

Brand guidelines

The rules for how your brand looks and sounds, short enough that people use them. Fill it in once and keep it in one shared place.

Brand

Owner

Version

Last updated

1 The brand in one line

What you do and for whom, in words a new hire could repeat.

What we stand for

What we will never do

2 Voice: we are, we are not

Pair each trait with the line it must not cross, plus a sentence that sounds like you.

We are

We are not

Sounds like (one example line)

3 Logo

Which version goes where, the space around it, how small it can go, and what to avoid.

Primary version, and where to use it

Other versions (stacked, icon, one color)

Clear space

Minimum size on screen

Minimum size in print

Misuse: what nobody may do to the logo

4 Colors

Primary colors first, then secondary, with every value and where each one goes.

Name	HEX	RGB	CMYK	Use

5 Typography

Each font with its weights, sizes and a fallback for slides and email.

Used for	Font and weight	Sizes	Fallback font

6 Imagery and illustration

What your photos and illustrations show, how they look, and what they never show.

Photography: what and how	Illustration and icons	Never use

7 Contacts and where the files live

One owner and one link, so old logos stop spreading.

Contacts	Where the files live (logos, fonts, photos)
Brand owner	
Design lead	How to ask for a new asset
Legal sign-off	

Worked example

A filled guide for a business bank

A sample to show the level of detail that works. The brand, its colors and its fonts are illustrative.

1 The brand in one line

Business banking for owners who would rather be running their business.

We stand for: fees shown up front, and a real person when it matters.

We never: use fear to sell, hide a fee or talk down to a customer.

2 Voice: we are, we are not

We are

We are not

Sounds like

Direct

Blunt

"Your transfer is late. Here is why, and what we did."

Warm

Chummy

"Good question. Here is the short answer."

Expert

Full of jargon

"You can claim this back. It takes five minutes."

3 Logo

Primary: horizontal, full color, for web and print. Stacked version for square spaces.

Clear space: the height of the mark on every side. Minimum: 24 px wide on screen, 25 mm in print.

Never: stretch it, recolor it, add a shadow or place it on a busy photo.

4 Colors

Name	HEX	RGB	CMYK	Use
Harbor Blue	#1F4E79	31, 78, 121	74, 36, 0, 53	Logo, headings, buttons
Signal Orange	#E8772E	232, 119, 46	0, 49, 80, 9	Calls to action only
Sand	#F4EFE6	244, 239, 230	0, 2, 6, 4	Page backgrounds
Ink	#1C1C1C	28, 28, 28	0, 0, 0, 89	Body text

5 Typography

Used for	Font and weight	Sizes	Fallback font
Headings	Source Serif 4, Semibold	32, 24 and 18 pt	Georgia
Body text	Inter, Regular	11 pt print, 16 px web	Arial
Labels and captions	Inter, Medium	9 pt print, 13 px web	Arial

6 Imagery and illustration

Real customers at work, in natural light, in the middle of a task.

Flat shapes in brand colors only. Icons drawn with a 2 px line.

Posed handshakes, piles of cash, 3D renders, heavy filters.

Before you share it

Seven checks. A guide that passes them is one people will open.

- ☐ Someone new could pick the right logo file in under a minute.
Test it on a colleague outside marketing. If they ask which file, rename the files.
- ☐ Every color has HEX, RGB and CMYK values.
Screens use HEX and RGB, print uses CMYK. A missing value means someone guesses.
- ☐ Text colors are easy to read on their backgrounds.
WCAG asks for a contrast ratio of at least 4.5 to 1 for body text. Free checkers test it in seconds.
- ☐ The voice section has example lines as well as adjectives.
"Friendly" means something different to every writer. A sample sentence does not.
- ☐ Logo misuse is spelled out.
Stretching, recoloring, shadows, busy backgrounds. Name each one, and show it if you can.
- ☐ Anyone can install the fonts, or knows the fallback.
Note the license and where to download them. Slides and email often need the fallback.
- ☐ There is one owner and one link.
One person answers questions and one folder holds the current files. Archive the old versions.

Rolling it out in five steps

Most of the work is getting people to use it, so plan for that part too.

- Step 1** Agree fields 1 and 2 with the leadership team
The brand line and the voice need a yes before anything visual is written down.
- Step 2** Collect the logo, color and font files
Vector logos, exact color codes and font licenses, all in one folder.
- Step 3** Fill in fields 3 to 7
Usually the design lead. Test each rule on a real piece, such as a slide or an ad.
- Step 4** Share it with everyone who makes things
Sales, HR and outside partners too. A 20-minute walkthrough beats an email attachment.
- Step 5** Review it every six months
Add new formats, fix the rules people keep breaking, and update the version number.