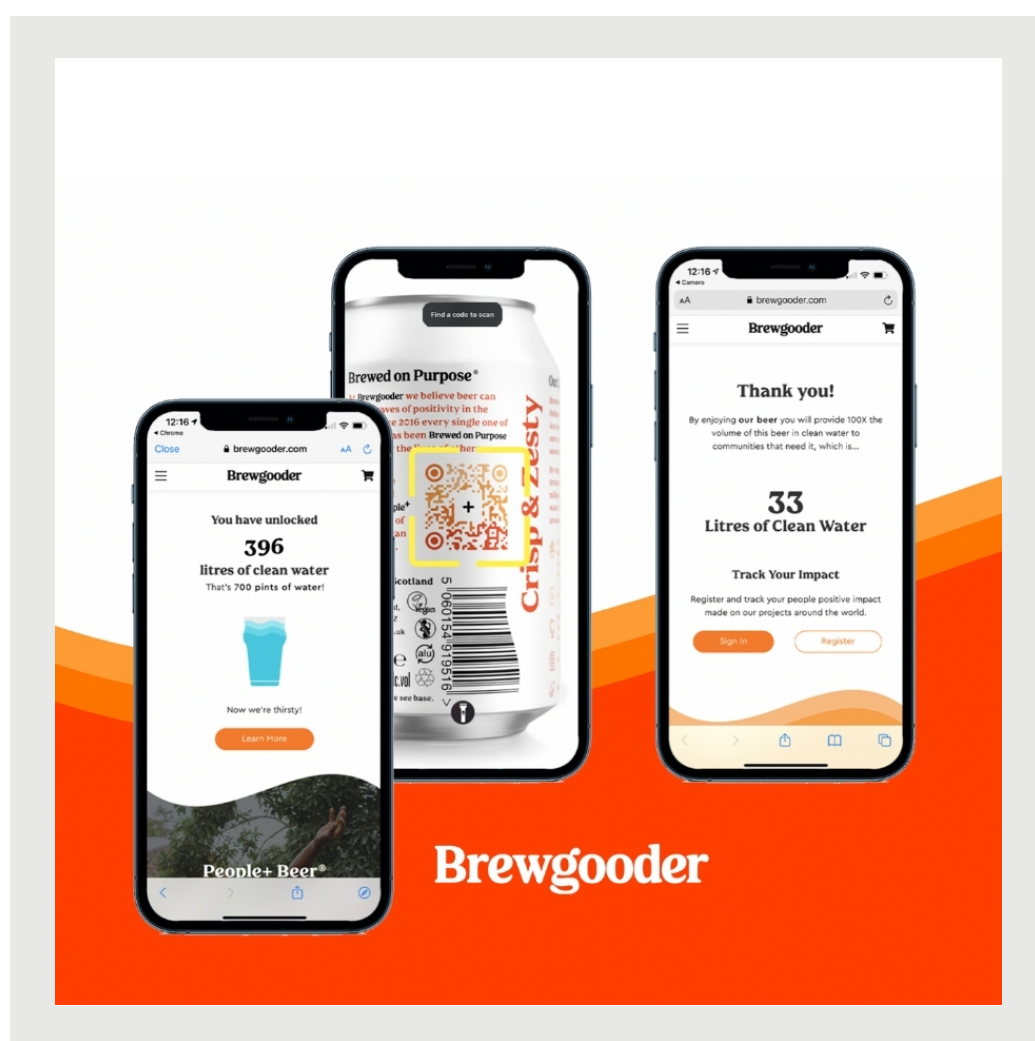
Without purpose your brand has a very limited point of difference that will inevitably be bettered one day.



Purpose and Impact report by Zeno Group, published in Forbes June 2020

Purpose-led brewing that provides access to clean water by investing 100% of all profits. Delivering over 130 clean water projects in 5 years (not to be confused with the Brewdog brand).

'Brewed on Purpose' as their brand line, they smartly prove this across all touchpoints with a QR code on every can that allows you to instantly connect with your personal account to see how drinking that product in realtime is positively impacting the world.



Practical things you can action today to present your purpose more clearly:

Reach beyond yourself - focus on your target audiences and future proof your purpose. If your purpose isn't forward looking by its nature, it will struggle to pass the test of time.

TRY

Revisit your target audiences, and think about how your purpose relates to their needs and values.

When talking purpose: less is always more - don't overload the conversation with words, and try to use visuals where possible. Whether photos, illustrations or icons, visuals can bring your purpose statements to life. For example, see the impact a simple image has on this powerful statement from Patagonia:

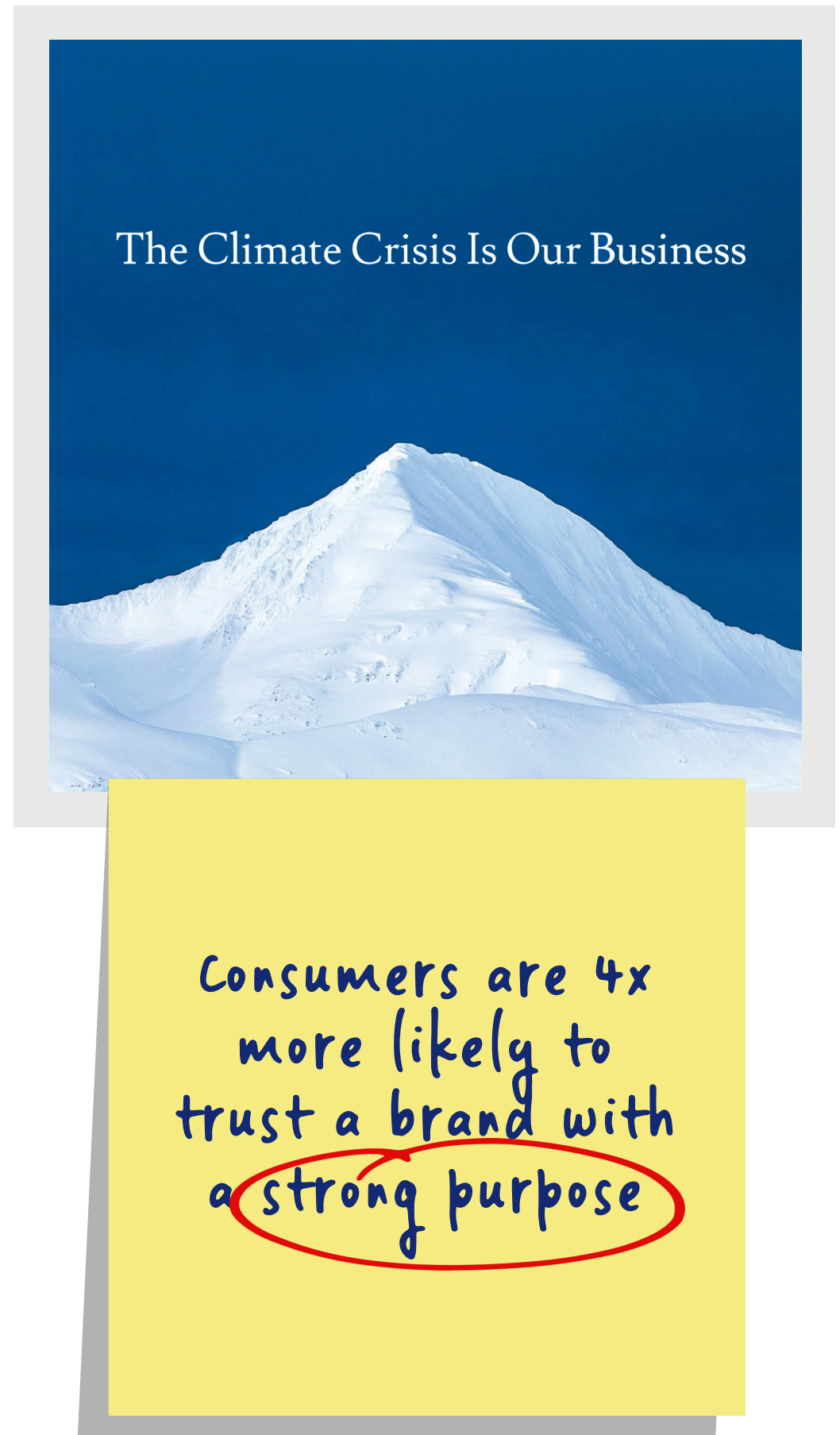
TRY

Communicating your purpose to 3 strangers who are new to your business. Either tell them in under 15 seconds, or write it down using 15 words or fewer. Getv them to feedback your purpose to you in their own words, and reflect on how effective your communication is.

Define your purpose to a single word - be selective and make that word ownable.

TRY

Invite your team to anonymously contribute a word on a write board platform and ask them to vote the answer. Reflect on if that words does what you need it too.



Purpose and Impact report by Zeno Group | published in Forbes June 2020

Live your purpose

Having a purpose is different from living it. For people to emotionally connect with your brand, it helps to have them believe in your business.

TRY

Align your purpose to each area of your business to see where you might be falling short:

Communication

e.g. Educating your audience on your purpose

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Supply chains

e.g. Working with suppliers who share your values

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Design

e.g. Communicating your purpose on different brand touchpoints like packaging

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Manufacturing

e.g. Using compostable packaging

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People

e.g. Providing a living wage

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Operations

e.g. Reducing waste where possible

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CSR

e.g. Partnering with causes which aligns to your purpose

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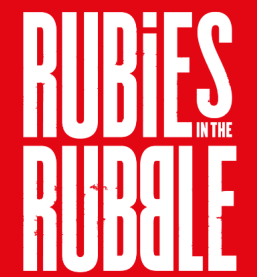
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SEE

Paynter Jackets wanted to reimagine how people consumed clothes, and release a very limited number of products each year, with a strict cap on how many of each item they create. Once they're gone, they're gone, meaning they don't mass produce anything.

Instead, they focus on finding quality, sustainable suppliers for their products, and take pride in the finished garments they ship. Best of all, customers love it paynterjacket.com

Rubies in the Rubble



Award-winning condiments, made gooder by using delicious ingredients that would otherwise go to waste

■ Founders:
Jenny Costa

■ Year:
2011

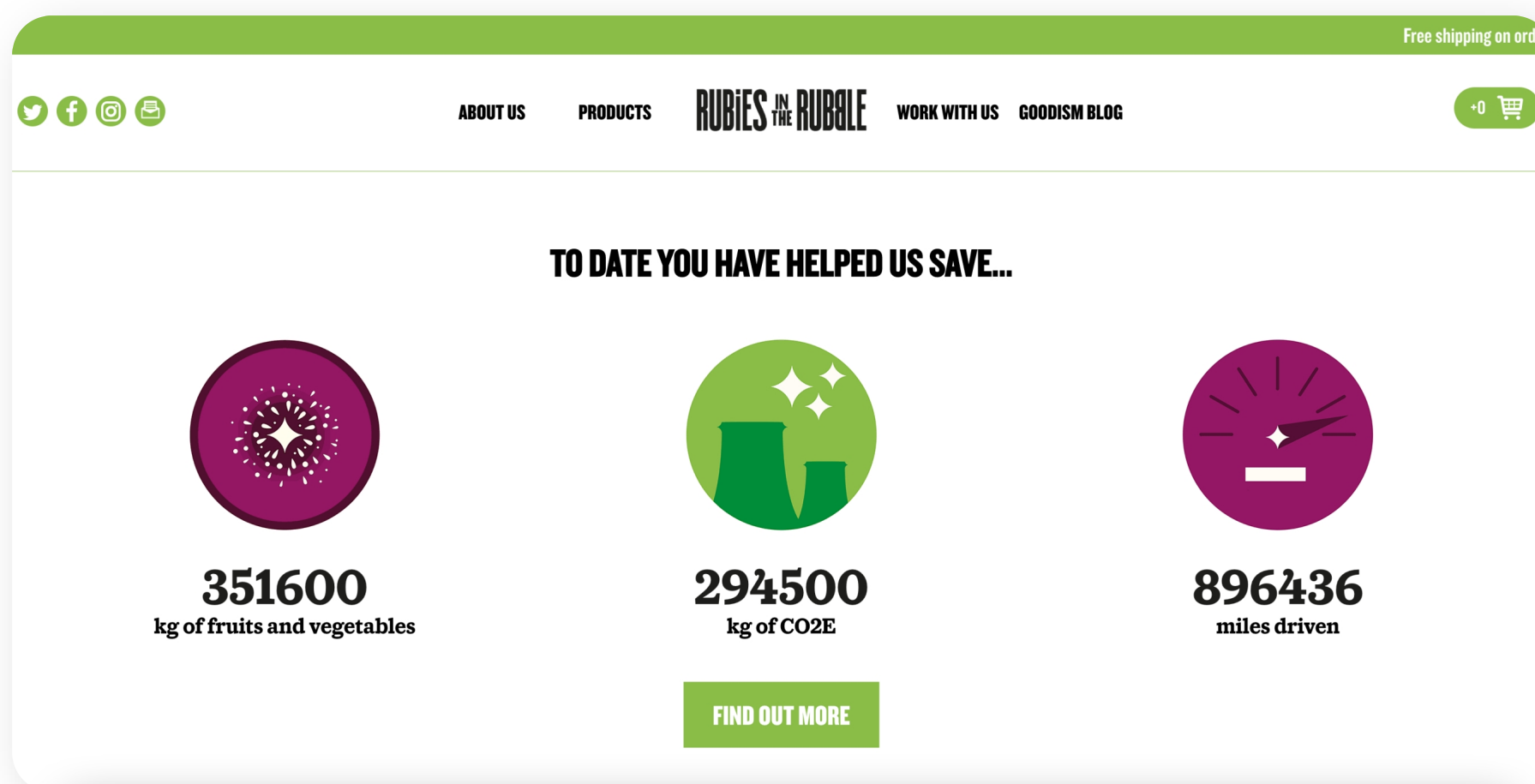
Rubies in the Rubble makes award winning planet based condiments out of waste produce that is either tricky to process, aesthetically misshapen, too ripe or abundant. With an annual revenue of £3.8million and impressive year on year growth the brand lives up to it's 'packed with purpose' promise.



