

BRAND GUIDE E-BOOK

# Branding 101: A Beginner's Guide for Entrepreneurs

A step by step guide to create  
your brand identity

by Denisse Diaz



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## Introduction

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Branding is more than a pretty logo or a trendy colour palette. It's about clarity, direction, and consistency.

This guide will help you lay the foundation of your brand by defining your mission, vision, values, personality, tone of voice and then move into the essentials of visual identity.

Grab a notebook and pen. By the end, you'll have answers to the most important questions every entrepreneur needs before building their brand.

👉 **Quick note about me:** I've spent 15+ years in marketing and branding, helping global companies and entrepreneurs find their voice. This guide distils what actually works, so you can skip the confusion and build a brand that stands out.

## 1. Your Brand Foundation: Mission, Vision, Values, Brand Personality and Tone of Voice

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### Why Start Here?

When you're starting a small business or building a personal brand, it's tempting to skip straight to the fun stuff: logos, fonts, colours.

But here's the truth: none of that matters if you don't know who you are or where you're going.

There's a saying in Spanish:

"El que no sabe para dónde va, cualquier bus le sirve."

(It means: Those who don't know where they're going, any bus will do.)

Don't just jump on any bus. Get clear on your destination first.

Your mission, vision, values, brand personality and tone of voice are your North Star. They are the guide you'll come back to when making decisions. Let's break them down.

## Mission: Your Brand's Purpose

Your mission answers the question: Why does your brand exist today?

### Ask yourself:

- What is my business here to do?
- Who do I serve and how do I help them right now?
- How do I want to be perceived by the public today?

### Top Tips:

👉 A mission almost always starts with a **verb**.

Why:

- A mission is about **action**
- It describes what the brand actively does today
- Verbs create clarity and momentum

### A simple structure that actually works:

*To + action verb + who you serve + how you help*

### Examples:

- To help small businesses build clear, consistent brands.
- To support busy professionals in building confidence at work.
- To design tools that simplify everyday tasks.

👉 **Exercise:**

**Write your mission in one clear sentence.**

**Example: "To help small businesses build powerful brands that connect with people."**

## Vision: Your Future Roadmap

Your vision is your dream destination. It's about where you're heading, not what you're doing today.

Ask yourself:

- Where do I see my business in 5–10 years?
- What impact do I want to make in the long term?
- What would the world look like if my brand achieved its ultimate goal?

### Top Tips:

👉 A vision often starts with "**A world where...**" or "**A future where...**"

Why:

- A vision is about **impact**, not action
- It describes the **future state** your brand is working towards
- It sets long-term direction and aspiration

A vision should feel bigger than your business and slightly out of reach. It is not about what you do day to day, but about the change your brand exists to create.

### **A simple structure that actually works:**

A world where/A future where/In X years + the positive change your brand wants to see

### **Examples:**

- A world where small businesses feel confident and clear about their brand.
- A future where professionals show up at work without fear of being seen or heard.
- A world where technology removes friction from everyday life so people can focus on what truly matters.

### **Exercise:**

**Write a short paragraph describing your brand's future as if it already happened.**

**Example: "In five years, my brand will be the go-to resource for creative entrepreneurs, inspiring thousands to build businesses they love."**

## **Mission vs Vision: What's the Difference?**

It's easy to confuse them, so let's make it clear:

- Mission = Today: What you do now, every day.
- Vision = Tomorrow: Where you're heading in the future.

Think of it like this:

- Mission is the engine of the car, what keeps you moving.
- Vision is the destination on the map, where you want to arrive.

### **Examples**


Mission (Present):

- "To provide affordable, healthy meals for busy families."
- "To help women build confidence through public speaking."
- "To design technology that makes everyday life easier."

Vision (Future):

- "A future where families no longer have to choose between convenience and their health."
- "A world where women's voices are heard, valued, and influential in every room they enter."
- "A world where technology removes friction from daily life, allowing people to focus on what truly matters."

### **Common Mistakes to Avoid**

 **Calling your vision a mission:**

- "Our mission is to be the world leader in..." (That's actually a vision statement).

