

Personal Branding: How To Design Your Personal Brand Image In 10 Steps [Cheat Sheet]

Without knowing it, every day you are cultivating your own brand.

The cold, hard, definition of a brand is the perceptions, ideas, concepts, and visuals that distinguish one product from others in the same market. So, when you think about it, the way you speak, work, communicate and write, it all adds up to create a personality that distinguishes you from others, thus establishing your own personal brand.

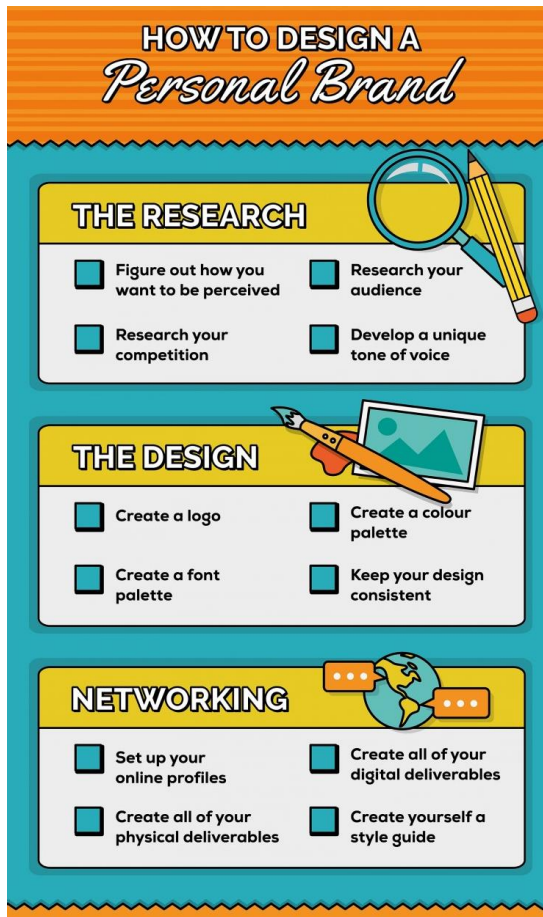
When it comes to business though, we tend to establish our brands a little more consciously and deliberately. This is where design comes in.

You have the power to design how you and your professional brand is seen by the world.

You can use colour, type, written tone, and so many more visual and written elements as building blocks that can add up to form a complete brand that reflects you.

So, whether you're a designer, an illustrator, a small business owner, or anything in between, branding yourself is a fantastic way to signal to future clients and employers "Hey! This is who I am".

To bookmark after you've finished reading, here's a quick checklist to base your personal branding on. Now, let's discuss 10 simple steps you can take to build your very own personal brand image right now.



01. Figure Out How You Want to Be Perceived

Figuring out who you are as a brand might seem like a big ask, but to clarify: I'm not asking you to figure out your brand's sole purpose in life, just how you'd like to be perceived by others.

Think of it similarly to how you adjust your personality and clothes to suit different situations. Sometimes you want to appear casual and relaxed, so you speak with slang, dress simply, etc. Other times, you want to be seen as more professional and sophisticated, so you'll speak a little more elegantly, and dress in something sleek and formal. It's all about a collection of adjustments, both visual, written and verbal, that add up to make a distinct perception.

Let's look at two self branding examples that capture these two 'personality' types and embody them through some beautiful personal brandings.

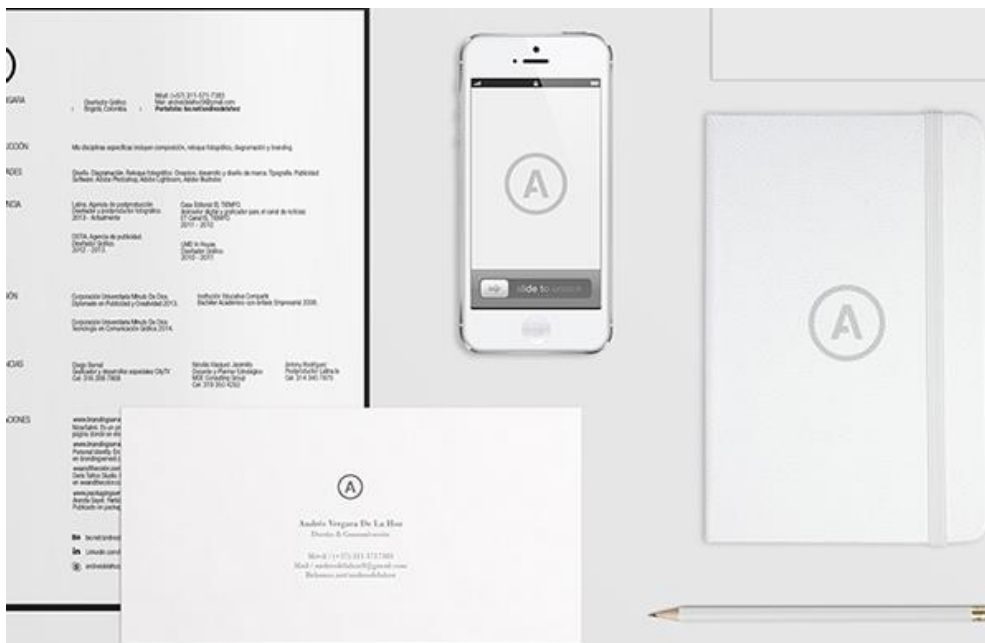
First, the more relaxed and casual brand. Designer Martina Meregalli has created a brand identity for herself that combines handwritten type with stylish

