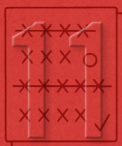


# CRAFT BEER BRANDING GUIDE

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BRANDING YOUR BREWERY,  
TELLING YOUR STORY AND SELLING A HELLUVA LOT OF BEER.

Isaac Arthur and Cody Fague



# CRAFT BEER BRANDING GUIDE

---

**A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BRANDING YOUR BREWERY,  
TELLING YOUR STORY AND SELLING A HELLUVA LOT OF BEER.**

**Isaac Arthur and Cody Fague**

## **COLOPHON:**

CLASSIC CREST® Cover IMPERIAL RED 100C (270 g/m<sup>2</sup>) 12.5pt / Smooth

CLASSIC CREST® Text AVALANCHE WHITE 80T (118 g/m<sup>2</sup>) 5.8pt / Smooth

## **DESIGNED UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF:**

Big Lug Canteen's Kristofferson Pale Ale (5.7% / 45 IBU)

Centerpoint Brewing Co.'s White IPA (4.2% / 49 IBU)

## **COPYRIGHT:**

Copyright © 2017 CODO Design, Inc.

[www.cododesign.com](http://www.cododesign.com) / [www.craftbeerbrandingguide.com](http://www.craftbeerbrandingguide.com)

®Registered Trademark and ™Trademarks of Neenah Paper, Inc.

[www.neenahpackaging.com](http://www.neenahpackaging.com)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

CHAPTER 1

YOU BREW BEER. SO WHAT?

5

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING YOUR CORE BRAND VALUES

11

CHAPTER 3

DEFINING YOUR BREWERY'S  
BRAND ESSENCE

17

CHAPTER 4

AN INTRO TO POSITIONING YOUR BREWERY

27

CHAPTER 5

CONCRETELY POSITIONING YOUR BREWERY

31

CHAPTER 6

WHO DO YOU WANT DRINKING YOUR BEER

35

CHAPTER 7

DEFINING YOUR BREWERY'S  
BRAND PERSONALITY

39

CHAPTER 8

SHAPING YOUR BREWERY'S BRAND VOICE

45

CHAPTER 9

DEFINING YOUR BREWERY'S CULTURE  
THROUGH BRANDING

49

CHAPTER 10

WHAT MAKES FOR A GREAT BREWERY NAME

53

CHAPTER 11

SOME JERK ALREADY TOOK MY  
BREWERY NAME

61

CHAPTER 12

BUILDING YOUR MODULAR IDENTITY SYSTEM

65

CHAPTER 13

NAVIGATING THE TTB LABEL  
APPROVAL PROCESS

71

CHAPTER 14

RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN FOR  
CRAFT BREWERIES

81

CHAPTER 15

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN: TURNING YOUR BREWERY  
INTO AN IMMERSIVE BRAND EXPERIENCE

91

CHAPTER 16

WHEN TO REBRAND YOUR BREWERY

97

CHAPTER 17

HIRING A DESIGN FIRM FOR YOUR  
CRAFT BREWERY BRANDING

103

CHAPTER 18

LAST CALL



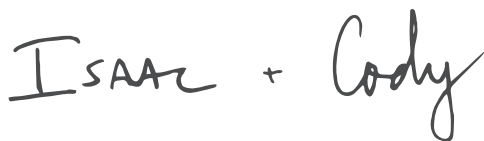
# FORWARD

As of 2017, it's estimated that a new brewery opens every single day in the United States. With this staggering growth comes increased competition and the new reality that you can't rely on your beer alone to stand out. That's where branding comes into play.

CODO Design is a branding firm based in Indianapolis, Indiana that focuses on helping craft breweries stand out, tell their story, and sell a helluva lot of beer. We've worked with breweries all over the country (and increasingly, the world) on their branding, packaging, web design and marketing. After years of working in this field, we've collected some thoughts to help you navigate each stage of the branding process.

This is a primer to get you thinking about your brewery in an important way—why do you brew the beer you brew and why does this matter to the people you want to drink it? The first half of this book is strategic and foundational while the last half is tactical and hands-on.

So kick back, pour yourself a beer and learn how to make your brewery stand out.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ISAAC + Cody". The word "ISAAC" is in all caps with a slightly stylized font, followed by a plus sign and the name "Cody" in a more fluid, cursive script.

Isaac Arthur and Cody Fague, CODO Design



# YOU BREW BEER. SO WHAT?

**BREWING GREAT BEER IS IMPORTANT. BUT  
BRANDING AND POSITIONING ARE NECESSARY  
TO MAKE YOUR BREWERY STAND OUT IN A  
CROWDED MARKET.**

If you're reading this, chances are you're considering opening a craft brewery. Chances are you're a brewer yourself. Or maybe you're in charge of marketing, are an investor or an industry groupie (hello there!). If you're reading this, I probably don't have to tell you about the explosive American craft beer industry. I don't need to cite statistics about overall craft market share versus macro beer. I don't need to tell you how many jobs this industry creates and while I'm an avid home brewer, I've got no business telling you how to fine tune your recipes for mass distribution. No, I've got no business telling you about any of that.

But, I can tell you about an enormously important business aspect that most brewery startups fail to consider when drafting their business plan—positioning and branding. So much of planning to open a brewery revolves around quantitative stuff. How many barrels will you brew in your first year? Where will you be located? Should you (or can you) self-distribute? Will you can or bottle? These are all important, but so many new breweries fail to consider their branding and positioning in a meaningful way.

For the sake of clarity, let's define these:

Your brand is your customers' perception of your company, including your products and your culture. It's their gut feeling about what you do and ultimately shapes why they either love or hate you. Why do they think you're different? How do they describe you to friends? Why do they (or don't they) support you? This messaging manifests through many touch points, but most importantly, your identity, package design, web design and marketing. It probably goes without

saying that the quality of your beer and your brewery's community involvement also play a crucial role here.

Positioning is the strategic act of defining your brewery's core concept, main audience, and how you're different from your competition.

Clearly positioning yourself in the market is only the first step. Then, how do you effectively communicate what's unique about your brewery to the thirsty masses? What images, colors, typography, packaging and web design elements reinforce this idea every time you come into contact with your customers? How can your branding shape the way people talk about your beer with their friends?

“**BREWING GREAT BEER IS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE. THEN YOU NEED TO GET THE WORD OUT IN AN ATTRACTIVE, STRATEGIC WAY.**”

Together, branding and positioning tell your story in a compelling way to current and potential customers. Given the finite amount of shelf space in local liquor stores, tap handles in bars and room in beer drinkers' minds, it's going to be harder and harder for new breweries to come out and make a splash without properly telling their story—particularly when opening in an already crowded market.

Yes, whether you buy a new or used brewhouse is a big decision, but we can't stress enough the importance of digging to understand your story. What kind of beers do you brew? Why do you do it this way? And who are your ardent customers? By taking a hard look at yourself and refining your brand messaging and positioning, you can tell a great story about your company that will fit seamlessly into beer drinkers' lives. From there, all you have to do is brew great beer.

Throughout this guide, we'll discuss how to accomplish the following:

- 1 FRAME YOUR BRAND VALUES**
- 2 DEFINE YOUR BRAND ESSENCE  
(AND CORE BRAND MESSAGES)**
- 3 DETERMINE YOUR BREWERY'S POSITIONING**
- 4 OUTLINE YOUR BRAND'S PERSONALITY & VOICE**
- 5 TELL YOUR STORY THROUGH COMPELLING  
BRANDING & DESIGN**
- 6 DESIGN YOUR BRAND IDENTITY,  
PACKAGING, WEBSITE, AND TAPROOM**



# DEFINING YOUR CORE BRAND VALUES

**YOUR CORE VALUES ARE THE IMMUTABLE RULES THAT GUIDE EVERYTHING YOU DO. THEY INFORM BUSINESS DECISIONS, BRANDING CONSIDERATIONS, THE BEER YOU BREW, AND HOW YOU DEAL WITH SUCCESS (AND FAILURE). THEY ARE YOUR REASON FOR BEING.**

Your brand's core values are set in stone the moment you decide to open your brewery. There are many reasons you want to run your own business, brew the beer you want to brew, and create the sort of experience you envision for your customers. An important step in the branding process is to clearly define these.

Your brand values are a set of emotional and qualitative rules that set the stage for your entire business ecosystem. Why do you exist? Who makes up your tribe? What do you stand for? It's important to define these because they directly influence your brand essence, positioning, storytelling, and broad strategic decisions. They inspire your internal team, attract the best talent, and get customers excited to support you (we all want to support companies we believe in).

To begin this process, write out all the different values your brewery holds true. Here are a few examples to get you started:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> INNOVATION    | <input type="checkbox"/> PLAYFUL       | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPARENCY    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY     | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTIVE     | <input type="checkbox"/> SIMPLICITY      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARTISTRY      | <input type="checkbox"/> RELENTLESS    | <input type="checkbox"/> LEARNING        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRECISION     | <input type="checkbox"/> TRADITION     | <input type="checkbox"/> HEALTH          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INCLUSIVE     | <input type="checkbox"/> DIY           | <input type="checkbox"/> SPORTSMANSHIP   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ADVENTUROUS   | <input type="checkbox"/> SELF RELIANCE | <input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-MINDEDNESS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COLLABORATION | <input type="checkbox"/> BALANCE       | <input type="checkbox"/> CHANGE          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CURIOSITY     | <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> IRREVERENT      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HUNGRY        | <input type="checkbox"/> MENTORSHIP    | <input type="checkbox"/> HUMILITY        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PASSION       | <input type="checkbox"/> REVERENCE     | <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE         |

You should end up with a good-sized list, maybe 15–25 values. Once you're finished, review them and try to combine similar ideas (it's not uncommon to list a lot of synonyms). There's no magic number, but we try to



work toward whittling down to 3–5 core values. We find that this makes them easier to remember and more importantly, easier to live by.

Once you've narrowed your list of core values, let's ask some questions to see if we can further refine them.

## **1 DOES THIS VALUE GUIDE BUSINESS DECISIONS?**

Does this value influence how you work with your customers and other organizations outside your business? For example, do you regularly think about this value when establishing relationships with distributors or supporting local charities? What about the other business you work with, such as restaurants or farms—how is this value reflected in the way you work with them?

## **2 IS THIS VALUE SET IN STONE?**

It's easy to be high and mighty when there's no money on the line. How steadfast is this value? If a big enough opportunity comes around, can you be swayed from your position? If so, it may not really be a core value.

## **3 IS THIS VALUE SOMETHING YOU'RE PROUD OF?**

Are you willing to wear this across your chest like a badge of honor? When telling people about your brewery, is this one of the first things you mention?

## **4 IS THIS VALUE THE REASON YOU STARTED YOUR BREWERY?**

Cut right to the heart of it—why are you starting your brewery? Can you boil the reason down to one or two words?

At this point you should be down to a pretty tight list (3-5). Now, take some time to write about what each of these values means to you—nothing crazy, maybe a paragraph or two. Why is “artistry” a core value? What does that mean to your brewery and why does it matter? Through this exercise, you may be able to rename these values to be more thematic, ownable and actionable.

Dogfish Head, a brewery known for its experimental brewing, is a great example of how core values translate into solid branding. With its focus on innovation and creativity, owner Sam Calagione beautifully expands on these ideas by saying, “Never let the tail of money wag the dog of inspiration.” This idea aligns well with his focus on boundary-pushing, atypical brewing, and is beautifully summed up by their brand essence, “Off Centered Ales for Off Centered People.” We’ll explore how to define your brand essence in the next chapter.

## OTHER THOUGHTS

### WALK THE WALK

It probably goes without saying, but you have to actively live by these values for them to matter. If you pride yourself on making the best beer you can possibly brew, are you prepared to dump an entire batch of something that doesn’t meet your standards? Are you willing to lose money in order to stand behind your values?

It’s important for your entire team, up and down the chain, to understand, and live by these values. We’ll get into this a bit more when we discuss how to shape your brewery’s culture in a later chapter.

