

BUILD-A-BRAND

BOOTCAMP



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Firm Name: _____

BRAND BRIEF

Date: _____

Introduction

This Brand Brief is designed to formalize and document your firm's brand, positioning and messages, with the goal of fostering a clear, compelling and consistent brand over time.

Your brand should be reflected in everything you do and in everything people experience when working with you. In addition to supporting marketing objectives, a brand is central to a firm's belief system and drives all aspects of business operations, internal and external.

This brief will define and document your brand and related brand elements, which together create your *brand architecture*.

Branding 101

Your brand represents all the information, experiences and expectations that collectively reflect your firm and/or services. Your brand is a qualitative commitment that is transformed into a quantitative offering. A brand reflects who you are, what you are about and what you can deliver. It also captures your *why*—the core value offerings and points of differentiation that set you apart from competitors. A brand is not a brochure, website or advertisement, though these physical manifestations do work to promote your brand in the marketplace.

In short, your brand is a symbolic association created in people's minds. *Your brand is what your firm is known for.* An effective brand will represent a singular theme that is clear, concise and compelling. Thus, your firm should consistently reflect—and strive to become known for—one compelling theme.

A brand is an identifiable entity or idea that makes specific promises of value. Your brand is a concept that stays in people's minds.

The auto industry provides a simple illustration of branding. Mercedes, for example, is synonymous with luxury, while BMW is revered for performance. Both are aluminum shells with four wheels, but they create different and distinct associations in your mind. Most important to branding, they have become known for these associations—they "own" them.

Your brand includes your brand promise, brand style, corporate identity (firm name, logo), slogans (value propositions) and design style (theme, colors, imagery) associated with your firm.

Your *brand platform* is the different elements of your brand working together harmoniously to form a singular, cohesive theme (e.g., "luxury" or "performance"). Creating a brand platform, then, requires you to define and formalize the elements of your brand, which can then be translated into various physical forms. The elements of a brand, as defined by Limitless, include the following:

- Brand promise
- Market position
- Brand style
- Target market
- Client motivators
- Value proposition
- Marketing messages
- Business name

Brand Promise

A **brand promise** is the promise your firm makes to the marketplace; it presents a singular, compelling theme that symbolizes what your firm offers (e.g., “luxury” or “performance”). Your brand promise serves as the cornerstone of your firm’s brand positioning.

Your brand will develop a reputation and build longevity depending on its ability to consistently align with your brand promise.

Whatever values a firm claims in its brand promise require diligence at every contact point with clients, prospects or spectators. Translating a qualitative brand promise into meaningful experiences requires all firm employees to fully understand and implement the brand across touch points with clients, prospects and centers of influence.

Describe your brand promise in a few short sentences to bring clarity to what you are delivering.

Brand promise:

What promise are you making to the marketplace?

Get clear on the outcome, experience or result you will deliver. Identify the functional and relational ways you deliver on that promise.

Market Position

As defined by Branding Strategy Insider, positioning is “the process by which marketers try to create an image or identity in the minds of their target market for their product, brand or organization.”

Simply put, market position is how your target audience views you in relation to your competitors. Good market position will accomplish two things: identify your firm as unique and represent a benefit valued by your target audience.

You are competing for mindshare among that audience. The human brain is designed to identify and retain information that is unique, whether good or bad. Given the volume of background noise our brains must filter, it is not hard to understand why effective positioning is important. Your firm needs to stand out among the crowd.

Your market position seeks to establish a position of dominance for your firm, one attractive to your target audience. For example, “We’re no. 1,” “the Uncola,” and “the happiest place on Earth” are all slogans that establish a market position while ensuring the competition cannot own this space.

Market position:

The _____ Firm
The WHAT Firm?

Brand Style

Your **brand style** is the design scheme that defines your brand and sets the tone for your brand aesthetic. The qualities and personality of your firm and brand are reflected in your brand style.

For example, if your brand is “luxury,” then all extensions of the brand should reflect luxury. By contrast, if your brand is “sophisticated success,” then brand style should reflect that.

All brand interactions and experiences with your firm should reflect your brand style, including these:

- Website
- Marketing materials
- Furniture and decor
- Amenities (e.g., reading materials in waiting room, refreshments)
- Meeting materials
- Performance reports
- Building, office space, meeting areas

Brand style:

What style do you want your brand to reflect?

