



The visual storytelling guide for business
owners who give a damn

HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR WORTH WITHOUT SAYING A WORD



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Introduction

WHO THE HECK AM I?

I'm Liam Mountstephen, founder of Longshot Studio. I help business owners turn their expertise into brands that actually work for them. The kind that attracts dream clients instead of bargain hunters.

Seven years in the design world taught me something important, brilliant business owners often have brands that make them look amateur. It's frustrating for me to watch, because these people do incredible work, but their visual presentation tells a different story.

I started Longshot Studio because too many talented professionals were stuck with branding that didn't match their expertise. Your brand should open doors, not close them.



This isn't about turning you into a designer. It's about understanding what makes some brands feel premium and others feel cheap. By the end, you'll know exactly what your brand is saying and how to make sure it's saying the right things.

Let's get started.

www.longshotstudio.com.au

[@longshotstudio.au](https://www.instagram.com/longshotstudio)

It's having conversations about you behind your back

WHY YOUR BRAND MATTERS MORE THAN YOU THINK

Every day, potential clients make decisions about your business before you say a word. They're looking at your website, your business card, your social media. Within seconds, they've decided whether you're worth their time and money.

Your visual brand is communicating your expertise, professionalism, and value whether you're aware of it or not. The problem is that if your brand looks amateur, people assume your work is too.

But once you understand how visual psychology can control that conversation, you can make sure your brand tells the right story about your business.

Your brand should be working for your business, not against it.

Let's make sure it is.



What you'll learn:

- The three elements that instantly communicate premium value
- How colour psychology affects buying decisions
- Why font choices impact credibility
- The spacing principles that separate amateur from professional
- How to audit your current brand and identify opportunities

Spoiler alert, it's simpler than you think

THE THREE ELEMENTS OF PREMIUM PERCEPTION

Some businesses charge premium prices while others compete on cost. Quality matters, but it's not the only factor. How your brand makes people feel about that quality is equally important.

Consistency builds trust

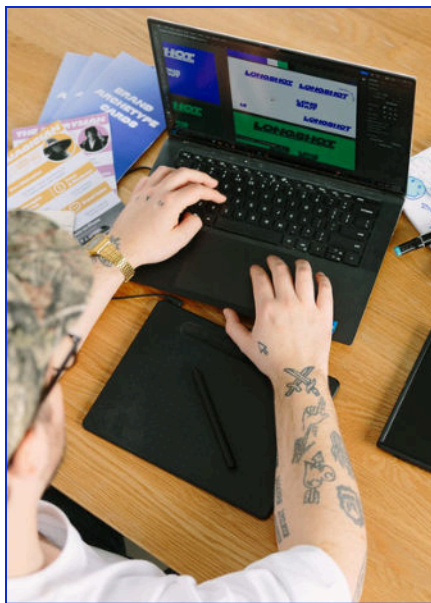
When every touchpoint looks professional and cohesive, people assume you pay attention to the details in your work too. Inconsistencies in your design suggests carelessness in your execution.

Simplicity suggests expertise

Confident experts don't need to shout. Premium brands use clean layouts, generous spacing, and restrained colour palettes. They let their work speak for itself.

Quality cues signal value

The right typography, professional photography, and thoughtful design choices act as visual shortcuts. They say "this business invests in quality" before anyone sees your actual work.



Why your colour choices might be sabotaging your success

COLOUR PSYCHOLOGY

Colours aren't decorative. They're psychological triggers that influence how people feel about your business. Choose wrong, and you could be accidentally communicating the opposite of what you intend.

The psychology:

Deep blues and charcoal greys = Trust, stability, expertise

Good for: Professional services, consulting, finance

Muted greens and earth tones = Growth, wellness, natural authority

Good for: Health practitioners, sustainability, coaching

Rich purples and sophisticated neutrals = Luxury, wisdom, premium service

Good for: High-end consulting, luxury services, creative professionals

Clean whites with strategic accents = Modern, efficient, innovative

Good for: Tech services, design agencies, forward-thinking businesses

What undermines credibility:

- Neon brights (unless targeting teenagers)
- Too many colours (more than 3-4 looks scattered)
- Industry mismatches (bright pink for accounting)

Why your colour choices might be sabotaging your success

COLOUR PSYCHOLOGY

Now for the moment of truth, it's time to take an honest look at your current colour choices. Grab your business card, pull up your website, and ask yourself these three questions (and no, being generous with yourself won't help your business):

Quick colour audit:

- Do your colours match the feeling you want clients to have about your business?
- Would your ideal client's favourite brands use similar colours to yours?
- Do your colours look professional and intentional when used together?
- Are you using the exact same colour codes across your website, business cards, and social media?
- Do your colours help you stand out from your direct competitors?
- Are you sticking to 2-4 colours maximum, or do you have a rainbow situation happening?
- Would someone in your industry take your colours seriously, or do they scream "amateur hour"?

