

Care Home **Brand & Identity.**

What is it, why is it important and
how can I look after mine better?



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Introduction

I was inspired to share some thoughts on this topic after a decade working with care homes and care businesses across the UK. The driving force was that more often than not, as a branding and web agency we would be asked to create either one or usually both of these things. Clients often didn't really know what they wanted from their brand, they just wanted to look trustworthy, or compassionate, or modern, or traditional - all admirable qualities - but it's not about looking like something, it's about being something. And herein lies the untapped reservoir of branding and identity gold for care homes.

The sector as a whole is conservative in its messaging, understandably. Marketing trends that appear tend to be adopted wholesale across the board quickly, particularly in the premium sector where fees are high and competition is fierce. Spa rooms, hair salons, cinemas and bistros - a decade ago they were a USP for homes in premium markets, now they are essential if you want to call yourself a luxury home. Although we'll also cover why you shouldn't be using luxury as a descriptor, later on!





Generous marketing budgets get swallowed up at a rate of knots by favouring quantity over quality while more restricted budgets are wasted by mimicking what already exists. When considering a new care home, there is added pressure to fill at an agreed rate, and the appetite for the perceived risk of 'not fitting in' is very low.

"We just want enquiries" is fine – a four figure monthly Google spend will do that, but what about when the home is full and there are another two being built within 5 miles? Without an identity that resonates, you will never feel the long-term ROI on your marketing budget, and it will likely never come down either. Don't be generic, do showcase your values and show how the team lives and works those values. Demonstrate how the community you have built changes people's lives for the better,

that makes the home what it is. Ultimately, be proud of the entity you are inviting people to become a part of – residents, team, family, friends and professionals.

Investing in discovery work about your team and what they believe is never wasted. We encounter businesses that talk about 'family' and a 'home-from-home' a lot, but a much lower percentage demonstrate this – it's simply told. And that's not how people make buying decisions. Three things to think about. Does your brand and in turn your marketing do the following?

1. Demonstrate an **understanding** of how the target audience feels
2. Foster and nurture **emotional connections**
3. Improve **customer experience** from enquiry to admission.

Moving House – Getting Divorced – Finding Care For A Loved One

The nature of the topic of elderly care is an inherently sensitive one. It deals with human beings at a time in their life when there is likely to be increased stress, existing tensions can be brought to the surface between families, and this can cause panic, emotional turmoil and the fear of not knowing what to do for the best.

Allaying these fears, and showing how a care home helps you overcome these is the first part of the overall picture. Helping people with what they want when they discover you is the foundation of building trust. Instead of leaping in with how caring and person-centred the home is, show an understanding of what is on the client's mind – don the empathy hat!

A website landing page that identifies how the person is feeling and relates to it quickly and helpfully will perform better than one which talks about the bar, or the company's "unwavering commitment to deliver...[insert caring word here]" or the latest award at the

regional awards ceremony. Make no mistake, all these things are important pieces of the whole, but they're not the headline act.

Two things most people looking for care want to know at the outset of their search:

1. Can you meet my continuing care needs or that of my loved one?
2. How much is it going to cost and what are the options for funding?

A typical UK care website will focus too much on the foundations of what 'good' care looks like (and I mean that in the CQC sense of the word), using words more akin to a regulatory inspection document, or academic paper. Words like 'dignity', 'compassion' and 'respect'. What the marketers call Order Qualifiers. Yes, they're important, but they are assumed by the prospective client to be inherent, and so talking about them in the way you might talk about a service will not pique someone's interest or set you apart from the last website they looked at.

It is important for every care business to examine what it is they do well, what they do differently and then demonstrate why that's important. So many care businesses we meet are in this situation – doing amazing work and changing people's lives, yet their website talks about person-centred care and dignity, on the home page, in the introduction.

If you are struggling to identify something your care home does differently, maybe it's time to start looking. It's not about how big it is, or whether it's state of the art, it's about how it makes people feel. By fostering emotional connections through deliberate content, you start to improve the overall customer experience – the biggest driver of word-of-mouth enquiries, over time.

