

Your Brand Needs a Visual Style Guide: Here's How to Create One

One of the most essential documents any business can have is a brand style guide, yet many don't have one.

Why are style guides so important? They ensure brand consistency throughout any collateral you produce – no matter who created it.

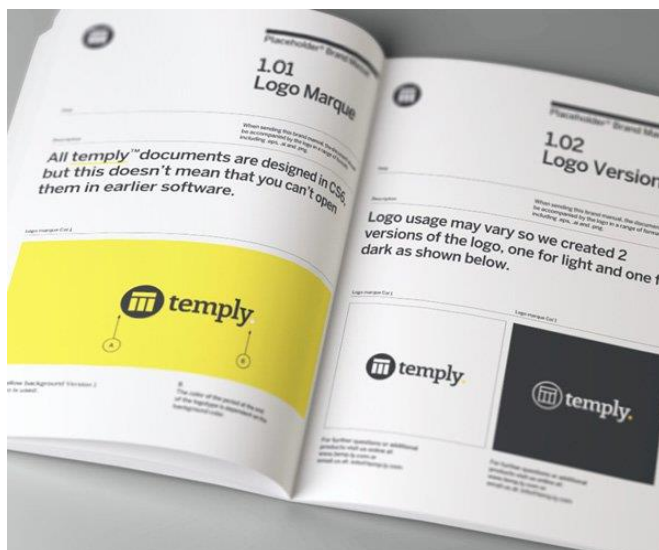
Style guides (or brand bibles) contain all the necessary information to create whatever your company needs. Whether it be a website, advertisement, internal memo, or whatever else, this little document will make your life a breeze. So, if these guides are so important, why isn't everyone on the bandwagon?

The biggest reason is time. Style guides don't just magically appear. They take time and effort to create, and time is a precious thing. But how much time does it take to explain to a designer how much space you need around your logo at all times? And how they're not supposed to change any of the colours? What about finding every font you use and having to relay that to them as well? Not to mention any iconography you've got circulating. Then when you hire a second designer since your business is booming, you'll have to explain it all over again.

Do yourself a favour. Create a style guide now and save yourself a lot of time and frustration down the road. Let's get started with some basics:

01. Dictate your logo size and placement

Your logo is an incredibly important part of your brand, and you want it to be reflected consistently along the way. In your guide, you can dictate exactly how to use your logo.



Here Temply dictates proper logo use as well as the variations that are acceptable for other colour usage in [their style guide](#).



Here you can see how they used their brand guide to place the right logo on their annual report.



It's also important to show how to not use the logo. Designers are creative by nature, and it's important to show them what they're not supposed to do alongside what they should. You can see these instructions outlined here in [Oxford University's style guide](#) by Gulp Creative. That way if there's any issue, you can refer them to the style guide and show where it clearly states how the logo can and cannot look.

If your company has multiple logos it uses you can condense the pages down and include all of the above information in single pages, or have pages dedicated to each logo, which you can see in the example from [FedEx's style guide](#) below.

06 | Operating Company Signatures

Whenever possible, use these preferred signature configurations. Artwork for all of our signatures can be downloaded from fedexbrand.com.



02. Pick your colour palette – and stick with it

Colours can be easily shifted from designer to designer or program to program. It's important to give the exact hex code for web use as well as CMYK values and Pantone colours for items that will be printed.

Shifts between RGB and CMYK can be severe, so be sure to manually check any conversions to make sure they're accurate, which saves both time and money if printing.

08 | Identity Colors

Color shows our spirit and promotes brand recognition. Our powerful corporate colors, FedEx Purple and FedEx Light Platinum, reinforce the stature of our company. Specific colors from our palette are used in the signatures of our operating companies, as shown below.

The preferred custom-engineered inks for FedEx match colors are available from authorized vendors. Contact INK International Ink Co. at (510) 791-2016 or Monarch Ink at (901) 458-1700.

