

alderandalder

# Brand Aid

**10 brand tips** for  
charities, social enterprises  
and non-profit organisations



Jonathan Alder



## What is your brand?

So what do we mean, when we say 'brand'? Well, a 'brand' is a communication tool. It's the thing that connects an organisation to their audience. So it's as relevant – and valuable - to an organisation like yours, as it is to any commercial business. The scale might be different, but the job it does (and the benefit it delivers), is just the same.

Your brand is really two things, separate but connected, a bit like a coin with two sides. One side of this coin is the tools and activities you use to communicate with your customers. These tools might include your logo, your literature, your website... anything visual. The communication activities might include an advertising campaign, press coverage or events you run... anything you do to encourage people to use the services or products you provide.

The other side of the coin is the impression you leave behind, as a result of communicating with your audience. Their opinion of the service and products you deliver. Another way to think of it is your 'reputation'.

Brand is one word to describe these two things.

This guide tells you how to make the best use of it.





## Tip 1

### Why do you exist?

It's a simple question, but it's not always easy to find the answer. As an organization grows and develops the original purpose behind it can get lost or confused as things change.

This confusion makes it harder to get things done... harder to make decisions. It makes it harder to move forward. If you have a clear purpose it brings clarity to **everything** you do. It differentiates you from everybody else and gives your audience a reason to choose you.

So here's a simple exercise for you. There are three steps.

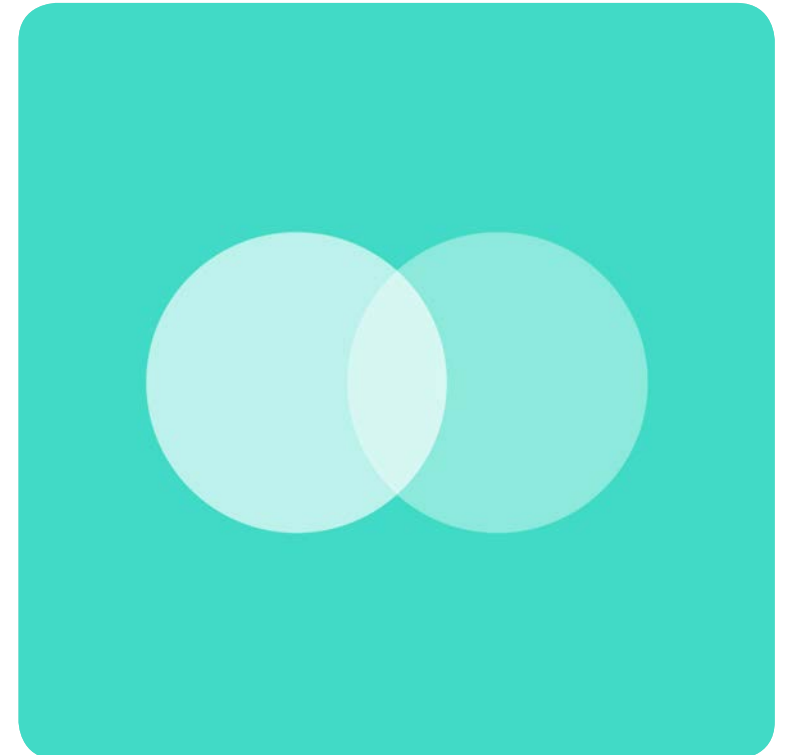
**One:** Write down your purpose. The reason you exist. Keep it short. 20 words should be enough.

(A good way to start is "Our purpose is to...", then fill in the rest).

**Two:** List all the things you do; all the services you provide or products you offer.

**Three:** Now compare the two. Does your purpose relate to EVERYTHING you do? If it doesn't, you need to change something. Either your purpose, or the things you do.

The reason is that a clear purpose – clarity about why you exist – makes it easy for people to choose you. Any kind of confusion makes it much harder.



## Tip 1: Why do you exist?

### Look at... **Cancer Research UK**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

There are over 200 forms of cancer. Cancer Research UK are dedicated to finding a cure for all of them. Their aim is “to save lives by preventing, controlling and curing cancer. We do this through funding world-class research into all aspects of cancer, providing information, and influencing public policy”.

Their purpose is very clear. To help them communicate this message they launched a new brand in September 2012. The reason they wanted a new brand for this job was that they wanted to “more accurately reflect who and what we are: a collective force of supporters, scientists, doctors and nurses coming together to beat all cancers”.

