

Graphic standards

Who cares?
And why do they matter?

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for smart marketing

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“Great design is not democratic; it comes from great designers. If the standard is lousy, then develop another standard.”

- Edward Tufte

At Mindpower, branding is our business. And having been in this business for 15-plus years, we know how important staying true to your brand really is.

Your brand is your identity – it’s how the outside world perceives you. Every logo, color, font, image, and word you associate with your brand helps define it. (So every logo, color, font, image, and word must be chosen carefully.)

Take Google.

Before you google Google (tongue twister much?), try picturing the logo in your head. Playful, primary colors. A simple (but distinct) typeface. Occasional whimsical imagery for the seasons, holidays, etc. Piece of cake, right?

That’s no accident. Google undoubtedly spent countless hours defining who they are, or better yet, who they wanted to be. In the end, they most certainly came up with a clearly defined graphic standards guide. And now, nearly every man and woman in the world knows them. Does Google stray from their graphic standards? No. And neither should you.

Saatchi & Saatchi has developed [a list of 20 tips](#) for designing effective guidelines. We’ve outlined our favorites here:

1. First, understand: Who will be using the guidelines? What will they gain from them? Where and how will they be accessed?
2. Pick up one big idea that permeates the brand. Explain how following the brand guidelines will help communicate this idea to your brand’s key audiences.
3. Live the brand; design the guidelines in the look and feel of the new brand design.
4. Have a clear introduction upfront to explain why the guidelines have been produced and how adhering to them will strengthen your brand.
5. Guide, don’t tell. Engage the user. Tone of voice is key, so keep it short and simple. (And fun!)
6. Have a clear typographic hierarchy (i.e. Headings, Introduction copy, Body copy).
7. Make rules flexible enough for designers to be creative, but rigid enough to keep the brand easily recognizable. Occasionally situations will call for rules to be bent, but never broken. Continuity is key, especially if you need the brand to breathe and extend across multiple media.
8. Show clear examples of how the brand should look across a full range of different media.

9. If your brand has been mishandled in the past, consider including a “Don’t Do” section, showcasing common errors.
10. Basic contents should include: Company Values or Spirit, The Big Idea, Toolkit, Copywriting and Tone of Voice, Colors, Typography, Photography, Graphic Devices, Layout and Grids, Applications, Overview with examples, etc.

Remember: Following your graphic standards is of the utmost importance. Strong branding tells your brand story and communicates what your company/brand stands for. So spend some time coming up with your guidelines (and making them easily accessible to your employees), and stick to them. The strength of your brand depends on it.



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Who cares? And why do they matter? *cont.*

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