

Mapping your brand strategy to sales and marketing goals. ✓





Why does your business need a sticky B2B brand?

We live in a world where almost anyone can create a web page, publish a newsletter or write a blog. Where finding out what the competition is up to is as easy as visiting their website, where competition is rife and ever more professional. And most challenging of all, where a buyer's time is more precious to them than ever before. How do you cut through the noise, make an impact in the market and attract attention? It is all down to your brand.

Gone are the days when a pretty logo and a snappy strapline was all you needed to build a brand. Now you have to understand your market, your product, your capabilities and most vitally – your customers.

The most significant factor in the modern marketing landscape is change – everything changes – all of the time. It would help if you created a brand that will not only make a mark and have a real impact, but one that will stick – that will work for you through all the changes in the market, evolving customers' needs, and the ongoing development of your product or service offers.

A well-researched, well-thought-through brand identity that fits your business like a glove and is resilient enough to adapt to changing situations is the key to creating steady growth. If you live and breathe it, it will bring a consistent and coherent approach that will grow your business.

A 'sticky' brand will cut through all the market noise and help differentiate your brand in the eyes of your customer. With a strong and sticky brand, you can use it as a springboard to experiment with different strategies and refine your approach.





How to align a B2B brand with sales and marketing goals?

When you build a brand, your brand strategy should be part of a hierarchy with the business strategy at the top – its goals and aims are delivered by the sales and marketing strategy – whose goals, in turn, are provided by the brand strategy.

Sales, Marketing and the brand should work together at all times to deliver the results – this means that the way that Sales and Marketing interact with the prospect at every stage of the buyer’s journey needs consideration when developing the brand.

Measurement and feedback need to be built in at every stage of your brand management process so you can work with an agile strategy that responds to an ever-changing environment and customer demands. This capability for iteration and refinement will allow you not only to cope with change but to make the most of fleeting opportunities.

Probably the most crucial element of brand development is brand positioning – how you want to position yourself in the market in the eyes of your customers and prospects.

Your market, your offering and your business strategy will determine the limits of the market landscape within which you can place your brand – but here are some general, and simplified examples of brand positioning statements about what might make your offering different:

- The cheapest
- The most expensive
- The best quality
- The easiest to use
- The most featured
- The most efficient
- The greenest





The goal of brand positioning is to ensure that your customer's perception of what you stand for, matches the brand perception you are aiming for. You can use market research to determine the nature and amount of any positioning gap.


Every brand has a value – whether that value is high or low, or even harmful. It is your Brand Equity and comprises the mix of customer perception, experience, and opinion about your brand. Brand equity can have a direct impact on your reputation and sales. Again, good market research can give you an idea of your brand's equity with the market as well as eliciting direct feedback from prospects and customers.

A low value for brand equity or a mismatch in brand perception should be addressed as part of your brand management process.



A stylized illustration of a telescope in teal, with a star and a small circle nearby. A dashed teal line arches over the top of the page.

How to fit core propositions to your customers' jobs to be done.'

A solid teal arrow pointing to the right.

Your customers lead busy lives – they are likely to have many tasks they need to get done in the course of their job – and probably many more to fit in if only they had the time or resources. They are always in search of anything that would help with those tasks – whether that would be to eliminate the need for them or to help speed them up. It follows, then, that what they are looking for in a product or service is just that – something that helps with their ‘jobs to be done’. When they look at a supplier, they are asking “How can your product or service make my life easier?” Your core propositions have to contribute positively to a customer’s “jobs to be done”.

The big question is, how can you do that? How can you ensure your offerings are going to hit the spot and trigger the customer’s interest and eventual purchase?

The first step is to identify what those “jobs to be done” are. Understanding your customers through a buyer profile is step one, fundamental to the whole process of building a brand and an essential guide here. If you know your customers, their role, their responsibilities, their day-to-day activities and their aims, then you will get a handle on the essential tasks they are looking to complete.

The next step is to see how tight a fit your core proposition is to their needs – if the fit is way off, you may be targeting the wrong customers, or your core proposition may be wrong. If it's a perfect match – you are fortunate. Often elements of your products and services may match – but it might not be evident from the marketing approach taken so far. You will need to re-align your brand and its content to address that miss-match and demonstrate how your offerings can help your audience.

