

A FOUNDA AUDIT · 7 MISTAKES, 30-MINUTE FIXES

The Brand *Look.*

7 Brand Mistakes Costing You Customers (And How To Fix Each By Monday)

A look at your brand from inside the rooms at Ogilvy, Saatchi, MullenLowe, TBWA, AMV BBDO, Grey, and Pablo.

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You opened this because something about your brand feels off, and you can't quite name it.

That's normal, and I see it every week in messages from people who've built something good and can't quite work out why it isn't landing the way they thought it would.

I've spent 15+ years inside Ogilvy, MullenLowe, Saatchi & Saatchi, TBWA, AMV BBDO and Grey, on work for Sky, Google, Lego, Mercedes, Levi's, Unilever, Samsung, Hugo Boss, Nordstrom, Polaroid, and 25+ other brands you'd recognise.

Here's what I believe, after all of it: if you have something to sell, share or say, **Founda is there when you need it.**

What follows is 7 mistakes I see in almost every brand running without an in-house strategist, and each one has a fix you can apply this week in about *thirty minutes*, without a strategy day or an offsite or a rebrand to do it.

Read the bit you need, skip the rest, and reply when one of them lands.

/Sam

MISTAKE 01.

Your homepage talks about *you*, not them.

The mistake.

Open your homepage and read the first thing you see. If it sounds like “We help businesses transform through bespoke solutions” or “Founded in 2019, we believe...”, you’ve got the disease: two whole sentences about you, and nothing about the person who just landed on the page.

Why it’s costing you customers.

Visitors take about **four seconds to decide whether to keep reading**. If those four seconds describe you, they’re gone, because they didn’t show up to read about a stranger; they showed up because something made them curious about themselves, and your hero either pays that curiosity off or wastes it.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

Rewrite the hero into one clear shape: their problem in their words, then the specific outcome they get from working with you. Read it out loud to a friend who doesn’t know what you do, and if they can’t tell what’s in it for them, you aren’t done yet. The whole exercise takes about thirty minutes, once you stop trying to sound clever.

FROM THE ROOMS: Lego’s homepage doesn’t open with the word “Lego.” It opens with what the kid (or the adult) is about to build. Same logic at any scale.

MISTAKE 02.

Your offer is *cheap* when it should be priced for what it does.

The mistake.

You priced what you sell by the hour, by guesswork, or by what felt fair to ask for at the time, rather than by what it actually does for the buyer once they've paid for it and gone home.

Why it's costing you customers.

Cheap signals “expendable,” and the buyer reads that signal before they read your sales page. A £150 strategy session lands in their inbox as a £150 favour, and they show up unprepared, never apply the work, and quietly resent themselves for booking it. **The cheap price predicted the outcome** before either of you opened a doc.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

Pick one thing you sell, triple the price, and add one tangible deliverable to justify the new number (a worksheet, a written recap, a 7-day follow-up call). The price is doing two jobs at once: it's paying you, and it's telling the buyer how seriously to take what's about to happen, which is why this should feel like a strategy decision rather than an arithmetic one.

FROM THE ROOMS: Patagonia raised prices in 2011 and asked customers to buy less. Sales went up. The price was a signal of confidence, not a cost.

MISTAKE 03.

Your brand voice swings between three different personalities.

The mistake.

Read your last five captions out loud, then your last five emails, then your homepage hero, in order. Most people doing this for the first time discover three different brands wearing the same logo, and none of the three actually sounds like the person who built the business.

Why it's costing you customers.

Recognition is repetition. The customer is forming a pattern of you in their head from every encounter, and if the voice swings, the pattern never sets, so they forget you between visits and meet you as a stranger again next time you show up.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

Pick the version that sounds most like the real you across all eleven pieces, and rewrite the other ten to match it. One voice applied a thousand times beats a brilliant voice applied once, and the whole exercise is a Saturday afternoon job rather than a brand workshop, so don't hire anyone to do it for you.

FROM THE ROOMS: Mailchimp's tone-of-voice doc is 50 pages because they figured out consistency matters more than cleverness. A clear tone applied 1,000 times beats a brilliant tone applied once.

MISTAKE 04.

You named your product before you knew who it was *for*.

The mistake.

You named the workshop, the course, or the service before you knew the specific problem it solves for one specific person. The name became a placeholder, the placeholder became permanent, and now you're selling under it.

