

The baby ceo's guide to branding

A DIY manual for branding
your first business



Why We Made The Baby CEO's Guide To Branding and Why It's Free

Let's be honest, starting and running a business right now is hard. Especially here in Nigeria.

The economy is unpredictable, prices are rising, and resources feel more limited than ever. Many people have great ideas but don't know where or how to start, while others are already in business but struggling to stay afloat.

In our 10 years of building Toast, we've seen it every day. We've been there too and if there's one thing we've learned, it's that no one does it alone. So, consider this our way of making the journey a little easier for you, by giving you a resource that we wish someone had given us 10 years ago.

The Baby CEO's Guide To Branding is not a generic "business book," it is a real, practical, and honest resource for people trying to build something that lasts. Whether it's their first business or their fifth attempt at getting it right. We know that access to knowledge can make all the difference between giving up out of frustration and finding a way forward. And we don't believe this knowledge should be locked behind a paywall or only accessible to a select few.

We're giving this guide away for free because we believe that everyone deserves a fair shot at success. We know that not everyone has access to expensive courses, mentorship, or the finances to back years of trial and error. This guide is our way of saying: Here's what we've learned. Here's what actually works. Here's how to navigate this journey without losing yourself in the process.

For you, as an individual, we hope this guide brings clarity, confidence, and direction. We want you to understand that your business can work, even in these hard, uncertain times. Whether it helps you structure your idea properly, manage your finances better, or just stay motivated when things feel overwhelming, we hope The Baby CEO's Guide gives you what you need.

Beyond individuals, we know that strong local businesses build strong economies. When people succeed in business, they create jobs, support their communities, and keep money flowing within the local economy. We need more of that. Nigeria needs more of that. More businesses that don't just start but thrive, so that we're not just barely surviving as a country anymore, but actually growing.

We're not claiming to have all the answers, but we do know this: when more people are equipped with the right knowledge, they make better decisions. And better decisions lead to stronger businesses, better job opportunities and a more resilient economy. All of which lead to a better quality of life generally.

So if you're reading this, just know, we made this guide for you. For the dreamers, the risk-takers, the people trying to figure things out one step at a time in spite of everything. We hope it helps. And we hope you keep going.

Because when you win, we all win.

1. Welcome to the Playground

Introduction

So, you've started a business. Congrats! You've got a great product or service, maybe even a cool name, but now what? How do you make sure your business isn't just another drop in the ocean of businesses fighting for attention?

That's where branding comes in. And no, branding isn't just about having a logo and a catchy slogan. It's about how people perceive your business, how they experience it, and what they remember about it. It's your business's personality, reputation, and promise all wrapped up in one. If that sounds like a lot, don't worry. This guide is here to break it down, step by step, without the fluff.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to improve your existing brand, *The Baby CEO's Guide to Branding* will give you the tools to build a brand that stands out, connects with your audience, and actually makes money.

Let's get to work.

2.

Baby Steps: Laying the Foundation

Branding is less about logos and more about knowing ***who you are*** and ***why people should care***.

Start here:

What Do You Even Do?

If you can't explain what your business does in one simple sentence that even a 10-year-old could understand, then we have a tiny problem. And by tiny, I mean *huge*.

This one-liner is called your **elevator pitch** because if someone asks what you do in an elevator, you should be able to answer before they reach their floor. It should include:

- The problem you're solving
- Your solution
- Why anyone should care

No fluff. No TED Talk. Just a clear and straight-to-the-point sentence.

Examples We All Know:

Nike: We make cool sportswear that helps you move faster, train harder, and feel like an athlete.

Spotify: We built an app that lets you listen to all the music you love anytime without needing to buy a single album.

Gala: We keep Nigerians from starving in traffic with delicious sausage rolls that are available everywhere.

Now your turn. What does your business do? And if it takes you more than one sentence, *we are going to need to have a talk.* 😊

What Problem Are You Solving?

People don't buy products. They buy solutions.

Nobody wakes up thinking, *"I need a sausage roll today."* They rush out of their house and realise, *"I'm starving, and I'm stuck in Lagos traffic."*

Before you start selling, you need to dig deep into the **real** problem you are solving. Ask **why** until you hit a dead end. The deeper you go, the clearer your brand's value becomes.

Example: Why Do Nigerians Need Gala?

Why do people buy Gala?

Because they are hungry.

Why are they hungry?

Because they are stuck in traffic for hours with no food options.

Why aren't there many food options?

Because most foods are hard to transport, require refrigeration, or can't stay fresh in traffic.

Why?

Because many foods are either too big, spoil quickly, or aren't packaged well enough to stay clean and safe on the go.

This process helps you understand the real **root cause** of the problem. Gala isn't just a snack. It is a **fast, portable, and hygienic solution** for people stuck in traffic with no time to stop for a proper meal.

It helps you understand why people would choose to buy your product or service.

Now, your turn. What problem are you solving, and what's the real reason people need your brand? Keep asking why until you can't anymore. That's where your business's true value lies.

Who Actually Needs This?

Not everyone. If your answer is "anyone with money," you need to kneel down, raise your hands and close your eyes.

