

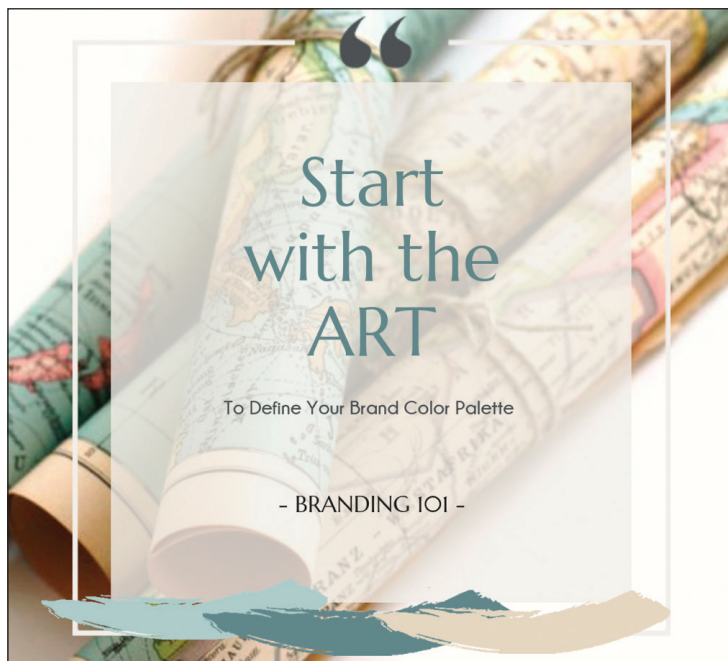
# Framework to Branding 101

*Add long-term value to your business with a strategic brand identity.*

For creative entrepreneurs in the art and design industry, mastering your marketing in today's digital age is a hot topic. Many independent businesses may need a re-branding initiative to refresh or evolve their marketing efforts. I've seen creatives and Fortune 500 companies build significant momentum with branding. I've also worked these same initiatives from my own corporate and entrepreneurial experience.

In today's digital path to purchase for customers, their first impression of a business is often online or in social media. We live in a highly visual and design-centric age; customers, especially millennials, appreciate style and gravitate to brands that are current, by design. It's important to brand your business in order to stand out in the competitive, crowded marketplace and position yourself for success with consumers. Let's face it: people are much more attracted to a cohesive, professional brand that looks established, authentic, and above all, stylish.

Branding and corporate identity unify every element of your marketing, from social media to web to in-store merchandising; and when done well, it is the most valuable equity imaginable for retailers. Branding can literally reestablish a legacy business or legit-



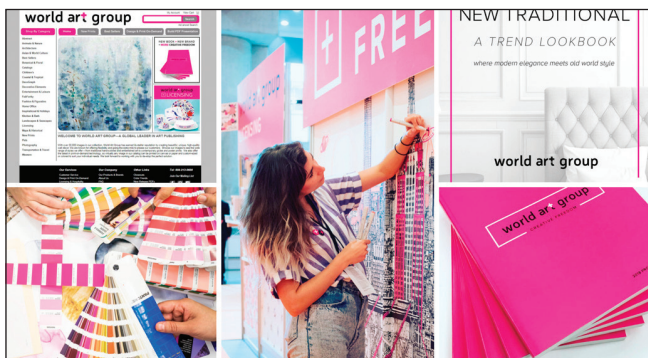
imize a brand-new business, making it seem more established and at the top of its game. Understanding the importance of using your retail brand to tell your story in a highly visual manner is critical for success in the business of design.

Branding touchpoints, or the places in which potential customers experience your brand, span both the physical and digital realms. Physical touchpoints include your storefront and interior, retail merchandising, display signage, and printed marketing materials. Digital touchpoints include your website, social media platforms, digital advertising, blogs, articles, newsletters, presentations, and all online digital marketing materials. Consistency in branding is key and more commonly the benchmark for consumers in deciding

*Use the same design principles used in custom framing to identify a unique brand color palette for your business.*



**Ginger Hartford** is a career veteran of the art and design industries formerly with Larson-Juhl. Ginger is recognized as a highly accomplished business development and marketing strategist and leader in the business of design. She has collaborated with Fortune 500 leadership teams to envision, build, and deliver high-impact customer experiences. Her extensive experience includes global business development, product design, integrated marketing, and branding with leading national retailers, international online art marketplaces, the designer community, and major brands across home furnishings, art and framing, and photography. Ginger is the founder of EurDesign Studio.



World Art Group's rebrand included adopting a signature color, magenta, which is integrated throughout all customer touchpoints.

where to do business.