 **Making them too similar:**

- Mission: "To inspire people to be creative."
- Vision: "To inspire people to be more creative." (Redundant and confusing).

 **Quick test:**

- If it sounds like what you do today, it's your Mission.
- If it sounds like a dream for the future, it's your Vision.

### Values: What You Stand For

Your values are the non-negotiables, the principles that shape how you show up and do business. They act like your **internal compass**, guiding every decision you make.

They do not change based on mood, platform, or trends. If a partnership, campaign, or client conflicts with your values, the answer should be: *we're not working together*. Values guide **behaviour and decisions**, especially behind the scenes.

They answer:

- What do I refuse to compromise on?
- What would I walk away from money for?
- What would still matter if nobody saw it?

Values are about judgment and decisions, not personality. You should feel slightly uncomfortable violating a value.

### How to Find Your Values

**A value passes this test:**

"I will still protect this when it costs me time, money, comfort, or approval."

If it does not pass that test, it is probably a personality trait.

**Values discovery prompts:**

- I would never work with someone who...
- I lose respect for brands that...
- I admire people or companies that consistently...
- I would walk away from a client if they crossed this line...

Then turn those answers into **nouns**.

### Examples of Values

- "I would never work with someone who lies" → **Integrity**
- "I lose respect for brands that exploit people" → **Ethics / Fairness**
- "I admire companies that include diverse voices" → **Inclusion**
- "I walk away from chaos and shortcuts" → **Excellence**

### Brand Personality

This is **how your brand behaves socially**.

It answers:

- If my brand were a person, what would they be like?
- How do people experience us emotionally?

- What vibe do we give off?

Personality is about **expression**, not principles.

**You can use these discovery prompts:**

- People often describe me/my company as...
- When I/my company speaks, people feel...
- My/My company's natural communication style is...
- The energy I/my company brings to work is...

Then, turn each statement into an **adjective**.

**Examples of Brand Personality Traits:**

- Warm
- Bold
- Playful
- Calm
- Direct
- Sophisticated
- Energetic

Think of personality as your brand's **human traits**. It shapes how your values show up in the world.

**IMPORTANT: Two brands can share the same values but feel completely different because their personalities differ.**

**Tone of Voice**

This is how your brand **speaks**.

It answers:

- How do we sound when we write or speak?
- How do we explain things to our audience?
- How do we show confidence, warmth, or authority in words?

Tone of voice is the **verbal expression** of your brand personality.

**Examples of Tone of Voice:**

- Friendly but professional
- Confident but approachable
- Direct but respectful
- Conversational but informed
- Warm but not overly casual

- Clear and concise

Think of tone of voice as your brand's **spoken language**.

It ensures your brand sounds consistent across captions, emails, websites, presentations, and conversations.

## Summary

**This flow mirrors reality:**

- Values inform personality
- Personality informs tone of voice
- Tone of voice shows up everywhere

**A simple way to remember it**

- Values = what you refuse to compromise on
- Personality = how you behave
- Tone of voice = how you speak

## 2. Bringing It to Life: Your Visual Identity

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Once your mission, vision, and values are clear, it's time to bring them to life visually. This is how your brand becomes recognisable and memorable. Think of your visual identity as the outfit your brand wears every day.

### Logo

Your logo is often the first impression people will have of your brand, so it needs to be both memorable and meaningful.

- Keep it simple and aligned to your brand ethos.
- If you are your brand, your logo could even be your name or signature (for example, mine).

💡 A logo doesn't have to be abstract; it can come from something you love or something that represents your business. For example:

- If you're a tree cutter, your logo could be based on a tree.
- Each feature, the roots, branches, or leaves, could symbolise different elements of your brand (growth, stability, connection, sustainability).
- This makes the logo more than just a pretty picture; it becomes a storytelling tool that ties back to your mission, vision, and values.

👉 **Exercise: Sketch a few logo ideas inspired by:**

- 1. Your own name or signature.**
- 2. A symbol connected to your industry.**
- 3. An element that represents your values, for example: a circle for unity, a flame for passion, a wave for flow.**

## Colour Palette

Colours communicate emotions before a single word is read. They set the tone for your brand.