Cancer Research UK are more than the 4000 scientists, doctors and nurses involved in their work across the UK. Just as important are the hundreds of thousands of supporters who raise hundreds of millions of pounds every year. Cancer Research UK are totally dependent on these donations. Without them there would be no research.

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)



## Tip 2

### Stand out from your competitors

It's a competitive market place, whether you're a business or a non-profit organization. Things are changing, and it's not going to get any easier. So you need to stand out from those organizations around you. But how?

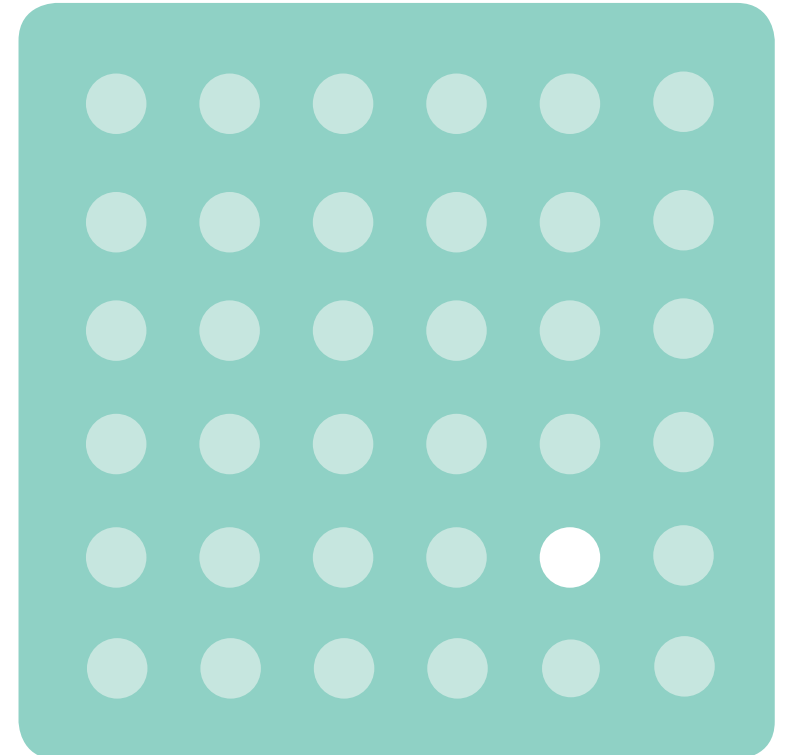
The good news is there are only two things you need to think about:

**Your organization** and **your audience**.

**You need clarity about yourself.** Clarity about who you are and why you exist. Clarity about the services or products you provide. And clarity about the benefit that these services or products bring to your audience.

**You also need clarity about your audience.** You need to know who they are (so you can develop the communication tools you need to engage them). You need to know where you will find them (so you can use the right communication channels to reach them). And you need to know what their needs are (so you can send them messages that mean something to them).

If you can keep your focus on those two things – on **what you do** and **what your audience need** – then you have a great opportunity to stand out from your competitors.



## Tip 2: Stand out from your competitors

### Look at... **Fifteen**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

**Fifteen** is a restaurant group, established by Jamie Oliver in 2002, that “uses the magic of food to give unemployed young people a chance to have a better future”.

There are three restaurants in the group, in London, Amsterdam and Cornwall. Every year each restaurant recruits a group of unemployed young people, aged between 18 and 24, for a unique, 12 month apprentice programme. The young people are taught all the skills they need to become professional chefs, and at the end of the year the successful apprentices graduate.

Fifteen has a very clear vision: to produce great Italian food and run an apprentice programme for unemployed young people. There is no compromise, no concession to the standards they accept, just because they have a social agenda. And Fifteen know who their audience is: people who love good food! Their customers are looking for a great meal. They want a great dining experience. They're not prepared to compromise either. So Fifteen need to be able to compete with all the other choices available to their customers. For breakfast, lunch and dinner. Every day of the year.

[www.fifteencornwall.co.uk](http://www.fifteencornwall.co.uk)



Photograph: Ellie Garland

Cornish Mackerel with Panzanella, from Fifteen Cornwall



## Tip 3

### You need to look good

Any successful organization is built on delivering a good service or product. The quality of what you do is why people choose you. The problem for some organisations is that the high quality of their services is not reflected in their communications.