## BE DIFFERENTIATED

There are some words that many businesses like to use to describe themselves, “ethical,” “trusted” and “quality” being some of the most common. While there’s nothing wrong with these concepts, they shouldn’t have to be said. Of course you should run your business ethically. But this idea doesn’t help you stand out from other breweries. Strive to stand for something that’s unique to your team—something that truly differentiates you from your competition.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE YOURSELF

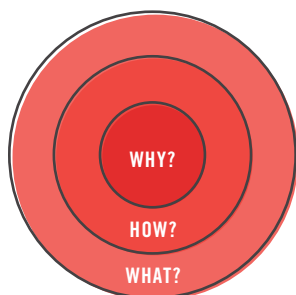
A lot of companies we’ve taken through this process have tried to create a “perfect storybook” image of themselves. “We make the best beer, and treat everyone perfectly, and we recycle, and we change the oil in our car every 3,000 miles, and we always remember to call our mom on her birthday, and we help old ladies cross the street...” You get the picture.

It’s important to tell the real story, your story. You need to look inward and define the values that you live by, even if they’re different from what the rest of the world expects. You can’t be perfect, so just be yourself and trust that you’ll attract the right people.

## “START WITH WHY”

A fantastic place to begin framing your values is to understand your “Why.” Simon Sinek familiarized this concept in his fantastic book, “Start with Why.” (if you’re not the reading type, you can also find a great TED Talk on this subject). Sinek says that there are three layers

to your story—the What, the How, and the Why. Most breweries land somewhere between the What and the How as far as their marketing is concerned, but the Why is what draws people in and creates a deep emotional connection (assuming you brew great beer of course). This directly informs your positioning and the role you play in your community and market.



SIMON SINEK'S GOLDEN CIRCLE

**WHAT DO YOU DO?**  
*WHAT'S YOUR CORE SERVICE?*

**HOW DO YOU DO THIS?**  
*SPECIAL PROCESS?*

**WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO?**  
*WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE?*

## QUICK EXAMPLE:

**WHAT:** “We’re a small, Belgian-focused brewery.”

**HOW:** “We use traditional Belgian brewing methods to create authentic Belgian beer.”

**WHY:** “My great, great grandfather worked at a brewery in Belgium and I grew up hearing stories about him. I’ve wanted to be a brewer for as long as I can remember.”

While this is a made-up example, you can see how this ‘Why’ is more compelling than the ‘How,’ which is more of a black-and-white fact than something that would make our fictional brewery different from other breweries.



# DEFINING YOUR BREWERY'S BRAND ESSENCE

WHEN BRANDING A CRAFT BREWERY, PEOPLE HAVE A TENDENCY TO WANT TO JUMP STRAIGHT TO AESTHETICS. BEFORE YOU BEGIN EXPLORING YOUR VISUAL IDENTITY, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT MAKES YOUR BRAND COMPELLING—YOU NEED TO DEFINE YOUR BRAND ESSENCE.

When branding a microbrewery, or any organization for that matter, people tend to want to jump straight to aesthetics right off the bat. “We want our logo to look vintage, but contemporary. A little bit rustic with just a touch of whimsy.” (for the record, I still don’t know what “whimsy” means).

Anyway, the problem with jumping to visuals too soon is that before you get to that point, you need to form a deeper understanding of your brand essence. This fluffy-sounding concept is important because it cuts straight to the heart of your brand—what do you stand for? It’s a distillation, often just a few words, of the most compelling aspect of your company—your biggest differentiator and your “Why?” Why should people support you? What role should your brewery play in their lives?

Once you have a grasp on these ideas, you can move onto the visual side of the equation. If done properly, your brand essence and the wider collection of surrounding ideas should directly inform your branding (identity design, website, package design, marketing, etc.) so that if someone is sitting in a bar perusing tap handles, they’ll see yours and immediately understand why they should buy your beer.

Here are a few questions we ask during the initial research phase of a branding project. These are part of a larger list of questions and tools we use to frame a brewery’s core values and the potential brand essence that can grow from them. Again, this all happens before we ever put pencil to paper sketching beer packaging or before we ever consider what your taphandle should look like.

- ▲ **In plain English, what is your brewery?  
(what do you offer?)**
- ▲ **What's the coolest thing about your brewery?**
- ▲ **Why does your brewery matter?**
- ▲ **What are your core values?**
- ▲ **Describe your beer. Who do you want drinking your beer?**
- ▲ **What role should your brewery play in your  
customers' lives?**
- ▲ **Describe your competition? How are you different?**
- ▲ **What emotions should your branding evoke?**

While your brand essence can (and should) directly inform your tagline and marketing messages, it's mostly an internal tool used to capture the spirit of your brewery. Some example brand essences we've developed have included, "Stomping Grounds," "Red Barn Romanticism," "Wild Alaska," "Shot & A Beer," "Creative Prairie," "Pioneering Spirit," and "Blue Collar Scientists."

## OTHER THOUGHTS

### INTERVIEW YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

We like to talk to as many different people with a stake in your brewery as we can, all the way from the owner of the company on down to the frontline guys (delivery drivers, for instance). A common example when we're working with a brewery is to interview the head brewer, any additional owners, cellermen, tasting room staff, and distributors. We also talk to ardent volunteers and customers.



The cool thing about talking to such a wide variety of people is that you'll quickly see patterns emerge from your conversations. And despite what a lot of agencies want you to think, branding and design isn't rocket science. Ideas that come up again and again are often great contenders for your brand essence.

## TALK TO FOLKS, ONE-ON-ONE

Over the years, we've interviewed large groups of people together and individually, and we consistently get better results when we talk to people in a one-on-one setting. This can be even more powerful when the folks you're talking to understand that there's no wrong answer to the questions you're asking them. Branding is all about emotion and storytelling, so discussing the first thing that comes to mind can often be very powerful.

What we've found in hosting large-group discovery sessions is that the group dynamic tends to dominate free conversation. It's not uncommon for a Type A person to talk and talk and talk and talk until eventually, the more introverted people in the group just start nodding their heads as if to say, "Yes, we agree with what the obnoxious guy said." This means you're missing out on the quieter person's opinions and ideas. Having those one-on-one conversations almost always yield valuable insights that you would not have gotten otherwise.

## BE CRITICAL

Once you can articulate your brand essence, you need to critically evaluate it by asking yourself the following questions:

Is this potential brand essence true? (Can I prove it?)

Is it relevant to my customers? (Do they care?)

Does it differentiate my brewery? (Can anyone else make this claim?)



We helped Big Lug Canteen (Indianapolis, IN) build their brand around the idea of their neighborhood as a 'Stomping Grounds.' This brand essence provided a lot of room for fun illustrations and storytelling.

## USE YOUR BRAND ESSENCE TO FLESH OUT YOUR ORIGIN STORY

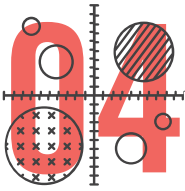
Now that you have your essence defined, you can move onto the storytelling process. People won't buy your beer just because you're "a regional craft brewery." Aside from brewing great beer, you need to tell a compelling story that resonates with people and gets them to come back with friends and family.

By considering your core value and your brand essence, you have the beginnings of a great story that can reach out and grab people. It doesn't need to be an opus—a few paragraphs may do. Just make sure it's well-written, relevant, and true to you.

## WORK WITH OUTSIDERS

If you've read to this point, then you're probably already thinking about your brewery's branding and positioning more meaningfully than mere aesthetics. That means you value design and realize how important an element it is in becoming a successful brewery. Nice!

An impartial set of outside eyes (whether from a design firm or even a group of close friends) can be a great help in organizing your team's thoughts and can become even more invaluable as the time comes to translate all these ideas into beautiful, compelling, smart, and—what the hell—maybe even whimsical design.



# AN INTRO TO POSITIONING YOUR BREWERY

**POSITIONING IS CRUCIAL TO SETTING YOUR  
BREWERY APART AND TELLING YOUR STORY**

When you're opening a brewery, you need to understand and be able to very succinctly articulate how you're different from every other brewery in your town—or even your region, depending on your concept and longterm goals. While you can get really technical with this (with market and trend analyses, etc.), we're approaching it from a branding perspective. We like to nail down three main points to define your positioning:

**1**

### **WHAT DO YOU DO?**

What type of beer do you brew? What's your concept?

**2**

### **WHO DO YOU DO IT FOR?**

Who do you want drinking your beer?  
Who makes up your tribe? Why do they need your brewery to exist?

**3**

### **HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT FROM YOUR COMPETITION?**

Not necessarily better, but what makes you unique?

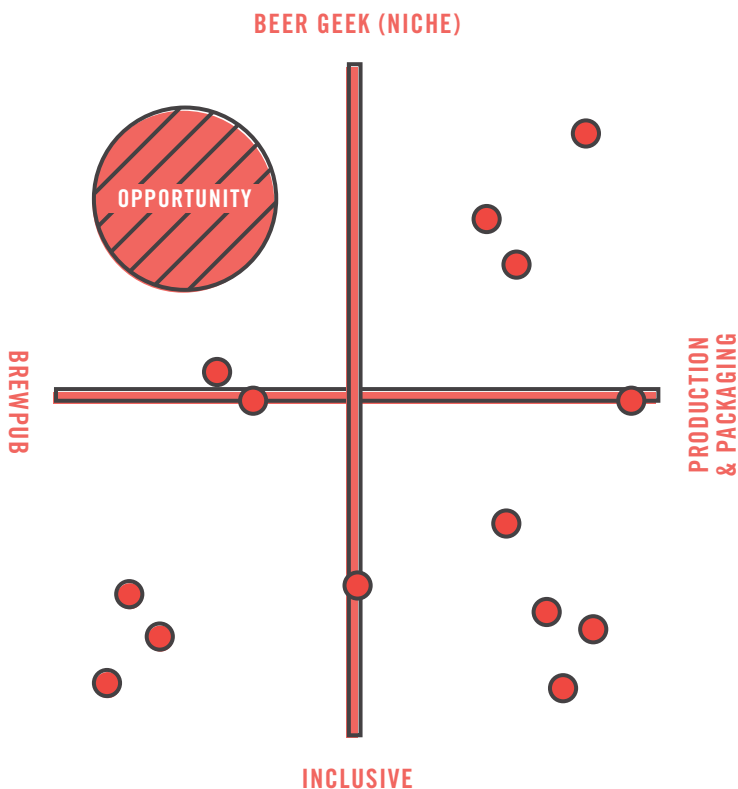
One of our favorite tools to kick the positioning process off is a matrix—a simple graph composed of an X and Y axis that each represent a different attribute of a brewery. These attributes might be price (low-to-high), visual style (minimal-to-heavily illustrated, etc.), and so on. This is an iterative, 'back-of-the-napkin' method for thinking about your brewery culture, your fans, your

competition, and how they all come together to reveal opportunities for brand strategy and marketing.

For example, let's use a matrix to help you determine where the breweries in your town fall to get a quick, eagle's-eye view of what is, and isn't happening in your market. These are a few questions to help you evaluate different aspects of your market to see how your brewery fits into it. These are all made up, so just follow along.

- ▲ **Are they a brewpub or bigger production brewery? What's their overall concept?**
- ▲ **Do they distribute or are they carry out only?**
- ▲ **Are they new or established?**
- ▲ **Are they involved in the local community?**
- ▲ **What beer styles are they known for?**
- ▲ **Are they well-branded? Do you know what they stand for?**
- ▲ **Do they create an inclusive, approachable place or are they more of a hardcore beer geek hangout?**
- ▲ **How do their prices compare to everyone else? (on-premise and off?)**

Choose a few of these and plot them on a matrix where you think they fall:



Using this group of breweries as an example, we see a lot of inclusive brewpubs featuring well-made, drinkable, non-offensive beers—nothing crazy, just the standard lineup. And while there are a few breweries in the region packaging more specialty beers (barrel-aged stouts, imperial IPAs, and sours, for example), there aren't any brewpubs to visit to regularly try these beers. Admittedly, this is an oversimplified look at the market, but this matrix reveals a potential opportunity if the local beer scene is mature enough to support this type of concept.