watercolour elements. Her logo and deliverables are organic, handcrafted and personalised.

Personal Branding by Martina Meregalli

This design helps to create an easygoing, casual, and a little playful tone and outward perception of Martina as a designer. It plays up on her strengths, shows she has something unique to offer (a blend of traditional and digital mediums), and constructs a recognisable style for her.

An example of a more sophisticated and sleek design is this one by designer Andres Vergara Delahoz.



Personal Identity by Andres Vergara Delahoz

As you can see, this is quite a polar opposite to Martina Meregalli's design. Instead of organic textures, a vibrant signature colour and handcrafted type, this design relies on all things minimal and monochrome.

Using only black, white, and a few shades of grey, a super simple and sharp brand mark, and lots of white space, this design is the definition of 'sleek'. What kind of designer would you assume Andres is from this personal brand image? Probably quite business-like and professional, a designer perfect for any sophisticated, minimal and stylish projects you have going on.

See how important a physical design is when it comes to altering and shaping others' perception of you as a designer? So, figure out some key words you'd like to be described as, and try to capture these in your design.

Some questions to ask yourself in order to determine what your outward visual tone should be are:

- What is the main thing I am offering to consumers?
- What is something unique I have to offer that others don't?
- What are my strengths?
- Do I have a distinct style?

02. Know Your Audience and Competition

Just like you would when starting up any business or tackling any design, arguably the most important thing to figure out and keep in account is who your audience is. Oftentimes, your audience is your boss, they determine if your business is a success or a total flop.

So, whilst following the beat of your own drum is important and a great technique for bringing something new to the table, do keep in mind your audience when designing.

Construct a profile of your typical audience member – who are they, what do they like and dislike, what other brands do they associate with, etc. If it helps you, put a face to them, give them a name, just round out your target audience as much as possible.

While you're building this profile, look at your competitors too. What brands in your market does your profiled consumer commonly associate with? If you're a designer, find other designers with a similar style/strengths and see what they are doing to attract clients. If you're designing for your organic cafe brand, look at popular organic cafe brands, see what similarities they all have, and what differences. Are there any gaps in the market that you could fill?

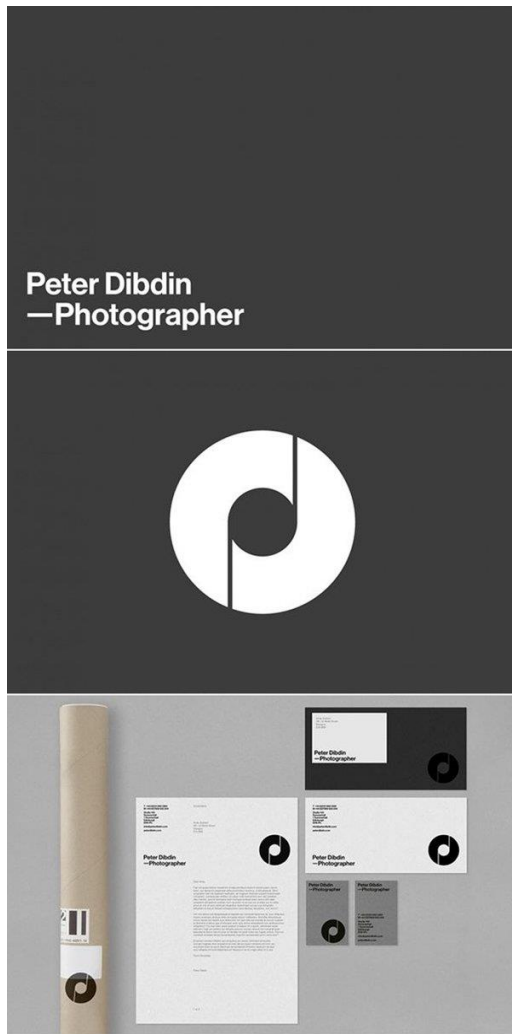
Lets look at some examples of brands that take common elements from the market, but give them their own twist in order to appeal to two different kinds of consumers.

This first example is by Hoodzpah Design for photographic agency 'Oh, Honestly'. This design uses lively illustrations, glamorous gold foiling, and a clean, elegant design to cater to future brides and grooms as a wedding photographer.