People will usually see your brand before they experience it, so to attract people you need to look good. It's harsh. It's shallow. But it's human nature. We judge things on their appearance.

If you deliver a professional service, you need to look professional. So you need to invest in your appearance, in the same way that you invest in other aspects of your business, like your staff, your equipment or your premises.

A first impression is really important in setting expectations about an organization. What is the first thing people might see about your organization: a poster, a leaflet, your website, a sign, a logo on a vehicle? Does it do you justice? Does it reflect the quality of the organization behind that leaflet, logo or website?

If it doesn't, you need to make better use of your brand, so you can tell your story. The way it should be told.



## Tip 3: You need to look good

### Look at... Hospiscare

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

Hospiscare is based in Devon and was established in 1982, to provide care and support to people with terminal illnesses and their families.

Thirty years later they care for more than 2000 patients every year. This takes over 200 staff, almost 1000 volunteers and costs nearly £5 million. Over 75% of this money is raised through fundraising and donations. To do this they need to communicate, and communicate well.

In 2007 Hospiscare recognised that the high quality of the services they provided wasn't reflected in their communication material. So they took the opportunity to build a visual identity that allowed them to present a true reflection of their brand. Keeping the existing logo and colours, they developed the other tools they needed to help them communicate. To support that was a brand guidelines document, developed to help users - who could be staff or volunteers - to get the best out of the visual identity.

Now the Hospiscare brand is applied to posters, name badges, signage, vehicles, website, annual report, lottery tickets... anything they use to reach their audience. And they know that everything, however big or small, printed or digital, reflects the high quality of the services they deliver.

[www.hospiscare.co.uk](http://www.hospiscare.co.uk)



Printed material from Hospiscare

## Tip 4

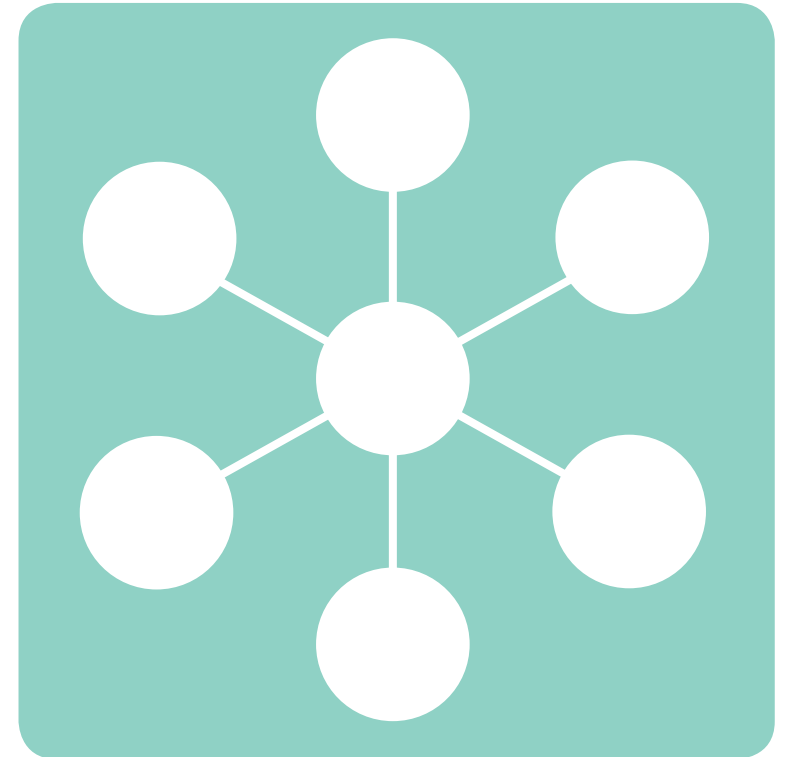
### What do you do?

As an organization develops its growth can be quite organic; opportunities occur and circumstances change. From the inside this growth can seem like a natural progression, a coherent path to follow. From the outside it can seem random and confusing. Unattractive.

Growth is an essential part of any healthy organization. It brings opportunities; new services to develop, new products to explore, new audiences to build relationships with. But it brings challenges too. The more you have to offer, the more you need to talk about. As your organisation becomes more complex, how do you keep it simple?