You need to get super specific about **who** your product or service is for. This is called a **user persona**, a detailed description of your ideal customer. The deeper you go, the clearer your business strategy becomes. You will know **where** to sell, **how** to market, **what partnerships** to pursue, and even what other solutions you can offer in the future.

So, let's get to know your perfect customer. Ask yourself:

- Where do they live?
- How old are they?
- What languages do they speak?
- What religion do they practice?
- What do they do for work?
- How much money do they earn?
- How do they relax?

And now, the weird but important question... **What did they eat for breakfast this morning?**

It sounds random, but it actually reveals **a lot**. If they had coffee and toast, they are probably busy professionals who need quick and easy solutions. If they had an elaborate meal, they might have more time and disposable income.

The more you know about your audience, the better your brand will be. A product for *everyone* is really a product for *no one*. Get specific, and watch your business become unstoppable.

What's Your Brand Personality?

Is your brand the cool best friend? The no-nonsense expert? The fun, chaotic genius? People buy from brands they *relate to* and *admire*.

Let's prove it with a quick game. Match these brands to a celebrity:

Apple: Brad Pitt, Trevor Noah, or Donald Trump?

Google: Taylor Swift, Barack Obama, or Burna Boy?

Sephora: Lizzo, Rihanna, or Lionel Messi?

Cadbury: Morgan Freeman, Leo DiCaprio, or Nicki Minaj?

Gala: Portable, Justin Bieber, or Wizkid?

If your choices were **Brad Pitt** (Smooth, confident, and always delivering excellence), **Barack Obama** (Smart, reliable, and cool), **Rihanna** (Trendy, bold, and setting the standard for beauty), **Morgan Freeman** (Classic, rich, and universally loved) and **Portable** (Always available, a little chaotic, but gets the job done), then congrats! You have just admitted that brands have personalities.

Your job now is to shape a clear, authentic, and relatable personality for your brand. Are you:

- The wise, no-nonsense expert?
- The playful and witty friend?
- The bold and rebellious game-changer?

Whatever personality you choose should shine through in your messaging, visuals, and how you engage with customers. If your brand were a person, who would they be? More importantly, would the ideal customer you defined earlier actually want to hang out with them?

3.

Looking the Part: Your Brand's First Impression

Before you start posting and selling, you need to look like a real brand, not a rushed side hustle someone threw together at 2 AM.

Your brand's first impression is built on five things: name, voice, logo, colors and typography. Let's break it down.

Name – What do we call your brand?

Picking the right name for your startup is a big deal. It's the difference between a brand that sticks in people's minds and one they forget before the conversation is over. A great name makes it easier for customers to find you, remember you, and recommend you. A bad name? Well, it can make things unnecessarily complicated.

Here are six best practices to keep in mind when choosing a brand name:

1. Avoid hard-to-spell and hard-to-pronounce names –

If people have to pause and think before saying your name out loud, you're making things harder than they need to be. Imagine someone hearing about your business and struggling to spell it when searching online. Keep it simple, you don't want to be correcting pronunciations 24/7.

2. Don't pick a name that limits you – You might start by selling handmade candles in Lagos, but what if you expand to perfumes? Or move to New York? A name like "Lagos Candle Co." could box you in. Pick something flexible enough to grow with your business.

3. Make it unique – You don't want to be confused with a dozen other brands out there. A quick Google search can help you avoid picking a name that's already overused. Plus, having a distinct name makes you easier to find.

- 4. Check online availability** – Before you get too attached to a name, check if the domain name and social media handles are available. Nothing is worse than coming up with the perfect name only to find out the Instagram handle is taken by someone who last posted in 2015.
- 5. Check for legal availability** – Government registration bodies like the CAC (Corporate Affairs Commission) in Nigeria or other relevant authorities in your country can help you confirm if your name is legally available. Don't skip this step because you don't want to build a brand only to be forced to change its name later.
- 6. Try to convey some meaning** – Your name should give people an idea of what you do or how you make them feel. Think of brands like “Netflix” (internet + flicks) or “Opay” (easy payments). A name with meaning helps create an instant connection with your audience.

Your brand name is a major contributor to the first impression that your customers would have. It should be simple, memorable, and flexible enough to grow with your business. Take your time, do your research, and choose wisely, because once the name sticks, it's hard to shake off.

Brand Voice – What Does Your Business Sound Like?

If your brand had to say, “*We don’t work on weekends,*” how would it say it?

- **Professional:** "Our team is out of office on weekends. We'll get back to you on Monday!"
- **Friendly:** "Weekends are for rest, you should get some too! We'll reply first thing Monday."
- **Fun:** "It's Saturday! No work, just vibes! Catch you next week. 🥳"

Your brand voice is how people connect with you. Whether it's playful, serious, or straight-up savage, it should be clear, intentional, and consistent across everything you do.