“Oh, Honestly” Logo Design And Identity System by Hoodzpah Designs

This next example by O Street for photographer Peter Dibden uses sharp, clean graphics, minimal colours and plenty of white space to create a sharp, and sophisticated design.



Peter Dibdin Photography by O Street

These two designs, while totally different, have similar technical elements. They share a clean, linear design, and yet cater to two completely different consumers. Hoodzpah's first design evokes glamour and happiness, perfect for wedding photography clients, while O Street's second design uses sharp, sleek elements to cater to more professional, artistic clients.

It's all about knowing where you want your brand to go, who you exactly want to attract, and creating a design to make just that happen.

03. Establish a unique tone of voice

Branding goes so much deeper than the outward appearance, in fact, it goes right down to the way you use words. Think of it like when you meet someone for the first time, you get to know much more about them by the way they speak.

So, for any copy that you use, whether it be a status update, Tweet, copy on your website, or conversations with clients, try to maintain a specific tone. You don't want a professional and sophistication brand sending out emails that greet customers with "Hey, what's up?", and likewise, you can't establish a fun, casual, friendly tone if you use a tone that is overly formal.

You can establish a tone through your designs as well. Check out this branding by Andreas M Hansen that uses a little humour with phrases like "master of karate and friendship" and some hand type to give off a more colloquial vibe to his brand.



Personal Identity by Andreas M Hansen

If you're not sure about what tone suits your brand, then write some sample tweets, emails or messages. Adjust them until you get a tone that feels right and achievable on a daily basis. Give yourself some scenarios, for example:

Would it better suit your brand to say "We apologise for the inconvenience" or "Sorry about the mix-up, we're on the case"?

Have a look at brands you admire and are competing against, check out their syntax and tone and swap and change elements until you get a tone that is just right for your brand, and that (more importantly) you know you'll be able to maintain in your day-to-day.

04. Create a Logo

I know, this point sounds like a whole other ballgame, a hefty task. But, it really doesn't have to be.

The beauty of logos is they can be as simple or as complicated as you want them to be. You can go for a detailed, planned out, strategically designed logo, or you can go for a simple logotype.

Logotypes are just what they sound like – a logo that just consists of the brand name written out in a certain typeface. Sometimes the typeface is adjusted in some way, sometimes not. It sounds simple and boring, but logotypes can be highly effective, and are a definite time saver if you're not looking to spend a lot of time coming up with an illustrative logo.

Basically, the key is to just consistently present your brand name in one visual way. Logos will also help you brand your content quickly, lets look at a few examples that use logos effectively.

First, we have a logotype. This design by Chen Zhi Liang goes super simple by just using a clean, bold serif typeface as his logo. When paired with a warm gold-toned signature colour and sharp blacks and whites though, Chen is able to create a distinct, flexible and simple design that works perfectly for his brand. And the best bit? You could easily whip up a logotype à la Chen Zhi Liang in no time at all.



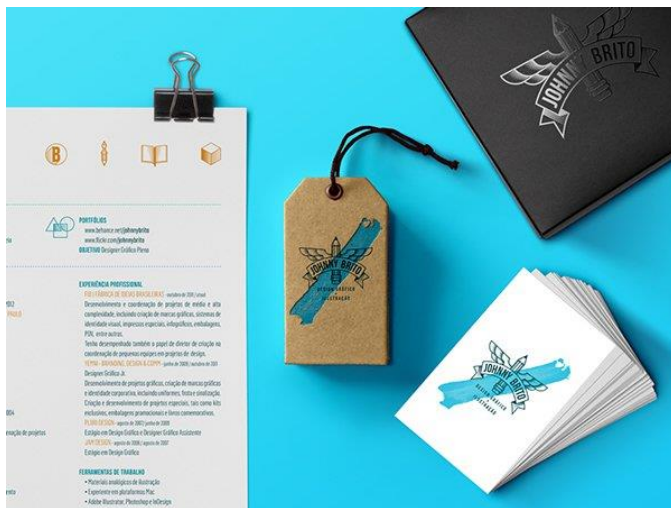
Self Identity by Chen Zhi Liang

Next, we have a logo that has no type at all. This design by Amrit Pal Singh uses geometric shapes, vibrant colours and an 'A' shape to create a sleek design. He offsets the graphic logo with a simple, geometric, serif typeface that puts a name to his logo and brand.



Personal Identity Project by Amrit Pal Singh

And finally, we have a logo that blends the two ideas – illustrative/graphical elements and type. This logo by Johnny Brito uses a logotype that is bound within a sharply illustrated graphic. The beauty of a graphic that combines type and illustrations is that you can communicate to your consumer in some way what it is you do – i.e. this example uses a pencil motif, suggesting something creative.