It's all about navigation. Make a list of everything you do and group all the related activities, services or products, in as few categories as possible. Then write a description - one description - that covers all the things in each category. You want to create a nice short list. Now, take a look at each category and see if you can do that again - group things together. You're trying to create structure, a logical relationship between all the things you do.

You want to help your audience find their way around your organisation, and it's easier to make a few simple decisions (choosing from a short list), than one complicated decision (choosing from a long list). If a journey is easy to make, they're more likely to make it again.



## Tip 4: What do you do?

### Look at... **The Dartington Hall Trust**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

**Dartington** is a social enterprise, covering 800 acres of rural Devon. It was founded in 1925 and is “a place of learning and experiment, addressing some of the significant issues of our time.”

What they actually do includes; providing a wedding venue, a collection of retail outlets, numerous opportunities to study and learn, pioneering research activity, hosting arts festivals and running a cinema... The list is enormous! Over time the list has grown as new opportunities and new needs have arisen. But it's diverse.

So when you look at **Dartington** they define their work in three broad areas; the arts, the promotion of a fairer society and the future sustainability of our planet. They've taken a very broad portfolio and packaged it in a way that is easier to understand, and easier to access, in all its diversity.

[www.dartington.org](http://www.dartington.org)



Photograph: The Dartington Hall Trust

The Dartington Estate

## Tip 5

### What's your message?

You've probably got a lot to say. There's probably a lot of things you want to tell people about. There's lots you can do, lots of services you can offer. Which is great, isn't it?

The challenge lots of organizations face, especially more established organizations, is being able to communicate all of the services or products they offer. There's too much to say. That's why understanding **why you exist** (Tip 1), is really important. But what next?

It's a bit like asking a question. If one person answers us it's easy. We can hear what they're saying, and begin a conversation. But if three or four people answer us at the same time it's overwhelming, too confusing. There's too much information. We can't understand what they're saying. We can't have a conversation.

**Your brand is a tool to help your organisation communicate.** It takes all of your messages and turns them into one conversation, so that your audience can get to know you, and you can get to know them.

That's the way to build a relationship.





## Tip 5: What's your message?

### Look at... **The British Red Cross**

In a UK survey of the 100 Most Desirable brands in 2011 The British Red Cross came in at number eight, two places above Aston Martin.

The survey was looking for brands that were **respected, attractive** and **aspirational**. When asked about the reason for this success their Head of Brand Development at the Red Cross had a very simple answer:

**“We have a universal appeal because we have a universal benefit: we will help you in a crisis wherever you are.”**

If you look at the list of things they do (disaster relief in the UK and around the world, support for refugees, first aid training, support and social care to vulnerable people on a global scale), the statement above is a very neat summary.

Such a clear, simple message makes it much easier to engage with your target audience. It's easier for you to communicate, and easier for them to understand.

[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)



## Tip 6

### Raise your profile

If you want people to engage with you, they have to know you exist. So you need to stand up and get noticed. You need to catch their eye. To grab their attention.

The problem for a lot of organizations is that they don't like to do that. It seems a bit too pushy. Too blatant. A bit arrogant. But the reality is that in an increasingly competitive environment, you have to go out and grab your space. Because if you don't, there are plenty of other organizations that will be only too happy to take you space, and all the benefits that come with it.

The good news is your brand is the perfect tool for getting you noticed. That's exactly what your visual identity was made for. Your visual identity is the bit of your brand that people can see – and for that reason it's at the heart of your communication. It's got all the elements you need: a logo, colours, a typeface, pictures, words and a design style for pulling all of those elements together and giving you a consistent image. It's just a question of whether you're making use of them all.

So don't be shy. Go out and get yourself noticed. Your brand has got everything you need.



## Tip 6: Raise your profile

### Look at... **YouGen**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

**YouGen** helps home and business owners find the right renewable energy solution for their needs, and the right supplier to install it. It was launched in 2009, from a home-office in rural Devon, with one member of staff, the founder, **Cathy Debenham**.

Despite these humble beginnings in three years YouGen have won a **Green Web Award**, for the best Ethical living site in 2009 and were Shortlisted for the best Ethical Blog in the **Observer Ethical Awards** in 2011. Cathy was recognized as Green Guru in the **BusinessGreen Twitter Top 100** in 2011, and in 2012 was both a Finalist in the Entrepreneur of the Year category at the **PEA Awards** and shortlisted for South West Sustainable Energy Champion in the **SW Green Energy Awards**. In addition to this YouGen and Cathy are regularly quoted and recommended in the national press. You can find YouGen on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. The site averages 26,000 hits every month.

