

# myweeklymarketing.

**Janice Hostager:** 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing.

**Janice Hostager:** 0:28

The word brand gets tossed around a lot in business circles, but what does it really mean? It's hard to define what your brand is, but we all know a well-branded company when we see one, right? We can all recognize a Starbucks from a McDonald's, a Disney from a Netflix. But how do you define your own brand? And that's what my guest today, Kylie Kullack, is going to talk about. Kylie is the head of client engagement for Struck. Struck is a branding agency that works with companies to boost brand awareness, engagement and growth. She's got some great branding tips to share with us today, so let's jump into my conversation with Kylie. Well, hey, Kylie, how are you today?

**Kylie Kullack:** 1:09

I'm doing very well. Thank you for having me.

**Janice Hostager:** 1:14

I get giddy about the topic of branding, but before we get into the details, we all start somewhere. So tell me how you got into branding, got into this world.

**Kylie Kullack:** 1:27

Sure, thank you. Yes, I love branding and could talk about branding all day long. Once you get into this world it's so interesting because you see elements of it every day and it just sparks conversation and who's doing it well, who isn't doing it well. So, yes, great appreciation for the importance of branding. Thrilled to be here.

**Kylie Kullack:** 1:49

I started in the advertising agency world, originally from New York City, kind of went through the ranks on the agency side in Manhattan, more on the media planning and buying side, so you know where you invest your marketing dollars.

**Kylie Kullack:** 2:05

And then my now husband and I decided to take a leap of faith and get a little bit of a change of pace and try living in Park City, Utah, for a year and now we're coming up on 13 years.

**Kylie Kullack:** 2:15

Definitely a great shift in lifestyle and kind of prioritization of work-life balance. And I've been the head of client engagement at my current agency Struck for the last 13 years, where we really focus on the importance of brand but ensuring that your brand is communicated effectively through all of the channels and we can talk a little bit about that a little bit later and, in my role, oversee kind of our client engagements, ensuring that we're understanding from our client's perspective what their biggest challenges are and how we can bring value as an agency partner in helping them achieve their goals and building roadmaps and kind of tactical plans on how they can do that, but then also employing the right strategic kind of tools and initiatives to help them achieve that and also measure once they've engaged with us. Because the last thing we want is for clients to come to us and you know, with lofty goals and say we can help them achieve them but not actually track that or measure that on the back end.

**Janice Hostager:** 3:21

Lots of questions about that one. But before we jump into that, so a lot of my clients and I would say people in general, I think brand seems sort of like this nebulous thing, and I know that Jeff Bezos is widely reported to have said your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room. Is there more to a brand than that? Like, how would you define brand if you could do it like in a sentence, not to put you on the spot here?

**Kylie Kullack:** 3:49

No, no you're fine, I would say. I would add to what Jeff said in terms of your brand should be a personification of an individual, right, how can you articulate who and what this brand is? If it was a person, your brand is not just your logo or your logo mark, right, it is how your customers, or potential customers, interact with you, perceive you and then what their experience is throughout that process. And so what we like to do is often share with our clients, going through that brand strategy piece is building out what your brand is as a personification, if you will. How does it look, how does it feel, how does it articulate, how does it speak? What feelings is it evoking from your prospective clients? And so I would plus up what Jeff said is it's, of course, what they're saying about you when you're not in the room, but what is that person that they're

**Kylie Kullack:** 4:45

talking about?

**Janice Hostager:** 4:46

I love that. For many years I had a design agency, so people would come to me and say, oh, I need my branding done. And what they meant, of course, was they need colors, they need a font, they need a logo, that sort of thing. But brands, they really do run so much deeper than that. So can you tell me some foundational principles of branding that small business owners can use when they think about their own brand? Now you mentioned personification, like where do you start with that?

**Kylie Kullack:** 5:13

Yeah. So I think that that is a really important piece is, before we start any engagement, whether it's designed to your point. You know what's the logo look like. You need to better understand what it is that we're looking to communicate. What is it about your business that is unique about you know, in comparison to others? What is that special kind of shiny object piece that nobody else has that you can own? So it's kind of a really thorough process to identify what is it that you uniquely bring and you can offer and your points of strength.