Johnny Brito Personal Branding by Johnny Brito

Even beyond the idea of a physically designed logo, consider the way that you want your brand to be written out in body copy. Do you want it stylised in some way? For example, the company Foursquare specifies that it is to be consistently written as 'Foursquare', not FourSquare, fourSquare, Four Square or any other variation.

Remember that the goal in constructing a logo, whatever type you go for, is to create one visual representation of your brand. When I say 'Coca-Cola' you picture the red cursive logo, right? While that's a pretty big example to emulate, try to generate a logo that is recognisable and suits your brand.

05. Develop a Tailored Font and Colour Palette

Colour is a powerful tool, so it's important that you not treat it lightly. Colour can change perceptions about your brand, generate certain emotions and feelings, and essentially, it can make or break your design. So, take your time when devising a palette to suit your brand, and give yourself time to get it just right.

The general rule of thumb when it comes to developing a colour palette is to stick to three colours or less in order to keep your design clean and not too overwhelming. For a cluster of more handy tips for picking out colours, be sure to check out these 10 colour secrets designers swear by for some inspiration.

Don't be afraid to throw in some textures and patternings too. These can go a long way in your branding, and can set you apart from the competition. Check out this personal branding by Leta Sobierajski that uses a super simple design that is brought to life through a strongly contrasting palette of white, black and yellow, and a sharp twotone pattern.



Identity by Leta Sobierajski

Just like with colours, you should also create a font palette. We know that too many colours can be overwhelming, but a common mistake is people not considering that the same rule applies to fonts.

Again, like colours, try to limit your choice of fonts to as few as you can, try to hit that sweet spot of about 2 or 3. Take your time to choose out your fonts as well, pairing two typefaces can be tricky at the best of times, so pick two that either complement each other nicely or contrast each other sharply.

Check out this example by Zofia Szostkiewicz that uses an elegant script typeface and a simple serif one to create an elegant and classy effect. Try to do as Zofia has done and pair a display typeface (like the script one) with a simpler type face (the serif), to keep things just as legible as they are beautiful.

Madame M
HAND MADE



Logo



Color palette



Madame M by Zofia Szostkiewicz

For a thorough rundown on pairing fonts like a pro, check out these super useful guides, both part one, and part two.

06. Keep It Consistent

This is perhaps what I would deem the biggest rule for branding – consistency. A brand is built on consistency, on a familiar design, tone and foundation, and likewise, a brand can be torn down by just a few instances of inconsistency.

Now, don't mistake consistency for 'the same old thing every day'.

Consistent brands don't have to be dull, boring, or predictable.

Take a leaf from Marina Zertuche's book and mix it up a little. See in the below example how she has sometimes used black on gold, and other times gold on white, or gold on black. Keep your colour scheme and type consistent, but combine them to let every piece speak for itself.



Enigma Personal Identity by Marina Zertuche

07. Set Up Your Online Platforms

As I'm sure you're aware, starting up any brand now means that you have to be accessible online. Generally, this means a website and a contact email, and nearly always, this means social media.

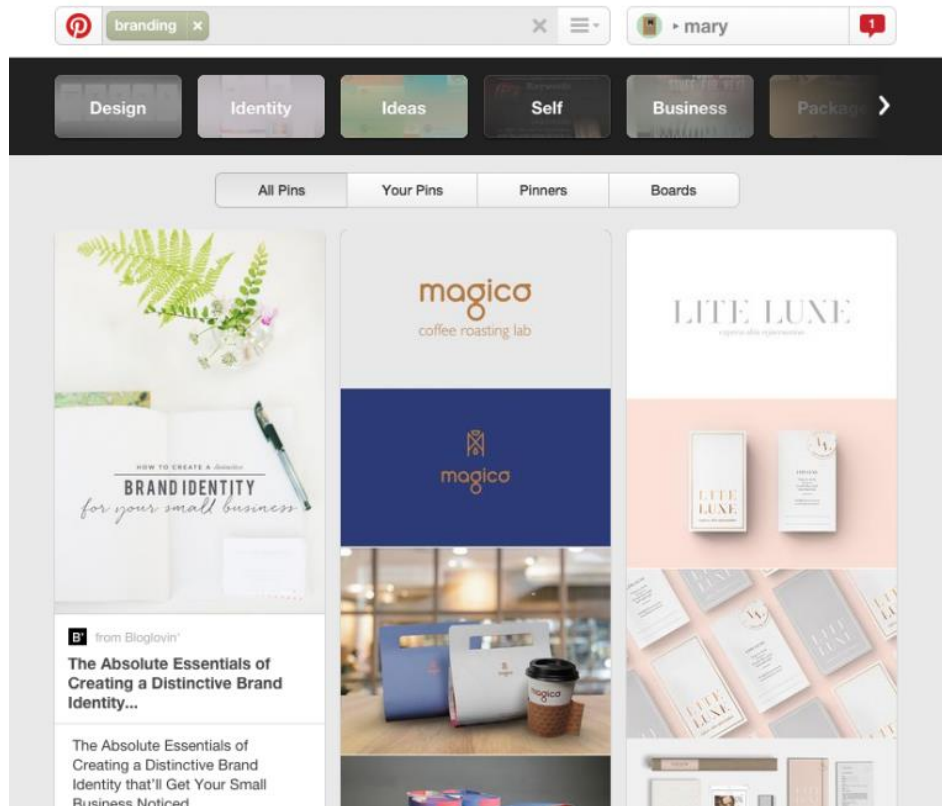
Social media isn't purely a recreational tool anymore, every day businesses are hopping aboard each platform and using it to network, advertise, show off their skills, and shape their brand.

