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# Developing Your Restaurant's Brand





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# Tapping Into Your “It” Factor

It's often hard to pin down exactly what prompts customers to return to one restaurant over and over again. Of course, the quality of the food, drinks, and service play a major part in that decision, but there is also a more intangible factor at work—a restaurant's brand. Simply put, your brand is the emotions and feelings customers associate with your restaurant. A brand lives in the mind of its patrons and affects how they perceive your business and what actions they take, such as choosing you as their go-to dining spot. Restaurant branding—which includes the components that go into establishing your restaurant's look, feel, tone, and identity—also plays into customers' perception of your business.

If you are opening your first restaurant, or want to give an existing business an overhaul, defining your brand and communicating it effectively to current and potential customers is a crucial step to generating a long-term, sustainable revenue stream. A well-designed, well-articulated brand can provide restaurant owners with the ability to be successful for years to come.

# Discovering Your Brand Identity

Before you can bring any branding elements to life, it's important to first establish a cohesive brand identity. Depending on your budget and marketing/design experience it may be a good idea to hire an independent designer to assist with the design-heavy components. This e-book can serve as a guide and roadmap as you begin to decipher and create your restaurant's brand identity. Whether you're curating your business' brand solo or with the help of your team, the first step should involve doing a deep dive into exactly what makes your restaurant tick.

## The 4Cs

To begin, you'll want to write out your goals for your restaurant — include both short-term (six months to a year) and long-term (two years and five years) aspirations. Having your goals front and center during this exercise allows you to maintain a clear focus on the questions your branding needs to answer. Then, take yourself and/or your team through a mini "discovery" session where you discuss and dissect your restaurant's 4Cs—Company, Category, Competition, and Customers. This is an easy acronym to remember and an organized way to drill down and find out what exactly makes your restaurant unique.

Some questions you may want to ask yourself and your team include:

## Company

- What is the inspiration behind your restaurant and what do you want it to look like in two years?
- What values drive your business?
- What “problem” does your restaurant solve?

## Category

- What categories does your restaurant fit in? (vegan, pizza, fast casual, etc.)
- How have these categories shifted over time, if at all?
- What current or upcoming trends are you noticing in these categories?

## Competition

- What are your restaurant’s direct competitors?
- What are your restaurant’s indirect competitors?
- How would a consumer say your competitors compare to you?

## Customers

- What does your customer base look like today?
- What do you want it to look like in the future?
- What customer feedback (positive or negative) have you received?

The 4Cs exercise should help to assemble a complete picture of your business, which you can use to craft a mission statement.



## Mission Statement

The goal of a mission statement is to clearly and concisely articulate your restaurant's core goals, values, and differentiators. A few thought starters that can spur the creation of a mission statement include:

- What is your promise to customers?
- What is the foundation of your company culture?
- How does your restaurant's values differ from your competitors' values?
- What is your restaurant's unique viewpoint?
- How does your restaurant serve customers' needs and pain points?
- Why are you serving this type of food in this type of way?

Keep in mind that a mission statement shouldn't be a full paragraph. Try to keep it to two or three sentences that convey your mission and values in a clear and emotionally compelling way to your audience. Look at this statement as the cornerstone for how you speak to your customers moving forward.

## Brand Story

A brand story is a couple of paragraphs that hit on the essence and personality of your brand. It shows where you started, what's important to you, and where you're going. Throughout this story the values and offerings that differentiate you from your competitors should bubble to the top. Think of this piece as your restaurant's bio and include the points you feel it's most important for your staff, investors, and partners to know. This short story can help to get everyone at your restaurant on the same page (especially helpful for new hires) in terms of business goals and understanding the soul of the company.





## Chapter



# Knowing Your Audience and Where You Fit In

Now that you have your mission statement and brand story nailed down, it's time to identify the audiences you want to reach. This is an important step because it allows you to create specific messaging depending on the audience you're targeting. For example, when marketing to locals you might tout your convenient location and the neighborhood discount you offer on Tuesdays. However, if you're trying to attract potential customers the next neighborhood over you may want to focus on the easy street parking and ability to make reservations online.

Equally as important is understanding how your business fits into the bigger restaurant landscape, including similar establishments

in your area. This will allow you to notice what type of language, design, and marketing has (or hasn't) worked for your competitors.