We've found matrices, like this one to be great tools to use at different stages throughout the startup process. You can use them at the very beginning when you've got a 30K foot bare-bones idea, and later in the process when might have a few partners, more capital and/or a potential location and need to test your ideas and assumptions about your position in the market. Matrices can also help you establish the visual tone, look and feel of your brewery.

## OTHER THOUGHTS

### HOW YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY SHOULD SHAPE YOUR POSITIONING

Working through your branding and positioning is an invigorating, challenging, and aspirational process. And while a lot of the work involves looking in toward yourself and your partners, you need to remember to consider one of the most important aspects of any business—who are your customers and what problems do they have?

This sounds strange when you're talking about brewing beer: People want beer, I make beer. Simple, right? You need to dig deeper than that, though. Think about your potential customers and consider how your concept can best fit into their lives. What does your community lack? Is there a local brewpub where people can gather? How about a great pizza and beer joint? Does your region have a brewery to call its own? Maybe there's no live music venue that supports smaller acts?

What purpose do you serve? How are you different from your competition? What role do you play in peoples'

lives? Getting this nailed down will give you a solid foundation to build your brand and brew great beer for the right people.

## **IT TAKES A VILLAGE**

Keep these matrices loose and have other people make them as well. It's fun to see how three or four people's opinions can differ when you look at them side by side. Bonus points if you can get some completely unbiased people to participate. We've actually gone to local beer bars to find people to fill these out to help a client. (Tough gig, we know).

Comparing results also hammers home how subjective this entire process is, especially when you're considering how different people interpret brand messaging.

## **ALL THAT GLITTERS ISN'T GOLD**

It sounds obvious, but there could be a very good reason no one is brewing or packaging a particular beer style in your market. Using the aforementioned example, opening an all-sour brewery could be a gamble in an area with very few other breweries if the market is just getting used to craft beer and may not be ready for something more "niche."

## **NOT JUST FOR BREWERIES IN PLANNING**

Say you've been open for a few years and are considering a rebrand. Matrices are still a valuable tool to use because at their core, they identify opportunities. And the beautiful thing here is you can tailor them to define whatever you want, from beer styles, to tasting room experience, to package design, and beyond.

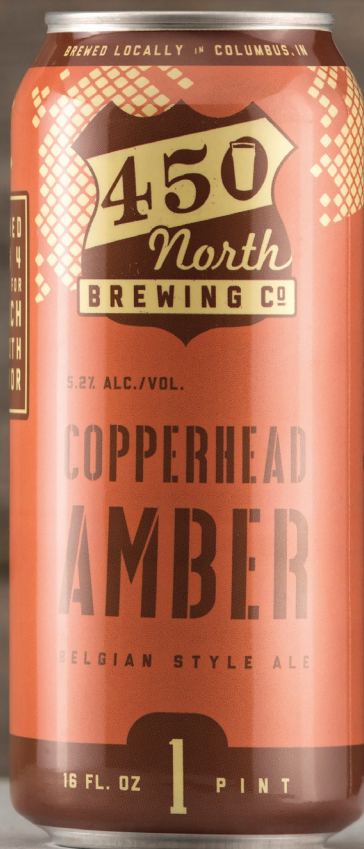


## POSITIONING INDIANA'S FARM BREWERY

Our foundational work with 450 North Brewing Co. (Columbus, IN) explored vintage seed bags, tractor badge typography and the visual vocabulary of highway Americana—resulting in a nostalgic, Mayberry-esque brand identity. The idea was simple—the Simmons family has been farming for generations. And they've been brewing for just as long.

We helped position them as Indiana's first “farm brewery” with a flagship packaging line that tells their story with sun-faded colors, industrial patterning, and no-nonsense Midwestern beer descriptions.





450 North came to market with a lineup of well-made, approachable beer styles. This allowed them to quickly become one of the fastest growing breweries in the state and to add more eclectic, experimental styles to their portfolio as their fan base widened.





GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL, WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS. (2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY, AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

BREWED AND BOTTLED BY  
450 NORTH BREWING CO.  
8111 E 450 N  
COLUMBUS, IN 47203  
[WWW.450NORTHBREWING.COM](http://WWW.450NORTHBREWING.COM)  
1 PINT 16 FL OZ / 10% ALC/VOL

YEAR

BOTTLE

Children of the Bourbon Barrel was a specialty R.I.S. brewed by 450 North for release at their inaugural corn maze beer festival—an event that helped strengthen their positioning as Indiana's farm brewery by creating a corn maze that was over an acre in size.



# CONCRETELY POSITIONING YOUR BREWERY

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHAT POSITIONING IS,  
LET'S GET INTO THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF DEFINING  
IT FOR YOUR BREWERY.



Now that we've explored what positioning is, let's get a bit more hands-on by looking at a few different strategies to clearly define it for your brewery.

Through the lens of an increasingly crowded craft beer market, we think it's fair to say that concrete positioning will become more and more difficult to achieve based on the beer you brew alone. Or to put it another way, there are a lot of great breweries making a lot of great beer.

So, how else can a new craft brewery differentiate itself?

## **1** CONCEPT & STORY

Aside from great beer, it's important to have a compelling story. Why are you brewing your beer? How did you get your start? Why does your beer (and your story) matter? This idea needs to align with your overall concept—that is, a collection of ideas including your business model, beer styles, brewery atmosphere and pricing.

## **2** LOCATION & COLLABORATION

Location used to be a great way for new breweries to differentiate, but again, with more and more new brewers opening up shop, it'll be harder to hang your hat on your geography. The exception may be in hyper-local partnerships with local farmers and producers, coffee roasters and other breweries.

## **3** SERVICE

It may sound old fashioned, but if your tasting room is staffed by assholes, people won't want to come back. If your delivery drivers are rude, don't clean tap lines, or drive recklessly, people won't want to support you.

Believe it or not, service can still be a great differentiator, particularly if paired with another unique brand attribute.

## **4** **BRANDING**

And finally, everything we've discussed up to now has to be directly aligned with your branding, that is, the visual design of your identity, packaging, responsive website, merch, and brewery space.

“**COMPELLING BRANDING CAN BE A FAIRLY COST EFFECTIVE WAY OF DIFFERENTIATING YOUR BREWERY OUT OF THE GATE.**”

Consider the alternate route: spending years to enmesh your beer into local bars and peoples' minds, and then having to backtrack and address branding issues after the fact.

## **OTHER THOUGHTS**

If this sounds like a lot of information, fear not. As much as we stress the importance of compelling branding and positioning for craft breweries, you should never forget that the most important thing you can do as a new brewery is make the best beer you can possibly brew. While branding can attract people initially, it's your beer that will turn them into loyal fans.

## WRITE YOUR BRAND POSITIONING STATEMENT

We don't always craft brand positioning statements because it's rare that you'd ever need to use one in the wild. So while we don't always think it's necessary, it can lend a sense of completeness to this entire process.

Your goal is to put a sentence together that clearly states what you offer, who it's meant for, why it's special, and the role you play in their lives.

### IT SHOULD LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

(BREWERY NAME) offers / allows / provides (etc.)

(YOUR AUDIENCE) to / with / etc. (UNIQUE BENEFITS)

**EXAMPLE:** Big Lug Canteen serves Nora residents English-style beers and hearty gastropub fare in a fun, airy, and creative spot.



# WHO DO YOU WANT DRINKING YOUR BEER?

MANY BREWERIES HAVE THE NOBLE GOAL OF GETTING MORE PEOPLE TO DRINK GOOD BEER, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT YOUR AUDIENCE ISN'T EVERYONE—IT CAN'T BE. SO, WHO DO YOU WANT (AND DON'T WANT) DRINKING YOUR BEER?

More often than not when branding a brewery, we'll hear that "everyone" is their audience. "We want to be inclusive!" This is one of our favorite industry tropes, along with, "Oh, we don't have any competition."

While a lot of craft breweries set out to get more people to drink local beer, it's important to realize that your audience isn't everyone. *It can't be.* By telling a compelling story through branding and positioning, you're going to connect with a certain kind of person. And if you do it right—through great beer, branding, marketing and service—they'll be your biggest fans and evangelists.

“IN FACT, IF YOU REALLY DO THIS RIGHT, YOU MAY EVEN TURN SOME PEOPLE OFF. BUT THAT’S OK, THAT’S PART OF THIS. YOU CAN’T BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE.”

The same beer that interests a 55 year-old, seasoned home brewer may not resonate with a 22 year-old lady who's just getting into better beer. Figure out how you differ from other breweries, figure out who'll go crazy for your experience, and start delivering. These are your people. This is your tribe.

By trying to be everything to everyone, you'll end up with watered-down messaging, and even worse, watered-down beer. You'll become bland—another "me-too" brewery. And who wants that?



Backward Flag Brewing (Forked River, NJ) is a veteran-owned brewery that has built a deeply loyal following of local veterans, firefighters and law enforcement officers by providing a relaxed place for them to gather and unwind.

# OTHER THOUGHTS

## WHAT TYPE OF BEER GETS YOU EXCITED?

If you only brew beer you're passionate about, people will take notice. Your beer will be better and this care will directly translate to your excited customers.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

What other breweries are open (or opening) in your market? What makes them special? Who buys from them? Do these breweries target the promiscuous craft beer drinkers or are they offering more niche styles?

## WHO DO YOU WANT (AND DON'T WANT) DRINKING YOUR BEER?

Do you want to reach craft beer newbies with a refreshing cream ale or target grizzled craft beer vets looking for high-octane, bourbon barrel one-off experiments? Your branding and design (and of course, your beer) can directly influence who buys your product.



# DEFINING YOUR BREWERY'S BRAND PERSONALITY

**IF YOUR BREWERY WERE A PERSON, WHO WOULD  
IT BE, AND WHY?**



After defining your brewery's values, positioning and brand essence, you can begin transitioning into the visual side of the house. Our next step on this path is to articulate your brand's personality. We've found the best way to tackle this is to think of your brewery as a living, breathing person. Then, you're simply defining what personality traits that person has. Understanding these attributes will pave the way for your next step—brand identity design.

## TO KICK THIS OFF, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. IF YOUR BREWERY IS A PERSON, IS IT:

- Male or female?
- Young or old? Middle-aged?
- Blue collar or high brow?

From there, list all the character traits you think apply to your brewery. Here are a few examples:

- |                                       |                                     |                                      |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FUN          | <input type="checkbox"/> ROMANTIC   | <input type="checkbox"/> SIMPLE      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SERIOUS      | <input type="checkbox"/> IDEALISTIC | <input type="checkbox"/> BIG-HEARTED |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONFIDENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> ANGRY      | <input type="checkbox"/> HEROIC      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INTROVERTED  | <input type="checkbox"/> STOIC      | <input type="checkbox"/> TECHNICAL   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WARM         | <input type="checkbox"/> STUBBORN   | <input type="checkbox"/> LOVING      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COLD         | <input type="checkbox"/> FLIRTY(?)  | <input type="checkbox"/> ACADEMIC    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IRREVERENT   | <input type="checkbox"/> REFLECTIVE | <input type="checkbox"/> SARDONIC    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DEMANDING    | <input type="checkbox"/> RESPECTFUL | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVENTUROUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCITING     | <input type="checkbox"/> FERAL      | <input type="checkbox"/> TACIT       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HARD WORKING | <input type="checkbox"/> IRONIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CHARMING    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INNOVATIVE   | <input type="checkbox"/> AMBITIOUS  | <input type="checkbox"/> COOPERATIVE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TRADITIONAL  | <input type="checkbox"/> DEDICATED  | <input type="checkbox"/> BIZARRE     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRAGMATIC    | <input type="checkbox"/> HONORABLE  | <input type="checkbox"/> UNCOUTH     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ACERBIC      | <input type="checkbox"/> BRILLIANT  | <input type="checkbox"/> VIBRANT     |

While there's no magic number, we find that 3 to 5 personality traits is a good mark to aim for. Many of the words people use to define their brewery can be grouped together (whether they're pure synonyms or are at least in the same ballpark, messaging-wise). The goal is to whittle down and refine into the clearest, most concise statement so your future communication and design work will be clear and consistent.

