



RONIN 1

DIGITAL MARKETING & RECRUITING



FIELD GUIDE 03

2026 EDITION

Building a Brand Framework

The Ronin 1 BLADE Framework, with worksheets
for building a trusted brand in the AI era

INTRODUCTION

Build a Brand People Trust

A business is what you sell. A brand is what people feel, remember and repeat about you when you're not in the room. In 2026, when anyone can generate a slick logo or a polished ad in seconds, that feeling is the only thing competitors can't copy.

This guide gives you the **Ronin 1 BLADE Framework**, a five-part system for turning a business into a brand, plus fill-in worksheets you can complete in an afternoon.

- 01 Where branding came from and why it matters now**
From ranch marks to AI-saturated feeds
- 02 Business vs. brand**
The difference, in one page
- 03 The BLADE Framework**
Backstory, Lens, Aesthetic, Dialogue, Evidence
- 04 Worksheets**
Origin story, purpose statement, identity board, voice dials, trust plan
- 05 Your brand in the age of AI**
A simple AI-use policy every small business should have

About this guide

Produced by Ronin 1 Digital Marketing & Recruiting LLC for small businesses and staffing agencies. Platform features, menus and prices change often, so this edition reflects what was publicly announced as of fall 2026. Always confirm the latest steps inside each app or its help center. Want it done for you? Visit ronin1dmr.com or email keven@ronin1digital.com.

SECTION 01

Why Branding Matters Now

A short history

Era	What a "brand" meant
Ranching days	A literal mark burned into livestock so owners could tell their herd from a neighbor's.
Store shelves	Makers put names, signatures and logos on goods so shoppers could find the producer they trusted.
Mass media	Brands became personalities built through TV, print and radio advertising.
Social media	Brands became conversations. Customers could talk back, review and share.
2026: the AI era	Content is infinite and cheap. Trust, authenticity and real human connection are now the scarce assets.

What a strong brand does for you

- **Earns trust faster.** People buy from, and work for, businesses they recognize and believe.
- **Attracts the right people.** Clear values pull in customers, candidates and partners who share them.
- **Makes choosing easy.** A customer with a good past experience doesn't shop around next time.
- **Reduces price pressure.** Loyal customers compare you to your promise, not just to the cheapest option.
- **Travels with you.** When you launch a new service, a trusted brand brings its audience along.
- **Makes marketing easier.** Your team, your designers and even your AI tools know exactly what "on brand" means.
- **Survives the AI flood.** A recognizable voice and real faces cut through generic, machine-made content.

SECTION 02

Business vs. Brand

Your business is the engine: the services, the operations, the invoices. Your brand is everything around it that shapes how people experience that engine.

Your business is...	Your brand is...
What you do	Why you do it and how it feels to work with you
Your services and prices	The promise people expect every time
Your logo file	The recognition people feel when they see it
Your office or job site	The experience of walking in, calling or messaging you
Your staff	The values, stories and standards your staff live out
Your marketing	The consistent voice behind every post, email and reply

Quick test

Cover your logo on your website and social profiles. Could a stranger still tell it's you from the words, colors, photos and tone? If not, your brand needs work, and this guide will help.

SECTION 03

The BLADE Framework

Like a well-forged blade, a strong brand is built in layers. Work through each letter in order. Each one builds on the last.

	Layer	The question it answers	What you'll produce
B	Backstory	Why does this business exist, and why should anyone care?	A short origin story: who started it, when, what problem they saw, and how you solve it today.
L	Lens	What do you believe, and what do you stand for (and against)?	A purpose statement, three to five core values, and a short "we are not" list.
A	Aesthetic	What does the brand look like everywhere it shows up?	Logo set, color palette, fonts, photo style and a mascot or brand character if you use one.
D	Dialogue	How does the brand sound when it speaks?	Voice settings, vocabulary, sample phrases and the persona you write to.
E	Evidence	Why should people believe you?	Reviews, results, case studies, credentials, real faces, and a clear AI-use policy.

Why "Evidence" is new for 2026

Older branding models stopped at look and voice. Today, polished visuals and confident copy are easy to fake, so proof matters more than ever: verified reviews, real client results, real team photos and honest disclosure when AI is involved. Evidence is what turns attention into trust.

B: Backstory

People connect with stories, not mission statements. Your origin story should be specific and human. Name the moment you noticed the problem, the person you wanted to help, and what you did differently. Keep it short enough to say in 30 seconds and to fit in a pinned post or an About section.

L: Lens

Your lens is the set of beliefs you see your work through. Start by finishing the sentence "We believe that..." Brainstorm words tied to what you care about (for example: integrity, speed, second chances, faith, family, craftsmanship, community). Then write what your brand is *not*. Saying "we are not the cheapest" or "we are not a call center" sharpens your position.

A: Aesthetic

Choose a small, consistent visual system and use it everywhere: two to three main colors, one or two fonts, a consistent photo style (bright and natural, moody and dramatic, clean and minimal), and a logo in full, icon and one-color versions. A mascot or character, like a samurai or a flame, can give your brand a face that works across stickers, videos and merch.

D: Dialogue

Your voice is how your brand sounds in captions, emails, DMs, job posts and even automated replies. Pick where you sit on four dials (see Worksheet 4), list words you use and words you avoid, and write to one specific person, your ideal customer, rather than to "everyone." If you use AI to draft content, give it these voice rules every time.

E: Evidence

Collect proof constantly: screenshots of kind messages (with permission), reviews, before-and-afters, placement numbers, years in business, certifications and community involvement. Feature real people whenever you can, and be upfront about how you use AI.