We'll start Branding 101 by solidifying an action plan. I'll highlight branding best practices and walk you through a design process to help identify your business goals, personality, and style. Brand exploration will identify steps to building an inspiration board with a color palette to best represent your overall brand aesthetic by style. Use this primer to jumpstart your brand-building with ease.

## Vision and Value

Developing a strategic framework for your branding initiative engages vision, value, voice, and views. Clarify your purpose and vision: why you do what you do, what you do so well, and how you do it like no other. Authenticity matters, so determine what values are meaningful to you—and to your customer demographic, for that matter. Your core values will underlie all future activities. From there, establish a tagline. Short yet powerful, taglines tap into the essence of your brand and are best leveraged to be memorable to customers.

It is critical to clarify and define your point of view across this framework, as the results will inform unique brand guidelines for your business. This is the strategic reference point to build out your company style guide, which includes a brand color palette, a logo, design elements, and a font suite.

These brand elements can be effectively utilized in every single marketing touchpoint, incorporated across your logo, business cards, website, marketing materials, packaging, and even in-store merchandising efforts. Successful brands understand that a unified, omni-channel approach in branding offers a consistent and professionally elevated customer experience at every interaction, whether online, mobile, or in-store. Ready to stand out?

## Find Your Voice

Craftsmanship also includes communication. Be inten-

tional in your manner by considering what you say, how you say it, and how you convey feelings. Consider your persona and personality; does it resonate with your ideal demographic?

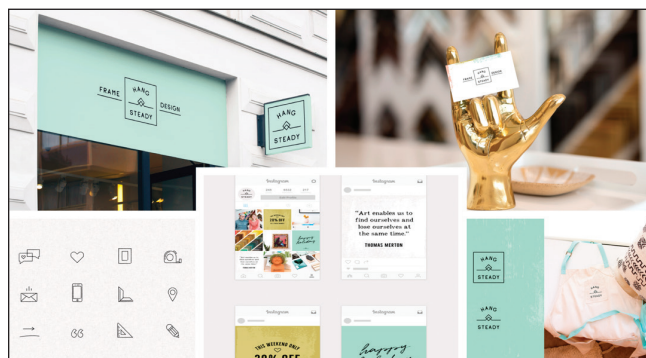
Tone can also make a big difference in words, phrases, and style of your communications. In fact, many social media influencers build huge followings with quotes or words to engage, motivate, and inspire customers while building trust in their brand. Are you casual, funny, personal, or imaginative? You be you, as they say. Just adhere to a brand style guide to optimize all communications and imagery used in your marketing efforts.

## Point of View

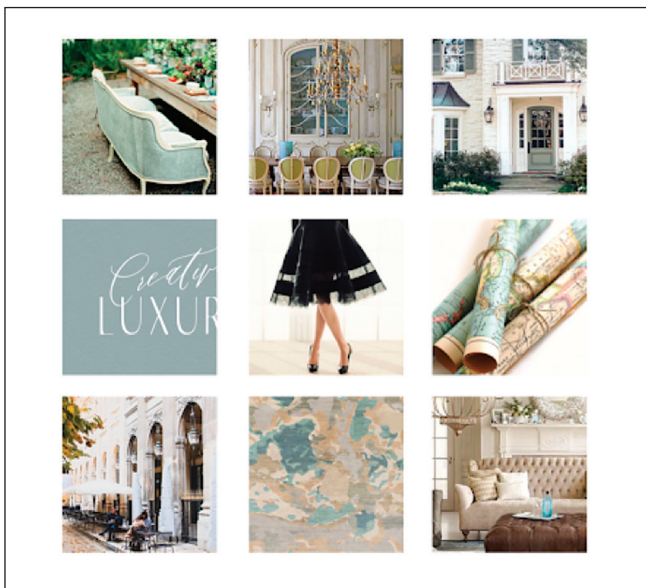
Curating images into a mood board helps define a color palette as the foundation to your branding efforts. Like a framer's skill in pulling colors from the art to design with matboards in custom framing, simply use the same design guidelines to identify a unique brand color palette for your unique business.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Select visual imagery that symbolizes your brand identity. Consider imagery that tells a story at a glance yet also has the look and feel to compliment your business model and demographic. Luxury brands highlight sophisticated imagery to appeal to a certain demographic, while an urban lifestyle brand might incorporate more artisanal imagery that appeals to a more creative-minded demographic.

"Hue" knew? You can start with the art to build your brand. Your signature color palette will infuse everything about your brand identity, from the logo to typography, patterns, and style guide. A style guide specifies the guidelines for an overall aesthetic in the look and feel of your brand. Your brand identity will channel across all marketing collateral your customers engage with.



Los Angeles-based framing boutique Hang Steady employed a marketing agency to help conceptualize its brand's look and feel.