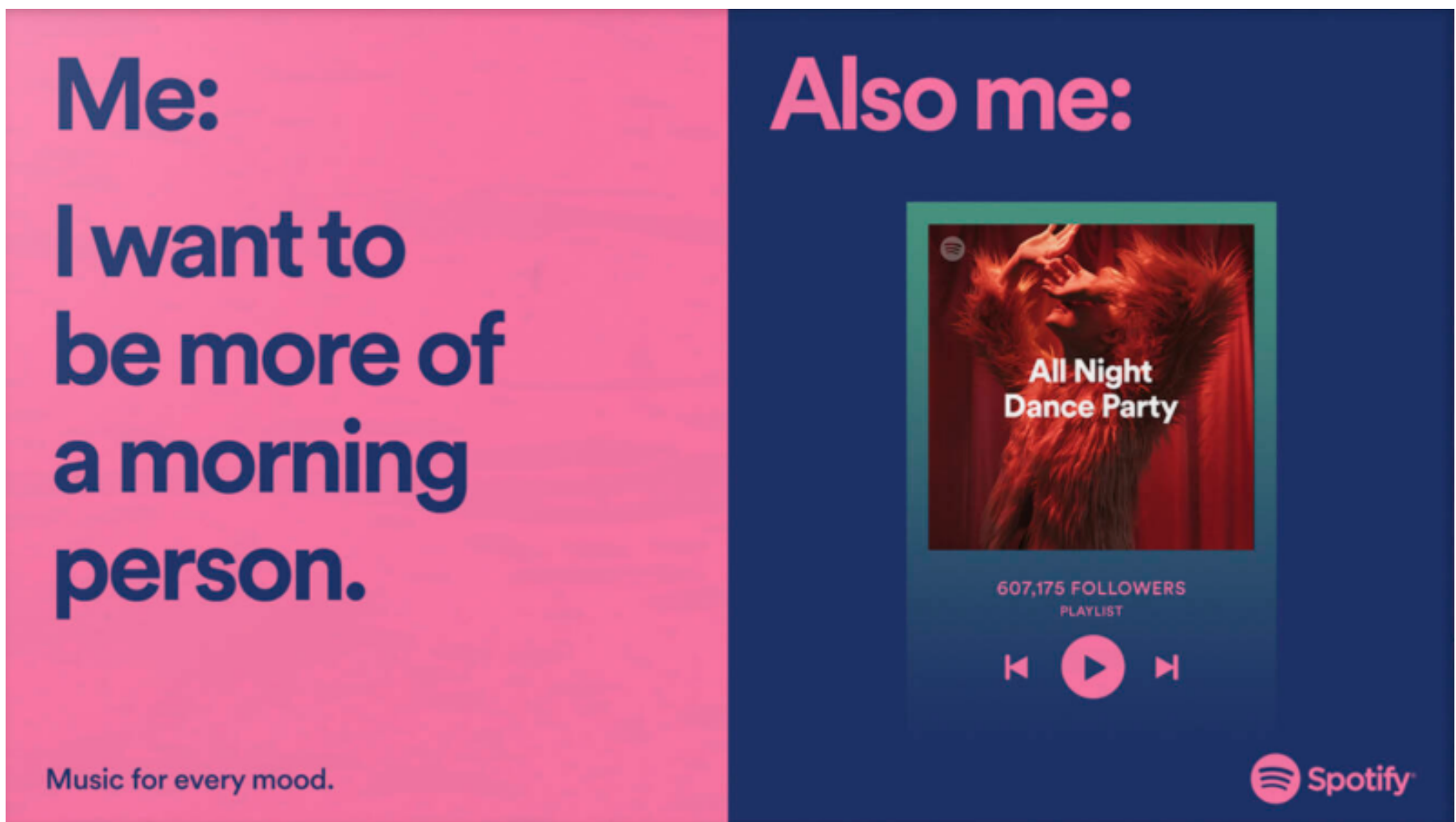
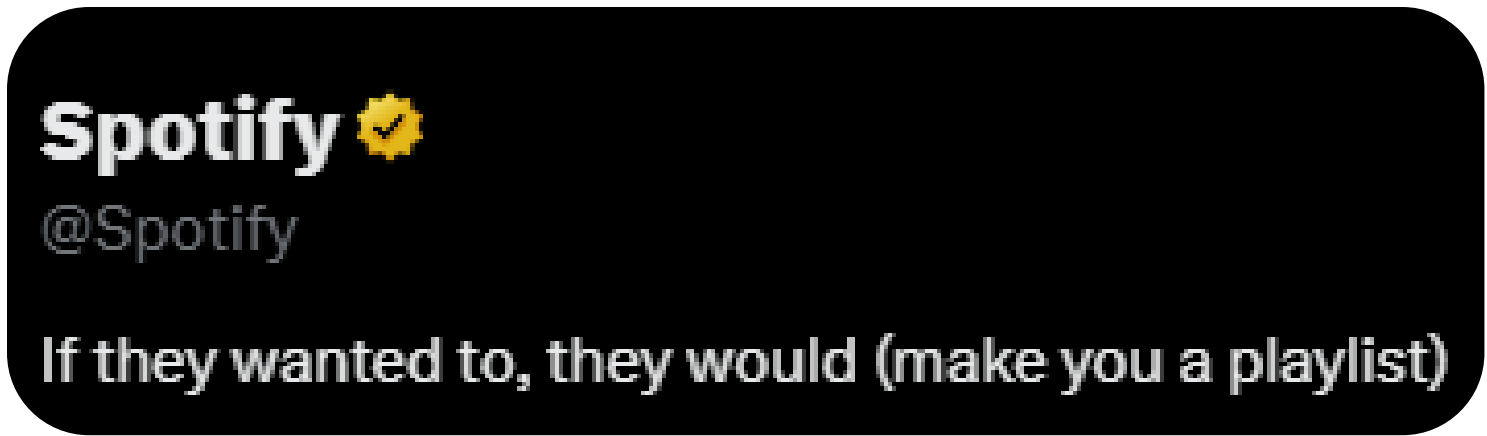
Here are some brands that own their voice:

Duolingo: Chaotic, unhinged, and hilarious. Their notifications go from "***Your streak is on life support. Do your lesson before we pull the plug.***" to "***It looks like you've learned how to say 'quitter' in Portuguese.***" Zero chill. 100% memorable.

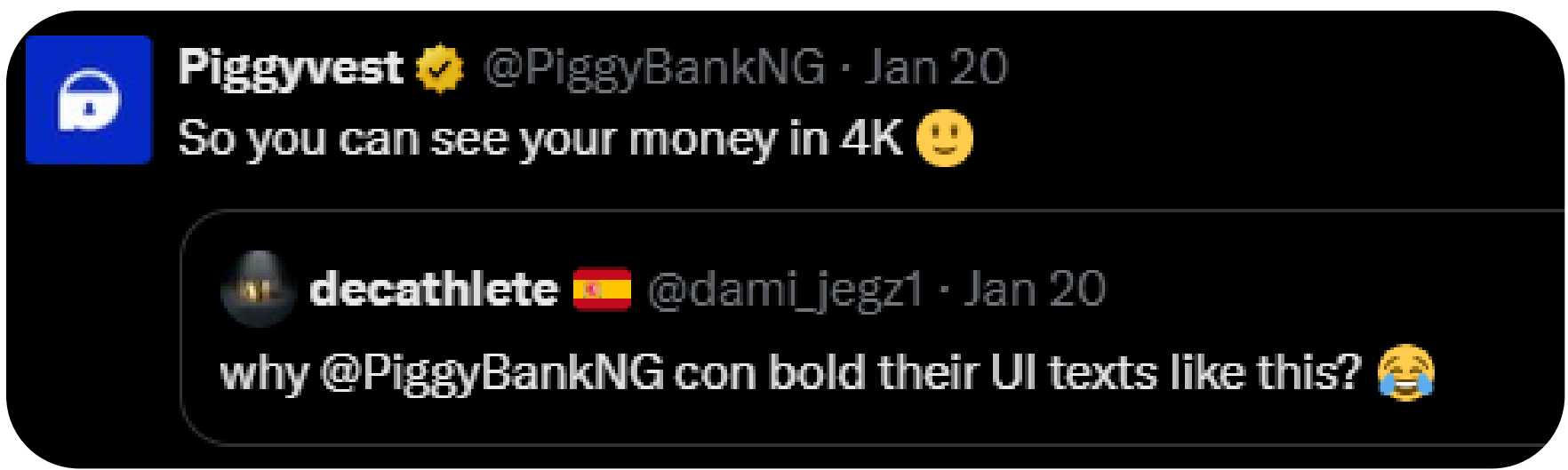
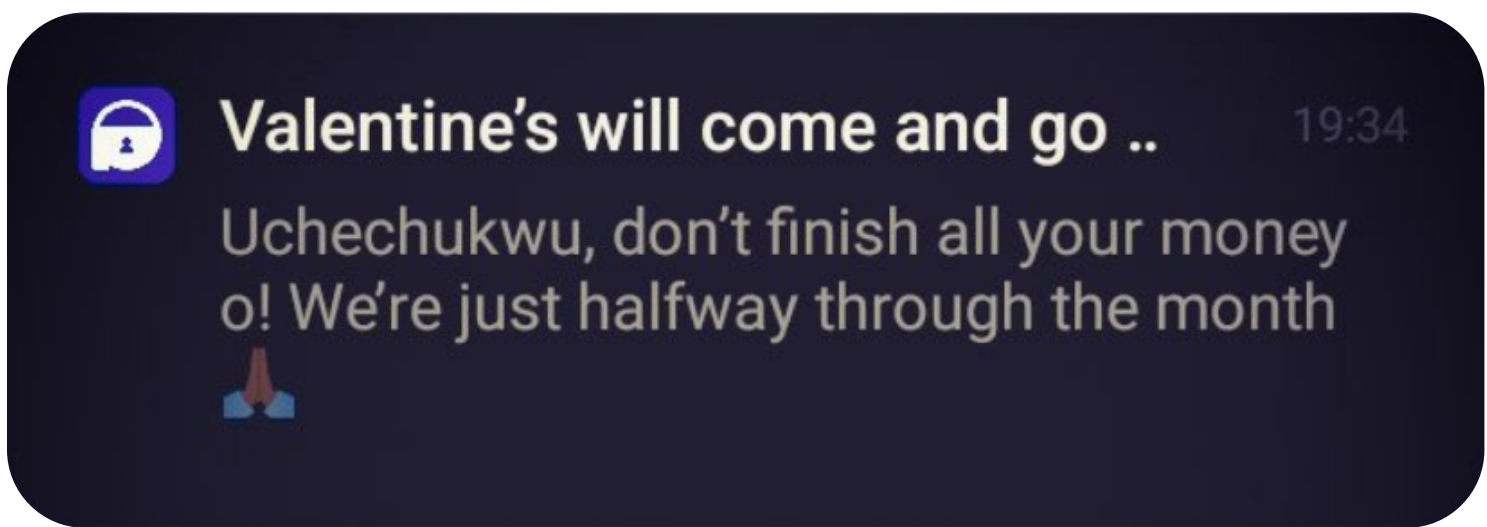


