



R

**RESEARCH  
MEDIA**

**MAKING  
RESEARCH  
RESONATE**

*The importance  
of building a  
start-up brand*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A START-UP BRAND

A strong brand should be the beginning of an exciting journey. Ensuring stakeholders are attracted to and engaged with your start-up can often prove challenging but, with a clear concept and brand, the route to market is made all the easier.

In a fast-moving and dynamic business environment, start-ups are springing up all the time. We at Research Media enable new brands to establish immediate clarity through our bespoke '[Start-up for Start-ups](#)' service.



## WHAT IS A 'BRAND'?

It's important to recognise that a brand isn't simply a logo, there is far more to it than that. A brand incorporates many elements including your positioning, ethos, values, unique selling point (USP), and a complete visual identity consisting of the logo, font or typeface, and the colour palette.

As a start-up, it's important to think about the impression you give and the perception you create right from the start – how you represent yourself in those early days can have real impact, especially when seeking financial backing.

## WHERE TO START?

There are many new businesses that begin their branding process by designing a logo and thinking about their positioning later, but that is the wrong way around! Your positioning should inform your visual identity and, done right, will help to deliver cohesion across your brand.

Any branding process should begin with building an understanding of your target audience to ensure that your brand resonates and creates impact. They need to know that you're 'talking to them' and they need to remember who you are, what you do and why.

Asking five questions of each of your assumed target audience groups (remember there may be more than one) will help you ensure that your start-up product or service can be of value to them.

**WHO** do you want to reach?

**WHAT** do they want to know?

**WHY** do they need to know it?

**WHEN** do they need to know it by?

**HOW** can you best reach them?

By including any time-sensitive information and identifying suitable communication channels at this early stage, you will have already done the groundwork for later communication strategy plans.

Once you have identified your audience groups, you can start to build this further and develop personas.



As a rule, personas provide common behaviour patterns, shared pain points, universal goals, wishes, dreams and general demographic and biographic information.

Collect as much of the following information as you can to work up a clear picture:

- **Role:** What is their job title? What is a typical day? Who do they report to? Who reports to them?
- **Goals:** What are they responsible for? What does success look like in their role?
- **Challenges:** What are their biggest challenges? How do they overcome them?
- **Fact-finding:** How do they discover new information? What publications or blogs do they read? What social networks do they actively use? What websites do they regularly visit?
- **Personal Background:** Age? Family (single, married, children)? Education? Income? Social life? Extra-curricular activities?
- **Shopping Preferences:** Online? In-store?

Information can be sought in a range of ways – online searches, social media, interviews (either in person or on the phone), surveys, and discussions with people you know in your personal life or have met professionally.

Once you've determined the detail, we suggest giving each persona a visual identity. Even just a stock photo will provide you with a visual trigger for the persona type, which will help inform all your communication activity.



## KNOWING THE COMPETITION

Once you know who you're aiming your brand at, the next step is to look at your competitors and increase your knowledge of the marketplace.

By examining who else is operating in your space, you will learn how you can stand out with a clear USP. Online research can prove invaluable here. What are the keywords that you currently associate with your brand? See who appears when you type them into Google. If you've done any market research, are there brands that respondents repeatedly say they like, admire or purchase from? Are these organisations true competitors, or are they doing something similar, but for a very different target market? What is their social media presence like? What language do they use? What is their core messaging?

While this can be time consuming, it will prove invaluable in the long run. The last thing you want to do is put time, effort and valuable funds into the launch of your brand, only to find that someone else is saying and doing the same thing and already has a strong profile. You want your brand to stand out from the crowd and, by identifying and communicating what makes you unique, you'll begin to forge your path to success.



# WHO ARE YOU?

Building your brand positioning is the next step of your journey and the following questions will enable you to formulate the Mission, Vision and Values for your start-up.

Ask yourself:

## MISSION: What do we do?

- What area of activity are we in?
- What status do we want to achieve?

## VISION: Why do we do it?

- What is our ultimate ambition?
- What are the principles behind our actions?

## VALUES: How do we do it?

- How do we go about our business?
- What impression do we want to create?

Don't restrict yourself in the first round of responses. You should refine and refine again until the message comes through loud and clear. You may end up with only a few words, but if you allow yourself the time to work through this methodically, you will uncover a perfect description of who you are, what you do, why you do it and how.

