



Cheeky by Name Cheeky by Nature!

An **Interview** with **Leona Watson**

Just six years ago Leona Watson was approached by two chefs seeking her assistance in starting a 'food and cooking' company. They were looking for someone with a love of cooking and a background in marketing and business. Utilising her corporate knowledge, within a year, Leona transformed Cheeky Food Group from a provider of traditional cooking classes into the 'event' it is today - and is now the sole owner. Cheeky creates fun, interactive team building cooking parties, where every participant cooks, flambés, sizzles and contributes to the creation of a magnificent meal. In 2006, Leona won the ABN's Outstanding Business Growth Award.

In your view, what is a brand?

Firstly, we need to understand one thing. People rarely make purchasing decisions on an entirely rational basis. People buy brands and experiences, and they do this with emotion. And that's what my definition of a brand is – a brand is the overall connection and expectation customers have of your company, products and services. Without a brand, it is difficult to do anything but compete on price - which means a non-branded business has little choice but to charge the lowest cost for its products or services and struggle for repeat customers.

Why is branding so important for a business like yours?

Branding is important for every business. For a sole business owner, branding is all about you - YOU are the brand.

What are the top 10 things to think about when starting/evolving a brand?

The process below is easy and works for both new and existing companies, large or small.

1 Brainstorm with your team or friends, to determine 20-30 adjectives to describe the personality of the brand you'd like, the words you'd like others to say about you and your company, as if the company was a person. Then narrow it down to about five. e.g. Cheeky's is: fun, professional, warm, engaging, passionate and innovative.

2 Then ask yourself if YOU deliver on those personality traits. Be brutal. These have to be innate traits. You will need to live, breathe and inspire your team with these traits. If not, experiment with the above until you're comfortable with the words. This is one of the most important things you can do. For example you might come up with 'effervescent' but if you're a bit shy, then consider 'friendly'.

3 Next, ask yourself if these are the attributes your target market is screaming out for - and I do mean 'screaming'! Will your target market want to do business with an individual, a staff member, a service, a product that's "x"? If not, start again, or review your strategy. Remember, people buy from people who are like them. So the more you have to deviate from your true self to reflect your target market, the harder the sell.

4 Judge everything you do, say, write, deliver, advertise – everything – against your business' brand. If for example, your business card and colours don't reflect them, find a new designer...it's their job to visually bring your brand to life.

5 Do you 'dress' like your brand? Check your wardrobe! Time to go shopping? I dress in colours and with a style that reflects 'fun and professional'.

6 Hire staff that match the brand. At Cheeky I don't base my recruitment decisions on resumes alone. Initially, applicants are asked to leave a message and the "Cheeky-sounding" candidates are progressed to the next stage. Shortlisted applicants are then invited to submit a written application. Only those whose written application demonstrates that they would be a good fit with Cheeky's operating philosophy are invited to a panel interview. The final stage of our interview process involves the applicant's attendance at an informal chat with our management team. A group decision is then made with regard to their employment at Cheeky's.

7 Pick your suppliers on a similar basis, especially if their job is to bring the brand to life i.e. writers, PR, advertising, web.

8 Ask some friends to phone your business to evaluate how you/your staff sound and the quality of the material you send/email them in response to their enquiry. Don't



Truly love your brand. If you don't, no-one else will....

forget your mobile and answering machine messages - voice tone can be everything!

9 Look at every piece of marketing and public collateral you have and decide if it's delivering on your brand. If they're not, change them.

10 Finally, retain an independent consultant to evaluate your marketing collateral and other publicly available material. To ensure objectivity, avoid retaining a consultant whose services might later be utilised by you to make any changes.

To decide how to market your brand, or evaluate opportunities, ask yourself:

- Will this showcase at least three of my brand personality traits? If the answer is "no", it's unlikely the opportunity will be a good match for you.
- Is this going to excite my target market? Is this a good way to get the best message to the right people? Or am I being seduced by supposedly great advertising rates?

- Will it bring a return on my investment? If you need the phone to ring, that's direct response advertising, not brand awareness and a different requirement. So set your criteria carefully, with the end result in mind.
- Is it measurable? Every time the phone rings at Cheeky we ask how the caller heard about us, and track \$ spend, \$ income per lead source, etc. This is a critical task and very easy to undertake.
- I ask people what they thought about my activity, so I can determine if their out take addressed my requirements. This very basic form of research can be extremely useful.
- Does the medium, partner, product or service, fit with my brand personality? Will this activity give the bonus of association with the medium, not just the message? e.g. AFR Boss or Vive? Both are stylish, but one is more 'cool/slick' and the other more 'professional/warm'. Both are fabulous magazines, but which most matches your brand and target market?

- Am I trying to do too much in the one advertisement? Develop one message and allow your customers to see it and hear it many times before you think of changing it. When building a brand it's essential that you provide consistent and repetitive messages.
- Does your message match its medium? i.e. if you have something as simple as a branded coffee cup, does it carry your logo with no other message? If so, perhaps you could add a message that links drinking coffee and tea with your brand in a way that delivers the personality? e.g. we could add "Enjoy your Cheeky break", rather than just a logo.

If there was one thing our members could do today to take their brand to the next level what would you suggest they concentrate/focus on?

Because a brand exists to bring focus and profit to the business, the brand must attract the right kind of staff and the right customers to provide that profit. It's all about exercising consistent and single-minded focus. Brands love momentum. Once your brand is on a roll, it will have the ability to deliver great business and fabulous staff to you!

If you could change anything about your brand now what would it be?

A lot of our marketing was put on hold recently during an organisational restructure. So now it's exciting to get more material and collateral to deliver on the brand. Our website and 'overall look' is undergoing a total update, so when I look at every piece, I'll be asking myself... "Is this website, van signage, proposal - fun, professional... etc?"

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“Look at every piece of marketing collateral you have and decide if it’s delivering on your brand.”

I wouldn’t change a thing about our team, which is great, as the team is our brand!

Any other advice you would give to our members about branding?

Truly love your brand. If you don’t, no-one else will.

And one final bugbear from Leona...

Please – if your company name doesn’t state clearly what you do, introduce some descriptive words on your business card. How many of us find recently collected cards, but are unable to remember anything about the card owners’ businesses – and are unable to find a clue on their cards.

Cheeky Food Group is a team-building/event company, skillfully using the fun and interaction of cooking to inspire smiles, talk and laughter between colleagues. The aim is to break down barriers, over-deliver on the client’s key messages and provide workmates with a non-competitive activity that everyone can participate in – whatever their age, gender, fitness or management level.

Cheeky is totally portable and able to run cooking events for groups of 4 to 400 people, across Australia, at conferences, hotels and function centres. They don’t even need a kitchen as they bring everything in, or they have a state-of-the-art venue in Surry Hills, Sydney, which can hold up to 50 people.

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How to Avoid the Top 10 Marketing Mistakes Businesses Make When Times Get Tough

By Carolyn Stafford, Connect Marketing

Here are 10 mistakes that business make when it comes to branding.

1. They lose sight of the big vision - for their life and their business.
2. They don’t follow a plan – they take a ‘scattergun’ approach to marketing.
3. They slash (or even wipe out) the marketing budget.
4. They take an ‘any client will do’ approach.
5. They reduce staff numbers to cut costs.
6. They communicate poorly with the people that matter most to their business.
7. They don’t seek professional support or help until it’s too late.
8. They stop networking and building their relationships.
9. They stop being creative and innovative and are slow to adapt to the environment.
10. They reduce investment in technology and the internet.



Read the full article by Carolyn Stafford from Connect Marketing at www.connectmarketing.com.au.