### Gather Data

If applicable, use your restaurant's point of sale (POS) system to gain insights into your current customer base by searching for any noticeable trends. Pull metrics such as average check amount, number of items ordered, busiest/slowest days and times of the week, return on promotions, etc. If you don't have a system like this, you can talk to your staff as they can provide anecdotal insight into the day-to-day customer experience on the floor. You can

also better understand your customer base by conducting an online survey. Develop comprehensive questions that include a free-form section where guests can share what they like and don't like about your restaurant in their own words.

## SWOT Analysis

In addition to knowing who you're talking to, you also need to understand how your restaurant fits into the larger industry landscape in your area. One method to help uncover this information is performing a quick strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis with your team.



### Strengths:

- What are your restaurant's strong points?
- What do you do better than anyone else?

### Weaknesses:

- What are some areas of the business that you could improve?
- What are the primary sources of complaints?

### Opportunities:

- What's an untapped market, service, product, or trend that you've never explored?

### Threats:

- What elements are impeding your success?
- What is holding you back?

The purpose of a SWOT analysis is to help a business understand all the factors that affect their ability to succeed. Both the strengths and weaknesses category refer to internal factors such as the resources, talent, and processes that you have the most control over. On the flip side, the opportunities and threats sections focus on external forces that can influence your business such as market trends, the economy, and funding.

After you complete your SWOT analysis the final learnings will highlight both the areas where your restaurant is performing optimally as well as those that might need some tweaking.





## Chapter

# Bringing Your Brand to Life

The next step in the process is developing your restaurant's look and feel. While food and service play a central role, you also need to think about how your business' colors, fonts, logo, and any other design elements coalesce together to form your brand's visual identity. It's during this phase that you can reach out to your design-savvy friends for assistance or hire an affordable freelance designer if you so choose.

### Mood Boards

With the insights obtained in the initial discovery session, you will have a pretty clear idea of your brand, its values, and its personality. One common component in creating a brand identity is to develop a mood board. This is a collage of visuals that

aim to capture the essence and soul of your brand. Some elements you can include on the mood board include colors, fonts, photos, and design styles that resonate well with you and your vision for your brand. You can definitely include elements from other companies' branding to gain more insight on what you like or dislike to help in the creation of your own brand's design. Using an easy-to-use online platform such as [Pinterest](#) or [Canva](#) can make this process simple and fun — just search, find what you like, and pin it to your virtual mood board. Don't be afraid to ask your long-time customers, employees, family, and friends for their thoughts on your mood boards too — your own free focus group!

## Logo

After you finish your mood board it's time to dive into the nitty gritty elements, which might include a company logo. If you are working with another person on the logo design, it's a good idea to do lots of frequent check-ins to ensure that the end result is a logo that you love.

Here are a few key questions you'll want to ask yourself during this process:

- Is this design timeless enough to use for years to come, or is it so trendy that it may need to be updated again in the near future?
- Can you clearly and easily read the business name, even from a distance?
- Does the design work for all print and digital pieces (business cards, signage, website, etc.)?
- Is this logo scalable — meaning it still works if used with different colored backgrounds, different sizes, etc.?
- Does this logo accurately convey the core feelings of the brand?

Whether or not to use a logo is entirely up to you, of course. Many restaurant owners prefer a wordmark or logotype, which is the company name set in a specific font, color, and/or graphical treatment. Again, it's what you feel will best represent your restaurant's brand to the public.

## Colors

Colors have the ability to influence consumers on a subconscious and emotional level, so it's important that your color scheme is giving off the right message to your audience. Make sure that the colors selected during the mood board phase still accurately reflect your brand once placed into the logo (if you have one).

For example, if your restaurant is known for locally sourced, organic cuisine, then light and clean colors such as greens, whites, and tans could be an ideal choice. On the contrary, if your establishment is hoping to catch the eye of Saturday night bar and nightclub patrons, you may want a darker, edgier color palette that features black, gold, and emerald.



Colors have the ability to influence consumers on a subconscious and emotional level.



## Fonts and Elements

There are literally millions of fonts available, so narrow it down to the options that work best for your logo and your brand as a whole. The most important thing to keep in mind during this process is to confirm that the fonts you choose are legible at any size, even when scaled down to a small print area. Next, you can explore more subtle touches—like adding a specific filter to each of your photos or implementing a unique font for large headlines—that can tie the new look of your brand together in the consumer’s mind. It truly is all the little things, that most customers may not actually notice, that collide to form the larger vibe and emotional pulse of your restaurant.