This level of recognition hasn't been achieved with a huge marketing budget, or a big team of people. It's been achieved by having a very clear focus on three things: **objective** (the need to raise their profile); **target audience** (home and business owners and installers); **communication tools** (a brand that works online and offline).

[www.yougen.co.uk](http://www.yougen.co.uk)





## Tip 7

### Talk to the right people

As the environment around you changes, you need to adapt to survive. You need to respond to the new demands you face. And to do that you might need help.

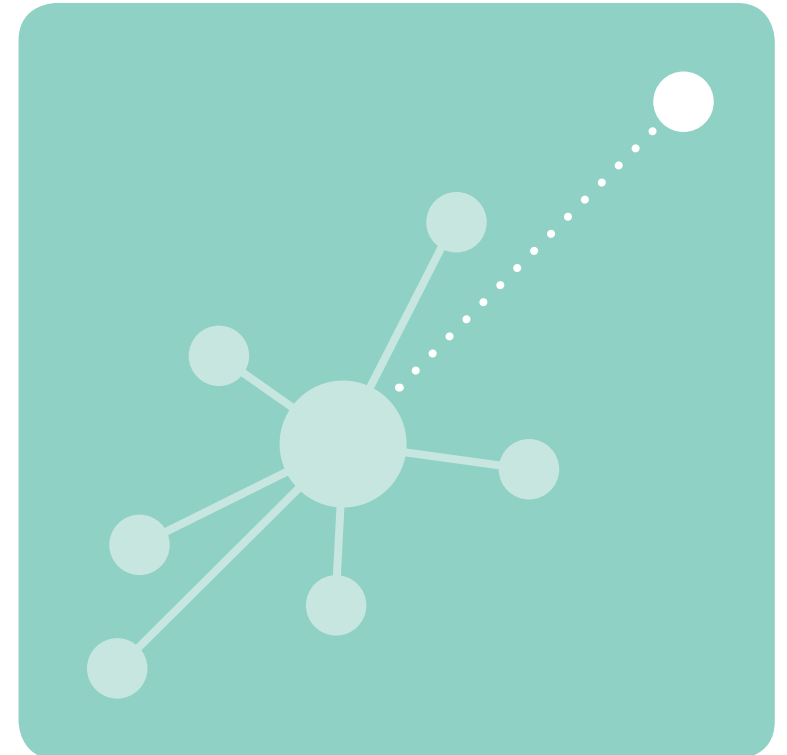
You could be looking for alternative sources of funding, someone to give you greater financial security. It could be an increase in the number of volunteers, to make it easier to do what you do. Every organization needs to make sure there's a healthy demand for what they do, so you might need more service-users or customers. Or you may be looking at ways to engage with your local community, so that you can enjoy the benefits that brings.

Whatever your need is, communicating with your new audience is the first step in developing a relationship. There are two things to consider about your new audience:

**Who are they?** Describe them (in detail) and why they are valuable to you.

**What do they need?** Why should this new audience be interested in you? What benefit are you bringing to them?

When you know the answer to these two questions, you are in a great position to start building your relationship with them.



## Tip 7: Talk to the right people

### Look at... **Devon Air Ambulance Trust**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

Providing and maintaining two helicopters to provide helicopter emergency medical services in Devon is an expensive business. With no Government funding to support them, Devon Air Ambulance Trust need to raise £4.5m every year.

One of the ways they do this is through their annual **Ride Out**, when hundreds of bikers from across the county ride the roads of Devon, to raise awareness of the work of Devon Air Ambulance Trust, and to raise funds to support the service. Although it started out as a very informal (and much smaller) gathering in 2006, it is now a major event, with over 700 bikers taking part in 2012. At the end of the ride there's live music, food, drink, stalls and prizes for the best bikes!

Bikers are a very specific community, with a very special relationship with Devon Air Ambulance Trust. The Ride Out is a great example of understanding who to talk to, and how to do it.