If your offerings are only slightly out of kilter, and you are sure that those customers are the ones you want to target, then it's time for some product or service development to make sure they are meeting the needs of your customers.

Ultimately, your ability to satisfy your customers and build growth is dependent on:



Understanding who they are, what they do, and what they are trying to achieve.



Creating attractive content that demonstrates you can help.



Delivering the products and services they need.





Why B2B brands need brand personality and brand essence.



In a competitive media landscape where, as a business, you are not only trying to differentiate yourselves from your competitors, but also trying to stand out against the constant background of content and media every customer is exposed to throughout their day, you need a distinct brand personality – something that makes you, you.

Having a brand personality should be a fairly straightforward thing to grasp – your brand's personality defines you – it makes you different, it helps you stand out, and it helps guide the style and character of your content and marketing.

But the best's brands also have an essence – an intangible attribute that creates an emotional response in your audience. Subtle, nuanced and challenging to define – a brand essence is unique to your brand and consistent. Think of the emotions conjured up by brands such as Disney, Apple, Trump Org, or Facebook. We will have an emotional reaction to each of them, which is difficult to define, and for each of us, it may be slightly or even wildly different.

Brand essence is the sum of all the things your company does, all the content it produces; its culture, it's people and its personality. To your customers, all of this combines to create an emotional reaction which goes deeper than a logical response to your content and marketing.

Whilst it requires effort to create a brand personality to avoid being bland, your brand will have an 'essence' whether you like it or not, whether or not you have taken active steps to cultivate and nurture it. It's equally as important as personality, but unfortunately more complex and slippery to control.

The best way to influence the sentiment of your brand essence is by getting everything else right – making sure you are not only delivering what your customers want, but you are delighting them, adding extra value, going above and beyond to create a positive experience. If you can do that, then your brand essence sentiment will be positive.

Make sure your company's culture is a fit with your customer's aspirations, and your brand's personality matches theirs. Both of these are part of the "flavour" of your brand essence, producing something unique to your business.



How to analyse and develop your ideal customer profile.

You may be familiar with the term Buyer Profile – it's a profile, or more usually profiles, of the buyers you wish to target with your marketing strategy and content. Creating a buyer profile gives you a solid steer on what type of content to create to attract the customers you want.

So how does a customer profile differ? Well, a customer profile is more about the type of companies you want to attract – in one sense, they are the level above buyer profiles. They are particularly essential if you are looking at Account-Based Marketing (ABM) but are relevant to all B2B businesses.

You are looking to create a description of a company that has all of the qualities that would make them the best fit for the solutions you provide.

When you define a customer profile, you might look at the following characteristics:

- **Budget / Revenue / Company Size** – What size of company, with what budget would be likely to be able to buy from you?
- **Geography** – Are there regions you do not sell to? Or are there logistical reasons that mean there is a finite area you can serve?
- **Legality** - are there legal reasons that limit potential customers? Such as age, location, or government restrictions?

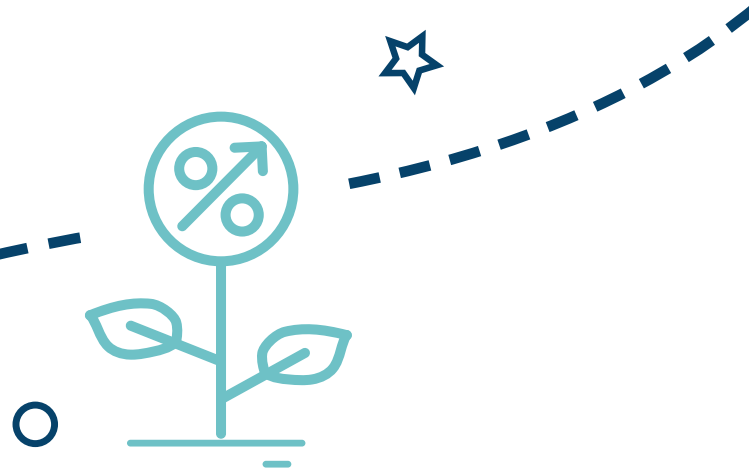


- **Industry** – which industries do you want to work with or perhaps have the most experience in? Which industries do you want to avoid for any reason?
- **Product or Service Limitations** – do you have a service level agreement (SLA) with your customers to meet a specific response time? If someone needs a response quicker, can you guarantee you'll be able to meet that demand?

