Facilitation Guide: Swag That Stands Out

Challenge

Students will develop a brand marketing plan for a local business by creating unique swag that will increase brand awareness and drive revenue growth. Students will conduct market research to understand and analyze the preferences and needs of their target market in order to create a swag product that resonates with customers and effectively promotes the brand and, ultimately, the business. They will create a compelling brand identity, effectively communicate the business's values through visual design, and develop a brand marketing plan that drives revenue.

This challenge is intended to be the first of three challenges within the Business Development series. Educators may choose to move through these challenges sequentially or pick and choose as needed.

Rationale

This challenge lets students apply their learnings to real-world business challenges, gain hands-on experience in marketing plan development, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to succeed in today's competitive marketplace. Students will use key performance indicators, measure the success of their brand marketing plan, and make data-driven decisions to drive business growth.

This challenge develops students' ability to conduct market research, analyze consumer behavior, and create a brand marketing plan that communicates business's values to customers. Using Glowforge, they can easily create and test swag prototypes to match the business's values and identity. They can also customize their swag to match the branded colors, logo, and other design elements, making it an ideal tool for creating unique and eye-catching promotional items. Students can experiment with different designs, sizes, and materials to find the most effective swag for the business. As they measure key performance indicators to make data-driven decisions, students will learn to drive business growth beyond traditional advertising methods.

Standards

Common Career Technical Core Standards

- BM 3. Explore, develop and apply strategies for ensuring a successful business career.
- BM 4. Identify, demonstrate and implement solutions in managing effective business customer relationships.
- MK 1. Implement marketing research to obtain and evaluate information for the creation of a marketing plan.
- MK 2. Plan, monitor, manage and maintain the use of financial resources for marketing activities.

ISTE Standards for Students

- Innovative Designer 1.4c: Students develop, test and refine prototypes as part of a cyclical design process.
- Computational Thinker 1.5b: Students collect data or identify relevant data sets, use digital tools to analyze them, and represent data in various ways to facilitate problem-solving and decision-making.

Facilitation Steps

DESIGN STAGES

Explore → Ideate → Design → Prototype → Evaluate

Iterate
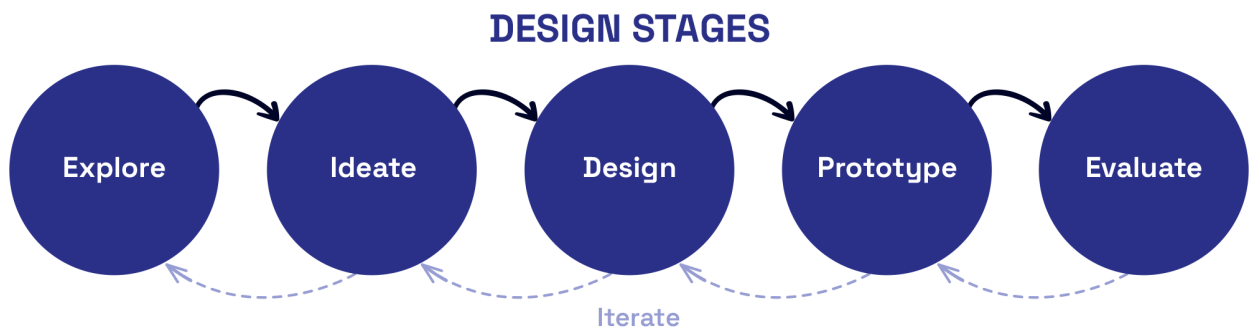
Explore

In this stage, students focus on researching and investigating a business and their current brand marketing plan. To ensure that students have the knowledge and skills they need to complete this stage, use the following steps:

1. Provide students with question prompts from the Explore stage of the challenge to help inspire their research. Students should consider their business's target market and what kind of brand marketing would increase its brand awareness and revenue growth.
    - Prior to beginning, identify local businesses that align with the students' interests or studies.

- Provide students guidance on how to reach out to businesses to create a partnership. Encourage students to maintain ongoing communication to ensure the success of the project. Use these real-world relationships to provide students with feedback and an authentic audience.

2. Guide students through organizing and synthesizing their research findings into key insights and themes. Distribute the **Case Study Organizer** to help students incorporate key considerations for developing a brand marketing plan. Help them define:
    - Who is their business's key demographic and how do they interact with a business's brand?
    - What makes the business unique and helps them stand out from their competitors?
    - How will their brand marketing plan reach the target market, use the most effective channels, and allow them to measure its effectiveness?
3. Provide students with research tools and techniques such as surveys, interviews, and observation methods to help them gather information.
    - Encourage students to ask open-ended questions and actively listen to the answers, so they can gain a deeper understanding of their customers' needs and wants.
    - Motivate students to challenge their assumptions and biases about the target market or the business so they can approach the problem with a fresh perspective.