These positioning statements will sit at the heart of your brand, providing the focus for all that you do. This is a strong way to differentiate you from others in a marketplace that can be crowded and full of competition. When it comes to your communication planning, these statements will also help you to become integrated across all platforms and ensure uniformity of look and feel.

Of course there are additional elements that contribute to your brand identity. What are the core messages you want to ensure are delivered upfront? And what is your tone of voice? Are you a corporate, formal brand that communicates in a very professional manner? Or are you fun, accessible, interactive and light-hearted? How would you like your audience to communicate with you, and how can you encourage that with your style? Do you say Hello, Welcome, Hi, Howdy or Good Afternoon? It may seem simple, but the way in which you speak to your audience sets the tone for all interaction and the way your brand is viewed. It might be that you require some flexibility in your tone of voice if you have very diverse audiences, but there should always be a core tone at the heart.



# SAY MY NAME

We've touched on many brand elements but we've not yet mentioned the brand name. When you're thinking about your name, ask yourself:

- Is it distinctive?
- Is it memorable?
- What is the link to your values and positioning statements?
- Are there any restrictions for future evolution or diversification?
- Can the name be used legally?
- Could the name have negative connotations? This is particularly important to consider if you are looking to build a global brand, as specific words might cause offence in some countries and cultures.
- Is the website URL available? How about social media profiles? A crucial consideration for starting to build an online presence.

# MAKE IT VISUAL



What about those visual elements we mentioned earlier – logo, colour palette, font and typeface? Having a strong identity from the start will allow you to tailor your message to the needs of your different audiences, without losing the essence of the brand. It will also make it far easier for you to communicate your brand and produce new materials in a cost-effective way. That's not to say that your identity won't evolve over time, but if your positioning is strong enough the evolution will come naturally.

While a logo is sometimes the linchpin that holds a brand identity together and makes it instantly recognisable, as we now know, brands aren't built on logos alone. However, the logo acts as the central, identifiable visual element that helps customers discover, share and remember a company's brand. Usually it takes the form of an icon (mark or symbol), logotype, or a combination of the two.

The following five principles of effective logo design help to determine its purpose and use. Your logo should be:

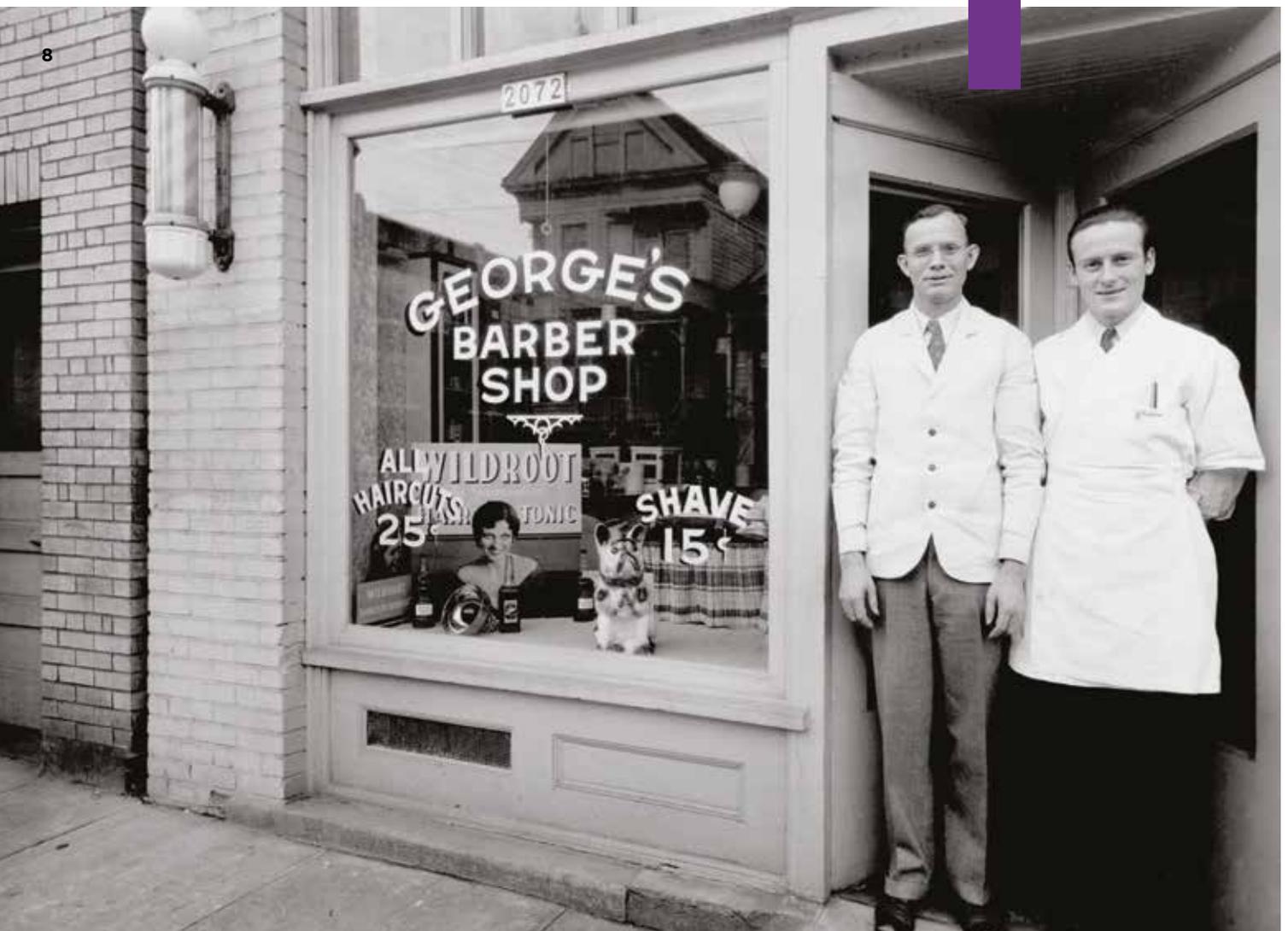
- Simple
- Memorable
- Timeless
- Versatile
- Appropriate

