

branding basics

for small business



 How to Create an Irresistible Brand on Any Budget

MARIA ROSS

Updated
Second
Edition

Praise for *Branding Basics for Small Business*

Marketing no longer means advertising, and brand no longer means logo. Your brand is the promise, the experience, the interactions, and the expectation people have for you. Maria Ross understands this, and teaches you how to think about this essential element of your business.

Seth Godin

Author of *Meatball Sundae* and *Linchpin*

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

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

Co-author of *Content Rules:*

*How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks
(and More) that Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business*

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

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

Midwest Book Review

.....
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*

.....
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 the lack of a clear, focused brand strategy cause people to waste time, energy, money, and to 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*

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 Bargaen
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Branding Basics for Small Business:
How to Create an Irresistible Brand on Any Budget
(2nd Edition)

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Dedication

For Paul.

And for all the entrepreneurs, small businesses, start-ups, and non-profits who bring passion to their work and purpose to their brands. Thank you for being my heroes. The world would be boring without you.

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Introduction

*Why Small Business Owners, Entrepreneurs,
and Nonprofits Need This Book*

EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES we're forced to endure bad marketing. Today, we humans create and assimilate a barrage of corporate messages and images that was unheard of a century ago. The noise gets louder as companies fight to rise above the crowd. The moment they find a new way to do this, the tactic is abused and destroyed until it breaks down and the next new thing arrives to take its place.

I've had enough. *I want to start a brand revolution.*

I admit it: During my marketing, advertising, and branding career, I've been guilty of adding to the scrap pile on occasion. This was simply because we were not always operating from a strong brand foundation and were just chasing the next new thing. I have since learned that when a strong Brand Strategy is created *first* and then executed clearly and consistently—even in the most subtle ways—it can pack a huge punch.

Why do certain businesses and organizations delight us so much? And if we must be inundated with all these marketing messages in today's world, why can't we expect—nay, demand—more *delight*?

Effective advertising and messaging stem from strong branding. Without a strong Brand Strategy, organizations flounder, trying out different marketing tactics in order to find one that sticks.

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. Good branding can transform a frumpy housewife into a triathlete (Nike), an average guy into a chick magnet (Axe), a plain Jane into graceful royalty (Tiffany & Co.), a take-out food junkie into a dinner party diva (Williams-Sonoma), or a simple accountant into a rebellious road warrior (Harley-Davidson). It can even inspire us to get involved in our communities and take an active interest in government (Barack Obama).

This ability to inspire and delight has finally been discovered in the nonprofit arena with great success. Nonprofits like the The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) are realizing that the secret sauce that makes a for-profit's balance sheet look so good can apply to their own image, message, and brand. I've been lucky enough to work with nonprofits through volunteer organizations such as the Taproot Foundation (Taprootfoundation.org) and affectionately term this "using brand for good rather than evil."

A strong brand that connects with the subconscious and emotional reasons why donors give to charity can get money pouring through the doors. The APSCA's message and brand spurs millions to open their wallets to be a voice for abused and homeless animals. And guess what? For many nonprofits, the compelling benefit isn't necessarily making the world a better place; sometimes it's tapping into a donor's personal desire to simply feel good.

I've always had a personal mission to create brands that change the world. I seek to do this with every client, even if they only reach one hundred people a day. I believe organizations of all sizes can create brands that delight, inspire, and make the world a better place—in big or small ways—while still making stockholders or owners happy.

I believe simple, well-crafted, well-targeted brand messages can accomplish more with less. We've seen hundreds of examples of

large companies like Apple, Virgin, and Starbucks that built their strong brands early and now attract new fans, expand into new business lines, and increase sales—seemingly without effort. And yet so many other companies chase the next best thing to get their messages heard above the din.

Small business owners often wish they could emulate the big guys, even if those guys aren't doing things well. They carry the added burden of trying to do everything themselves, from scratch, and often forsake branding in their quest to get immediate sales and keep the doors open another month. Who can blame them when one person has to be chief executive officer, accountant, operations manager, marketing manager, and in many cases, the actual producer of the goods and services they sell? When you're knee-deep in inventory control, invoicing, lease agreements, or supplier relations, branding can seem like an afterthought, or a luxury you can't afford.

My goal with this book is to help small businesses, start-ups, and even nonprofit organizations build meaningful brands that *connect* with their audiences: brands that say something about their customers and partners, extend easily into other products or services, and turn customers and partners into evangelists. They can learn these lessons by emulating large, successful companies as well as businesses right around the corner.

