HubSpot | VENNGAGE

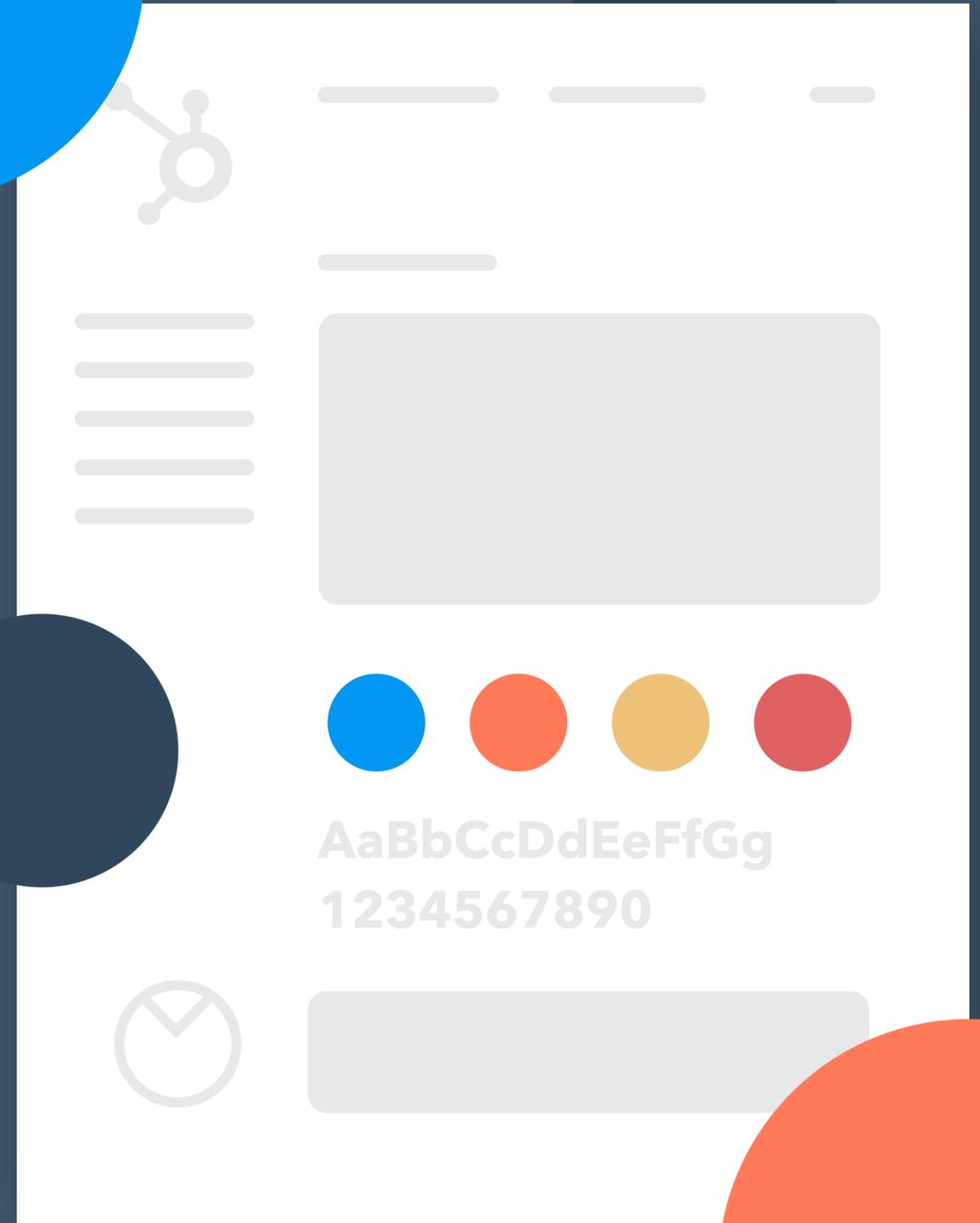**BRAND STYLE GUIDE KIT**

How to Build an Effective Brand Style Guide

(+ Templates to help you do it)

Table of Contents

Introduction

If you don't already have a brand style guide, you've probably at least thought about the need to create a consistent brand identity. Why?

Because effective branding affects everything you do -- from your business strategy to closing sales deals to talking to your customer. Branding defines who your brand is, what you're brand does, and how you communicate that externally. Having a cohesive brand, in essence, creates trust both in the market and with your customers.

Because branding is so important to any business's marketing strategy, we believe every company out there should have brand guidelines. And when it comes to branding, consistency is everything.

**So what is a brand style guide exactly, you ask?**

Your brand style guide is the collection of specifications that help you present a consistent visual brand to the world. It's the guardrails that you share both externally and internally that help you say who and what your brand is. It's how you communicate (both implicitly and explicitly) what your brand stands for.

While we believe having a brand style guide is essential to building an effective marketing strategy, it also has a few more tangible use cases:

- Gives your employees, contractors, and partners a central place to access important documentation and visual assets to create more effective content.
- It helps establish trust with your customers and audience.
- It helps you maintain consistency, particularly when making updates to your branding.
- It lets you define what and who you brand is, not someone else.

Now that you're convinced of the importance of creating a brand style guide, we're here to help you build it from the ground up. In the following sections, we'll take you through the steps of putting together you style guide.

Best yet, we've also included some free Venngage style guide templates to make documenting your style guide as simple as possible.

Image Source
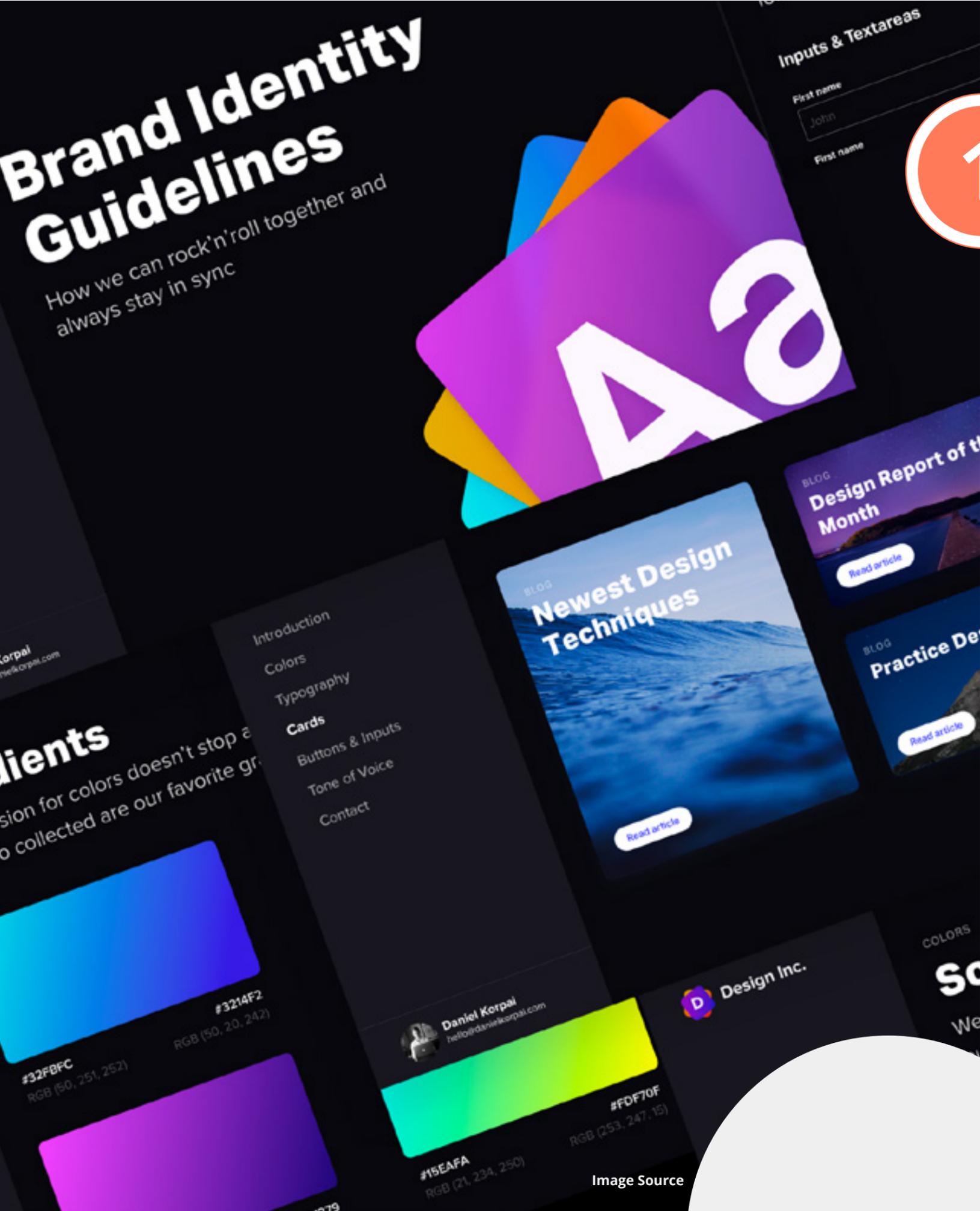
1 Define Your Brand Story or Identity

Before combing your brand assets into a documented style guide, you first need to define your brand story or identity.

Your brand identity guides the visual choices for your fonts, logos, imagery, etc. All of your visual assets should tie back to your company's identity.

A story or identity usually includes what your brand says, what its values are, how you communicate its concepts, and which emotions you want your customers to feel when they interact with your business.

> **Branding is what people say about you when you're not in the room.**
> **JEFF BEZOS**

What to include in your identity statement:
What your company values are

How you communicate your company's values and concepts

What emotions you want your customers to feel when they interact with your business

Effective Brand Identity Statements

Atlassian made their brand story all about personality.

They've made it clear that they know exactly who they are and what they want to be, describing themselves as "bold", "optimistic", and "practical with a wink". By describing themselves in this way, they're making it clear that every future business decision can be tied back to their identifying characteristics.

ATLASSIAN'S BRAND STYLE GUIDE >

Personality

Our personality establishes the foundation of the Atlassian brand. It is a product of our mission, and a reflection of our culture, values, and promise to customers. We make sure that these traits come through in all of our customer-facing communications and content.

Bold

We take a stand. Not everyone will agree with everything we say – and that's ok. We state our position and back it up. We are clear and direct, acknowledge the hard truths… but are not cocky.

We have our point of view, but don't belittle our competitors or people who don't share it.

We are humble. We know we're a team that makes awesome software, but we're balanced. We acknowledge when we fail, admit it, embrace it, and grow from it.

Optimistic

We are upbeat, resourceful, and friendly. We motivate and demonstrate a can-do attitude to show our customers what good things are possible. We know that innovating and getting things done is messy, we acknowledge that, and then focus on the solutions together.

We are not delusional. We know that we make sophisticated, and at times complicated tools that take a little time to master. So we don't over-promise when it comes to the learning curve. We strive to simplify the path and explain the best way forward.

We make people more productive and less stressed. We can't solve every problem a team has, but we empathize and give it our best shot.

Practical with a wink
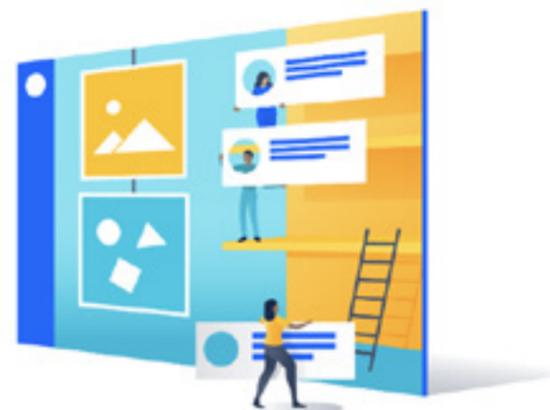
We lend a helping hand. Tips, tricks, and how-tos are gold. We provide the right information at the right time. Having "just enough" is better than "all the things".

We use clear, plain-spoken language, avoid industry jargon, and are mindful of using references that may confuse people of different cultures.

We don't take ourselves too seriously. We know humor makes life more enjoyable.

We are free to be funny, but we don't force it. It's more about being "human" than being "humorous."

Writing style
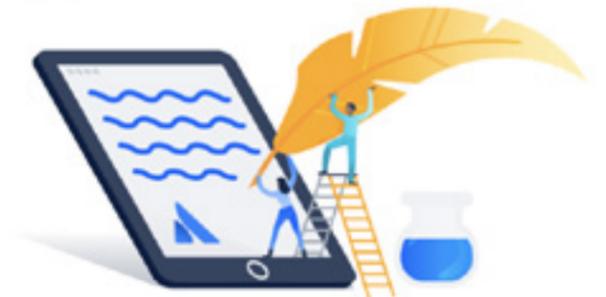
The Atlassian writing style is an amalgamation (note: don't use big words like this) of our core company values, company mission, design principles and our voice and tone.

We speak our minds by quickly offering solutions that will be useful to our users, right now. To help them do the best work of their lives, we inspire and push teams to try new things by simplifying complex problems into easy to understand pieces. With a familiar tone, clear language and a solid knowledge of our audience, we craft messages that get teams moving in the right direction, then we get out of their way.

Trello tells a similar brand story in 10 principles, each one accompanied by a custom illustration.

TRELLO'S BRAND STYLE GUIDE ›

Universal

Trello helps just about anyone bring perspective to their life. People use Trello across industries and job functions, and projects span work and personal use cases. As a universal tool, Trello is quickly accessible wherever and however you work. This principle shows up in things like Trello adapting to a member's language, working seamlessly regardless of network connectivity, color blind-friendly visuals, and the screen reader experience. It also means we think in terms of solving broad, rather than specialized, problems.

Easy

To work well for so many people across so many use cases, Trello must be clear. A new user can be up and running in a few minutes. Simple does not mean lacking features. Instead, we build features that increase usefulness without adding complexity. Simplicity trumps power, but ideally we deliver both.

Personal

Trello gives you perspective on everything you do in one place. It is you when you are working with colleagues from your company or organizing projects with external stakeholders. It's also you when you're collaborating on volunteer projects, organizing home schooling assignments, searching for your dream home, or keeping track of restaurants to try.

Visual and Tactile

At a glance, members can understand the status of a Trello board. Distinctive visual elements are in place so users don't need to rely on reading text to find the thing they're looking for. Dragging a card across lists in Trello feels as easy as moving sticky notes on a wall.

Familiar

Our core design patterns - boards, lists and cards - come from the real world so we don't have to explain much.

Succinct

There's little Trello product vocabulary to learn. If you're designing something and you need to add a noun or adjective to explain it you're probably about to make Trello more complicated. Don't. There's also a natural constraint to how much you can add to a Trello board before it ceases to deliver perspective.

Direct

Trello members are directly manipulating the objects that live on their device. We avoid Save/Cancel buttons, and members can edit-in-place rather than using settings menus.

Flexible

Trello provides a set of general purpose tools that you are free to combine in the ways that work best for you. Trello doesn't tell you how to use it and we avoid labelling things in ways that imply a certain use. You shape Trello to fit you.