## Chapter

# Developing Your Branding

Now it's time to infuse your space with your new look and feel. This is where you can begin to plan out how your space will reflect your restaurant's new brand. From signage and menus to décor and staff uniforms, no detail is too small when it comes to sharing your brand's story with your customers.

## Signage

Begin by updating your interior and exterior signage to reflect your brand's new style and voice. No matter if it's a table tent, sidewalk sign, or wall mural, the signs you display are the mouthpiece of your restaurant. Be creative and authentic when updating your signage—make sure the message, look, and feel are consistent with your brand and how you and your employees speak about the restaurant. It's

important to pay equal attention to the messaging and the visuals, since these are the two components that combine to create the foundation of your brand.

## Menu Design

One of the most impactful marketing pieces in your restaurant is your menu. Before revamping your old menus, take stock of your current food and drink offerings. Work with your staff to evaluate each item and decide if still meshes well with your new brand story. You may notice that some items need to be removed or updated in order to align with your updated brand values.

Once you decide which dishes get to stay and which have to go, update your old menu to incorporate your new look. You should still be mindful of adhering to the

guiding principles of menu design—clear sections by meal type, concise descriptions, bold enticing ingredients, and best sellers—so that your new menu is poised for success. For a more in-depth look at curating an effective menu design, check out our e-book, “[Menu Magic: How You Can Increase Restaurant Sales](#).”

## Décor

A restaurant’s décor greatly adds to a customer’s perception of the establishment’s values, mission, and overall vibe. You will want to select interior design items that work well together and also



integrate well with your brand’s story — [Pinterest](#) is a great tool for stockpiling inspiration. Continuity is key so that diners feel that they are truly experiencing your brand throughout their entire experience. For example, if your spot prides itself on veggie-forward dishes consider featuring an array of fresh plants in your space to add another layer to your garden-to-table brand story. A wild-card component, such

as a photobooth, Instagram-worthy wall mural, jumbo-sized board games, or a cozy fireplace can also help to set you apart from the competition.

Other design elements to consider include:

- Lighting
- Artwork
- Table centerpieces
- Tables and chairs
- Greenery
- Tableware, dishware, and glassware
- Paint colors
- Flooring
- Floorplan

A well-designed space can evoke strong emotions and feelings in guests, giving them a favorable impression of the restaurant even if they don’t consciously register why they feel that way. This is why creating a brand story that is integrated into every element of your restaurant is so critical.

## Your Staff

Another part of the branding process is the employee uniform. Like every other design element, uniforms should feature your brand’s color scheme, logo, and fonts. But engaging your staff with your brand shouldn’t stop at what they wear. Your employees should be your brand’s biggest fans and best storytellers. Train staff on your brand’s story as well as its key differentiators. Arm your people with this information and encourage them to share it with your guests on a daily basis. This can

include telling customers about the inspiration behind the restaurant's founding, an explanation of unique dishes on the menu, and an overview of how your handcrafted cocktails are assembled by your skilled bartenders.

One side effect of empowering your staff to feel invested in your business and their role as brand ambassadors is that you may also see employee retention and sales increase over time.

## External Marketing

The final step to rolling out your new brand is to apply it to any existing digital and print marketing collateral. This can include your restaurant's:

- Website
- Direct mail
- Social media
- Emails
- Flyers
- Business cards

Regardless of which marketing pieces you're working on, always keep the target audience and main action you want people to take top of mind.



Always keep the target audience and main action you want people to take top of mind.




## Conclusion

# Leaving Your Mark


Crafting a unique and compelling brand from scratch is no easy feat and requires constant monitoring and updating to remain effective. Take it step by step and while it may not be wise to change your core brand messaging, a color palette change, logo refresh, and website update are all elements that may need to be tackled down the line.

Remain vigilant in upholding your new brand standards and encourage your staff to do the same. The goal of creating a brand for your restaurant is to provide guests with a great story and experience while dining at your restaurant. Top it off with amazing food, drinks, and service, and your customers won't be able to resist telling their family and friends all about their favorite spot.



**“When I first opened, it was very difficult to get financing through banks and traditional lending. Rewards Network really put me in a position where I was able to push forward. I always go back to Rewards Network because of the marketing piece. It’s a great way to get us in front of people that we would not have normally been able to reach out to.”**

— Dishema Fulton  
*Baltimore Crab & Seafood, Atlanta, GA*



Want to learn more about how Rewards Network can help your restaurant grow?

Contact us today:

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