WORKSHEETS

Worksheet 1: Your Backstory

Answer each question in a sentence or two, then combine your answers into a short paragraph.

Who started the business?	
When and where did it begin?	
What problem did you notice?	
Who were you trying to help?	
What did you do differently?	
How do you solve it today?	
What moment are you proudest of?	

Your 30-second origin story

Tip: add two to four real photos (founder, first location, team, a client win) to use alongside your story.



WORKSHEETS

Worksheet 2: Your Lens

Fill in the blanks to create a purpose statement you can adapt for your bio, website and pitch.

Hi, we're **[business name]**, a **[type of company]** based in **[city or region]**. We help **[who you serve]** **[achieve what result]** through **[your services]**. We care deeply about **[value]**, **[value]** and **[value]**.

Write your version below:

We believe that...

Core value 1

Core value 2

Core value 3

Core value 4 (optional)

Core value 5 (optional)

We ARE...

We are NOT...

WORKSHEETS

Worksheet 3: Your Aesthetic

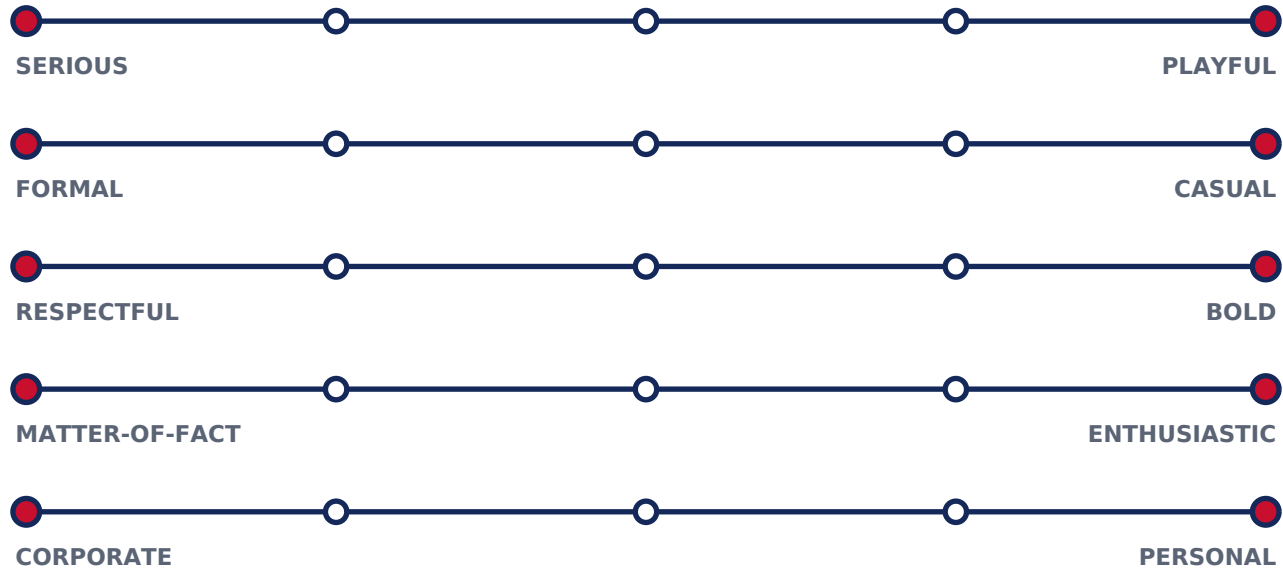
Build a one-page identity board. Share it with anyone who designs for you, and upload it to Canva's brand kit or give it to your AI tools as a reference.

Brand name & tagline	Color palette (HEX codes)
Logo versions (full, icon, one-color)	Fonts (headline / body)
Photo style: 3 words	Mascot or brand character
Mood board: paste or list 5 images that capture the feel of your brand	

WORKSHEETS

Worksheet 4: Your Dialogue

Mark where your brand sits on each dial. Most strong brands lean clearly one way on at least two dials.



Words & phrases we USE

Words & phrases we AVOID

Our ideal reader is...

We use emojis? (never / sometimes / often)

We post in which languages?

Sign-off or catchphrase

WORKSHEETS

Worksheet 5: Your Evidence

List the proof you already have and the proof you'll start collecting.

Proof type	What we have now	What we'll collect next
Reviews and ratings		
Client results / case studies		
Testimonials (video or written)		
Credentials, licenses, years in business		
Real team and behind-the-scenes photos		
Community involvement		

Your brand in the age of AI

Write a short AI-use policy and share it with your team. It protects your reputation and keeps everyone consistent. Here's a starting point you can adapt:

Sample AI-use policy

- We use AI to brainstorm, draft and edit. A person on our team reviews everything before it's published.
- We never use AI to create fake reviews, fake customers, fake endorsements or fake employees.
- We label realistic AI-generated images, video and voices using each platform's AI labels.
- We never generate content using a real person's likeness or voice without their written permission.
- Customer messages answered by AI always offer a quick path to a real person.
- We don't paste confidential client, candidate or employee data into public AI tools.

Let's build your brand together

Ronin 1 helps small businesses and staffing agencies build brand identities, websites and content systems. Visit ronin1dmr.com or email keven@ronin1digital.com.



RONIN 1

DIGITAL MARKETING & RECRUITING LLC

Marketing · Recruiting · Business Development

ronin1dmr.com | keven@ronin1digital.com | [@Ronin1DM](https://twitter.com/Ronin1DM)