There is a better way to show your care home or business to the world, which enriches your content and resonates with the people who are choosing a home: the families of those people that need care.

Branding for Care Businesses

Branding is important for all businesses, regardless of what that business is. Chances are if you are shown a group of logos from the same sector there will be a discernible similarity about them. Tech companies, healthcare companies, banks etc all have hallmarks that attach them to that sector, often even similar palettes - nowhere is this more prevalent than in anything considered ecological. But within the parameters of this, these are the things by which you should measure your brand.

- 1. Differentiation** In a competitive market, a strong brand identity helps a care home differentiate itself from others by conveying its unique values, mission, and approach to care. A well-defined brand can help a care home stand out from its competitors, and when done well, can be a key factor in the decision-making process for families searching for a care home.
- 2. Trust** A strong brand identity helps build trust with potential residents and their families. A strong brand communicates professionalism, reliability, and competence, all essential qualities for building trust with families.
- 3. Recognition** A strong brand identity can help a care home become more recognizable and memorable to potential residents and their families. By creating branding that resonates with their target audience, a care home can increase brand recognition, making it easier for potential clients to remember the care home when they need it.
- 4. Connection** A well-defined brand identity helps a care home connect with potential residents and their families on a deeper level. By creating a consistent brand voice and message, care homes can communicate their compassion, understanding, and commitment to providing quality care, fostering a stronger connection with clients and their families.



Look at how your care business fares against these titles and examine what you do that nobody knows about. What do you really know about your competitors? How do they communicate their uniqueness.

The Difference Between Branding & Marketing

Branding and marketing are very often used synonymously, but they are not the same thing. Let's look at the key differences:



- 1. Focus** Branding focuses on building a care company's Brand Identity, which includes its values, mission, messaging, and visual identity. Marketing, on the other hand, is focused on promoting and selling the care home's products or services to a target audience.
- 2. Goals** The goal of branding is to establish a strong and recognizable brand identity that resonates with the target audience, creates trust and credibility, and ultimately leads to long-term business success. The goal of marketing is to increase sales and revenue in a short-term period by promoting and advertising products or services to a target audience.
- 3. Approach** Branding takes a long-term approach to building a brand identity, by carefully crafting a message and establishing a unique brand identity that sets the business apart from competitors. Marketing, on the other hand, is more immediate, focusing on promoting products or services to increase sales and revenue.
- 4. Nature** Branding is a holistic and strategic approach, encompassing everything from messaging to visual identity. Marketing, on the other hand, is more tactical, using various channels such as advertising, social media, and email marketing to reach and sell to a target audience.

Branding and marketing are different but complementary approaches that work together to achieve a company's commercial goals. Branding establishes a strong and recognizable brand identity, while marketing promotes and sells products or services to a target audience using various channels. That said, they are also symbiotic; a great looking brand that nobody sees is useless, and a marketing campaign that looks amateurish will continually under perform, costing more long term to continue 'buying leads'

Return on Investment - Strong Foundations

Branding is foundational for care homes because it is a long-term strategic approach to building the home's or group's identity and reputation, which lays the groundwork for all other business efforts, in particular, marketing. The return on investment (ROI) of branding is difficult to measure as it involves many intangible factors like brand recognition, customer loyalty, and reputation. However, a strong brand will have a significant impact on a business's financial performance over time. Branding can help businesses differentiate themselves from competitors, increase customer loyalty, and drive sales. It also enables homes to charge premium prices for a premium product.



Taking the Pulse of Your Brand

The simplest way is to conduct your own brand audit. It sounds big and scary, it isn't. Here's our list of checkpoints for you to go through with your team. Done with full engagement and openness, you will find that the results can be enlightening and surprising, but they are always useful. Get started:

1. Define the objectives of the audit. e.g.
 - a. *to decide if we need a refresh*
 - b. *social media*
 - c. *online reviews*
 - d. *website analytics*
2. Gather information on the brand's history, mission, values, and target audience
 - a. *This can be one sentence for each. Starting with something is more important than getting everything right away.*
3. Conduct market research to understand brand perception among customers and competitors
 - a. *This can be as simple as asking friendly family members and staff for an honest opinion, or as organised as an online survey*
4. Evaluate the visual identity and brand messaging, including logo, tagline, and marketing materials
 - a. *Do you like it?*
 - b. *What does it say?*
 - c. *How could it be better?*
5. Analyse the digital presence of the brand.
 - a. *website*
6. Review your service offerings, pricing, and customer service
 - a. *Do they reflect what you do?*
 - b. *Are they competitive*
 - c. *Are they clear?*
7. Assess the consistency of the brand across all touchpoints, including customer interactions and employee training
 - a. *Is the logo the same everywhere?*
 - b. *Are there lots of colours and typefaces?*
 - c. *Is there evidence of much older branding?*
8. Benchmark the brand against competitors and industry best practices
9. Identify opportunities for brand improvement and growth
 - a. *This could be a disconnect between your printed materials and your digital*
 - b. *It might be to gain more reviews or more enquiries*

While this list can look daunting, it can be as big or as little as you like, from a discussion over coffee to a half-day session. It is important to include members from all levels of the business and that they feel they can speak openly. The greatest insight can often come from the simplest observations. Here are some additional questions which can help to get the ball rolling.

1. What does a great day in here look like? What would you see and hear?
2. What does a really bad day here look like? What would you see and hear?
3. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the business overnight what would that be?

If you would prefer to have this session lead for you, that's what we do!



Establishing a Care Business Brand Strategy

Before you can begin on the implementation, we need to know where we're at and where we want to go. Here are some simple steps to help you analyse gaps in the market and establish unique selling propositions (USPs):

- 1. Identify your target market** Know your ideal customer by defining their needs, behaviours, and preferences.
- 2. Research the competition** Look at your direct and indirect competitors to find gaps in the market that they are not serving or under-delivering on.
- 3. Analyse your strengths** Identify what sets you apart from your competition. This could be your experience, expertise, or unique offering.
- 4. Identify unmet or under served needs** Use market research, customer feedback, or other sources to understand what your target market is looking for but is currently not being served by your competitors.
- 5. Develop USPs** Combine your strengths with the unmet or under served needs of your target market to create a set of USPs that differentiates you from the competition and resonates with your target customers.
- 6. Test and refine** Test your USPs with your target market, solicit feedback, and refine them. Don't be afraid to get it wrong and always be welcoming of feedback, good or bad.

Implementing a Care Business Brand Strategy

1. **Create a brand style guide** that outlines the brand's visual identity, including typography, colour palette, and logo usage.
2. **Develop a brand voice** that defines the tone and language used in all communications, both written and spoken.
3. Ensure that all **employees are trained on the brand strategy, values, and voice**, so they can consistently represent the brand.
4. **Develop and implement a marketing plan** that aligns with the brand strategy and messaging.
5. Ensure that all **customer touchpoints**, including website, social media, packaging, and customer service, are **consistent** with the brand's visual and verbal identity.
6. **Monitor and measure the effectiveness** of the brand strategy through metrics such as brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth.
7. **Continuously refine and adapt** the brand strategy based on customer feedback, market research, and changing business needs.
8. Creating a website and social media presence that reflects the care business's unique brand identity
9. Developing educational content that positions the care business as a thought leader in the industry
10. Use advertising to increase visibility and awareness of the care business among potential clients





Measuring Brand Success for Care Businesses

As we've already talked about, it's important to be able to measure the ROI of any branding projects you undertake but it's not quite as straightforward as measuring simple figures, there is more nuance required. But over time, regular tracking will give you accurate feedback on what is working, therefore informing your future endeavours. You could use these measures.