So, one of the key steps to launching your personal brand may be getting aboard the social media train.

But, what social media sites should you hop on? Not all of the sites are the same, do the same things, or suit the same mediums. So, let's do a quick run through of where you should head.

A Facebook page is probably the most ubiquitous platform, most brands from designers to law firms seem to have a Facebook page. Since Facebook is the second most frequented site in the world (just coming in behind Google), statistically, you have pretty good odds of connecting with people through Facebook.

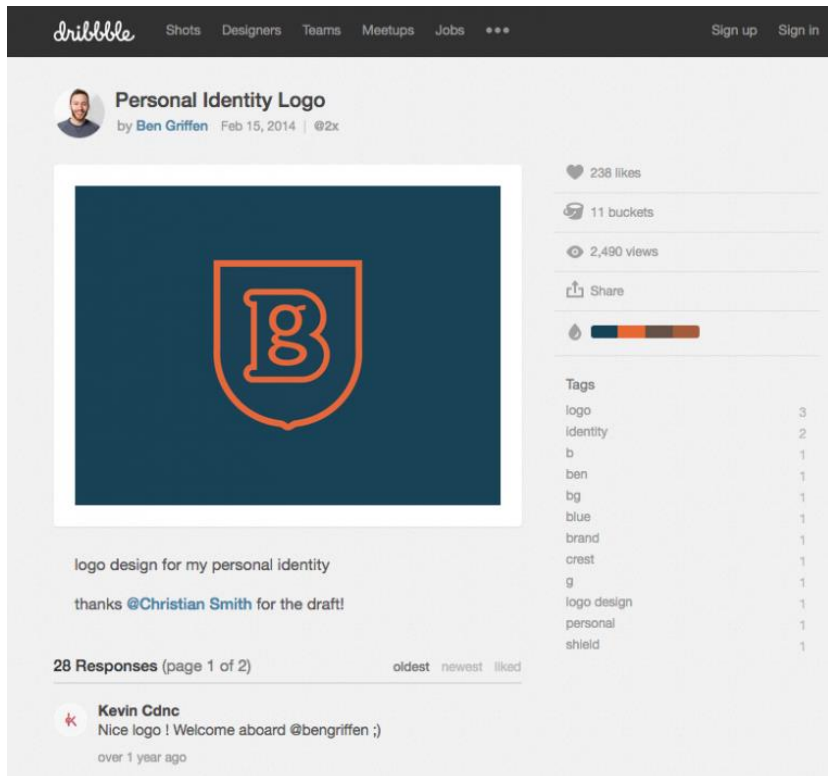
Pinterest is great for any brand that has visual content to share – blogs, designers, artists, any company that generates infographics etc. Pinterest is now the second largest driver of internet traffic in the world (once again, just clocking in behind Google), so, by putting your visual content up on Pinterest, you increase your chances of it being shared and your site being visited. Win/win!



Pinterest

Twitter is a great tool for any business looking to post regular updates – perfect for anyone who posts regular content, like articles or updates. Twitter is also great for networking with consumers and peers, with the easy and quick socialisation tools. Since Twitter lets you post in short, sharp bursts, it's a great tool for establishing a written tone.

For creative types – artists, designers, developers – sites like Dribbble and Behance are fantastic for connecting with and giving/receiving feedback from others in your field. Both these sites also have a jobs board feature for employers, so posting your work up there could get you some work, which is always a plus!



[Enigma Personal Identity by Marina Zertuche](#)

Instagram is another tool that just keeps gaining more traction and becoming more powerful for brands. Instagram is useful for many brands, but especially those with a strong visual element. So, if you take a lot of photos, have some snapshots of your work to share, or are keen to take the time to generate unique content to post to your account, then give Instagram a go! For inspiration on what visual content you can create, head on over to this article, for 10 different types.

Once you've found which sites you and your brand belong to, be sure to check out these 10 hacks to increasing your social media traffic to make the most of your social media network.

Even beyond social media, consider if you will need a website or a customised email address. At the end of the day, just ask yourself – how will people find me and how will people contact me? If you have an instantly clear, concise and logical answer to those questions, then good job, you did it!

