

What is your brand's social identity?

 By [Louise Marsland](#)

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Does a brand need a social identity online, like a person needs a personality? Specialist social agency Cerebra seems to think so, publishing a new report on 'The Social Identity' for brands this week.

The question at the heart of this report that Cerebra asks is this: 'If you were to remove your company logo from every piece of content you made, could people still recognise it to be yours?' The reason this question is necessary, is because every time a brand enters the social media space, people can play around with it and change it, but also because social media encourages attention deficit - a brand doesn't have even 30 seconds to get its brand message across.

In order not to be tuned out by consumers, brands are now creating "strong, authentic un-logoed content that still conveys the brand identity" reports Cerebra. It can still be termed 'branded content' because the brand must come across strongly in the content.

And in fact this presents a challenge to marketers, because you need a strong brand identity for your brand to survive in a landscape *sans* logos and other brand collateral that identifies it instantly, but for it still to be recognisable visually or when written about because the brand essence is there and because you have done your job in creating a brand instantly recognisable in any context or content.

There is no doubt that marketers are still struggling with the fact that they don't own their brand message in the realm of social, as social media users dictate the social rules, depending on the culture of users on each platform, as Cerebra points out: "Social rules are dictated by the culture of the users on each social platform, and they will decide if your content is welcome or not. Your adverts will rarely gain social reach, but your content might if it's relevant. The trick now, is to make your brand stick out, by having a defined and consistent approach to social content.

"So, a new set of language and design considerations are required to communicate with an audience that lives in front of a screen, and has the control over whether to allow your content into their lives or not. As many designers will tell you, the user needs to be at the centre of attention and strategy. Everything you say or do online is a representation of your brand, and it is the combination of a language guide and a visual identity that makes up your Social Identity," states the report.

Step-by-step guide

Cerebra goes into detail on why brands need a social identity in addition to the brand CI manual; how brands should say what they want to say in a 'language guide' including defining your brand purpose and personality, audience and platforms; your visual identity; and best practice online; as well as top tips for creating compelling social content - with examples. It

even includes a printable handy 'cheat sheet' for your community social media manager!

Some of the highlights contained in 'The Social Identity' from Cerebra, are:

- **Authenticity:** An improved visual appeal is what first and foremost catches one's attention. A true and honest representation of your brand's personality will attract the people you want as customers and advocates for your brand.
- **Consistency:** Consistency in creation is key in building trust and rapport with your audience.
- **Tone:** As much as what you say is important, how you say it, is just as vital - tone needs to match, brand personality conveyed and local culture tapped into - this is where the voice of your brand is defined. This applies to copy in tweets, Facebook updates, blog posts, image descriptions on Instagram, and community management responses...
- **Stand out:** Well-constructed content lays the foundation for truly meaningful visual interpretation that will bring your concepts to life. You want your consumers to be able to pick your brand out of the social line-up.
- **Best practice:** There is no right or wrong, each community is as unique as a snowflake, but there are best practices that can be customised and applied.
- **Simplicity:** Don't overthink anything. Content needs to be impactful and to the point and grammatically correct.
- **Brand love:** Gaining the love of your followers can only happen if you are authentic, show your personality, your truth.

And most importantly, I think, Cerebra nails it with this point: "Social media is about communication, not advertising." If brand managers and social media managers keep that most important point in mind, they will do okay.

Source: Cerebra is one of the leading social agencies in Africa and publish their great 'social' insight for free to clients and anyone else who is interested in regular reports. Go to [Cerebra.com](https://www.cerebra.com) to download their previous releases.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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