Similar to when you developed your core values: Once you've picked 3 to 5 personality traits that describe your brewery, take some time to write about what they each mean to you. Write about why they apply to you, and why this matters to your fans.



Fernson Brewing Co.'s (Sioux Falls, SD) personality centers around ideas of creativity and mystery found out on the Great Plains. This led to the creation of 'Fernson,' a mysterious prairie traveler.

As we've mentioned a few times throughout the values and brand essence development process, it's easy to settle for things that aren't exactly ownable. Yes, you strive to brew high quality, drinkable beer. But so does every other brewery in the world (hopefully). I don't say this to be cynical, but rather to get you to think, and rethink, these personality traits until they're authentic to your brewery.

Here are a few more questions to help make sure your personality traits are squared away:

### **1 IS THIS PERSONALITY TRAIT TRUE?**

What processes do you have in place to back it up? Can you think of any anecdotes that illustrate it in action?

### **2 ARE ALL OF THESE TRAITS RELEVANT?**

A personality trait may be true, but does it matter to your customers? Does this help you better keep the promises you make and fill an important need for them?

### **3 DO THESE TRAITS DIFFERENTIATE YOUR BREWERY?**

Are these traits different from what everyone else is putting out there? Look around at your competition—how are other breweries talking about themselves? It's common to see similar language like, "high quality beer," "best ingredients," "local," etc. in this space. Don't be similar.

## **OTHER THOUGHTS**

A lot of companies make the mistake of aligning their personality with what they believe their audience wants. Similar to the politician who supports one side of an issue one day and is against it the next, it can make your messaging sporadic and perhaps worse, untrustworthy. It's far better to build off of your core values and messaging to define a set of true, authentic and ownable brand personality traits.

Don't be afraid to be yourself. And no matter what you do, don't be a damn politician.



# SHAPING YOUR BREWERY'S BRAND VOICE

HOW TO CONSISTENTLY COMMUNICATE YOUR  
BREWERY'S VALUES THROUGH WORDS

‘Brand voice’ is how you consistently communicate your values and personality through words, no matter the channel or audience. Understanding your voice is an oft-overlooked piece of the brand foundation process. Whether people simply stop short after fleshing out the brand’s broader visual language, or just think of it as marketing, it represents a missed opportunity to connect with customers. Doubly so if you’ve already put in the work to understand your brand essence and positioning.

How can we avoid this and make sure that everything we’re putting out into the world works to tell a broader story? How can we make sure it all has the same tone and personality? For now, let’s explore how to shape your own brewery’s brand voice.

## **1 DEFINE YOUR BREWERY’S CORE VALUES**

What do you stand for? What are you unwilling to compromise on? What do you believe and pursue every day? How is your beer different? These are all compelling and should inform your brand voice and communication pillars. And luckily, you already hammered them out in Chapter 2.

## **2 WHERE WILL YOU BE SPEAKING?**

You need to get a sense of where people will come in contact with your brand and let the medium itself drive how you deliver your messaging. A blog, for example, can be an intimate place to share long-form writing and photos to give people a look inside your business. Instagram, on the other hand, can be a fun, quick way to show the faces behind your company. If you’re doffing your rubber boots and presenting at a conference, or

even a tap takeover, consider how you dress and how you tell your brewery's story. Mesh tank top? Khaki cutoffs? A few ideas, from us to you.

Common touchpoints (places and times you interact with your customers) include: social media / website / blog / packaging / print materials / merch / tap truck / growlers and drinkware / coasters

Often overlooked touchpoints include: keg collars / merch (beyond logo'd apparel) / brewery way showing and custom signage / custom jockey box

### **3 WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?**

Who's your audience, and what role do you play in their lives? This process starts with your customers and can extend to distributors and other accounts. While all of your communication needs to be consistent, a distributor may be looking for more specific information than a customer.

For example: the compelling brand story behind a new beer belongs on a promotional poster to go up in a bar, while a distributor may need a folder and sales sheets that break down quantitative info like your pricing and production schedule. While the general consumer may not need so much in-depth info, your distributor still needs to know the story behind your brewery and the beer itself (name, style, etc.) and how that plays into your larger brewery's brand narrative. They have to sell the stuff, after all.

## 4

## DECIDING ON A TONE OF VOICE

This is where you start to form your overall tone of voice. One of the best questions to frame this decision is to go back to when you framed your brewery's personality; if your company were a person, what kind of attitude would it have? It doesn't have to be a specific person, though sometimes it can be; think Sam Calagione, Jim Koch, or James Watt.



One of our favorite examples is Big Lug Canteen (Indianapolis, IN). Craft Beer can be such a sanctimonious industry, with overly serious men crafting beer in dark brewpubs. But Big Lug? They make fun of themselves. *A lot*. If you swing by their brewery, you'll see irreverent words like "Decent" and "Alright" to describe their beer and food. This approach is realized across social media as they share and even promote negative Untappd reviews.

# VOTE!

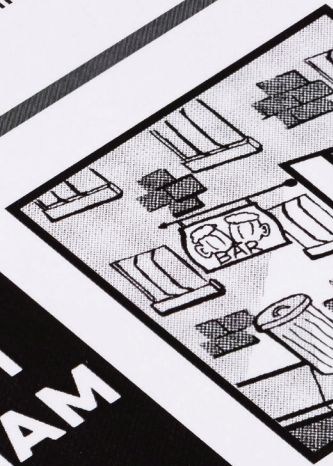
THE WILLIAM TAFT PRESIDENTIAL ALE IS OUR ROTATING IPA.  
EVERY BIG LUG CUSTOMER HAS THE CHANCE TO VOTE ON WHAT  
IPA THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE NEXT.



- THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO CAST YOUR BALLOT
- 1) GO TO [WWW.BIGLUGCANTEN.COM](http://WWW.BIGLUGCANTEN.COM) AND VOTE
  - 2) TAKE A BALLOT CARD FROM THE TABLE  
DROP IT IN THE BIG LUG VOTING BOX.

**DUTCH  
GRISHAM**

*Ben Mee*

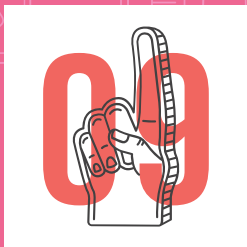




A few voices to try on: irreverent / serious and staid / counter cultural / lifestyle-oriented (outdoorsy, tech, foodie, etc.) / proud / hopeful / sentimental / etc.

How would a new tone of voice alter how you announce a new beer you're tapping this weekend? Or, that you're collaborating with another brewery?

If you don't define your tone, it can be easy to lose consistency in your messaging and communication as your brewery grows. This gets even worse as you bring new people (communication directors, sales team, etc.) into the mix. Get your brewery's brand voice defined and on paper now and check back regularly to ensure you're speaking the right language.



# DEFINING YOUR BREWERY'S CULTURE THROUGH BRANDING

**YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE CAN BE AS  
COMPELLING TO OUTSIDERS AS IT IS TO  
CURRENT AND POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES.**

I remember about six years ago, when a few breweries started to open up in our town. It was interesting to watch as each one attracted a horde of people wanting to work for them in whatever capacity, for whatever pay was available—mopping floors, filling growlers, checking ID's, anything. Their payment was often as simple as a growler fill for every hour worked. To people outside of this industry, it seemed absurd. But if you love craft beer, and the people who make it, you understand that the real payment wasn't just a few growlers—it was the opportunity to be a part of something you love.

If you've made it this far into our little guide (seriously, go outside), you're already familiar with the public side of branding—that is, how to differentiate your brewery and tell a compelling story to attract new fans. But we wanted to explore another benefit of understanding your core values, your “why,” and your brand essence—creating an awesome company culture that will attract and retain the best people in your community.

The idea of company “culture” has been sullied a bit as of late with visions of Silicon Valley tech start-ups slinging Nerf darts at each other across foosball tables, but I promise it's deeper than this. Your culture is driven by your core values and brand essence. It's why you brew your beer the way you do. It's your workplace environment. It's about working together to solve problems, celebrating victories and working through failures as a team. Your culture is driven and shaped by the amount of ownership your people can take in the brand. It unites and aligns everyone, from the owners and head brewers, to the sales and marketing people, to the volunteers filling growlers, to the delivery driver, behind one compelling story.

And this shouldn't be forced. There are corny manifestations out there, but your people should be excited to get up in the morning and go to work. They should be buzzed about it and tell their friends and family about what they do and bring them into the brewery nonstop.

Here are a few things to think about as you begin to consider your brewery's culture:

- 1** **WHAT ARE YOUR CORE VALUES & BRAND ESSENCE? (HINT, YOU'VE ALREADY DEFINED THESE)**
- 2** **WHAT ROLE DOES YOUR BREWERY PLAY IN THE COMMUNITY? WHAT CHARITIES DO YOU SUPPORT?**
- 3** **DO YOU GIVE EMPLOYEES FREEDOM TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR BRAND? (THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, SALES, EVENTS, ETC.)**
- 4** **HOW ENGAGED IS YOUR AUDIENCE? (DO YOU REGULARLY SEE NEW MENTIONS AND CHECK-INS EVERY DAY?)**
- 5** **WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL EMPLOYEE LIKE?**
- 6** **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR BREWERY / WORKPLACE? (INCLUDING THINGS THAT MOST CUSTOMERS CAN'T SEE)**
- 7** **HOW DOES YOUR TEAM WORK TOGETHER TO SOLVE PROBLEMS?**

Company culture is something that tends to form organically, but it *can* be shaped. As with anything, you need to actively write that narrative. If you're in a leadership role, you need to brew the best beer possible, treat employees and vendor partners with respect, and have a firm grasp on your origin story. If you can do these things, you're half way there.

The rest begins from the day you open up shop and continues as long as you're in business. It's the continual telling of your story and ultimately shapes who you are, what you do, and why you matter.



Carmen Beer Co. (Playa del Carmen, Mexico) has created a space that attracts locals and tourists alike. Firmly rooted in the tradition of American craft beer—albeit on permanent holiday, they've already made a mark on the burgeoning Mexican craft beer scene.



# WHAT MAKES FOR A GREAT BREWERY NAME

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT GOES INTO A GREAT  
CRAFT BREWERY NAME FROM A BRANDING AND  
POSITIONING PERSPECTIVE.

Having a great name for your brewery is every bit as important as brewing great beer because it communicates even before people see your logo and packaging—who you are, what you stand for, what you believe in, and why someone should care about you. It's the foundation for your brand identity, packaging, tasting room vibe, marketing and overall culture. And if it isn't well thought out, it can dog you for years.

In this industry, a winery from around the world or a brewery from around the corner can sue you over naming rights. We like to stay in our own lane, so we won't delve into trademark law here. Instead, we'll lay out some criteria for an effective naming strategy.

## **1** AVAILABILITY / PROTECTABILITY

The most important element of naming a brewery in this crowded market is availability. Is there another brewery, winery, or distillery with the same (or similar) name? How about a similar beer name? Is your URL available? How about social media handles? It's frustrating, but with the amount of Cease and Desist orders flying around, asking these questions is a must for naming any brewery from here on out.

## **2** DIFFERENT (REFLECTIVE OF YOUR DIFFERENTIATOR)

Your name should reflect your brand essence. Do you have a special brewing process? Is there something special about your team, how you got your start, or where you're located?

**EXAMPLE:** Anchor Steam's name is a nod to a historic nickname for beer brewed under primitive conditions on

the West Coast. Their classic bottle shape and overall branding align to support this narrative.

### **3 EASY TO SPELL & REMEMBER**

Being easy to spell and recall doesn't necessarily mean that your name has to be short, though that can be a great attribute as well. No matter the length, your name needs to be something people can easily pronounce.

