

### How To Create A Complete BRANDING GUIDE

### WHAT IS A BRANDING GUIDE?

nc

A branding guide is a complete document, typically presented in a short book or PDF file, that includes design style standards for all visual content.

Think of a branding guide as the decision filter of creating content for your brand. This guide sets the standards for creating all of the content in your business, including the correct way to use imagery, text, and design elements to personify your brand and keep the brand experience consistent.

Your brand can only remain consistent if every team member is following the same decision-making process when creating content. By having a shared style guide, your team will, be able to quickly make design decisions that support and build upon the existing brand experience.

#### **DESIGN PICKLE**<sup>®</sup>

# Why does **my business** need a branding guide?

Everything your customers know about your brand comes from what they see, hear, watch, and read, so all of your content advertising needs to adequately represent your brand.

Consistency is key.

Imagine for a moment that you have a pet cat. While scrolling through Facebook, you see an advertisement for a new online pet store. The ad has pictures of kittens playing with toys with the copy "Give your furry friend a new toy!", so you click the ad excited to buy your furry friend a new cat toy. When you click the link, though, you are redirected to a landing page that only offers dog toys.



You become confused, frustrated that you didn't find a toy for your cat, and frustrated at the waste of time navigating to a new window.

The online pet store just lost a potential buyer because the experience of the buyer's journey wasn't consistent.

If the team member who runs online ads doesn't follow the same style guide as the team member who is building landing pages, conversion rates are going to decrease dramatically with confusion and distrust of an inconsistent experience.

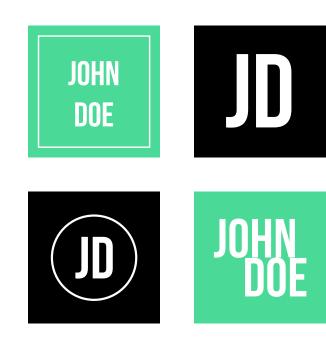
Let customers know they can trust and depend on your business by giving them a consistent experience every single time.

# What does a **good branding guide** include?

A comprehensive branding guide should cover most, if not all, of the following:

#### LOGOS AND VARIATIONS

If you already have a logo designed for your business, your branding guide should include all acceptable variations of the logo. For example, is it acceptable to invert the colors of your design? Do you have a small variation to be used specifically for website favicons? Do you have a variation with your logo and company name in the same graphic? Having all acceptable files on hand will ensure that your logo is not altered in a way that violates copyright laws or simply acceptable brand standards.





#### **COLOR SCHEME**

When it comes to brand color, less is always more. A great rule of thumb is to choose two principal brand colors and one accent color. The principal colors you choose should be used on the majority of your website, formal communications, and advertisements. Your accent color should be used less often to show highlighted or important.

Although your color scheme may only include 3 colors, don't think this will limit your design potential; using different shades of each color can create a dramatic, yet consistent, color palette to choose from.

Be sure to have exact colors in both RGB and CMYK format so the color will remain consistent between digital and print design.

#### FONT AND TYPOGRAPHY

Your message is only effective if somebody actually reads it. Ensure that your message is not being overlooked by using appropriate,consistent typography in your copy.

Choosing a font to match your messaging is a lot like choosing a pair of shoes to match your outfit; start by determinin g the tone. Are you dressing in professional attire for a formal occasion or in your favorite jeans for a fun occasion? If it's a formal occasion, you'll need to choose a pair of dress shoes. If it's a fun occasion, you'll need to pick a casual pair.





#### **DESIGN ELEMENTS**

When creating content, design elements are very important to consider. Do you want your brand to feel artsy and edgy, friendly and comforting, or sleek and professional? Design elements help to create the "feel" of your branding, so choose the acceptable design standards accordingly.

Design elements include the kind of stock photos chosen for ads, sample designs used in the past that accurately portray the "feel" of your brand, standard iconography, and acceptable photo filters or overlays. Include lots of examples in this section of the style guide.

The same goes for typography; before you can settle on which font to choose, you'll need to determine the tone of the text. If the tone of your brand is serious and professional, choose a more subtle, classic font like Helvetica or Lato. If the tone is whimsical and fun, choose something like Papyrus.

It's okay to choose a few different fonts for the same piece of content as long as you stay within the typography family. Try using bold, italic, or increased font size to add contrast in your copy.



#### VALUE PROPOSITION

What value does your product or service offer? How does this value compare to the price? What features of your product or service set you apart from your competitors? Having your value proposition in writing will help keep the messaging of your brand consistent.

Think about the buyer's' journey for a moment:

Let's say John fits into your target audience and is in need of your product or service. He sees an ad on social media that captures his attention, and he clicks. John is redirected to a landing page with more information on your product or service where he is prompted to enter his email address.

But what if the landing page John is redirected to looks nothing like the ad he clicked on? What if the ad offered a "free trial" but the landing page only offered a "risk-free" trial that you had to front \$499 to begin? John is now frustrated that he got "tricked" into clicking your ad, so he leaves the page before entering his email with a bad taste in his mouth.

Don't lose customers because of a slight difference in ad copy, product and service features, or brand promises. A complete branding guide includes sample copy of brand features (What can your product or service can do for the customer?), brand promises (Do you offer a free trial or a risk-free trial?), and any taglines or phrases that can be used verbatim on promotional content.

#### **BRAND VOICE**

A value proposition outlines what to say about your business, but how you say it can make or break the effectiveness of your message.

To find your voice, you'll first need a mission statement. Choose a mission statement that will remain true throughout the life of your brand, no matter how much growth you experience.

The Design Pickle mission statement is "to change lives through creativity." This mission statement serves as an overarching goal that our team takes into consideration before starting any new projects, promotions, or campaigns. Does my ad copy show how somebody's life can be changed through creativity? If not, how can I change my verbiage or imagery to portray a better life as a result of using our service? Having a mission statement can help every team member make design decisions quicker and more effectively.

Once you have a solid mission statement in place, create example pitches for your brand that capture your mission statement accurately and concisely. Include extensive one-page informational brand overviews, short brand descriptions, and examples of ad copy.



#### **DOES MY BUSINESS NEED A BRANDING GUIDE?**

Yes! Every business needs a comprehensive branding overview whether you are the only employee or you are one of thousands of employees.

Give your team a brand roadmap to ensure consistent, quality content is being delivered to your community – create your complete branding guide today!

**Design Pickle** created this guide you're reading and we'd love to create one for your business.

Learn More