*Having a gallery of images saved to a Pinterest board will help you hone in on your style and identity as a brand.*

## Brand Inspiration

It is essential—even inspiring—to curate and save imagery to a Pinterest board for your creative review. Gather images that represent your brand, services, voice, and style. Curate imagery that is symbolic of your personality, style, and identity as it relates to your business vision and voice. In the above photo, I've curated imagery that represents my passions for design, art, and travel, all about the home in my distinct style.

Once you have a gallery of images, the branding starts to emerge. Select up to nine favored images in similar color or tone to create a mood board (sometimes referred to as an inspiration board). It's also helpful to include graphic design and attractive fonts that appeal to you, as these will go on to help in font selection. From this mood board, I was able to extract a core color palette of six complimentary colors for the EurDesign Studio style guide. I also found this exercise helpful in establishing a tagline for the business: "Artful Living, by Design."

## Focal Fonts

The typefaces you select and the effect they create will frame your brand communications visually. Look for three core fonts to be interchangeable by size and brand colors in your marketing efforts. Contrasting typography styles is a popular approach. Modern typefaces with strong structure and geometric form contrast well with elegant or classic styles. Each font typeface available in bold or italic options offer plenty of flexibility within consistency. Consider your style; whether modern, classic, or traditional, you can find a font suite with which to design your marketing mate-

rials. Avoid common design mistakes such as using too many fonts, colors, or elements.

Canva for Work, a marketing design toolkit I highly recommend, has created 20 unique font combinations to help give you a little inspiration when getting started on creating your own brand. They can be found at [www.canva.com/learn/canva-for-work-brand-fonts](http://www.canva.com/learn/canva-for-work-brand-fonts).

## Graphic Elements

Graphic elements offer a distinctive touch in designing your marketing materials. Art direction can come from your unique selling proposition or what differentiates your business in the marketplace. Design elements that are fresh and modern tend to appeal to younger consumers, while classic elements can help create a luxury mindset.

EurDesign Studio, for example, is inspired by my experience working around the world of art and design and my penchant for traveling in Europe. I'm also mindful in working with clients to personalize their experience directly as "Eur" design, not my design. Therefore, my design elements include artful paint swatches and European vintage maps in each of my brand colors. These design elements are utilized across marketing materials, social media, and website design to unify my branding. From there, the graphic design for content development possibilities are endless!

## Excellence by Example

In 2018, World Art Group launched a world-class rebranding initiative. Their signature color, magenta, symbolized more than just a color; customers felt it getting "Haute Pink" by design! World Art Group's new branding speaks to creative freedom, design, innovation, and customization. The rebranding absolutely energized the brand within global design and art communities among a plethora of art publishers. Their signature brand elements—in color, typeface, and artistry—are integrated throughout every customer touchpoint for a cohesive experience.

Lonnie Lemco, executive vice president sales of marketing, says; "At World Art Group, we felt it was time to re-evaluate our brand personality and define our experiential difference. We wanted to understand our top emotional and rational attributes in order to identify clear breaks in vision, goals, and culture. The process was extraordinary, and it helped us create our visual strategy for the brand and brand identity. It also helped us to create our tagline: Creative Freedom, which serves as our mantra for how we





The warm and modern aesthetic Hang Steady's brand conveys was designed to appeal to the business's demographic.

engage with our employees, customers, and vendors."

Custom picture framing boutique Hang Steady in Los Angeles, CA also proved the effectiveness of the branding model by engaging a likeminded branding agency in the early stages of business development. Their fresh, modern approach to design was cultivated across their visual identity to center on the warm and modern culture they're cultivating with their clientele. Personalized service with a passion and a brand personality meant to be approachable, handcrafted, modern, and warm attracts newcomers to the world of custom framing. Owners Andria and Andrew Eden needed help with everything from a company name and logo to visual identifiers, web de-

velopment, brand photography, and designing countless custom touchpoints. Working with a professional, creative, and style-conscious partner resource enabled the couple to create a total brand package and extensive content portfolio for Hang Steady that is exceptional by today's standard, in any industry.

Strategic use of their branding color palette, typography, and styled icons attract local community members as they position their brand in social media marketing as an influencer and design authority. Branding design elements can be used to create an unlimited amount of content to then feature across all social media platforms. The result? This new business looks established, stylishly attractive to new clientele, and in command of their brand voice and personality.

Any art and framing business, designer, or creative entrepreneur can benefit from branding, whether it is for an established business or a brand new one. Our industry is constantly evolving with design in digital going mainstream, and expectations for businesses are high. Create a big brand for your small business by tapping into creative resources to help elevate your professional brand identity and add long-term value to your unique business. **PfM**

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