FEDEx MATCH COLOR	PANTONE® EQUIVALENT	CMYK	RGB	WEB-SAFE HEX
FedEx Purple	PANTONE 2885	C90 M100 Y0 K0	R102 G0 B153	66 00 99
FedEx Light Platinum*	PANTONE 877	C0 M0 Y0 K37	R153 G153 B153	99 99 99
FedEx Light Platinum Reverse**			R204 G204 B204**	CC CC CC**
FedEx Light Gray	PANTONE Cool Gray 5	C0 M0 Y0 K37	R153 G153 B153	99 99 99
FedEx Light Gray Reverse**			R204 G204 B204**	CC CC CC**
FedEx Orange	PANTONE 021	C0 M85 Y100 K0	R255 G102 B0	FF 66 00
FedEx Green	PANTONE 361	C75 M0 Y100 K0	R0 G204 B0	00 CC 00
FedEx Blue	PANTONE Process Blue	C100 M0 Y0 K0	R0 G153 B204	00 99 CC
FedEx Red	PANTONE 180	C0 M100 Y80 K0	R255 G0 B0	FF 00 00
FedEx Yellow	PANTONE 1235	C0 M00 Y100 K0	R255 G204 B0	FF CC 00
FedEx Yellow Uncoated†	PANTONE 1161H			
FedEx Gray	PANTONE 404	C0 M0 Y18 K50	R153 G153 B153	99 99 99
White		C0 M0 Y0 K0	R255 G255 B255	FF FF FF
Black		C0 M0 Y0 K100	R0 G0 B0	00 00 00

* Use of this color based on this page, you may use the PANTONE® color codes for identification, which can be found in the current edition of the PANTONE® color guide. The colors shown on this page and throughout this guide have not been evaluated by Pantone, Inc. for accuracy and may not match the PANTONE® Color Checkers. Contact Pantone/PANTONE® Publishers for accuracy info.
 **Other registration techniques are available outside the use of FedEx Light Platinum; you may use FedEx Light Gray.
 †Use these colors to create self-adhesive labels when reverse signatures appear on boxes.
 ‡Approved PANTONE® equivalent for FedEx Yellow.



Here you can see how FedEx dictates the appropriate colour codes to ensure consistency across the board.

03. Choose fonts that reflect your unique identity

Fonts are a large part of any collateral you produce, and it's essential to be consistent with your typography throughout in order to look professional. Often you'll have many different typefaces each for a different purpose. In your guide you can dictate what typeface goes where and how to use it.



Here the headline typeface is depicted in [The New Agency's style guide](#) by Studio by K, as well as several other font combinations. This guide could benefit from showing sizing, kerning (the spacing between your letters and words), and leading (the distance between lines of text on the page).

Here you can see how their typography was implemented on their website.

04. Select iconography to set you apart

Iconography can really help set your brand apart. Include it in your guide to make sure it's being used appropriately. You can link specific sets within the guide so they're much easier to find.



This design by [Sam Small for BUNKR](#) is a great example that demonstrates how patterns and icons can be used effectively. Here you can see the size variations and colour preference, but as you'll see in the next image can change in certain instances.



Here you can see the pattern was adjusted to black and white to be used as a receipt, but in the next image it is used in its full colour state for the interior of an envelope.



05. Set a style for your photography

Photography can also be a reflection of your brand. Specific styles evoke certain responses, and people can recognize a brand based off of a photo. While photos are necessary for all brands, if it's an important part of yours it's something you should include in your guide for any photographers you work with to reference.

Photography Style

REDFERN BRAND IDENTITY GUIDELINES

A distinctive photographic style has been developed. It is based on a sense of welcome. It should reflect what it is like to live, work and learn in Redfern and make people want to visit the area. It should support our brand essence of 'Welcoming spirit' and our brand values: vibrant, living culture, diverse, forward-thinking.

Mood
Warm, friendly, fun, open, optimistic and positive

The main principles are:

- The large 'smile' device, where this is used the image should be composed so that it forms a 'face'. As shown in the examples on the following pages, the images can use two people or objects to form this composition.
- Colourful: use of natural colour - no filters or colour cast light effects, no black-and-white unless intended for monochromatic application.
- Believable situations: imagery should be real-life scenarios that depict people in Redfern going about their day-to-day life. It should feel warm, friendly and engaging and make you feel that you will be welcome if you visited the area.

People
Shots should be simple, direct and feature real people, not fashion models. They should show interaction to reflect relationships between people. The people captured, can either be looking off camera or giving direct eye contact. People should look positive, approachable and natural with an appropriate mix of race, age and gender to reflect the area.

Location
To provide authenticity locations should be from around the Redfern area.

Specific shots
We are developing a library of images available for use. From time to time you may need to be more specific in your communications and this may involve using a particular location, talent and getting them to act in a certain way. Within this situation, it is very important to create a sense of naturalness and to avoid clichéd poses or effects. All our photography should support our brand attributes through characteristics of the people, their actions and their environments.

Vibrant
Context: Redfern has a positive, exciting and transformative energy.

