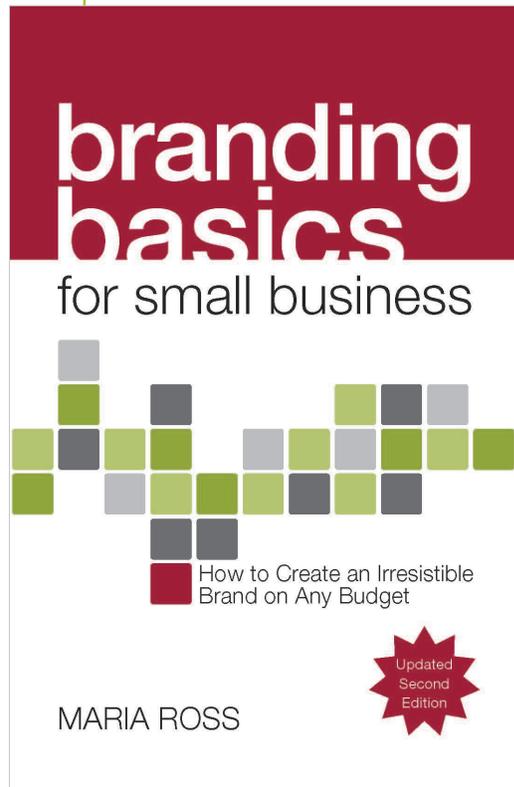


Branding Basics for Small Business:

How to Create an Irresistible Brand on Any Budget (2nd Edition)



Author: Maria Ross

Categories: Nonfiction/ Business

Publisher: NorlightsPress
762 State Road 458
Bedford IN 47421, USA

Number of pages: 206

Book Size: 5.5 x 8.5

Print ISBN: 978-1-935254-87-4

ebook ISBN: 978-1-935254-89-8

Official release date: April 1, 2014

Distribution: Ingram Book Group

“Maria Ross makes it clear that branding isn’t just for big companies, rich companies, or consumer companies. *It’s for your company.* In a single readable volume, she shows you how to separate yourself from the pack and win.”

— Marty Neumeier, Director of Transformation, Liquid Agency and author of *The Brand Gap*, *Zag*, and *Metaskills: Five Talents for the Robotic Age*

“Don’t launch without it!”

— Beth Schoenfeldt, Founder & CEO, FundedBuy

about the book

The popular guide used by entrepreneurs, start-ups, small businesses and non-profits everywhere to build an irresistible brand on any budget is now updated! *Branding Basics for Small Business, 2nd Edition* includes fresh content around social media, content marketing and networking trends and additional real-world case studies of small business and entrepreneurial success.

Small businesses, start-ups, and non-profits enviously watch “the big guys” create tribes of loyal followers. How do they do it? What can time and resource-strapped organizations learn from them? The secret is a strong Brand Strategy, which goes far beyond a logo. Brand is your core promise, personality and reason for being. Effective branding isn’t about how much money you spend, but on how clearly and consistently you communicate the right message through all you do.

In *Branding Basics for Small Business, 2nd Edition*, brand strategist, author and speaker, Maria Ross, shares practical tips and real-world case studies of irresistible small business brands, plus insights from global marketing experts on how you can make this happen for your organization. Part One defines what brand really means (and what it does not) and why it matters to your success. Part Two outlines a simple ten-question process with exercises designed to help you build a strong brand strategy of your own. Part Three offers practical action steps to bring that brand strategy to life through design, marketing tactics, social media, content marketing and more so you can:

- Generate buzz and loyalty with the right customers, clients, or donors,
- Make smarter, more cost-effective marketing decisions,
- Stand out from the crowd and grow your business.

This practical and entertaining guide is your answer to building the perfect brand, connecting with loyal fans and growing your business or organization on any budget.

the audience

Entrepreneurs, small business owners, founders and non-profit executives who often wear many hats and deal with limited budget, time and resources. Their ranks include those who sell products or services to consumers and/or businesses, or non-profits who need to generate awareness and attract more donors. Marketing professionals will also benefit from a refresher on brand strategy for their own organizations that must adapt to competition and changing customer needs.



about the author

Maria Ross is a brand strategist, author and speaker who believes cash flow and creativity are not mutually exclusive. As creator of Red Slice, she advises entrepreneurs and small businesses on creating irresistible brands. Prior to that, she spent years guiding marketing strategies for both start-ups and global brands, including Discovery Networks, Monster.com, and Business Objects. Ross has written two books and delivers engaging business and inspirational keynotes and workshops for organizations such as BlogHer, *The New York Times* Small Business Summit and the Chamber of Commerce. She has appeared in numerous media outlets, including MSNBC, ABC News, Huffington Post, NPR, and *Entrepreneur*. In her spare time, Maria is an actress, community volunteer and published food and wine writer.