Spotify: Cool, witty and engaging. They blend humor, cultural relevance, and data-driven insights to make users feel seen and understood.

They usually send messages like *"You had 'Breakup Songs' on repeat this week. Are you okay? 🙄"* or *"We see you vibing to Afrobeats at 2 AM. Respect."*



PiggyVest: Smart, relatable, and witty. They make saving money sound fun, not boring, with tweets like *"Budgeting is just gossiping about your money."* or *"Treat your savings like Jollof rice, guard them with your life."*



To help you figure out your brand's voice, here are 10 well-known brands and how they sound:

- **Apple** – Innovative and sleek
- **Coca-Cola** – Refreshing and uplifting
- **Nike** – Motivational and empowering
- **McDonald's** – Friendly and inviting
- **Google** – Informative and helpful
- **Disney** – Magical and nostalgic
- **Airbnb** – Inclusive and community-focused
- **Red Bull** – Energetic and adventurous
- **Netflix** – Relatable and casual
- **Amazon** – Reliable and customer-centric

Now, get to work! Your brand voice is waiting to be discovered.

Logo – The Face of Your Brand

Do you know that 90% of people recognize a brand by its logo? That means your logo is doing a lot of heavy lifting. It's your brand's first impression, its face, its profile picture.

At Toast, we don't just judge logos based on how good it looks. We use four key metrics to separate the great from the forgettable.

1. **Simplicity** – Can you draw it in four seconds or less? If not, it's doing too much.



2. **Uniqueness** – If I Google it, will I find five others that look just like it? *This is extremely important because it can save you a lot of money down the line.*

3. **Functionality** – Is it still legible when it's tiny on a business card or massive on a billboard?



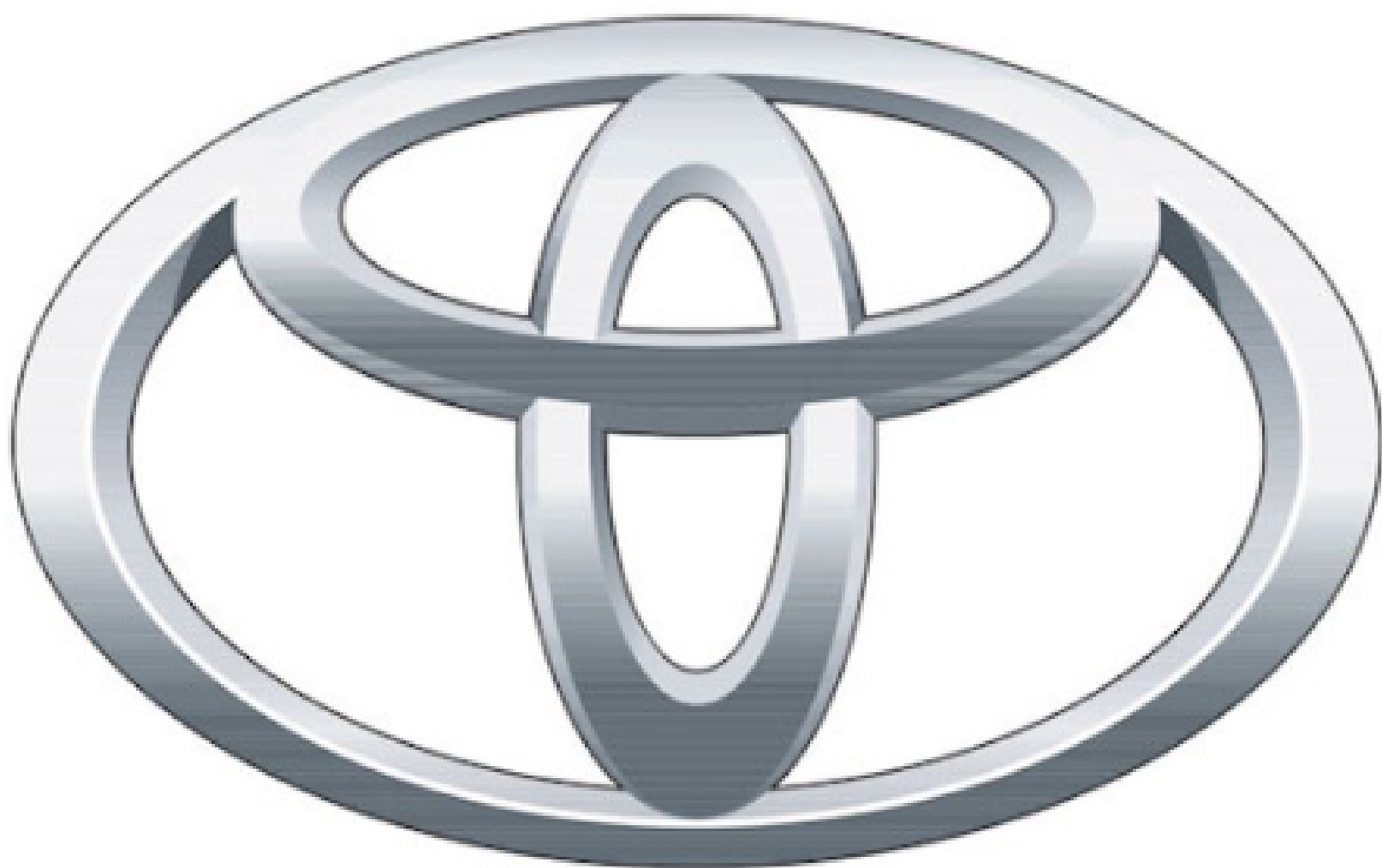
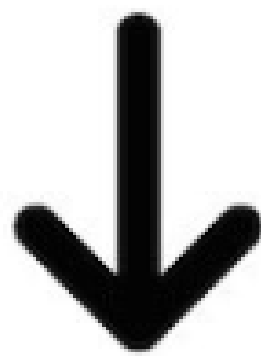
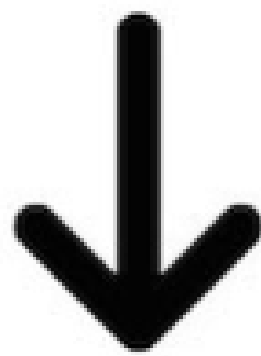
4. Storytelling – Is there a solid message behind the design, or did you just think it looked cool?

