

Brand Guidelines Reinvented

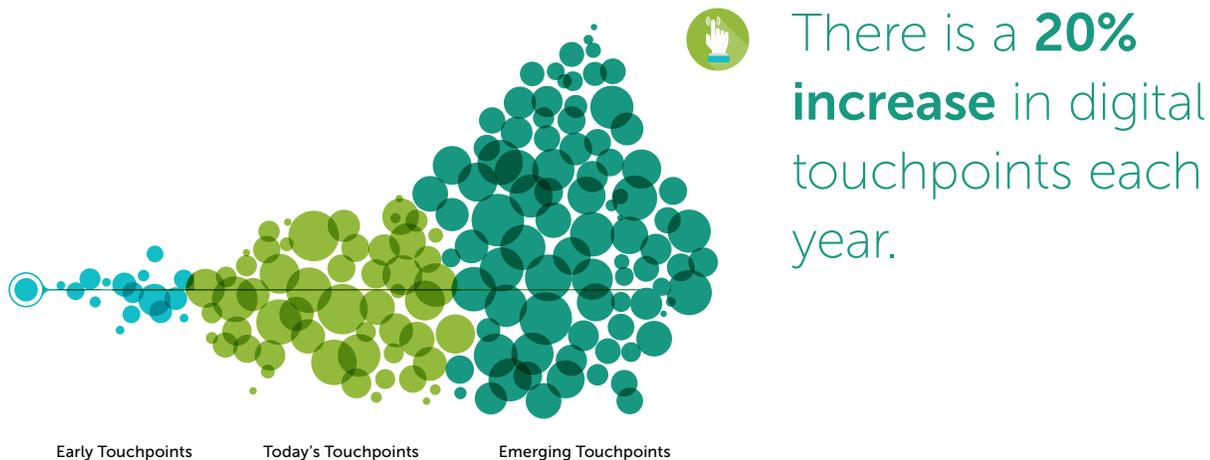
Go digital and set your brand
free in just four steps.



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Believe it or not, brand management used to be easier. You just emailed brand guidelines in a PDF and – voilà! – your designers and vendors had everything they needed to use your company's logo, colors and typography correctly.

Nowadays? Good luck with that. Social media, global teams, freelancers and an explosion of digital creative mean there are more visual assets being produced than ever before. Brands must constantly consider the landscape and adapt accordingly.



Along with an increased number of assets and file types, there are also more – and more refined – marketing channels to consider. You have to tailor your brand guidelines to fit those channels, because a print ad in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and memes on BuzzFeed shouldn't play by the same rules.

Evolve Your Guidelines in Four Steps:

So how do you keep up? This helpful four-step guide will put you on the right path towards building brand guidelines for today's marketing world. First, get a baseline for your brand and **evaluate** the current state of your guidelines to spot gaps and opportunities. Next, **identify** the current marketing channels and areas where you want to explore. **Adapt** your brand guidelines to fit these new channels. Finally, learn how to effectively **distribute** your brand guidelines so your brand story is being told the right way.

EVALUATE

Go over what you have in your brand guidelines – what to develop and what to improve.

IDENTIFY

List the marketing channels your brand occupies now and where you want to expand.

ADAPT

Modify brand guidelines to suit the channels your message will occupy.

DISTRIBUTE

Publish your brand guidelines so that they are relevant and use-case specific.

Let's start with the basics. Take a look at the current state of your brand guidelines and measure them against this checklist. (We've left a few blanks at the bottom for customization.)

If there are gaps in your brand guidelines, you're leaving room for interpretation that could end up hurting communication. Take this opportunity to put it all in writing, because even if the brand guidelines in your mind are perfect, no one else can read them in there.

1: EVALUATE

| Yes | No | N/A | Do your brand guidelines include: |
|-----|----|-----|---|
| | | | Introduction - Who are you? Why are you here? |
| | | | Audience - Who are you talking to? |
| | | | Fonts - What are they? How do you use them? |
| | | | Colors - What are they? Include Hex, CMYK, RGB and PMS. How should they be used? |
| | | | Logo - Size and placement. Show us all the versions of your logo: With and without taglines, full color, black and white, black, white, word mark only and logo mark only. |
| | | | Icons - What does your system of icons look like? |
| | | | Imagery (Photography and Illustration) - What style photography do you use? What do you avoid? What is your illustration style? How do images and illustrations work together? |
| | | | Tone and Voice - What do you sound like? What tones do you avoid? |
| | | | Mascot - Do you have one? How and when do you use it? |
| | | | Value Proposition - What one important value do you promise to your customers? |
| | | | Business System - What do your letterhead, business cards and envelopes look like? |
| | | | Presentations - What are your approved PowerPoint and other presentation templates. |
| | | | Product UI - What does your product look like? Form fields, buttons, etc. |
| | | | Website - What is the design system? Grid, fonts, buttons, etc. |
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It's important for your brand to be present in the places where your target audience is spending their time. For most brands, this list of communication channels (and corresponding advertising opportunities) has grown significantly with the proliferation of social media sites.

Make sure you're thinking about ALL of them, because many have completely unique environments and requirements. We've started a list of possible channels and left a few blank at the bottom so you can add more.

