



MODULE 4: MAKING YOUR BRAND STAND UP AND SHINE

Welcome to Module Four in the **Red Slice Brand Bootcamp** series:
Making Your Brand Stand Up and Shine

SLIDE 2: In this session, we're doing to ASSESS your strengths and weaknesses and build a brand that works with what you've got so you can authentically deliver. We're also going to ARTICULATE your brand attributes, tone and personality so that you can attract and appeal to the folks you created in your ideal customer and client profiles from the last module. We're also going to LEARN a new way to look at competition. When your customer or clients are assessing whether to invest in you or not, we have to be conscious of what else they may be considering, which means we'll need to DETERMINE why you are different from - and better than - those other options for their time and money.

SLIDE 3: First, let's discuss strengths and weaknesses. As we discussed in Module One, your brand promise needs to authentically be something you can actually deliver. Acknowledging where you're strong and weak is a great way to ensure the brand plays to your strengths and downplays or addresses your weaknesses in a positive way. It's not about lying to people. It's about working with what you've got and what you want to offer to the world. In thinking about your brand and how to represent it visually and verbally, we must first consider: "What unique things can your business offer? What compelling assets, skills or connections do you have? What does your business really have going for it? Where is your business vulnerable? Where do you fall down against the competition?"

This is not about specific products or services per se, it's about your overall or corporate strengths and weaknesses.

For example, a great location is a strength but the lack of a strong community network to promote your business is a weakness. In some cases, the same item might be both a strength and a weakness, like maybe being small. Being small could mean you can only serve so many customers or you can't scale globally like some of your competition. But it can also mean you offer more customized, handcrafted solutions to your clients and excellent customer service. This may be something you decide to play up in your brand to counteract the competition.

SLIDE 4: In this module's Homeplay, you're going to fill out a chart of your strengths and weaknesses. Again for your business or yourself as a whole. What do you have in your arsenal from which to draw? What do you have on your side, and where do you know you're weak against the competition? Also, as a solopreneur, artist or microbusiness where much of what you do is tied to *you* personally, consider your own personal strengths and weaknesses (networks, connections, education, personal experience or story, etc.)

SLIDE 5: Next, let's get to the fun stuff. This is my absolute favorite part of building a Brand Strategy because it relies so much on what you dreamed of for your business. **What are brand**

attributes? That's just a fancy way of saying the emotions, adjectives and personality traits of your brand.

What do you want people to “think of” when they hear your name or see your logo? Which parts of their brain do you want to “light up” when they think of you? You get a very different impression when you think of Apple vs. Microsoft, or Kmart vs. Saks Fifth Avenue, or Kay Jewelers vs. Cartier or Tiffany, don't you? You can describe this in pictures, images, adjectives, personality traits or even use famous people, locations, or analogies if that rings true for you.

Do you want them to see you as warm, comforting and rich, like a vanilla latte? Do you want them to perceive you as sleek, sharp and cutting edge? It sounds like a silly acting exercise, but if your business were a person, what would it be like?

It may help to leverage the brands of people, characters, or locations for your description. As an example, if I say I want my brand to be the “Audrey Hepburn” of its industry, you would instantly get a picture of grace, femininity, elegance, and beauty without explicitly stating that. What images come to mind when you think of “New York City” as opposed to “New Orleans”?

Articulating the “vibe” you want your business to convey is a huge help to designers and writers in understanding your brand personality, tone and voice. With such description, they can get a feel for the right colors, typefaces and even word choices to use or avoid. Remember, it's their job to convey the brand “vibe” visually and verbally so help them do that!

SLDIE 6: Some descriptors and words for this exercise really are better than others. The more evocative a word you can choose, the more helpful it will be. A word like “professional” is good, but that can mean a lot of different things. See how much you can dig into this. “Buttoned up” or “Confident” might be stronger word choices to guide a designer and writer.

This slide includes examples of some words that evoke imagery and meaning more effectively. **A great resource during this exercise is thesaurus.com.** I use this all the time with my clients because word choice really does matter. One time, I had a client who adamantly did not want to use the word “sassy” to describe her business. But we came upon “cheeky” which was more in line with what she was trying to say to her target audience. Sometimes you really just need to find the right word and believe me; you'll know it when you find it!