Collaborative

Trello is optimized to help groups of people work together better. While Trello can certainly be used individually (and often is), we're focused on making it the best tool possible for collaboration. Trello provides a shared perspective which means if a member moves a card a collaborator sees that near instantly.

An inspiration board, **like this example from Dsign Something,** can help illustrate your brand identity as well:
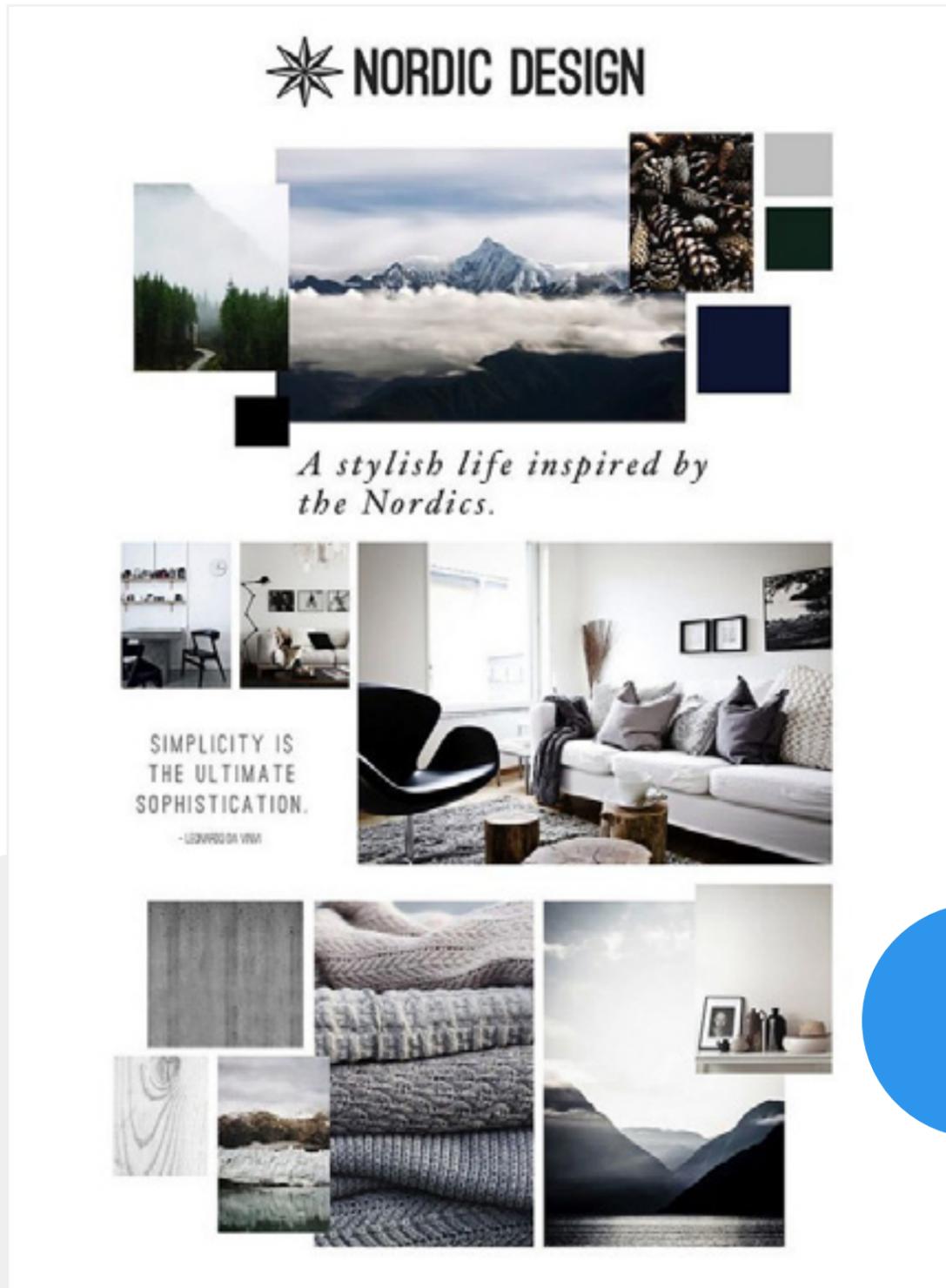
Other brands, like **Facebook**, use a more traditional approach. In Facebook's brand style guide the company mission is spelled out, plain and simple:
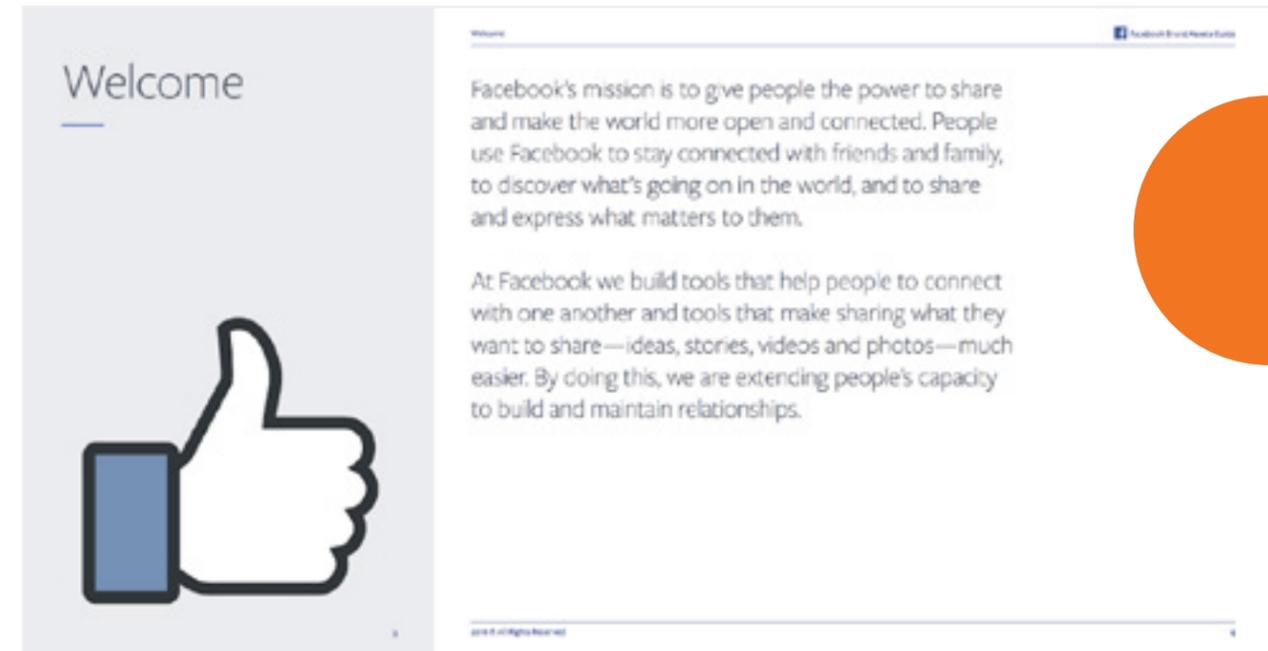
No matter which way you choose to present or tell your brand's story, creating a brand style guide must start with it. **The story or identity you tell sets the stage for the brand experience, and will inform the rest of the style guide.**

Present Your Official Brand Name

2

After explaining your brand identity and story, it's time to talk about your brand or company name. In this section you can explain how you came up with the word or name that represents your company. Or, you could talk strictly about how your brand's name should be presented in different contexts.

Origin

People are often fascinated to learn where their favorite company's name came from. For example, this question on **Quora** about how Spotify got it's name has over 100k views:

How did Spotify get its name?

Answer · Follow · 53 · Request

2 Answers

Daniel Ek, Founder & CEO of Spotify
Answered Dec 31, 2010 · Upvoted by Sebastian Widlund, works at Spotify and Ankita Pawar, Data Engineer at Spotify (2015-present)

This again takes us back to my flat that I had out in the suburbs of Stockholm. Martin and I were sitting in different rooms shouting ideas back and forth of company names. We were even using jargon generators and stuff. Out of the blue Martin shouted a name that I misheard as Spotify.

I immediately googled the name and realized there were no Google hits for the word at all. A few minutes later we registered the domain names and off we went.

We were a bit embarrassed to admit that's how the name came up so our afterconstruction was to say that Spotify stems from SPOT and IDENTIFY.

135.4k Views · View Upvoters · Answer requested by Florian Jensen

Showcasing Your Brand Name

FLIPBOARD

Your brand's name is a part of your brand story, so don't be afraid to wax poetically about your name coming to you in a dream. For example, here's a story from **FlipBoard**.

ORIGIN

Our name is inspired by the idea of setting things in motion, by the technology and information that keeps the world moving forward. Our identity represents the place where ideas and perspectives are shared, and comes to life as a window onto great content.

You might also decide to show how you took two words and smashed them together, like we did at **Venngage**.

Venn Diagram   Engage

Or use standards from your past and future to explain your brand name, like **SoftBank** did below:

Origin of Brand Name and Logo

The 21st century Kaientai banner is a symbol of the new world the SoftBank Group is working to bring forth through the Information Revolution

The power of intellect to discern what lies ahead one step ahead of the times and the power of execution to realize that vision are the essential qualities demonstrated by Ryoma Sakamoto, leader of Japan's enterprising naval trading company, the Kaientai, in the 19th century. These qualities also represent the core ideals pursued by the SoftBank Group in its business activities. Using the banner of the Kaientai led by Sakamoto as a motif, the SoftBank brand logo symbolizes our passion.

It's really up to your company how you present this info, but telling your brand name's story can really help your brand feel genuine and authentic.
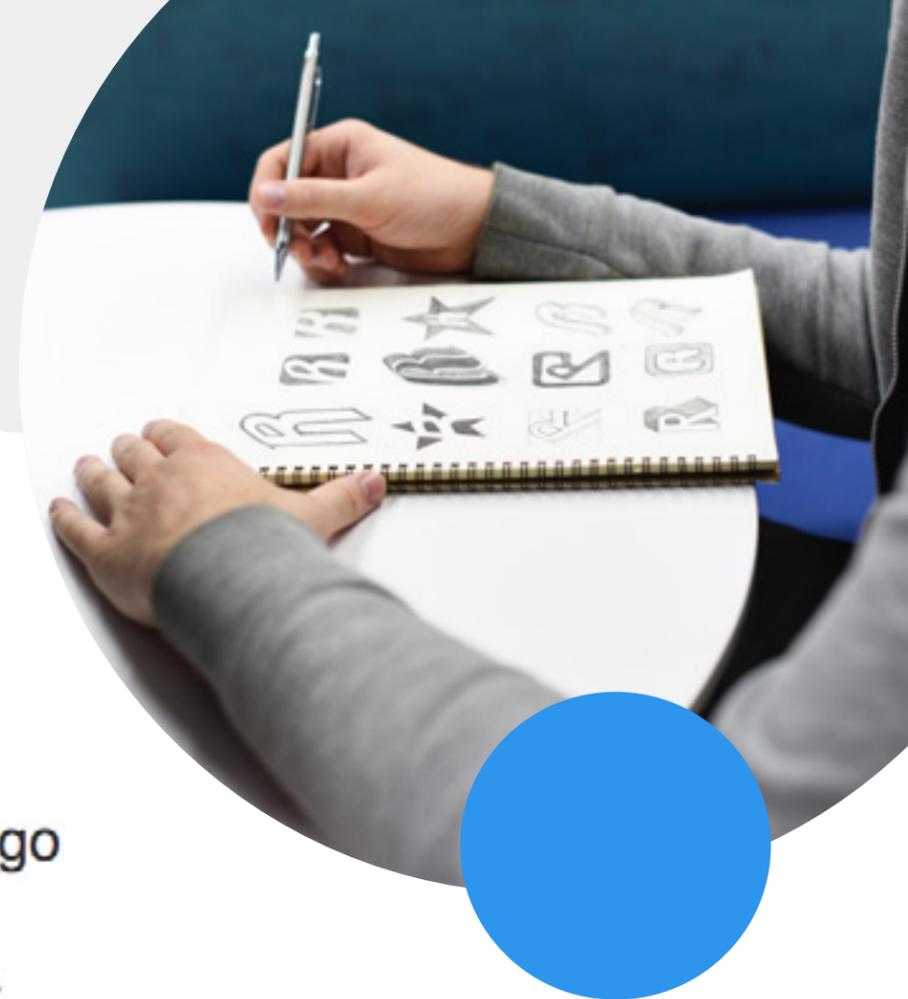
Pronunciation & Usage

Next, explain exactly how someone should use or say your brand name. Because brand names are often made up words, contain unusual capitalization, or have unique spellings, it's important to communicate exactly how your brand name should be presented.

If your company has an obscure or made up name, be sure to show the public how you want it to appear in print and online. This includes showing what letters should be capitalized and if there are any random spaces.

Here's an example of how **Kissmetrics** presented this:

Kissmetrics brand

Please be kind to our brand

Primary Logo

JPG, PNG, EPS, SVG
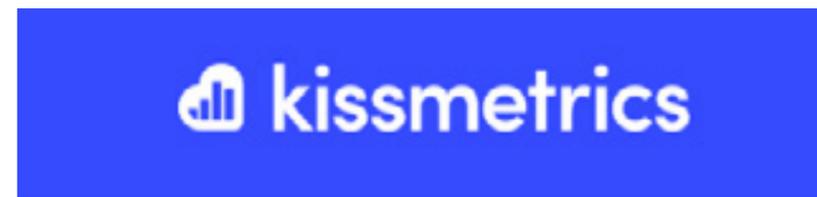
Primary Logo on Dark Background

PNG, EPS, SVG

Mistakes happen

Here is the correct way to spell our name.

~~KissMetrics~~

~~KISS-metrics~~

~~KISS~~

~~KISSMetrics~~

Kissmetrics

Or this example from **WhatsApp**

Naming Usage

Never modify or abbreviate the name "WhatsApp." The "W" and second "A" in WhatsApp are always capitalized. Keep "WhatsApp" as a single word.

WhatsApp

Whatsapp   Whats app

whatsapp   Whats App

✕ Incorrect
Never split WhatsApp into two words and always use the correct capitalization

And even this one from **Disqus**, that shows exactly how to say their rather obscure name:

Branding & Logo Guidelines

We're excited to provide you with the Disqus logo for use on marketing materials or helping you advocate your existence on the Disqus network. To deliver a consistent message, we've created this simple guide.

PRONUNCIATION

(dis·cuss • dĭ-skŭs')

HOW TO USE THE DISQUS LOGOS
The Disqus logos may be included in third-party applications or to promote your presence on Disqus. If you're referring to the Disqus organization in an article or webpage (such as help documentation), you may use either the text logo or the social icon. If you're integrating Disqus into your application, you should only use the social icon.

