

Your Business Image



AN IMAGE IS AN EXPRESSION. A business image, also known as your Brand, is the impression you create in the minds of your customers; it's your customers' perception of your business. It signifies what your business stands for.

Brand image is important for any business. When consumers buy a product or service, they aren't just buying a product or service; they're buying what your brand stands for. That is why it's so important to design your brand/image to convey exactly what you want it to say.

You build a strong business image by ensuring that every form of communication, from the way you answer the phone to the way you promote your business, sends one clear message to your customers. That single message gets repeated over and over in your thoughts, in your words, in your actions. In other words, your Brand identity.

How do you determine which business image is right for you? That image will depend on the kind of business you are in, of course, but there are other factors to think about.

Carefully consider the following four considerations:

- The impression you want to leave with your customers
- The feeling you want them to have about your business
- The real reason why customers buy your product or service
- The idea or information that your customers want to know about you

To help get you started, consider the following example:

Type of Business	Image to Consider	Image Selected
Daycare	Safe environment	Caring
	Caring environment	
	Healthy snack	
	Fun for kids	
	Convenient Location	

The image that the daycare centre finally selected – the caring image – was the one that the owner thought was most important to her customers. Let's see how that image measures up to the four key considerations listed above.

- **Impression** - This daycare centre cares about your children.
- **Feeling** - You want parents to feel comfortable leaving their children at the centre because they know you take good care of their children.
- **Real reason** - The real reason parents bring their children is that they know you care for their children as if they were your own.
- **Want to know** - Customers want to know that you care about their children.



Here's another example. Say you own an arcade and want to leave the impression of fun, but you also want parents to know that your arcade is a safe place for their kids to visit. Which message do you send? FUN.

Why FUN? Why not play up the safe – place aspect? Because you want to appeal to what your customers – the kids – really want, how you want them to feel, and the real reason they come. Send the message of fun. Let your customers experience fun when they come to your business, and they will leave with the impression of what a fun place it is. The kids will pester their parents to go, and the parents will do their own checking to ensure it is a safe place.

Choosing the Right Image for your Business

Complete the following exercise to help you decide which image is right for your business.

What type of business are you in?

List all the possible images or impressions you would like to create for your business, product, or service:

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Which image do you believe is the most important to most of your customers? (In the case of the daycare centre, for example, some customers will bring their children because it is convenient for them to do so; most, however, will bring their children because they know they will be well cared for.)

The image most important to most of your customers is:

Why is this image important to most of your customers?

Which of your customers' needs are you meeting? (i.e., They need to feel... by purchasing a product or service with you).

You may be tempted to list more than one image but choose only one. Two or more will confuse your customers and make it harder for you to leave a lasting impression about your company or product or service.

Next, fill in the blanks below, following the daycare example on page 1. This part of the exercise will enable you to see how your chosen image measures up to the four key considerations.

Impression _____

Feeling _____

Real reason _____

Want to know _____

Once you have selected what you believe is an effective image – one that your customers will respond to – test it. Ask your potential customers, business acquaintances, or family and friends this question:

“Is it important to you, as a customer that _____
(enter your type of business, e.g., daycare centre) is seen as _____
_____ (enter your business image, e.g., caring),
or is it important to you that it is _____
(enter the other image you were considering, e.g., safe)?”

Listen carefully to the responses you get. If you discover that the image you have chosen is not as effective as you thought, go back, and work your way through this exercise again. Once you have selected an image that meets with general acceptance, continue to the next exercise. It will help you choose a name for your business.

NOTES

Choosing A Business Name

Once you decide on a business image, you may wish to ensure that it is reflected in the business name you select. For example, any daycare centre that wishes to be seen as caring would not call itself Dynamite Daycare or plain old Children's Daycare Centre. Instead, it would favour such names as Mother Goose Community Daycare Centre or Just Like Mom Daycare Centre, as these names convey a more caring image.

Your business name - also called a trade name – is an important asset to your business. It is a reflection of what your business represents, and it is often your first impression with customers and what people will remember you by. You want to select the best possible name for your business. Think in terms of originality, future-proof, user-friendly, available (in some form) and likeable.