- 1. Brand Awareness** Measure the number of brand impressions, reach, recall, and overall visibility in the market.
- 2. Social Media Engagement** Monitor key social media metrics such as engagement rate, followers, and frequency of brand mentions and shares.
- 3. Website Traffic** Analyse website traffic, particularly the number of unique visitors, bounce rate, click-through rates, and time spent on the site.
- 4. Conversion Rates** Track conversion rates from leads to customers, particularly those generated through the brand's digital channels.
- 5. Brand Sentiment** Analyse sentiment analysis of customer comments, reviews, and other feedback to assess how the brand is perceived.
- 6. Sales and Revenue Growth** Track sales and revenue growth, particularly the percentage of sales from new customers compared to repeat customers.
- 7. Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)** Analyse the long-term value of customers, particularly those acquired as a result of branding and other marketing efforts.
- 8. Cost per Acquisition (CPA)** Track the cost of acquiring new customers through branding and marketing efforts.

By tracking these KPIs you can monitor the effectiveness of their branding strategy, identify areas for improvement and optimization, and assess the overall impact on the bottom line.

Summary

I hope you now have a bit more insight than when you started into the importance of successfully building and implementing a brand strategy. One that requires you to understand your customers' immediate needs and how branding can effectively differentiate you in your marketplace.

Care businesses need to be particularly mindful of a consolidated, consistent approach to branding because building trust and reputation with potential customers is paramount. It is important to understand the difference between branding and marketing, as branding is foundational while marketing is a tactical execution in response to your market's current needs. Evaluating branding ROI can be challenging, but it is possible to gauge the success of branding through various metrics.

To build an effective brand strategy, it is critical to conduct a thorough brand health check, create a comprehensive branding strategy, and implement the branding plan consistently. Tracking and measuring key performance indicators (KPIs) is crucial, as it helps you understand how effective your branding efforts are in achieving your

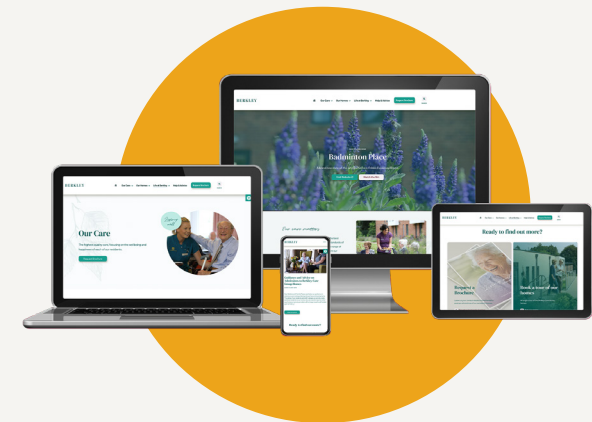
business goals while also identifying areas for improvement.

Finally, let's just recap on the key things people are looking to experience when looking for care for a loved one. It is important to be mindful of the CLV here and what you are asking your customer to invest. People often look for the following in a care brand:

- 1. Trustworthiness** A healthcare brand that is trustworthy can establish credibility and inspire confidence in patients and their families.
- 2. Expertise** Healthcare brands that are recognized for their knowledge and expertise in a specific area can attract customers who are seeking specialized care.
- 3. Quality** A healthcare brand that is synonymous with high-quality care, advanced technology, and advanced medical techniques have a strong appeal to patients who are focused on outcomes.
- 4. Compassion** A healthcare brand that focuses on personalized care, empathy, and respect for the patients' emotional

and physical well-being can build strong emotional connections with their customers.

- 5. Accessibility** Healthcare brands that are accessible, have short wait times and convenient locations, and offer online scheduling can attract patients seeking quick and convenient care.
- 6. Innovation** Healthcare brands that are known for their innovation, such as cutting-edge research and technology or innovative care delivery models, can generate excitement and attract customers who are looking for the latest advancements in healthcare.



Contact Us

It's easy to say, right? But it's often harder to get started. There are many companies who can help you with all of these steps. We have been assisting care companies with this for over a decade. If you'd like to get started on your own, or just hear a little bit more about how we can help, arrange your 20 minute chemistry call today.

If you'd like to know more about our other services, you can also download free e-books on:

1. Branding & Identity for Care Homes
2. Websites for Care Homes (this doc)
3. Marketing for care Homes
4. Mission, Values & Culture – support for care businesses.

All are available to download at

care.studio



**Let's talk about
marketing your
care home**

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