PLEASE DON'T ...
✕ Use our logo with colors other than #2e9fff or PMS 2995 U
✕ Alter the shape of our logos
✕ Include the Disqus logo on physical merchandise
✕ Confuse our name with an Olympic sport
✕ Shave the logo into a pet or other animal

DOWNLOAD BRAND ASSETS

TEXT LOGO
Transparent Background

DISQUS   DISQUS
SVG • PNG   SVG • PNG

Colored Background

DISQUS   DISQUS
SVG • PNG   SVG • PNG

DISQUS   DISQUS
SVG • PNG   SVG • PNG
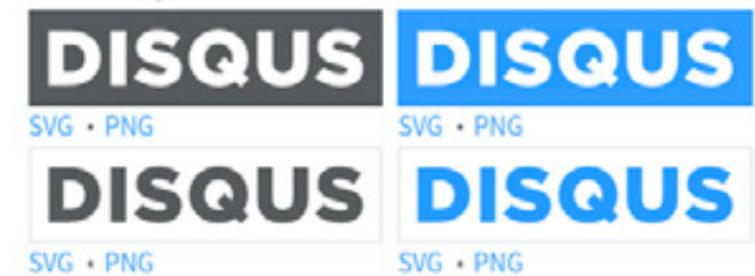
SOCIAL ICON
Transparent background

SVG • PNG   SVG • PNG   SVG • PNG

You can even get creative, **like DISQUS did in this video**, when describing your brand name.

3 Explain Your Logo & How It Should Be Used

After your company name, your logo is the most important part of your brand. It's the one thing you want everyone to immediately recognize as belonging to your company and only to your company. Standing out in the marketplace is one of the main reasons you are creating a visual brand in the first place.

But before you decide on any logos, colors, or graphics, take a look at what your competitors are doing first.

Choosing the Right Logo

As you can see, **Mobingi** took this advice pretty seriously when choosing their logo:
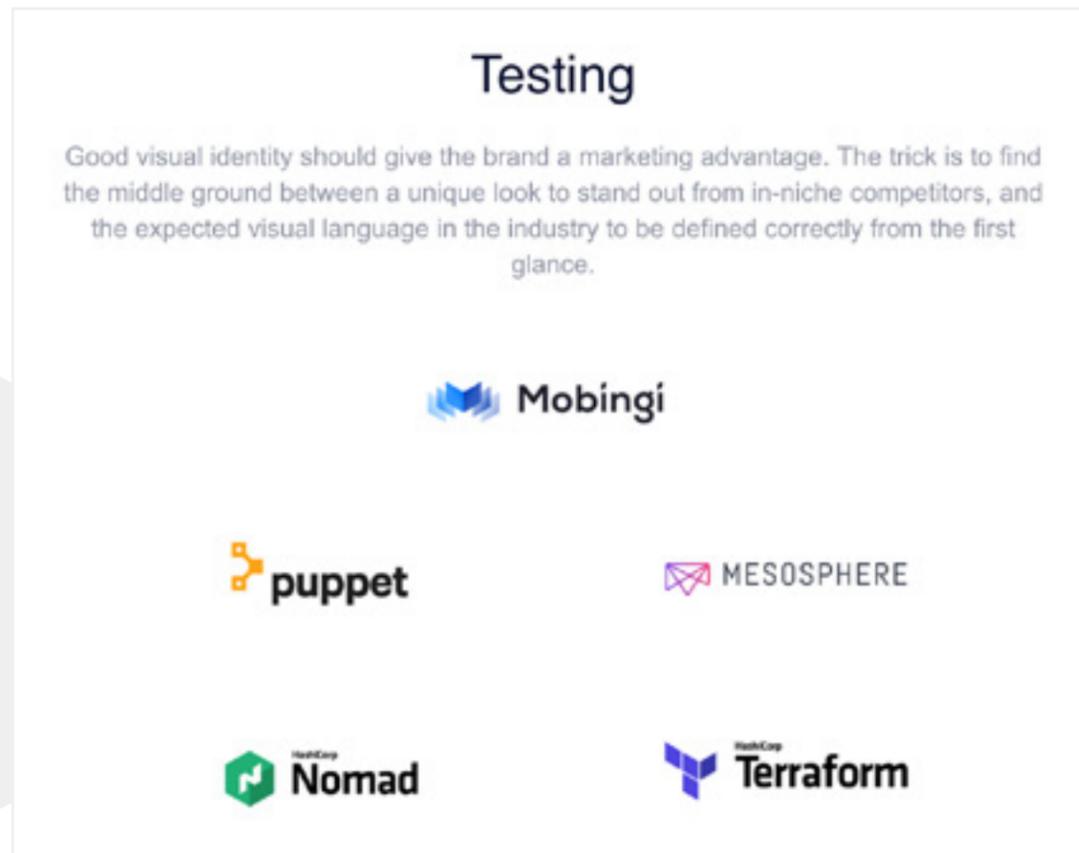
This exercise will ensure that the branding you choose is not too close to your competitors. Because if they are too similar, your potential customers will likely get confused.

After that quick exercise, it's time to add your main logo to your brand guide.

Main Logo

Have you ever seen the Facebook logo in any color other than "Facebook blue"?

This is the one graphic that Facebook wants everyone to recognize them by, above even their brand name and word mark. Arguably, brand consistency has helped Facebook become one of the top brands in the world.

All of the top brand style guides outline rules for exactly how to use their main logos to make sure nobody sends the wrong message with their brand.

You can present this as a single logo, like **Snapchat** did:
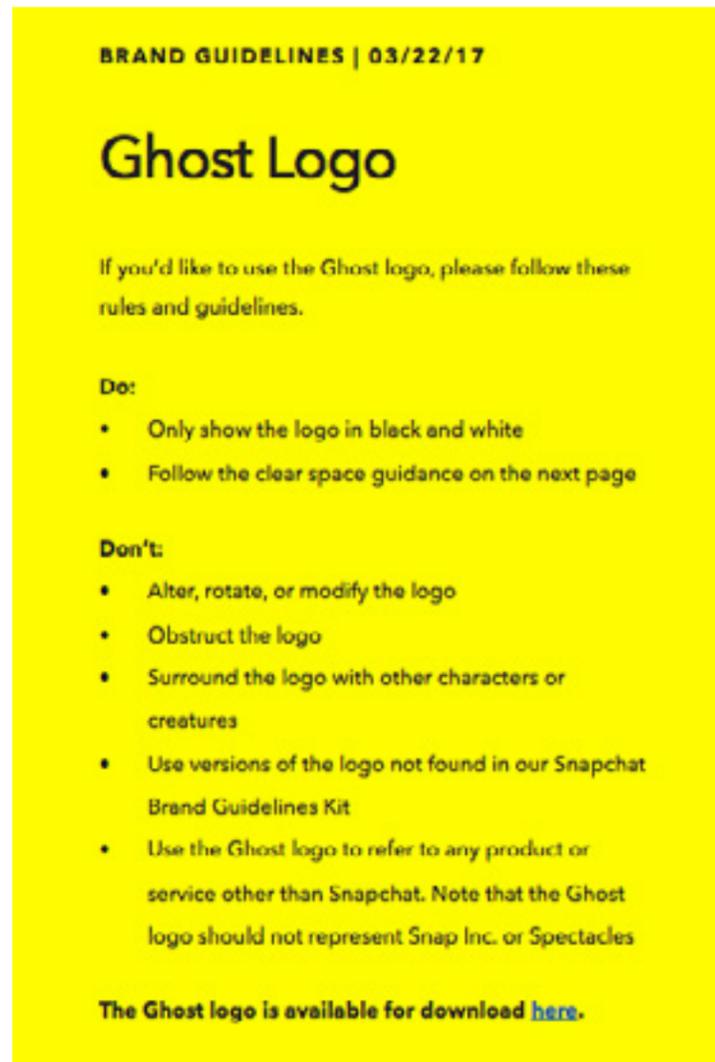
Or you can present a collection of logos with your different brand colors:
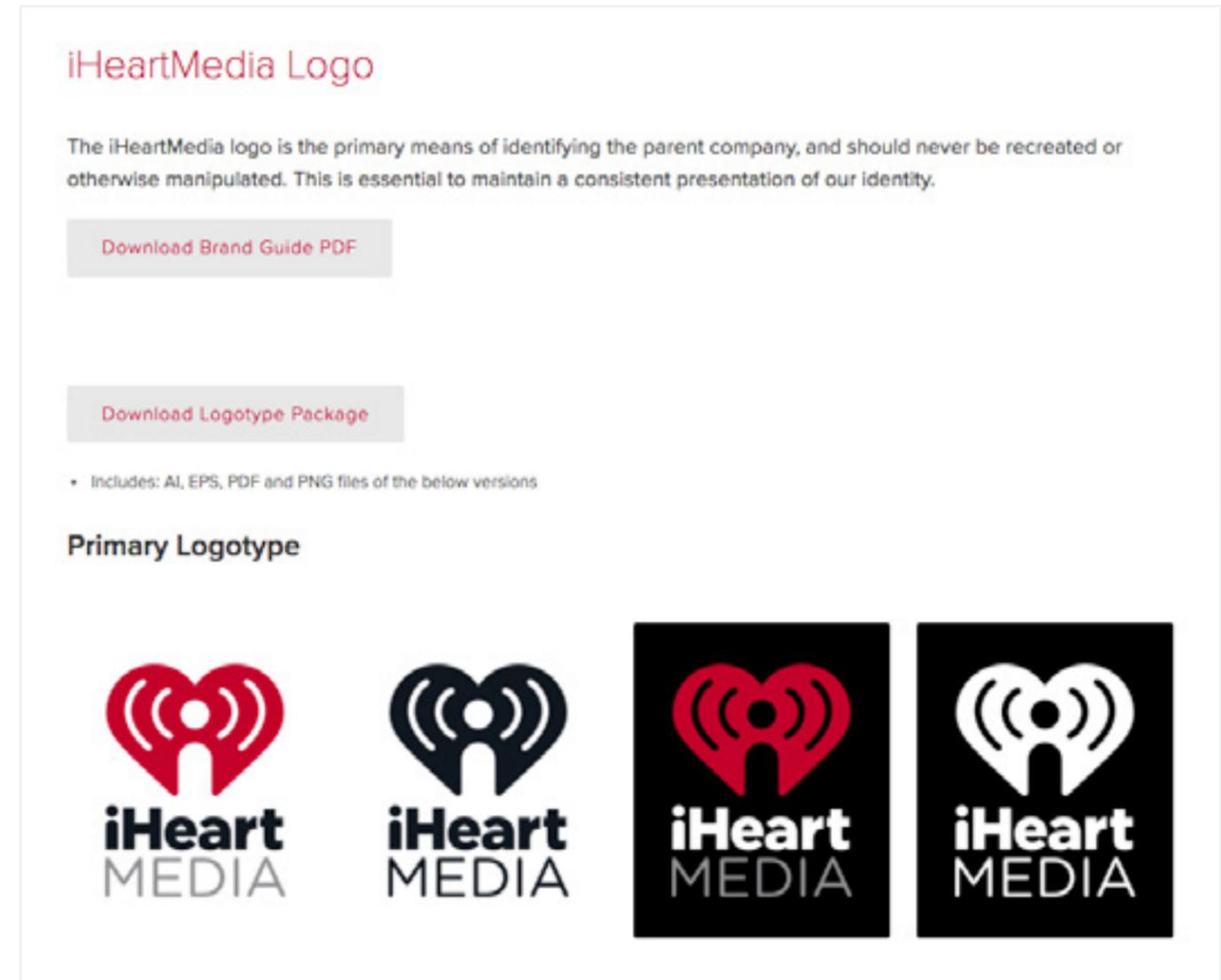
This example comes from **iHeartMedia**, and shows how you can create a both flexibility and consistency in your brand guidelines.

Or go all out like **Dropbox** did. While the main Dropbox logo looks like this:
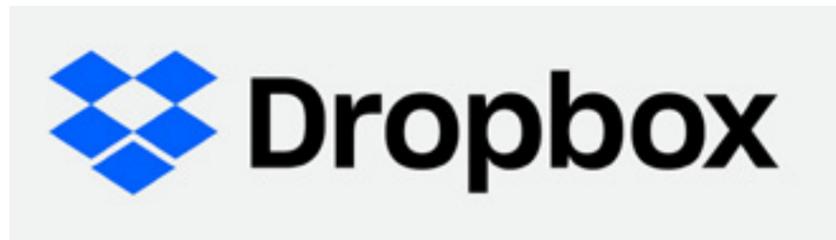
They also use an expanded palette to help it fit any situation:
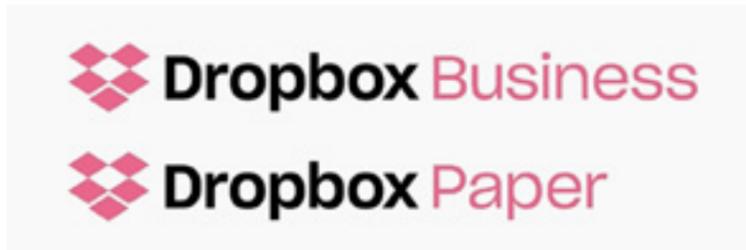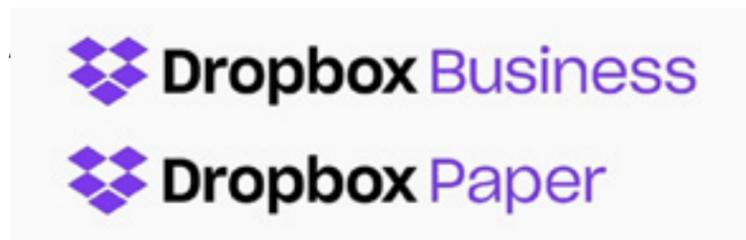
As you can see above, instead of using their old trademark blue, they have expanded their brand color palette significantly.

These rather massive changes helped position Dropbox as something that connects the creatives of the world.

Want to increase your brand flexibility with an expanded color palette?

Get this free Venngage template below:

This template can help you pick your color palette.

TRY THIS TEMPLATE NOW ›
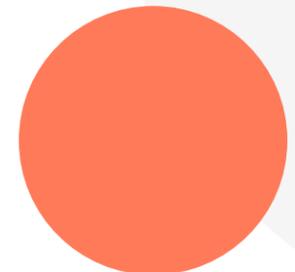
Secondary Logos, Marks & Symbols

Almost every brand is going to have a secondary logo, mark, or symbol that they use throughout their company communications.

Having this secondary logo is a necessity now because of the hundreds of ways your logo could be used. By including a secondary logo, people won't have to modify or misuse your primary logo in situations where it really doesn't fit.

An effective secondary logo takes parts from the main one, and simplifies the design. This could be a minimalistic logo, short wordmark, or even something as simple as a single letter.
Now if your brand or company has a very complicated logo, it's a good idea to create a simplified version of it.

A simplified logo can use a more basic font face or just the initials of your company name. Like in this **example**:

A simplified logo gives designers and the press more flexibility to use your logo in many situations.

For example, almost every large tech brand that you use each day utilizes secondary logos. You may have even seen them so often that you have mistaken them for primary logos.

