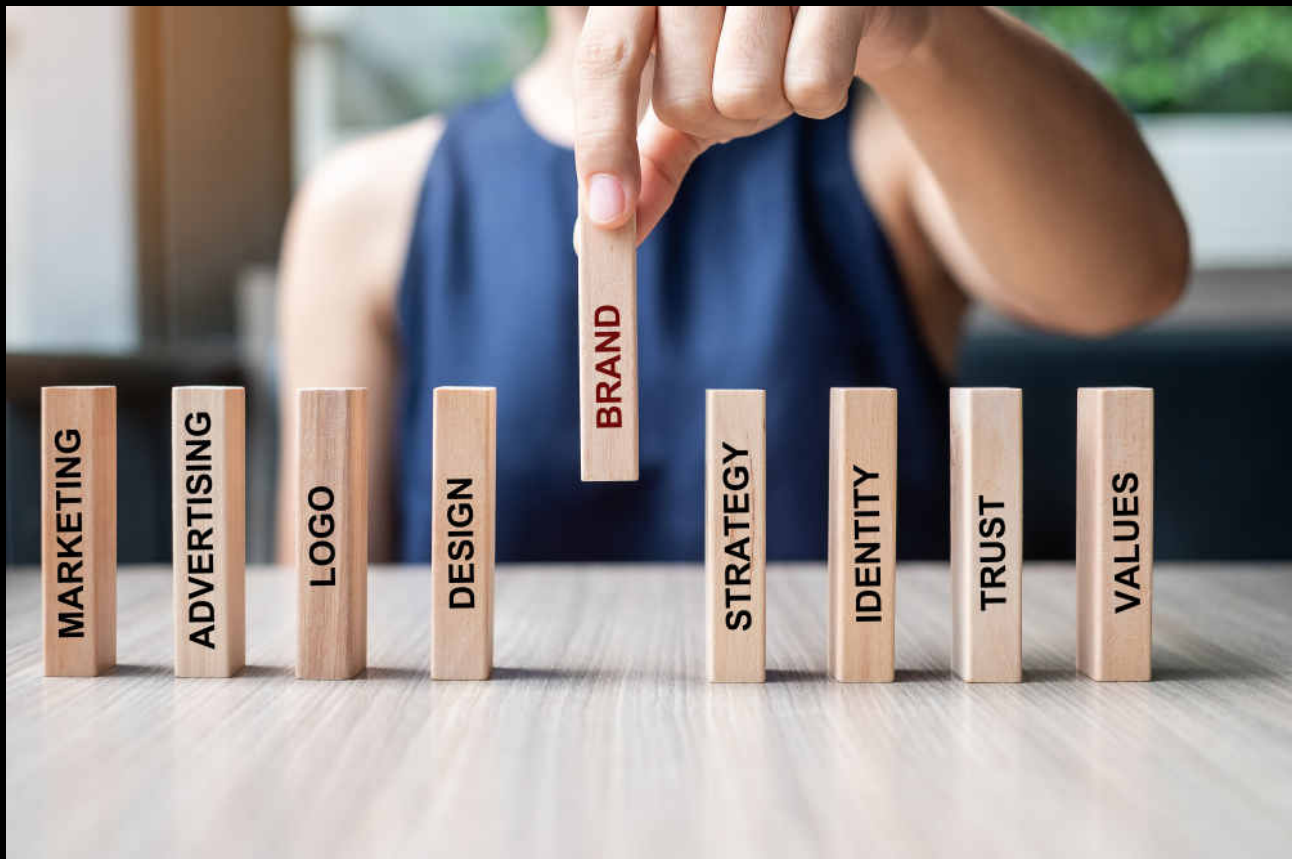




# Brand building isn't as expensive as you think



I don't want to pick on Skoda too much because I'm genuinely happy owning and driving their cars. But they do seem to serve up plenty of demonstrations of how marketing could be done better. [Brand building](#) is a case in point.

## The company's view of brand

Visit any Skoda showroom as you'll see one aspect of their idea of brand:

- Big showrooms.
- Clean, shiny floors.
- A quiet atmosphere.
- Name plates.
- Skoda logos everywhere.
- Everything colour-compatible with green.
- Defined processes.
- Designated staff performing designated roles.

In short, Skoda seems to want to pretend that being owned by VW-Audi means they're the same as VW-Audi. This kind of big budget activity is what puts normal businesses off brand building. They see it as too expensive. And they're right.

But this isn't brand-building. Most of this is *branding* i.e. sticking a consistent look on everything that moves and lots of things that don't.

## The customer's view of brand

This is what the Skoda brand feels like to the consumer (me):

- Queuing to see the 'proper' person while I can clearly see somebody else doing sweet FA because it's not his job to speak to customers.
- Excessive paperwork.
- Lots of signatures.
- Watching people staple pages together and shuffle backwards and forwards between offices.
- Filling in a customer service survey and not getting a response.

Compare that 'brand experience' to the local no-name garage where I take my cars when their warranty expires:

- Nice but nothing fancy.
- Tackles anything.
- Drop my keys off and leave.
- Never queue.
- Anyone in the office jumps in to help.
- And it's half the price.

If brand building is seen as making everything pretty then it's no surprise normal businesses avoid it. Brand means more than your appearance and your logo. Those are just your visual cues. They don't attract new business.

Effective brand building is driven by three Xs:

- eXperience – how customers feel about their dealings with your businesses.
- eXpectation – how customers or prospects anticipate future dealings with your business will be.
- eXpression – how customers publicise their opinion of your business.

If you want to build your brand, the starting point is to make sure the customer experience is positive. It's your products and services that are the foundation of your brand, not your logo. When you develop and improve quality, reliability, pricing, delivery, service, staff, etc. you improve your brand.

That's why we say brand building isn't as expensive as you think. Building a strong brand is about doing the things your business should have been doing anyway.

Once your products and services reach a standard you can be proud of, then you can concentrate on your visual cues, making them [consistent](#) and [ever-present](#). By then, when people recognise an asset like your logo, it'll trigger the positive feelings that generate sales.

## Next steps

1. The DIY route. If you want to start to build your brand, focus on your customers, not you:
  - a. Understand the customer experience. Survey customers to identify the good and bad points of your products and services.
  - b. Fix the weaknesses.
  - c. Promote the strengths.
  - d. Make your brand's visual cues consistent across all media and channels.
2. The Assisted route. If you don't have the time, people or system to do this yourself, well, that's what we're here for. Give us a call. We're surprisingly friendly.

Remember, Forbes Baxter Associates is a [marketing development agency](#) so we develop your in-house marketing skills while we help you grow your business.

Some links to services you may find useful

**Marketing Strategy**

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**Brand Marketing**

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