The Brandbooked Method

How we build a startup brand

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Before you start

This guide is the method behind the finished brands in Brandbooked, Alterra Studio's store of startup brands. Every brand in the store went through these steps. You can run the same steps on your own brand, whether you are a founder doing it yourself or a designer doing it for a client.

The method has one rule that sits under all the others. A brand is one idea, carried through every piece. The mark, the type, the colour, the pictures, the motion and the homepage all answer the same sentence. When a piece answers a different sentence, or no sentence, it goes.

Work through the chapters in order. Each one ends in something you can check: a page, a count, a test at a given size, a number of frames. Taste is allowed in, but it decides last.

You will need about ten competitor homepages, a browser that can show a page at desktop and phone width, a vector editor, and a way to make short loops (any motion tool will do). An image model helps with chapter 6 and is optional everywhere else.

> The numbers in chapters 1 and 8 come from Alterra Studio's public benchmark of 100 funded AI and SaaS homepages, captured on 2 October 2026: alterra.studio/research/startup-website-benchmark-2026. Each number is quoted as the benchmark states it.

01

The brief

Pick one buyer, one problem and ten real homepages to measure.
Everything after this chapter is checked against the page you write here.

Choose one segment

Write down the stage, the sector and the person who signs. "Seed to Series A fintech, sold to the head of finance" is a segment. "B2B companies" is not one. If the product serves several buyers, choose the one who decides first. You can widen the brand later.

Write the buyer problem in their words

One sentence, in the words the buyer would use on a call. Leave your product out of it. A sentence in the shape of "month-end takes us too long and I still don't trust the numbers" is a buyer problem. "Finance teams lack real-time visibility" is a slide.

Take it from a sales call, a support ticket or a review if you can.

Audit about ten competitor homepages

Find about ten funded companies that sell to the same buyer. Open each homepage at two widths, 1440 by 900 for desktop and 390 by 844 for a phone, and screenshot the first screen at both. Then score each site on the twelve questions below, 0, 1 or 2 each, for a total out of 24.

Two scoring habits keep the audit honest. Where a question is about the first screen, score both widths and keep the lower score. When you are unsure, give the lower score.

Question	What earns a 2
Says what it does in five seconds	The headline, or headline plus a one-line subhead, says what the product does at both widths
Speaks to one specific buyer	The first screen names a role, a team or an industry. Generic words like "teams" score 1
States why it's different	The first screen gives a number, a named alternative or a concrete mechanism
Looks established	A custom identity with no defects at either width. Template or stock-led scores 1
Shows specific customer results	A named customer paired with a number
Shows proof that matches buyers	Customer logos and an attributed testimonial or case study. Investor badges alone score 0
Brand carried into shared surfaces	A share image, a favicon and a linked social profile
Tight type and colour system	Two font families or fewer, three filled-button colours or fewer

Question	What earns a 2
Ships new content	A dated post, release or announcement from the last 90 days
One clear next step	One primary call to action in the first screen and another in the last section, at both widths
Shows the product	Product screens, a product video or a live demo in the first screen, at both widths
Measures what converts	An analytics tag plus a conversion, ads or CRM tag

For each question, write how many of the ten scored 0, 1 and 2. These counts show which gaps the category leaves open.

For comparison, the 100 funded homepages in the benchmark averaged 14.1 out of 24. Their weakest area was credibility: 53% showed no customer logos, testimonials or case studies.

> Keep the audit anonymous. Call the companies Competitor A, B and C, or write "7 of 10 homepages". Names, links and scores stay in your private notes. The point is to find the gap, and naming a company you scored low helps no one.

Count the category's clichés

While the ten screenshots are open, look for what they share. Check five places: the colour, the kind of mark, the hero layout, the type and the imagery. Write each cliché as a count, in the form "n of 10 use a purple-to-blue gradient" or "n of 10 open on a floating 3D object". Keep at most five.

This list becomes the ban list for the mark, type and colour. It also explains the finished brand later: here is what the category does, and here is what we left out.

Write the brief

One page, no more. It holds:

- the segment, in one line;
- the buyer problem, in the buyer's words;
- the two or three audit questions your brand and homepage will fix, with the category's counts beside them;
- the cliché list with counts;
- the proof you will be able to show on the finished homepage (a customer, a number, a screen).

If the brief names more than one segment, more than one problem or no proof at all, rewrite it before you move on.