There are many ways to start designing a logo, but at Research Media we often begin by sketching out ideas on paper, based on the brand understanding and positioning already locked in. The process of getting concepts down on paper and then building on them can unlock new directions to explore. These can then inform the final solutions that wouldn't necessarily be reached when working on the computer. After the strongest sketched ideas are selected the most appropriate concepts are worked on digitally.

Typically, our process follows a simple path:

- **Concepting** – mind mapping and validating information
- **Visualising** – sketching and preliminary design concepts
- **Gathering** – conversations and feedback on preliminary design concepts
- **Refining** – working up and refining concepts until direction is chosen
- **Delivering** – presentation of final concept, files and usage guidance

Once the logo is refined and fully developed, we then start to look at the overall identity and other visual brand elements. This includes looking at colour, typography and other deliverables that will bring everything together, along with accompanying style guidelines that contain and prescribe the logo usage rules. This guide is an essential piece of kit to ensure that no matter who is creating the brand collateral and marketing materials, a cohesive look and feel is maintained.



## CREATING A WEB PRESENCE

So, your brand positioning is secured and you've got a stunning visual identity – now it's time to let the world know about you!

A website is often the first port of call when discovering a new brand, product or service. Your website is your shop window to the world and it's essential that it shows off those wonderful brand elements you have worked so hard to lock in.

Reviewing other start-ups and businesses, both inside and outside of your niche area, will help you to determine what you do – and don't – want. So, your brand positioning is secured and you've got a stunning visual identity – now it's time to let the world know about you!

A website is often the first port of call when discovering a new brand, product or service. Your website is your shop window to the world and it's essential that it shows off those wonderful brand elements you have worked so hard to lock-in.

Reviewing other start-ups and businesses, both in and outside of your niche area, will help you to determine what you do – and don't – want. Look at the homepage of a selection of websites and ask yourself the following:

- What is the product or service?
- What is the tone of voice?
- What are the key messages?
- Who is the product or service aimed at?
- What is the lasting impression?

All these questions should be easy to answer from an initial visit and that's crucial to keep in mind when you begin to build your own site. Core messages should be front and centre, and the visitor should be in no doubt as to what your brand is called, what it does, why they should be interested, and where they can go to find out more. Your website should be relevant, accessible and engaging.

When building your website, it's also worth considering the inclusion of a data capture form. This will help to determine who is visiting and engaging with your brand, as well as providing you with valuable data for future campaigning.

## WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING TO ACHIEVE?

Once you have your website built, how do you draw people to visit it and engage with your brand? What communication strategies can you use to reach that target audience? If you're seeking investment, for example, how will a funder know? How likely are they to inadvertently stumble across your website (if you even have one)? And how useful is that web presence? Does it give a faultless, clear view of your brand, or is it confused? Being clear from the outset will help you in the long run.

As part of your communications plan, it is crucial to put Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into place right from the start. What do you want to achieve and by when? What are the measurable targets that will help you to determine the success of any communications activity? How will you measure them and how do you go about creating a communications plan to deliver on your KPIs?

There is a wealth of opportunity – both online and off. Branded business cards and stationery should be as important as any other elements. A beautifully branded website sitting alongside a plain, templated business card will not help consolidate understanding and awareness of your brand. Similarly, branded headed paper and compliment slips should be unified in look, feel and message.

Your personas play a major part in your communications strategy. The noise across digital platforms alone is huge. Opportunities are seemingly endless, but without that clear picture of your audience, you'll struggle to make yourself heard.

But what are you going to tell them? How can you formulate a marketing message that will entice your targets to find out more?



## WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

The story that you tell has the power to make a change, ensure you remain memorable and create emotion. This should carry through from your visual identity to the messages that you share. Your brand must deliver an integrated and unified impression that will remain front and centre of your target's mind.

While you might be inclined to tell the 'story' of your start-up from inception to market, why not explore something more creative by building a story around your vision – why you do what you do? Whatever the story you tell, it should always be authentic, relevant and relatable.

Videos can serve as a valuable tool to communicate your story in a highly visual way that engages and remains concise. There are plenty of examples of how this has successfully worked for hundreds of brands. Television adverts provide endless examples of storytelling and we encourage you to begin looking at them in a new light. What is the story they are telling and why? Who are they targeting? Do they achieve their goal successfully? Do you remember it days, weeks, or even months later?

Depending on the industry area of your start-up and your target audience, it's always worth bearing in mind that complex language can be a barrier. So how can you ensure that details of your start-up reaches key stakeholders without alienating them?



## THE POWER OF IMAGES

A great place to start is looking at the enormous opportunity that creative design offers. Images play a crucial part in any communications plan and are vital to online success. There are plenty of statistics that support this:

- Colourful visuals increase people's willingness to read a piece of content by 80%
- When people hear information, they're likely to remember only 10% of that information three days later. However, if a relevant image is paired with that same information, people retain 65% of the information three days later
- Content with relevant images gets 94% more views than content without
- Visual content is more than 40 times more likely to get shared on social media than other types of content

Source: [HubSpot](#)

An engaging image-led flyer, leaflet or brochure is a great way to communicate detailed information about your start-up in a concise format. Explaining the research and reasoning behind your enterprise, and ensuring the USP and value is clearly communicated (alongside the cohesive visual identity), enables faster stakeholder understanding.

When you're creating your collateral, you should, of course, keep in mind what you want it to do for you. Do you hope to use it when seeking funding? Or are you more established and looking to secure a customer base? Ask yourself what the call to action is for the recipient to ensure you deliver on your goal. Do you want to use it (or elements of it) digitally, as well as in print to broaden the reach? Whatever the purpose, bear in mind that graphics can be an effective tool to tell your story – you don't have to always use words.

Infographics are a great tool for sharing detailed information in an engaging and memorable way. Why not include an infographic in your flyer then strip it out as a separate file for further sharing?