### **4 LIKEABLE / FUN TO SAY**

Like beer, names can be judged on their mouth feel. This can be hard to quantify, but a good name is fun to say and can be an important element of solid brand strategy. Consider a name with alliteration. Or an irreverent name. Or a short phrase.

### **5 FLEXIBILITY**

Does your brewery name lend itself to larger theming or branding campaigns? Think about your flagship beers and how their names can further enhance your overall brand name and story.

**EXAMPLE:** Tin Man Brewing Co. has a great name that lends itself to broader brand strategy. Their overall identity centers around a robot illustration and is supported by beer names like "Circuit," Alloy," and "Rivet."

### **6 PORTABILITY**

Your name shouldn't hold you back as you grow and expand into new markets: think names based on some hyper-local oddity (if you'll be distributing far away) or shallow fads.



# OTHER THOUGHTS

## BE CAREFUL WITH MADE-UP WORDS

Made up words can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, they tend to be available—and they can seem like a godsend after ripping your hair out from the naming process. However, keep in mind that these often carry no ingrained meaning to potential customers, meaning you have to work harder to tell your story. Of course you'll do this anyway through great branding and beer, but why start off in the hole if you can avoid it?

## ¿CÓMO TE LLAMAS?

It's important to make sure your name doesn't translate to something unsavory in another language (this can extend to include slang). We were in business for two years before we realized that our name, CODO, translates to “elbow” in Spanish. This could've been much worse, anatomically speaking.



# SOME JERK ALREADY TOOK MY BREWERY NAME!

NAMING A CRAFT BREWERY CAN BE INCREDIBLY FRUSTRATING. LET'S WALK THROUGH THE PROCESS TO GET FROM INITIAL CONCEPT TO A FINAL, TRADEMARKABLE NAME.

Finding a perfect name can be one of the most frustrating steps of opening a craft brewery. More often than not, that perfect name, the one you've been dreaming of, sketching out on your Trapper Keeper, and telling friends and family about ever since tasting your first batch of home brew, has already been taken by some small outfit across the country. Damn.

In the previous chapter, we wrote about what goes into a good craft brewery name—things like availability and ownability, reflective of your biggest differentiator, and how easy it is to spell and say. Now, let's look at how to get from an initial concept to an original, ownable, and trademarkable name in an era of 5,000+ craft breweries.

So we're not so abstract here, let's make up a fun example: you and your partners are all into old motorcycles and have found a perfect brewery location in an old auto shop. You're opening a small brewpub that focuses on session beers.

Starting off, we'd say that brewing session beers isn't novel, but your cool location and the start of a deeper theme and culture surrounding motorcycles gives us some fun stuff to work with.

Using this hypothetical brewery-in-planning as an example, let's dig in and look at what "buckets" or ideas we can explore to find a great brewery name.

In no order of importance, let's explore the following concepts:

## **1** YOUR TOWN'S HISTORY

This in and of itself can be a strong concept, so long as another brewery doesn't open up down the street

with a similar story. Was your town supported by a big industry? Was it a frontier town? Who lived / lives there? Is there a landmark or cool feature (river, statue, building, battle ground, big ball of twine, etc.)? What's the story behind your town's name?

Since we don't know where this town is, let's instead focus on the brewery location itself. An old auto shop dovetails nicely with the motorcycle theme and can already give us an approachable, blue collar vibe (seems to work well with the approachable, session offerings, too).

Quick words and ideas to write down: shop, service center, pit stop, station, tool box, gear box, wrecker, repair, monkey wrench, wrench monkey, shade tree mechanic, knuckle buster

## **2** YOUR BEER ITSELF

Sessionable, easy-going beers evoke names and words that are calming and non-threatening. The ultimate goal is to combine ideas that smartly reflect your core messaging, but you don't need to worry about that at this phase. For now, you're trying to get out as many related ideas as possible (but, if you can start making connections between ideas at this point, more power to you!).

Quick words and ideas: small / light / easy going (easy rider) / quaffable / training wheels / on ramp / starter / converter / spark / water / crisp / "like making love in a canoe"

## **3** MOTORCYCLES

Now let's look at your main differentiator—your group's love of motorcycles. Let's start concretely by breaking down the gear and different things that go into the

subject. Types of motors. Bike parts and components. Types of motorcycles. Historic bikes. Motorcycle clubs (maybe good for informing brewery culture, but could also be bad due to the criminal stereotype, or worse, trite. See the note at the end of this chapter on cultural implications). Tools and mechanic gear.

Maybe we can explore motorcycle lingo and slang? Quick words and ideas: bone shaker / steel horse / colors / rocker / 1-percenter (fun tie in with ABV and session beers) / weekend warrior / ape hangers / 2-stroke / clutch / belt drive / big twin / big block / bone yard / brain bucket / bronson rock / canyon carving / chain / valve / cog / chaps (woo hoo!) / cut / crash bar / drag bars / flat head / flywheel / gearbox / inline / ink / iron butt / iron head / lane splitting / monkey wrench / nomad / organ donor / shovel head / etc.

In a real project, we would repeat this exercise many times over, gathering several hundred words and concepts.

“THE GOAL IS TO GET A LOT OF RAW MATERIAL TO WORK WITH SO WE CAN WHITTLE DOWN TO THE VERY BEST.”

Skipping ahead, let's either take some of these words wholesale, or combine them with other concepts to see what we can come up with.

Pull some cool bike words from the batch we came up with above. Trust your gut on these and grab anything that sounds cool and feels right: bone shaker / canyon carver / bronson rock / big block / cHOP shop (eh?) / flywheel / clutch / iron head / monkey wrench / nomad

Let's combine ideas surrounding session beer and motorcycles. Maybe something along the lines of a starter bike: 250 club / 250 CC / 2 banger / 2-stroke / low rocker / easy rider / 1-percenter / glide / waxer / Sunday rider / fair weather rider / training wheels / sissy bars / tassels (woo hoo!)

Google these words in conjunction with industry terms. Example: "Bone Shaker" + "brewing" "beer" "alcohol" "food" "wine," etc. You want so make sure, at this step, that you're clear from similar names.

Now here's where the frustration begins; "Bone Shaker" immediately shows as a beer name. And a bar. Damn. There's a Carver Brewing Co. And there are several breweries with Canyon as a part of their name (not a complete deal breaker, but it's not 100% differentiated and ownable, either). Surprisingly, there's a "Bronson Rock" bar. Big Block, Flywheel, Iron Head, Monkey Wrench, and Nomad are all either beer or brewery names. "Clutch" is a New Belgium beer, and '2-Stroke' is a beer by Motorworks Brewing (great name!).

"250" brings up a Keurig Coffee Brewing System. That could be a problem since they're in the food and beverage industry (coffee "brewing" no less) and have deep pockets (think potential legal action). However, We would feel comfortable presenting "250 Club" as an option.

Low Rocker only brings up one similar brewery name. This one may be worth exploring, assuming your team likes it.

And finally, the most compelling concept surrounds the 1% monitor (biker slang for gang members). We could spin this into ‘Low Percenter’ or ‘4-Percenter’ Brewing Co., a nod to your focus on session beer.

And that’s why this process can be so frustrating. Granted, we toiled through these ideas quickly, but we only generated three or four possible options. Every time we’ve helped a client name a brewery, we’ve found several options that are absolutely perfect. Except they’re already taken. But that’s okay. Go back to your concept and don’t be afraid to scrap what you’ve developed and start over. Maybe even give it a few days and come back to it fresh.

After all that, let’s say “Low Rock Brewing Co.” is the winner (with a seasonal beer program called the “cHOP Shop Series”). Everyone on your team loves it and it appears to be available. After your lawyer gives us the official go-ahead, the next step is to immediately buy the domain name and claim any social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Untappd, Instagram, Christian Mingle, etc.) before heading into the identity design process.

## OTHER THOUGHTS

### BRAINSTORMING TOOLS

Some tools we like to use are lateral thinking (approaching problems in a nonlinear,

nontraditional way), word clouds, thesaurus and dictionary, and of course, Google. Great places to find unique, cool names are in slang and language surrounding the different elements of your differentiator.

## ON CLICHÉS

At this point, it's unlikely you'll find an available, cliché, or otherwise, boring name. However, if you stumble upon one, don't settle just because it's not taken. Just because you can't find the perfect name now doesn't mean you should settle for something you're not happy with or that isn't true to your story. You're going to be living with this for a while; so get it right now.

## LAWYER UP

We always make sure our name options pass the cursory Google test before sharing them with a client. But the final go ahead should come from an attorney. It doesn't have to be a trademark attorney (though they do specialize in this sort of thing). This can add a week or so to the process and some more cash. But it can also save thousands of dollars and heartache down the line.

If you want to sound like you know what you're talking about, ask your lawyer for a "Knockout Search" on your name. If everything passes, you're free to trademark.

## CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

You need to make sure your name doesn't carry any negative connotations. Our small motorcycle-centric brewpub was of course, made up. But if it were real, we would need to be careful how closely our name referenced driving (an overzealous person might suggest



you're promoting drinking and driving). And the motorcycle gang stuff can be precarious as well. Aside from being overdone, it could potentially paint you as the type of place where those groups gather, preventing casual drinkers from visiting.



# BUILDING YOUR MODULAR IDENTITY SYSTEM

FOR A LOGO TO BE SUCCESSFUL, IT NEEDS  
TO HAVE SEVERAL SUPPORTING ELEMENTS.  
THIS “BRAND IDENTITY SYSTEM” KEEPS YOUR  
BRANDING FRESH AND CONSISTENT.

“Brand Identity System.” “Modular Identity System.” “Logo System.” Whatever you’ve heard it called, the key word is “system.” As you’ve learned in previous chapters, your brand is more than a logo. Your name, identity, and package design all need to reflect a compelling, core brand essence. Now that you’ve hammered out all of this strategic brand foundation work, let’s get down to the nuts and bolts of how to actually put your brand identity into play.

To start, your logo (aka, identity) needs to be flexible enough to use across any print and web applications you may run into. It needs to be as recognizable and reproducible in one color as it does on your website or tap truck. We won’t dive into raster versus vector file formats, but suffice to say that the design firm you partner with needs to give you vector files. These are infinitely scalable without losing detail meaning your logo will look as crisp on a business card as it does on a billboard.

An identity “system” is a suite of visual elements that can be used across all your brand’s touchpoints. These can include a main logo, alternate logo builds, icon system, textures, typography, and a specific color palette. Used smartly, these elements keep your branding fresh and lively across different pieces while still being consistent and familiar.

This approach comes in handy for merchandising. Some folks may not want to buy a shirt emblazoned with a big logo, but a more subtle shirt with a cool secondary icon may outsell your IPA. Well, hopefully not. But you get the idea.

When it’s all said and done, this process should net you the following core brand identity elements:

- ▲ Main logo (delivered as a vector file)
- ▲ Secondary logo elements and iconography (vertical and horizontal logo builds for different applications, tagline, etc.)
- ▲ Color palette (including Pantone, CMYK, RGB, and Hex values)
- ▲ Typography (including usage guidelines for specific weights and directions to purchase your own font licenses)



North Pier Brewing's (Benton Harbor, Michigan) modular identity system consists of a main mark, and several secondary builds. They've used this to great effect across their merch program.



**BIG  
LUG**  
CANTEEN



Big Lug Canteen's (Indianapolis, IN) modular identity system consists of several builds of their canteen mark as well as a robust icon system and patterns to denote individual beers.



# NAVIGATING THE TTB LABEL APPROVAL PROCESS

GETTING BEER LABELS APPROVED CAN BE A PAINFUL PROCESS IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS TO MAKE IT GO SMOOTHLY.

To start, the TTB, or Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, is the federal gatekeeper for approving beer packaging, among other things. It's kind of like the X-Files, but with more of a focus on beer and less sardonic wit. And markedly less Scully. Actually, it's nothing like the X-Files. Sorry.