This isn't a comprehensive list by any means, but it may prove a good starting point when defining your ideal customer profile. A lead needs to have these qualities to be able to buy from you. You can use this profile when qualifying leads to ensure that sales time is not wasted on leads that are not likely to buy.

Ideal customer profiles are focused on the fit of the account and don't look at the nitty-gritty of the individual buyers within that business. Once you have identified business accounts that fit your customer profile, you want to start thinking about who your sales reps are talking to and who is responsible for actually making the purchase.

Businesses that fit your ideal customer profile are comprised of these individuals who all hold different titles and have varied product/service knowledge, and levels of experience. These are the buyers you need to profile in your buyer personas.





Is there a risk your last agency reverse-engineered your buyer personas?



There is a temptation when looking to define your buyer personas, to take a short cut and only look at your existing customers and create buyer personas based on them. It is an approach many agencies will take, and on the face of it, it seems a reasonable way to create personas quickly.

But there are a couple of dangerous assumptions at work here. Firstly, these are the customers you have – not necessarily the ones you want – or the ones you might aspire to have. They may have got you here – to your current level of sales – but will they help you develop and grow your business?

Secondly, are they typical? It may be that you have some outliers, some customers who are unique for some reason and basing a buyer persona on them could end up being disastrous.

Developing a buyer persona requires a much deeper level of thinking. Without the broader picture, you can't possibly know which aspects of your customers are genuinely unique to them and which elements are the ones they share with other potential clients.

It's also essential to go beyond the simple demographics to understand your prospects' challenges, fears, and aspirations. You need to identify their pain points – what do they struggle with? What elements of their weekly tasks are difficult, tedious or challenging? What other people exist in their world who might be helping or frustrating their work?

You also need to know the answer to the big questions – what are they looking to achieve – in their job role and life generally?

Reverse-engineering buyer personas from existing customers doesn't trigger the same thought processes or the same rigorous research and evaluation – it can be useful, but only as an input into more in-depth, buyer persona development.



How to position your customer as the hero in the stories you tell.