Here's an example from **Squarespace**:
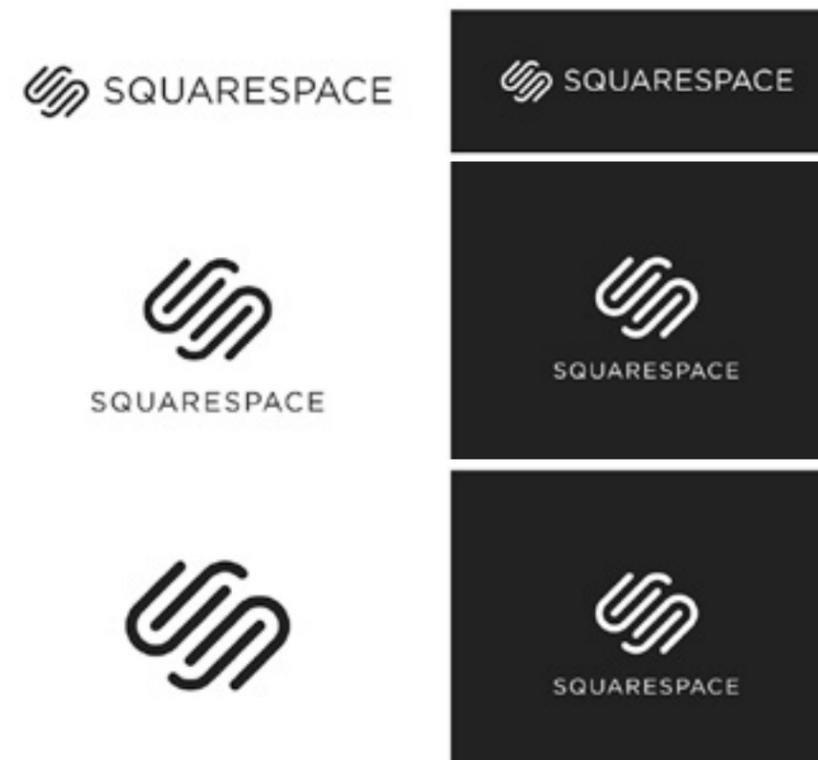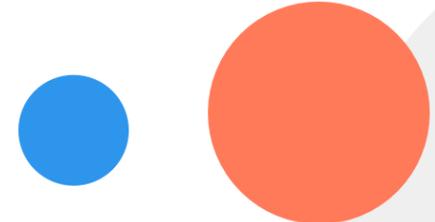
And here's another example from our friends at **Medium**:

Wordmark

The Medium wordmark is an important expression of our brand identity. It should in no way be distorted or redrawn when applied to communications. Because the wordmark is such a recognizable and highly visible brand asset, it is vital that it is always applied consistently.

Medium
Wordmark. Minimum digital size: 20 pixels (height)

Monogram

Our monogram is the reduced form of our wordmark. It should only be used when the wordmark is too small to achieve maximum impact.

M

They call their recognizable "M" a monogram, but it's basically a simplified version of their main wordmark.

Even Netflix has a secondary logo. They call it their **"symbol"**:

N | NETFLIX

Almost every brand that you can think of has a secondary logo.
The places where your branding can be used is limitless. Make sure your company is ready for many possibilities with a few logo choices.

Other Brand Marks

If your company has a mascot, or some other recognizable brand mark, you should add it to this section as well. Because if something is this important to your company, you need to ensure it's used correctly.

The thumb icon from **Facebook** is another example of a recognizable brand mark. It's not exactly a logo, but it is a visual that is recognizable and unique to that company. Facebook considers it to be one of their most important assets to their visual brand.

Thumb Icon

The Thumb Icon is one of Facebook's most valuable brand assets. This logo is meant to represent the concept of "liking" something on Facebook.

Using the Thumb Icon
Only use the Thumb Icon with a clear written call to action (for example: 'Like us on Facebook', 'Install our app on Facebook', 'For use with Facebook') to reference your Facebook presence. No other icons should be used with the Thumb Icon.

This mark does not replace Like thumbs found in the Facebook product. When the Thumb Icon is used in a marketing context, this is the thumb that should be used.

After explaining all the parts of your logo, there needs to be a section on how people should use your logo as well. This should include what colors or icons it should be used with, any specifications on turning or modifying the logo, as well how much spacing is necessary around the logo.

Colors

With some colors, your logo or wordmark is going to look horrible. But you can keep people from using those shades by presenting a few approved colors.

This section is not the place where you introduce your official brand colors or palette. Instead, you should show what colors you want your logo used with.

Usually there are a few examples of it in a brand guide. That's where using a style guide template can come in handy:

Want to use this template to build your own style guide?

GET STARTED NOW >

VENNGAGE STYLE GUIDE CHEATSHEET

TYPOGRAPHY

COLOR GUIDE

LOGO VARIATIONS

FONT SPECIMEN

Oxygen
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
12345678910

HEADER TEXT WEIGHT

Aa

SUB HEADER TEXT WEIGHT

Aa

BODY TEXT WEIGHT

Aa

#2D95EC

#666666

VENNGAGE

VENNGAGE

VENNGAGE

Medium goes a bit further, removing any ambiguity by specifying primary, secondary, and incorrect logo color usage:
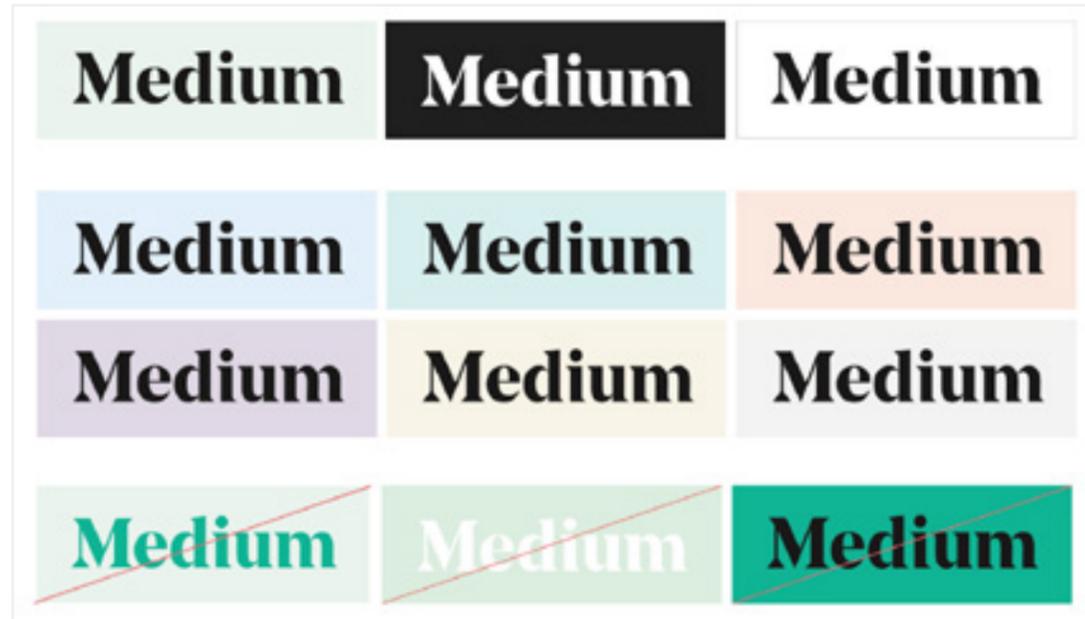
Additionally, you could follow **YouTube's** lead and show how your logo should be used with photos. In their brand guide they outline how their logo should be used in about every situation:
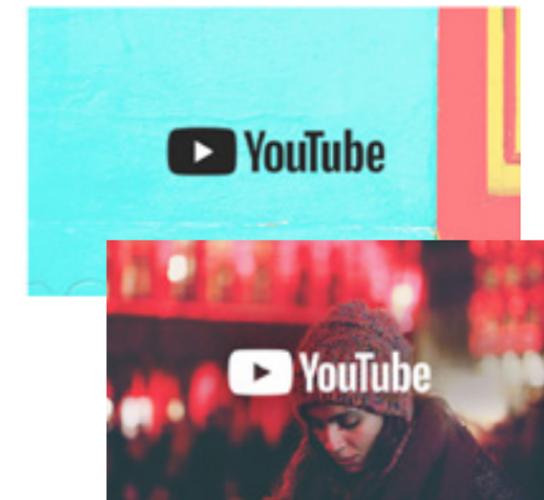
And with the rise of great photography, this is becoming more and more common in brand guides.

Size & Spacing

There is nothing worse than seeing your beautiful logo smashed up against another graphic on the page. Incorrect spacing can really ruin any visual in an instant.

To avoid this fate, you should include a section which shows how to correctly space your graphics.That includes specifications on how much space to leave around logos, just like **Snapchat**, **Medium**, **Facebook**, and **Spotify** have done in their brand style guides:
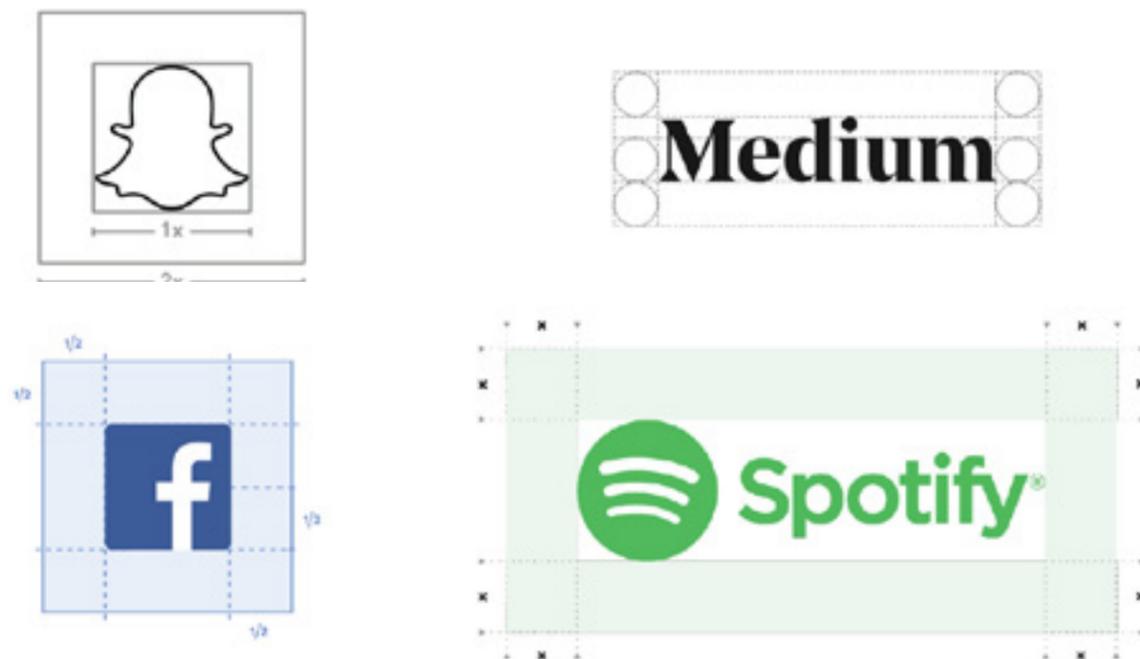
They've clearly marked "exclusion zones" around their logos. Usually about half the width of the logo itself, these image-free zones give logos space to breathe to ensure they maintain visual impact.

They've clearly marked "exclusion zones" around their logos. Usually about half the width of the logo itself, these image-free zones give logos space to breathe to ensure they maintain visual impact.

It's usually a good idea to dictate minimum logo size here too:
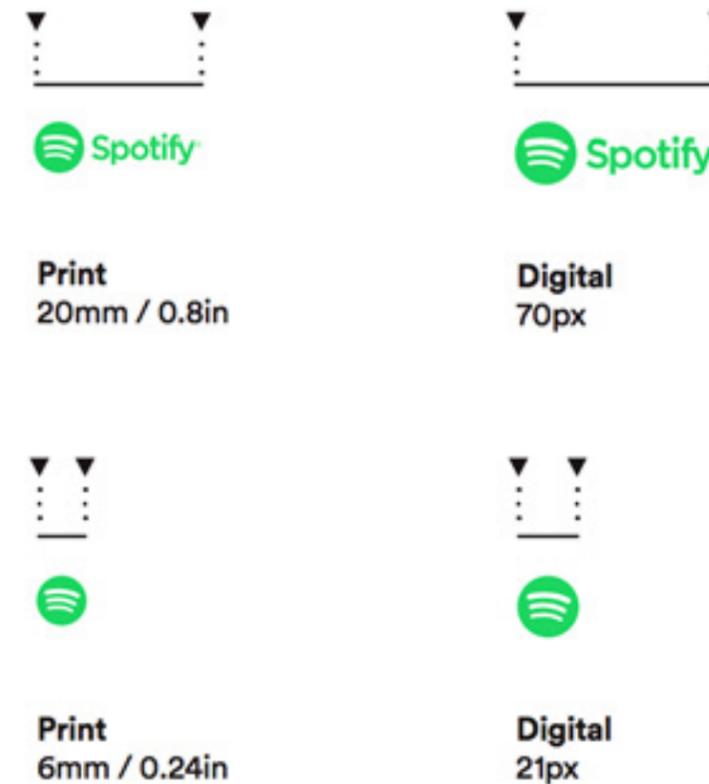
Figure out the smallest size at which your logo is still legible in print and on screen, and make sure it doesn't appear any smaller than that.

Poor Usage

However you decide to present it, make sure there is no confusion on what your main logo should be or how it should be used.

An inconsistent logo can really hurt your brand in the long run.

One of the best ways to confirm people know how to use your logo is to show them how not to use it.

Spotify used an entire page in their brand guidelines to outline this idea.

NO

Do not use the old stacked version of the Logo, or in any way manipulate the relationship between the Wordmark and the Icon.

NO

Do not apply a gradient to the Icon or Wordmark.

NO

Do not resolve the Logo in two different colours.

NO

Do not distort or warp the Logo in any way.

NO

Do not outline or create a keyline around the Logo.

NO

Do not change the Logo colour or tone outside those colours specified in the colour section of this guide.

NO

Do not rotate the Logo.

NO

Do not change the typeface or otherwise recreate the Wordmark. Use only the provided files.

NO

Do not manipulate or draw your own Icon.

NO

Do not remove the circle from the Icon. The beams should never sit on their own.

NO

Do not crop photos or patterns through the Logo.

NO

Do not use the Wordmark without the Icon.

Present Your Official Brand Color Palette

Now is the time to talk about your official brand colors.

In the past, brand colors were simple. You might have had to pick one or two colors that matched with your logo, and you were all set.

But that's all starting to change. Many companies are now using **multiple color schemes** to add vitality to their brand communications.

To keep brand recognition strong, it's more important than ever to make core brand colors are well known and consistent.

4

Primary Color Palette

Every company should have a primary color palette, so it makes sense to start there when communicating your colors in your style guidelines. Usually this primary palette consists of three to five colors that really represent your brand.

Whether you, like Snapchat, have one primary brand color and some secondary shades:

Or like **Netflix**, you have specific color combinations you want your designers to stick with:

It's a good idea to make your core brand colors absolutely clear.

