



A Practical Guide to Staying on Brand

by Erik Cox, Wise Ape

Over time and as businesses grow it can be difficult to maintain the brand you are known for. When your brewery started it was likely you and a handful of friends who ended up being your first employees. Early on the group is small, passion runs strong, and your brand is easy - it's you.

Some of you may have invested in a brand consultant to work through and document your brand, your mission, vision, and values. I've spent more than my fair share of time in brand workshops and I think they are a valuable exercise to gain consensus for the handful who participate. The mission, vision, and values are framed or, better yet painted, on the wall and too often the brand work ends there.

As time goes, responsibilities and distractions grow. It can be difficult to know if you are keeping to your brand. It's easy to be overrun by donation opportunities: wouldn't it be helpful to short list them by which ones add to your brand? You're looking to add some new gear to your store: what items could you sell which add to your brand? You're building out a new patio: what fixtures could add to your brand experience?

A tool I suggest is to boil your brand down to 2 or 3 words, and "quality" can't be one on them - good beer is assumed. For example: Music, Funky, Colorado. It's easy to remember a few words and when you're stuck in indecision, just think, does this work with "_____, _____, or _____?"

Even more useful is for people outside the core team to keep your 3 words in their mind. This allows you to delegate and trust things will get done on brand. And if they're not on brand, it makes the conversation easier because you can have a discussion about how someone thought having a 8ft pink statue of liberty in the tap room related to any of your 3 words.



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I work to help companies own their brands and hit their objectives with smart creative that's just as functional as it is aesthetic. As a partner in a San Francisco design and business strategy firm, I've worked with startups, consulting firms, and multinational corporations. That inspired me to launch WISE APE so I could work with small businesses I love.