Praise for *Branding Basics for Small Business*

“Maria Ross makes it clear that branding isn’t just for big companies, rich companies, or consumer companies. It’s for your company. In a single readable volume, she shows you how to separate yourself from the pack and win.

—Marty Neumeier, Director of Transformation, Liquid Agency and author of *The Brand Gap*, *Zag* and *Metaskills: Five Talents for the Robotic Age*

“Match your authentic purpose with the courage to serve only the right customer (not any customer). That’s the essence of a successful business you will fall in love with. Maria’s book is the recipe for getting there. Dig in!”

—Mike Michalowicz, author of *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, *The Pumpkin Plan* and *Profit First*

“Creating content that captivates customers, differentiates your organization and drives sales is vital today. But the first step is getting crystal-clear on your brand strategy. Before you dive into the tactics to produce random acts of content, read this book”

—Ann Handley, chief content officer of MarketingProfs and co-author of *Content Rules*

“Such a wide and clear scope on what makes successful brands so...successful. Great coverage. And great inspiration to be true to your values and think big.”

—Danielle LaPorte, author of *The Fire Starter Sessions: A Soulful + Practical Guide to Creating Success on Your Own Terms* and *The Desire Map*

“Maria Ross cuts through the fluff and explains why strong brands are built on customers’ experiences and not on huge advertising budgets. Complete with real examples from top companies, this book is a roadmap leading small businesses and entrepreneurs in the right direction.”

—Adam Sutton, MarketingSherpa.com

“So many small businesses and entrepreneurs are intimidated and overwhelmed by the concept of branding. What is it? Where do I start? What does it even mean? Maria Ross breaks down branding into easy, doable steps and her writing is engaging, fun and jargon-free. This is a must-read for anybody who’s struggling with who to market to and how to reach them.”

—Sarah Von Bargen, blogger, writer, and small business consultant, sarahvonbargen.com

“(This book) is a wise and recommended read, not to be missed by any small business. ”

—Midwest Book Review

“Any organization looking to be more successful and get to the next level will benefit from the smart insights and fascinating, real-world stories in this book. Building a brand isn’t easy, nor is managing an existing brand’s reputation – especially in this time of online reviews and social media wildfire. Whether you’re trying to figure out what a brand is, thinking about rebranding, or ready to blast your brand full speed ahead, Maria cuts to the chase and tells you everything you need to know. This is invaluable for everyone, especially organizations with limited time and resources that need results - fast.”

—Whitney Keyes, professor of strategic communications and global reputation management, Seattle University, author of *Propel: Five Ways to Amp Up Your Marketing and Accelerate Business*

“As someone who has worked with thousands of small businesses, I have seen a lack of a clear, focused brand strategy cause people to waste time, energy, money and flounder in the marketplace. Never fear, Maria breaks down branding so that anyone with a business, or who is thinking of launching a business, can understand why an investment in branding is make or break for creating a thriving business. Don’t launch without it!

—Beth Schoenfeldt, Founder & CEO, FundedBuy

“With *Branding Basics for Small Business*, Maria Ross offers a clear + compelling definition of what a “brand” really is: Your company’s reputation, personality, and reason for being – all rolled into one package. If your “package” is less than phenomenal -- or long overdue for a re-boot -- this book is a little treasure. Dive in.”

—Alexandra Franzen, writer, workshop leader and author of *50 Ways to Say You’re Awesome*

contact info

Maria Ross

maria@red-slice.com | 206-661-0227

Twitter: @redslice | FB: /redslice

Highlights from *Branding Basics for Small Business*

Maria Ross On What Brand Means to Your Business:

“In a way, good branding is an art form, and like any art it has the power to inspire, delight, anger, provoke, motivate, and entertain.”

“Brand is... your company’s reputation, personality, and reason for being – all rolled into one package. Brand communication is like a three-legged stool: it is expressed not only visually (in your logo, design, or colors), but verbally (in the words you use or copy you write), and experientially as well. An ad may tell me your company is fun, convenient, and easy to do business with, but if your clerks don’t smile at me or your online checkout process is akin to taking a college entrance exam, then I’m going to doubt those brand promises.”

