



PART 1: A DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO STARTUP BRANDING

Tips for a Strong Foundation

Start with a Competitive Analysis

If you haven't already, make sure to do a competitive analysis to benchmark your business against all the other businesses in your industry. **This should be a living document, because when you grow, so will your competitors.** You need something at a glance that can help you track where you stand relative to them.

If you think you can't be bothered to work on this type of analysis, remember that your competitors have already done so. Spend time on this document — you will need it time and again for many marketing decisions.

By tracking your competitors slogans and/or key messages, you can get a sense of how and where to position your company. It could be as simple as, "We're the leader in customer service."

Craft 3-4 Value Propositions

Based on your competitive analysis, you should be able to define at least 3 core value props for your business. These are the key things that **ensure you are highly differentiated from your competitors.** These value props should be shared with your business at large, as well as with appropriate vendors. Companies will hire numerous consultants and spend 6+ months on refining their value props. It's not something to take lightly.

Don't Skip the User Personas

Who you sell to is just as important as *what* you sell. Both of these need to be guiding principles for your brand.

A large part of defining your user personas is **specifying the demographics or market share** that you're going after. Any creative, branding or agency team will ask you about your users. If they don't, be wary of hiring them.

Many companies generate their value props and user personas after doing a competitive analysis to ensure they're targeting the underserved gaps in the market. All 3 of these things are important.

Document for Ease of Sharing

Whether on an Excel file or Google doc, make sure that you create easy-to-update documentation as your business grows. Pick a user-friendly format for easily sharing with future vendors and business partners.

A lot of companies swear by creative briefs or lean canvases. Whatever you put together, **make sure it's easy to quickly understand across a variety of teams.** Avoid complicated or internal-only jargon. Your goal is to ramp your company up quickly, so the faster you can share this knowledge, the better.