SLIDE 7: In your packet, you're going to embark on this adventure with words. I want you to think of pictures, images, adjectives, famous people, locations, or personality traits that describe what you want your business to stand for or evoke. What you want it to “mean” to your target customers. You're going to brainstorm a list of all the adjectives, images, or emotions around your brand (the “brand attributes”) that come to mind first, and then trim the list until you have the five to seven most important ones. Why? Because just like we talked about before, if you think you're going to effectively be a laundry list of all things to all people, I'm sorry, you won't. Focus on the most important ones. That often means doing that little trick of writing down everything and then cutting the list in half and then in half again until you get to five or seven core attributes that matter the most for your positioning. (CLICK)

SLIDE 8: Now let's talk about competition. Somewhat related to the Brand Attributes exercise, you want to check out what others in your space are doing and if your desired brand personality or position is already "taken" in the market. Your Brand Strategy should clearly address how you're different and why customers should come to you instead of the other guy. Branding is all about differentiating your business from the other options customers have and finding the "whitespace" you can claim in the market. **Knowing what you're up against will help you craft your brand and message so you can clearly and concisely state why you're the best alternative.**

SLIDE 9: Competition is not just your direct competition of those who do exactly what you do. It could differ based on price, seasonality or need. For example, let's look at a chocolate shop, a jewelry store and a florist. You would never go to a chocolate shop to buy a diamond ring, right? And the florist probably doesn't sell boxes of imported chocolate. So their products don't really compete. When you want flowers, you go to the florist, period.

But...come Valentines' Day for example, a husband may have money set aside to spend on a gift for his wife. He needs a special, romantic gift. With that need in mind, he could spend that money at the chocolate shop or at the florist or at the jewelry store. So in that scenario, those businesses are competitors. That is why you see advertising like "A diamond is forever" to counteract this and show someone why they are a better alternative. It's not always just about "Buy this product FROM ME over the other guy." "Sometimes it's "Buy this PRODUCT over the other one."

For example, if you're a custom jewelry designer, your competition may still be jewelry but it's the less expensive, store-bought jewelry so you can talk about your work being one-of-a-kind and designed specifically for the person.

SLIDE 10: Sometimes it's an alternative. For example, a website designer competes against those DIY website templates or someone designing the website themselves. If you're a therapist, your competition may be self-help books or even a night of heavy drinking commiserating with your girlfriends (I'm sure you could find a way to talk about therapy being a healthier and safer alternative!). You need to think about, within your category for a person's particular need, what else competes for the time and money they could spend on you? What might they say if they were turning down your sale and how would you counteract this? What would you say to convince them? How are you better and different so they will choose you?

SLIDE 11: In your packet, you'll find a chart to map the top competition or alternatives. You can look at both direct and indirect competition. Pick a short list; you don't have to go with 20, but just a representative and obvious sample. For each one, list bullet points of their positioning by looking at their websites. What are they saying, what do they offer? Can you tell which Brand Attributes or "vibe" they are trying to convey? Who do you think they are targeting by how they look and sound? What are their main messages around what they provide? Be brief. Then, counteract those points by listing why your business is better or different. In doing this, you'll be able to address what's called "objection handling" in your brand messages – it will be like you'll

be there, right alongside the voice in the person's head telling them to go to the competitor. Sort of like the little angel on their shoulder, nudging them to choose you for the right reasons. This is why it's so important to ensure you're always talking to your true ideal customers – so you can feel confident that you can meet their needs and are not trying to “con” them into buying from you just because you want them to!

SLIDE 12: Now it's your turn! For this module's Homeplay, you're going to assess your strengths and weaknesses and how you might play them up or down within your brand and marketing. Then you'll think about your business' personality and vibe and come up with 5-7 brand attributes that descriptively evoke your brand look and voice. Remember, you'll also want to map this to what your ideal customers would be attracted to. If you find your ideal customer is way off from the type of company you want to create (if she's a little bit country and you're a little bit rock and roll, let's say) you'll have to rethink your brand personality or your target customer. This is a great sanity check, so don't get discouraged if this happens. Better to know now than after pouring thousands of dollars into marketing a company that doesn't even appeal to the targets you had in mind! Remember, this is not an academic research formula at this point. Use your gut, best judgment and knowledge of your space, service and product.

Finally, you're going to identify your three to five main competitors - direct or indirect – and assess what they saying and how they are presenting themselves you can then present a counterargument as to why you're a different and a better alternative.

Please do all this before you move on to Module Five, in which we'll build on this and be talking about how to turn this information into clear compelling messages and copy, including a winning elevator pitch. Any questions, please drop on over to the private Facebook group that is part of your course....Red Slice Brand Bootcamp. If you haven't already requested to join the group, please do. Enjoy, good luck and I look forward to seeing you at Module Five!