BUILDING A BRAND ON A SMALL BUDGET

Your name, look, voice and promise: what a brand really is, and how to build one without an agency.

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AT A GLANCE

- A **brand** is what people think and feel about your business. It's built by **every experience** customers have, not just your logo.
- Start with three things: a **clear promise**, a **consistent look**, and a **recognizable voice**.
- You can build a strong brand with **free and low-cost tools**, as long as you're consistent.

Why it matters

A clear brand helps customers remember you, trust you and tell others about you. It lets you charge fair prices instead of competing only on cost. And it makes every marketing dollar work harder because people recognize you.

The four building blocks

Block	What it is	Example: Rosa's Cleaning Co.
Promise	The one thing customers can always count on	"The same trusted cleaner, every visit"
Look	Logo, colors, fonts, photos	Simple logo, deep green and white, real photos of her team
Voice	How you sound in words	Warm, direct, bilingual, never pushy
Experience	What it's like to buy from you	Easy text booking, on-time arrival, follow-up message

Step by step

1. **Write your promise** in one sentence. What do you want customers to say about you?
2. **Choose 2 to 3 colors and 1 to 2 fonts.** Use them everywhere.
3. **Make a simple logo.** A clean wordmark (your name in a good font) is fine to start. Free design tools can help, or hire a freelancer for a fixed price.

4. **Use real photos** of your product, your work and your team. They build more trust than stock images.
5. **Write 5 voice rules**, like "short sentences," "friendly, not slangy," "always say thank you."
6. **Make a one-page brand sheet** with your promise, colors, fonts, logo and voice rules. Share it with anyone who makes anything for you.
7. **Apply it everywhere**: signs, website, social media, invoices, packaging, uniforms and emails.

> EXAMPLE
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> **Amara** had no design budget. She chose two colors from her product packaging, one serif and one simple font, and wrote her promise: "Gentle skincare you can trust for sensitive skin." She paid a freelancer a flat fee for a wordmark logo and took product photos by a window with her phone. Customers began recognizing her posts in their feeds before reading the name.

> TIP
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> **Your brand includes your community.** If your business serves a language or cultural community, let that show in your words, images and values. It's a strength.

Common mistakes

- **Changing your look constantly.** Consistency builds recognition.
- **Spending big on a logo before you have customers.**
- **Copying a competitor's look.** It confuses customers and can cause legal trouble. See **B-07 Picking and Protecting Your Business Name**.
- **A promise you can't keep.** Your experience must match your words.

Your checklist

- ☐ Write your one-sentence brand promise
- ☐ Choose 2 to 3 colors and 1 to 2 fonts
- ☐ Make or commission a simple logo
- ☐ Write 5 voice rules
- ☐ Create a one-page brand sheet
- ☐ Update your signs, profiles and documents to match

Key words, explained

Word	What it means
Brand	What people think and feel about your business.
Brand promise	What customers can always count on from you.
Wordmark	A logo made from your business name in a styled font.
Brand voice	The personality of your words.

Where to go next

- **L-02 Your Website: What You Need and What You Don't**
- **L-03 Social Media for New Businesses**
- **B-07 Picking and Protecting Your Business Name**

IMPORTANT

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