03. HOW TO BUILD A KNOCKOUT BRAND

The circular design of the product is based on the purpose to reduce the combined impact of food wastage that contributes **6.7% of all greenhouse gases emitted**.

This is extended with recipes to help customers extend the life of the food further and waste less. Rubies in the Rubble is a certified BCorp.



Naming

Virgin has made quite a name for itself. It's known and loved by people worldwide, and shows that whilst a name **isn't everything**, it certainly is a good place to start. If you've already named your startup, fantastic! If not, read on.

Top tips when naming your startup

Make it yours.

It's been proven time and again that consumers are more likely to engage with your brand if they embrace the story behind it. For startups, that story starts with you. Consider how to make your brand name the embodiment of your startup story.

Keep it simple and straightforward.

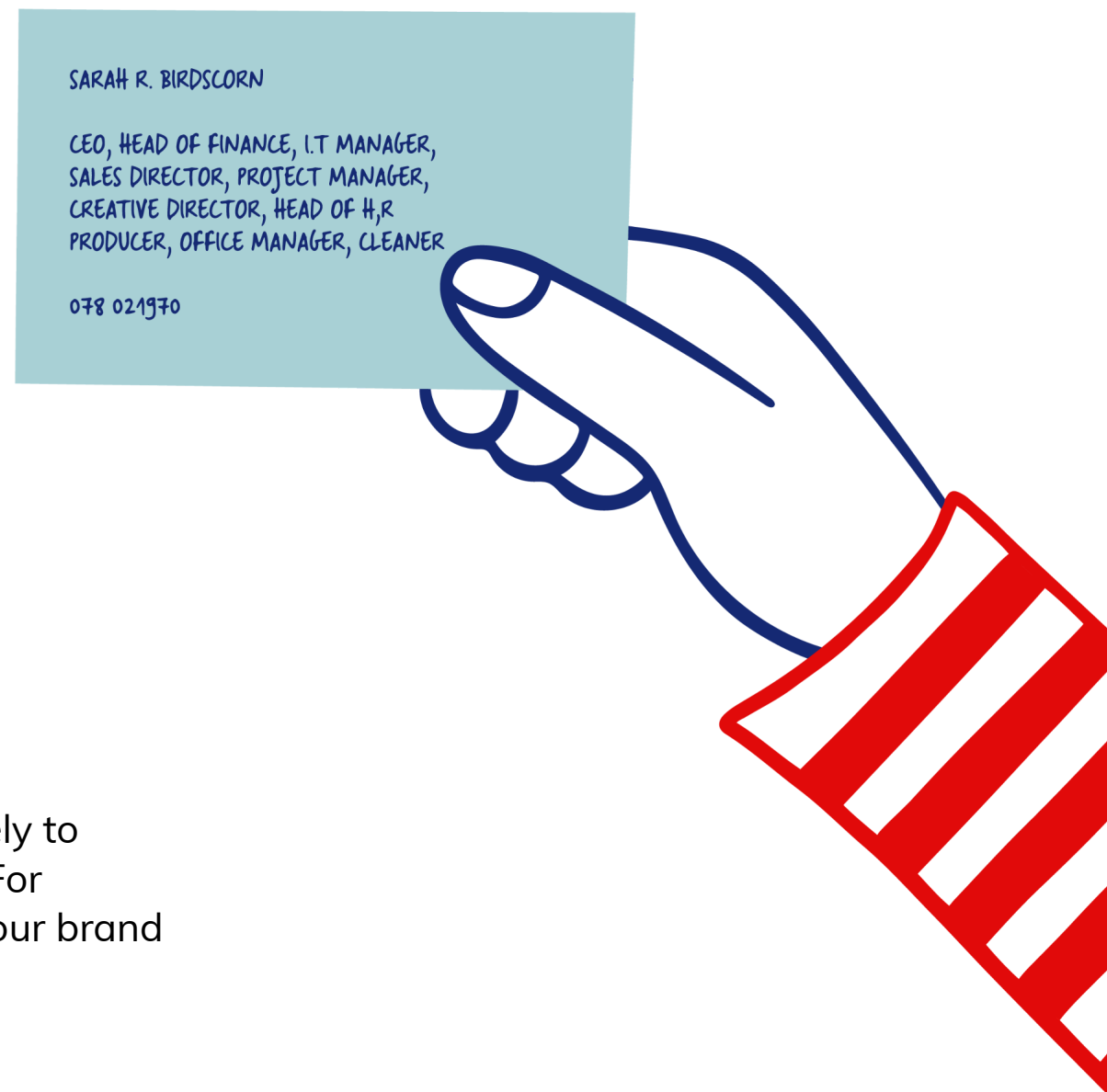
Don't try to over complicate things. People may want to search for your company after hearing about it, so you don't want to risk them not being able to spell or pronounce it.

Be creative but still be clear.

Virgin Galactic (vs. Virgin Space) and Virgin Active (vs. Virgin Gyms) are two examples of names with a bit of a twist. But don't go too abstract or people won't know what you're offering.

Say my name.