Basically, the TTB specifies what you can and can't put on your beer label. This covers everything from the art itself, down to what type size you can use, what verbiage can be included, where to place certain elements, and so forth.

Our first time designing beer labels was eye-opening because we made something that we and our client loved. The client then submitted it to the TTB and several weeks later, we got dinged with a laundry list of edits. Some of them made common sense, and some of them were, well... peculiar. Let's discuss some of the issues we've run into to see if we save you some headache, shall we?

Here are some insights we've gleaned to help you navigate the process.

## **1 MAKE SURE TO FACTOR THE TTB'S BACKLOG INTO YOUR PROJECT TIMELINE**

Before designing anything, you need to understand that this approval process can completely kill your timeline, both as a designer looking to make some beautiful cans and as a brewer, looking to can some great beer.

TTB is allowed up to 90 days to review your labels and while it doesn't always take that long, it's a safe benchmark for planning your label production and brewing timeline. You can find the current TTB backlog schedule at [www.ttb.gov](http://www.ttb.gov)

We've found this waiting period is a good time to tackle other design pieces so you're not sitting on your hands.

## **2 READ, REREAD, AND RE-RE-READ THE TTB GUIDELINES**

This probably goes without saying, but you need to download and thoroughly review the TTB's guidelines.

This is a good way to figure out the larger components of your label requirements, like how to list your beer's style, ABV, brewery location, government warnings, and so forth.

## **3 GET OUT AHEAD OF THE VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE INITIATIVE**

While not mandatory yet, there is currently a push to get all breweries to include caloric and nutritional info, alcohol content, ingredients, and a "born-on date" on their packaging or website. We'll see some best practices emerge over the next few years, but for now, you can jump ahead of the curve and include it from the start.

## **4 ORIENT YOURSELF WITH CURRENT, ON-THE-MARKET LABELS**

Before designing your labels, buy several varieties of whatever it is you're designing (12 ounce bottles, 22 ounce bombers, 16 ounce cans, etc.) to review. This will give you a good sense of packaging that's on the market and has ostensibly survived the TTB's horrible maw.

Then, you should drink these, because toting around a bunch of full cans and/or bottles is silly and expends way more energy than necessary. Gotta conserve calories in this economy. That's a pro tip, from CODO, to you.



## **5 DON'T LIMIT YOUR LABEL DESIGN**

This is aimed at designers who are looking through the dozens of pages of TTB guidelines with a sense of dread: You should view these rules more as parameters (or a checklist) than a roadblock. Consider overall positioning and branding, and design the hell out of those things. Remember, you'll be duking it out with countless other brands out in the wild—make it count.

## **6 SAVE YOUR TTB SUBMISSION FILES CORRECTLY**

We almost included this nugget with one of the earlier points, but it's so important that it warrants its own section. As of this writing (please confirm this on your own, as it changes), the TTB is requiring that submitted files be less than 750kb in size, and saved as RGB color mode Jpegs. (Apparently, the TTB reviews these files on a Jitterbug flip phone.)

If you don't do this, it means more time waiting for approval. Look, we don't make the rules here. Just give them what they want and back away slowly.

## **7 BE PREPARED FOR SMALL, HAIR-PULLING EDITS AND THE ADDITIONAL APPROVAL TIME THEY REQUIRE**

At the risk of sounding pessimistic, make sure to factor in extra time for revisions. No matter how carefully we, our brewery clients, and their lawyers review label submissions, there's always a chance that the TTB will find something to push back on. Build in an extra week or two to make these changes if you're looking ahead to purchasing labels or brewing the beer itself.



Fernson Brewing Co. (Sioux Falls, SD) decided to go with a style-forward naming convention. This can be a great, stress-free approach if you're planning to add several more beers to your lineup. The major TTB consideration in this case was making sure we had the beer styles correctly denoted.



As of early 2017, breweries don't have to include ABV info on their packaging. This will likely change over the next few years as we see more standards developed surrounding the Voluntary Disclosure Initiative. 450 North Brewing Co. (Columbus, IN) wanted to get out ahead of this by including the correct info on their specialty packaging. They also wanted to include a winged-pitchfork impaling a hop. At this time, pitchforks impaling hops do not appear to be prohibited by TTB guidelines.



# RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN FOR CRAFT BREWERIES

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE WEB DESIGN  
PROCESS FOR A CRAFT BREWERY SHOULD  
LOOK LIKE.

While it would be fun to discuss the latest web design and development technology and trends, it wouldn't be very useful because most of what we'd write about would be woefully dated within a few years. So rather than talk about the tenants of responsive web design or weighing the pros and cons of one content management system over another and discussing social media API integration, let's discuss what the web design process should look like as well as what information you should be thinking about and prioritizing to achieve your communication goals.

Before we get into the design and development process itself, we'll talk about a few different approaches you may consider for your brewery. These are all driven by your overall concept (example, a brewery that's big on taproom events could benefit from a calendar, while a brewpub may not have that need). These are by no means off-the-shelf solutions, but they should give you a good idea of how your website can become a relevant part of your marketing plan.

## **1 LEAN, BRAND-FORWARD MICROSITE / SPLASH PAGE**

This can be as simple as a logo, a short 'about' blurb, and contact info / social media links. This is often used as a temporary placeholder while a more robust website is built out. Some breweries might even be able to get away with using something like this for a few years provided they actively use social media and engage with their audience in other ways.

A benefit of going this route is that it can be done relatively cheaply and quickly. But as with anything that's

cheap and fast, it won't have the same immersive impact that a more robust site could.



We built a microsite for our friends at Ballad Brewing (Danville, VA). This held them over while we launched a larger, more immersive website for them. In addition to carrying their branding, it links to their social media channels and blog.

## **2** BLOG AS A STARTUP JOURNAL

We love when breweries document their start up journey, warts and all. That's what makes craft beer so compelling—it's a direct connection to an industrial practice, where you can watch people work hard to create something tangible and beautiful. This transparency is powerful.

By sharing photos and writing about where you are in the process, we've seen breweries build enormous buzz before they even finalized a location. Ideally, this blog would live on a larger website, though in a pinch, you can

start a standalone blog to capture your progress using something like Tumblr, WordPress, or Medium.

If we had to choose between a simple blog and a lean, brand forward microsite (as consumers), we'd take the blog. All day. Or even better, a combination of the two. Or better yet, Option 3.

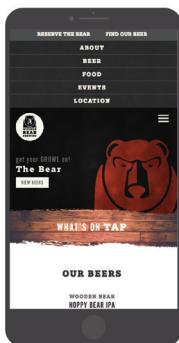
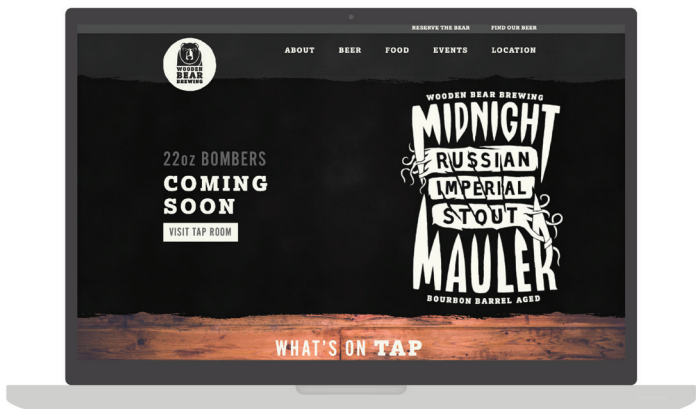
### **3 ROBUST, IMMERSIVE WEBSITE**

This would be the most feature-rich option of the three. We're not talking a bloated site full of cool functionality just for the sake of having it, but a fully fleshed-out website with multiple pages devoted to different elements of your business. These might include a page highlighting your brewers, photo galleries, an events calendar, beer finder, keg availability, blog, full social integration, and anything else you can dream up.

This site would serve as digital home base for all your communications. The larger you become (or hope to become), the more necessary something like this is. If you're distributing regionally, for example, your website can be a great way of giving people who may not be able to visit your brewery a taste of the brewery experience.

(Pictured on the next page) We built a responsive website for Wooden Bear Brewing (Greenfield, IN) that showcases their rotating tap list, events calendar, beer finder, food menu, and social sharing. The site is built on WordPress, allowing them to update it whenever they want. Check it out at [www.woodenbearbrewing.com](http://www.woodenbearbrewing.com)



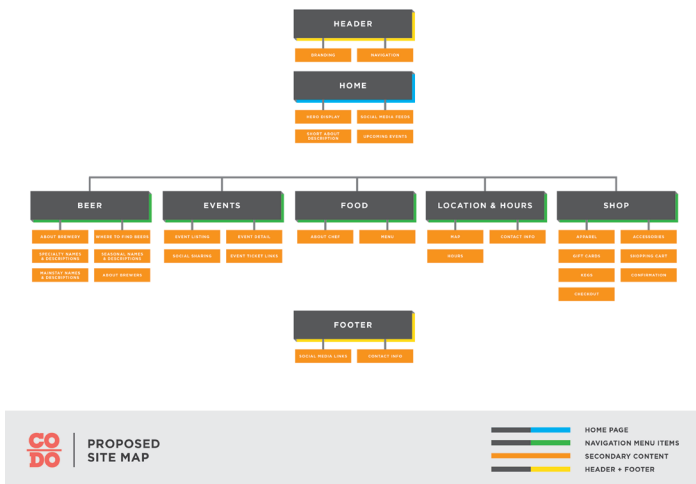




Now let's discuss what the web design process itself looks like. There will be differences between how one firm handles this process versus another, but this should give you a good idea of the major steps along the way. To make this easy, we'll run you through our process.

## 1 COMPREHENSIVE SITE MAPPING & INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

One of the most important steps in this entire process is determining what content (blog, beer descriptions, location lists, general about info, social media integration, etc.) you need on your site, and figuring out where it belongs. This all takes the form of a site map which, along with user testing and your brand foundation, will drive design and functionality considerations through the next phase.



Sitemaps are crucial for determining what information you need to include on your website and where it should all go. By tackling this at the beginning of the web design process, you can make for a much more pleasant and user-friendly experience.

## **2** ROUGH WEBSITE DESIGN

Some firms will make wire frames at this stage, though we never found them to be useful. Wire frames act as a rough sketch to determine what content will go where (imagine a page with a bunch of boxes strewn about).

Instead, we use the site map to jump straight into sketching a couple different options based on the outlined goals, art direction and brand foundation. We'll generally present the home page and a few key secondary pages as well as some examples to give you a sense of how the site will look and feel across different devices (phone versus tablet versus desktop).

## **3** REVISIONS

After a direction is chosen, we take your feedback and refine the design into a near final form. With responsive web design, we also lay out the site across various “breakpoints”—the dimensions (or display resolution) of various screen sizes between big screens down to tablets and mobile phones. These breakpoints are determined by analyzing user display data from several sources to determine which resolutions are the most common now and in the immediate future.

Having a responsive website is extremely important because more and more people are experiencing your brand, and the internet itself, on phones and tablets. Optimizing your site to be fluid across different screen sizes makes for a more pleasant experience and can increase site visitors and sales.

## **4** DEVELOPMENTAL “DEV” SITE

Once the design is approved, we begin to develop the site in a development (or “dev”) environment. The site is hidden from search engines and only our team and you will know it exists. This allows us to refine and build a fully functional site before it ever goes live.

A fairly obnoxious problem (for you, the site owner, and us, the designers) is when you receive an email or tweet complaining about an issue someone found with your site. Building in a dev environment goes a long way to eliminate this issue with thorough browser compatibility testing in real time by everyone involved.

As we get close to launching your site, we run your team through a tutorial so you know how to update its content yourself, whenever you need to.

## **5** SITE LAUNCH!

Once everything is ready on the staging site, we migrate everything to the live domain for launch. We take care of other things like Google Search Console (how your site displays in Google Search results) and Google Analytics to monitor your site and inform future functionality considerations.