Why it's costing you customers.

A name that doesn't telegraph either the buyer or the outcome doesn't sell, and the difference shows up fast: "The Strategy Session" is a meeting, but "The Brand Look" tells you exactly what you're about to see. **The name is a sales person you don't pay,** and a lazy name leaves them at the door before they say a single word.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

For each thing you sell, write the name plus a six-word description, and if the description isn't already implied by the name, rename it. Liquid Death didn't get called "Premium Canned Water for Hydration" because the name was supposed to do the brand strategy in two words, and the product was always going to be water; the only thing the marketing could be was the name.

FROM THE ROOMS: At MullenLowe I once watched a great product sit unshipped for six months, because nobody in sales could pitch the name they'd been given, and two words later it shipped in two weeks with the same product behind it.

MISTAKE 05.

You're posting content but you don't have a *thesis*.

The mistake.

You post tips on Monday, behind-the-scenes on Wednesday, a quote on Friday, trending audio on Saturday, and the posts are all fine on their own. They're just not arguing for anything in particular.

Why it's costing you customers.

A thesis is the one belief your brand keeps arguing for, no matter what you're actually posting about; it isn't a tagline or a bio line, it's the thing underneath the work that holds it together. **Without one, every post has to win on its own merit**, the audience never builds an opinion of you, and they scroll past harmlessly forever.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

Find your thesis in one sentence. Levi's has been arguing "the original is the best" for 25 years, and Audi has been arguing "Vorsprung durch Technik" for four decades without blinking. Yours might be "small businesses can market like the famous ones," or "the fix takes thirty minutes, not thirty days." Pick the belief, put it inside every post for two weeks, and watch what shifts in the saves and the replies.

FROM THE ROOMS: Patagonia's thesis is "the planet is your customer." Every product page, every ad, every email argues for it. 25 years. The thesis is what you'll never let go of.

MISTAKE 06.

Your customers can't repeat what you do back to *you*.

The mistake.

A customer recommends you to a friend at the school gates on a Tuesday afternoon, and they pause, they hedge, they say “kind of” or “sort of” or “she’s hard to explain.” That hedge is yours, not theirs: they’re not bad at recommending you, you’re bad at being recommendable.

Why it's costing you customers.

Word-of-mouth is the cheapest acquisition channel anyone has ever invented, and it dies on the first hedge, because if your customer can't say what you do in one clean sentence, the friend won't follow up and the recommendation evaporates in the car park before you ever know it happened.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

Ask three customers to describe what you do, in writing, in their own words, and look for the line that repeats across all three of their answers. **That line is your homepage hero, your bio, your one-liner** from now on, because you did not write it; they did, and that's the entire point.

FROM THE ROOMS: At Ogilvy we'd run "8 customers, 1 question" tests before any rebrand. The 8th customer's words are the ones that go on the wall.

MISTAKE 07.

You're chasing reach when you need *recognition*.

The mistake.

You're tracking views, celebrating the post that got fifty thousand of them, and optimising for who sees you once rather than for who recognises you next week, next month, next year.

Why it's costing you customers.

Reach is rented. Recognition compounds. A viral post that doesn't build recognition is a one-night stand with a stranger who'll never come back, paid for in time you won't get back, while the brands that actually scale are doing the opposite: picking a signature and applying it without negotiation, post after post, until the audience can spot them at a thumbnail.

The fix you can ship by Monday.

Pick one visual signature (a colour, a typeface, an opening line, a frame, a sound bed) and apply it to your next ten posts without exception, because recognition gets built in tens rather than millions, and boring on purpose beats novelty every Tuesday of the year.

FROM THE ROOMS: Liquid Death's silver can. Mailchimp's monkey. Lego's brick. None of those are the products. They are the recognition system.

What to do with *this*.

1. Pick the mistake that hit closest.
2. Apply the fix this week, in about thirty minutes, with no prep or offsite needed.
3. If you want the templates I use to fix all 7, grab a Founda Strategy Pack from \$25, or build a bundle of 4+ packs and the discount kicks in automatically.

founda.me/intelligence/packs

4. If you don't have a site that does any of this yet, Founda builds you one. AED 400, one year of hosting included, two weeks to live.

founda.me/businesses

If you have something to *sell*, share or *say*, Founda is there when you need it.

/Sam