

What Makes Your Small Business

Different

**A simple guide to
discovering your brand
identity**

Retail Alchemist

Most small business owners start their business because they care about something.

They care about quality. They care about creativity. They care about people.

For my Mum and I, our passion has always been fashion, fabric and colour. Both trained seamstresses, we fell in love with vintage fashion – the quality, the craftsmanship, the sustainability and the timeless styles. So the direction of our business was never really in question.

Fifteen years later, we're still running our shop and still completely in love with our niche.

But somewhere along the way, many founders are told they need to “build a brand.”

Create a logo. Post more content. Follow the latest marketing advice.

And while those things can help, they often miss the most important question:

What actually makes your business different?

After nearly two decades working across retail management and running my own shop, I realised that many small business owners are expected to build brands without ever being taught how to define the identity behind their business.

Through Retail Alchemist, I help founders uncover what makes their brand unique so they can communicate it clearly, confidently and consistently.

Because when your brand identity is clear, everything else becomes easier.

Marketing becomes more focused. Messaging becomes more confident. And customers begin to recognise and remember your business.

And that's where real brand growth begins.

Hi! I'm

Laura





Realisation

Why Many Small Businesses Feel Invisible

If your business ever feels like it's blending in, you are not alone.

Many small business owners work incredibly hard to market their products and services.

They post regularly.

They design logos.

They follow marketing advice.

They try different strategies hoping something will finally click.

But despite all that effort, something still feels missing.

Engagement feels inconsistent.

Messaging starts to feel confusing.

And your business can begin to look and sound similar to everyone else.

Customers may like what you offer, but they struggle to remember you.

And when people can't clearly see what makes your business different, they simply move on to the next option.

But this isn't a failure of effort, creativity or commitment.

It's usually something much simpler.

A brand clarity problem.

Because when the identity behind a business isn't clearly defined, everything built on top of it — marketing, messaging and visuals — can start to feel scattered or uncertain.

But when your brand identity becomes clear, everything begins to align.

Your message becomes stronger.

Your voice becomes more confident.

And your business becomes far easier for people to recognise and remember.

You Probably Already Have Something Special

One of the most surprising things I see when working with small businesses is this: Most founders already have something that makes their business different.

They just haven't learned how to identify it yet.

Because when you're inside your own business every day, the things that make you different often feel normal.

They feel obvious.

They feel like "just the way you do things."

But to your customers, those things can be incredibly meaningful.

**It might be the care you put into your work.
The standards you refuse to compromise on.
The way you treat your customers.
The experience you bring from years in your industry.**

Or the story behind why you started your business in the first place.

These things are not small details.

**They are the foundations of your brand identity.
They shape how people experience your business.**

They influence how customers talk about you to others.

And they are often the real reason someone chooses your business instead of another.

Your difference might come from:

- your story**
- your experience**
- the way you serve your customers**
- the values behind your work**
- the standards you refuse to compromise on**



Recognition

**Sometimes it's your attention to detail.
Sometimes it's your creativity.
Sometimes it's the passion that sits behind
everything you do.**

**And sometimes it's simply the fact that you care
more deeply about your work than others in your
industry.**

These things matter.

**But until you recognise them, they remain
hidden.**

**And when your difference stays hidden, your
brand can begin to look and sound like everyone
else.**

**The good news is that discovering what makes
your business different is often much simpler
than you think.**

You just need to start asking the right questions.

Retail Alchemy Tip

**What feels ordinary to you is often what
makes your business extraordinary.**

**The way you work.
The way you care.
The standards you hold.**

**Don't overlook the things that come
naturally to you — they are often the very
things your customers value most.**





Discovery

Ask yourself these questions:

Why did I start this business?

What frustrated me about this industry before I began?

What do I care about more than others in my field?

What do customers consistently say about my business?

What do I refuse to compromise on?

Write down your answers.

You may begin to notice a pattern forming.

Your brand difference lives at the intersection of three things:

Your values:

Your experience:

Your approach:

When these align, your business becomes more than just another option.