FedEx

FedEx

FedEx hidden arrow that represents how they are always moving forward

TOYOTA



The Toyota Logo has every alphabet of the company's name



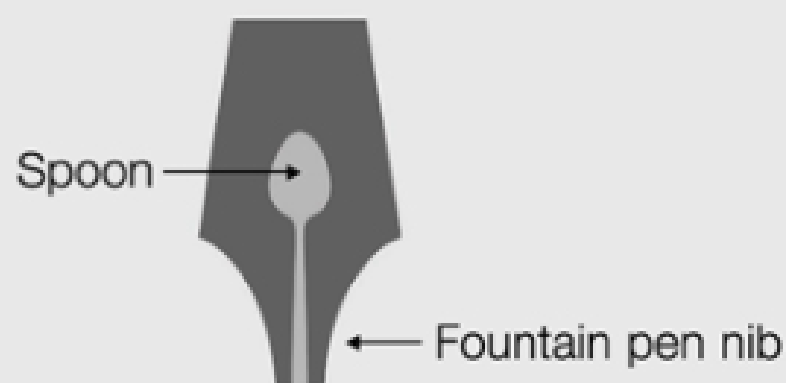
Tour de France logo



Hidden shape of a cyclist



THE GUILD OF FOOD WRITERS



Whether it's your first logo or your fifteenth, run it through these metrics. If it checks all the boxes, congratulations, you've got a solid logo! If not, it might be time to go back to the drawing board.

If you don't have a logo at all and hiring a professional branding agency isn't in your budget, don't worry, we've got you. Here's a quick DIY logo hack to get you started:

- 1. Pick a Font That Matches Your Vibe** – Want to look professional? Go for a clean, bold sans-serif. Want something playful? Try a quirky handwritten font.
- 2. Use the first letter or a simple icon** – Use the first letter of your brand's name as your brand's icon or check free resources like [The Noun Project](#) or [Canva's icon library](#) for something that represents your brand. Keep it minimal.
- 3. Make it unique** – Do a quick Google search of similar businesses. If your logo looks too much like someone else's, tweak it by changing the font or adding / removing simple elements until it stands out.
- 4. Test the 4-Second Rule** – Draw it from memory in four seconds. If you can't, simplify it.

Boom! You have a logo. It might not win design awards, but it's a solid start until you're ready to level up.

Ps. if you're worried that your simple letter logo would lead to an unsuccessful business, here's some more proof that you couldn't be more wrong



Company Name: Hinge
Industry: Dating App (Tech)
2023 Revenue: \$396 million



Company Name: Adobe
Industry: Tech
2023 Revenue: \$19.409 billion



Company Name: Uber
Industry: Tech
2023 Revenue: \$8.7 billion

Still worried about your simple logo? Exactly, I thought so!