# EUROPE'S DIGITAL SKILLS DEFICIT: THE FACTS

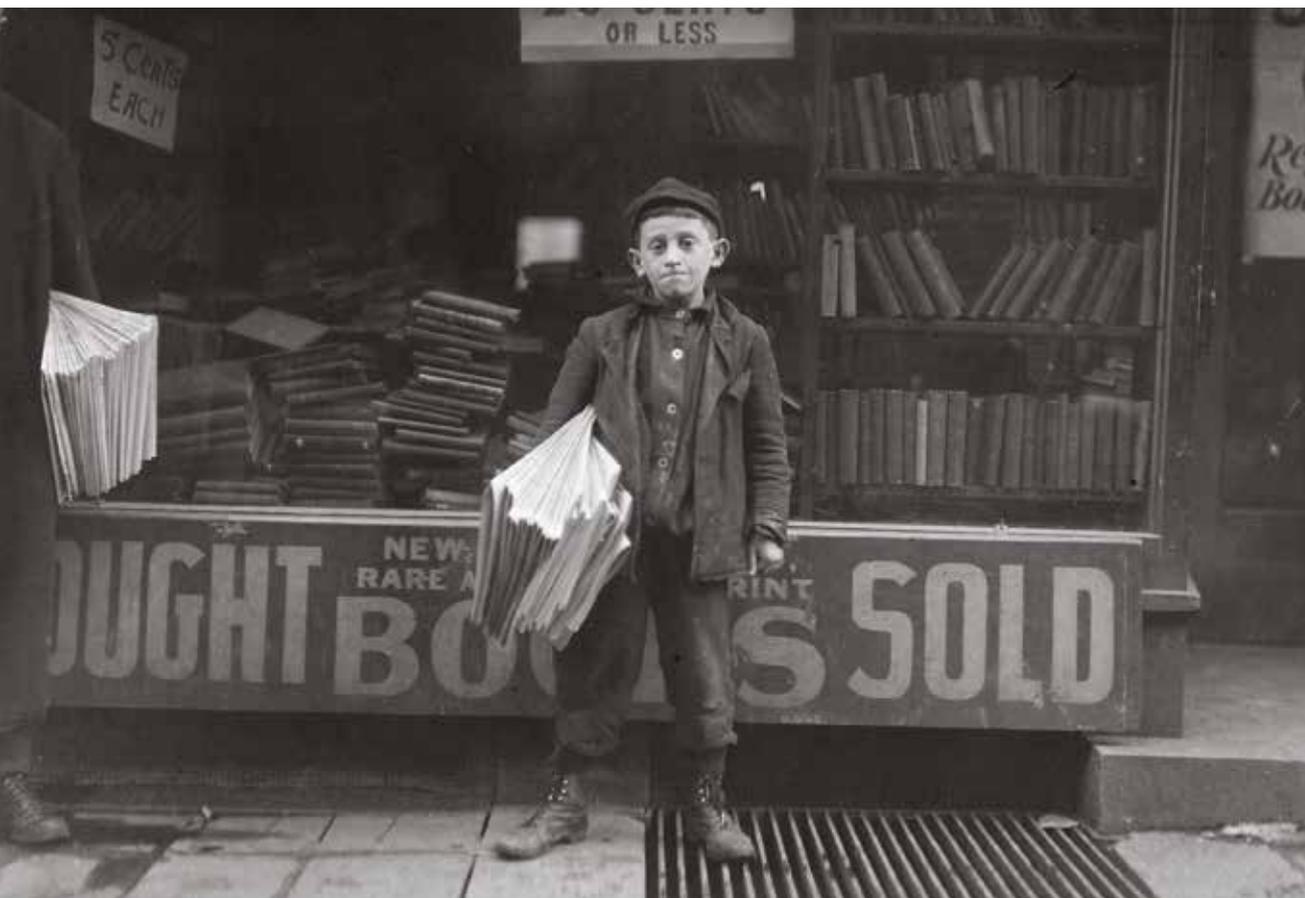
2020 ICT WORKFORCE DEMAND = 8.863 MILLION



↑  
2020 ICT WORKFORCE =  
7.95 MILLION

↑  
SHORTFALL = 913,000





## SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

Flyers, infographics and videos are innately ‘shareable’ and social media provides the perfect opportunity to identify and target audiences. Social also offers an invaluable channel to reach audiences that are often far harder to tap into using more traditional routes.

Social media can boost your profile as a thought leader and can help you to build your network and keep up with trends. Social provides an enormous opportunity to bring your start-up to the surface. It is an invaluable (and free) resource that shouldn’t be overlooked.

It is important to consider your choice of social media streams. From your earlier persona work, ensure the channels that you select are relevant for your audience. There’s no point in having a social presence on each of the major platforms and spending hours pushing out message after message if your audience isn’t there to receive them. The ideal stream is one where you can directly interact with your audience, join in conversations and be surrounded by interested and engaged parties.

There are also several social software platforms that will help you enormously as you start your streams. We highly recommend Hootsuite for ease of posting, tracking and for exploring analytics on your posts. It also allows you to host all your streams in one place which will save you valuable time.

Email marketing is another important area to consider when seeking to reach your audience. If you have included a data capture form within your website, you should already be gathering data, and you can promote further sign-up across your social media streams.