[www.daat.org](http://www.daat.org)



The Ride Out reaches the end of the road in Teignmouth

## Tip 8

### Be flexible

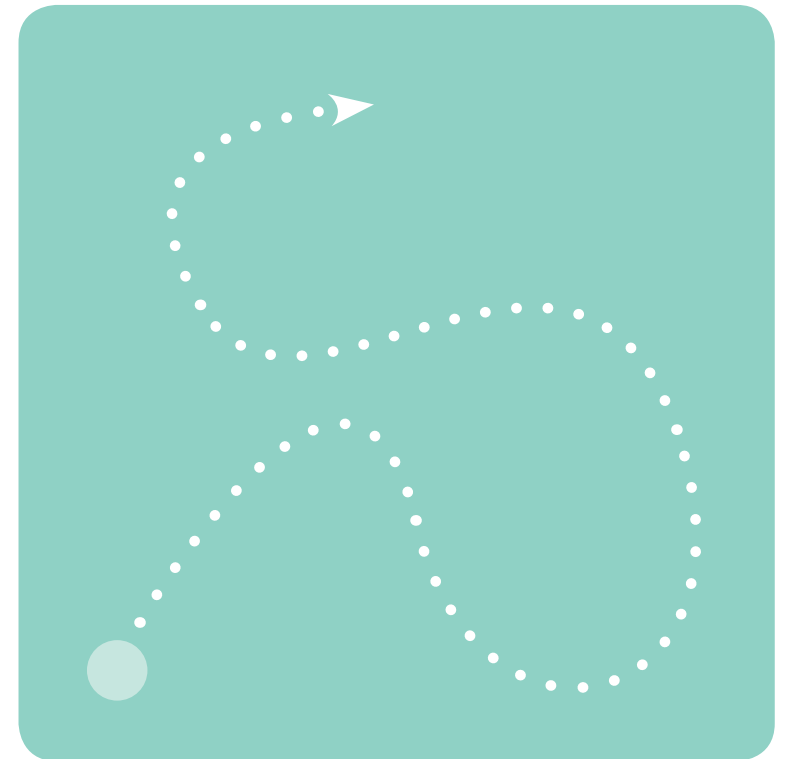
Everything's changing – our culture, our economy, our technology. And each of these changes presents not only new opportunities, but also new threats. So you need to be prepared for something different. Something unexpected.

It could be external pressures on your organization that shift. Or changes in the desires, expectations or needs of your audience. But things will be different. And how, what, when and who you communicate with will be different too.

Now no-one has a crystal ball, no-one knows what will happen. But if you've got all the fundamentals of communication in place: your logo, a colour palette, a typeface, imagery, language and style for combining all those elements, then you're well equipped. You've got all the raw materials you need to face the future, whatever it might be.

So when you look at your brand, don't build the brand you need today.

**Build the brand you'll need tomorrow.**



## Tip 8: Be flexible

### Look at... **Oxfam**

Oxfam was founded in 1942 and 70 years later they are still here, helping disadvantaged people all over the world. The challenges may have changed, but the need hasn't.

Oxfam now consists of **15 organizations** working in **90 countries**, all under the Oxfam brand. To do that they have needed to adapt, again and again, so that they can continue to fulfil their mission: a global movement of people working towards a world without poverty.

But it's not just the way they work that has needed to adapt, the way they communicate has had to change too. In 2012 they unveiled the result of a two year project to develop their brand and help them communicate more effectively. In a world of global communication, they have developed a global brand, bring greater consistency across nations, not just in the way they look, but in the messages too.

[www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)



## Tip 9

### Your brand is everything you do

Another way to describe your brand is the 'personality' of your business. It's reflected in everything you do. Everything you do is an opportunity to engage with your audience. Which is a huge opportunity. Are you making the most of it?

If you think of your organization you can divided it roughly into four areas: your communication, your product or service, your people and your location. Each of these areas presents a specific – and often unique - opportunity to engage with your audience.