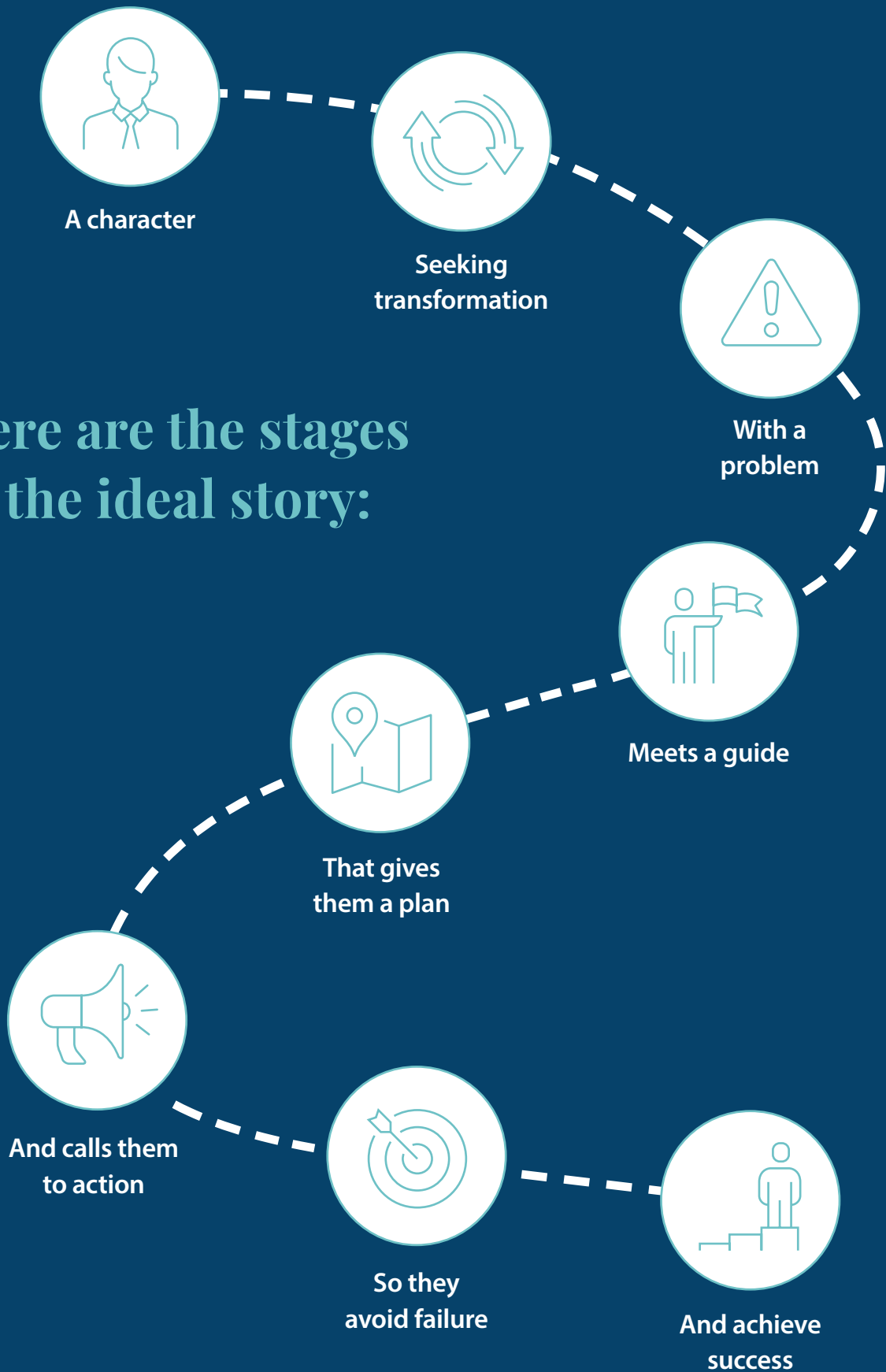
One of the reasons why understanding your customer through developing a buyer persona is so crucial to brand creation is the insight it gives you—allowing you to understand their motivation and utilise that knowledge to engage with them. Gaining a deep understanding of the issues they face, their struggles, their goals and their daily grind will enable you to create unique and powerful content from their point of view.

Make the customer the hero by creating content that demonstrates an understanding of the tasks they need to accomplish and the ideal path they need to take to complete them. Use your stories to establish your brand as a reliable guide – a trusted companion on their journey. Highlight the troubles they will face and explain and demonstrate how you can lead them through to a better place – a better solution. Extol the benefits of taking the journey and explain the rewards that come from a successful conclusion.

Most of all, be clear about what you do, how you can help, and the benefits to them. Finally, remember it's a story – it needs to be engaging, entertaining even. Your tone of voice should be appropriate, welcoming, friendly, motivating and characterful. Your story needs to capture the imagination of your audience and transport them to a world of possibilities.



Here are the stages of the ideal story:





Why content is intrinsically linked to your brand.

According to HubSpot, a brand is:

A feature or set of features that distinguish one organisation from another. A brand is typically comprised of a name, tagline, logo or symbol, design, brand voice, and more. It also refers to the overall experience a customer undergoes when interacting with a business — as a shopper, customer, social media follower, or mere passer-by.

Whatever business you are in, you have to talk about your product or service. You have to let people know it exists. And you have to give people enough information so they can decide to buy it. All of this is part of the brand experience, and all of this is content. It may seem obvious, but it is essential to remember that whatever you are doing, it is part of what you do when you build a brand whether that be a landing page on a website or a sign-up form on your exhibition stand.

And you cannot avoid giving an impression with that content. Even if you write in a neutral tone – with no emotion or character, that still says something about your brand and your company. (And in this instance, it is unlikely to do you any favours).