Pay attention to phonetic pronunciation. In a world of voice-activated search (hello Google, Siri and Alexa) make sure that your brand or offering is easy to understand when spoken out loud. Beware of words that have a similar pronunciation but differ in meaning and or spelling.



Beware of autocorrect.

Ensure your name doesn't automatically trigger a "correction". This can be the downside of "creative" spelling and can subtly undermine the validity of your brand.

Keep it short.

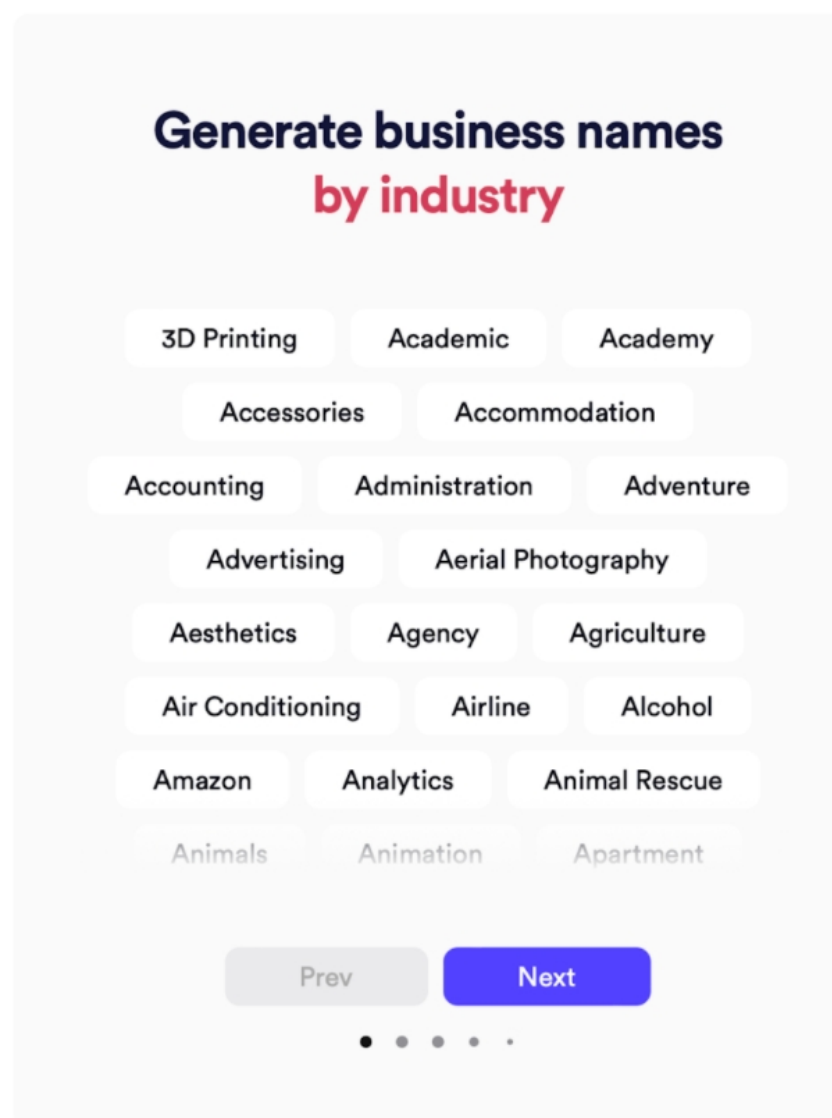
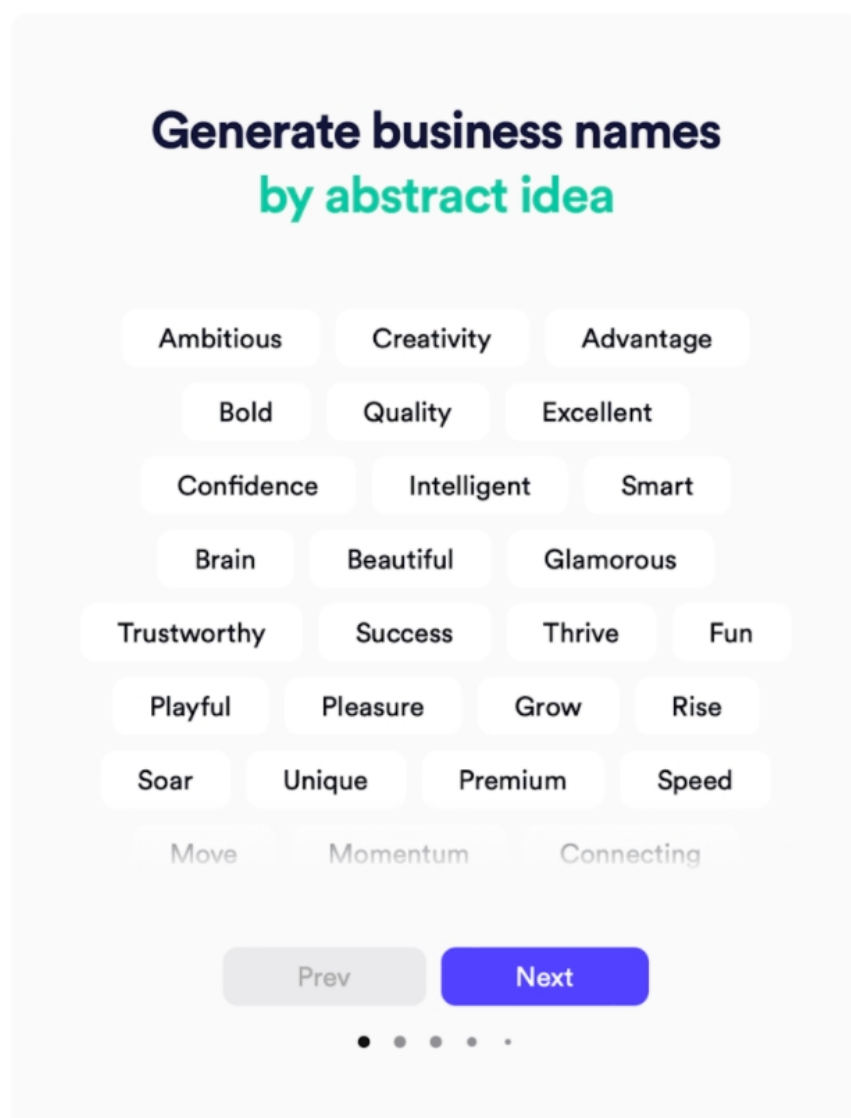
With apps and social media, brevity is key. Encourage people to write it in full by sticking to two or three syllables. Also test how it will appear on app stores and different screens.