Keeping your image in mind, what are some key words that might form part of your business name?

To generate more ideas, consider the following:

- Make it original:
 - Explore keywords. Twinword has an awesome free keyword tool that can help you find inspiration for your name (type twinword.com/ideas into your browser for easy access). If you type a keyword related to your business into its search field, it will give you a graph of all other words related to it.
 - Consult books, newspapers, business directories and chamber of commerce membership lists. Flip through the pages and write down words that resonate with you.
- Future-proof:
 - One thing you do not want to do is create a name that minimizes your future expansion plans or limits your reach. (i.e., a name like Goddess Heels by Fiona would not be helpful if your plan were to expand into the male market).

- One way to future-proof your name is to stay away from the singular headspace – i.e., “this is the product we make or thing we offer” and to think about your company’s story, values and key differentiators as your brainstorm.
- User Friendly:
 - Choose a name that is easy to say, spell and type into Google.

As you browse and search for ideas, write down any interesting words or names – anything that really grabs your attention:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

From your list of words and ideas, develop a list of business names. Then write down the four or five that you like best:

Name #1 _____

Name #2 _____

Name #3 _____

Name #4 _____

Name #5 _____

Now let’s see how you did. Use the chart on the following page to rate the business names you selected. Assign one point for each characteristic that the business name portrays.

Possible Business Names

Characteristics	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Is the name distinctive?					
Does the name match the image you're trying to create?					
Does it describe the business you're in?					
Does it create a picture in your mind?					
Is it easy to recognize?					
Is it easy to remember?					
Is it easy to spell?					
Is it different from the names of your competitors?					
Have you kept the name short?					
Total Score					

Take the two or three highest-scoring names and ensure they are available for SEO (search engine optimization) purposes. You want to be able to use the name you choose in your website URL so checking if it is available in .ca or .com form is an important step (note: .ca is Canada only, whereas .com is for any country).

- www.godaddy.com is a go-to tool for checking domain (URL) availability and letting you see your .ca or .com alternatives.

Show the business names where URLs are available to a group of friends. Consider their reactions to each name and the discussion that took place, then make your decision.

Enter the business name you have chosen.

If you are considering using your personal name in your business name, consider the possible disadvantages?

- Customers, suppliers, and other people can contact you after hours at home. (This may or may not be a disadvantage to you, depending on your business.)
- If the business has problems, financial or otherwise, your personal reputation may be put at risk.
- People see “brands” with emotion and attach these to memory so you could be disconnecting with some people you are trying to attract.

However, if you feel that using your name brings value or known quality to your business, naming the business after yourself can be effective. Look at all sides before you decide. Choose your business name with care – it will remain for the life of your business.

The names you have selected, in order of preference, should be listed below:
First Choice:

Second Choice:

Third Choice:

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REGISTERING YOUR BUSINESS NAME

Now that you have chosen your business name, it is important that you protect it by registering the name with the Government of Saskatchewan's Corporate Registry. This task is quite simple to complete by going online to: <https://www.isc.ca/CorporateRegistry/RegisteringaBusiness>.

1. You will be asked to **state your business name** so have your options readily available in case your preferred name is already taken.
2. You will be asked if you plan to run your business as a corporation, partnership, or sole proprietorship. There are many differences between these **business structures**, so it is important to do your research or talk to an accountant and/or lawyer about what works for you.
3. Once you have confirmed your business type and name, you must **search for your name availability**. Searching costs \$50 (\$20 for a non-profit). It takes approximately 3-5 business days to get the results. Once approved you will get notice from ISC that your business name has been reserved for you (along with your reservation number) and that you have 90 days to register your business with Information Services Corporation. If for some reason you fail to register the name within 90 days, you forfeit the right to use the name. To regain that right, you would have to start over with a name search again.
4. While you wait for your business name approval, there are a few things you can think about and that you will need when **completing the registration step**. During the registration step, you will be asked the location of your business, what your anticipated monthly sales are, if you are planning to operate extra-provincially, and if you're planning on hiring employees. Also, you may want to think of a few more names, just in case the ones you submitted are not available.
5. Once you have received your Reservation Number, you are permitted to **officially register your business**. The Corporate Registry and Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance will review your registration and you will be notified of the results within five business days. All businesses will automatically be registered for a Business Number with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). You will also need to register for an additional account if you have employees, are a corporation, require a GST number, or if you're importing/exporting. Your registration expires in 3 years for a sole proprietorship or partnership, and every year for a corporation. It will not automatically renew. **Please make note of the appropriate renewal timeframes for your business type.**

