

# **CHECK IT BEFORE YOU WRECK IT.**

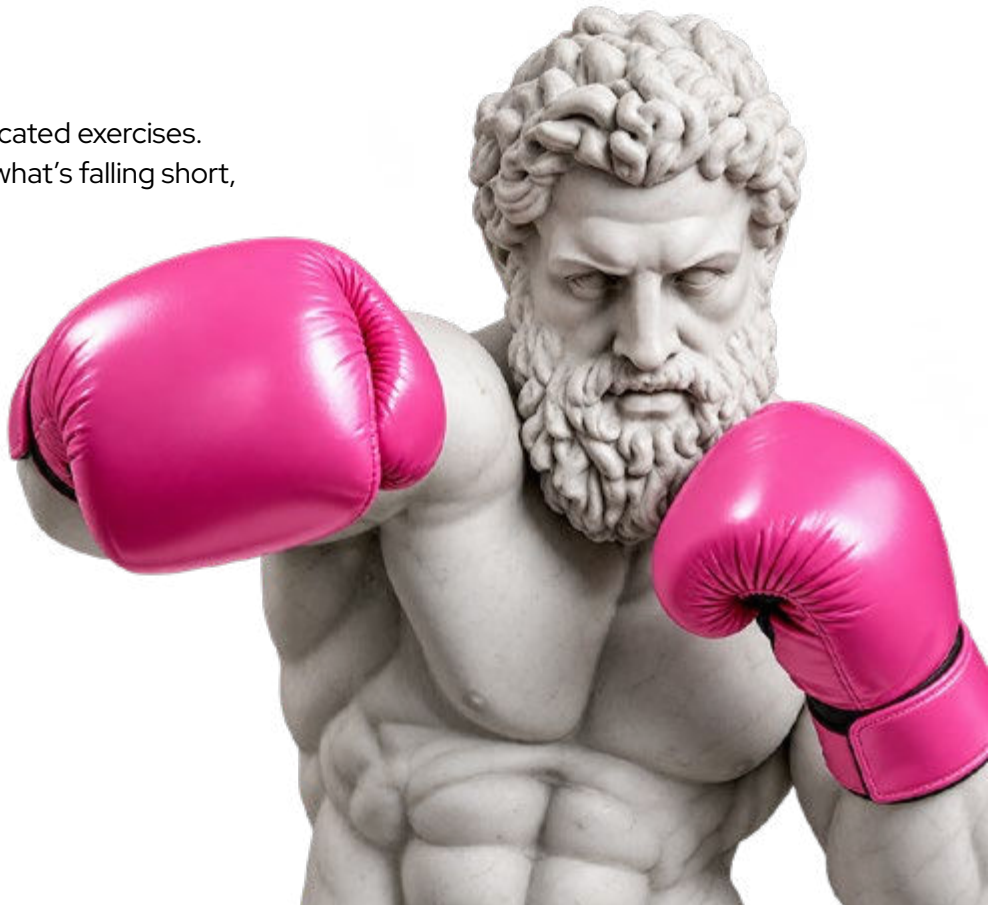
## **The Small Business Brand Checklist**

Your brand might look perfectly fine on the surface. Nice logo.  
Decent website. Colors that don't make anyone's eyes hurt.

### **But how well is it doing its job?**

This checklist will help you find out.

No marketing degree required. No complicated exercises.  
Just an honest look at what's holding up, what's falling short,  
and what deserves your attention.



## BEFORE YOU START

# YOUR BRAND IS UP FOR REVIEW.

## Don't worry. Nobody's getting fired.

You spend so much time inside your business that it's easy to miss the things other people notice immediately.

Maybe your website looks great, but nobody understands what you're selling.

Maybe your messaging sounds like five different people wrote it.

Or maybe you've been using the same branding since your business was a completely different business.

It happens.

**The trick is catching those things before they start costing you customers.**

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## HERE'S HOW THIS GOES.

### 01

#### BE HONEST

Read each statement and check the box if you can confidently say it's true. Not mostly true. *Not we're getting there.* **True.**

### 02

#### KEEP SCORE

Each category has five questions. Give yourself one point for every box you check.