Keep good company.

Think about where people will see your name. If part of your strategy is brand partnerships, consider how the name works alongside other brands.

TRY

[Looka's name generator](#) for getting the creative juices flowing if you feel stuck.



Positioning

Building a startup is an incredible journey to be on, and whether you've realised it yet or not, competition is an inevitable part of that journey. However much you might think yours is, no business idea is unique, and other creative founders will have the same idea as you. The key to standing out amongst your competitors is how you position your brand.

Start with your why

Your purpose is your driving force, so lead with it when positioning your brand. If your competitor is leading with a feature, benefit or product, consider how your purpose will play against that.

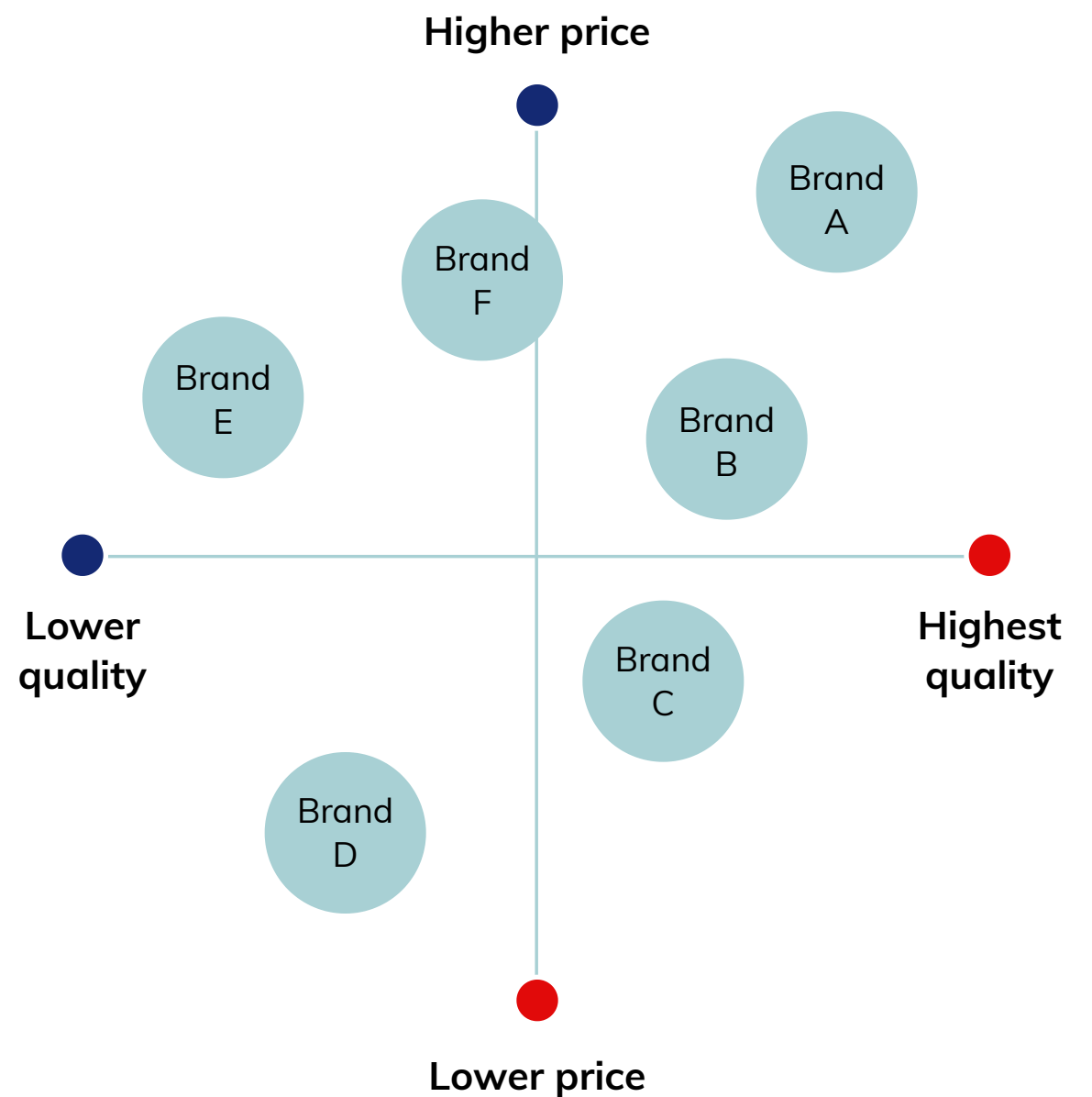
How do you fit into peoples' lives?

Your brand is a proposition of something to people, a promise of an improvement or outcome, a way of solving a problem. How do you fit into your customer's lives? Are you a product on a shelf in a supermarket, something which they keep in their pockets and use every day, or a premium piece of kit that they'll replace once in 10 years? By working out where you fit in, you can discover who else is trying to fill that space too.

Competitive mapping

This is a neat way of visualising how your brand stacks up against its competitors in the market. It helps you work out where you're playing - are you competing on price? Convenience? Quality? Taste?

Here's an example of a simple diagram on how different brands are positioned in the market:



03. HOW TO BUILD A KNOCKOUT BRAND

To make this relevant to your brand, change the axis to make them applicable to your industry. Here're some examples you could use:

Hairdresser

Price (low to high)
Range of services (general to specialised)

Non-alcoholic fizzy drink brand

Taste (bitter to sweet)
Nutritional value (low to high)

Here's an example from an old pitch deck for the design tool Canva. But mapping out other solutions in the marketplace, they were able to easily show where they fit in.