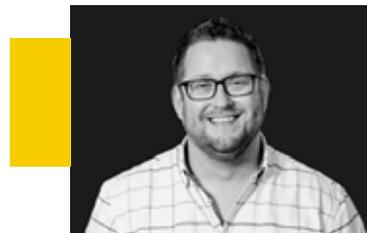
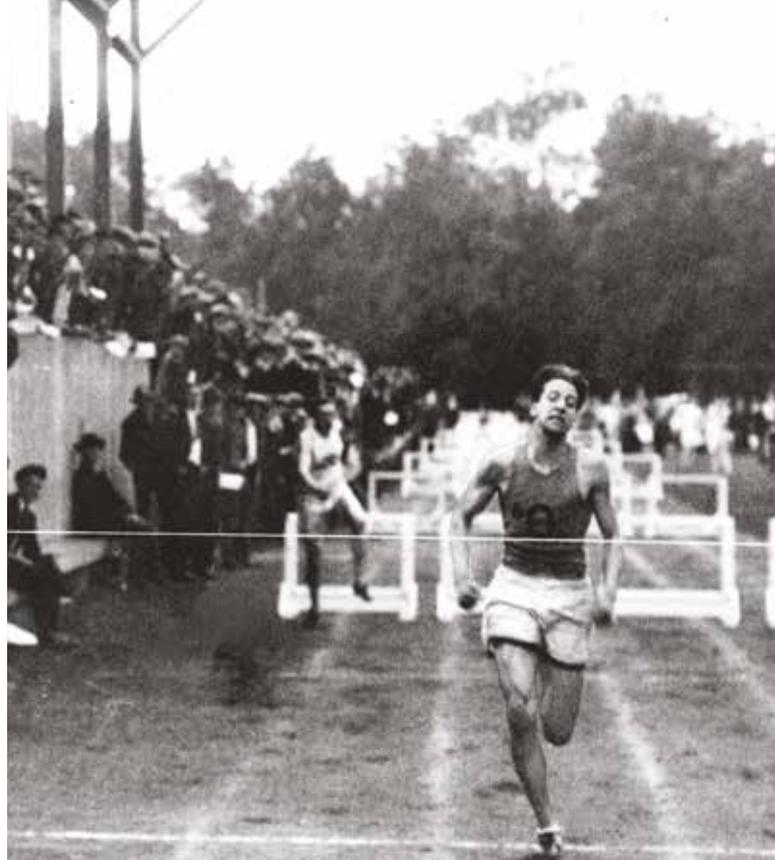
Use email marketing to keep interested parties informed of your news, latest developments and product launches.

There are many options for email marketing software, many of which include templates that enable you to easily include your logo, images, copy and, of course, that valuable call to action. Software and systems will also enable you to track engagement and review the success of any emails sent so that you can grow and develop your campaign organically. Campaign Monitor and Mail Chimp are systems to look at – both have a number of templates that will help as you’re starting out. As you grow and develop, you can explore more bespoke HTML mailers which creative agencies will be able to build for you.

## WRAPPING UP

There are many more areas we could examine when it comes to communication, but we hope that these few examples will get the creative juices flowing and help you to think a little differently about the opportunities available to you and your start-up. To wrap up, we would like to leave you with five top tips to keep in the back of your mind as you begin your branding journey:

- **Build your brand from the ground up.** Don't leap in with a logo and then try to figure out who you are. By working through your brand development methodically, you'll ensure a cohesive and clear brand that packs a punch.
- **Know your audience.** Take the time to understand your market and always keep your target audience in mind. This will help you to deliver a clear message that delivers on your KPIs.
- **Determine what you want to achieve upfront.** Flesh out your KPIs and decide how you will measure them. Ensure you monitor your progress closely to determine future campaign plans.
- **Find the right tools for the job.** Understanding your audience will help determine the best routes of communication. Avoid trying to be everything to everyone. It simply won't work.
- **Tell your story.** Decide the hook that will resonate with your target audience and communicate it in a unique and memorable way.



We would love to work with you to provide creative solutions to your branding challenges. Drop us a line and discover how we can help you to develop your start-up brand and create a bespoke suite of valuable collateral that will engage your target audience.

**JOHN EGGLETON**

*Account Director*

jeggleton@researchmedia.com

+44 1274 785 080



RESEARCH  
MEDIA

