

CASE STUDY

Building Your Brand Strategy

To set up marketing initiatives for success, a company must first establish a clear, defined brand. As a business owner, it's critical to articulate what differentiates your products and services from others and communicate that value to your customers. This case study examines how the owner of The Marula Beauty Boutique was able to identify her key brand values and use them to maintain and grow her customer base when COVID-19 hit.

Background:

The Marula Beauty Boutique is a New York-based boutique focused on clean skincare with a mission dedicated to sourcing high-quality, natural ingredients from South Africa. Its founder, Elizabeth, has more than 20 years of experience in retail management. She's a skilled saleswoman, an active member of her community, and her store is always bustling with shoppers and conversation. Her core customer base is predominantly women age 30+ who are interested in clean beauty products to target skincare issues.



Problem:

COVID-19 forced Elizabeth to close her store temporarily. She needed to maintain sufficient cash flow to cover rent and other expenses. It was vital for Elizabeth to understand how to articulate and use her [brand](#) identity to help generate sales both in-store (when possible) and online, while introducing an ecommerce channel.



Thought starter:

Think about a brand you know and like. What does it tell you about the company's values?

Owner's approach and tools

Elizabeth evaluated her business's brand across four key categories, identifying her unique offerings and developing the key building blocks that make up her brand.

Brand building blocks worksheet

Characteristics	The Marula Beauty Boutique	
Brand attributes Characteristics, benefits or features of the company that appeal to customer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Offers organic natural products➤ Dedicated to socially conscious sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ High quality➤ Effective skincare
Brand personality Collection of consistent, human-like traits (e.g., emotional, intellectual, and behavioral patterns) that are unique to a brand and help drive connection with core customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Welcoming➤ Ethical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Confident➤ Passionate
Brand values Underlying set of guiding principles that drive the brand's purpose and business decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Trustworthy➤ Eco-friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Socially conscious➤ Authentic
Brand positioning Act of designing your brand to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of customers and set it apart from competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ For customers seeking environmentally friendly, effective skincare, we provide a line of high-quality skincare products, ethically sourced from South Africa, and deliver them in a welcoming setting, so that customers love their skin and feel good about their purchase	

Next, Elizabeth reviewed her business strategy to ensure her decisions and messaging were consistent with the essence of her brand, and identified where improvements were needed.

Brand integration worksheet

Category	Evaluate: How does this reinforce my brand?	Action items: What can I do differently/better?	Priority
Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organic, natural sources ➤ Unique powerful ingredients ➤ Socially conscious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve packaging to be more environmentally conscious so customers feel great about their purchase 	Medium
Logo and/or tagline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use color to signify “environmentally friendly” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure all communication reflects consistent logo and coloring (e.g., email, social media, website, samples) 	High
Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Owner is welcoming and passionate ➤ Owner shares expertise and advice while connecting and engaging directly with customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Launch new sales channels that reflect brand personality including curbside pickup and free samples ➤ Create a personal touch with “thank you” cards and emails 	High
Brick-and-mortar store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Warm environment with furnishings that reflect South African heritage ➤ Features stories of products and ingredients, why we carry them and where they are made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feature store and product stories in social media videos to continue sense of community ➤ Offer small, in-store or virtual events 	High
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Did not convey key brand characteristics or offer ecommerce options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Launch online store and translate brand to website ➤ Feature key brand assets 	High

Implementation

After identifying new areas to better integrate her brand into her business strategy, Elizabeth:

- ✓ Analyzed her packaging inventory to make financial decisions about timing of phasing in new, more eco-conscious packaging
- ✓ Set up a simple ecommerce store, featuring high quality images of her top selling products and detailed ingredient descriptions
- ✓ Featured sales through live Zoom events, focusing on skincare and importance of self-care
- ✓ Created videos on Facebook and Instagram featuring her store to reestablish a sense of community
- ✓ Offered small, in-store shopping events to select customers when it was safe to reopen
- ✓ Included a welcome video on the website home page with skincare advice and tips
- ✓ Created an "About Us" page including values and heritage to reinforce the essence of her brand
- ✓ Performed an annual review to confirm her brand is clearly reflected in all aspects of her business

Other key terms

Brand: is the identity of a product or service based on the perception customers have of your business.

Brand assets: are the elements that work together to spark the recognition of a brand (i.e., fonts, colors).

Logo and/or tagline: is the brand's most recognizable visual cue and depicts the name and purpose of a business. It can be text, an image, or a design.

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