People: Enthusiastic, engaged, inspirational

Living culture
Context: Redfern has a rich, living culture drawn from its Indigenous heritage and its enduring creative and artistic associations.

People: Creative, bohemian, respectful

Diverse
Context: Redfern gives you the opportunity to experience something different and it may not be what you're expecting.

People: Eclectic, cosmopolitan, open-minded

Forward-thinking
Context: Redfern has a history of innovation and interesting things continue to happen there - it is embracing the future with an understanding of the past.

People: Aware, original thinkers, inquisitive

Photography Specifications

Banner Images
The dimensions for images used on banners need to be actual size at 100dpi. The size recommended above allows for an image to be approximately 7 metres by 1.5 metres. If an image is to be produced larger than this then a larger file size will be required.

• Web Format - 1024px x 768px (361mm x 271mm) @ 72dpi, jpg
• Print Format - 4863px x 3720x (420mm x 315mm) @ 300dpi, jpg or TIFF
• Large Format - 7874px x 5808px (2000mm x 1500mm) @ 100dpi, jpg or TIFF

This page taken from [Redfern's brand style guide](#) is a little word heavy, but it lays out exactly what a photographer would need to know for whatever they happen to be shooting. It gives style reference as well as specs to make sure everything transitions from the photographer to you smoothly.

Photography Examples

REDFERN BRAND IDENTITY GUIDELINES



Images for style reference only. These images are not rights released for use by the Redfern brand.

Keep in mind that photographers are visual people. If you're going to provide them with specifications give them some examples they can reference as well.



Or consider this image taken from [District's style guide](#), created by Creature Design. You can see a similar style reflected in their magazine below.



06. Don't forget about web-Specific Elements

Today it is a necessity to have your brand online in one form or another. Your site should feel like your brand just as much as anything else you produce. A lot of the things you use for print will translate just fine over to the web, but there are some things that are strictly online that you might not have thought about.

There are often multiple pages to a website, and each page needs to look related to the next. Decide what information is most important and form a hierarchy to be used throughout. The buttons and navigation bar should match your brand style, as well as a 404 page (fun 404 pages make light of an inconvenient situation).

07. Set your brand voice

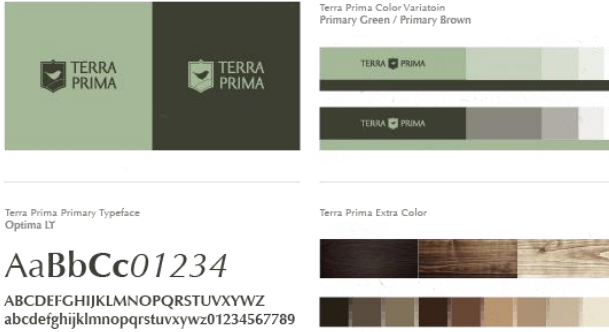
A brand voice is just as important as the brand style. Your brand should sound and look a certain way. In an ideal world, you'd have one person constantly writing everything your brand needs, but most of the time that's not possible. Giving the writer you have on hand guidelines for how they should dictate your brand will help avoid any instances of sounding off-brand.

You might include particular words and phrases that should always appear, or be sure to say which words should be avoided. Maybe you only want to appeal to women over 65 who love to knit, be clear to include who you're targeting and how it should sound.

08. What It All Boils Down To

You may be curious how collateral turns out when you have a style guide, and the images below are great examples.

Terra Prima_Logotype Constant



Here is an excerpt from [Terra Prima's style guide](#), and you'll see in the next two images how this single page is applied to different media.



You can see the elements of the style guide coming together to help shape these pieces.

Now that you know the basics, you may be wondering if everything above is completely necessary for your brand, and the answer is probably not. Every brand will need different

information. There are some brand guides that are over 100 pages, and some that are as short as a single sheet. Determine what is most necessary for you and go from there.

It's also important to realize that brands change. The style guide you create this week might be different than the one you're using in a year. Allow for flexibility, but always be sure to save old versions to refer back to.

That last thing you need to decide is whether this is a public or internal document. There are pros and cons to both. If your document is public, you can give anyone who needs it the information directly through a link. The downside is anyone can get their hands on it and potentially rip off your branding.

If you choose to keep it internal it can be a lot easier to update. You won't have to worry about how professional it looks either since it won't be viewed outside of the company, although it is more difficult to relay to outside sources.

However, you decide to make your style guide, it should be clear and concise. Whether it looks so fantastic you want to make it available for all to see, or not so great and you just want to keep it within the family, it should do one thing: make the design process smooth and simple for all