

Why Do You Need Brand Guidelines?

What are brand guidelines?

All businesses have a brand, whether it's been consciously constructed or has simply developed over time. Brand guidelines, sometimes called a style guide, are an essential part of an effective marketing strategy. Essentially, a brand guideline is a document that guides employees and designers on how different elements of the business should be used. For example, brand guidelines might suggest how to use the following things:

- Fonts – including the look and sizes of headers and body text
- Logos – including the right colors, the right sizes, the right alternative logos etc.
- Color palettes – what specific colors should be used in online and print material
- Approved images
- Tone of voice and stylistic guidelines

Creating a set of brand guidelines is a very exciting but time-consuming project for a designer, because it requires an incredible amount of thought and a comprehensive understanding of the business. However, there are several reasons why going to the effort of creating a set of brand guidelines is worth it. So why do you need brand guidelines?

Why do you need brand guidelines?

They help create a strong brand identity

One of the reasons you need brand guidelines is that they help create a strong brand identity. Consistency is key. Constructing an identity, no matter what it is, it's much easier when you have a set of guidelines to help you maintain a coherent image.

Strong and consistent branding helps clarify what your business stands for, allowing your business to communicate your purpose, your personality, and your promises. For example, a law firm or a higher education institute might have more stringent rules about how they use tone of voice on social media than a restaurant or a creative agency. A consistent tone of voice, and a consistent brand identity, helps keep a business on-message. Which leads us to our next point...

They help maintain an image of professionalism

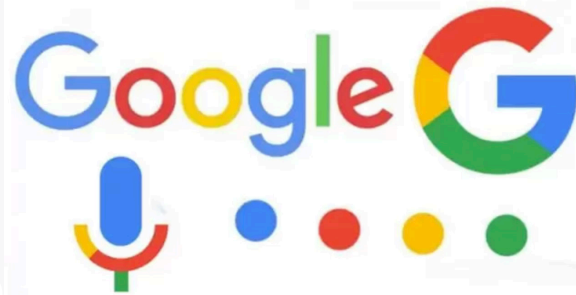
As we mentioned, a law firm might want to consistently use a particular tone of voice, perhaps one that is sincere, informed, but also friendly – text talk and cheeky jokes probably aren't appropriate. This will help maintain an image of professionalism. However, it's not just tone of voice which suggests professionalism. Things such as consistent colors and logos across your businesses online and offline will help too.

For example, if your logo differs on Twitter from your website, or even between your Facebook profile picture and your cover photo, customers might get confused or even apprehensive about using your business. Basically, inconsistent branding simply doesn't look good. One of the reasons businesses need brand guidelines is that they ensure impressions of competence and professionalism across the brand.

They aid brand recognition

This is the most obvious reason why businesses need brand guidelines. The consistency that guidelines create means that brands are instantly recognizable to customers, without having to introduce who you are and what you do.

Consider Google, for example. When you see those four colors, you know exactly who you're dealing with. That's because Google's carefully created brand guidelines outline what colors are the 'Google' colors.



This all links back to your brand's identity – the stronger and more consistent it is, the more likely your audience is going to recognize you and identify you amongst your competitors. Having consistent brand guidelines also means that when you come to add to your store of designed products – whether it's an additional logo, a Twitter header, or a new email signature – the new addition is going to gel with your existing designs and be just as recognizable, even though your customers haven't seen it before!

They're useful for employees

This is a very practical reason as to why you need brand guidelines. Brand guidelines mean that your employees will always be using your branding in the correct way – the right shade of blue, the right tagline, the right font, and the right size logo etc. If you have a new recruit, or your Marketing Manager is out of the office, having a set of brand guidelines means that the right branding is easily accessible to everyone, and that everyone knows how to use it properly.

Not sure where to start with your branding? Find out more about our branding service and how we can help you build your brand.

Source: Aneela Hoque, Digital Glue Agency