MUDCRAFTS

Before the logo: 5 brand decisions and a brand kit checklist

Five decisions to make before anyone opens a design file, then a checklist of what a small-business brand kit should contain.

THE FIVE DECISIONS (WRITE EACH ANSWER DOWN)

- [ ] Who is this for? Two sentences: who they are and what they are trying to get done. Not "everyone".
- [ ] What do you want to be known for? Pick one thing, maybe two, and make sure you can deliver it every single day.
- [ ] Why should they believe you? List your proof: years in business (if it is a fact), a process others skip, real work you can show with permission, honest reviews, a guarantee you will keep.
- [ ] How do you sound? Choose three words for your voice and one for what it is not. Read your last three customer messages aloud: do they sound like one person?
- [ ] How will you look, and where will it show up? Test the logo at the smallest and largest size you need. Choose one or two colours, one or two fonts, one photo style.

TEST THE ANSWERS BEFORE YOU SPEND ON DESIGN

- [ ] Say your "known for" sentence to three customers. Does it match what they would say?
- [ ] Show your voice words to a friend who knows the business. Do they recognise you?
- [ ] Look at your last five social posts. Would a stranger understand who they are for?

A BRAND KIT USUALLY COVERS

- [ ] Logo versions: primary, horizontal and stacked, a small simple version, full-colour, one-colour and black-and-white, light and dark backgrounds, clear-space and minimum-size rules.
- [ ] Colour palette: one or two main colours, a couple of supporting ones, neutrals, with exact values for screen and for print.
- [ ] Typography: usually two fonts (headings, body) that you are licensed to use, with a fallback for places like email.
- [ ] Imagery and graphic style: what your photos look like, your icons, patterns and shapes.
- [ ] Voice and tone: the words you use and avoid, how friendly or formal you are.
- [ ] Templates: business cards, letterhead, invoices, social posts, email signature, signage, packaging.
- [ ] Guidelines: a clear few pages with the rules, a few do and don't examples and a note on voice.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHOEVER BUILDS YOUR IDENTITY

- [ ] What exactly is in the kit: which logo versions, files and templates?
- [ ] Will there be a guidelines document, and how long is it?
- [ ] Do you start with research and strategy, or jump straight to design?
- [ ] Who owns the finished work and the original files?
- [ ] Can you show a few identity projects, not just logos?
- [ ] What help is available later when I need new materials?

PROTECT WHAT YOU BUILD

- [ ] Search the Canadian Intellectual Property Office trademarks database and WIPO's Global Brand Database to see whether your name or logo is already taken in your field. WIPO itself notes it may be prudent to search national registers too, or consult a trademark attorney.
- [ ] Get ownership and file handover agreed in writing. The creator may be the first owner of the copyright unless you agree otherwise in writing, depending on where you are. Ask for the original, editable files.

We are designers, not lawyers: use this as a prompt to check, and get proper advice before you print a thousand business cards.

WHERE THE FACTS COME FROM

Canadian Intellectual Property Office, trademarks: ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/trademarks
WIPO Global Brand Database: wipo.int/en/web/global-brand-database

Want a second pair of eyes?

Tell us about your business at mudcrafts.com/contact/ or ask Muddy in the chat on the site.
We are MudCrafts. We build your brand... with love.