08. Create All Your Digital Deliverables

Creating a brand doesn't mean you can just create a logo and colour palette and be done. In reality, there are so many other extra elements (deliverables) that you

need to design. Think about Facebook alone. First, you have a profile picture, then you have a cover photo, then you have your image posts, your content design, app button images etc.

My advice to you would be this – do it all in one go. Make a checklist of every element you need to create for your social medias/digital mediums and create them together. This will keep your designs consistent, prevent any inconsistencies (e.g. if you used a slightly different colour), and make it way easier and quicker for you to launch.

Let's look at a real world example of these deliverables in action. Publisher Penguin Books has an iconic orange colour that is often offset by a light blush colour, and the iconic black, white and orange penguin logo. See how they've used these elements in their profile picture and their cover photo.



Penguin Books

Simple, telling of their brand, shows off their product and is subtly coloured in keeping with the Penguin Books palette.

Next, arguably the most important element, is your content. Figure out how you will consistently design your visual content to suit your brand. What style of photography will you use? Will you use any kind of filters? What kind of type will you use?

What Penguin Books have done is played up their vintage vibe and their use of simple compositions, signature colours and organic imagery/textures. Check it out.



Penguin Books

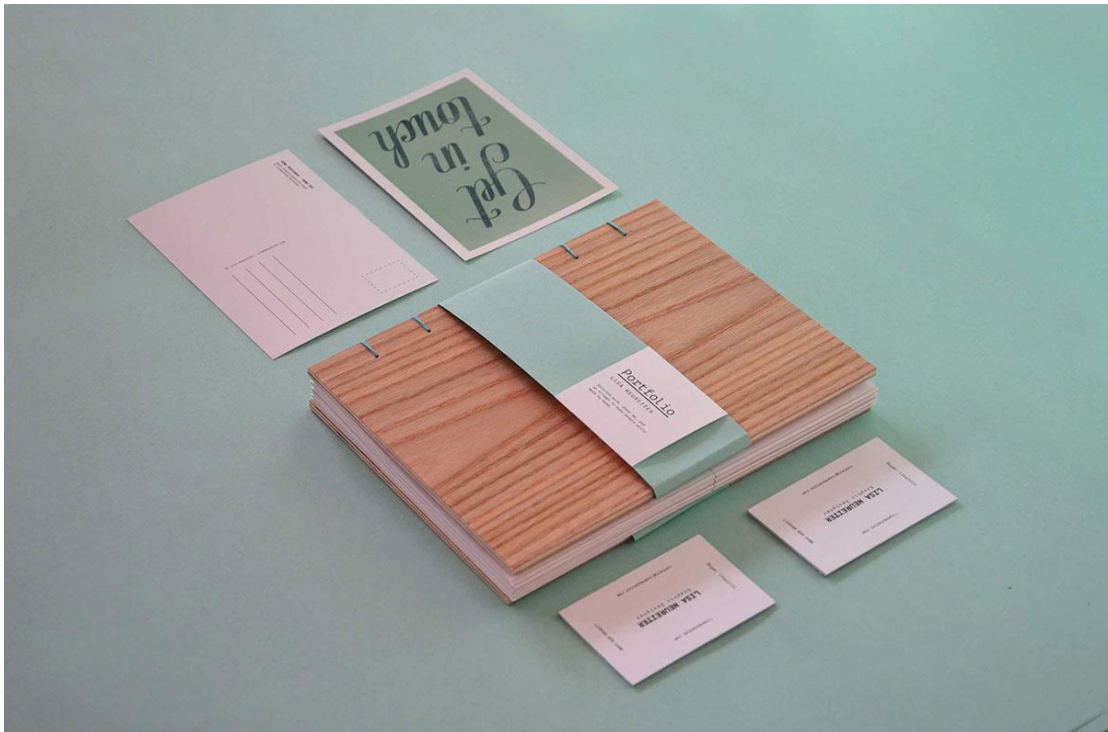
And all of these elements are just on Facebook alone. Beyond that, you have Twitter headers, Twitter image posts, Instagram posts, Google+ headers, Youtube Channel Art, and so much more, depending on what sites you choose to put your brand on.

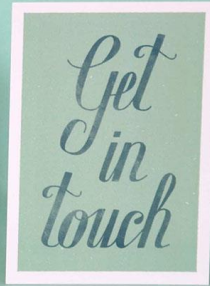
Oftentimes, the dimensions, sizing, cropping etc. of each digital deliverable is different, – i.e. Instagram-sized images will get cropped drastically when posted on Twitter. So, to make sure your designs are perfectly sized and optimised for each social media, check out Canva's ready-to-go templates.

Beyond social media, consider what other digital elements you might need. Do you need content for your website? Do you need a signature for your email? Try to think about every channel that you'll be professionally using, and pad it out with as many cohesive designs as you can.

