BRAND IDENTITY CHECKLIST

MODASSIC MARKETING
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THANKS!

Thanks for downloading this brand identity checklist. Your brand is one of your most valuable assets. However, too many small to medium-sized businesses don't take the necessary steps to properly define and use their brand.

We hope this guide will help set you on the path to properly defining and protecting your brand.

RYAN SHORT // Founder of MODaslic
Introduction

When asked why one loves the Apple brand, it’s never just about the Apple logo. Sure, it’s cool to have a laptop with the glowing apple on the back. But usually you like it because of the open and clean design of their retail stores and website, the way their product packaging feels when you open it, the design of the user-interface, the photography, the type, the commercials, the hype before the yearly keynote, etc. The brand is not one of those things individually, but all of them working together.

A brand is both the physical and emotional representation of your company. It’s the impression you make and how you communicate without saying a word. But it doesn’t happen accidentally.

Your brand identity can influence things like profit and consumer loyalty just as much as (and sometimes more than) your actual product or service, so it needs to be strong, unified and clearly defined. The only way Apple and other well-known brands work so cohesively is because there are rules and they are followed.

However, far too many small and medium-sized businesses have no brand rules or brand standards at all for current and future employees to follow. Brand guidelines should answer all questions and act as a filter. Without rules, you’ll see different shades of brand colors, different fonts on everything, and even incorrect usage of logos.

“YOUR BRAND IS YOUR MOST VALUABLE ASSET—DEFINE IT AND PROTECT IT.”
- RYAN SHORT // Founder of MODassic

At MODassic, we believe no business is too small to take their brand identity seriously. Your brand is your most valuable asset—define it and protect it. Follow the checklist and see how your brand measures up.
Logos and Logotypes

A brand is not a logo, but it is a major component of your brand identity that can lead the rest of the design. Therefore, your logo must be an accurate representation of your brand’s personality and make sense to your target audiences.

Visually, it should be simple, easy to read and look good in one-color versions. The most effective logos stand the test of time and don’t have trendy elements like gradients. Your guidelines should note the correct and incorrect way a logo should be used in digital and print.

Sometimes brands have secondary logos and stand-alone icons, which is great, as long as they are cohesive and their usage is clearly defined.

You should have all of your brand assets easily accessible in various file types (.ai, .eps, .png, .jpeg, etc.).

- Is your logo an accurate representation of your business?
- Is your logo simple and easy to read?
- Do you have the original vector files as well as high-quality JPEGs and PNGs?
- Have you defined your primary, secondary and alternate logos?
- Do you have both approved and disapproved uses for your assets? (e.g. size and space requirements)
Typography and Font Choice

Analyze your font choices and make sure that they are a) consistent across all mediums, and b) appropriate for your business.

Fonts have personality and can change the look and feel of your overall brand. You wouldn’t use a curly font for a business trying to have a high-end, corporate look and feel. Even defining that headlines are in all caps can help create a consistent look across assets to achieve your brand’s identity.

p.s. Not all fonts are licensed for commercial use. Double check that you have the appropriate font licenses.

- Do your font choices match your brand personality?
- Are you licensed to use your fonts?
- Have you defined a headline and paragraph font?
- Are your fonts consistent across print and digital assets?
Color

Take note of what different colors communicate—you don’t want to use a shade of blue where you really should be using red. In addition, you can designate certain colors for use as call-to-actions (for example, orange could always and only be used for buttons) and use other colors to indicate different product divisions or sectors of your company.

Again, it’s all about creating consistency and color is something that can easily get skewed if not clearly defined. You should have all brand colors defined in CMYK, RGB, hexadecimal code and Pantone. Because colors on the web are created with an RGB color space, there are certain shades that simply can’t be reproduced in a CMYK printing process. Your colors should look the same online as they do in print.

It’s important for brands to know what those color values are in the different color spaces, even if you don’t need them right away. You wouldn’t want someone to guess down the road and potentially create new, off brand colors.

Do your color choices align with your brand’s personality?

Are all colors clearly defined and labeled with RBG, CMYK, Hex and Pantone color values?

Have you defined roles for the colors? (e.g. which colors are primary versus secondary, headlines only, for buttons, etc.)

Want to learn more about color? Check out our guide to color blog post here
Photography and Design Elements

Your brand should also have a defined photography style. This can be challenging, especially if you are pulling from stock photography sites. Defining the content and subject of the photos can be a good place to start. Are the people looking at the camera or are they candid? Do the people match your target audience? For app companies, a rule could be to make sure the photos always have the latest iPhone shown.