Don't forget to include the necessary hex codes, RGB values, and CMYK color codes to make sure your colors are presented consistently across media. Don't let people guess. Give them all information they would possibly need to ensure your brand color is used consistently, everywhere.

You can even give your brand colors some real names to help with communication. For example, at HubSpot, we have "HubSpot Orange" to signify our primary orange brand color.

PRIMARY PALETTE

HEX	#FD4041	#47B5E0	#D9E0D4
RGB	253, 64, 65	71, 181, 224	217, 224, 212
CMYK	0, 89, 74, 0	64, 10, 4, 0	14, 6, 16, 0
PANTONE	RED 032 C	305 C	7541 C

SECONDARY PALETTE

HEX	#2B445E	#ABABAB	#EFEFEF
RGB	43, 68, 94	171, 171, 171	239, 239, 239
CMYK	88, 70, 41, 29	34, 27, 28, 0	5, 3, 3, 0
PANTONE	294 C	421 C	656 C

TEAL   FOREST   SALMON   VIVID   PAVE

It's much easier to call a color "Pave" or "Forest", like in this example from Jungle House, than remember a bunch of hex codes.
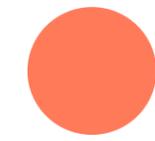
Extended Color Palette

With the thousands of places your branding can be used, it's also important to have a secondary or extended palette. Not every company is going to need this, but it's definitely recommended as your brand and marketing gets more complex.

When you are working for a company as large as **LinkedIn**, for example, you are probably going to have a handful of brand colors to choose from.

However, with the many projects and smaller companies under their control, it makes a lot of sense to have this many colors to choose from. You may not need 81 separate colors, but having a **few extra sanctioned ones can't hurt**.

Corporate color palette

The LinkedIn corporate palette consists of three colors: LinkedIn blue, black, and white. LinkedIn Blue is the core of our brand identity and should appear whenever possible for members to immediately identify our brand.

LinkedIn Blue	Black	White
HEX 0077B5	HEX 000000	HEX FFFFFF
RGB 0·119·181	RGB 0·0·0	RGB 255·255·255
CMYK 100·23·0·19	CMYK 0·0·0·100	CMYK 0·0·0·0
PMS 641	PMS Process Black	PMS —

Various shades of cool gray can be used to add texture and depth to text, backgrounds, and illustrations. A few examples of some of our grays are outlined below:

Dark Gray	Medium Gray	Light Gray
HEX 313335	HEX 86888A	HEX CACCCE
RGB 49·51·53	RGB 134·136·138	RGB 202·204·206
CMYK 9·0·0·90	CMYK 6·0·0·55	CMYK 2·0·0·22
PMS Cool Gray 11	PMS Cool Gray 7	PMS Cool Gray 2

Accent palette

The LinkedIn accent palette consists of four bright colors chosen to have high visibility. These colors should be used sparingly for feature design elements in the following order:

Accent Blue	Accent Purple
HEX 00A0DC	HEX 8D6CAB
RGB 0·160·220	RGB 141·108·171
CMYK 86·8·0·0	CMYK 52·66·0·0
PMS 299	PMS 265

Accent Red	Accent Orange
HEX DD5143	HEX E68523
RGB 221·81·67	RGB 230·133·35
CMYK 0·87·85·0	CMYK 0·66·100·0
PMS 179	PMS 152

Extended accent palette

The LinkedIn extended palette is a comprehensive set of colors chosen primarily to offer flexibility in data visualization. These colors should be used sparingly, with the corporate and accent colors dominating the design.

See examples of how these colors are used in data visualizations. You can also download quick reference guides with accurate color breakdowns for print and screen to help guide your designs.

Brands like **Trello** that rely more heavily on color to express functions and components of their product tend to develop more comprehensive color systems to fit their needs. For example:

Spelling out every shade of each color in their palette means no more fiddling around with color pickers

Official Textures or Patterns

If there are certain patterns or swatches you want designers to use, include them in your brand guidelines.

This brand guideline from **Design Lotus** specifies exactly what patterns they want to be associated with their brands:

Now in this brand guidelines template for **Bash + Butter** they did something very interesting with their official color palette as well. As you can see, they included a gold pattern or texture alongside traditional colors.

This extra element in their visual brand helps make their content different from other brands. And making these small choices for other people will help you present a consistent brand to the world.
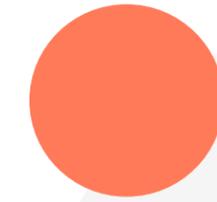
Correct Color Usage

Colors are going to interact in different ways if they are used on a mobile device or in print.

Something could look amazing on your massive monitor, but when seen on a small phone, screen it's much less impressive.

Yelp recognized this potential problem and specified which colors go on mobile and web content and which colors go in print.
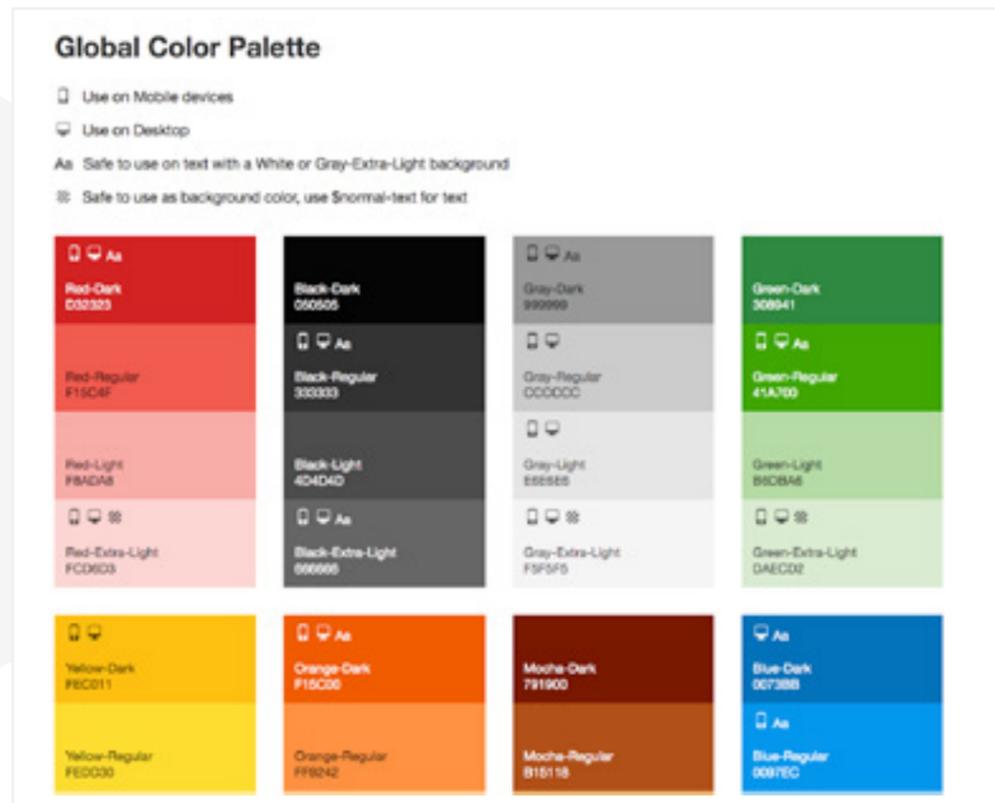
Each color in their palette has been approved for use on a device, or not, with a smart icon.

Spotify has even included realistic examples of where not to use their distinct "Spotify green":
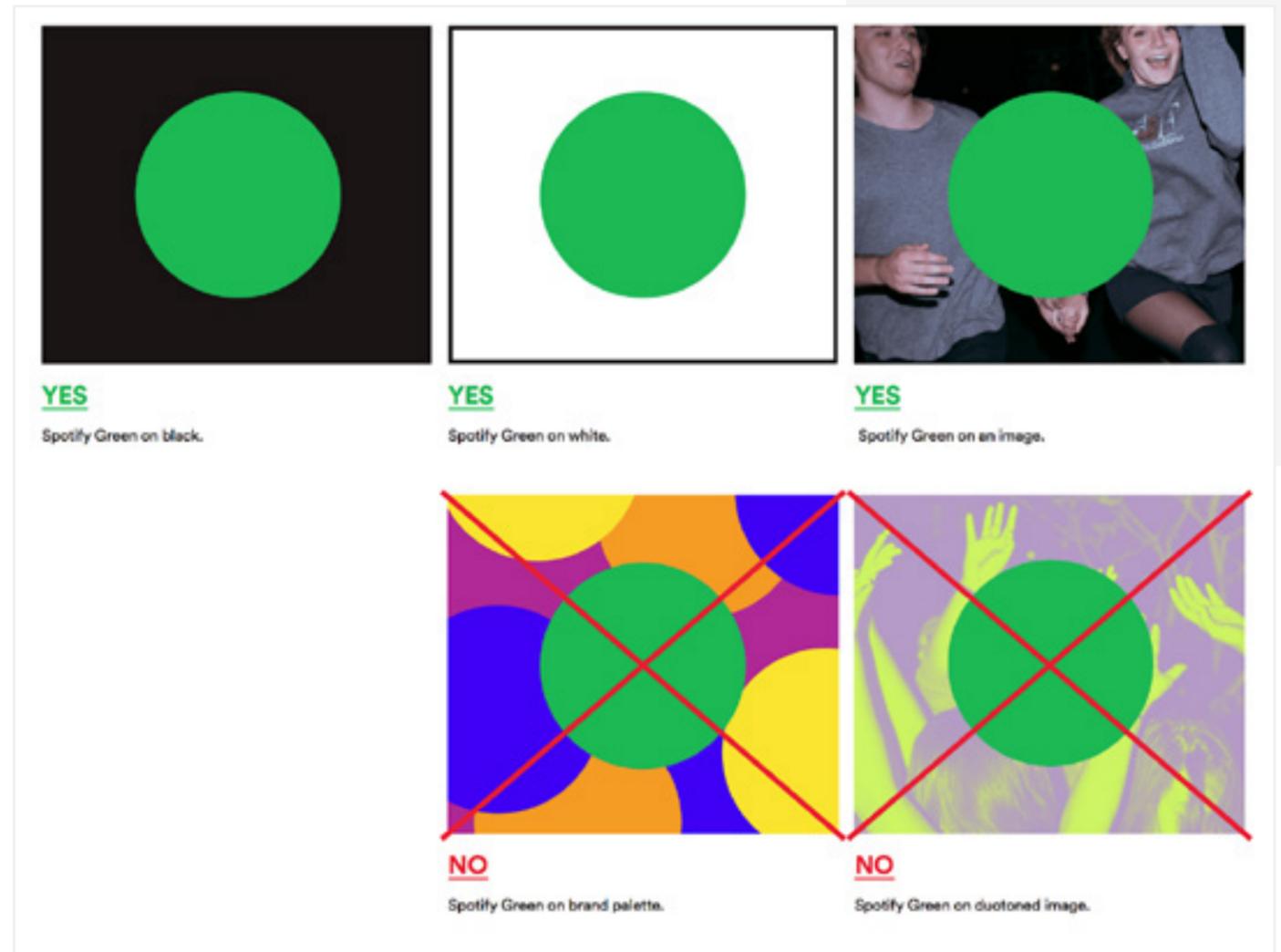
Whichever way you shake it, the more rules the better when it comes to color in your brand style guide.

5

Choose Fonts That Fit Your Brand

Typography is one of those things that goes unnoticed if it's done well, but sticks out like a sore thumb if it's done poorly. Allowing font choices to slip under your radar can really cheapen your brand.

To enhance your brand experience, use a brand style guide to ensure you're applying typography consistently across your work.
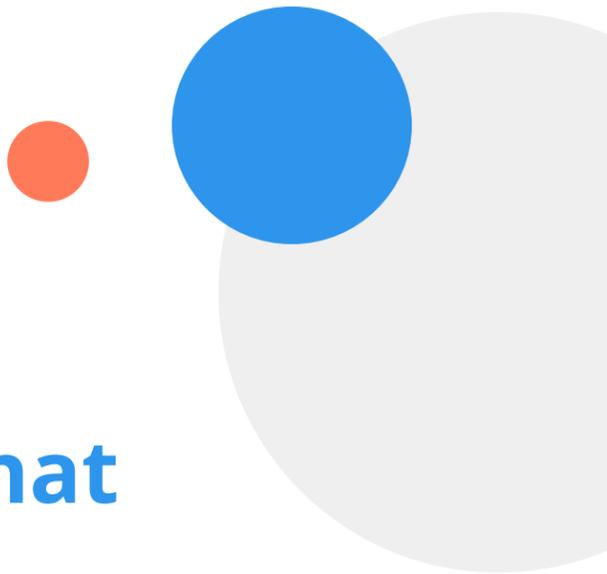
Primary Fonts

Like your color palette, your font collection should have about three to five different examples. Each should include the name of the font, the weight and any embellishments.

From the bold headers you use on your blog posts to the body text that fills those posts and everything in between. For example:
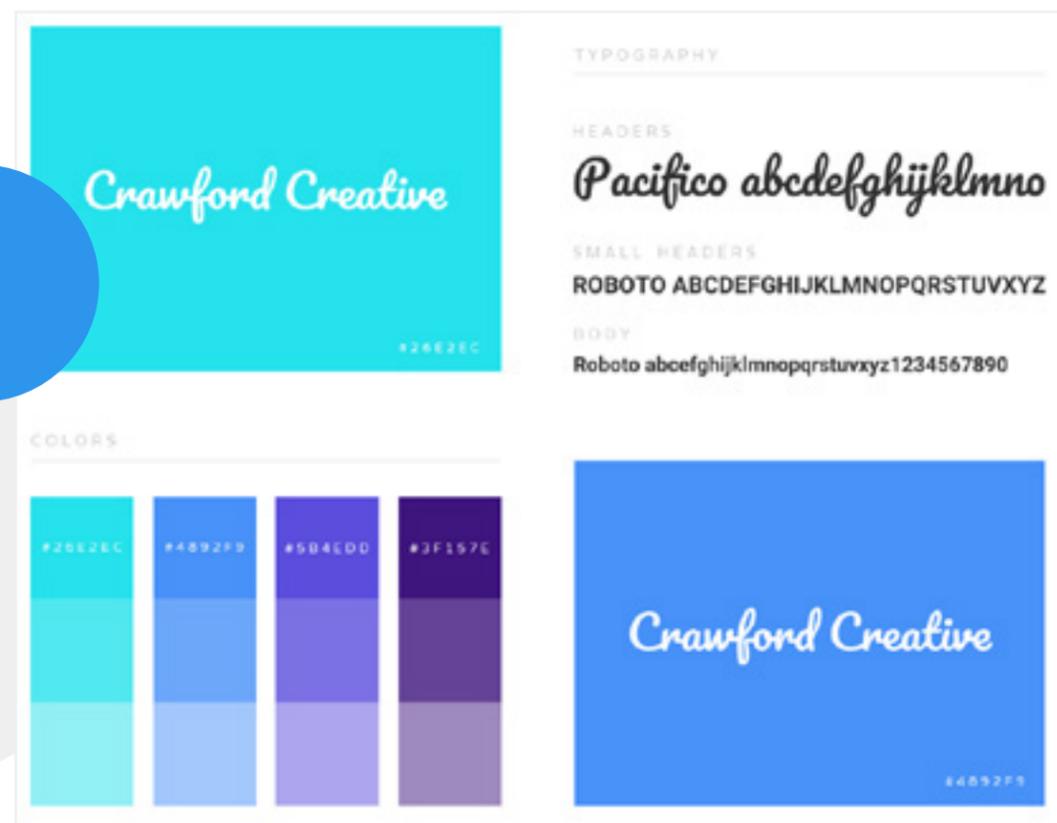
Want to use this template to build your own style guide?