09. Create All Your Physical Deliverables

While so many things are online these days, it's important to not forget the medium that started it all – print. You can network online all you like, but handing someone a real business card, or sending them a letter with a personalised letterhead, or letting them physically flip through a portfolio of your work can be refreshing and just as important as any digital connection.





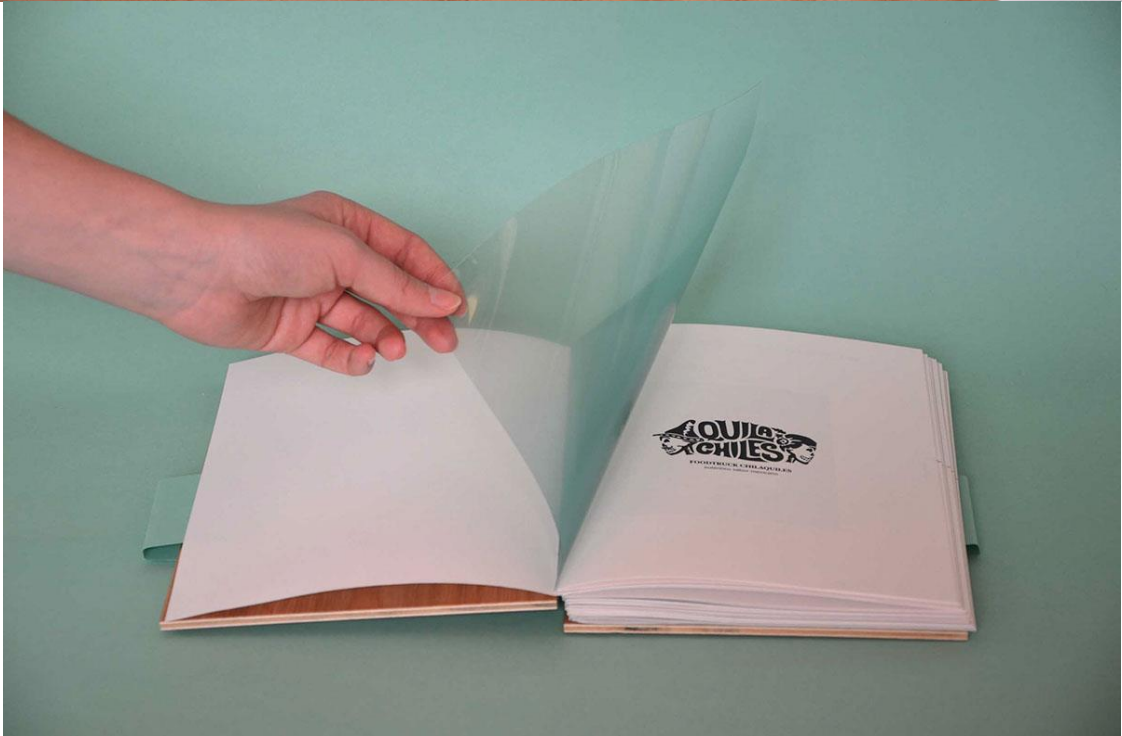




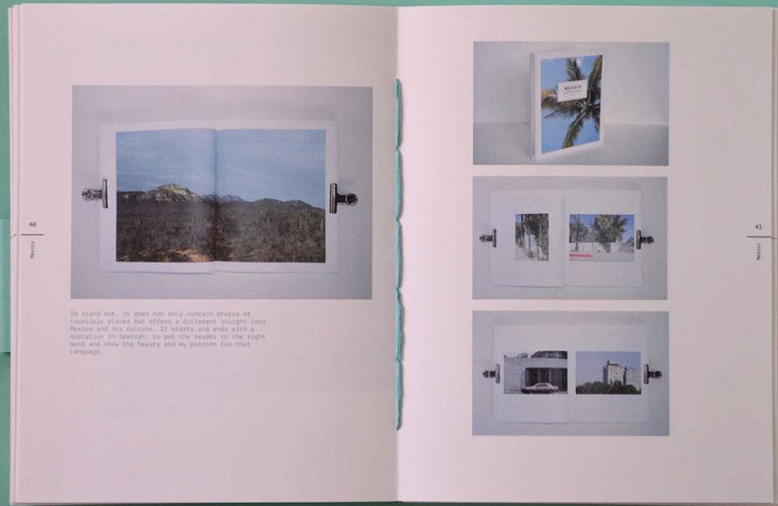
QUILACHILES

FoodTruck Disruption

This is not just a portfolio but also an attempt to encourage people to write more messages by hand. In a time dominated by digital technology, people often forget to do this. Therefore, after each section, you can find a postcard attached. Please feel free to write it and experience the joy you feel when writing a message by hand. I am quite sure it won't take long until you find a response card in your mailbox.