Target Market

A **target market** is the particular group of people (the *market segment*) to whom your services are intended and marketed. Target markets are defined by demographics, often including financial criteria (i.e., assets), age, gender, profession, interests, psychographics or other qualities.

Your target market should consist of individuals who are most likely to receive value from—and therefore buy from—you.

Generally speaking, the more focused and specific your target market, the more pointed and effective your marketing efforts can be.

Target market:

*Make a comprehensive list of ideal client characteristics.
Then identify the 3–5 that reflect your ideal client “persona.”*

Client Motivators

Client motivators are the driving forces behind your target market—the reasons those individuals are motivated to engage with your services.

Motivators can be positive or negative. Positive motivators include hopes, goals and dreams. Negative motivators include needs, questions and concerns. Client motivators are rarely based on facts; they are emotional forces that compel individuals to seek out your services. An effective brand and brand architecture will speak directly to the client motivators of your target market, thus ensuring you attract those individuals' attention and resonate with them.

Your marketing messages should consistently reflect the needs, goals and motivators of your clients. They must recognize that you relate to and understand their situations, endowing them with confidence that your experience can meet their needs.

Client motivators:

Create a comprehensive list of the issues, needs, pain points and desired outcomes of your ideal client.

Value Proposition

A **value proposition** is a clear statement defining what your target market can expect from your services. Most companies have value propositions that focus on their unique qualities (i.e., firm-centric propositions), rather than their clients (i.e., client-centric propositions). Your target market is seeking to address their own motivators, so describing the qualities of your firm requires them to connect the dots between their needs and your services. By contrast, client-centric messaging directly addresses client motivators and thus clearly communicates why a client should choose your firm, with little or no interpretation required.

When firms leave interpretation up to the client, they lose control of the brand experience. Firms often stress qualities that they feel are important differentiators, such as being independent, objective or knowledgeable. These firm-centric differentiators fail to elicit strong emotional responses, so clients and prospects fail to become emotionally invested in a firm's brand message.

A stronger approach is to focus on the emotional benefit or value delivered to the client, and to capture and demonstrate that benefit. When potential clients are made aware of a benefit they're not currently receiving, their need for that benefit is awakened and a positive connection is made. Such messaging causes prospects to become emotionally invested in exploring a relationship with your firm, while also reinforcing your relationships with current clients.

As we considered the relationship between our brand promise ("confidence"), market position ("trusted experts") and client motivators (what drives their decisions), we decided to define our value proposition as the ability to help our clients better manage their financial lives. People often experience an overload of financial information, a myriad of confusing choices and great concern over managing their wealth. We wanted to proclaim that when daunting financial choices arise, people who select our firm can choose with confidence.

This implies two messages: that people can choose a firm with confidence, and that if they choose us, we'll help them face any questions and decisions with confidence.

Brainstorm ideas for your value proposition here.

Marketing Messages

Marketing messages reinforce your firm's brand by defining its key message and communicating the details of your brand. These messages should be simple, succinct and consistently utilized throughout the firm when explaining your services.

The format and context of the communication forum determine how much detail should be provided to reinforce and expand the key messages. Perhaps two to four bullets points of supporting information can be used, depending on context. For example, if you are creating an advertisement, you may only have room for the value proposition; if you are developing a website, you have room for all messaging.

Your marketing messages should always reinforce your brand promise, and every communication regarding your firm should contain your key marketing messages.

Your offering can be expressed through an excerpted list of brand attributes, which includes the following:

List attributes you want to convey, and brainstorm your key messaging points.

Corporate Identity

Your **corporate identity** sets the graphic standard for your brand and includes your firm's name, logo, color palette and imagery. These elements should be used consistently, and be defined in a Graphic Standards Document created by the design team. Below are some of the relevant details covered by such a document.

Firm Name:

Logo:

Imagery:

Color Palette:

Conclusion

Branding is a process, not an event.

Designing, delivering and executing your brand platform will require clear and consistent use of brand architecture across business operations, communications, collateral and experiences.

This completed Brand Brief will serve as the framework for communicating your brand and its underlying value in a clear, concise and compelling way. Your firm can ensure brand continuity by driving these elements into every aspect of your business operations, particularly with regards to promoting and advertising your value to the marketplace.