At the end of this stage, students will reflect on their research in order to learn more about the business's current marketing plan and identify areas of opportunity. Encourage them to consider how they will apply insights from their research to generate ideas for swag that will create excitement.

Before moving on, students should consider if there are any other resources that would be helpful to explore. Once they are finished, students will continue to the Ideate stage, where they will brainstorm ideas and consider what channels they would use to promote the business.

Ideate

In this stage, students will use their knowledge from the Explore stage to brainstorm and experiment with different ideas for swag. The goal is for students to explore as many ideas as possible without judgment. Remind students to consider their target market. To ensure that students have the knowledge and skills they need to complete this stage, use the following steps:

1. Encourage students to generate as many ideas as possible no matter how seemingly far-fetched they may be.
    - Motivate students to explore different perspectives and think about what would make the swag unique and appealing to the target market.
2. Suggest students analyze a competitor's swag.

- After they research swag from competitors in the same industry, students can identify its strengths and weaknesses.
- Lead students in a discussion about how this information can be used to develop swag that stands out from the competition.
3. Ask students about their value proposition. Ask them to explain:
   - How the swag communicates the brand's values and identity to potential customers.
   - How the swag communicates the brand's mission or unique selling proposition.
   - Where they will promote the swag to increase brand awareness.

At the end of this stage, students will have multiple ideas for their swag as well as ideas for their marketing plan. They should be able to narrow their focus in order to develop a design that is unique, helps the business stand out, and conveys the business's values and identity.

Before moving on, students should prioritize the ideas that have the greatest potential to increase brand awareness and drive revenue growth. Once they are finished, students will continue to the Design stage where they will select one or two ideas that they will develop further.

Design

In this stage, students will develop their ideas to draft a detailed plan for the brand marketing plan and swag. Students should focus on one or two ideas to better understand their business's needs and final design before printing. Encourage students to consider how their swag can be tested and refined to ensure its effectiveness in increasing brand awareness and driving revenue growth. To ensure that students have the knowledge and skills they need to complete this stage, use the following steps:
1. Provide students with question prompts from the Design stage of the challenge to help inspire their work.
2. Ask students to explain how their swag design communicates the business's values and identity to potential customers. Consider using prompts such as:
   - What design elements convey the business's values and identity?
   - How did you incorporate the brand's colors and logo into your design?
   - How does your design appeal to the target audience and communicate the brand's message?
3. Encourage students to think about how the swag will be presented to potential customers, including packaging and promotional materials. Have them consider creative ideas like:
   - Packaging that is designed to create a memorable unboxing experience for customers. How can this be used to reinforce the brand's messaging?
   - Creating a sense of exclusivity or rarity for the swag. What limited edition features or design elements could be added to create a sense of value and exclusivity for customers?

- If using social media channels for promotion: What design elements could be added to encourage customers to share photos of the swag on social media and tag the business?

At the end of this stage, students will have a detailed design for their swag, including sketches or digital mockups, as well as a plan for how the item will increase brand awareness and revenue growth.

Before moving on, students should consider if they would like to change anything in their design. Once they are finished, students will continue to the Prototype stage, where they will select and test one of their fully developed designs.

Prototype

In this stage, students will select one of their fully developed designs, print the necessary elements on Glowforge, and test their designs. To ensure that students have the knowledge and skills they need to complete this stage, use the following steps:

1. Model how to use Glowforge in a safe and efficient manner.
   - Review the Glowforge safety guidelines.
   - Use this video to show students a demonstration of how to use Glowforge.
   - Remind students of any applicable classroom or school policies.
2. Provide students with the question prompts from the Prototype stage to help them develop and test their prototype.
3. Give students the time and resources needed to print Glowforge elements for their swag, assemble, and test their finished prototype.
   - Create a classroom print schedule to ensure that all students are able to produce the elements they need efficiently.
   - Provide students with art supplies to add elements of color to their prototype swag.

At the end of this stage, students will have a finished prototype that is functional, cost-effective, and unique. Their prototype should help the business stand out, build brand awareness, and increase revenue.

Before moving on, students should review their finished prototype to ensure it aligns with their business's brand identity. Students may need to test multiple times or return to earlier stages of the design process before moving on. Once they are finished, students will continue to the Evaluate stage, where they will get feedback on their finished prototype.

