

(Excerpt from *Chapter 1: Reality Check*)

It's Tough Out Here

With all the new t-shirt brands popping up every day, it's no surprise that many people believe it takes no hard work to set up shop and start making money. Starting a successful t-shirt business is just like starting any other business. It takes, among several other things, willingness, dedication, skill, and, whether you like it or not, money. There's gonna be times you'll feel like throwing in the towel, too.

Even after we had been at it for a while, there were months we had to rummage for loose change for lunch money, and we thought maybe it was time to give it up. Maybe it just wasn't worth it. But you know what, we kept on going, and that's what set us apart from most aspiring business owners who fail in less than a year.

Think You Got What It Takes?

Before you dive deep into the business, you need to seriously think about it and decide if this is the business for you. Are you truly passionate about creating a t-shirt brand? Are you ready, willing, and able to sacrifice other important things in your life for your business? Are you ambitious enough to set goals and climb the ladder to success? Or are

you just doing this for the money, or because you thought it would be cool to have a clothing line?

(Excerpt from *Chapter 6: Creating a Solid Brand*)

More Than Just T-Shirts

Consumers often buy products out of habit because they become loyal to the brands that produce them. It's more than likely that there are a few brands that have been in your house for the past 10 years, because you, or your family, have become loyal to those brands and continue to buy their products. That's not to say that the brands you've become loyal to are necessarily better than all the rest. They just happened to grab your attention and keep it long enough to build a relationship with you as a buyer. You want your t-shirt brand to do the same to your target market.

Your t-shirt brand is more than just a collection of t-shirts. Your 'brand' is the personality of your entire business. Your 'brand' must evoke emotions and create sensory experiences, while exhibiting admirable human qualities. Everything from the t-shirt designs and packaging to the website and marketing, and even how you answer emails and phone calls. Your brand personality should be unique to your business. It is what distinguishes you from the rest of the t-shirt businesses out there.

What Do You Stand For?

First and foremost, in order to begin creating a solid brand you need to stand for something. What, or who, does your brand represent? The things you stand for are the basis for what your brand should revolve around.

In addition to standing for something, your brand must offer a unique selling point. What do you offer that other brands don't? What is so special about your brand that would pique people's interest? What do you promise that others don't, or can't? Your unique selling point should answer all or some of these questions. If you have done your research and have already come up with an original idea for a t-shirt brand, this step becomes easy. Your original idea is one of the unique selling points that sets the foundation for your brand personality.

Everything you do with your brand should be in line with your unique selling point, either directly or indirectly, otherwise you risk losing the impression you intended to make on your customers. If your unique selling point is that you offer the most dirt-cheap, high end t-shirts, you've got to stick to that. You can't decide to shift your prices all of a sudden to increase your profit margin, or to afford better quality fabrics. If your unique selling point is that your t-shirt designs broadcast the biggest current events, you've got to be in tune with the latest controversy, perhaps even keeping your customers up to date through your blog.

LAUNCH A KICK-ASS T-SHIRT BRAND (PREVIEW)

Maintaining your brand image by being true to your unique selling point is the key to building a solid brand. Here's an illustrated example of the importance of this.

A hypothetical brand, 'Eco Catz', promises eco-friendly, feline inspired t-shirts made in the U.S.. If Eco Catz were ever to release even *one* t-shirt made in China, that wasn't environmentally friendly, there would be an outrage from their loyal customers. Even if it was discovered that the Eco Catz headquarters doesn't practice recycling, their whole reputation could be at risk. Therefore, the people at Eco Catz know that, based on their unique selling point, they must continue to produce their clothing in the United States of America, be feline inspired, and be as eco-friendly as they claim to be. Customer loyalty depends on it.

Your Brand Name

As important as your unique selling point, and what you stand for as a brand, is your brand name. In the previous chapter we covered this briefly, but there's more to a brand name than it's availability. Your brand name should be strong, likable and memorable. It should be easy to pronounce, and most of all it should reflect what your brand is about. A good brand name is suggestive of your unique selling point, but not too narrow so as to decrease the your ability to claim new selling points in the future.

LAUNCH A KICK-ASS T-SHIRT BRAND (PREVIEW)

A name like 'Awesome Black Tees', for example, restricts a brand to producing just black t-shirts. Anything else would be out of line with the brand identity, since right off the bat, the name establishes that the t-shirts will be black. It's no wonder most big name brands refrain from ending their brand name with the name of a specific product. Notice it's not *Tide Detergent*, *Nike Sneakers*, or *Hanes Underwear*. They are simply *Tide*, *Nike*, and *Hanes*.

Too many new t-shirt brands make the mistake of adding "apparel", "threads", "tees" or a similar word to the end of their brand name, and it really limits their potential expansion. In fact, we made this mistake with our previous brand *The T-Shirt Gang*. The name suggested t-shirts and t-shirts only. Just imagine how awkward it would be if we had decided down the line to produce jeans or footwear under that brand name.

Your Brand "Profile"

Describing your brand properly is a necessary skill for building a successful clothing line. After you've pondered a bit about your brand and what you stand for, you'll have to create a brand "profile" which will be very useful on your forthcoming journey. Not only does your brand profile help clarify what your company is all about, it also shows that the people behind the brand are knowledgeable on what they're

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selling and know how to present a great idea.

Your brand profile should be included on your website, within your catalogs, and in press releases. In many cases it's your one shot at reeling in your target customer. Just look at it as a dating ad for your brand. You want to attract as many potential "dates", or customers, as possible, so you want a profile that speaks to your target. Some people have trouble with describing their brand in words, and if you're one of those people, don't lose sleep over it. It's often hard to put into words exactly what your brand is about. Let's work on getting that down.