Colors – Consistency Over Chaos

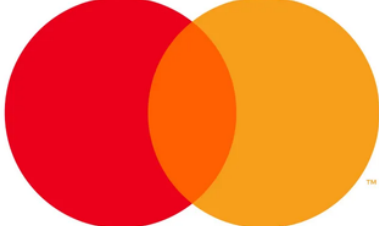
If your brand changes colors like a chameleon with commitment issues, people are going to assume you don't know what you're doing. And honestly? They'd be right.

Your brand's colors should be like your secondary school uniform. Easy to recognize, intentional, and not randomly changing every other day.

Here's how to get it right:

Match Your Brand's Personality - Is your brand bold and energetic? Sleek and sophisticated? Fun and playful? Picking the right brand colours can help emphasize that personality and make it a little easier for your people to find, recognize and remember you.

Here's a quick colour guide. Hope it helps 🙏

Urgency & Excitement	Comfort & Affordability	Attention & Excitement	Balance & Growth	Trust & Security	Style & Luxury
     	     	   	     	       	       

Pick your brand colors - Keep it simple! Start with **one main color** that matches your brand's personality (Red for boldness, Blue for trust, Orange for energy, you get the idea). Then, add **two neutral colors**, one light (like white or a soft pastel) and one dark (like black or deep gray). Sticking to just three colors in the beginning keeps things clean, professional, and, most importantly, **not a rainbow explosion of confusion**.

Stay Consistent Everywhere - Website, social media or packaging, you should keep the colors exactly the same. No one should feel like they've stumbled onto a different brand because you suddenly switched from bright red to neon green.

As your business grows and new needs arise, you can expand your color palette. A great way to do this is by adding different shades and tones of your primary color. It keeps things cohesive without turning your brand into a chaotic color wheel. Start simple, stay consistent, and when the time comes, **level up with purpose**. Now, go forth and make the world a little more colorful!

Typography – Choosing the right font

Fonts are everywhere. They are on your website, packages, posters, etc. The best brands stick to one major font across all of these different platforms. You should too. The right font makes your brand look polished and professional, while the wrong one can make it seem unserious or outdated.

Here are some best practices for choosing the right font:

- 1. Keep it Legible** – Your font should be easy to read across different platforms—websites, social media, packaging, and print materials. If people have to squint or tilt their heads like they're solving a puzzle, it's time to rethink your choice.
- 2. Match your brand personality** – Fonts have personalities too! A tech startup might go for sleek, modern sans-serifs like Montserrat or Inter, while a bakery might use a warm, handwritten script. Make sure your font reflects your brand's vibe.
- 3. Stick to 2–3 fonts max** – Too many fonts can make your brand look chaotic. A good rule of thumb is to pick:
 - **A primary font** for headlines (bold and attention-grabbing)
 - **A secondary font** for body text (clean and easy to read)
 - **An optional accent font** for extra personality (if needed)

See examples below

Bodoni Bold

Bodoni Italic 

Montserrat Light. Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book.

S

OSWALD BOLD

Brittany 

Cooper Hewitt. Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book.

S

4. Ensure proper licensing – Not all fonts are free to use commercially. Check the licensing before committing to a font, especially for branding and marketing materials. Google Fonts is a great place to find high-quality, free fonts.

When choosing fonts, ensure that they are readable, align with your brand's personality, and work across all your materials. A well-chosen typeface can make your brand feel polished, cohesive, and instantly recognizable.

4. The Game Plan: How Not to Fade into the Background

With your definition, personality, voice, logo, and colors locked in, you now have the **tangible** part of your brand. But here's the thing, if no one knows you exist or has an opinion about you, all that work means absolutely nothing (ouch, but true). Your brand isn't just what you say it is, it's what people believe it is.

This is where marketing strategy comes in. It's the plan that takes you from being invisible to showing up in all the right places, in front of the right people, at the right time. Without it, your brand is just a well-dressed ghost, nice to look at but completely unseen. Let's make sure all this effort wasn't just for a cute logo sitting in a folder on your laptop.

Here's a quick guide to getting your brand in front of the right eyes

- 1. Find Out Where Your People Hang Out** – Are they scrolling through Tiktok at 2am? Networking on LinkedIn? Fighting the oppressors on Twitter? Or even chilling at Ikoyi Club? Figure it out and *show up*.
- 2. Be Loud in the Right Places** – Posting once a month and hoping for the best isn't a strategy. Show up consistently on the platforms that matter to your audience. If they see you enough times, they'll remember you.
- 3. Give Them a Reason to Care** – Nobody follows a brand just because it exists. What's in it for them? Are you entertaining, educating, or solving a problem? Make it worth their time.
- 4. Be Easy to Find** – If someone Googles your brand and the only result is your cousin's birthday photos, we have a problem. Optimize your social media, website, and business listings so people can actually find you.

Marketing isn't magic. It's just making sure the right people see you enough times to remember you.

5. Consistency: The Secret Sauce

The hard truth is that 20% of businesses fail within their first year, and about 70% won't make it past their tenth. There's a difference between a brand that blows up today and is gone tomorrow, and a brand that stands the test of time. The difference is consistency

Most people think being consistent means being perfect every single day, it doesn't. It just means showing up. Period. Even on the tough days. Even when you don't feel like it. Even when the results aren't rolling in as fast as you'd like. The brands that last aren't the ones that got lucky; they're the ones that kept showing up, doing the work, and staying true to their message. Keep at it, and soon, your brand won't just survive, it'll thrive.