**Kylie Kullack:** 5:45

But more also equally important is what are you not, what are you not going to deliver on so that you can even have a stronger position moving forward? And then, what does that look like and how does that feel? What is your voice and tone? How do you communicate? It's really important for particularly you know your listeners as you're building your marketing plans, to have a clear understanding of who you are, what your brand story is and how you articulate it. But then also, how are you deploying your voice, you know tone of voice across your different marketing channels? So your social media is it consistent? Or are you maybe more playful on your social and then more serious on your website, right, you want to make sure there's consistency with how you're communicating to your audiences, so that they're always having the same brand experience through the various touch points.

**Janice Hostager:** 6:39

And that can be hard right, especially if you have a team. You know everybody has to be on that same, that same sheet. You know a paper that know that this, this is how you talk at all, in all cases, and this is the...

**Kylie Kullack:** 6:50

Absolutely and we'll develop those you know and I would recommend your team you know your clients going through a similar process.

**Kylie Kullack:** 6:56

It doesn't need to be too in-depth or too cumbersome. It should be something that's pretty inherent, particularly for a founder or kind of the groups of those who are working particularly within the startup space is who are we and what is that short list of? What are our brand attributes and how does that get expressed from a communication perspective? And it should be two or three points like very salient, very succinct. This is how we communicate, so that they all are working from the same playbook and they're all speaking the same language.

**Janice Hostager:** 7:40

Now working backwards from that a little bit. So when I have a client that says, oh, you know, like I don't know where to start with my brand, so I always think of your mission, your vision and what that is like a stone and you throw that stone in a pond and it's like a series of concentric circles that radiate outward, so from there, once you figure out what that stone is, then they can determine who you're about, then you can determine what's unique about your company, what is your personality, and kind of go from there. So it's not like you really have to start somewhere. Do you start with that mission and vision or is there another place that you kind of start within that company? Or maybe it's the founder's personality? How do you start? What within that company Do you start? Or maybe it's the founder's personality, or what? How do you start? What's that called?

**Kylie Kullack:** 8:14

Yeah, no, I think that is absolutely the place to start with, because that's where the passion comes from, the founders in particular. Right, it's like why are you putting your blood, sweat and tears into this idea? What is it that you're looking to achieve and how can your offering uniquely do that? So it's understanding, mission and vision. But then it gets a little bit more tactical, into kind of for us, there are about two or three things that we also like to layer in. Is targeting right? So a prioritization of the audience segments that are going to have the highest potential for growth with whatever it is that you're offering. So, you know, particularly for startup businesses, you want to make sure that you're growing as quickly as possible, but you also want to be growing smartly and strategically, with the audiences who are going to engage, re-engage, but then also share and kind of advocate for you or your product post engaging with you. So it's really important to make sure that we prioritize audiences and, for the money that you might be investing from a marketing perspective, you're being smart in how you're investing,

that you're not just marketing to everybody. Let's look at prioritizing your investments so that you can really focus on those high value audiences from a targeting perspective.

**Kylie Kullack:** 9:39

We also then like to layer in kind of this brand positioning piece, right?

**Kylie Kullack:** 9:40

So how do we develop a clear and compelling brand positioning statement, if you will, that defines how your brand should be perceived in the minds of those target audiences that we just talked about, and how does this differentiate the brand from competitors but also aligns with kind of customer expectations?

**Kylie Kullack:** 9:56

And usually, you know, we do a lot of work in terms of understanding the competition and kind of the competitive landscape and where you fall within that mix, what is the audience, what are the landscape, the industry factors that are, you know, need to be front and center to get to this. And it's usually a sentence or two, so that it's a very clear distillation of who it is your organization is and what you offered and who you offer it to, and it should be something that everybody in your organization can repeat and can articulate very clearly. It's not your tagline, it's not external facing, it's not for your consumers. For the most part it's more this is who we are and this is what we offer and why it's important. And then, as we get a little bit further, then we can help with kind of more of that product positioning. So if you're an organization that offers multiple products, how can you make sure that you're building up strategic frameworks on how you can position those products that are kind of nuanced for the various customer needs?

**Janice Hostager:** 10:55

So they all align with the same brand?

**Kylie Kullack:** 10:57

Yes

**Janice Hostager:** 10:59

Okay, all right. Are there instances where a company will kind of offshoot and kind of go with a separate brand for a separate product or separate lines of products?