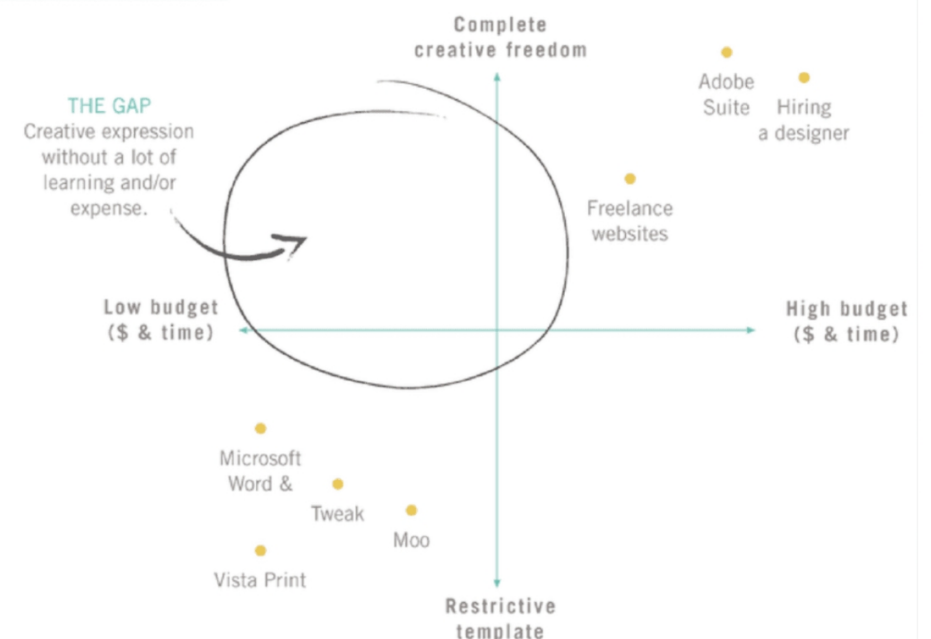
Online B2B product

Automation (low automation to high automation)
Traffic share (low traffic share to high traffic share)

Sport trainer brand

Fashionable (low to high)
Price / Comfort (low to high)

GAP IN THE MARKET



10x better

If you're going up against direct competition, you need to be clearly different. A good way of thinking about this is, is if you're going to be, for example, faster, then to make people go with you over a competitor, you should be 10 times faster. If you're going to be premium, the customer needs to perceive your brand as much more premium. The same goes for price. If you're going to be cheaper, you need to ensure that you're noticeably cheaper.

Design

You know what defines your brand, and where it sits in the market. How does your brand look and feel? This is design. Designing the elements of your brand can start with a logo, but include things like experience design and tone of voice. Take care to ensure each of your brand touchpoints are designed in a way that lives up to what you want your brand to be.

USE

[Canva](#) is a great design tool which anyone can use, and comes with templates and tutorials to help you along the way.



Joel Spolsky | Founder of [Trello](#)

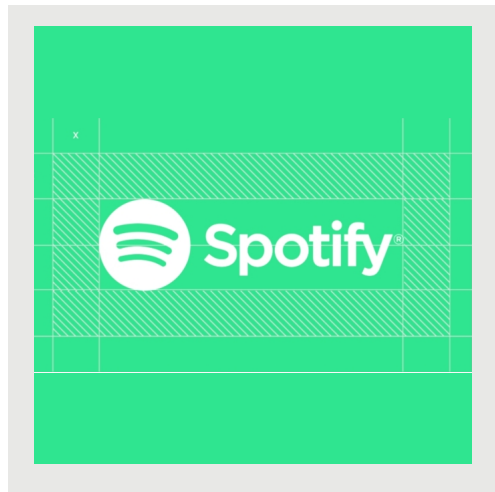
Brand guidelines

Brand guidelines are the toolkit for your brand. From colours to fonts, different layouts, physical and digital applications, brand guidelines help people who are using the brand bring it to life. This could be partners, designers, your co-founder or someone in your team.

Good guidelines ensure consistency whenever and wherever your brand is used. Here're some elements which you should include in your guidelines:

- **Purpose:** Lead with your purpose, as this informs all areas of your business including design
- **Colour palette:** A group of colours which are used when designing anything for your brand. Try this free, quick [colour palette generator](#)
- **Typography:** The fonts and styles which your brand uses will be specific to you, and will include combinations of different fonts, sizes, colours and weights. Try [Google Fonts](#) free online browser to test different combinations
- **Photo guidelines:** What type of photography should be used in your brand, how it should be used, good examples. Try [Unsplash](#) for sourcing great, royalty-free photos

See some great examples of guidelines to get started here:



Spotify



Medium



Netflix



Logo design

Your logo. It's your mark, your business signature, the thing that people will see more than anything else. Sometimes founders will design a logo before doing anything else. Whilst this will work for a few of you, most of the time it's better to use the work from earlier in the guide when you're developing your framework, to inform your logo.

While a logo may seem quite simple to create, designing a great one isn't always easy. It involves a deep understanding of your customers and their needs. Often, designers find themselves creating many iterations of a single logo before getting it just right.

"I strive for two things in design: simplicity and clarity. Great design is born of those two things."

Lindo Leader | Graphic designer

See some great examples of guidelines to get started here:

Start with the why.

If it sounds like we're repeating ourselves...that's because we are. Designing a logo for your startup needs to embody what you stand for, and what your purpose is. Start with your purpose, and see what inspiration you get from it. Note it all down for later.

Context is key.

When designing a logo, it's important to understand where it will be used most. If your primary product is an app, for example, how does the logo play as an icon on a smartphone? If you're producing branded clothes, how does it work on the garment or label?

Check out the competition.

Your logo will often be seen side-by-side with competition, maybe on a smartphone homescreen, supermarket shelf or high st. Make sure you're making your mark, quite literally, against these logos.

Create a Pinterest board.

Start browsing your favourite websites and instagram accounts for inspiration, and save them to a Pinterest board. You don't need to think too much about what you're capturing, but consider why something appeals to you in the context of your brand, and take time to curate your Pinterest board so it ends up a helpful collection of images, videos, colours, illustrations, other logos and anything else which gets your creative mind in gear.

Sketch out ideas.

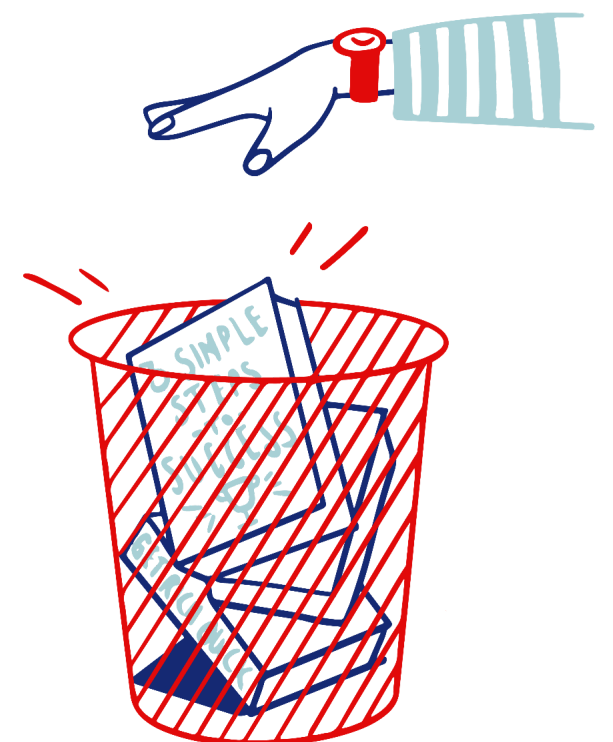
Try and take it back to basics with a pen and paper, and sketch out ideas based on your name, purpose and elements. Limit yourself to 10-12 seconds for each sketch, and do this for 20 minutes. See what happens, you might be surprised.