It's not a stretch to say that content IS your brand and every piece you create should be "on-brand" – with the appropriate character, emotion and flavour all combining to not only communicate the message in an attractive way – but to put your stamp on the content – to convey your brand's personality. Publishing content that is "on message" is one of the principal ways to build a brand.





How design matters across every element of your brand.



Differentiating your brand has never been more important – whether that be in your content, your offer, your culture, your brand’s personality or the way you present that brand – being different is a proven way to stand out from your competitors.

Brand design is a vital element of that approach. Not only by making sure that your brand design is distinctive – but also by establishing authority and credence through quality design. And it’s important because the way your brand looks is the very first impression you give – visual imagery is processed by the eye and brain way before written content. Design has a significant impact on brand perception – how well your prospects and customers receive your brand.

The look and feel of your website, your social media posts, your packaging, your publications – even your business cards – communicates a wealth of signals to your audience about your brand identity and either add value to your brand equity or damage it. They all help create a brand. It is vital that those signals are intentional – that they back up the brand narrative and the messages you wish to convey.

Naturally, it’s important to get the basics right – clean, clear, uncluttered design helps with legibility and ensures the message shines through. Making sure the typographic hierarchy is obvious, and layouts easy to follow are simple things that cannot be ignored. Never underestimate the fundamental importance of getting those basics right. But beyond the basics is where you express your character, authority, culture, approach and point of difference through your design. This brand development is an incredibly fine balancing act and needs a deftly nuanced touch to avoid giving the wrong message or alienating your audience.

Imagine arriving at a meeting and talking in an accent no-one can understand, or being overly familiar with everyone, or rude, or perhaps even worse, not being noticed. Just as the way you present yourself in a meeting is one of the critical factors that help you achieve your goals in that meeting, so the way you present your offering through your brand design, is one of the vital elements that help you attract and convert customers.

So, design is crucial and needs thoughtful implementation across every piece of content. Getting this wrong risks giving a false impression or even not being attractive enough to get a chance to present your proposition.



Why having a media mindset is so important?

We live in a world of rapidly accelerating change. More than ever that pace of change is making more and more demands on people's time, and their time is a finite resource – there are only so many hours in a day.

And so it is that any modern business is always competing for people's time. But you are competing not just against your competitors, but against the demands of your customer's daily job, and you are doing so, not just against a background of your competitor's content, but against a background of all content. What you produce will be judged against the standards and value of all media – television, radio, podcasts, blogs, Facebook, Instagram and other social media. Your content needs to stand out against that background.

Your potential audience is immersed in a multitude of media, and they could be actively engaged in any one of them, or, even more likely, a number of them, at different times, in different ways and for different reasons.

This means you need to have the ability to understand and publish in different media allowing you to reach your audience where they are, at that moment, with a suitable, media-friendly, media-appropriate, message. Having a media mindset is about creating content, on a regular basis, that your audience will want to consume with the same excitement and enjoyment as their favourite paid-for magazine, radio show or video channel. It means thinking like, and becoming, a publisher.

You can repurpose content for different media and publish different content for different stages of the buyer's journey – this will help ensure you are relevant and read.

Publishers are obsessed with their readers – just as you should be obsessed about your brand's audience. Always think of your audience first and create content that caters to their interests.



Thinking like a publisher means publishing stories, stories that engages your audience's attention and guides them to a happy conclusion. You need to be inspiring and educational, offering help, advice, guides and insights. You need to uncover the expertise you have as a business and publish content that uses that knowledge to capture your audience.

Think like an editor too – is your content the right quality, the right tone of voice, does it tell the right story and is it right for your target market?

You need to think beyond your brand messages and publish content that is non-product or service specific; such as overviews, insights, industry guides, opinion pieces and how-tos. It's about thinking what your audience would benefit from knowing and then delivering that.

It is equally important to think about where these assets turn up in your buyer's journey and with what messages? The information prospects are searching for will vary according to where they are in the buying cycle. Content to generate awareness will be different from content to convert leads to customers. Broadly speaking the three types of content that match the stages of the buyer's journey are as follows:



By regularly publishing relevant content at the appropriate time in an engaging format, you will capture your audience and build the brand – not only building sales but also building brand personality, brand effectiveness and brand perception.