It becomes a brand people recognise and trust

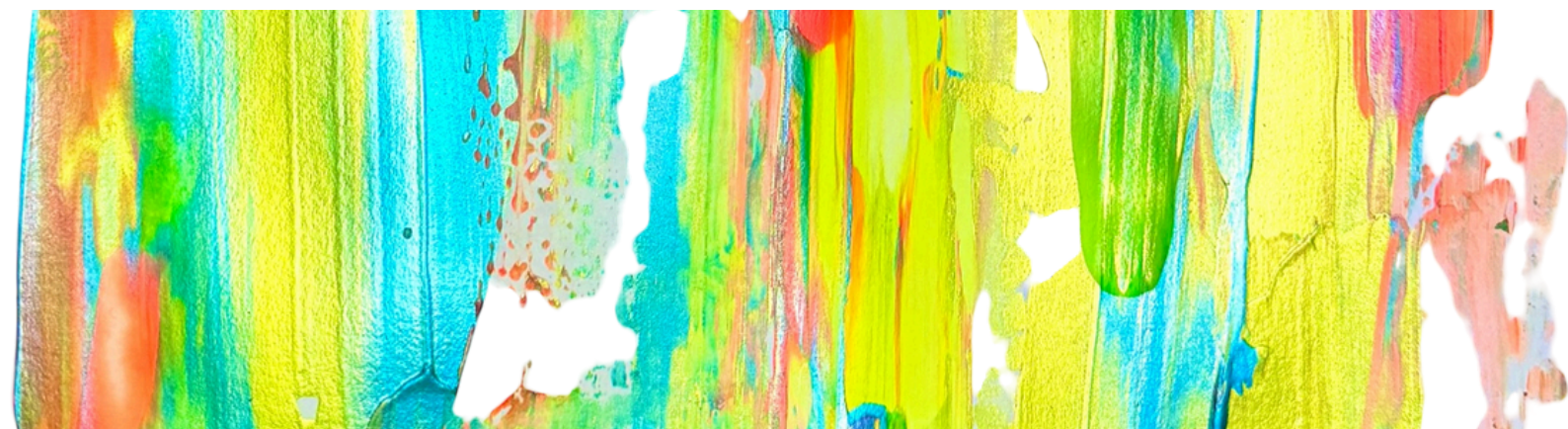


The Brand Difference

Complete this sentence:

My business is different because...

Your answer may become the starting point for your brand identity.



Your Brand Difference Needs The Right Audience

Discovering what makes your business different is a powerful first step.

But for that difference to truly matter, it needs to connect with the right people.

Not every business is meant for everyone. And when you try to speak to everyone, your message often becomes too broad to truly resonate with anyone.

The brands that stand out most clearly are the ones that understand who they are speaking to: They know the type of person they want to help. They understand what those customers care about.

And they shape their message in a way that feels relevant and meaningful.

When your brand identity and your ideal client align, something powerful happens.

Your message becomes clearer. Your marketing becomes easier. And the right customers begin to recognise themselves in your brand.

Because the truth is, your difference only becomes powerful when it matters to someone.

And the more clearly you understand the people you want to serve, the easier it becomes to communicate what makes your business unique.

Retail Alchemy Insight

Not everyone needs to understand your brand.

The right people will feel it instantly.

When your message speaks clearly to the people it's meant for, you stop chasing attention — and start attracting alignment.





Your Turn

Ready to Turn Your Difference Into a Brand?

You've already done something most small businesses never take the time to do. You've started to uncover what makes your business different. And that matters more than you might realise. Because your difference is the foundation of your brand.

But if it stays undefined, it stays invisible. This Is Where Most People Stop

They recognise there's something there, but they don't know how to build it into something clear, consistent and recognisable.

And that's the difference between a business that blends in — and a brand that people remember.

This Is Your Next Step! The Who Are You? Brand Identity Workbook is designed to take what you've just uncovered and turn it into a complete, aligned brand.

Inside, you'll learn how to:

- **define your brand personality**
- **develop your voice and messaging**
- **build a visual identity that reflects your brand**
- **use colour and design with intention**
- **create consistency across everything you do**

So your business doesn't just exist, it becomes something people recognise, remember and trust. Your brand feels clear. Your message feels natural. Your content feels consistent. Your customers instantly "get" what you're about.

That's what happens when your identity is defined. You've Already Started.

You don't need to figure this out from scratch. You just need to take the next step.

Lauren Douglass is the founder of Retail Alchemist and a passionate advocate for independent retail.

After years working across retail management, shopping centre operations and running an independent shop, Lauren realised that many small business founders are expected to build retail brands without ever being taught how the industry really works.

Through Retail Alchemist, she helps independent founders discover their niche, create unforgettable retail spaces and build commercially sustainable businesses that bring life back to the High Street. Her work has been endorsed by the Sedgemoor Chamber of Commerce, and she has spoken at MIB International events, sharing her belief that independent businesses are the talent pools of our communities and deserve the same strategic knowledge as large brands.

Community sits at the heart of everything she does. Lauren actively supports local initiatives and charities, creating free resources and opportunities that strengthen independent business communities.

Based in Somerset, Lauren balances building Retail Alchemist with running a family shop, raising her daughter Connie and pursuing her love of colour, creativity and beautiful retail spaces. She believes the High Street is not dead — it has simply been forgotten — and that the next generation of independent founders will be the ones to reimagine it.

Fuelled by a determination to show her daughter that big dreams are possible, Lauren is driven by bold ideas and a belief that independent shops deserve to thrive, inspire and bring life back to our High Streets.

Through Retail Alchemist she is turning that vision into reality. Are you ready to join her?

