



Brand Consistency

Understanding the Essential Elements

A brand is a promise. It's a promise that what your company says and does and looks like will be the same tomorrow as it is today. Consumers count on this consistency, and that leads to trust.

Brand consistency is one of the best ways to differentiate your company from competitors, promote quick recognition in the marketplace, and engage customers.

Brand Guidelines

The first step to brand consistency is developing clear, concise and comprehensive brand guidelines. These should include:

- Voice and messaging
- Logo and other brand taglines or marks
- Color palette and typography
- Photography
- Social media guidelines

Even with guidelines, some companies still fall short.

The challenge is that brand consistency lives in the details. And these details need to be managed at every touch point. That takes discipline, knowledge, and tenacity.

For example, choosing the right colors and messaging for your company is extremely important, but using a disciplined approach to applying those same colors and that same messaging at each and every customer interaction is where the strength of your effort really benefits you.

Here are some areas where the branding details really matter:

KEEP YOUR COMPANY COLORS CONSISTENT

You most likely have a color palette of 2-5 colors that are used consistently in your brand communication. For instance, brown and gold are synonymous with UPS. Red and gold connect to McDonald's. By using your colors consistently, you make it easier for customers to become aware of your brand immediately.



Strategically choosing your colors is the first step. Consistently executing the correct color match is equally important. Your color tones can vary, based on the method of printing (offset vs. digital) and based on the substrate the color is printed upon. This printing variation can even change your color to a different shade! Good printers and branding partners will pay attention to these details, ensuring that the production process is altered to produce the correct shades of your company colors.

TYPOGRAPHY – CHOOSE IT WISELY: PRINT IT CLEARLY

One of the most overlooked aspects of aesthetic brand consistency is typography. It's important to select typography that fits with the personality of your business. Once you've selected an appropriate font – or family of fonts – use them in all of your messaging.

Fonts are generated through various software programs and exported in formats that match their end use. Getting this formula right will lead to clear, crisp typography. Often, when materials are not exported correctly, typography can appear unclear, even fuzzy. Your company can invest a lot of time in your choice of fonts and then fail when executing them.

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MESSAGING: KNOW WHAT TO SAY AND HOW TO SAY IT

Determine the correct messaging for your business and determine the tone and personality of your business, too. Some businesses are best served by a serious tone while other businesses are better served by a tone that is informal, even quirky. Do research, study your competition, and decide what kind of message communicates what your brand is all about.



If your company has a tagline, use it over and over again. A tagline isn't just for your website. Include your tagline on flyers, radio ads, employee uniforms, store displays and sales materials.



Will customers save money shopping at your store? Talk about savings at every opportunity. Do you pride yourselves on quality customer service? Stress it constantly!



Decide what differentiates your business and then repeat that messaging until your customers can't possibly avoid associating your name with your best attributes.

REMEMBER THAT IT'S ALL ABOUT USER EXPERIENCE

It's true that people will remember how they felt more than what they saw or heard. Give them an atmosphere that creates a positive feeling and they will desire to connect with your brand again.

Identify all the touch points you have with prospects and customers. How can you optimize each touch point? Do these moments all align with your brand? Are you using each touch point to educate, inspire and move the process along?

Whether it's a customer conversation with your receptionist or a shopping experience online or the experience of standing in line waiting to order food from your restaurant, invest in creating an unforgettable but consistent experience for your customers.

Use your color, messaging, tone and personality to enhance the customer experience.



CONTROL THE PROCESS

Managing corporate artwork through a single source facilitates brand consistency across substrates and the user community. This can be done by outsourcing as part of brand management to consultant partners who specialize in marketing, merchandising and enforcing brand standards. Consultants can manage all aspects of the process from graphic design, to product development and fulfillment. They can also serve as a conduit between corporate and each location to facilitate local marketing efforts that adhere to brand guidelines.

Summary

By adopting a consistent approach to branding that starts with your logo and extends into every interaction each customer has with your business, you develop the kind of trust and instant recognition that customers require.

Seize every opportunity to teach your customers about your business. Whether they're standing at the point of sale with a product or walking past your display in a store, customers should learn about you. By making good decisions and applying them consistently, you're building the framework for lasting success.