



BRANDING FOR SUSTAINABILITY BUSINESSES AND PROJECTS



What is branding? Branding is more than a logo or colour scheme – it’s the identity and perception of your business or project. It encompasses the values you stand for, the tone you use, how you visually present yourself, and how you’re remembered by others. For sustainability-focused organisations, branding is how you translate your mission into a recognisable, trustworthy presence.

How is branding different from marketing?

While branding and marketing are closely linked, they are not the same thing. Branding is about defining the identity of your business that goes beyond products or services, it is the overall experience and relationship that customers have with your company. Marketing is the action that you take to promote your brand, products or services to your target market. It is often more short-term in focus and uses specific campaigns and tactics like advertising (in mass media or social media), public relations and other types or promotions to persuade customers to use your products or services. In short, branding defines who you are and what you stand for (creating an emotional connection), while marketing is the actions take to promote your products or services. Good branding provides a strong foundation for effective marketing, and good marketing helps to communicate and reinforce your brand’s message to the world.

Why is branding important?

In the sustainability sector, branding is crucial for:

- ▶ **Building trust:** Stakeholders are more likely to support organisations that communicate clearly, consistently and ethically.
- ▶ **Differentiation:** With growing numbers of green initiatives, a strong brand helps you stand out and define what makes your approach unique.
- ▶ **Mobilising support:** A compelling brand can inspire action—whether that’s policy change, funding or grassroots participation.
- ▶ **Communicating impact:** Branding gives you the tools to tell your story, report on progress and show why your work matters.



Core values of a sustainable brand

Your brand should reflect the values at the heart of your mission. These might include:

- ▶ **Integrity:** Being honest about your goals, impact and challenges.
- ▶ **Authenticity:** Staying true to your community, culture and environmental ethos.
- ▶ **Transparency:** Sharing not just successes but lessons learned.
- ▶ **Equity and inclusion:** Reflecting diversity in voice, leadership and storytelling.
- ▶ **Resilience:** Communicating adaptability and long-term vision.

These values should not just be stated – they must be lived, seen and felt in everything from your messaging to your partnerships.





How to establish your brand values

To establish brand values, start by defining your company’s mission, vision and purpose. Engage key stakeholders, including leadership and employees (if you have employees at this stage), to gather input on what principles are most important to your business. Consider the needs and perspectives of your potential or current customers as well, using feedback to identify core themes such as sustainability, innovation or community impact. Once you’ve identified the key values, define them clearly and

ensure they align with your brand’s personality and mission. Lastly, it’s important to ensure that the values are consistently reflected in everyday actions and decisions.

Embed them into company practices, reward behaviours that align with them and review them periodically to keep them relevant as the business grows. By keeping values central to the brand’s identity, you create a strong foundation for consistency, trust and connection with both employees and customers.



Tip

Think of your brand as a person – how would they talk? How would they explain what you do to a friend or funder?

Finding your brand voice

Your brand voice is how your organisation sounds across platforms – from reports to tweets. It should be:

- Consistent:** Across channels and content types.
- Approachable:** Avoid jargon. Speak clearly and warmly.
- Confident:** Be proud of your mission and share it boldly.
- Contextual:** Adapt your tone for different audiences, while staying rooted in your values.

Elements of successful brands

- 1. Clear purpose:** A succinct mission that people can grasp and rally around.
- 2. Visual identity:** A recognisable logo, colour palette and design system that reflect your values.
- 3. Consistent messaging:** Key phrases, taglines or value statements that are repeated across content.
- 4. Authentic storytelling:** Real stories from people and places impacted by your work.
- 5. Engaged audiences:** A community that shares, supports and grows with your work.
- 6. Adaptability:** The ability to evolve without losing your core identity.

Branding isn’t a luxury – it’s a tool for alignment, clarity and impact. For sustainability projects and businesses, a strong brand is how your values take shape in the world. It connects vision to voice, and ideas to action. Here’s recommended step to follow to develop an effective brand strategy:

Step	Description
1. Define your brand purpose	Identify your core mission, vision and values. Understand the “why” behind your brand and what sets it apart.
2. Conduct market research	Analyse your target audience’s demographics, behaviours and preferences. Conduct a competitive analysis to find market gaps.
3. Create a brand positioning statement	Clearly define your brand’s unique value and how it stands out from competitors. Identify who your target audience is.
4. Develop your brand identity	Choose visual elements (logo, colours, fonts) and define your tone of voice. Craft a brand story that resonates with your audience.
5. Create brand guidelines	Develop a set of rules to ensure consistency across all marketing materials and platforms. Include logo, colours, fonts and tone of voice.
6. Design customer experience	Ensure every brand interaction (website, social media, customer service) reflects your brand values. Focus on a seamless user experience.
7. Develop your brand messaging	Create a tagline, elevator pitch and key messages to communicate your brand’s value and benefits effectively.
8. Implement your brand across all channels	Ensure consistency in visuals, messaging and tone across digital platforms, advertising and internal branding.
9. Monitor and adapt	Use analytics to track brand performance and customer feedback. Be willing to adapt your strategy based on trends or changing customer needs.

Listen to the podcast on *Branding for sustainability businesses and projects.*