## **6** MONITOR & SERVICE AS NEEDED

It's a good idea to regularly review your analytics to see how people are using your site. Is there a page that gets no visits? How about one that people spend several minutes on? Maybe there's a call to action that's not working as we had planned? This information can guide future content and design revisions.

From here, your site is out there in the wild telling your story, leaving you time to focus on more important things like brewing great beer and growing a herculean beard.

## OTHER THOUGHTS

### RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Responsive web design means that your site automatically formats to fit whatever device someone is using. This means you get the same content on a desktop as you do on a tablet or smart phone, all in a pleasant, easy-to-use experience.

Whether you decide to go with a microsite, a startup journal, or an immersive experience, your website must be responsive. Even a lean microsite needs to work properly on smaller screens because people are no longer tolerant of non-responsive sites. If your site isn't responsive, you'll lose business without even knowing it.

### A NOTE ON CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

As recently as a few years ago, businesses often had to pay design firms to update their site's content. Adding a new seasonal beer to your beer page? An hour of billable time. Adding a new cellerman's bio? An hour of billable time.

Those days are largely gone, due in large part to the rise of Content Management Systems (CMS). We're big advocates of WordPress and build nearly every website that comes through our studio's doors on its robust, user-friendly backend. This allows you to fully edit your site without needing to know anything about coding.

## A NOTE ON TEMPLATES VS. CUSTOM DESIGNED SITES

We won't lie and say that every brewery in the world needs a fully-custom designed website. Sometimes, a template can be a perfect solution to your design problem. However, templates can be a double edged sword—while they're relatively cheap and easy to get up and running, there's nothing to stop a brewery from down the street from using the same one (we've actually seen this happen). If the goal is total differentiation, then your site should make you stand out, not make you blend in.

If you're working with a design firm on your website, be sure to ask whether or not they're going to use a template. While a template may be a good solution for your brewery, paying a design firm an absurd amount of money to upload your logo and colors to one (when you could just as easily do it) is borderline unethical on the part of the designer, and definitely a waste of cash for you.

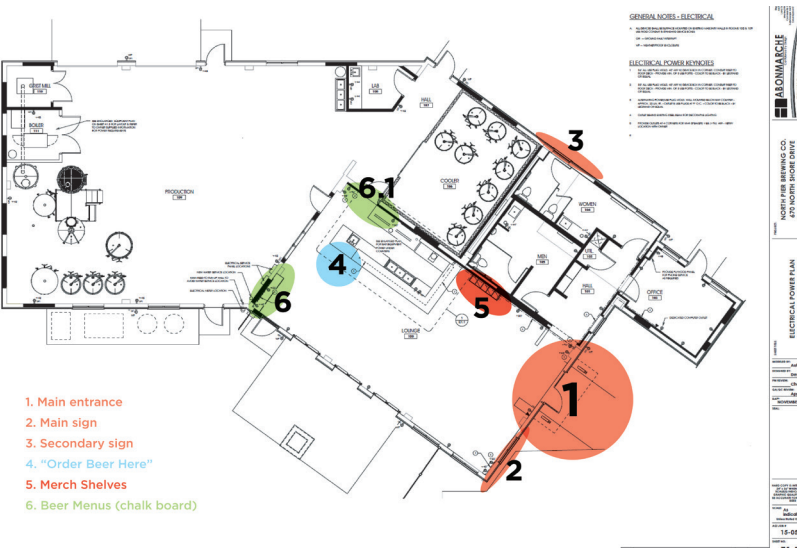


# ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN: TURNING YOUR BREWERY INTO AN IMMERSIVE BRAND EXPERIENCE

THE DESIGN INDUSTRY TENDS TO THROW AROUND TERMS LIKE “ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN,” “EXHIBITION DESIGN,” AND “SPATIAL DESIGN.” WE’LL SPARE YOU THE INDUSTRY LECTURE AND SIMPLY SAY THAT ALL OF THESE REFER TO THE ACT OF VIEWING YOUR BREWERY AS AN IMMERSIVE, THREE-DIMENSIONAL BRAND EXPERIENCE.

This oft-overlooked portion of your brand can help tell your story and make your brewery more pleasant to patronize. “Wayshowing” with directional signage combined with thoughtful spatial design fosters better customer service and creates a lasting impression that’ll keep people coming back.

For the sake of this conversation, we’re talking about the public-facing side of your brewery—the taproom, tasting room, restaurant, merch area, checkout counter, etc. There are far more qualified people than us to tell you how to arrange your brew deck and tanks. We’ll also assume that this is happening after your branding has been developed, or shortly thereafter as a part of your foundational design process.



An early spatial map for North Pier Brewing Co. (Benton Harbor, MI).

# 1

## DEFINE YOUR OVERALL GOALS / DEVELOP SPATIAL MAP

The first thing you need to do is understand how customers will flow through your space. Example: a stripped-back, industrial setup with an emphasis on growler fills will have a markedly different flow than a comfortable brewpub environment that invites groups to settle in and order several pints over the course of an evening.

The best way to kick off this process is with a list of your strategic business objectives and a top-down view of your taproom (you likely already have several of these developed through your planning stage). What should customers see when they arrive? What should they do? How long should they stay, and how much time and money should they spend? The goal is to break the space down into specific zones and identify what should happen at each one.

Common examples can include: main entrance / foyer / host station / seating (2-top / 4-top / communal) / bar / booths / restrooms / private party room / merch & checkout area / patio / growler fill station / brewery proper (for tours)

Next, we'll identify messaging opportunities for each of these areas. This usually happens in the form of mockups and prototypes to get an idea for what the specific are can look and feel like. This is also important for gathering production estimates.

Some examples can include: murals / custom signage / wayshowing / large atmospheric elements / branded games & other communal activities



### **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:**

What is my overall concept? How do I want people to use my space?

How many areas or “zones” do we have? (chart these on your floor plan)

What do we want people to do at each one?

## **2 SIGN & CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT**

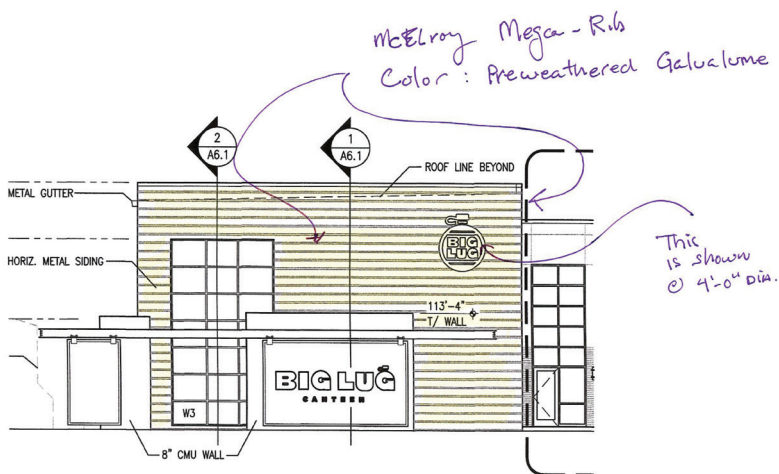
After developing your top-down zone map, the next step is to figure out how to best use the space to help your customers become immersed in your brand story. This is where architectural elevations (technical drawings with measurements) and photos come into play. Grab photos (if the buildout is far enough along) and elevations of every area you’ve identified and begin sketching and prototyping different options until you’ve arrived at the best solution.

### **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:**

How do we tell our brand story?

What tools can we use? (video / audio / large-scale signage / print pieces / interactive elements / etc.)

What sort of production budget are we working with?



Building on their bright, poppy branding, Big Lug Canteen (Indianapolis, IN) used their elevations to get a sense of what materials to use for their buildout as well as how everything should be sized.

### **3 COMPONENT EXPLORATION & PRODUCTION PLANNING**

Once you've settled on final design components, you'll be ready for production. Your creative partners should be shepherding this congruently with the design process itself. Either way, you (or your partners) need to talk to different fabrication and/or production partners to hammer out costs and hash out a timeline to produce and install everything.

#### **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:**

How are these components produced / fabricated?

Figure out logistics: budget / production & installation timelines

Make sure to consider any necessary permitting if tackling exterior signage. This can be a pain to deal with and needs to be considered up front, before you pull the trigger on production. A competent production partner should be able to help you navigate this process.

### **4 INSTALL EVERYTHING**

The final step is approving everything for production and coordinating install dates. Your creative partner should coordinate most of the specifics directly with the vendor. On your end, you'll likely need to make sure they can get into your space when necessary to put everything in place.

Oh, and make sure to view everything through a little finger-picture frame lens when it's done. You've earned it.

# OTHER THOUGHTS

## THIS IS FOUNDATIONAL

It's likely that you'll have to shelve some ideas for a later date due to budget issues. But even if that's not the case, make sure to always consider how you can improve your space and customer experience. Can you make your brewery more inviting? Can you improve peoples' experience? Environmental design, like branding, is never complete. This goes deeper than simply making cool signage—it's tailoring your environment to tell your story.

## FESTIVAL KIT

You can apply this same thinking to your festival kit buildout. Try to picture your booth, tent or table from different distances and in different settings. What should attendees do when they come up to your booth? Are they immediately given a sample, or are there opportunities for them to share a photo of your setup on social media? How about when that line starts to build up? Are you doing something cool with your jockey box? What fun ideas can you come up with to reinforce your brand and get people talking?







The centerpiece of Big Lug Canteen's brewpub is a wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling mural comprised of all the absurd things that would float by in a Big Lug's dream. Don't laugh, I know you dream about chicken wings, too.



This custom wayshowing helps to guide people down a long bar at North Pier Brewing (Benton Harbor, MI), making the beer ordering process easier.



# WHEN TO REBRAND YOUR BREWERY

REBRANDING CAN BE AN ENORMOUSLY IMPORTANT STEP TO SUCCESSFUL GROWTH. KNOWING WHEN TO REBRAND CAN BE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.



Most of this guide is geared for newer breweries or breweries-in-planning. But what if you're already established? What if you've got a solid foothold and now want to do some housecleaning? Maybe you were one of the first breweries in your city and ushered in a now vibrant beer scene. Or maybe you're a 20+ year old regional brewery who's still rocking that homegrown look. Either way, at this stage, you're striving to bring consistency across all channels and packaging, and will have to strike a fine balance to keep the charm and character that got you where you are without looking too sterile and "corporate." Easy, right?

This can be a fun process that breathes new life into your team, gives your fans something to talk about and puts your brewery in the spotlight nationally. Further, it can address some serious, lingering issues. Before diving into major considerations, let's discuss some reasons why you may want to consider rebranding.

## **1 YOUR OVERALL LOOK IS DATED & DOESN'T REFLECT YOUR CORE VALUES**

It's not uncommon for design to age poorly. If it was never done professionally, or maybe worse, was done in a superficial, trendy manner, it can begin to show its age quickly. And if you're growing and making exciting changes, this can inhibit all your progress.

## **2 YOU'RE MAKING MAJOR CHANGES WITHIN YOUR COMPANY (REPOSITIONING & CHANGING UP YOUR PORTFOLIO)**

You're no longer the small outfit you once were. Perhaps you've brought in a new head brewer, are shifting your seasonal program, and are adding more fermenters to your facility. These are the sort of changes that could make you consider a brand refresh.

## **3 NEW COMPETITION IS LEAVING YOU IN THE DUST**

We see this with a lot of old-guard breweries. High-energy startups will open in the same region and often position themselves against these older breweries (those jerks). This is exacerbated by people overlooking their old standbys in favor of trying the latest and greatest beer.

## **4 YOU'RE EXPANDING INTO NEW MARKETS AND FACING STAUNCHER COMPETITION**

Breweries who are crushing it all over the country have solid branding and amazing beer. If you're expanding into new markets, it's only a matter of time until you clash with such a brewery. And this works both ways—big time breweries might expand sales to your backyard and create the same set of problems.

## **5 YOUR WEBSITE ISN'T RESPONSIVE & FEATURES OUT-OF-DATE INFO**

Your website needs to be responsive and has to be easy for your team to update internally, without fussing with code.