Take your sketch to a designer.

If you're using a designer, you'll want to give them your guidelines and sketches as part of the brief. Even if you're using a site like 99 Designs, whoever is creating your logo will need this input from you to get started.

Try before you buy.

Armed with some options, put your new logo designs in front of your target audience, and see how they respond to each. Try and get them to explain what they like, and what turns them off.



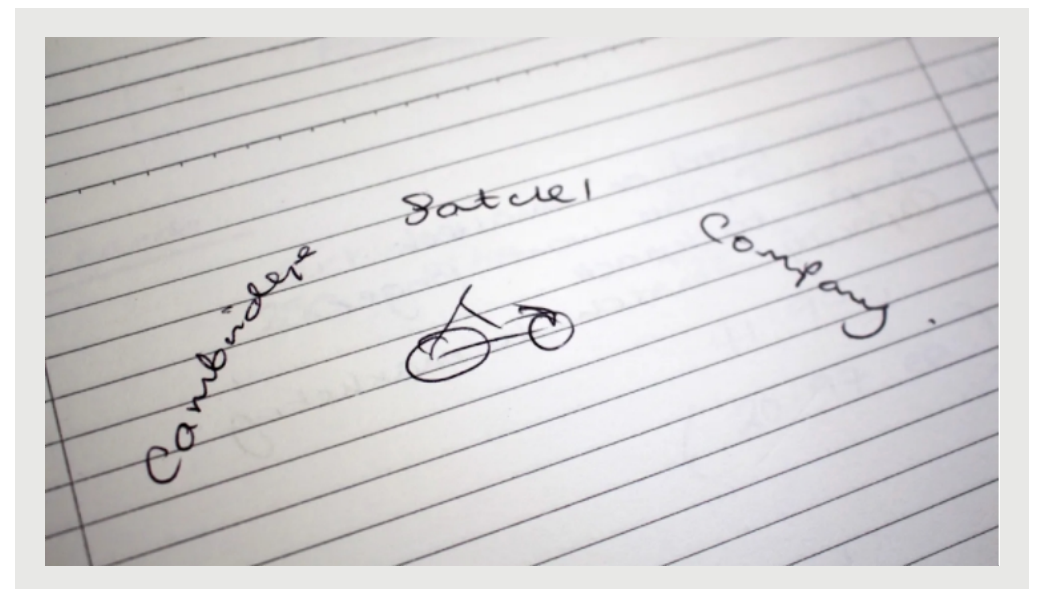


Listen to Julie's story on Sophie Ellis-Bexter's Spinning Plates podcast

BUT.... At Virgin StartUp, we like to cut through the BS. It's important to say that not all logos are created equally, and that spending time and money on something doesn't mean it will deliver what you need.

Julie Deane started the Cambridge Satchel Company to pay her kids' school fees - and the bags took off. She needed a logo - and fast - and not being a designer herself, and with no money to hire one, she turned to Microsoft Word, and clicked on Word Art. She spent a few minutes, found an image of a bike, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Whilst the company has since rebranded, this logo took Julie from 0 to a multi-million pound business. In this case, Julie's products spoke for themselves, and the quality and colour options were what propelled the company to success.



Tone of Voice

Your tone of voice is how your brand is heard, and the way you approach communicating with the world. Your tone of voice affects all your brand touchpoints, including social media, videos, customer service messages, in-store signage, websites and more. Let's find out how to find and define your brand tone of voice.

Start with your why

Yep, we're here again. Your purpose will drive your brand voice. If your purpose is to empower, for example, how does that manifest in a tone of voice?

Go back to your target audience

When designing your tone of voice, you need to keep your audience in mind. If your target customers are in their early 20s, then what type of language resonates with them? What should you avoid?

Here's two examples from [Data Axle's](#) white paper on generational differences:

Millennials

value both email and Social Media, particularly networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They tend to be brand-loyal, driven by personalised, cross-channel brand experiences, brand philosophy, and loyalty rewards.

Gen Z

crave authentic, personalised brand experiences and quality products and services, and tend to value mobile apps over email and social media. While they prefer in-store experiences, it's also important to reach them on their preferred social media channels: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and increasingly TikTok (according to Forbes). You can also check the social profiles of your real customers and find out what resources and brands they follow.

What medium are you using?

Your tone of voice will change depending on the context. If you're responding to a customer complaint, you'll want to approach this differently from posting a social media update on Twitter. Make sure you have all your touchpoints mapped out when thinking about tone of voice.

TRY

To help you get started on tone of voice, use this template to try and mark where your brand would sit on this chart. You'll soon find the difference between fun and serious is actually significant once you consider it.

Brand Personality Spectrum

What is the personality of your brand?

Personable and friendly	Corporate, professional
Spontaneous, high energy	Careful thinking, planning
Modern or high tech	Classic and traditional
Cutting edge	Established
Fun	Serious
Accessible to all	Exclusive



04.

When and how to rebrand

Knowing when the right to rebrand is can be difficult.

If you've spent months or years growing a community around a brand, only to then start afresh, how do you do it without alienating them? Let's look at an example from the Virgin StartUp community.

The founders of drinks brand, **Berczy**, took the bold move to rebrand and rename their startup. We find out why, and how they went about it.

It's time for your startup brand to be all about: you. As we discovered at our MeetUp last year, having a strong narrative at the heart of your brand can help set you apart from faceless corporates. As founders, we often find our own stories entwined with our startups' missions, and if we make our startup brands personal, they're often stronger for it.

For **Nick Graham**, founder of alcoholic sparkling drinks brand, Berczy, his story began with one fateful trip to Toronto, Canada.



“About two years ago, I went on a trip to Toronto with friends to see my twin brother, who had recently emigrated there. Whilst we were over there, we went into a store to pick up some drinks for the evening, and were introduced to the concept of a ‘hard seltzer’.