**Kylie Kullack:** 11:05

Yes, absolutely, and we definitely recommend that and making sure that, as you're looking through, if you're an organization that has multiple different products, kind of going through a brand architecture process and really defining that organization of your products and services to help ensure clarity, consistency and kind of synergy across all the various brand touch points, right. So if you have a house of brands versus a branded house. How can you make sure that you're very clear in articulating? The various products all live under a specific brand.

**Janice Hostager:** 11:39

Is that something you'd recommend with a smaller business, or do you feel like that's maybe down the road a little bit?

**Kylie Kullack:** 11:44

For the most part, for smaller businesses, I would say it's focus on your core brand and getting the awareness out of your brand and once you get them into your audience, into your funnel, that's where you can use your various channels to help introduce or reintroduce other products to clients.

**Janice Hostager:** 12:02

Okay, so I'm a small business owner. I like to say it's hard for a jar to read its own label, right? So it's hard for us as small business owners to really kind of get a grip about what our brand should be and to kind of see ourselves from the outside in. So where do you start in the process? If you're a small business owner, where do you start in that process?

**Kylie Kullack:** 12:56

I think it's in articulation even if it's just putting down on paper of this is what I believe my brand is and kind of what is unique and the best way you could do, we recommend that, we recommend is either with small businesses or through larger organizations is let's do some testing, right, put it out into the marketplace and get feedback from those who engage and know the brand as it exists today, equally important, those who don't know your brand or your offering, and have them experience it and kind of share back with you what they believe the experience is or the brand is, because that will also help better articulate, maybe, what tweaks need to be made or how you're positioning. It is maybe confusing, so there might need to be a bit of a clarification, if you will, of what it is your product is and how you're communicating it. So we like to do a fair amount of testing, whether it's primarily with those who are that primary kind of target audience that you're you're looking to reach

**Janice Hostager:** 13:35

Okay, just kind of put it out there, get some feedback, kind of...

**Kylie Kullack:** 13:39

Yeah, and if you, have iterations of those you know, put an option or two in front of those folks who know the brand, um, but also have the outsider perspective.

**Kylie Kullack:** 13:48

Uh, because it is true for small business owners, you can get very into the weeds, um, and sometimes you just need that 10 000 foot view of clarity just to be able to step back

**Janice Hostager:** 14:30

Yeah, yeah, so I have clients that will...

**Janice Hostager:** 14:33

Um, I get this question actually quite a bit. Um, what role is consistency? How important is consistency, I would say, in your brand? So let's say, your website looks a certain way I'm talking in visual branding at this point but say, your website looks one way and you're trying to keep that consistent, but you know your social media person's over on TikTok using some different fonts and some different colors. Is that a big deal?

**Kylie Kullack:** 14:59

Yes, yes, that is a big deal. It is a cardinal rule within branding to ensuring that it is consistent across the board. You have no idea where and how your customers will be engaging with your brand and they need to know that it is the same brand through those various touch points. So if someone has gone to your website and then happens to follow you on TikTok but then sees a completely different representation of the brand, that's misleading and it's not clear. Typically, consumers have about four or five touch points with a brand before fully engaging with that product or brand and we just need to make sure that they understand.

**Kylie Kullack:** 15:39

Oh, I see this is Janice's website and Janice stands for this and this is what she offers. And then I see her again in a print ad or I see her again on my TikTok and I understand. Oh, yes, okay, now I understand what it is that they offer and I'm interested in that and I need to go find them right. So, absolutely, we like to make sure and strongly recommend that there is consistency across the board. Whether you're a startup and you, you know

your core brand is your logo. You know your color palette, your type. Any photography treatment like that is the core, that is the holy grail that you want to make sure that you have really strong rules about how they're engaged and how they're employed.

**Kylie Kullack:** 16:18

Also, equally important is the brand voice and consistency and how you're communicating, and it can be a one sheet that you share with any employee so that they are very clear from the outset of okay, this is how and these are the rules of engagement, right,

**Janice Hostager:** 16:39

Yeah, that's a good way of putting it too. Anything from like the logo you have on a pen to the way people pick up the phone and answer it, and you know and how helpful. Well, even if you look at retail locations, if you go into, say, Bath and Body Works, they all smell the same, you know. So they put a great deal of thought and time and energy into making sure that there's this consistency between what you see online, what you see in their digital marketing and their advertising, their social media to write down to their storefronts or Trader Joe's is another good way.