If you answered no to more than two of these, your colours are definitely working against you.

Your fonts are saying things about your business

TYPOGRAPHY THAT BUILDS CREDIBILITY

Font choices communicate personality, professionalism, and positioning before anyone reads a word.

Fonts can come from all over the place, whether you're grabbing them for free on **Google Fonts**, diving into **Adobe Fonts**, or buying them outright for your own licence.

Sans-serif fonts = Modern, clean, approachable

Good for: Most service businesses, tech, contemporary brands

Serif fonts = Traditional, established, trustworthy

Good for: Law, finance, academic institutions

Script fonts = Personal, creative, boutique

Good for: Creative services, luxury brands (use sparingly)

Decorative fonts = Casual, niche-specific

Good for: Very specific industries only

A few tips:

- 01 Stick to 2 fonts maximum
- 02 Ensure readability at all sizes
- 03 Match your industry
- 04 Test on different materials

Font Styles

Abc

Decorative
Serif Sans-Serif
Script

The spacing secret that screams expensive

USING WHITE SPACE STRATEGICALLY

White space isn't wasted space. It's one of the most powerful tools for communicating professionalism and quality. This is why spacing matters:

Cramped layouts suggest budget operations

When everything is squeezed together, it looks like you're cutting corners. To your potential customers, this can feel like you offer a low-quality service.

Generous spacing suggests premium service

Luxury brands use lots of white space because it feels expensive. It shows confidence in your value.

Good spacing improves comprehension

People absorb information easier when it has room to breathe. Your message will become clearer and more impactful.



The spacing secret that screams expensive

USING WHITE SPACE STRATEGICALLY

White space isn't wasted space. It's one of the most powerful tools for communicating professionalism and quality.

How to use spacing strategically:

- Give elements breathing room
- Use consistent spacing throughout
- Don't fill every inch with content
- Let your content feel calm and organised

Spacing audit:

- Does everything feel cramped together?
- Are spaces consistent between elements?
- Does it feel professional or overwhelming?

Look at brands you admire and notice their use of white space. Give yourself permission to use more than feels comfortable.

How to stop looking like you raided the free stock photo library

PHOTOGRAPHY THAT POSITIONS YOU PROPERLY

Your images position your business in the market. The wrong photos can undermine everything else you've done right.

Photos that kill your credibility: Generic business handshakes, obviously staged stock shots, and inconsistent styles that look like you grabbed random images from different sources.



VS



Here's the thing about photography, it doesn't need to be shot by a professional, but it does need to look intentional.

How to stop looking like you raided the free stock photo library

PHOTOGRAPHY THAT POSITIONS YOU PROPERLY

If you're sourcing stock photos, try these platforms:

Unsplash, **Pexels**, and **Envato Elements** offer quality options.
Canva has surprisingly good hidden gems in their library too.

What to look for in quality stock photos:

- Images that look candid and natural rather than obviously posed
- Consistent lighting style that matches your brand mood (bright and airy v.s moody and dramatic)
- Photos that actually relate to your industry, not generic "business person at laptop" shots
- High resolution images that won't pixelate when you use them
- People who look like your actual target market, not generic stock models
- Images with space for text overlay if you plan to add copy
- Photos that match your colour palette or can be edited to fit
- Authentic expressions and genuine moments rather than forced smiles and handshakes

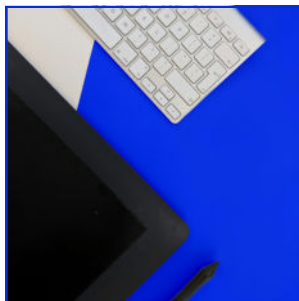
The goal is finding images that feel intentional and specific to your business, not something every other company in your industry is already using.

