

Assessing Your Canvas

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When painting a house (perhaps an intricate, old Victorian), our thoughts immediately imagine the color, the paint finish, and how the final product will stand out from all the other houses on the street.

It's easy for us to get excited and head to the hardware store to look at color swatches. However, it would be ill advised to jump in with a paint roller and start coating your house with bright tints without first checking the quality of that historic wood siding, your canvas.

If you immediately start painting, you will miss that rotten piece of trim under the front parlor window sill. You'll miss the leaky gutter causing it all. Of course your paint covers the cosmetic effects of these issues, but the trim is still rotten, and that gutter is still leaking underneath it all. A bad gutter is still a bad gutter, no matter what color you paint it.

By taking the time first to assess the home and fix up some of these underlying problems, you'll not only ensure that you have a perfect canvas for your paint, but your entire house will stay vibrant for years to come.

In the same way, your Brand deserves careful attention. Before launching a brand (or rebranding) effort, it is essential to establish the solid foundations of your Stuff, Story, and

Audience. Only after you put in the effort to concretely and confidently summarize what you do, why you do it, and who you do it for, will your canvas be ready.

Making social media posts, YouTube videos, or writing blog entries might seem like excellent tactics - they are definitely pieces many business owners are most excited to begin - but they shouldn't be your first steps. These elements are the brightly colored paints in our Victorian house metaphor: if content is created without a solid understanding of the brand, it won't take long for the inconsistencies and holes to show.

In other words: if your Audience sees your Stuff already peeling off the walls, or that your Story runs into the hues of conflicting messages, they aren't likely to hire you to work on their own houses. Your brand is a very important marketing tool. It's important you decide on your brand's basics before you can shape a reputation.

Luckily, inspecting a brand's structure is fairly simple. **We built a brand assessment** to help our clients thoroughly check the structure in about 30 minutes. We know you've got awesome ideas. We're ready to see you put them into action. Afterwards, we'll be able to chat with you about your brand's foundations and messaging opportunities. We can help you lay out a solid structure (and we're pretty good at picking paint colors too).

There are a few other options as well: Let's test your team with a few "top of mind" questions. Can employees pitch your brand's message off the top of their heads? Do your customers see your overall mission and message in every team member?

Taking the time now to ask these questions will save you a lot of time, energy, and money down the road. It's exponentially easier to replace an old gutter now than to have to spend a future day off climbing up a ladder with another costly can of paint to fix a problem you could have righted the first time.

In the end, no amount of paint can fix trim that has rotted away, and neither will it hold up against a constant stream of water from a malfunctioning gutter. In the same way, without a solid handle on your brand's Stuff, Story, and Audience, your marketing and messaging efforts won't stand much of a chance.

You don't want your competitors to win "Best House on the Street" because your Audience sees a dilapidated structure in pretty colors. Assess your brand to make sure whatever colors you choose; your Victorian house becomes the brightest and most beautiful house on the block.

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