I'd love to see more marketing out there that doesn't insult our intelligence, waste our time, or offend our senses. I want to show you how everyone in the organization influences brand and how a complete Brand Strategy now will help you make a thousand little decisions later on, so you can reap big rewards, get that cash register to ring, appeal to new donors, and attract rabid, loyal fans.

Enjoy the ride. It'll be fun.

Part 1:

What Is Brand and Why Does It Matter?

What Is a Brand?

IN THE MID-1990s, NIKE introduced a branding and advertising campaign called *If You Let Me Play*. The ad campaign was an offshoot of their iconic *Just Do It* message. The ads showed poignant close-ups of young girls of every race saying,

*“If you let me play sports
I will like myself more;
I will have more self-confidence,
If you let me play sports.
If you let me play,
I will be 60 percent less likely to get breast cancer;
I will suffer less depression.
If you let me play sports,
I will be more likely to leave a man who beats me.
If you let me play,
I will be less likely to get pregnant before I want to.
I will learn what it means to be strong.
If you let me play sports.
If you let me play sports.”¹*

From a purely business perspective, Nike designed this ad to sell apparel and accessories to women. Their campaign struck a powerful chord and hit me on a visceral level, making me see Nike in a whole new light.

I admired how the message went beyond “buy our stuff.” This campaign was about empowering our girls, strengthening them,

saving them from abuse and self-doubt, and putting them on a healthy path to adulthood. The ad was about equality, opportunity, and challenging yourself. As I looked into the eyes of the young girls on TV, I fell in love with Nike. I wanted to support Nike and all its efforts. Despite the controversies Nike has faced over the years, I smile when I recall that campaign. I hope it saved at least one girl by giving her courage and hope.

Nike showed me that a business can have a mission-driven brand and still make money. But what is this mysterious thing called *brand* and why should we care?

Brand is your story, your core purpose, and your customer promise. Brand is your reputation—which ultimately lives in the minds of your customers. Brand is what your customers say it is, not what you say it is, but you can shape and influence it through intentional actions. A clear, consistent brand will shape your business, guide your investments, and help you grow and prosper. And regardless of budget crunches or time constraints, your small business, nonprofit, or start-up can build a strong brand just like Nike. You have a powerful story to tell and a mission to accomplish. With your advantage of being small and much closer to the customer than global corporations, you have the power to engage and inspire your audience, however large it is, and make your community or world a better place.

Think about the big guys like Nike, Disney, Virgin, and Apple. How does reading the names of these companies make you feel? What images immediately come to mind? What emotions do they evoke?

Recall a memorable shopping experience you've had. How did you respond to the store, the clerk's competence, and his behavior toward you? Was the store layout appealing or did you feel anxious, claustrophobic, and manic? How did you feel about yourself when you left the store carrying their bag? Did you feel happier, smarter, more sophisticated, or more eco-savvy—or were you embarrassed to carry around the store's logo?

That, ladies and gentlemen, is brand in action.

But what does *brand* truly mean?

Some people believe brand is merely a logo, a website, or company colors. I work with many business owners who say, “Oh, I don’t need a Brand Strategy. I already have my logo and business cards, thank you.” But those items are only outer symbols of the brand—vehicles that communicate your brand to the world. They are not the brand itself.

For years, Scott Montgomery, executive creative director and principal for Bradley and Montgomery (bamideas.com), a brand innovation agency, has been building and communicating brands in unique ways for the likes of Microsoft, Angie’s List, and JPMorgan Chase. He also lectures frequently on branding and has been featured on National Public Radio (NPR) and in *The New York Times*. Here’s what Scott has to say about brand:

“In a world where absolutely everything in media is changing, let me try to define ‘brand’ in a way that won’t. A brand is exactly two things: it’s the promise your offering makes to people, and the clothes that promise is dressed in. The degree to which that combination generates the behavior you want from people is all that matters.”

Brand is the core experience, the story, and the essence of your business. It’s your company’s reputation, personality, and reason for being—all rolled into one package.