GET STARTED NOW ›

On the flip side, Twitter has kept a very simple font collection, choosing one font to use for pretty much everything:
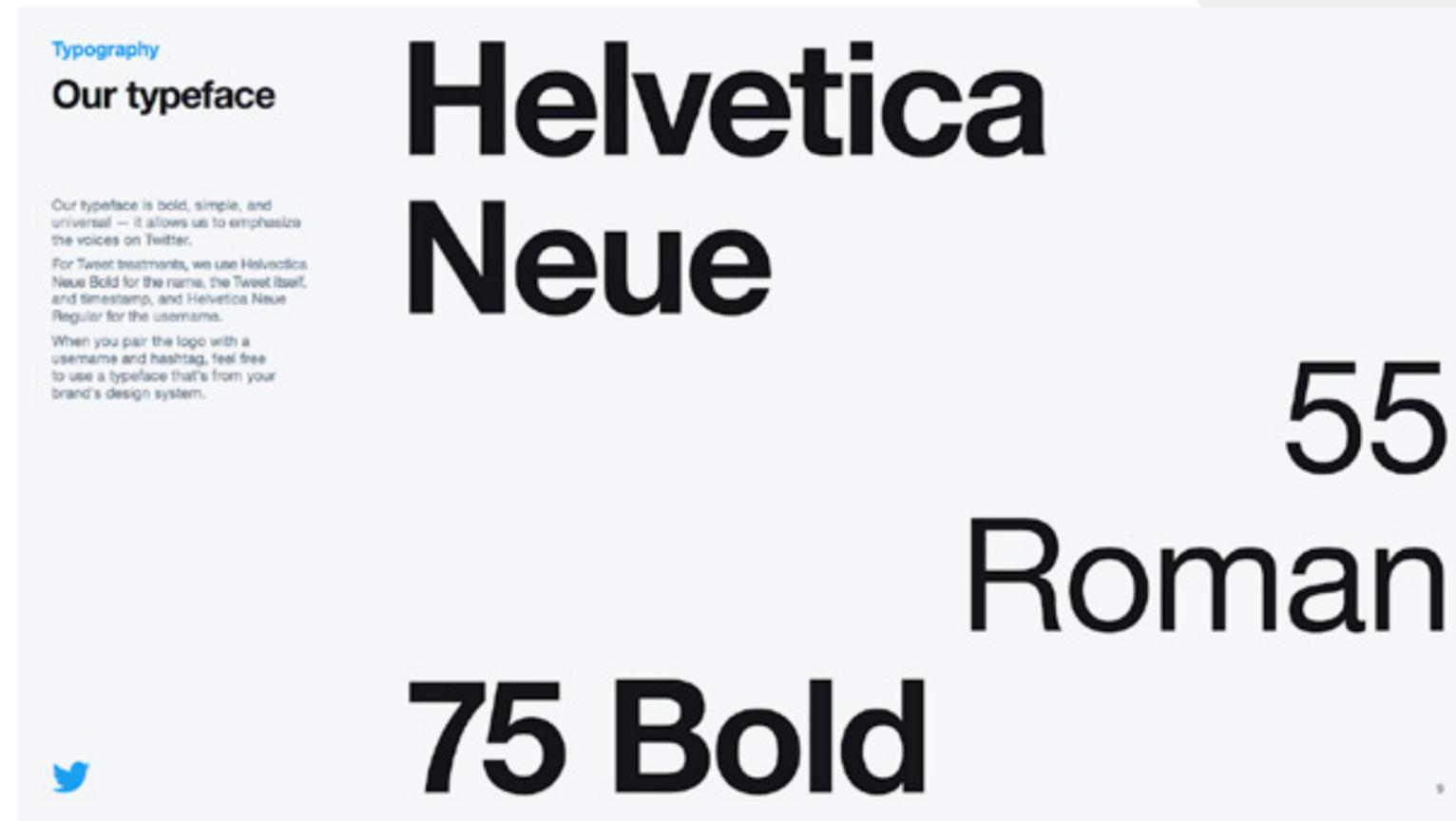
Instead of completely different fonts, they use different weights and sizes to differentiate between their font collection. We do the same at HubSpot.

Trello chose the same typeface as Twitter, but takes it a few steps further by specifying a hierarchy of font styles, sizes, text colors, list styles, and paragraph formats:

Trello's example is a more traditional approach, and many companies break down their fonts in this way. This approach ensures that no one needs to guess which is a header or a body font.

Depending on your product or business, sometimes it's necessary to specify different fonts for different platforms. iHeartMedia has left nothing to chance by including font options for Android, wearables, Microsoft products, and even autos:

Some companies even design their own fonts!
If you do, it's a good idea to include fallback
options for external use:

Circular Spotify

Primary Font

Helvetica Neue
Fallback font A

Arial
Fallback font B

Sans Serif
Fallback font B
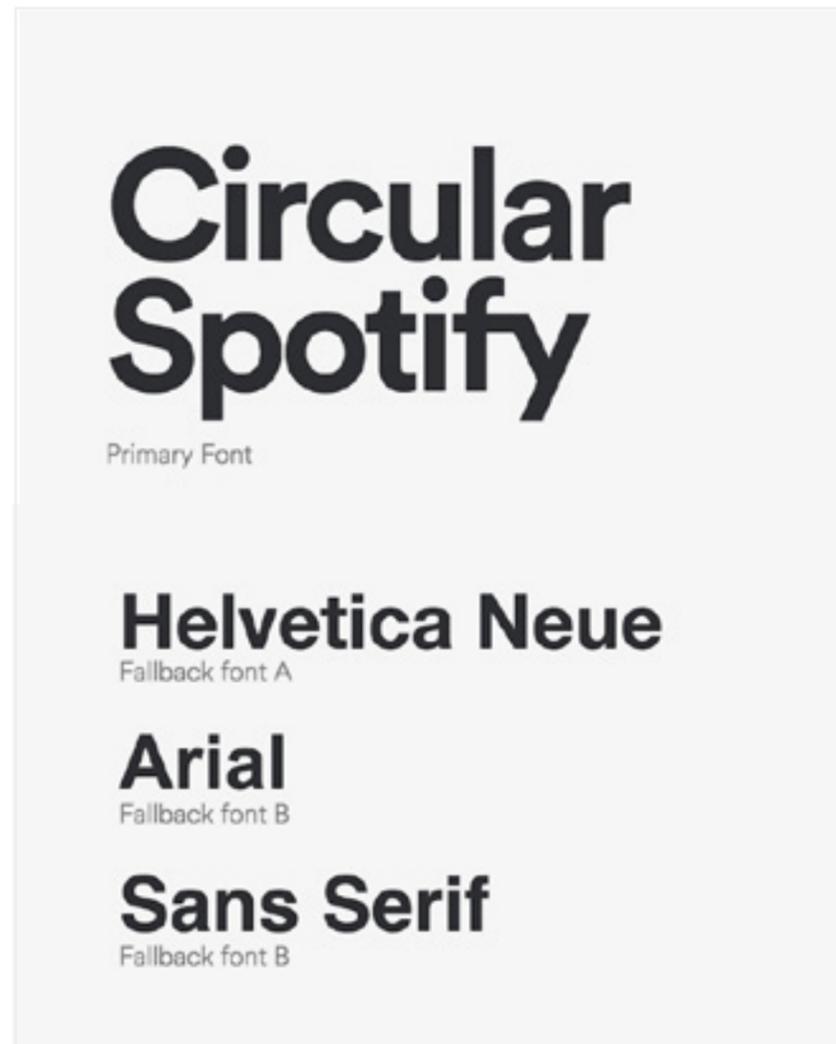
Need to learn about choosing fonts?

Check out Venngage's article on **how to choose infographic fonts**–all the same rules apply!

Want to use this template to build your own style guide?

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colour combinations

professional & stylish

rich & polished

#B42F32	#DF6747	#E3E3CD	#878D52	#494940

gracefully modern

#FAAC77	#C9C9B3	#F9EFEE	#606B67	#333C3E

brilliant blues

#33AFA9	#238D87	#0C6950	#E3F2F2	#152329

sunny & warm

#DA5526	#F68930	#FEBC36	#D0C6B4	#6177F90

baroque luxury

#A35E22	#EBA631	#E8C89B	#E5E4DA	#BFB093

classic & trustworthy

#CA3542	#276478	#849FA0	#AEC0C5	#57575F

Font Weight

Make sure your designers know what weight each of your fonts should have. Some projects may need a bolded font, a medium, or a light font style, but users will not know which to use unless you specify it.

Want to use this template to build your own style guide?

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Typography

Aa
Montserrat
Bold

Aa
Merriweather
Regular

Lorem Ipsum

Pellentesque condimentum quis dolor eu sodales. Phasellus blandit urna in hendrerit dictum. Phasellus maximus nisl et lacus fermentum dignissim. Curabitur ultricies finibus, sodales purus sed, bibendum leo.

Color Palette

Midnight Blue
#3D57A3

Creamy Yellow
#FDD8A4

Sunburn Red
#FC887B

Dusty Light Blue
#94CCE0
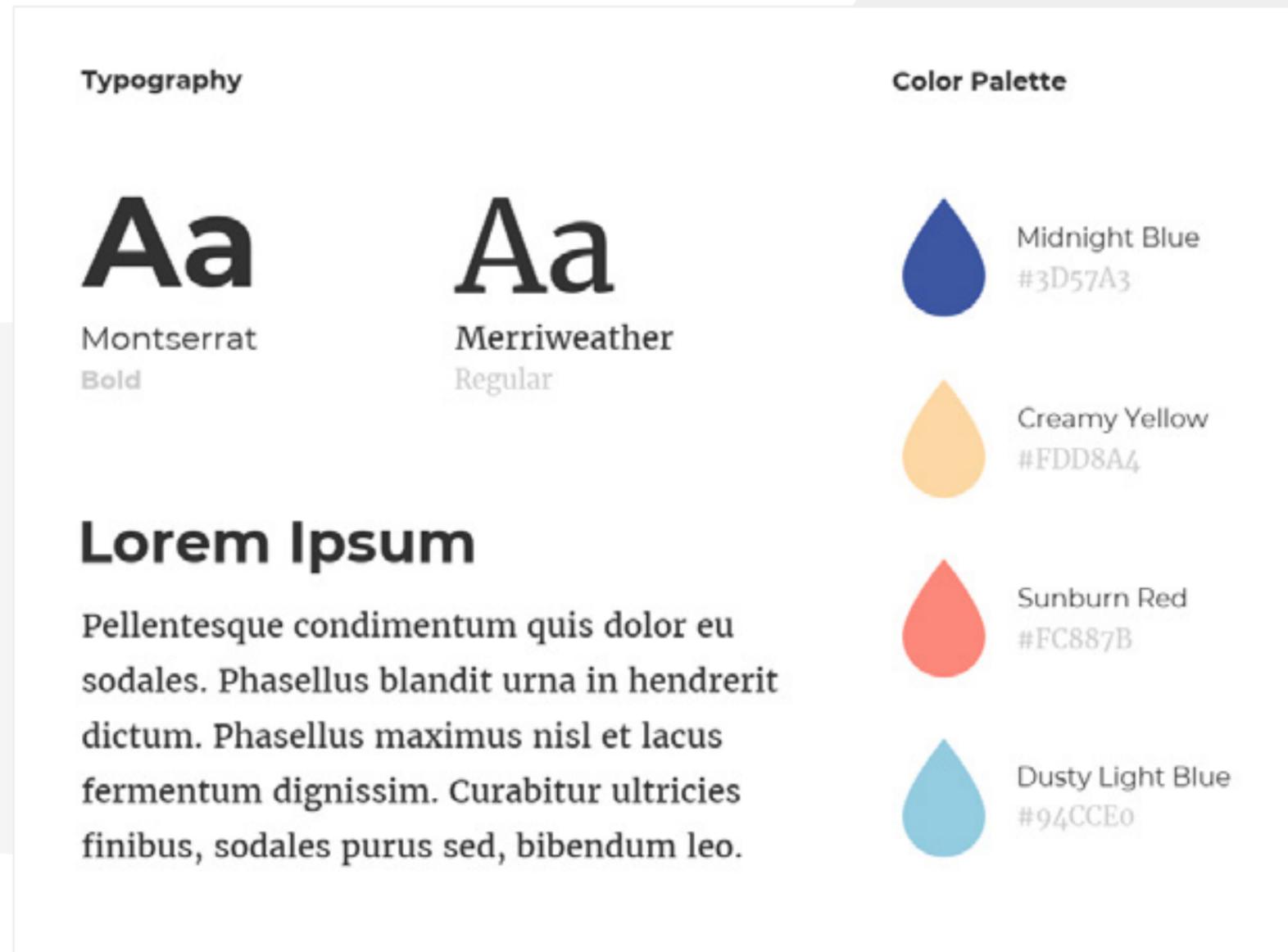
In this brand guideline template above, we show you exactly what weight should be used with all fonts.

Font Color

Most of the time, you're going to use a neutral color or one of your brand colors for fonts. But sometimes you need a little extra color in your typography.

For example, Atlassian lists off a handful of colors that can be used with its many brand fonts choices.
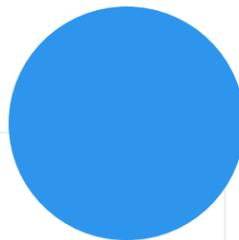
Typography colors

We mostly use the neutral palette for typography, but will make exceptions here and there - mostly for campaigns and interactive elements like text links. See the color usage guidelines for more information.

	B400 - Pacific bridge	HEX #0052CC	RGB 0, 82, 204	CMYK 100, 60, 0, 0
	N900 - Slate	HEX #091E42	RGB 9, 30, 66	CMYK 100, 88, 34, 55
	N700 - Snorlax	HEX #253858	RGB 37, 56, 88	CMYK 89, 76, 31, 37
	N500 - McFanning	HEX #42526E	RGB 66, 82, 110	CMYK 75, 62, 30, 25
	N0 - Doctor	HEX #FFFFFF	RGB 255, 255, 255	CMYK 0, 0, 0, 0

From a Pacific Bridge blue to an almost-white color called Doctor, all of these color choices can be used to spice up Atlassian's written content in no time.

WebSummit takes it a bit further by showing which colors should be used with each font in their brand guide.