### 03

#### FIND THE GAPS

At the end, you'll see what your scores mean, where you might be losing people, and what you can do about it.

### 04

#### MAKE A MOVE

You don't need to fix everything by Friday. Pick the thing that matters most and start there.



#### ONE MORE THING

This isn't a test you need to ace. A low score just means you've found something worth paying attention to.

## CLARITY

### DO PEOPLE GET IT, OR ARE THEY GUESSING?

You know your business inside and out. **Your customers don't.**

And if someone has to scroll through three pages, decode your clever tagline, and piece together what you're selling, there's a good chance they'll just leave.

### CHECK YOURSELF.

- ☐ I can explain what my business does in one clear sentence without rambling.
- ☐ Someone visiting my website for the first time can quickly understand what I offer and who it's for.
- ☐ I know who my ideal customers are, what matters to them, and what influences their buying decisions.
- ☐ I understand the specific problems my customers are trying to solve, and my messaging addresses those problems.
- ☐ My products or services are organized and explained in a way that makes choosing the right one easy.

MY CLARITY SCORE

\_\_\_ / 5

## 01

### IF YOUR SCORE IS LOW...

You might be making people do too much thinking.

And people generally don't stick around to solve a mystery when they're trying to spend money.

Unclear positioning, confusing offers, and vague messaging can all create friction before a potential customer ever reaches out.

### TRY THIS.

### THE 10-SECOND TEST

Show your homepage to someone who doesn't know your business.

Give them 10 seconds.

Then ask:

- **What does this business do?**
- **Who is it for?**
- **Why would someone choose it?**

If they struggle to answer, you've found a place to start.

## CONSISTENCY

### DOES YOUR BRAND HAVE MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES?

Your website says sophisticated. Your Instagram says playful. Your emails sound like they came straight from a corporate handbook.

#### Which one is it?

Your brand doesn't need to look identical everywhere. Different platforms call for different approaches.

But people should still recognize the same business behind all of them.

### CHECK YOURSELF.

- ☐ My logo, colors, and typography are used consistently across my website, social media, marketing materials, and other customer touchpoints.
- ☐ I have documented brand guidelines that explain how my visual identity should be used.
- ☐ My brand voice sounds recognizable whether I'm writing a website headline, email, social caption, or advertisement.
- ☐ I have clear messaging guidelines, including examples of language my brand uses and language it avoids.
- ☐ Someone creating marketing materials for my business could follow my guidelines without having to guess how things should look or sound.

MY CONSISTENCY SCORE \_\_\_\_ / 5

## 02

#### IF YOUR SCORE IS LOW...

Your customers might be meeting a slightly different version of your business every time they interact with you.

That's not ideal.

Consistency helps people recognize you, remember you, and develop confidence in what they're seeing.

And no, using the same shade of pink everywhere doesn't automatically make your branding consistent.

#### TRY THIS.

### THE BRAND LINEUP

Pull up your website, Instagram profile, latest email, and a recent marketing piece.

Look at them side by side.

Cover the logos.

**Do they feel like they belong to the same business?**

Pay attention to more than colors and fonts. Look at the language, imagery, personality, and overall impression.

If things feel disconnected, write down exactly where.

## CONNECTION

### ARE YOU GIVING PEOPLE A REASON TO CARE?

People have options. Lots of them.

And while price, quality, and convenience certainly matter, they're rarely the whole story.

Your brand should give people something to connect with. A perspective. A personality. A reason to feel like your business understands them.

**Because being seen is one thing. Being remembered is another.**

### CHECK YOURSELF.

- ☐ I can clearly explain what my business stands for beyond making money or providing a good product or service.
- ☐ My messaging reflects what my customers care about, including their goals, frustrations, and priorities.
- ☐ My brand communicates a recognizable personality rather than relying on generic industry language.
- ☐ I can explain why my business exists and what drives the decisions I make.
- ☐ My website and marketing materials give potential customers a sense of what it's like to work with or buy from my business.

