

# 5 Signs That Your Brand is Having an Identity Crisis

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Each year, countless car manufacturers and dealerships happily welcome a nescient customer base whose self-consciousness drives them (no pun intended) to making what most would consider—one of the most frivolous and expensive purchases that a person could make.

That's because every year, thousands of middle-aged men around the world take to various car dealerships and websites to buy expensive sports cars in hopes of compensating for the fact that they've lost their self-confidence due to aging and aren't quite sure where they fit in today's society. In other words, they have a midlife crisis.

Much like those middle-aged men, believe it or not, many brands also have a crisis as it pertains to understanding and embracing just where they fit in the market. Unfortunately, that crisis often comes at the cost of a myriad of customers if it doesn't go addressed. Which is why it is imperative to recognize if your brand is showing any of the following signs.

## 1. Lack of distinctiveness

Have you ever attended a corporate or sporting event where everyone in the crowd all either wore the same company or team colors? If so, and if you also wore those same colors, didn't you feel a sense of unity amongst your fellow man that kindled in you a feeling that togetherness is so much better than being isolated?

While that feeling that you felt is a great thing in most aspects of life, when it comes to business, one of the worst things a brand can do is relinquish its individuality in favor of blending in with other brands in its industry.

Try to think about it from a consumer's perspective, if your brand currently blends in with others in its respective industry and lacks distinctiveness, what incentive would your target audience have to choose your brand over any of the others?

The reason why most brands often make the mistake of blending in is because to their managers, standing out from the crowd seems difficult, risky, and often means not catering to all potential customers. But that's exactly what a brand must do in order to become beloved by a targeted audience.

“One of the greatest dreads of marketers is turning off potential customers.” Writes Douglas Atkin, author of the book, *The Culting Of Brands: Turn Your Customers Into True Believers*. “Well, to generate a cult-like devotion to your brand, the kind of attachment that leads to large profits and word-of-mouth, you cannot expect to secure every man, woman, and child on the planet.”

If your brand lacks distinction from others in its industry, it most certainly has an identity crisis that needs to be addressed and corrected as soon as possible.

## 2. Inconsistency

Whether it's a relationship with a significant other or a relationship with your target audience, one of the most important things that you could do to ensure the relationship flourishes—is be consistent. Which essentially means that you should continue doing all of the things that initially attracted people to you in the first place.

When a brand is all over the place, consumers often perceive it as erratic and unstable; two characteristics that lead to untrustworthiness in the eyes of your audience.

“A brand is a promise of a certain kind of consistency and continuity over time.” States author and cultural critic, Virginia Postrel, in a conversation with author Debbie Milman, for her book, *Brand Thinking And Other Noble Pursuits*.

Take an honest assessment of your brand, has it been consistent as it pertains to being in accord with what captured the hearts of your ideal audience initially? If not, it's a clear sign that your brand has an identity crisis—and the following sign is probably a huge why.

### 3. Incongruence between your brand and ideal audience

A big part of the reason why brands often experience inconsistency when it comes to its messaging, imagery, and tone—isn't solely due to the marketing managers in charge of those brands having no clue of what they're doing (but let's not kid ourselves, that is a contributing factor).

The primary reason why brands are inconsistent is because they're not congruent with the expectations of their ideal audience. Which in turn, leads to brands throwing any and everything at the wall in hopes that it'll resonate with consumers enough to influence them to eventually pay for their products or services.

However, as author Gregory V. Diehl explains in his book, *Brand Identity Breakthrough*, “When you understand a person's core values well enough, you can reasonably predict his or her actions under any given circumstances.” Diehl expounds, “That's important when trying to understand what your audience will or won't spend their money on or how they will respond to a specific marketing campaign.”

In order to get the best response from your brand's ideal audience, you must first fully understand the type of people who would make ideal customers for your brand. By understanding just who your ideal audience is—it becomes so much easier to create messaging that'll resonate with them enough to influence a desired action.

### 4. You have an “er” brand

I'm sure you're probably wondering, “What in the heck is an ‘er’ brand?” I also asked myself the same question the very first time I read author and brand-building expert Denise Lee Yohn's book, *What Great Brands Do*.

According to Yohn, ‘er’ brands are brands that position themselves as being better, cheaper, bigger, smaller, tastier, or any other adjective that ends with the letters ‘er’ when compared to competing brands.

The problem with having an er brand is that your brand's entire identity becomes based on the performance of other brands—as opposed to simply being known by consumers for its own unique attributes.

To abstain from having an er brand, make sure to emphasize in your marketing materials precisely what uniquely distinguishes your brand from all others in its category.

“Remember, to avoid an ‘er’ positioning, your unique value shouldn’t be based on being smaller, bigger, thinner, lighter, faster, sexier, or cheaper than another brand.” Writes Yohn. “To establish meaningful and lasting differentiation, pursue one or more of three chief strategies: Be first. Own an attribute. Specialize.”

Keep this in mind, great brands make their mark on the world by being a word that you cannot add an er to... unique.

## 5. Lack of personality

I’m sure that I don’t have to tell you that establishing true, worthwhile, and long-lasting relationships isn’t easy. And it certainly doesn’t happen overnight. But one of the best ways to expedite the relationship building process with potential customers or friends is by having a great personality.

Contrary to what many branding experts may lead you to believe, every brand has a personality. And like humans, some brands happen to have more exciting and intriguing personalities than others.

If you’re worried that your brand’s personality is too bland at the moment, it’s not too late to correct that problem. In fact, [here’s how to do just that](#).

Although it may not seem as if a brand having a lack of personality is an identity problem; it most certainly is to your target audience. That’s because boring brands are easily forgotten in the market. And forgotten brands definitely have an enormous crisis on their hands—they won’t exist for very long.

## Contact us

If you’d like professional help with developing your brand and its identity, we’d love to speak with you and discuss the many ways we could help your brand reach its full potential and connect with its core audience. Be sure to [contact us](#) and we can begin the process of decrypting your brand’s best narrative.