Web Summit

iOS styleguide

FIVE

April 30 2016
by Ivan Bjelajac
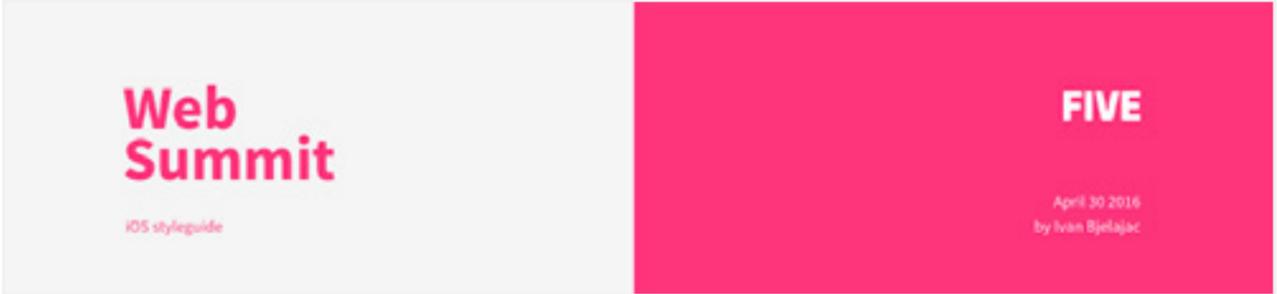
Style name	Azo Sans	Use	Colors
Headline large	Bold	Talk details, Attendee & Speaker name	
Headline small	Bold	Titlebar name,	
Body text	Regular	Body text, List item descriptions	
Button text	Bold	Buttons	
Caption	Regular	Tab navigation, timestamp, caption	

Don't leave any extra room for interpretation if you can. When you do, it's more likely for mistakes will be made.

Define Your Brand Voice

The importance of having a consistent brand voice in your messaging should not be underestimated. Spend some time finding the style that resonates with your audience and aligns with the personality of your brand.

Once you have it figured out, ensure that it's replicated across your channels by spelling it out in your brand style guide.

6

Brand Voice

Shopify has gone above and beyond in defining their voice–including a number of do's and don'ts for grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, naming, and tone. By giving tons of examples they make it difficult to go awry with messaging.

Creating a guide like this will avoid calling the same thing a handful of other names throughout your site or company.

Don't call something one thing on your homepage and another on social media. This will just leave the reader confused and could even lead to the loss of a customer.

Do

If the customer abandons their checkout, send them an email reminder to complete their order

- Never
- 6 hours later
- 24 hours later

Don't

If the customer abandons their checkout, send them an email reminder to complete their order:

- Never
- 6 hours later
- 24 hours later

- Merchant's store
- Women's clothing
- Customers' credit cards

- Merchants store
- Womens clothing
- Customers credit cards

- Zones and rates

- Zones & rates

- Black Friday Cyber Monday
- BFCM

- Black Friday and Cyber Monday
- Black Friday, Cyber Monday
- Black Friday & Cyber Monday
- Black Friday/Cyber Monday
- bfcm

- Shopify Pay
- Shopify App Store
- Shopify Theme Store

- Shopify Analytics
- Shopify Discounts
- Shopify Account

- You can't have products with negative weights
- Your products don't have weights
- You're all set up
- This product doesn't require shipping
- The customer name shouldn't contain numbers
- It's a good time to plan your Black Friday sale
- An error occurred and your changes couldn't be saved
- I'm Kit, your digital marketing assistant
- This transfer hasn't been received
- You haven't connected your account
- You've exceeded 10 password attempts

- That'll make sure you are all set up
- It would've been possible if you'd installed the latest updates
- The set up was not complete, but this'll do
- There're 10 products in this collection
- Your product mustn't be more than 20kgs
- This product needn't be shipped
- There are 3 visitors who've viewed this product
- You gotta set up Shopify Payments to use Shopify Capital
- It'd be a good idea to place an ad this weekend

On the other side of the spectrum, **CampaignMonitor** has kept it short and sweet, simply outlining their writing style in a couple brief paragraphs:

Instead of saying what words you should use, they outline how the writing should feel. But if you want to keep it to a few words, take a look at this example from **Skype**:

They knocked it out of the park with a simple but effective summary, contrasting words that they like with words that they don't like.

Unique terminology

If your brand has coined any words or phrases, include a dictionary in your brand guidelines. For example, the word "YouTuber" wasn't intentionally created by **Youtube**, but it did become synonymous with their brand in popular culture.

Because of it, they take the time to explain how that word should be used in their brand guidelines.
And if you have any terms that your company uses significantly, go ahead and explain them. Your die-hard customers may know the lingo, but new users and the press may not.

In **Reddit's** brand guidelines they do exactly this and outline a few of the words that have become part of their brand identity:

Just like they state in the opening paragraph of that example, these definitions will help people understand Reddit better.

If you have any terms or words that are now part of your brand, we would recommend explaining them in your brand guide. It also doesn't hurt to show how to use them in context or include a few examples like Reddit did.

Include Supporting Visuals & Info

7

Last but certainly not least, it's time to talk imagery. Everything about your imagery, including style, color, and content, contributes to the perception of your brand.

Create some guidelines for imagery like photography, illustrations, charts, infographics, etc. to include in your brand style guide.

A lot of brands forget this step and it hurts them in the long run, especially when it comes to data visualizations.

Icons

If you work for a company like Lonely Planet, which publishes a ton of travel guides and content, creating your own custom icons helps you create repeatable, consistent imagery across all of your content.
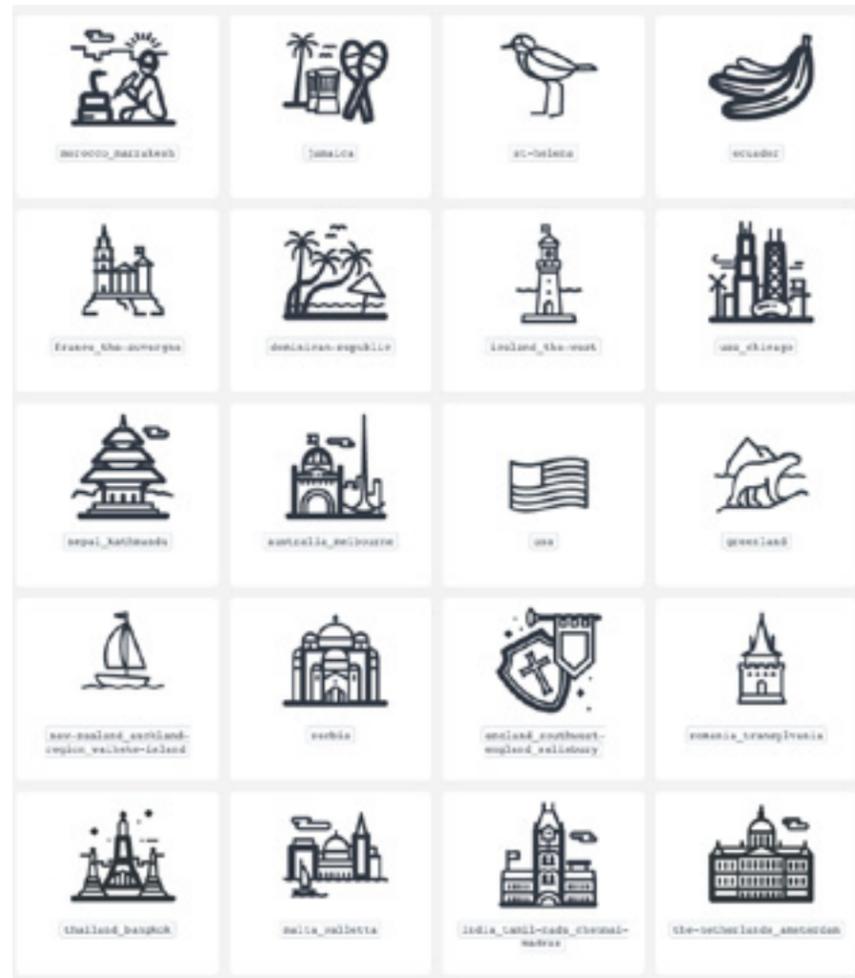
By creating a collection of these icons, it will help hundreds of individual contributors produce consistent visual content. This consistency will help readers or travelers recognize and utilize their content instantly.

Here's another example, this time from **Country Financial**. They outline not only the colors that can be used for their icons, but also the specific use cases for each icon:
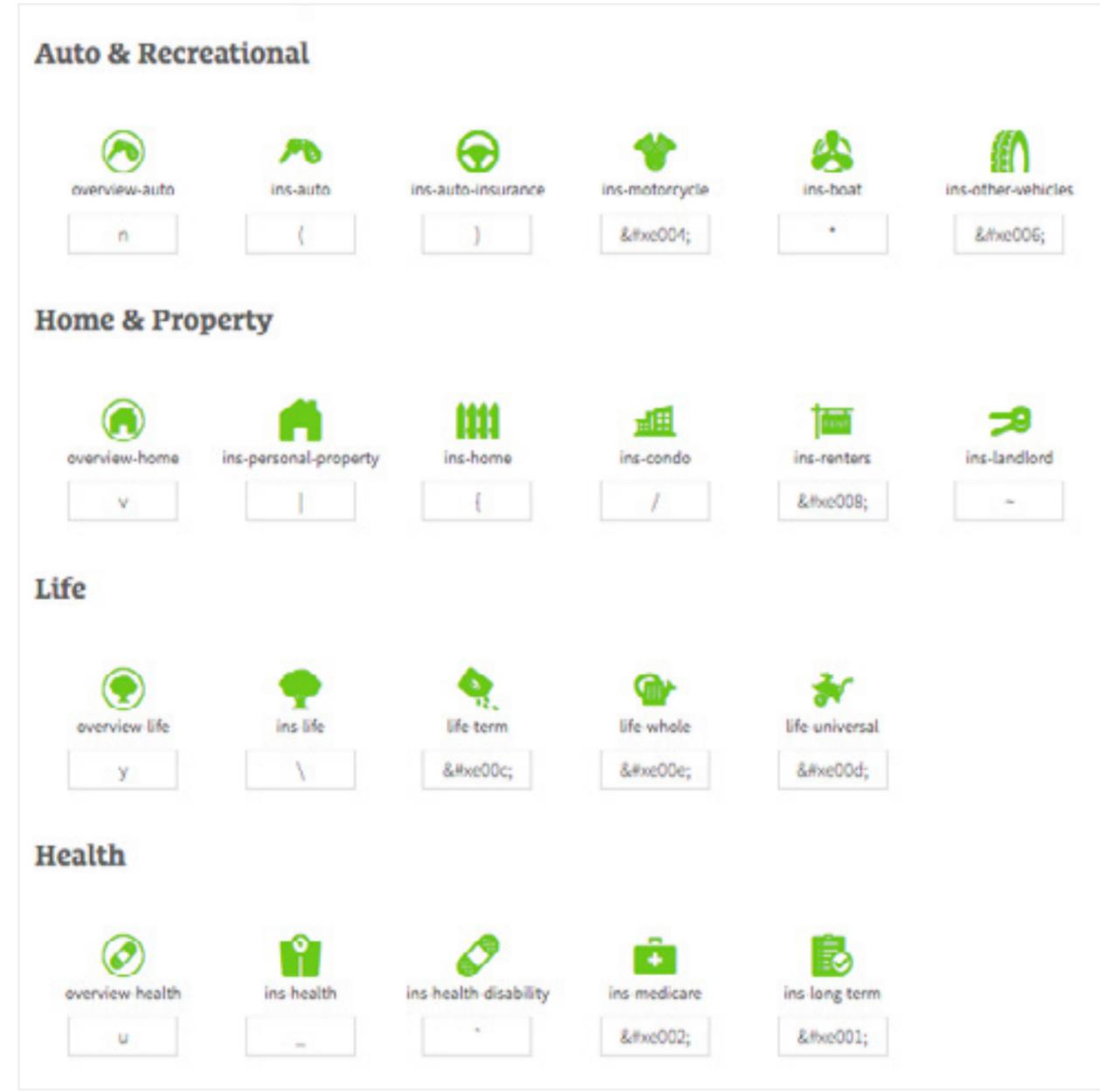
Even if you don't have the budget to design your own icons, you can still make style guidelines for pre-made icons. Specify characteristics like icon colors, sizes, and visual style (line art, filled, one color or multiple colors).

You can use this template to create custom icons.

GET THE FULL TEMPLATE →

Illustrations

Over the past few years, there have been a huge increase in brands using hand-drawn illustrations.

Now brands are starting to add them to their official brand guidelines, like **Fabled** did:

Not only are illustrated icons all over their brand guidelines, they officially sanctioned a handful of branded illustrations as well. These official illustrations are a fantastic way to set your company apart from the competition as well.

Additionally, Trello loves to feature custom illustrations, but knows it can be hard for different artists to produce illustrations with a cohesive style.

They leave nothing to chance by outlining what it means to make a "Trello-y" illustration–with guidelines on concept, composition, shadows, and more. Most importantly, they give examples!

This will help your brand create a cohesive visual style, even if there are a handful of designers working on each project.

Photos

Photographic style is just as important as illustrative style.

Some brands use photography to tell their story exceptionally well. When you see a photo by companies like this, you know instantly it came from them.

If you use photographs frequently in your branding, your style guide should specify the level of complexity, compositions, color schemes, styles, and technical specs that make photographs fit within your brand.

Berkeley's brand guidelines describe their photographic style as light, airy, and natural, only featuring images that fit into one of three categories: topical, cultural, or historical.

And if your brand is known for one consistent style, the same camera settings are probably the same in every photo.

We really like how the brand guidelines for **Full Circle** included those settings above.

Telling someone what camera setting to use is like giving someone the hex code of your brand colors, but for photography. You could even take it a step further and include any filters or presets your designers should use when editing photos.

All that info is great for internal use. But what if you want to make sure the press or bloggers use the right photos?