MY CONNECTION SCORE \_\_\_\_ / 5

## 03

### IF YOUR SCORE IS LOW...

**You might be giving people plenty of information without giving them much reason to feel anything about it.**

And that makes it easier to forget you.

Connection doesn't require an inspirational founder story, constant vulnerability, or turning your business into a personal diary.

Sometimes it's as simple as having a clear opinion, understanding your customers, and sounding like a real person.

Imagine that.

### TRY THIS.

### THE GENERIC LANGUAGE AUDIT

Read your homepage and highlight phrases like:

*Quality service. Customer satisfaction. Innovative solutions. Excellence. Passionate about what we do.*

Now ask yourself:

**Could my competitor copy and paste this onto their website without changing a word?**

If the answer is yes, get more specific.

What do you believe? How do you approach things differently? What do customers consistently appreciate about working with you?

That's the stuff worth talking about.

## RECOGNITION

### WOULD ANYONE KNOW IT WAS YOU?

Here's an uncomfortable question:

**If we took your logo off everything, would your brand still look like yours?**

Or would it blend into a sea of businesses using the same colors, stock photos, and recycled messaging?

A recognizable brand gives people something to remember.

And in a crowded market, that's a pretty big advantage.

### CHECK YOURSELF.

- ☐ My brand has a distinctive visual identity that goes beyond simply having a logo.
- ☐ My visual identity looks noticeably different from my direct competitors.
- ☐ My messaging communicates a specific point of view rather than repeating common industry claims.
- ☐ I can clearly explain what makes my business a better fit for certain customers than the alternatives.
- ☐ My brand has recognizable elements that customers encounter consistently across different platforms and materials.

MY RECOGNITION SCORE \_\_\_\_ / 5

## 04

### IF YOUR SCORE IS LOW...

**There's a chance your business is looking and sounding a little too much like everyone else.**

And when people can't tell the difference, they're more likely to compare you on things like price or convenience.

Standing out doesn't mean being loud, weird, or deliberately different just to get attention.

It means giving people something distinct enough to recognize and relevant enough to remember.

### TRY THIS.

### THE COMPETITOR LINEUP

Open the websites of three direct competitors alongside your own.

Take a good look.

Are you all using similar colors? The same imagery? Nearly identical headlines?

Now cover the business names.

### How easy is it to tell everyone apart?

If you're struggling, your customers probably are too.

Write down three things that make your business different.

Then ask yourself whether someone could discover those differences just by looking at your website.

# GROWTH POTENTIAL

## IS YOUR BRAND KEEPING UP WITH YOUR BUSINESS?

Remember when your business was just getting started?  
You've probably learned a few things since then.

Your services may have changed. Your customers might be  
different. Your prices have hopefully gone up.

### But has your brand kept pace?

What made sense two years ago might be holding you back today.

## CHECK YOURSELF.

- ☐ I have a clear idea of where I want my business to be in the next one to three years.
- ☐ My current branding reflects the quality, expertise, and value of what I offer today.
- ☐ My brand attracts the kinds of customers and projects I want more of.
- ☐ My messaging and visual identity can accommodate new services, products, or business opportunities without needing to be reinvented.
- ☐ I know which parts of my brand need attention to support my next stage of growth.

MY GROWTH POTENTIAL SCORE

\_\_\_ / 5

## 05

### IF YOUR SCORE IS LOW...

**Your business might have outgrown the brand you built for it.**

That doesn't automatically mean you need a complete rebrand.

Sometimes it's a matter of refining your messaging, improving how your services are presented, or updating a visual identity that no longer reflects the business behind it.

The important thing is recognizing when there's a disconnect.

### TRY THIS.

## THE THEN VS. NOW TEST

Think about your business when you first launched.

Now compare it to today.

Have your prices changed? Your services? Your experience? The customers you want to attract?

Write down the three biggest differences.

Then look at your website and branding.

**Do they reflect the business you are today, or are they still telling the old story?**

## THE BRAND CHECKUP

# THE RESULTS ARE IN.

You've made it through all 25 questions. Time to find out what your answers are telling you.