If any of these pain points sound familiar, here are some larger issues to consider as you prep for a rebranding process:

## **1 IDENTIFY WHY YOU WANT TO REBRAND**

Using the list above, what problems are you trying to address? Have you outgrown your home-brewed identity? Are you making more diverse (or more drilled down) beer styles? Are you expanding into new markets and facing tougher, more-established competition?

If you suspect that you need to rebrand, you're probably correct, but it's important to understand exactly what problems you're facing, what opportunities you can capitalize on, and what you want to get out of the effort.

## **2 IDENTIFY BRAND EQUITY THROUGH A BRAND AUDIT**

If you've been in business for a while, there's a good chance you've got certain visual cues that are essential to preserve through a rebranding process. People remember you and seek you out (in part) by your "look;" this is called Brand Equity. Think about brand colors, or logo elements that people instantly recognize (like New Belgium's iconic cruiser bicycle). These elements can be outlined through a preliminary brand audit.

This is important because it gives you a foundation for moving forward with the rebranding process. What elements are absolutely critical, and which can be jettisoned? If an update is in order, what elements do you need to maintain to ensure your current customers aren't lost trying to find your beer on tap or on shelves?

A typical audit process takes stock of every bit of communication you've used over the years, from your

logo, to packaging, website, sales material, and ads. Using this material, you and your branding agency can suss out any constants and determine what needs to remain and what can be axed.

To prepare for this, gather as much of your marketing materials as you can (posters, packaging, website screenshots, pictures of your festival setup, POP displays, merch, etc.) Even if these are the very thing driving you to rebrand, it's important for your creative firm to see and understand what you've done in the past.

And all of this is assuming you're still wanting to maintain some elements from your initial branding. But what if you're looking to start with a clean slate?

“MAYBE YOUR HEAD BREWER, DUE TO A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE LIFE CHOICES, HAD TO FAKE HIS OWN DEATH AND MOVE TO IOWA.”

Maybe a brewery across the country decides to sue you because your name kind of sounds like a one-off seasonal they brewed back in 2012. Look, it happens.

No matter the reason, if you're looking to completely start from scratch, it's largely the same process as defining your brand essence, only you're not so much looking back to the past as you are toward the future and where you'd like to position your brewery.

### **3 FIND A DESIGN FIRM**

While identifying why you need to rebrand (and deciding what elements are key to your brand equity) are important considerations, finding a great design firm partner to help you navigate this process can be the difference between a successful project and a nightmare.

If you can find the right partner, they'll handle everything we've discussed in this book and set you up for the next phase of your business.



# HIRING A DESIGN FIRM FOR YOUR CRAFT BREWERY BRANDING

AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING DRAMATIC, HIRING A GREAT DESIGN FIRM CAN BE HALF THE BATTLE OF GETTING YOUR BREWERY'S BRANDING ESTABLISHED. HERE ARE SOME POINTERS TO MAKE SURE YOU FIND THE BEST MATCH.

It can be tempting to try and handle your branding, that is, the actual visual design of your identity, packaging, and so forth, yourself. After all, you're starting a business and likely have a strong DIY drive and sense of pride in what you're doing. We own a small business too, and we completely understand.

But if you have the money, hiring a design firm (or a freelancer, depending on your budget) is one of the most sound investments you'll make. While you can (and should!) work through the foundational strategic work we've previously outlined, a great creative partner can help you make all of this look amazing.

And here's why—think about how you buy beer, or wine for that matter. Great branding and packaging can directly influence what you pick up, and what you bring home. People are visual creatures and whether we like it or not, we make gut decisions based on surface level stuff—like branding. If your identity and/or packaging is poorly executed, it reflects poorly on you, and likely won't sell as well as the beer next to it.

Okay, off of our soapbox and back to branding your brewery. If you're open to working with a designer, here are some pointers for finding the right creative partner to help you develop and implement all of this.

## **1 FINDING A DESIGN FIRM**

This part is easy. Simply head down to your local design emporium and... just kidding. The best way to find a great design firm is to ask someone you trust for a referral. Is there another well-branded brewery or small business in town? Reach out to see who they hired.

If that doesn't work for you, you can always hop on Google to find local (or not-so-local) options. Make sure the firms you're considering ACTUALLY SHOW WORK on their website. Don't get us started on that.

Look at their portfolio, but understand that any competent design firm will define your brand essence and messaging and tailor your identity, packaging and website to reflect these ideas. You're not simply picking an aesthetic style off a shelf and saying, "Here, make me this one!" That being said, do check out their work. Branding is a gut level, emotional endeavor anyway. Do you like most of what they make? If so, reach out to them.

## **2** **INTERVIEWING A DESIGN FIRM**

Once you've found a firm you're interested in, reach out and expect a response shortly thereafter. Once you get together, tell them about yourself, your team, your vision and dreams. What's your concept? Why are you doing this? How will your brewery be different from every other brewery in your state? The design firm should have some questions of their own.

This initial meeting can be likened to a first date—be wary of someone who's more concerned with whipping out their portfolio and talking about themselves than they are with listening to what you have to say. A group that asks lots of questions and actually listens to you could be a good partner.

After that, find out what their capabilities are. What does their creative process look like? Have they worked through the TTB beer label approval process before? Have they helped any other breweries come to market?



Do they enjoy drinking craft beer? A fun question is to ask them to describe a project that has gone poorly. It'll give you a candid look at how they work. Some of our best clients have caught us off guard with this one.

Make sure to find out who you'll be working with throughout the process and who'll actually be designing your stuff.

“**AND BEWARE OF ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES. THESE SNAPPILY-DRESSED BASTARDS ACT AS A BUFFER BETWEEN YOU AND THE DESIGNERS WHO ACTUALLY SHAPE YOUR IMAGE.**”

Working through account reps can cause a handful of stupid, avoidable problems (miscommunication, blown deadlines and budgets, awkward jokes and small talk, etc.). Thankfully, this role is dying out in small-to-midsized design firms.

And finally, this project could take anywhere from a few months to a year or more. So while you don't need to expect the design team to come to your birthday party, you do need to like them. If they're not too fun to be around now, just wait until you're working together and the meter's running. It's also important to realize that any design firm worth their salt is putting you through this same vetting process—determining if your concept is viable and if you'll be fun to work with.

### **3 WHAT WILL THIS COST ME?**

It's important to talk about money up front, or at least in that first meeting. I can't tell you what to expect to

pay, since a freelancer will charge differently than a small shop than a big shop than an agency, etc. But it's important to discuss cost so the design firm knows what kind of approach they can offer. Maybe it's \$8 thousand? Maybe it's \$80 thousand? Regardless, if your budget doesn't match their rates, they should be more than willing to refer you to someone who can work with your budget.

A quick note here; branding is one of the cheapest ways to differentiate your brewery when you consider the alternative of spending years fighting to get your beer



We've found large mood boards to be one of the best ways to collaboratively art direct a brewery's brand experience. While not as hands-on, you can gather similar inspiration using Pinterest. You can also find casserole recipes and how-to guides for knitting cute hats for your dog on Pinterest, which is nice.

in bars, liquor stores and peoples' homes. Getting your branding right the first time will pay dividends and be one less growing pain to contend with down the road. And if done well, it will have infinitely more value for you than its price tag.

## OTHER THOUGHTS

Again, you should steer clear of creative firms that don't show their own work on their website. There's probably a good reason why they don't.

Positioning is one of the most important "things" that can come out of this branding process. Make sure to discuss your competition, your audience and how your brewery is different with the design firm so they can clearly communicate this idea through compelling design and branding.

Working with a local firm can be great (they're accessible, they know your market, you can drive over and vandalize their building if they make ugly work, etc.). But consider firms in other markets as well, particularly if they have a lot of experience with craft beer. Do your research and pick the right partner the first time.



# LAST CALL

**“YOU CAN’T BUILD A REPUTATION ON WHAT YOU’RE  
GOING TO DO.” – HENRY FORD**

Alright, now, get out there and brand your brewery!  
Just kidding. Sort of...

Our hope with this guide is that you not only understand what branding and positioning are; we also want you to understand the important role they play in making your brewery stand out. People are emotional beings first. Solid branding encourages them to make that initial leap—to pick a beer up off the shelf, to order it on draft, to introduce it to their family and friends as a special thing they discovered.

This guide started out as a way to outline the key challenges we tackle when working with breweries. But on a deeper level, this is the process we want every craft brewery to go through, no matter their concept, size, or budget. We don't care about the possibility of an impending beer "bubble", or headline grabbing acquisitions, or backhanded Super Bowl commercials. All we care about is enjoying amazing beer.

Take stock of what you have. List out your core values. Figure out what makes you stand out from your competition. Make sure your customers understand why you exist. Do your labels look awesome? Is your website useful? Is your beer delicious? How are you going to grow in a manner consistent with your brand? When you wrestle with these ideas, you're on the right path to creating a vibrant company that craft beer fans will be proud to support.

Be sure to drop us a line if you ever need help with any of this. Or if you ever need help with taste testing your beer. We're good at that too.

Good luck, and cheers!

# ABOUT CODO DESIGN

CODO Design is a branding firm based in Indianapolis, Indiana. After graduating from Herron School of Art & Design in 2009, we founded CODO based on the belief that we can create better design by directly including our clients in the creative process.

Since partnering with our first brewery client in 2012, we've fallen completely in love with the craft beer industry. This work has taken us all over the country, and increasingly, the world, as we've helped to bring regional production breweries, brewpubs, nano breweries, farm breweries and contract breweries to market through branding and positioning, naming, package design, environmental design, and interactive design.

Our Hands-on Branding™ work and thoughts on craft beer have been featured in major industry outlets like Craft Brewing Business, Brewbound, American Craft Beer, Craft Beer and Brewing Magazine, and Oh Beautiful Beer. All of this experience lead to us becoming hired as subject matter experts on craft beer branding for the University of Vermont's "Business of Craft Beer" program where we remotely teach students from around the world about the finer points of brand strategy.



LEARN MORE AT: [WWW.CODODESIGN.COM](http://WWW.CODODESIGN.COM)

# ABOUT NEENAH PACKAGING

In order to differentiate a bottle from all others on shelf, labels must be beautifully crafted, designed, and printed. They must communicate the same level of excellence as the product inside the bottle. At Neenah Packaging, we make selecting the perfect creative labeling papers easy by combining the tactile appeal of premium uncoated papers with superior wet strength capabilities.

Specifically designed with premium beer applications in mind, our BELLA® Label Papers convey a resilient confidence and create a sensory experience that makes consumers want to touch and connect with your product. As durable as they are beautiful, our labels have the ability to handle unforgiving high-speed bottling and packaging lines, and easily accept die-cutting embossing, and foil stamping as well as offset lithography and flexographic techniques. Consider BELLA Label the perfect handcrafted look for your perfectly handcrafted beverage.

When we first saw CODO Design's digital Craft Beer Branding Guide, not only did we love it, we knew that we needed to see it through to printed form. The result is a stunning book with all of the best secrets on brewery branding available anywhere. We are proud to partner with CODO, a company that believes in the power of branding, storytelling, and helping brands like yours sell more product, as much as we do.



**NEENAH**  
PACKAGING

**LEARN MORE AT: [WWW.NEENAHPACKAGING.COM](http://WWW.NEENAHPACKAGING.COM)**



Whether you're a brewery-in-planning with a barebones idea, a newly-opened taproom, or a regional powerhouse, you need to understand your core values, the role you play in your community, and how you're different from every other brewery in the world.

CODO Design draws on years of craft beer branding experience to get you thinking about your brewery and its story. Why do you brew the beer you brew, and why does this matter to the people you want to drink it?

Kick back, pour yourself a beer and learn how to make your brewery stand out.

The logo for CODO Design is a white graphic on a red background. It consists of the word "CODO" in a bold, sans-serif font, oriented vertically. The letters are contained within a white rectangular frame that has a decorative, slightly irregular top-left corner. The "O"s are stylized with a small gap in the middle of each letter.

CODO