Here's a crazy idea, give it to them! **Airbnb** has a ton of photos that they want people to use:
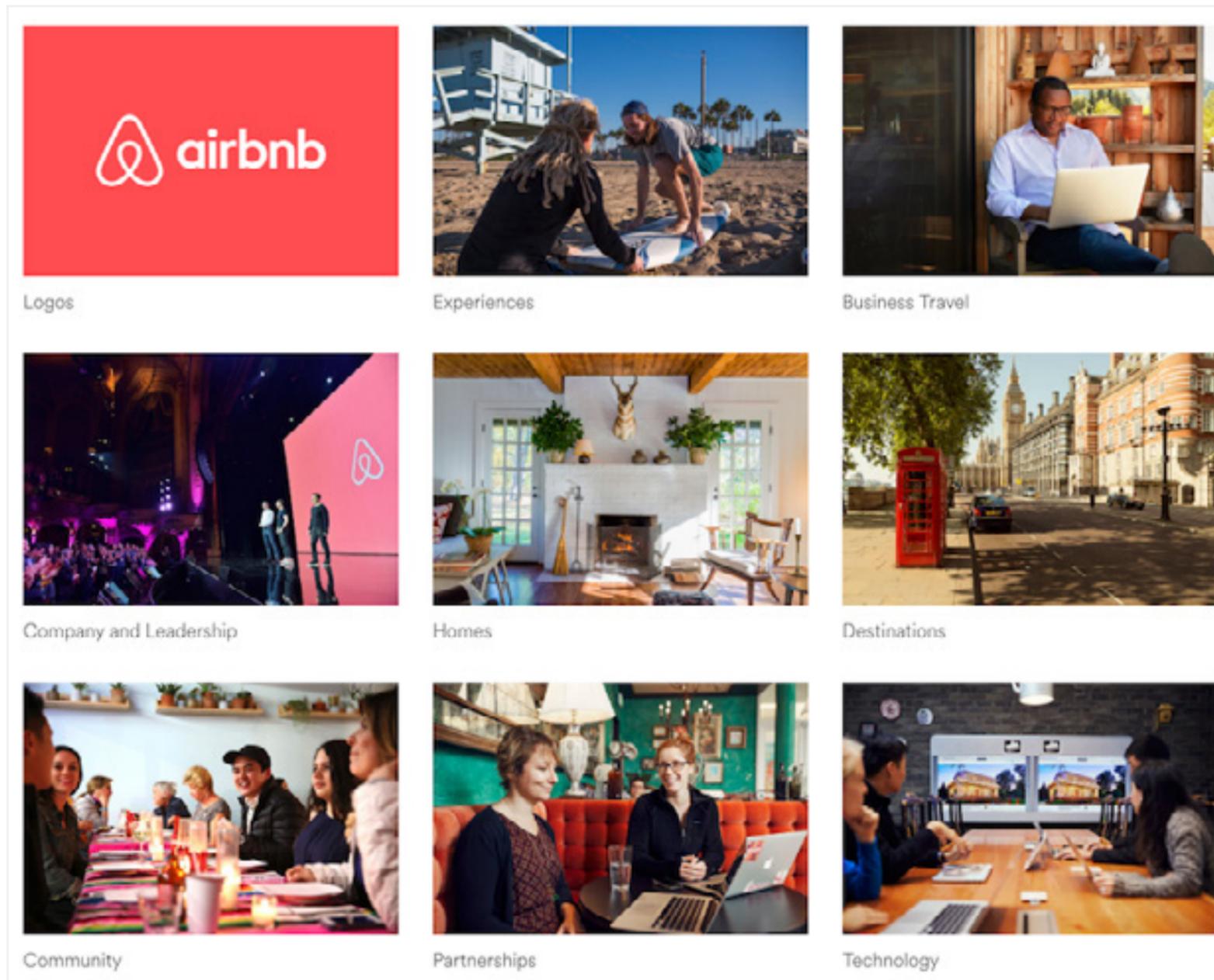
There are literally thousands of them. Best of all, they have already done all the hard work for those writers.

We recommend coming up with about twenty of your own sanctioned images that the writers can use as well. It will help keep all your branding consistent, even on sites you can't really control.

Data Visualization

If your **branding features infographics** or data visualizations, don't forget to include some stylistic guidelines for them as well.

Presenting data in an effective, consistent and beautiful way is a bit tricky sometimes. That's why it's important to outline how your company visualizes data in your brand guidelines. Specify when and where to use infographics and data visualizations, and include style preferences and technical conventions.

Shopify gives their designers clear directions on how to approach a data visualization:

Followed by some definitive rules for labeling and styling those visualizations:

Guidelines

Data visualization should be approached by:

SOLVING A PROBLEM

Have a clear question that needs to be answered. If multiple answers to multiple questions are illustrated in a visualization, it will become over complicated and hard to understand.
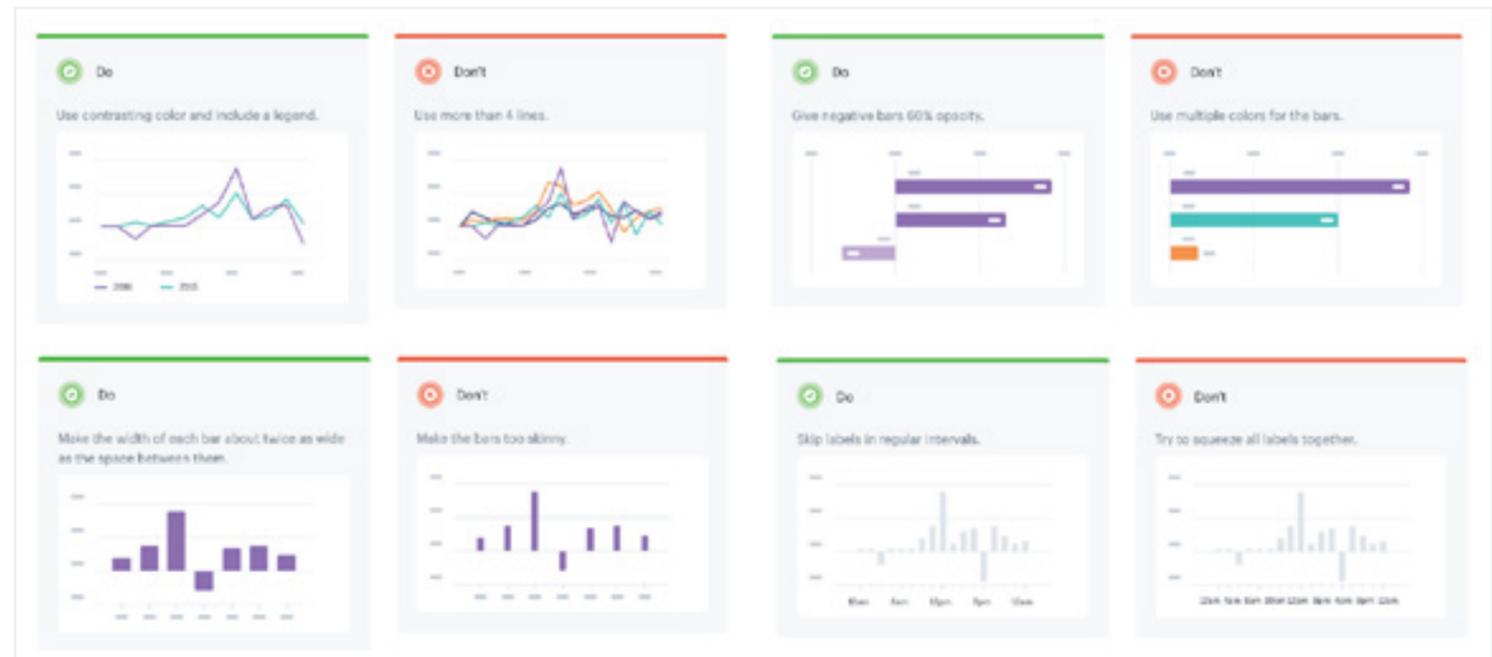
TESTING WITH REAL DATA

Testing with real data will reveal the effectiveness of the visualization. Also test when there are a few data points (one or two) or many data points (100+).

SCALING BY NUMBER OF DATAPOINTS

Think about how the visualization will scale with more or less data points. Look out for cases where data is sparse (mostly zero) or spiky (some values are much larger than others).

And in In this incredible brand guidelines from **Truth**, they spend
two full pages telling their employees how they should visualize data.

When you have a ton of teams working on different projects,
these brand guidelines should help them present a united front.

Guidelines like these are very easy to overlook, but when used properly, it
goes a long way toward fostering a cohesive brand presence – especially
for more complex media like infographics and data visualizations.

Conclusion

Don't send mixed messages when it comes to your brand.

Take inspiration from today's top brands and make your own brand style guide to allow everyone representing your brand to produce collateral quickly, efficiently, and with confidence.

Build an effective brand style guide with these seven simple steps:

1. Kick off your brand style guide with a great brand story
2. Present your official brand name
3. Use logo guidelines to create a recognizable brand signature
4. Include your brand's core color palette
5. Dictate your typography hierarchy
6. Define your brand voice
7. Specify the imagery and iconography that makes up your visual style

Or work with one of our pre-designed templates–just pop in your own branding and you're off to the races!
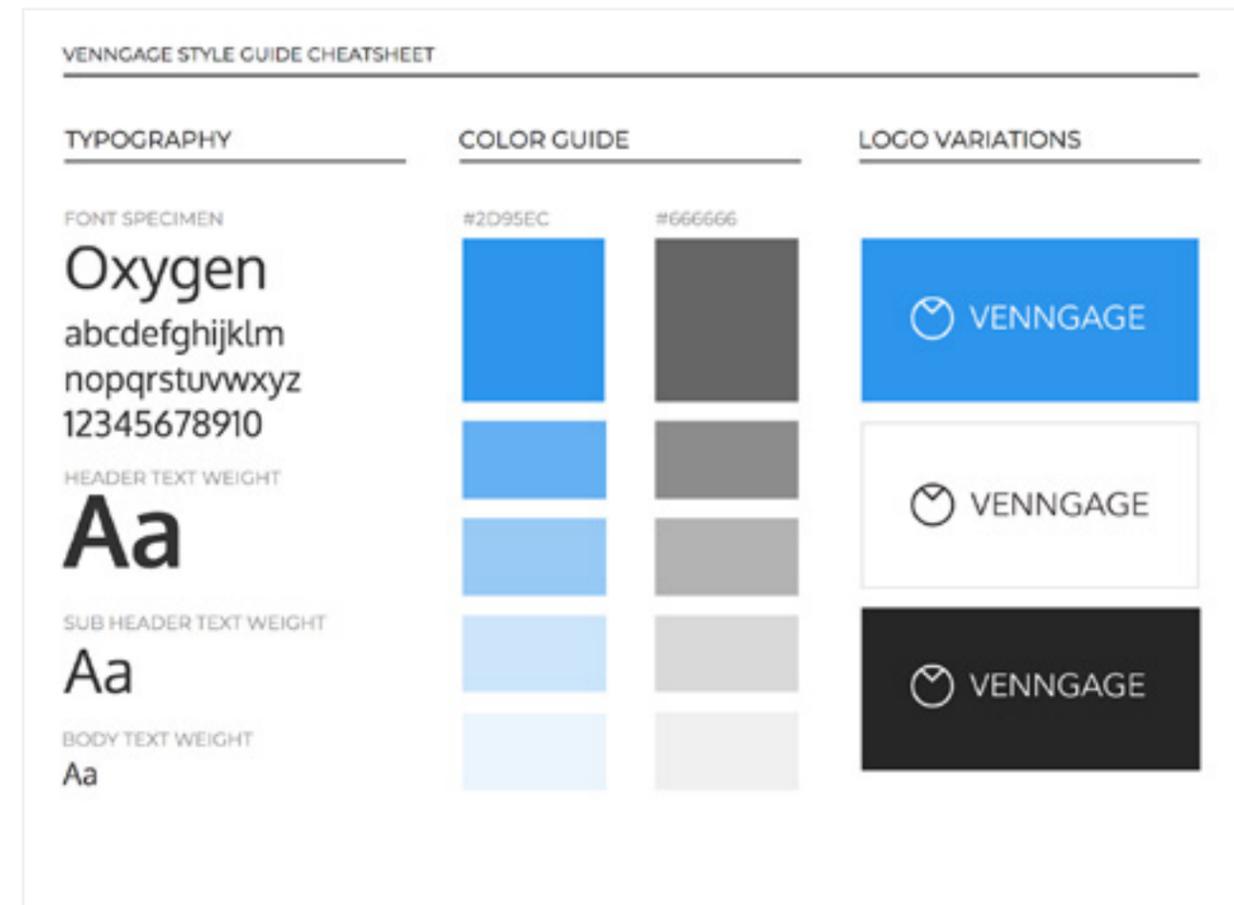

If you find that something about your brand is not working, fix it! A brand style guide should be an ever-evolving document, which is why we've made editing and **sharing a breeze**.

VENNGAGE

Hiring a graphic designer is pricey. With Venngage's online graphic design software, people of all design levels can create professional visuals.

Venngage's Business plan offers over 500 customizable templates for a wide variety of needs -- from infographics to presentations to reports. Your Brand Kit makes it easy to apply your company logos, brand fonts, and brand colors to any design.
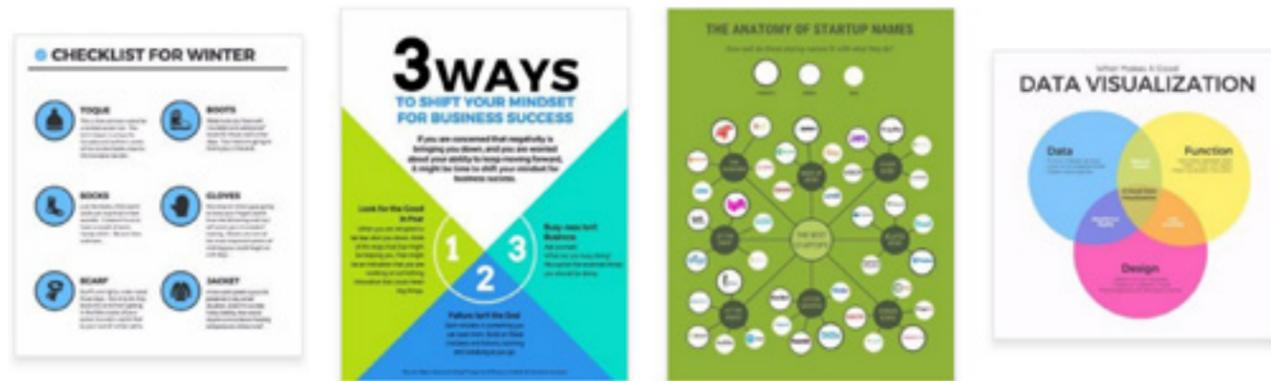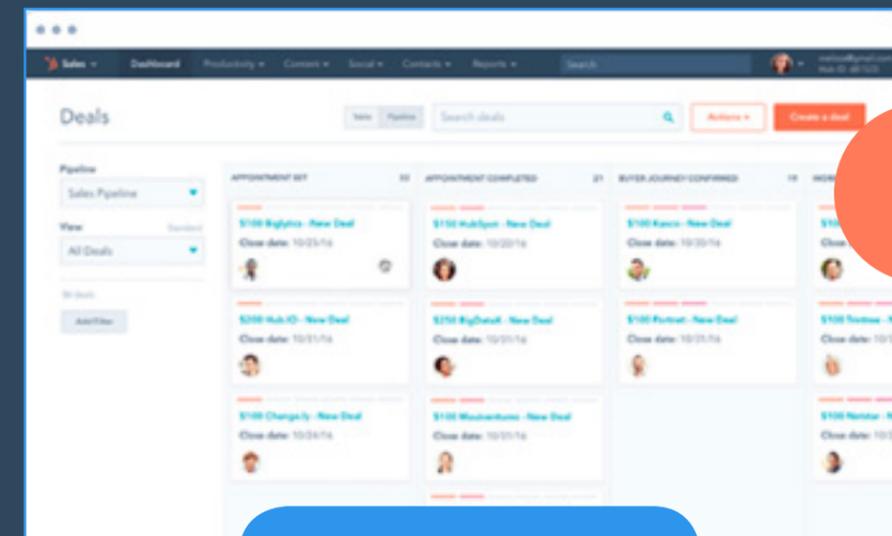

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