How to ensure your social media is a good fit with your brand.

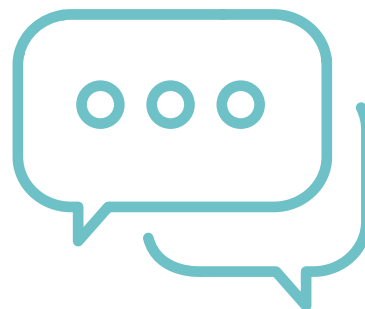
Any work you do with social media has to be informed by the knowledge you have of your customers' habits and preferences, the most important of which is knowing what social media platforms they are likely to be engaged with. There is absolutely no point spending time and effort developing content for channels where your audience is not present. The first step is, therefore, to identify where you will find your audience.

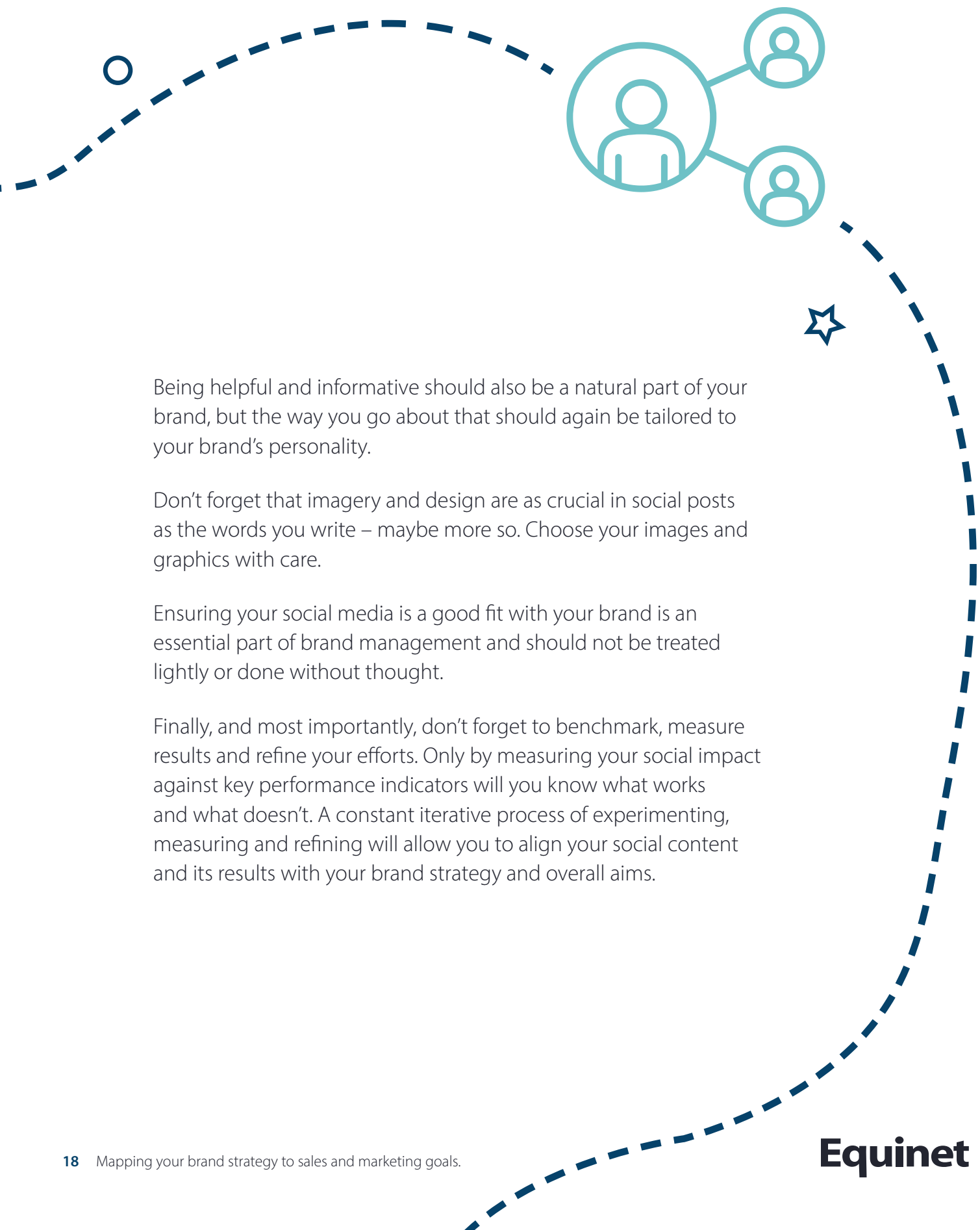
Your brand content should be all about appealing to your customers and potential customers. Base everything on the buyer personas you have developed - what interests them, what they respond to, and what makes them sit up and pay attention.