How do you maintain consistency, you ask? Don't worry, we've got you

1. Create Your Brand Guideline Document

If your brand had a holy book, this would be it. Your brand guideline document is where you record everything you've built while reading this book. Every color code, logo, font, voice, audience, and strategy decision goes here, and nothing should go out into the world without being checked against it.

This isn't just some "nice-to-have" PDF that you wouldn't touch for the next 12 weeks, it needs to be the daily study for you and your team.

In order to get the best out of your brand guideline, you need to treat it like law. If it's not in the guideline, it doesn't go out. Period.

You also need to update it as you grow, Your brand will evolve, and that's okay. Just make sure the guidelines evolve with it. We recommend quarterly or bi-annual updates to keep everything fresh and relevant.

For more resources on brand guidelines -

1. [A Step-by-Step Guide to Building a Brand Guideline](#)

2. [12 Guideline examples from Top Companies](#)

2. Create a Content Schedule

Posting randomly when you “feel like it” is a great way to disappear from your audience’s mind. Plan ahead and stick to a schedule, even if it’s just once a week.

3. Engage Regularly

Don’t ghost your audience. Reply to comments, answer DMs, and keep the conversation going. Relationships take effort, even the digital ones.

4. Keep Your Promise

If you say you’re going to do something, do it. Whether it’s launching a product, hosting a giveaway, or just sending emails every Friday, your audience should know they can count on you.

5. Adapt Without Losing Your Core

Trends change, platforms evolve, and businesses grow. Adjust when needed, but don’t lose sight of what makes your brand, your brand. That’s the most important thing.

6.

How to Know It's Working

So it's been 6 months already, you've followed all the guidelines in this book, and you're still not sure if you have a great brand or not. Just ask yourself these three simple questions to find out if you do:

- 1. Are people recognizing your brand?** - Do they see your logo, colors, or content and immediately know it's you? Or do you have to keep reintroducing yourself like a guest at a party no one invited?
- 2. Are they remembering what you do?** - When people hear your brand name, do they instantly recall what you do? If not, you might need to sharpen your messaging because confusion doesn't convert.
- 3. Are they buying?** - This is the big one. Are people happily giving you their money? If yes, congrats, you're on the right track. If not, we need to tweak some things. Maybe your offer isn't clear enough, maybe your product or service needs to be better, maybe your audience isn't the right fit, or maybe you just need to show up more.

If you're getting "yes" to all three, keep going. With consistency and sticking to your core, your brand is bound to succeed.

7. Final Wisdom for Baby CEOs

Congrats, Baby CEO! You've made it through the crash course in branding. By now, you should know that branding is more than just a logo and a catchy name, it's about creating a personality for your business that people actually want to connect with. But before you run off to build your empire, here are some final gems to keep in your pocket:

1. **Keep it simple** - If you have to explain your brand too much, it's not working. Your audience should "get it" in seconds.
2. **Know who you're talking to** - Your brand is not for "everyone." Be specific. The better you understand your audience, the easier it is to attract them.
3. **Look the part** - A strong brand voice, a solid logo, and a consistent color scheme make you look like a business people can trust. Don't skip this step.
4. **Be seen and remembered** - Show up where your people are, market your brand with intention, and make sure you stand out. "Hope and vibes" is not a marketing strategy.
5. **Stay consistent** - The brands that last are the ones that keep showing up, even when results aren't immediate. Perfection isn't the goal, showing up is.
6. **Track your growth** - If people recognize your brand, remember what you do, and are willing to buy from you, you're doing something right. If not, tweak and refine until you get it right.
7. **Give it time** - No brand becomes iconic overnight. Keep learning, keep growing, and most importantly, have fun with it. You're building something real, and real things take time.

Now, go forth and build a brand that people love!

8.

About Toast Creative Studios

We are a team of young, unconventional, Nigerian design thinkers who refuse to settle for “good enough.” We do not just solve problems. We break them apart, rethink them, and build solutions that make real world impact. We are obsessed with pushing boundaries, questioning the norm, and creating work that matters.

Contributors



Jide (Generalist Lead) - Jide is what happens when creativity meets structure, when big-picture thinking meets attention to detail, and when someone who genuinely loves solving problems is given ample opportunity to. Whether it’s branding, websites, strategy, or making sure the office playlist isn’t trash, Jide is always on it, and Toast is all the better for it.



Ore (Junior Generalist) - Ore learns at the speed of light and executes like a pro, making “junior” feel more like a formality than a reality. She’s proof that you don’t need 10 years of experience to bring fresh ideas, sharp instincts, and vibes that make work fun.



Rocky (Emotional Support Officer) - His job description? Providing unconditional love, judging your font choices with a single glance, and ensuring no one works too hard without a cuddle break. If you're having a stressful day, Rocky will sit next to you and dramatically sigh, reminding you that no deadline is worth losing your chill.



 **toast.**