



The Complete Guide to Developing Your Brand Guidelines



ResourceSpace

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Your brand characterises your business and helps you stand out from your competitors.

As a brand manager, it's your responsibility to make sure the organisation's core values come across in all communications—no small task.

Your organisation may own lots of brands run by both foreign and domestic teams—so you'll need a master strategy to keep your brand intact. Brand guidelines that make it crystal clear how to use your content are crucial.

A brand is made up of several different visual components. Here are some examples:

- Default Photo filters
- Colour combinations
- The style of your audiovisual content
- The templates and designs you use for infographics and illustrations
- The appearance of your email signatures and presentations



How do you manage these aspects?

It's not efficient to micromanage every project in order to enforce brand consistency—here's where your brand guidelines kick in to make sure everyone sticks to the rules.

The key steps for creating your brand guidelines:

1. Creating a language
2. Establishing correct formatting
3. Managing how people use your brand guidelines
4. Updating assets and rebranding

Creating a language

You know a file is somewhere on your drive or cloud, but no matter how much you look, you just can't find it.

It's probably somewhere, but because there's no protocol for naming and storing files, your chances of finding it are slim.

That's why, when developing your brand guidelines, you need a clear set of instructions for adding content to your digital asset management (DAM) system.

Below are the key points you should cover.



A standardised naming convention

Create a system for naming files. This could be according to their media format, content, date or use. Actually, it doesn't matter, as long as it's consistent and works for your organisation



How folders are created, categorised and named

Digital folders can be as chaotic as physical ones. Create a policy for creating new folders and make sure everyone sticks to it.



Centralise your storage

Your organisation may have lots of different departments with their own methods of storing files, but this doesn't work.

Siloed file storage inevitably leads to branding inconsistency, and you'll lose visibility over how your assets are being used. Centralising your storage allows you to control access and editing rights where necessary.



Tagging instructions

If your file storage platform offers it, what metadata should be added to images to make them easy to find later on? Metadata identifies the theme of the image, as well as what's in the image.

Correct formatting

Your digital assets are likely to be used on a variety of social media platforms. They'll be shared with clients and other organisations to either promote your organisation or collaborate on projects as well.

Things start to get messy when organisations don't have a template in place to make sure all images used in social media posts follow the same pattern. Posts are inconsistent and at odds with the brand guidelines. You can make things easier for your colleagues by specifying how images should be sized and formatted for each channel.

Here's a list of the most common file formats and how they're used:

File format:	Application:
JPEG	A compressed photographic image, made smaller for easier sharing.
PNG	This format is suitable for sharing large files that have been compressed with no reduction in quality.
GIF	This is a low-resolution web graphic designed to load very quickly. Not just for sharing memes - you can also use these in CTAs and banners.
TIFF	This format is suitable for images that are still in the editing process; they are high resolution and allow for multiple layers without impacting quality.
PSD	This is the default Adobe Photoshop format that allows a whole project to be saved with all the layers you have added. However, the maximum size is 2GB.

Correct formatting (Continued)

Now that you know what purpose of each file type, let's take a look at how you should be sizing images for the most commonly used social media platforms.

Facebook

Business page profile picture:

- 180 x 180 px
- 1:1 aspect ratio

Cover image:

- 820 x 312 px

Shared image:

- 1200 x 630 px
- 3:2 aspect ratio

Twitter

Profile picture:

- 400 x 400 px
- 1:1 aspect ratio

Shared image:

- 1024 x 512px
- 2:1 aspect ratio
- 5MB maximum image size

Header photo:

- 1500x 1500px
- Image auto-adjusts according to screen/device

Instagram

Image for feed:

- 1080 x 1080px
- 1:1 aspect ratio

Instagram stories:

- 1080 x 1920px
- 9:16 aspect ratio

LinkedIn

Profile picture:

- 400 x 400px

Header image:

- 1584 x 396px

Business profile picture

- 300 x300 px



Managing how people use your digital assets

The first thing to think about when implementing brand guidelines is the level of access different colleagues will have to wherever you store your assets.

When setting up your storage solution, whether that's a professional DAM system or free alternative, create a map or tier system with your team for the permissions and editing rights you'll assign to internal and external groups and individuals.

Who needs access to your digital assets?

- Photographers
- Graphic Designers
- Web Designers
- Printers
- Marketing Department
- Sales Department
- Customer Services
- Content writers
- Clients

The key to maintaining brand consistency is to control how the content is used. Then you can ensure colleagues have access to the most relevant and up-to-date versions without duplicating files, compromising quality, or losing or damaging content.

Managing how people use your brand guidelines (Continued)

What is a workflow in Digital Asset Management?

A workflow is a sequence of steps created in order to complete tasks.

In the context of digital asset management, this refers to the approval stages your assets go through as they are created, released and then used within your campaigns and operations.

Not everyone will need the same level of access to your digital assets, and you can decide who sees what. To manage what's being uploaded you need to divide users into three categories:

1. **No upload permission:** these users can view content in your library (not necessarily all content though) but can't upload or make changes to existing content.
2. **No approval required:** these users can instantly upload content to your system.
3. **Upload approval required:** these users can upload, but their content has to be approved by an administrator and won't appear on the system straight away.

Workflows let you monitor content uploaded to your system by users who may not be familiar with your metadata requirements—new starters, for example. They also allow more frequent, trusted users to upload new content without the need to get it approved first.

To simplify how you assign permission, you can categorise your user groups in clusters such as:

- **Administrators** - no upload approval required. They can add, manage and update assets when needed.
- **Secondary users** - require upload approval.
- **View only users** - no upload permissions.



Managing how people use your brand guidelines (Continued)

Training and onboarding

A comprehensive training and onboarding process will help make sure your brand guidelines are implemented successfully. This means the DAM system will be used and updated by individuals who can confidently manage and upload content that's relevant, up to date, and aligns with your brand's core values.

Your DAM service provider should be able to help you make the best plan for your company, while they'll take care of the initial training and support process as well.

Most importantly, your brand guidelines should be created with your employees in mind. Use engaging language and easy to follow steps. Offer fun training events to encourage brand buy-in. Your employees need to be committed to your mission statement to execute your brand guidelines effectively, so make them feel included by helping them understand what your company is trying to achieve and why consistent branding is important.

Remember, your most influential brand ambassadors are already within your organisation.



Updating assets and rebranding

Naturally, your business will evolve, and your collateral will always be improving and growing. But to see the real benefits of this evolution, you have to manage any updates or rebranding initiatives effectively.

To preserve your professional image, frequently conduct audits to gain assurance that your branding is always relevant and correctly applied across all of your visual media.

Marketing resources you should always check:

- Web pages
- Printed material such as brochures, catalogues, business cards
- Social media profiles and posts
- Signage at your physical locations
- Design and format of your presentation slides
- Videos



Incorporate updates into your brand strategy

Like all other aspects of your business, you'll also need a strategy for your branding. Be sure to schedule regular audits to review where your branding currently stands, what needs to be updated and how will you prepare for the future. Your schedule will include reviews of:

- your brand strategy itself;
- the design elements you use to ensure you remain relevant in your style;
- how your brand guidelines are being implemented and whether your codes are being applied;
- and, lastly, the responsiveness of your audience to your branding - is your corporate image still resonating with your target audience.

Putting rebranding and updates into action

Updating your digital assets doesn't need to be a daunting effort. With a DAM, you can categorise your content and create a system which enables the team responsible for updating your brand assets to easily access, replace and update the relevant files.

It's then important to communicate these updates across the entire organisation and offer new training to ensure that everyone is aware of how to use the new content and create new branded elements.



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