“Brand clarity attracts customers and brand consistency makes them stick around.”

Maria Ross On Making Smarter Marketing Investments:

“If you’re guided by a strong Brand Strategy, you will ultimately spend less money by doing the right things, rather than wasting money on the wrong things.”

“If you don’t have a grounded Brand Strategy, you’re all over the place, grasping at whatever new trend or opportunity is in front of you on any given day. I call this ‘performing random acts of marketing.’”

“If you don’t know who and where your buyers are, you’ll spend time and money on the wrong things and end up poking your eye out with a sharp stick in frustration because nothing will work.”

Maria Ross On Branding “Inside and Out:”

“PR can’t just come along and make you thinner, prettier, or more popular if the fundamentals aren’t in place – if the brand promise isn’t met. Many CEOs think they can operate poorly, slap a coat of public relations over everything, and their reputation will be magically transformed.”

“Your mission and vision create the framework and inspiration your organization and its employees need to be successful. An old Japanese proverb eloquently states the important symbiotic relationship between vision and action: Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”

“If you can’t delight and inspire your employees, you won’t be able to delight and inspire customers.”

“If brand as we’ve defined it is indeed the sum total of all the customers’ experiences, ads they’ve seen, messages they’ve heard, even colors or designs that have subconsciously influenced their perception, then branding is everyone’s responsibility in the organization.”

“Thinking through every touchpoint the customer has with you is a great way to find those tiny moments that can make you ‘buzz-worthy.’ Companies that live their brand inside and out do this well.”

Maria Ross On Social Media:

“Social media is not a brand or marketing strategy. It is part of your marketing strategy —which in turn is rooted in a strong Brand Strategy.”

“In these days of social media, people can now expose brand identity crises to millions of people with the click of a mouse. Even the smallest misalignment can undo what months and years of brand marketing have promised.”

Maria Ross On Customers:

“Brand is the “mind share” you get from customers. You’ll be in a much more powerful place for long-term success if you can capture the mind share that leads to the wallet share, rather than propping up short-term results with random gimmicks, discounts, or specials that don’t invite ongoing loyalty.”

“If your brand is so clear and concise it gets their attention, then you’re on your way. Then the brand provides the “air cover” necessary to make all your other marketing activities effective.”

“Think about your ideal customer, not your average customer. “Average” will dilute your answer too much, leading to generic, vanilla communication that won’t appeal to anyone. When you try to be everything to everyone, you end up being ‘nothing to nobody’”

Maria Ross On Small Business Opportunity:

“Being small means you’re close to your customers and all decisions stem from you. Being nimble and having a small employee count can help you embrace that strength and build your brand right from the start.”

“You might be small, but you can think big. Use brand as the opportunity to create a mission-driven organization that adds something to the world and to the lives of those you touch: customers, employees, partners and even the community at large.”

The year 2011 represented the second full year of economic expansion since the end of the downturn in mid-2009. Small businesses, which represent about half of the private-sector economy and more than 99 percent of all businesses, were at the core of this expansion, which saw output, business income, and profits rise while business bankruptcies and unemployment declined.

Source: *Small Business Economy, 2012 U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy*

Small businesses with fewer than 500 workers outperformed large firms in net job creation in three of the four quarters of 2011—similar to an overall pattern that has existed since 1992 in periods when private-sector employment rose.

Source: *Small Business Economy, 2012 U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy*

Small business is BIG!

- The 23 million small businesses in America account for 54% of all U.S. sales.
- Small businesses provide 55% of all jobs and 66% of all net new jobs since the 1970s.
- The 600,000 plus franchised small businesses in the U.S. account for 40% of all retail sales and provide jobs for some 8 million people.
- The small business sector in America occupies 30-50% of all commercial space, an estimated 20-34 billion square feet.

Furthermore, the small business sector is growing rapidly. While corporate America has been “downsizing”, the rate of small business “start-ups” has grown, and the rate for small business failures has declined.

- The number of small businesses in the United States has increased 49% since 1982.
- Since 1990, as big business eliminated 4 million jobs, small businesses added 8 million new jobs.

Source: The U.S. Small Business Administration, <http://www.sba.gov/content/small-business-trends>