2: IDENTIFY

| | Marketing Channels | | | Do your brand guidelines work? | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----|-----|--------------------------------|----|-----|
| | Yes | No | Add | Yes | No | Fix |
| Affiliates | | | | | | |
| Billboard Ads | | | | | | |
| Blog | | | | | | |
| Desktop Ads | | | | | | |
| Direct Mail | | | | | | |
| Facebook Ads | | | | | | |
| Facebook Page | | | | | | |
| LinkedIn Ads | | | | | | |
| LinkedIn Company Profile | | | | | | |
| LinkedIn Group | | | | | | |
| Local Search Marketing | | | | | | |
| Print Ads | | | | | | |
| Emails | | | | | | |
| Meerkat | | | | | | |
| Mobile Ads | | | | | | |
| Mobile App | | | | | | |
| Partner Sales | | | | | | |
| Pay Per Click | | | | | | |
| Periscope | | | | | | |
| SEM | | | | | | |
| SMS | | | | | | |
| Snapchat | | | | | | |
| Twitter Ads | | | | | | |
| Twitter Account | | | | | | |
| Broadcast Ads | | | | | | |
| YouTube Channel | | | | | | |

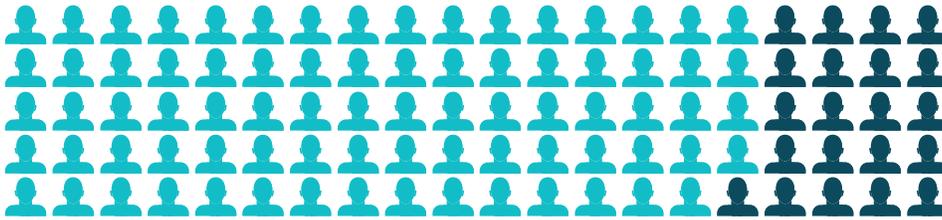
Each marketing channel has special needs, unique audiences and even their own language. So after you're finished building your marketing channel list, ask yourself these questions for each channel:

- 1. What tone should I be using in this channel?** Your brand voice is your brand voice, but you can change the tone of that voice for different audiences and platforms.
- 2. What type of imagery resonates with this channel?** If you already have imagery guidelines, it's wise to tailor this for different platforms.
- 3. What additional sections or brand elements do I need for this channel?** New channels mean you may need to create new brand elements.

Maximize your brand's potential with visual social media.

70% of Tumblr's audience is between the ages of 16 and 34.

- STATISTA



71% of Pinterest's 72.5 million users are women.

- SEARCH ENGINE LAND

80% of users access Twitter via their mobile device.

- ENGAGESCIENCES

70% of Instagram users come from outside of the U.S.

- HOOTSUITE



Once you identify the channels you want to participate in, it's time to add, edit or remove sections accordingly to make sure your guidelines are channel-specific.

Here's an example of how a women's fashion company can evolve their guidelines for Instagram:

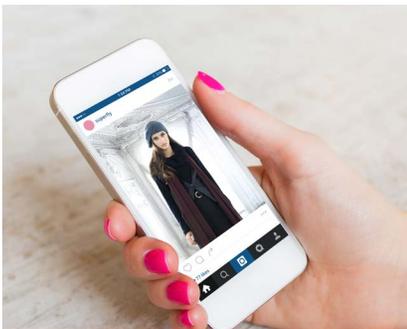
3: ADAPT



1. TONE

1. What tone should I be using in this channel?

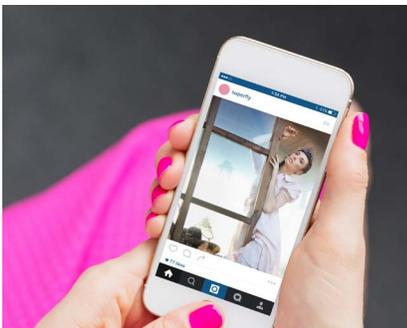
Our tone should be more lighthearted and less sales focused on Instagram. Since it's an image/photo journal platform, overly promotional items seem out of place.



2. IMAGERY

2. What type of imagery resonates with this channel?

We will take our photo style and skew it a bit more artistic and beauty-based than normal. Inspirational quotes seem to be the norm, so we will also develop a template for a series of inspirational quotes that align with our brand voice.



3. BRAND ADDITIONS

3. What additional sections or brand elements do I need for this channel?

We'll need our logo formatted to use on Instagram along with a bio. We'll need to outline what filters are allowed, image style and dimensions and a list of approved hashtags.

4: DISTRIBUTE



All set? Not quite. We still have to work out how you're going to communicate these brand guidelines and make sure they stay up to date. Otherwise all the hard work you put into them will go to waste.

Marketing organizations today rely on lots of people to help carry their messages to their customers – agencies, partners, distributors, franchisees, etc. Your brand guidelines have to be easy to access and easy to use. Most successful brand managers are publishing brand guidelines online now, and many are using cloud-based platforms that allow you to make your brand guidelines accessible to anyone on the web with permission-based control. Updates can be managed all at once in one central location.

Marketing has gotten much more sophisticated. Your brand guidelines have to keep up. Using a static set of rules to control the way your brand is interpreted everywhere means your brand is going to be a hit in some places, and a dud in others.

So, yes, when it comes to this new era of brand management, more is the name of the game. More assets. More channels. More niche audiences. But with the proper guidelines – and proper technology – brand management also means more opportunity to connect and make lasting positive impressions with customers and prospects.

Learn More

For more information about online brand guidelines, visit us at:
<http://www.webdam.com/DAM-software/brand-connect/>

ABOUT WEBDAM

Webdam, a Shutterstock company, is a leader in digital asset management, changing the way marketing and creative teams manage the world's brands. Founded in, 2005, the Webdam cloud-based platform connects the visual content that drives impactful brand experiences and allows brand-building activities to scale across the enterprise and consumer touchpoints. Over 500 of the world's leading brands rely on Webdam to accelerate their marketing operations. For more information, please visit Webdam.com and follow Webdam on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).