To stand out, it does not only contain photos of beautiful places but offers a different insight into Mexico and its culture. It starts and ends with a question on Twitter, to put the reader on the right mood and show the beauty and my passion for that language.



The slogan expresses the constant movement and the aspect of the connection is reinforced by the abstraction of the city map of Oaxa, which at the same time has the look of always pulsating veins. The typography and the box elements were inspired by ECG screens. This creative element was used in a playful way on the different applications. On the cups for example there you can find the slogan „Puls está girando“ which means pulse rotating. But beyond complex of posters, city lights, cups, invitations and a magazine.









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[Personal Branding Print Portfolio by Lisa Neureiter](#)

As Lisa herself notes, “...it was important for me to think about every tiny detail and tell more about myself as a person,” She says, “The wooden cover expresses my love for nature and the coptic binding represents passion for doing stuff manually.”

10. Create Yourself a Style Guide

Now, this final point is totally optional, but I’d highly recommend it. If you’re not familiar, a style guide is basically a set of rules about your brand’s construction – everything we’ve talked about here.

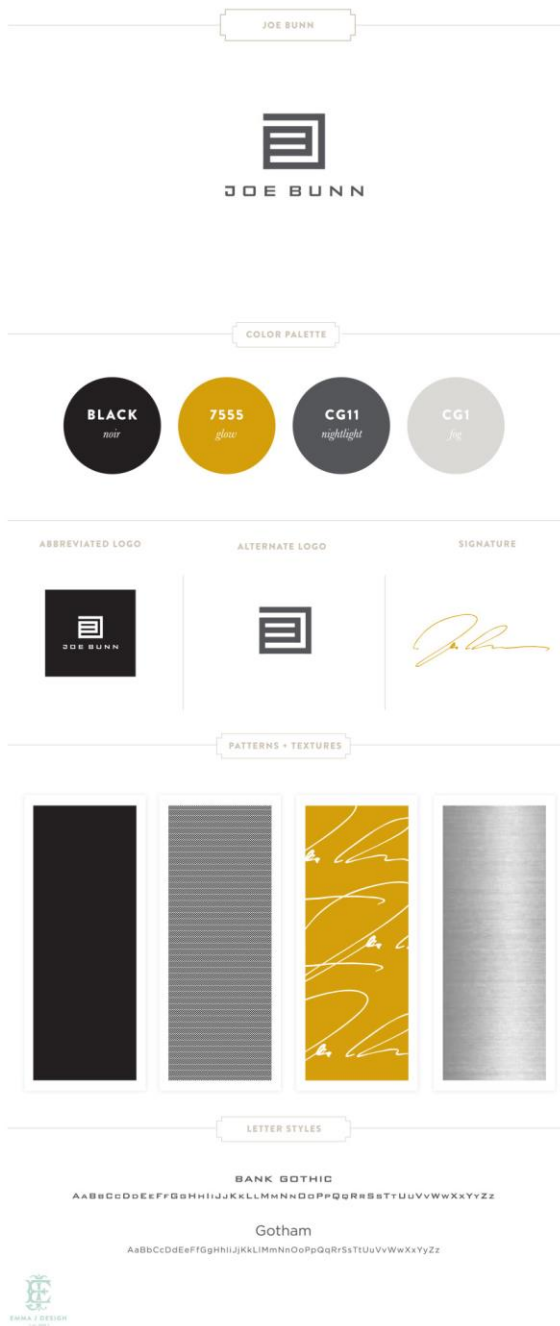
Use a style guide to note down each colour in your palette, the type you use, the different graphic elements to use, etc. So, if you ever get stuck and forget what exact shade you’re meant to use, just refer back to the style guide and you’ll be back on your way. Check out these tips to creating a style guide to make that whole process quicker and easier for you.

Have a look at this article for 50 pieces of inspiration for creating your own style guide. A notable example is this one below by Amanda Michiru for her own personal brand. Read it through in full and have a look at her approach to branding.



AMD Personal Brand by Amanda Michiru

Don't want to make an extravagant brand manual like that one? No problem. What a lot of people do these days with their self brandings is create a style guide sheet that has the basic fundamentals. Check out this one by Emily McCarthy.



Swatch out your colours, note down their exact shades, put in all your graphic elements, patterns, textures, and note down your typefaces used.

Over To You

Building a brand that perfectly captures you and your work is not always the easiest thing to do, it can take a lot of introspection, planning, and time. But, if done right, an effective personal brand can be the perfect complement to your skills and emerging professionalism.

Keep your branding consistent, keep it on message, and keep it authentic to who you are on a personal level and a professional one. Ask people to assess what they associate with your brand, get advice and get second, third, fourth, fifth opinions.

Have you built yourself a brand identity, or do you have plans to? What methods do you use to promote yourself to audiences? Leave your tips, tricks and advice down in the comments!