Spirits mixed with sparkling water and a fruity flavouring, this concept is popular in Canada - and it was certainly popular with us that night. So, we wanted to bring a taste of that back to the UK market.

“With Berczy, we vow to recreate for our customers that buzz we felt while sitting with a couple of drinks in the famous Berczy Park that night: the calming sound of the famous fountain, the backdrop of a slowing city, and the buzz of a summer’s evening.”



Back in the UK, Nick and his co-founders set about building the direct-to-consumer proposition, of what was then initially called NATRL, for customers to have a taste of their Berczy summer's night.

Nick and his team focused on getting the drinks sold through different routes to market, such as garden centres, farm shops and delis, and they learnt a lot about how to secure necessary funding, the road to raising and building a customer base. But then, in what might often be deemed a risky business move once your product has already launched, the team decided it was time for a rebrand.

How was Nick confident that rebranding was the right decision and not one that might break - rather than make - the business?

Trusting the data



“When we thought back to our learnings over the first six months of business, and we digested the data sets from a 2,500 person sampling survey we carried out, we realised rebranding was the right choice to help us on a few fronts. It helped us bring our founding story of that night in Berczy Park to life; the strong brand story would help us stand out in a rapidly-moving market; we were sure it would lend the brand to a more global audience in the future.”

04. WHEN AND HOW TO REBRAND

Rebranding carries a risk of alienating customers who have already formed a connection with your brand. There are countless cautionary tales from corporate rebrand history, from Tropicana and Pepsi, through to Gap and Netflix, which all involved screeching u-turns after investing heavily in new logos or marks.

How did this nimble startup mitigate the risks and ensure they kept their customers on side? Berczy took customers with them on the rebrand journey.



“We kept them in the loop by sending emails and asking for feedback along each step of the rebrand process. We ensured that existing customers went on the journey with us, so when we finally re-branded, the vast majority of our customers supported us.”

The process of actually rolling out a rebrand is a complex and meticulous challenge when you map out all of the ways your brand is brought to life - on and offline. Nick and the Berczy team took a methodical approach, and it paid off:

“The rebranding process actually took about 6 months to complete. We started by analysing the current market and understanding other companies’ visual identities to isolate our position.

“We then worked with an agency to build our brand vision, mission and values around our unique selling points. After that, we worked painstakingly to overhaul every single visual concept, such as social media, ads, packaging and so forth, until the Berczy brand was complete.”

So for founders considering a rebrand, what can we learn from Nick and Berczy?



Before the rebrand process:

What work do you need to put in beforehand?

Engage in a conversation with customers

“These are the people who will make your startup a success, so their views must encompass what your brand represents. Word of mouth is also the cheapest form of marketing, so if they love the brand, what’s to stop their friends and family from also loving it?”



Understand the landscape of your competition

“Have a clear understanding of who you are competing with, and what your brand needs to do to stand out. Even if your product tastes better, or functions more efficiently, consumers will frequently buy with their eyes - so, visually, your product must beat the competition.”

Have a solid understanding of your brand aspirations

“Where do you want your brand to be seen and sold? If you have a solid understanding of the place you want to get your startup to, you can ensure that your brand is optimised in a way that engages with consumers in that arena. If you are selling directly to customers, as opposed to businesses, the way your brand talks, looks and feels will be entirely different.”

During the rebrand process:

What makes a standout brand?

Be clear on what your proposition is

“Who are your customers? Who are your competitors? For what occasions will your product be used? What does ‘good’ look like in your industry?”

Involve the best people

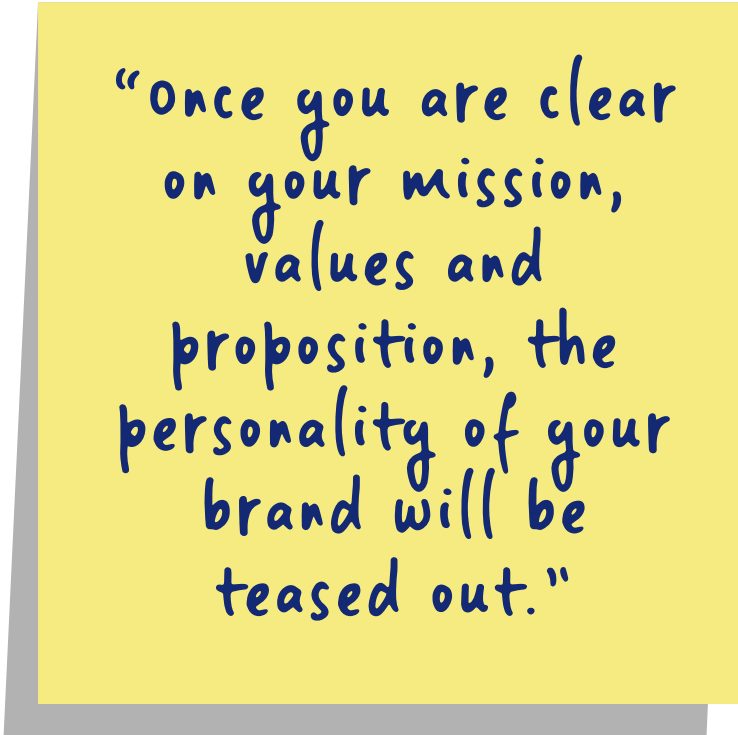
“Not everyone is a marketer, an accountant, a lawyer and a supply chain professional - we all have limitations. So, if branding isn’t your strong point, bring someone on the journey with you who does have that experience and passion.

“Whether that be an agency, freelancer, or employee is almost irrelevant, but to find the ‘perfect’ brand for you, having those around you with the requisite experience and tenacity in getting it right for the business is imperative. It’ll pay for itself in the end!”

Work from the customer, backwards

“This is a cliché that couldn’t be more true. What are the most important things for the customer when they consider buying your product? Is it the price, look and feel, or is it perhaps the founding story? If you can understand how your customer would interact with your product, the branding process becomes so much easier to test, iterate and move forwards.”

So, now you know how to analyse whether your startup needs a rebrand - and you know exactly how to go about it. Does Nick have any last words on how to ensure your brand embodies the sparkle of an inspiring founding story?



“Once you are clear on your mission, values and proposition, the personality of your brand will be teased out.”



“At the end of the day, your brand personality is something that your customers will relate to. So how will they relate? Is it a message of hope? Maybe just a bit of fun? Exactly what do you want them to feel?”



About this Guide

This Guide was produced for Virgin StartUp by [Goldfish](#), with contributions from:
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