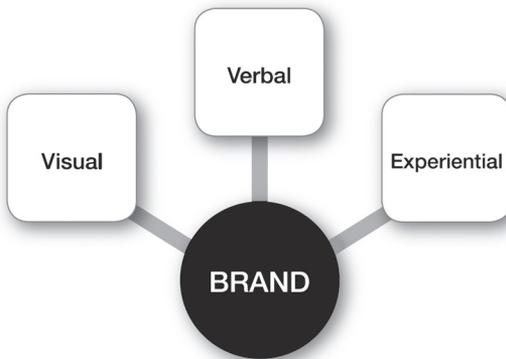
Brand contains the promise you make to customers, the value your product or services provide, and the difference between you and your competition. Brand is your reputation, your image, and the “mind share” you occupy in people’s brains based on their experiences with you, whether real or imagined.

Brand can also encompass your philosophy, a cause, and the reason you do what you do. You might think of brand as the

personality and soul of an organization communicated in various ways, such as through a logo. Here is Wikipedia's definition of brand:

“A brand is a collection of images and ideas representing an economic producer. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary. A brand is a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected to a company, product, or service. A brand serves to create associations and expectations among products made by a producer.”

In this definition, I especially like the phrase: *both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary*. This shows us that the brand experience you create is a two-way interaction across multiple vehicles. Your brand goes beyond the advertising you push out to customers. It's also based on people's first-hand interactions with your organization.



Brand communication is 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.

Since brand is a promise, a reputation, *and* an actual experience, entities besides businesses can have a brand. For example, countries and cities have brands. What feeling do you get when you hear Paris, France, versus Omaha, Nebraska? How about Antarctica versus Puerto Rico? I recently heard China is launching a rebranding effort to change their image on the world stage. Chinese authorities are going to highlight their scenic areas, corporate visitor centers, and museums in an effort to make the country seem more modern and welcoming.

In an October 2009 article for *CorpComms Magazine*, Alfredo Muccino, the chief creative officer of Liquid Agency, a global branding firm, explained that London's brand is no longer the quaint "royal family/tea and crumpets" deal or the "British punk movement." He feels England has morphed into something more cosmopolitan, blending the old and the new in a unique way.²

Events and holidays also have brands that evoke images and emotions. Take Christmas, for example. Many of us envision gathering with family and friends, decorating a tree, exchanging gifts, eating too much, and playing games with the kids. For some, Christmas has a warm, loving feeling attached to that brand. But since brand is defined by our own experiences, others may have a quite different take: to them, the brand of Christmas may represent chaos, budget woes, or stress. The brand is your own experience of that event.

People, from politicians to movie stars, may have their own brands. Famous personalities know the brand must be protected

at all costs, which is why they're upset when photos are used without permission. Oprah's brand is a Midas touch for the books, people, and products she endorses. She zealously guards her media properties to protect her personal brand. No one besides Oprah appears on the cover of *O Magazine*, and her brand communicates exactly what she intends it to communicate.

We've all seen what can happen when a personal brand is tarnished by scandal, as with golfer Tiger Woods and politician John Edwards. Once a brand goes bad, it's difficult to recover from the damage.

Brand Identity Crisis

Do you ever feel frustrated when a company brags about great customer service, then traps you for thirty-five minutes on a call center help line from hell? Then you know what I mean. How about food that's branded as wholesome but turns out to be extremely high in sugar or sodium, or automobiles that claim safety as their first priority but in reality possess potentially fatal flaws?

When a brand's reality fails to live up its promise, we have a *brand identity crisis*.

When a brand's reality fails to live up its promise, we have a *brand identity crisis*. Since brand lives in the minds of customers, they are the ones who ultimately control the brand perception based on their actual experiences, no matter what you might say in your ads or tout on your website. And if you're suffering from a brand identity crisis, they will form a different impression than the one you *want* them to have about you. 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.

The only way to have direct influence on your brand perception and avoid an identity crisis is to make a clear promise and then be certain everything you deliver and communicate is aligned with that promise.

The only way to have direct influence on your brand perception and avoid an identity crisis is to make a clear promise and then be certain everything you deliver and communicate is aligned with that promise. The rest depends on how customers perceive your intentions. If you've intentionally built a Brand Strategy that speaks directly to what those customers need and care about (rather than what *you* need or care about) and you're set up to deliver, then you should be okay.

Brand Myths Shattered

If you're part of a small business, nonprofit, or start-up with limited resources, you may think a killer brand is beyond your grasp. Not true! Let's dispel a few common myths right now.

Myth #1: Branding is difficult and time-consuming

Branding isn't rocket science, but it does require focused thought about what your business stands for and who you want to reach. Then, you must commit to consistently convey that message through everything you do. This actually saves time and effort, because you won't need to reinvent the wheel with each new activity or program. Sure, spending time up front on the ten Brand Strategy questions in Part 2 may take some time, but it is well worth the effort.

