

MARKETING

Key branding lessons from the top 4 ecommerce giants

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Simply showing up online with a business Web site is not enough to guarantee success.

Ecommerce giants Apple, eBay, Craigslist and Etsy seem to have cracked the code.

Together, they brought in total revenues of more than \$275 billion in 2018. They are successful businesses and successful brands.

The most successful [ecommerce](#) businesses know that their [brand identity](#) and brand is everything.

I have studied what these four ecommerce brands are doing right and cultivated a list of 13 actionable branding lessons that can help your business.

EBay

Evolve to stay relevant

In today's fast-paced digital world, technologies and trends often become obsolete before we have even had a chance to understand them.

Online businesses that stand the test of time are relatively rare. And this makes eBay a bit of an e-commerce unicorn.

When eBay was founded, it was one of the first businesses to take advantage of one of the Internet's greatest strengths connecting people with similar interests across vast distances. The ecommerce auction platform allowed people with niche interests to find other people with the same interests and buy their stuff.

No longer just an auction site, eBay introduced the "[Buy it Now](#)" option in 2000. And, as the years passed, sellers started opening eBay shops that were truly dedicated to ecommerce instead of simply unloading a few unwanted items.

Today, eBay is taking steps to elevate its overall user experience. It has introduced guaranteed shipping times,

personalized home pages, price-match guarantees, instant selling, and a line of shipping supplies for sellers.

By evolving to provide a more competitive user experience, eBay's brand has managed to stay relevant and thrive.

What you can do:

- Collect feedback from your customers and prospects to learn what elements of your brand are misaligned or lacking. Prioritize improving these elements as your business grows.
- Keep an eye on your competition are they offering a bigger, better or different experience than you? Step up your game to remain relevant do not be afraid to take your own unique direction.
- Develop a brand that allows you to evolve. [Company names](#) such as "Just Tables" or "Headphone Hut" will limit your ability to evolve and grow as new opportunities arise. For more on this, read [Why and how to rename your business](#).

Craigslist

If it is not broke, do not fix it

As impressive as eBay's longevity has proven to be, Craigslist's epic success is even more remarkable.

The most striking aspect of the Craigslist brand? The online classified site's interface has remained mostly unchanged since it debuted in 1995. No one could call Craigslist a beautifully designed Web site even in 1995. But, it is functional and user-friendly.

The Craigslist brand is defined by simplicity and user-friendly interface. This is not an accident.

As Craigslist founder Craig Newmark [explains](#), "The design of Craigslist originated in my observation that people want something that is functional, effective, simple, and fast. That design philosophy has been maintained throughout."

And so, Craigslist continues to thrive in defiance of the common wisdom that sleek design is best.

What you can do:

- Stick to your brand identity consistency gives your audience time to get to know and like your business. As we strongly advised in our comprehensive guide on [how to start a business](#), be sure your brand identity is consistent everywhere you show it visually, including on your Web site and in your marketing materials.
- Identify the elements of your brand that resonate most positively with your audience. Those are the elements to hold onto as your brand evolves.
- Work to create a strong brand identity when you start your business and strive to constantly improve it. When you develop your brand identity, be sure you get a [custom logo for your business](#) and not a template-based logo or generic design. You do not want your business brand to look like thousands of other, unappealing businesses.

Etsy

Human connection has value

Consumers know of Etsy as a marketplace for handcrafted goods. Etsy products are sought after because they are made with a human touch in the midst of an impersonal, machine-dominated society.

Product uniqueness alone cannot account for Etsy's appeal. It is the story behind the product the human connection to the product that makes each hand-made item sold on Etsy truly special.

What you can do:

- Remember that business is meant to serve people not the other way around. Let that govern your business practices. For more on this, read [16 crucial Web site design factors that help your small business increase customers and profits](#).
- Encourage human connection via customer support. Phone calls and live chat will create stronger bonds than email.
- Share the stories behind your services or products. Show how they were shaped by humans.

Apple

Embrace your tribe

People who use Apple products tend to be incredibly devoted. When new Apple products debut, they garner huge amounts of speculation and press. And YouTube explodes with new unboxing videos.

But what drives this rabid devotion?

Apple creates great products to be sure. But Apple has also successfully established its brand as a status symbol. The Apple logo does not only indicate that you use a particular product. It also communicates that you are a member of the Apple community.

As Shaun Morgan, a branding writer at Bynder, [points out](#):

"The air of premium exclusivity that Apple employs when promoting new product releases, and the meticulous attention to the aesthetics of its products, has enabled the Apple brand to be associated with luxury in the eyes of its followers. And that is what many of its consumers are paying a premium for: a symbol of status that is driven by emotion, not practicality."

Creating a loyal tribe of customers means tapping into their hearts, not just their wallets.

What you can do:

- Appeal to your audience's emotions to help your brand resonate.
- Take a genuine, unique and authentic stance that will attract your best audience.
- Remain true to your vision and brand-defining characteristics to avoid alienating loyal customers.
- Reward customers for their loyalty with high-quality products, service and support that support your brand vision.

IF YOU FOLLOW in the footsteps of these ecommerce success stories, you will know you are headed in the right direction.

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