Besides the subject, the colors used within the photos can affect the overall look and feel. Take a look at the “Do it!” column in our example. There are a lot of neutral colors and pops of green. Now, take a look at your photos. Is there a filter applied to the photos? Are they all black and white? Are they really light and bright? Is there anything you avoid?

If there are specific icons or graphic elements used in designs, these should be defined for proper use. The icon style used on a brochure should match the icon style used on the website. Of course, there should be artistic freedom for the designer but big elements like patterns, icons and illustration style can easily be noted as a guide.

- Do you have a clear picture of on-brand versus off-brand photos?
- What is your source of photography and do you have up-to-date images?
- Are your icons and graphic elements defined and do they match in style?
Voice and Tone

Your brand will have an overall look and feel, but also a voice and tone that you see through its messaging platform. What is your brand trying to achieve for its customers? What does it say to its target audience? This may require training employees on your voice, but it’s necessary for a cohesive identity. Below are a few examples from Skype & MailChimp.

At MODassic, we spend a lot of time researching your target audiences to fully understand their needs and wants as well as your company’s capabilities. This allows us to see your company’s unique selling point and how to position you in the industry. This comes through in headlines, content offers and social media captions.

Defining your messaging style, voice and tone in your brand guidelines can serve as a filter for your employees when writing emails, press releases and even social media captions.

☐ Is your voice first-person or third-person?

☐ Is the tone of your communication friendly? Sarcastic? Serious? Professional?

☐ What is your unique selling point? Is that coming through in your messaging?

☐ Does your voice on social media differ from your voice in press releases? Is this defined?

Our tone of voice.

The Skype tone of voice is unique. As a company built around our users, the Skype voice is always plain-speaking and human.

Our products are always explained in the simplest terms. If your mum couldn’t understand what is being written, then it’s not the Skype voice.

Humour is an important part of the Skype voice. We don’t tell one liners, but employ a gentle wit to engage our users.

For instance “You could think of us as that overly generous Aunt who always insists you have a third helping. We prefer to think of ourselves as a big group hug, even a present. Yes that’s it, we’re a present but without the ribbon.”

hahahahahaha

hehe

I don’t get it.

MailChimp’s voice is human. It’s familiar, friendly, and straightforward. Our priority is explaining our products and helping our users get their work done so they can get on with their lives. We want to educate people without patronizing or confusing them.

One way to think of our voice is to compare what it is to what it isn’t. MailChimp’s voice is:

- Fun but not silly
- Confident but not cocky
- Smart but not stodgy
- Informal but not sloppy
- Helpful but not overbearing
- Expert but not bossy
- Weird but not inappropriate
Brand Management

You don’t always need a dedicated, full-time brand manager, but someone at your company should function as a brand guardian—the gatekeeper for all of your brand assets. This person will be in charge of keeping your branding consistent and will keep track of all of your brand assets.

To do this successfully, everyone at your company should be aware of the brand standards, understand the importance of following them, and have easy access to your brand guidelines and brand assets, like fonts and icons. Most of the time, brand standards are violated because someone didn’t have the logo file or font they needed and it was quicker to just do something on their own than track down the proper rules and assets. To solve this, create a brand identity guide in both a PDF and online version so that it is easily accessible by all employees and vendors.

At MODassic, we create a PDF brand guideline document for clients that they can share with employees and vendors. In addition we have developed a custom brand ID portal that houses all of our clients brand rules and assets online so they are readily accessible.

- Does someone at your company function as a brand manager?
- Do you have a brand identity guide in both PDF and online formats?
- Do all employees understand that there are specific fonts, colors and brand rules that need to be followed?

BRAND INTERPRETATION

How is your brand being received?

How people talk about your company online and in-person is also part of your brand. Consider how you respond to online reviews, who tags you in posts and who is an advocate for your company. The brand manager can monitor this behavior and suggest what is working as is not as time goes on.
Conclusion

Your brand is what sets you apart from other companies. It’s not just your logo or the colors you use—it’s how all of your assets work together to communicate your brand’s personality. A cohesive brand identity is the cornerstone of your marketing, and can greatly impact your success as a business. In this ebook, we talked through the essential elements of a brand guide and how to achieve brand consistency throughout print and digital media. We also discussed the importance of having someone manage your brand and its various assets.

By now, you should be well-equipped to achieve a consistent brand identity. If you have questions or are interested in seeing how working with an agency can help you unify your brand elements and create an ROI driven marketing strategy, give MODassic a call at 214-295-5165 or visit us at modassicmarketing.com.