Is Registration Required on Personal Name as a Business Name?

The only time you do not have to register your business name is when you decide to operate under your birth name exactly as it is stated on your birth certificate. In Canada, if you have a birth certificate or immigration status, you have the right to build your personal reputation without having to legally register or incorporate your birth name as your business name. Generally speaking, you have the right to earn as much money as you want under your personal name. Just remember there are tax implications to you personally and you may have to consider insurance concerns depending on what your business is.

For example, you could run a hairdressing salon as Jane Smith (if that were your given name) and not have to register the business. However, you need to remember that once your business generates \$30,000 a year you must register for a GST number. It is recommended that at \$29,000 you register for a GST number. You can either go online to register your GST number or you can phone in to do it. (Call CRA at 1-800-959-5525 or go online at <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/gst-hst-businesses/account-register.html>)

However, as soon as you create an alias – for example, Jane’s Hair Salon or Jane Smith’s Hairdressing – you **must** register the name regardless of whether you decide to operate as a sole proprietorship or incorporate. Remember, you must register your business name if it is different in **any way** from your given birth name.

UNIQUE BUSINESS POSITION

Although your business name is important so is your unique business positioning statement. This statement helps to set you apart from all other similar businesses within your region or province. The foundation of your business's success starts with ensuring you are sharing your unique business positioning message with potential customers.

Your unique business positioning is not a unique selling proposition and has nothing to do with selling. Nor is it an elevator pitch or a marketing tagline.

This is a tagline:



Your unique business position is a clear statement of how you are different than any of your competitors. It is specific to you and not a general comment that could apply to many. Just as deciding on your image and carefully selecting your company name, your unique positioning statement is the foundation for your business messaging.

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Developing Your Unique Positioning Statement

Definition: A unique positioning statement is a clear, truthful statement about how your business is different from your competitors. It is a statement that clearly identifies how you are compellingly unique.

Your unique positioning statement will be one to two paragraphs long (a paragraph is two or more sentences). Your first paragraph starts with NAME OF YOUR BUSINESS is the..... Your first sentence must be able to capture the reader to read more. You use strong words such as *First, Largest, Oldest, Newest, The source for..., The home of..., Only*. The first sentence will be the most read sentence of your entire unique positioning statement.

There are five areas within each business where you will be able to identify your unique features:

1. Product Differences
2. Service Differences
3. Differences as an owner
4. Longevity and historic differences
5. Location differences

Let's start to develop a unique positioning statement for your business. First, think about what you do better than anyone else? List things that make you unique or different using the five areas noted above (i.e., product differences, service differences, owner differences, etc.)

Second, let's list things that are factual about your business and consider the use of power words such as the only one; the first, largest, oldest; the most, newest, longest running; the source for information; the home of, etc.

LOGOS

Logos are a point of identification; they are the symbol that customers use to recognize your brand and your image. Ideally, you will want people to instantly connect the sight of your logo with the memory of what your company does – and, more importantly, how it makes them feel.

Logos can be pictures, words, or a combination of both. Your logo should:

- Send a message to your customers in a single glance
- Give a clear impression of what your business does
- Be easily used on your letterhead, invoices, receipts, newspaper ads, etc.
- Be placed in the upper left-hand corner of any printed matter
- Be distinctly yours
- Be easy to identify
- Be used repeatedly so that customers begin to recognize it and associate it with your company
- Use simple, clear lines in designing your logo, artwork, and graphics. This will make your newspaper advertisements easier to reproduce.

