By Sara Conte

How to Create a Branded Website

You can't sell CFO services when you look like a bookkeeper.

Special Offer: <u>Click here</u> to receive a **free branding consultation** for a custom website.

If you are trying to become the firm of the future and connect with new clients, you need to look the part. You can't sell CFO services when you look like a bookkeeper. Put on a tie. Button up. And build your brand.

Your brand is what the outside world thinks of you. It's a collection of impressions you build up over time. These days your first impression is often made online. You need a website and your website needs to be a great reflection of you. A branded website.

Here's what your clients do:

- 87% check out your website before meeting with you

- 96% admit the website highly affects whether they choose your service

- 100% admit, "I have left a website because it was poorly designed or difficult to use"

Clearly a website has an important impact on your business. When your clients search for you online you need to be there. But you can't just be there in a bland, or unprofessional way. You need to look the part. Looks matter.

A branded website will instantly build your credibility. Your clients will be more likely to choose you – and trust you when your website reflects your best self.

Here are the 6rules of a branded website:

1. **Define Who Your Are and What You Look Like**–This is Branding 101. Know who you are. Your customers can't begin to understand your unique sales position if you don't. Write down 5 words to describe yourself. Then narrow it down to one. Keep this word in mind as your mantra when you are building your website. For example, the one-word mantra for a Nordstrom-type practice might be "quality". A Nike-type practice might be "leading". Then figure out what this looks like. Look at some companies you admire. What colors and fonts do they use to convey their brand? What images? Put all of these details into a document together and call it your brand guide. Share it with your staff and select clients for feedback.

2. **Create a Logo**–Keep your logo simple. Some of the world's leading brands stick with stylized type. If you do add a symbol, it does not have to mimic what you do. Mercedes doesn't have a car. Amazon doesn't have a book. Your logo does have to convey the spirit of your brand and speak to your target customer. If you need a logo and know just what you want, contact a freelancer to complete it. If you need help and have a big budget, contact a branding agency. If you need inspiration and affordability, check out the online logo builder at PrestoBox, SquareSpace, or Vistaprint.

3. **Choose Great Photos** – Images convey emotion. Choose the right ones for your brand. Ideally these are images that you have professionally taken of your company, your products and your happy customers. There are also several free and affordable online resources for stock photos. We like Unsplash, iStock, and MorgueFile. Please don't use any clipart on your website.

4. **Keep Your Website Simple** – Make it easy for your clients to find what they are looking for. Use a lot of

white and not a lot of words. Simpler sites – with small splashes of color and great photos – look more sophisticated and visitors are more satisfied because they can find what they want. The more color and light variations on the page (complexity) the more work your eye has to do to send information to your brain. Take your inspiration from Google – our favorite example of online simple (and so effective).

5. **Make it Mobile**–Your branded website needs to be mobile. Your clients are increasingly attached to their phones. In fact, 91% of adults have their phones within reach 24/7. When your clients search on their phones, 70% of the time they take action within 1 hour. Another clincher, Google announced this year that non-mobile responsive websites would rank lower in search results.

6. **Be Found Online (SEO)** – When your clients search for you, you need to be there. Identify your key search terms. These will probably be your business name, location, services and names of your key staff. Setup your website with tags for these phrases and use them in content throughout your site. Most small firms are found by searching for the primary accountant's name. If your name is Robert Smith, for example, use your full name in content on the site. Using abbreviations like Robert, or Mr. Smith won't be as effective to get into the search results.

Follow these 6 rules to help you better understand who you are and how to communicate that online. Your branded website will be the gateway to your firm of the future. In fact, 80% of people surveyed chose one service over a competitor because it had a better website. Make it your firm they choose.

Sara Conte is co-founder of PrestoBox, the world's first automated branding agency. Get matched with a recommended brand and then instantly build your logo, website, business card, and brand guide.

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