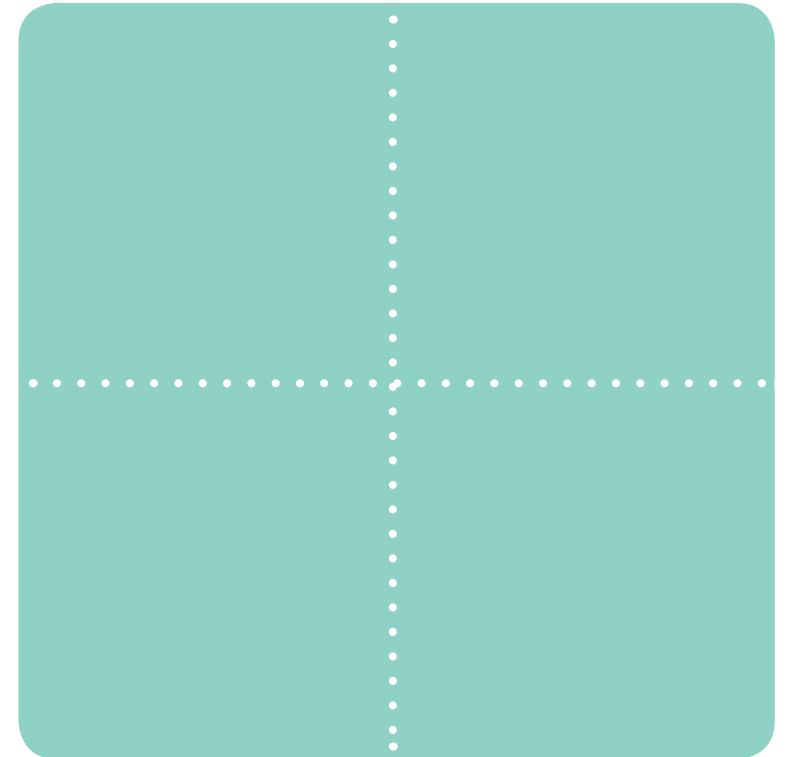
**Communication:** This is any material you produce to communicate with your audience; website, literature, posters, newsletter. Do they reflect the personality of your organization through the words and pictures they use?

**Product or service:** What does the quality, price or availability of your product or service say about your organization?

**People:** Do the people within your organization – full-time, part-time, volunteers – reflect the personality of your organization through their behaviour?

**Location:** What does your premises say about your organization? It's not just about how it looks – inside and out – but it's location, accessibility and transport links.

How do each of these perform for you? If you don't think they're doing everything they could, make some changes.



## Tip 9: Your brand is everything you do

### Look at... **Elvis & Kresse**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

Elvis & Kresse produce a stunning range of life-style accessories, aimed at the fashion-conscious shopper who's looking for something a bit different. What makes Elvis & Kresse's products different is what they're made from.

Their signature Fire Hose range is made from de-commissioned Fire Brigade hoses. They make bags, belts, wallets, iPhone cases, all from waste material.

On their website they declare **"industrial waste is the cornerstone of our brand"**. But it's more than that. At Elvis & Kresse their focus on waste goes beyond the product. The packaging is recycled too. All the boxes have been used at least once. Product labels are end-of-line labels that are unwanted. Each bag is wrapped in reclaimed parachute silk. And in recognition of the value of this 'waste', 50% of their profits are donated to charity.

The values at the heart of the Elvis & Kresse brand extend beyond their products. They bring them to every aspect of the customer experience, making it hard to ignore them, and easy to embrace them.

[www.fire-hose.co.uk](http://www.fire-hose.co.uk)