- Choose 3–5 colours maximum to stay consistent.
- Think about colour psychology:
  - Blue: trust, calm, professionalism.
  - Red: passion, boldness, urgency.
  - Yellow: optimism, creativity, joy.
  - Green: growth, balance, sustainability.

👉 Example: I chose orange 🍊 because it represents warmth, optimism, and motivation, perfectly aligned with my brand personality.

👉 **Exercise:**

**Pick one “core” brand colour that reflects your values, and then build 2–3 complementary colours around it for accents and variety.**

## Don't Forget Accessibility

It's not just about how colours look; it's also about how they can be read. Not everyone experiences colour the same way, so your palette needs to work for people with visual impairments or colour blindness.

- Avoid very light text on a light background, or dark text on a dark background.
- Use high contrast where possible, for example: dark blue text on a pale yellow background.
- Test your colour combinations before locking them in.

👉 **Exercise:**

**Once you've chosen your brand colours, run them through one of these tools to make sure your designs are legible and accessible.**

💡 Resources to check your colours:

- Contrast Checker by WebAIM: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- Accessible Colour Generator: <https://learnui.design/tools/accessible-color-generator.html>
- Colors Contrast Checker: <https://colors.co/contrast-checker>

## Typography

Fonts are like accents; they influence how your words “sound” to the reader.

- Choose at least 3 fonts:
  1. A heading font (bold, distinctive).
  2. A body text font (easy to read).
  3. An accent font (optional, can be a cursive or playful style for personality).

👉 Tip: Don't go font crazy. Consistency is key. A messy mix of fonts feels unprofessional.

👉 **Exercise:**

**Write your brand name in three different font combinations and ask yourself: Which one feels most like “me” (or my business)?**

👉 **Top tip:** Play with different font styles in Canva to see which combination works best for you.

## Photography Style

Images speak faster than words. Your photography style should reflect your brand’s personality and industry.

- Build a mood board on Pinterest or Canva with images that reflect your brand values and aesthetic.
- Decide on the style: bright and clean, moody and dramatic, natural and candid.
- Make sure your imagery feels consistent across platforms.

👉 **Example:** A wellness brand might choose airy, light-filled photography with lots of natural textures. A tech start-up might prefer sleek, futuristic visuals.

👉 **Exercise:**

**Collect 10 images that you’d love to see associated with your brand. Lay them out and ask: What do these have in common? That’s your style direction.**

## Summary

Your visual identity is not just decoration, it’s communication. Every colour, font, and image should reinforce your brand’s mission, vision, and values.

## 3. Action Steps Checklist

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Here’s a quick recap to put everything into practice:

- ✅ Define your mission in one clear sentence.
- ✅ Write your vision as if it is already real.
- ✅ Select 3–5 core values that guide how you make decisions.
- ✅ Choose 3–5 brand personality traits that describe how your brand shows up.
- ✅ Define 3–5 tone of voice principles that shape how your brand sounds.
- ✅ Choose your logo, colours, fonts, and photography style.
- ✅ Build a mood board to capture your visual inspiration.

By doing this, you’ve created the foundation of your brand, one that people will trust, recognise, and remember.

## About Me

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Hi, I'm Denisse Diaz, a marketing director with 15+ years of experience helping brands grow, stand out, and stay memorable.

I've worked with global education companies, built corporate brands from scratch, and mentored entrepreneurs who are just starting out.

I don't just talk branding, I live it. From choosing my own brand colours (yes, that orange 🍊) to building a personal brand online, I've tested what works and what doesn't.

This guide is here to save you the headaches I've seen so many small businesses go through. My mission is simple: make branding less overwhelming and a lot more fun.

💡 And if after reading this you still feel a bit stuck or unsure, that's normal, branding can feel like a big puzzle at first. The good news? You don't have to figure it out alone. I offer 1:1 consultations where I can help you with your brand positioning and build a brand that actually works for you.

👉 Let's connect:

- Instagram: @thedenissediaz
- LinkedIn: [Denisse Diaz](#)
- Book a 1:1 session [here](#)

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