

Creative intelligence for  
startups and scaleups

A photograph of two business professionals, a man and a woman, in an office setting. The man is in the foreground, wearing glasses and a light-colored shirt, looking towards the right. The woman is behind him, also in a light-colored shirt, looking at a computer monitor. The image is overlaid with a teal gradient.

# Branding for scaleups

An insider's guide

**SIM7**  
Creative Agency

# Branding for scaleups: an insider's guide

Developing a brand to withstand the rigours of fast-growth and to establish a leading market position takes verve, nerve and skill. But where should you direct your energy and investment? Here's our branding for scaleups five-step checklist.

Most entrepreneurs enjoy launching their companies and the process of creating a name, a brand and a fledgeling marketing strategy. But the most exciting branding stage comes when the business is doing well; when it's a scaleup that's growing fast and has developed a clear proposition and identity.

This is because you'll have a solid idea of a) what works for your business and what doesn't b) who your customers are and c) what your values are.

These are what makes your business unique and identifying these three areas will allow you to understand the story you want to tell with your brand. They'll help you to create a narrative that's effective and built for the future.

So, what's on your immediate agenda? There are five priorities to consider. And while they can be challenging and require investment, you're about to initiate one of the most enjoyable and rewarding branding exercises that your company will ever undertake.



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# 1. Brand refresh

Unless you struck lucky or were able to invest in a super talented creative agency, it's unlikely that your original brand identity reflects where your business is today and where it's heading tomorrow. The good news is that you probably won't need to go through the entire branding process again – a brand 'refresh' is all that's required. At its simplest level, this will involve giving your logo and identity a 'polish', which usually involves refining the form and colours and setting the standards for consistency.

As mentioned earlier, your company should now have a defined set of values (or at least a clear idea of market and positioning) and now's the time to let them seep into your brand. Talk to the agency that's carrying out the refresh about these values and make sure that they are reflected in some way – even if it's just your...ises that your company will ever undertake.

# 2. Tone of voice

Few but the best-funded startups bother to invest in a Brand Voice, but when you're a little further down the line and exploring deeper marketing channels and upping your budgets, it's worth defining the way your brand communicates and the language it uses. Again, this is an area that can be massively influenced by your brand values and your creative agency should be able to help you create an authentic, effective tone of voice that is as identifiable as your logo or brand colours.

In the meantime, start considering the tonal values that might inform your brand voice. Should your brand sound friendly, for example? Or is approachable a better fit? Or how about welcoming? There are subtle differences between all of these adjectives, and it takes time and thought to define them correctly.



## 3. Quality content

Hopefully, you'll have been creating content – blogs, social media, etc. – as a matter of course from day one of your business venture, but now's the time to really step things up. Craft content that drives traffic or awareness and builds trust. At the most elemental level, begin refining your SEO by defining the words that people are likely to search for in relation to your company. Those are your keywords. Use them in every piece of content you publish online – and try to make it more original and engaging than competing links on the first page of Google. This strategy will begin to drive traffic and customer attention.

Meanwhile, start considering next level content such as podcasts, videos or even a customer magazine. These are proven channels for established businesses, and they demonstrate greater authority and standing within the marketplace. And if that all sounds expensive a) the returns will be worth it and b) it's entirely possible to convert a short chat into enough targeted marketing material to drive a business for a month. We know because we did it.

## 4. Media relations

Branding isn't just about design. It's about the way that your business presents itself to the world across many different touchpoints or marketing channels. PR or media relations is a highly effective way of creating valuable business connections and it starts coming into its own for companies of a certain size. As a scaleup, it's worth creating a dialogue with different media outlets and starting to create narratives and angles that will put you on a larger platform.

Many entrepreneurs will be excited at the prospect of being featured in a big-name national newspaper or online destination, but know your audience and what purpose each media outlet serves for them. So while a single (and undoubtedly hard-fought) mention in a Financial Times or TechCrunch article may get your name out there, to convert readers into customers you'll need to show up in the places they'll be looking.

*Adapt your PR tactics to what will help you achieve your ambitions. Talking to journalists can be a thrill, but perhaps approaches like influencer relations will be much more powerful for your brand.*

## 5. Strategy

An ownable, well-defined brand strategy with beefed-up brand assets cuts through the clutter and competition, straight to the audience you need to get to. Approach every marketing or advertising opportunity with the question: “is this true to my brand’s values and qualities?” The answer will help you communicate effectively, whether that’s executive speaking at an event, taking part in a roundtable, announcing news, launching a new marketing campaign, entering a partnership or simply writing a blog.

It’s how branding for scaleups has the greatest chance of success. It’s how you’ll find your voice, project brand consistency and ultimately build trust – especially when you’re moving fast and driving change.

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