How to stop looking like you raided the free stock photo library

PHOTOGRAPHY THAT POSITIONS YOU PROPERLY

The professional photographer advantage

When you're ready to invest, a professional photographer delivers something stock never can, a cohesive, curated set of dozens of images that tell your specific story. They understand your brand, capture your actual team and workspace, and create a library of content that works across everything from your website to social media. Many can also coordinate videographers for a complete visual package.



Easy wins to implement today: Use natural light whenever possible, keep backgrounds clean, and maintain the same filter style across all photos.

The goal isn't perfection, it's consistency and authenticity that matches your work quality.

Why consistency is your secret weapon and how most people mess it up

THE POWER OF VISUAL CONSISTENCY

Most small businesses get one element right but let others slide. Great logo, terrible typography. Beautiful colours, cheap photos. Professional images, inconsistent spacing.

Here's the brutal truth: Inconsistency kills credibility faster than anything else.

Why it multiplies your impact

It builds recognition, suggests you have systems in place, creates trust through predictability, and amplifies your professionalism with every interaction.

Where does it matter most?

Your website is the hub everything should match. Then business cards, social media, email signatures, proposals, and any physical presence.

The biggest killers we see

Different logo versions floating around, slightly different colour codes across materials, and mixing professional photos with phone snapshots. Often it's because different people designed different pieces without clear guidelines.



Why consistency is your secret weapon and how most people mess it up

THE POWER OF VISUAL CONSISTENCY

This is exactly why brand strategy and guidelines matter

When we work with clients, we don't just design a logo, hand it over and walk away. We create comprehensive brand guidelines that document everything, exact colour codes, font specifications, logo usage rules, photography styles, spacing principles.

These guidelines become your consistency roadmap, ensuring anyone working on your brand knows exactly how to maintain that professional cohesion.

The simple fix

Document everything. Write down your exact colours, fonts, spacing rules, and image styles. Use this as your checklist for everything you create going forward.



Consistency isn't about being boring, it's about being memorable for the right reasons.

The brutal honesty audit, grab a coffee this might sting

BRAND CONFIDENCE AUDIT

Time for honest assessment. This audit will help you identify where your brand is strong and where it's letting you down.

Rate each area from 1–5 (1 = needs work, 5 = excellent):

Colour Assessment

My colours feel appropriate for my industry and target market: ___/5

My colour palette has 2–4 colours that work well together: ___/5

I use the same colour codes across website, business cards, and social media: ___/5

My colours help me stand out from direct competitors: ___/5

Subtotal: ___/20

Typography Assessment

I can easily read my body text at small sizes on business cards: ___/5

My font choices match the level of professionalism I want to convey: ___/5

I use only 1–2 different fonts across all materials: ___/5

My fonts are identical on my website and printed materials: ___/5

Subtotal: ___/20

The brutal honesty audit, grab a coffee this might sting

BRAND CONFIDENCE AUDIT

Rate each area from 1–5 (1 = needs work, 5 = excellent):

Spacing Assessment

My website and marketing materials don't feel cramped or cluttered: ___/5

There's consistent space between my logo and text on all materials: ___/5

My text has proper line spacing that's easy to read: ___/5

The spacing around elements feels intentional and professional: ___/5

Subtotal: ___/20

Photography Assessment

My photos look intentional rather than random phone snapshots: ___/5

All my photos have similar lighting, filtering, and editing style: ___/5

My photos accurately represent the quality of my actual work: ___/5

I avoid cringey stock photos like handshakes and high fives: ___/5

Subtotal: ___/20

The brutal honesty audit, grab a coffee this might sting

BRAND CONFIDENCE AUDIT

Rate each area from 1–5 (1 = needs work, 5 = excellent):

Consistency Assessment

My logo appears the same size and position on business cards, website header, and email signature: ___/5

Someone could tell all my materials belong to the same business without seeing my logo: ___/5

My website colours exactly match my business card colours: ___/5

I have written guidelines or notes about my brand standards: ___/5

Subtotal: ___/20

Add up all your subtotals to get your overall brand confidence score.

Don't worry if it's lower than you hoped , on the next page, we'll break down exactly what your score means and give you a clear roadmap for improvement.

TOTAL SCORE: ___/100

What your score actually means and what to do about it

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

80–100: Strong Foundation

Your brand is working well for your business. You've got solid fundamentals in place and you're communicating professionalism effectively. At this level, focus on maintaining what's working rather than making dramatic changes.