Evaluate

In this stage, students will evaluate their brand marketing plan and their unique swag, and receive feedback from others. Feedback can be provided in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class. Encourage students to reflect on their process and consider their alignment to their

original goals. To ensure that students have the knowledge and skills they need to complete this stage, use the following steps:

1. Provide students with question prompts from the Evaluate stage to help them reflect on their print.
2. Encourage students to share and discuss their ideas to generate feedback and suggestions from their peers to refine and enhance their design.
   - Students can use the question prompts from the Evaluate stage to guide their discussions.
   - Use a peer feedback model, such as a gallery walk, affinity mapping, or a concentric circle discussion, to support students as they work in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class.
3. Provide students with question prompts to help them reflect on the feedback that they received. These might include:
   - How can you further improve and refine your design?
   - If making additional changes to your swag, which of the design process stages will you return to?
   - Are there any gaps in your brand marketing plan you need to address? How will you measure the effectiveness of your plan?
4. If applicable, provide students with time to complete a learning reflection, self-assessment, and/or peer critique.
   - Use the provided Assessment Suggestions for more ideas.

At the end of this stage, students will be able to reflect on the strengths and areas for improvement of their brand marketing plan and swag design. Students should determine whether revisions are needed and return to the appropriate stage in the design process to adjust their print. Consider assessing student work using one of the Assessment Suggestions or extending the challenge using provided Extension Activities.

Supplemental Supports

- For newer Glowforge users, demonstrate how to use Glowforge and its design features, including the design software, engraving capabilities, and cutting functionality. Check out the Glowforge Educator Guide for more ideas.
- The Glowforge Community is an excellent resource for inspiration, troubleshooting, and additional tips and tricks. Members are responsive and freely share techniques, settings to create customization with various materials, and more.
- Provide background information on successful branding plans and channels to help students think about the power of branding:
  - The Ultimate Guide to Brand Awareness
  - 6 Types of Brand Awareness Campaigns
  - 10 Successful Marketing Campaign Examples to Get Inspired

Assessment Suggestions

Overall Learning Reflection

Learning reflections allow students to reflect on their learning experiences, identify key concepts, and explain how they have grown while completing this challenge.. Ask students to write or record a video about what they learned during the challenge and how their learning will impact their future in business. Students can incorporate feedback elements from the Evaluate stage to describe their strengths and areas for improvement.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessments allow students to reflect on their learning through portfolios, presentations, or learning journals that involve evaluating their own progress and identifying areas for improvement. Consider providing specific criteria prior to beginning the challenge that students can use to assess their progress over the course of the challenge. The criteria may include elements related to:

- Creativity and Innovation: How well did you use your creativity to develop unique and effective swag that communicates the brand's values and identity to customers?
- Marketing plan: How effectively did you develop a brand marketing plan for the swag that aligns with the business's overall marketing goals and objectives?
- Branding: How effectively did you develop branding for the swag, including the brand's name, logo, and messaging? How will it be presented to customers?
- Material Selection and Cost-Effectiveness: What strategy did you use to select eye-catching and cost-effective materials for the swag?
- Presentation and Communication: How effectively did you present and communicate your ideas, designs, and brand marketing plan to evaluators?

Educator or Peer Assessment

Educator or peer assessments allow educators or students to review the quality and effectiveness of the finished brand marketing plan and swag design. The assessment can be based on specific criteria listed below or use a more open approach like a gallery walk or artist showcase. In addition to the self-assessment criteria, the evaluator might also want to consider:

- Customer Feedback and Iteration: Was customer feedback gathered and effectively incorporated into the design process? Were improvements made based on customer feedback?
- Attention to Detail: How much attention was paid to the details of the design, such as the material quality, the product's finished look, and packaging or promotional materials?
- Overall Quality and Effectiveness: Based on the above criteria, how effective and high quality is the finished swag? Is it likely to be successful in increasing brand awareness and driving revenue growth for the business?

Extension Activities

Design challenges often inspire students to think about what's next. For some, this could mean connecting with people in the industry or applying their skills in new ways. Here are a few ideas for how you can help students extend this challenge:

- Find a local business that's open to connecting with students. Students can utilize their marketing skills to create a pitch deck and presentation showcasing the benefits of incorporating swag to enhance brand awareness and revenue. This allows students to enhance their communication and persuasion skills.
- Have students develop and lead a branding workshop for school clubs, or other organizations. Invite local businesses to participate. Students will create an experience that helps others learn effective branding strategies, including how to create swag to grow revenue.

If your students enjoyed this challenge, they might also enjoy Marketing Magic, a design challenge that encourages students to consider how to develop and implement a marketing plan to sell a digitally designed product created using Glowforge.

The next challenge in the Business Development series is Waste to Wealth, students examine how decisions about materials, production time, and selling platforms can impact the profitability of a product.

Ready to take the Business Development Series to the next level? Try the Capstone Challenge Pitch It!, where students devise a business pitch for a unique design or product and present it to a panel of potential investors.