**Janice Hostager:** 17:10

I think if I go to any Trader Joe's, the cashiers are chatty and friendly and down to earth and that's part of their brand. So, yeah, so I mean, I think we don't really need to be a big corporation to start implementing some of that. It can be something that any small business can do, and I know what the audience is going to say is like if you have the time right, so but I think that this is probably important for anyone, at least initially, to do and keep up with it and keep track of it.

**Kylie Kullack:** 17:45

Absolutely, and you know we are such big believers in brand and how your brand is communicated.

**Kylie Kullack:** 17:47

One of the unique things about Struck is that you know we are unique in that we have a very robust kind of branded environment entity within our organization, right. So to that retail point, we work with a lot of organizations, whether it's your lobby experience to you know, a full-on headquarters or retail experience. How do you ensure that you're bringing the brand to life in an authentic way, but a consistent way, so that you know you have that same nuance of walking into Trader Joe's and I know what I'm going to



expect. There shouldn't be surprises there, right, because that's the brand that you know and love and that's why you chose Trader Joe's over a competitor.

**Janice Hostager:** 18:25

Right, right, good point. How do or maybe they don't, but how do branding efforts kind of contribute to customer loyalty and repeat business for small business?

**Janice Hostager:** 18:36

It's probably just what you said, right, kind of like you know what it's going to be, therefore...

**Kylie Kullack:** 18:42

Yeah, and you know you want to ensure that there is the experience that they go through for their first purchase cycle is consistent across the board.

**Kylie Kullack:** 18:52

But, to your point, the components that you can put into play from a CRM perspective and kind of, once you have customers within your database, how are you consistently communicating to them and following up with them and executing on that brand vision, even when you don't have them necessarily on your website, purchasing or in your retail experience purchasing your product?

**Kylie Kullack:** 19:38

And to your point, it's like you know, when you have time, we believe that the most important investment for a new company or organization who is really investing in marketing and trying to get their product out there. This is the foundational piece, right, this is how you define success, moving forward and having a strong brand, and it doesn't have to be complex, it doesn't have to be a huge lift, right, but if you have that, one pager of this is who we are, this is what we offer, this is why we're unique and this is how we differ from competitors, this is how we communicate and this is our brand within all of our key channels. That helps you scale considerably and putting the time into something like that is invaluable and helps you scale and as you bring on more employees, there's a playbook from which everybody's working from and it should be revisited, right, because a brand shouldn't sit on a shelf. Once it's set, you don't forget it. A brand is, as I said, a person, right, it's a living, breathing thing. So how do you make sure that, as you grow and evolve, that you're ensuring that you're readdressing, kind of that one sheeter, if you will, of who it is this brand is and how it's being communicated?

**Janice Hostager:** 20:35

I was just going to ask you that, like, what happens if, down the road, a few years into it, I'm thinking, you know this, what I thought it was initially isn't really who we are now. It's not really who my customers are. How do you go about changing that? Do you do an abrupt phase? Do you do some subtle changes, like where do you? How do you address that?

**Kylie Kullack:** 20:53

Yeah, I think you have to evaluate the market opportunity right. If you're seeing that an abrupt change would dramatically and you know you might see a dramatic increase in sales by making that shift, that is something that is a very viable option. If you think it's a slower burn, then you need to better understand kind of the marketplace and the impact some of these changes might have. It is a sound way, particularly from a smaller business perspective, is to start testing the waters and seeing kind of if you're getting more of a response on, let's say, this new product offering or this shifted tone, and then you can start to implement across the board. Another key thing I think is you know making sure I mean you were talking about SEO before and particularly for small businesses. Yes, revenue sales is kind of success metric number one, right yeah, is this working or is it not right?

**Kylie Kullack:** 21:47

But as you're growing, it's also identifying, kind of what are those one or two other metrics that you want to keep an eye on that you can measure to see if you are getting the traction that you're looking for. And in this day and age, it's just so overwhelming how many different metrics you can track and it's just like data overload, right, and you can get lost in analysis paralysis, right. And this happens with our large, large entertainment global clients, right, like they have so many different data points that they're looking at that they're not actually making strategic decisions because they don't understand which one is the most important. And what we like to always counsel our clients is there are two or three major metrics that you need to focus on, of course, pay attention to the other ones, but you need to keep your eye on the prize with, kind of those top two or three metrics and define how you're gonna be measuring them so that you can really kind of adjust in your business model if you need to, or product offering if you need to.

**Janice Hostager:** 22:46

And what are those metrics?