I advise you to get your Brand Strategy in place early, so you can put it into action. No lengthy six-month projects or heavy binders of recommendations for me. True, this process is never "done," because you never stop being a steward of your brand once

everything is in place. But instead of starting from scratch with each new program, you simply keep an eye on things and regularly do a “system check” on your materials, business practices, customers, and messaging to ensure your brand is clear and consistent.

Branding should not be a complex process that requires a PhD. This is a simple strategy that helps you define and live your organization’s values—and also provides a roadmap so employees and partners can verbalize and live those values, too. Living your values, if they’re authentic to your organization’s core mission, should not be hard. You know what they are; now you need to intentionally decide how to communicate them through everything you do and say. Effective branding means avoiding hypocrisy and being consistent with your employees, customers, and partners.

Effective branding means avoiding hypocrisy and being consistent with your employees, customers, and partners.

A well-thought-out Brand Strategy makes things easier for you by getting everyone on the same page.

Myth #2: Branding is expensive

Effective branding can be achieved on any budget.

I’ve worked with twelve-million-dollar budgets and one-thousand-dollar budgets and no company ever thinks they have enough money, regardless of their size. The real key to effective branding is identifying a clear picture of your ideal customers and developing a benefit-driven message that speaks directly to their needs. Once you align customers and benefits, you can work with a designer to create your logo and visual identity and with a writer to craft your copy.

Branding only becomes expensive when you *don’t* take time to build a clear Brand Strategy first, because then you’re grasping at straws and throwing money away on activities that don’t move you forward. An irresistible brand is not about big budgets; it’s about

making a promise your target audience cares about, then delivering on it clearly and consistently across all customer touchpoints.

Brand is not about big budgets; it's about making a promise your target audience cares about, then delivering on it clearly and consistently across all customer touchpoints.

That is what makes branding effective, not how much you spend. Thousands of customer touchpoints and interactions are available to help you communicate your brand promise for free or with little added investment if you get creative. And today, with so many free communication technologies at your disposal, the only cost is time. 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.

Myth #3: Branding is all fluff

Brand equity can make or break a company. If you think brand has no financial impact, consider why private equity firms purchase brands for billions of dollars just to gain control of the brand cache or loyal customer base. Studies tell us a strong brand image leads to increased sales, greater gross margin, and improved ROI (return on investment).³ Taking the time to build a strong brand helps organizations survive in an economic downturn. One study showed that “strong brands enabled companies to endure continued economic weakness and thrive in the transition to recovery.”⁴

Brand is the reason people pay three times as much for a white T-shirt at Nordstrom than they would at Target. It's the reason people ask for Coke at a restaurant, then order water if the place only serves Pepsi. And it's the reason the exact same couch may seem hip and sleek at Pottery Barn, but appear boring and plain at a discount store. An effective brand directly translates into bottom-line sales.

An effective brand directly translates into bottom-line sales.

If you build a brand and communicate it to the right people at the right time, you'll attract the interested customers you seek. In addition, a strong brand guides other marketing decisions that fuel your company's growth, including where to advertise, who to partner with, and how to price your product. Those decisions are anything but fluff; they are the lifeblood of your organization.

Myth #4: All designers are the same

All designers are not the same. While you can save a lot of money by thinking through a Brand Strategy on your own, you'll need a good designer to bring the visual aspects to life and make your brand appealing. Some designers get it, while others don't. When I worked for a corporation and hired outside vendors, I always turned to the right designer for advice instead of relying on someone's nephew, a high school art student, or an in-house computer programmer.

If a prospective designer doesn't ask about your target audience and what you'd like to convey to your customers and clients, then you should run the other way. A designer who only charges \$100 can cost you a lot more money in lost sales by not communicating the right message. Likewise, don't ask one of your software developers to create a logo or website simply because he knows Adobe Illustrator or HTML programming. Just as someone who knows how to put pen to paper may not be a good writer, programmers are not graphic designers or branding consultants.

Graphic design is a skill. Good designers understand how imagery, font, color, shape, and spacing impact the subconscious connections people make about your company.

Good designers understand how imagery, font, color, shape, and spacing impact the subconscious connections people make about your company.

They know how to take a verbal message and communicate it visually. And they should be experienced enough to give you clear recommendations and push back if you are going in the wrong direction.