It's also important to recognise that prospects may be at different stages in the buyer's journey – so developing social content that reflects that stage is another critical capability to master.

Finally, your social content should deliver on-point messages that will help you to achieve your overall brand strategy.

In social media, your brand's personality is a vital element of getting your audience to engage, as well as differentiating you from the crowd. Your tone of voice and character should be an expression of your brand's culture and values – and is all part of building the brand. Ideally, you should have a brand bible that lays out clearly what type of posts you should be creating and with what attitude.





Being helpful and informative should also be a natural part of your brand, but the way you go about that should again be tailored to your brand's personality.

Don't forget that imagery and design are as crucial in social posts as the words you write – maybe more so. Choose your images and graphics with care.

Ensuring your social media is a good fit with your brand is an essential part of brand management and should not be treated lightly or done without thought.

Finally, and most importantly, don't forget to benchmark, measure results and refine your efforts. Only by measuring your social impact against key performance indicators will you know what works and what doesn't. A constant iterative process of experimenting, measuring and refining will allow you to align your social content and its results with your brand strategy and overall aims.



Why aligning Sales and Marketing is vital to the brand experience.

For the sake of brand consistency, sales, and marketing should be working from the same brand strategy, but this arrangement needs to go deeper and broader to make a business successful in today's selling landscape. To avoid sales and marketing working at cross-purposes or worse, working against each other, you need to create a culture of alignment from the very beginning.

Anytime your customers interact with your company – at whatever level – with whatever department, their experience should be consistent – the brand messaging should be the same – the personality should be the same. This should be a given and implies that all areas of the business, including sales and marketing should be on the same page, they should all be aware of the company's agreed strategy at all levels: business, marketing and brand.

Having them, both focussed on a common brand strategy – a common plan – will deliver way more value to the business than if they work independently. When you start the brand development process, involve them both. Working with sales and marketing to define strategy creates a more informed buyer persona and a better, more robust approach. Whilst marketing may know more about what potential customers you want to attract and what they are interested in, sales are likely to learn more about existing customers and what attracted them to buy from you (and hopefully, what makes them stick with you).

Whilst most of the information and data about prospects and customers now flows into marketing from online interactions, it is still sales who have to close the deal. Sales need all the appropriate and timely information to enable them to do their job.



This is all part of Sales Enablement:

The iterative process of providing your business's sales team with the resources they need to close more deals. These resources may include content, tools, knowledge, and information to effectively sell your product or service to customers. (Hubspot)

Sales Enablement is a collaborative process – owned by both sales and marketing. Marketing provides the content and intelligence, and sales pass back details of their real-world interactions with the customer. And their observations and feedback on how the content and campaigns are received.

Working together, pooling the knowledge gained from both sales and marketing – will provide more comprehensive market and customer intelligence that can feed into strategy.

The day-to-day data from multiple customer touchpoints with both sales and marketing, as they traverse the buyer's journey, can be channelled back to the CRM to deliver more targeted prospect interactions and better results.

Aligning sales and marketing will also enable powerful account-based marketing (ABM) – where the two areas work as one to identify major prospect companies. Together they create precisely targeted, unique content, along with strategic real-world interactions, that bring in big accounts that boost the company's revenue. It is where a strong Sales Enablement strategy and implementation can pay off – proving the sum is more than the parts.

Ready to talk?

Book a consultation
with one of our Brand
Growth Plan experts
on **01234 262262**

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