The opportunity here is refinement, small tweaks that elevate what you've already built. Document your current brand standards so you can maintain consistency as you grow or bring on team members.

Next step: Create a simple brand guidelines document noting your colours, fonts, and visual style. This protects your investment as your business evolves.



What your score actually means and what to do about it

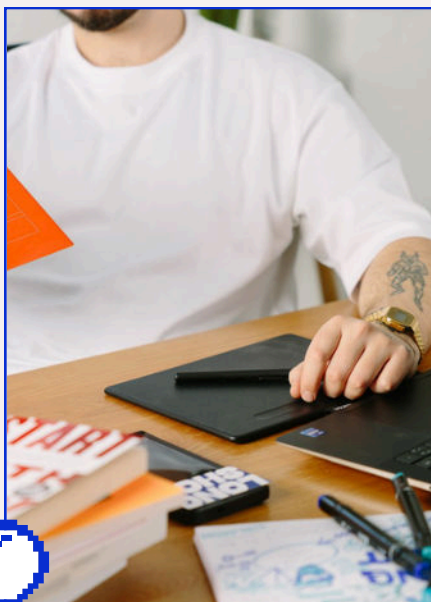
UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

60–79: Good Start, Room to Improve

You're doing several things right, but there are gaps that might be costing you credibility with potential clients. This is actually a great position to be in, you have a solid foundation to build on.

Look at your lowest-scoring category first. If spacing scored lowest, focus there before moving to other areas. Small improvements in your weakest area will have more impact than perfecting what's already working well.

Next step: Pick your lowest-scoring category and commit to improving it over the next 30 days. Set a specific goal, like "redesign business cards with proper spacing" or "create consistent photo editing style."



What your score actually means and what to do about it

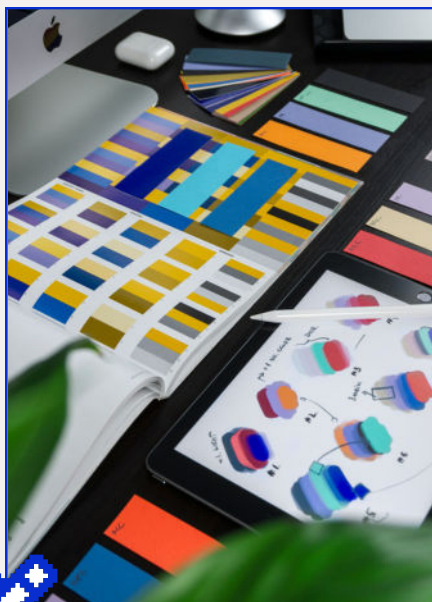
UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

40–59: Mixed Messages

Your brand is sending inconsistent signals about your business quality. Some elements work well while others undermine your credibility. The good news? This inconsistency is fixable, and addressing it will make a dramatic difference.

Focus on consistency first. Rather than redesigning everything, get your existing good elements working together harmoniously. This approach is faster and more cost-effective than starting from scratch.

Next step: Audit all your current materials and identify which elements are working well. Then bring everything else up to that standard rather than lowering the bar.



What your score actually means and what to do about it

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESULTS

Below 40: Strategic Overhaul Needed

Your brand is likely working against your business goals rather than supporting them. But here's the opportunity - you have enormous potential for improvement that will directly impact how prospects perceive your business.

At this score level, piecemeal fixes won't be enough. You need a new systematic approach that addresses the fundamentals: colour, typography, spacing, imagery, and consistency all working together.

Next step: Consider whether you want to tackle this systematically yourself using this guide as a roadmap, or whether investing in professional brand strategy would accelerate your results and provide better long-term value.



Jot down your next steps based on what we found

RIGHT, LET'S GET TO WORK

My biggest opportunity area

One specific thing I'll improve this week

One bigger project I'll tackle this month

Jot down your next steps based on what we found

RIGHT, LET'S GET TO WORK

Resources or help I need

How I'll measure success

Here's the good news, none of this is permanent. Fix the right things first and you'll start seeing real changes in how people perceive your business faster than you think.



FANCY A COFFEE AND A CHAT ABOUT YOUR BRAND?

I'd love to hear about your business goals and help you spot the biggest opportunities to make your brand work harder for you.

No sales pitch, just a genuine conversation about where you're at and where you want to go.

Let's catch up

