

# What is a brand?

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**Many owners of small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) don't have an exact answer to the question: 'What is a brand?'. And, amongst those that do there are many vastly different interpretations.**

According to *The Dictionary of Business and Management*, a brand is: 'A name, sign or symbol used to identify items or services of the seller(s) and to differentiate them from goods of competitors'. Icons, words and symbols are part of what creates a brand, but to most SMEs this is a very misleading definition.

In the words of one of the greats of the advertising industry, Walter Landor: '(S)imply put, a brand is a promise. By identifying and authenticating a product or service it delivers a pledge of satisfaction and quality'. This definition clearly teaches us that a brand is not just a set of images or colours, but is a more complex 'entity' that infiltrates every level and every corner of the business.

## What are the challenges to creating a brand?

With this in mind it is easy to see where many SMEs fall short. They simply create a name, pick an icon to represent it and then go to market with a message that they believe their customers want to hear. But a brand is not a product or a service. It is intangible and remains etched in the memory of consumers.

Too often we see companies trying to create a brand as they would a product, which usually fails as they struggle to integrate it throughout the business. The business owners or brand developers are usually not the target audience for the product or service, so by simply applying what they feel would work does not necessarily deliver the correct or appropriate message to the actual target audience.

A brand is simply a set of associations. If these are correctly aligned, a brand will have instant recall and value. As marketers, our goal is to ensure that these 'memories' help the consumer understand what the SME delivers and what they aspire to. Key points of differentiation should be included to set the business apart from its competition.

An easy test to prove this is to identify the brands represented by the following:

- Golden Arches
- Colonel Sanders
- Oh, what a feeling!



If you answered McDonald's, KFC and Toyota, then you have just experienced the power of brand! If not, then perhaps you have been living on a desert island?

## How do you create a strong brand?

There's a lot of clutter out there these days, and it's becoming more and more important for businesses to have a strong brand. That which was once the domain of large multinationals is now descending into the SME space. Competition is increasing and consumers are becoming savvier.

Quite simply, a strong brand is the key ingredient for success.

At McCorkell & Associates, the two most common requests we get for brand development are for brand reinvigorations or 'brand facelifts' and for the development of a logo or brand from a blank page. [www.mccorkell.com.sg](http://www.mccorkell.com.sg) ■

### Brand development case study: McCorkell & Associates

**Client:** Audit Bureau Australia

**Brief:** Reinvigorate the current logo to reflect the bureau's three media auditing services

**Methodology:** ABA sought to take both divisions of this not-for-profit authority and develop strong, recognisable brands. The Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) and Circulations Audit Board (CAB) had not had a brand refresh since 1932 and 1952 respectively. To this end, it made sense to join the boards under one brand that coincided with similar organisations around the world. Thus, the Audit Bureau of Australia (ABA) was born, with ABC and CAB as sub-brands.