Now that you understand the brand and image you want for your business you can develop your logo. An online tool that would help in laying out ideas that match your brand is www.wix.com or www.canva.com. It's free to try and you only pay if you want to. Our suggestion is to use the tools to get ideas and take the ideas to a local designer or print shop to help finalize your logo design and provide you with final formats needed in ongoing marketing material.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

List your ideas on how the following communication tools might contribute to building your business brand/image.

Your Ideas

STATIONERY

Logo _____

Business card _____

Letterhead _____

Envelope _____

PRODUCT PACKAGING

Label _____

Price tag _____

Shipping carton _____

Bag _____

ADVERTISING

Newspaper Ad _____

Flyer _____

Brochure _____

Sales Letters _____

PLACE OF BUSINESS

Storefront _____

Store layout _____

Product display _____

Signage _____

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES

Greeting customers _____

Answering the phone _____

Return policy _____

Guarantees, warranties _____

Other Communication Tools

You know you have succeeded in conveying your intended image when people automatically describe your business with the exact impression that you have worked so hard to build:

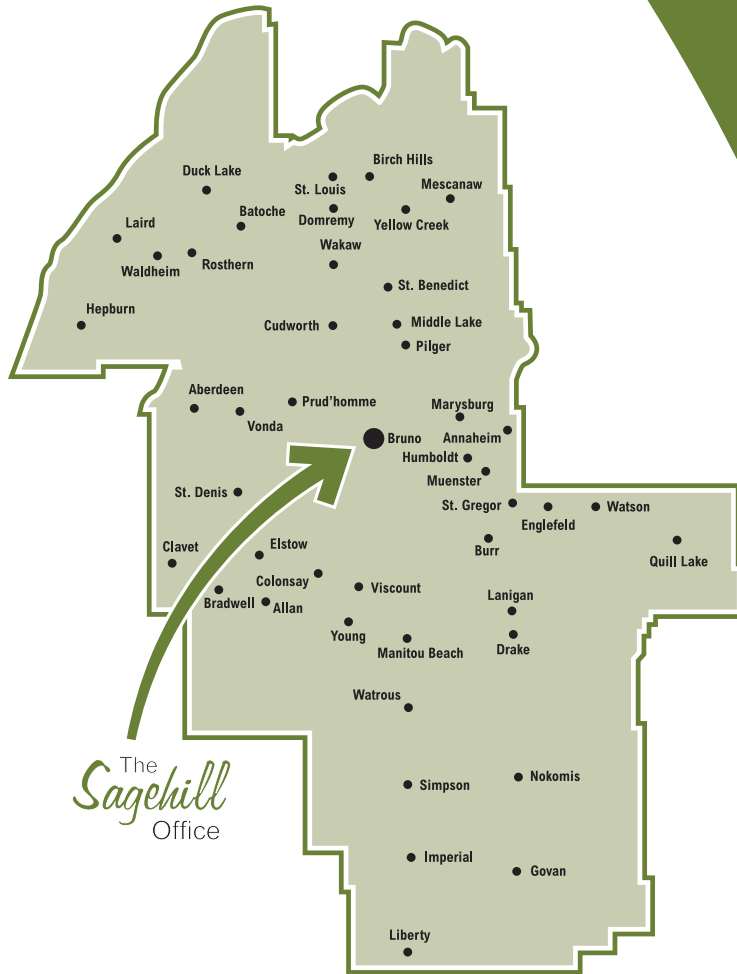
- When they see your product
- When they visit your store
- When they hear you talk
- When they see your advertising

Business images are not created overnight. Experts say it can take up to two years and sometimes more to build a strong image for your business. The results are well worth the time and effort. Remember, a lasting impression will:

- Increase the customer's ability to recall your business
- Make the customers think of you first when they are in the market to buy
- Help distinguish you from your competitors
- Lead to increased sales
- Help you to build repeat business

Your image reflects your business and your products and services...

Give it the time and thought it deserves!



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