**Kylie Kullack:** 22:49

I mean, of course, sales, particularly for smaller organizations. It's brand awareness, right. So how do people, do people even know about you? And how are we going to measure that, whether that is just word of mouth? That's a really good way of understanding, kind of oh, have you heard of us? And no, okay. And then always asking those follow-up questions of how did you hear about us? Because you might have evangelists who are huge fans, who are telling their friends left, right and center and you want to make sure that you are connecting with those folks because they are your brand ambassadors and they are doing this. You know for the most I mean understandably, for free because they are your brand ambassadors and they are doing this, you know for the most, I mean understandably, for free because they believe in your product and they believe in, kind of the solutions you're offering. So how can you make sure to amplify the goodwill that they're doing on your behalf as well?

**Janice Hostager:** 23:36

That's, that's really good. Um, so are there some common branding mistakes that you see, especially with smaller businesses? Do you what? Do you see that you think, ooh, this is a brand issue.

**Kylie Kullack:** 23:48

I would say it's a really delicate dance particularly for smaller startup organizations who could see either partnership,

**Kylie Kullack:** 23:50

like our co-marketing opportunities that could be really profitable or lucrative from a potential sale perspective but maybe aren't in the best alignment with your brand, right? So it's really important for you to make sure that, as you're, you know defining who it is, that your organization is and what your products are and what you aren't. As you're evaluating partnership opportunities or sponsorship opportunities or any place that your brand is going to be, among others, that you're ensuring that there's consistency there and kind of common value and speaking to the right audiences and the same audiences, because the last thing you want to do is put your, your brand, in a situation where it's a different audience in a different segment and it confuses the audience as to who you are and what it is you're offering.

**Janice Hostager:** 24:48

Okay, okay. So how do you know if you've got a branding problem? Are there some red flags? Now, obviously, you can spot it, your customers can spot it, but as a small business owner, okay, I realized that sales are not where I hoped they'd be. How do I know it's a branding problem?

**Kylie Kullack:** 25:14

I think a really good way that you could do that is to ask a handful of folks who know your product and those who don't, to give you some feedback on your product and very quick two or three questions of you know what is it that I do and what is it that my company offers? And just elicit really direct feedback. And if there is inconsistency across the board, then you have a branding problem.

**Kylie Kullack:** 25:33

It's so interesting, right, like you don't have to have huge budgets, particularly for small businesses. Right, like every investment that you make is one that needs to be really considered, but there are some ways that you can make some decisions and get some information that are not all that costly. And also, you know, the rise of AI is also really helpful from a small business perspective. How can you leverage tools out there that can help you propel and kind of move your marketing efforts forward in a smart way? And so, whether it's a survey that you put together on SurveyMonkey and send it out to 20 people that you know, know, engage with your product and don't, and ask a very number of questions of what is it this brand is, what is it that we do, what is our offering that's really cost efficient and it can give you a lot of information on how folks are interacting and engaging with your product.

**Janice Hostager:** 26:28

Oh, that's really really smart. Thank you. Kylie, thank you so much for all that you shared with us today. How can people find out more about you?

**Kylie Kullack:** 26:38

You can find me on LinkedIn, Kylie Kullack. I'm sure we'll post something so you can sell it. My last name is a little tricky to find, but on LinkedIn, but also at Struckcom. We also have a form there as well.

**Janice Hostager:** 26:50

Okay, well, thank you so much, Kylie. I appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today.

**Kylie Kullack:** 26:56

It's been a pleasure to be here. Thanks, Janice.

**Janice Hostager:** 26:59

I hope our episode left you feeling fired up about taking your brand from generic to uniquely You. Remember, your brand is so much more than a logo or a catchy tagline. It's how you make people feel, how you show up consistently and how you connect with your audience. For more information about Kylie or anything we talked about today, visit [myweeklymarketing.com](http://myweeklymarketing.com). Forward slash 104. If today's tips gave you some light bulb moments, I'd love to hear about them. Dm me on Instagram at [at Janice Hostager Marketing](https://www.instagram.com/atjanicehostager/), and share your biggest takeaway. And hey, if you're feeling extra generous, share this episode with a fellow business owner who's working on nailing their own brand. Also, make sure you're subscribed so you don't miss any future episodes. We've got some great guests lined up that you'll definitely want to hear from. Thank you so much for joining me today. See you next time. Bye for now.