You'll be pleased with the results if you craft a strong Brand Strategy on your own first, before embarking on any design project, and then spend a bit more money to work with a gifted designer who'll get it right from the start.

Myth #5: Branding works immediately

Branding and direct response marketing are two different things. Before a brand sticks, people need to experience it over time and in different ways. After all, brand is visual, verbal, *and* experiential, as we discussed. Nike's swoosh didn't have meaning within the first three months it appeared. No one knew what Ben and Jerry were about until news of their socially responsible brand and practices started to spread. And before Disney was *Disney*, with all the imagination, magic, and family entertainment it represents, the company was just an animator named Walt Disney who had big dreams.

Starbucks began as a little-known coffee company in 1971, but in 1982 Howard Schulz began transforming the brand into the retail powerhouse we know today. Schulz made brand changes and then held fast to his vision of what Starbucks could mean to customers, community, and society in general. He never wavered as he carefully built the company's marketing and brand around that vision.

Branding and messaging evolve over time as customers respond to them. You may be tired of your brand and messaging after three months, but that doesn't mean all your potential customers have had a chance to see it and form an opinion. A marketing research guideline suggests people need to see a marketing message five to seven times before they act on it. While you may live, eat, and breathe your brand on a daily basis, others need a chance to see it more than once and respond.

While you may live, eat, and breathe your brand on a daily basis, others need a chance to see it more than once and respond.

If the message is different every time they see it, then you're always starting from zero with your target audience. Give the brand messages and visuals time to work their magic before deciding to pull the plug. As long as your direction is focused and you're consistent across media, you should give the brand concept six months to one year to heat up before you decide if it's working or not.

Avoid the temptation to change things every few months in an effort to boost quarterly sales growth. If you spend time up front making the best decisions about your Brand Strategy *before* you implement it, then you won't feel the need for major changes later.

Think long and hard before you flip the switch on a logo or brand positioning.

If you get consistent feedback that things aren't working, then you know it's time to make a change. When Pepsi altered their Tropicana juice carton packages in 2009, the new cartons were bland and generic looking. Responding to intense public outcry, Pepsi's CMO at the time, David Burwick, conceded: "Sometimes you land in a great place, and sometimes you don't. And when you don't, you need to find a better place. Fast."⁵

Branding vs. PR vs. Marketing vs. Social Media . . . Oh My!

Along with believing brand is the same thing as a logo, people often confuse branding with public relations and marketing tactics, such as press releases, advertising, social media—even price promotions. In reality, brand forms the *foundation* of your marketing plan: it shouldn't come after the fact. Only by clarifying your Brand Strategy are you able to make the right decisions, such as if and where to advertise, whether to buy a booth at a particular event, and where to send press releases.

With that in mind, let's put definitions around these terms to keep things straight. Think of this as Marketing 101.

Branding and Marketing Are Not the Same

If any of you suffered through business school as I did, you learned about the ***Four P's of Marketing—product, price, place, and promotion:***

1. **Product (or Service):** What do we sell and how do we make it?
2. **Price:** How much do we charge for it?
3. **Place:** Where and how do we get it to our end consumers?
4. **Promotion:** How do we get people to know it exists and convince them to buy it?

So, broadly, marketing is an umbrella term for bringing products or services to “market” and effectively selling them. Too often, small business owners only think of marketing in terms of the fourth P, Promotion. But marketing encompasses so much more. Subcategories that fall under marketing include:

**Love what you've read so far
and want to learn more?**

**Get the entire book and be
on your way to building an
irresistible brand at
<http://bit.ly/brandingbasics2>**

“Marketing no longer means advertising and brand no longer means logo. Your brand is the promise, the experience, the interactions and the expectation people have for you. Maria Ross understands this, and teaches you how to think about this essential element of your business.”

– SETH GODIN, author of *Meatball Sundae* and *Linchpin*

“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, 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 random acts of content, read this book!”

– ANN HANDLEY, chief content officer of MarketingProfs and co-author of *Content Rules*

Create an Irresistible Brand on Any Budget

In *Branding Basics for Small Business*, marketing expert Maria Ross shares real-life examples and expert interviews to show how organizations of any size can create a winning brand. 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 starting with a strong Brand Strategy, which goes far beyond a logo. Brand is your core promise, personality and reason for being. Effective branding is not about how much money you spend but on how clearly and consistently you communicate the right message through everything you do. This book reveals a simple ten-question process to build a strong brand strategy and bring it to life 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.



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 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*.

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