Photograph: Elvis & Kresse



## Tip 10

### **You will upset somebody. Don't worry about it.**

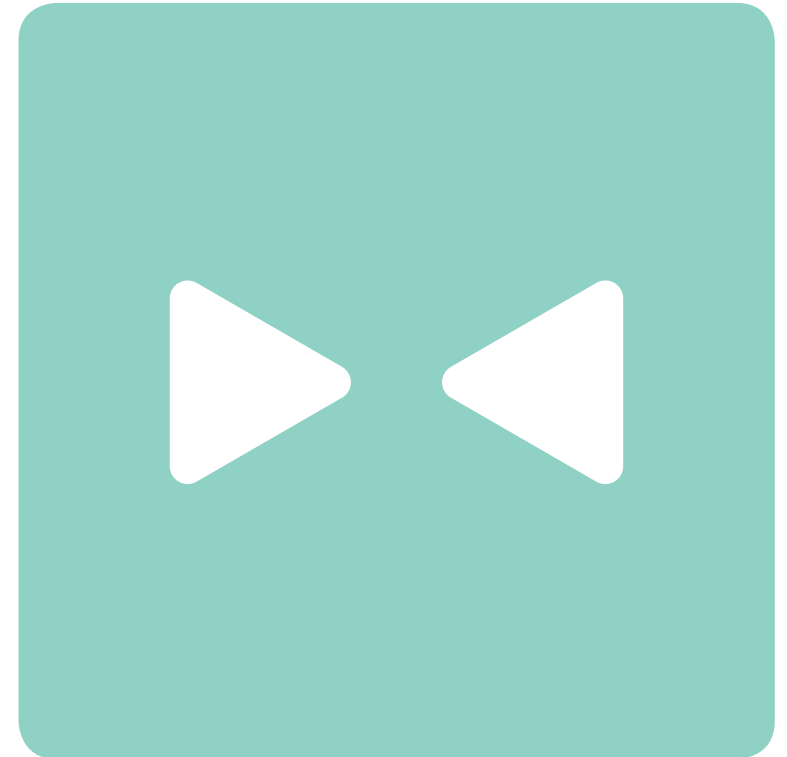
Does your organisation stand for a particular cause or purpose? Are you passionate about what you do? If you are, you can guarantee that someone holds the opposite view just as passionately. They will object to everything you say and disapprove of everything you do. Don't worry about it.

**Strong brands are built on passion** and it's your passion for what you do that drives the success of your organization. That passion is a beacon that attracts like-minded people to you. Those people are vital to your success, so attracting them has to be your priority. Understanding what they want to hear is crucial.

Whether your passion is to help disadvantaged communities, drive changes in consumer behaviour or protect some aspect of our fragile environment, you need to accept that not everybody shares your view, let alone your passion. But that's OK.

The worst thing you can do is try and please everybody. Because to do that you need to compromise. And the problem with a compromise is that there's no passion in it. Nobody hates it, but nobody loves it either... and as I've already said, strong brands are built on passion.

**So if you stand for something, make sure everybody knows.**



## Tip 10: You will upset somebody

### Look at... **Greenpeace**

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

For over 40 years Greenpeace has been upsetting people: oil companies, whaling ships, even governments (in 1985 the French government ordered the sinking of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in a New Zealand harbour, killing one person on board).

Greenpeace have been doing this because they believe that the only way to protect the planet is to confront those organisations who are damaging it. And that comes with risks. Greenpeace activists confront oil platforms, whaling fleets, logging companies and governments, in hostile environments around the globe. So how do Greenpeace get people to take these risks, year after year, for 40 years?

**It's all about passion...** sharing their passion. That passion puts them in conflict with many, but it also inspires others. People from different countries and different cultures. It unites them behind a single cause and inspires them to take enormous risks, year after year, because they share that passion.

[www.greenpeace.org.uk](http://www.greenpeace.org.uk)



Photograph: Denis Sinyakov/Greenpeace

Greenpeace activists confront an oil drilling platform in the Arctic



## So what next?

It's a competitive market place. Things are changing. You need to stand out from those organizations around you. I hope these 10 tips get you started.

I hope they help you to understand your brand a bit better, and that there's something here that you can take away and apply to your organization... something that will make a difference. Because it doesn't matter how big or small you are, brand has a role to play in your success.

The advice in this book isn't comprehensive. It's selective and subjective, based on my experience of talking to a fascinating range of charities, social enterprises and non-profit organizations. But I hope it gives you some insight into brand; some inspiration to make the best use of your own. Because your brand is a powerful tool, if you choose to use it.

All you need is commitment, knowledge and a lot of passion.



## Meet Jonathan

[www.alderandalder.co.uk](http://www.alderandalder.co.uk)

I specialise in brand creation and brand management. I've been working in the design industry for 23 years. I started my career in London, as a designer, and worked for several companies before I left, 16 years later, as a creative director. In 2005 I founded Alder and Alder with my wife, Charlie, because we wanted to spend our time doing what we're really interested in. For me that's working with ambitious organizations that are passionate about what they do. I help them to turn that passion into success, by making better use of their brand.

At Alder and Alder I've worked with a range of non-profit organisations, from well-established charities with turnover in the millions, to brand new social businesses that are still defining their business strategy. As well as working one-to-one with clients, I regularly run seminars and workshops, to share my experience and help organizations unlock the value of their brand.

The aim of this guide is to help people get a better understanding of brand. If you've still got questions you want answered, do get in touch.



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