### FIRST, ADD UP YOUR SCORES.

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Clarity          | ___ / 5         |
| Consistency      | ___ / 5         |
| Connection       | ___ / 5         |
| Recognition      | ___ / 5         |
| Growth Potential | ___ / 5         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>___ / 25</b> |

### ONE IMPORTANT THING.

Your total score doesn't tell the whole story. You could score 20 out of 25 and still have a serious clarity problem.

Or you could score 14 and discover that a handful of relatively small improvements would make things much better.

**Pay attention to where you lost points, not just how many.**

That's where the useful information lives.

### WHAT YOUR CATEGORY SCORES MEAN.

#### 4-5 POINTS / LOOKING GOOD

You've got a strong foundation in this area.

That doesn't mean there's nothing to improve, but you're probably doing more right than wrong. Keep an eye on things as your business evolves.

#### 2-3 POINTS / ROOM TO IMPROVE

Some things are in place. Others could use attention.

You don't need to panic, but you probably shouldn't ignore those unchecked boxes either.

Look for opportunities to make things clearer, more consistent, or better aligned with your business goals.

#### 0-1 POINTS / TIME TO DIG IN

This area needs some attention.

Depending on the category, you may be creating confusion, missing opportunities to connect with customers, or making it harder for people to recognize the value of what you offer.

**The good news? Now you know where to look.**

### AND YOUR OVERALL SCORE?

#### 21-25 STRONG FOUNDATION

Your brand is in pretty good shape.

You've got many of the important pieces in place. Your next move is making sure they continue supporting your business as it grows.

#### 15-20 A FEW LOOSE ENDS

You've made progress, but there are some gaps worth addressing.

The good news is that targeted improvements could make a meaningful difference without tearing everything apart.

#### 0-14 LET'S TALK ABOUT THOSE GAPS

There's room to strengthen your brand.

Some of the fundamentals may be unclear, inconsistent, or no longer aligned with your business.

**Before you spend more money on marketing, consider whether the foundation underneath it needs some attention.**

## YOUR BRAND HIT LIST

# ENOUGH CHECKING BOXES.

## WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

You've identified some things your brand does well. And probably a few things you've been meaning to deal with. Now comes the useful part. You don't need a 47-step action plan. **You need somewhere to start.**

### 01 THE BIGGEST GAP

Which category received your lowest score?

**My lowest-scoring category:** \_\_\_\_\_

If multiple categories tied, choose the one most likely to affect your customers' experience or buying decisions.

### 03 THE CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE

Think about the questions customers ask before hiring or buying from you.

What seems to confuse them? What do they need explained more than once? What objections keep coming up?

**One thing my customers might be unclear about:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 05 THE PLAN

What needs to happen to make that improvement?

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**When will I get started?** \_\_\_\_\_

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### 02 THE THING I KEEP PUTTING OFF

Be honest. Is there something you already knew needed attention?

Maybe it's your website messaging. Maybe your branding has become inconsistent. Maybe your business has changed, but your marketing hasn't caught up.

**I've been meaning to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 04 THE FIRST MOVE

Choose one improvement you can realistically tackle.

Not five. One.

**The first thing I'm going to address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## HERE'S YOUR REMINDER.

You don't have to redesign your logo because you scored a two.

You don't have to throw out your entire website because your messaging could be clearer.

And you definitely don't have to fix everything at once.

**Figure out what's getting in the way.**

**Then deal with that first.**

## THE NEXT STEP

# FOUND A FEW THINGS?

## GOOD. NOW YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.

It's easy to get caught up in how your brand looks.

The logo. The colors. The fonts. The website.

But what about the decisions behind all of it?

**Who are you trying to reach?**

**Why should they choose you?**

**What do you want to be known for?**

When those answers are fuzzy, it shows up in your messaging, your marketing, and sometimes, in the opportunities you're missing.

## THAT'S WHERE I COME IN.

I'm the designer and strategist behind Studiolit.

I help businesses figure out what makes them different and bring it to life through thoughtful branding and design.

Maybe you need to get clearer on your strategy. Maybe your visual identity needs some attention.

**Or maybe you just need a damn good designer in your corner.**

Whatever the next step looks like, it starts with a conversation.

**START THE CONVERSATION**