BRAND VISUAL IDENTITY AUDIT
Created by APX Design LLC

A solid brand is an essential component to any business and can often be the deciding factor for whether your potential customers decide to do business with you or a competitor. Conducting a thorough examination of your brand's visual elements and how they are being utilized should be conducted every few years in order to ensure they are being remain consistent and holistic. This audit was created in order to help you to determine the strength of your brand' visual identity system together with its weaknesses or inconsistencies and opportunities for improvement and new developments.

A NOTE ON TONE, VOICE, AND MESSAGE: A brand's tone, voice and message are its ways of verbally expressing its personality. The primary focus of this audit is on your brand's visual identity or the "look and feel" of your brand. Ideally, the two should be in perfect alignment. Therefore, if you haven't already, I recommend first reviewing your brand's use of tone, voice and messaging in your marketing collateral in order to help guide your brand's visual identity.

This audit will guide you through various elements as they apply to your brand's visual identity and how it has been applied throughout your marketing collateral. For this purpose, "marketing collateral" refers to the collection of media your business uses to support your sales and marketing efforts (ex. business cards, brochures, website, emails, etc...) This brand audit has been grouped into 5 primary metrics:

1. **How consistent are the visual elements used throughout your brand's touchpoints (logo, fonts, typography, color palette, icons and graphics, patterns, photography)?**

2. **How well does your visual identity represent your brand's personality?**

3. **How well does your visual identity speak to your company's target audience?**

4. **How well does your visual identity distinguish itself from your top competitors?**

5. **Are the appropriate types of branded marketing collateral being utilized?**

Consistency

How consistent are the visual elements used throughout your brand's touchpoints (logo, fonts, typography, color palette, icons and graphics, patterns, photography)?

Design Element	Questions
Logo	Do you have a primary and secondary logo mark? Do you have standard logo "lockups" based on placement and usage? Is there consistent usage for each? Has the logo quality been compromised in any of your marketing collateral?
Colors	Do you have a standard color palette that is used consistently across all media? Do you have a secondary color palette?
Fonts	Are the same fonts being used throughout all your marketing collateral? Are you utilizing no more than 2-3 font families in your designs?
Typography	Are the typographic styles consistent throughout all your designs?
Company name usage	Is your company's name referred to consistently accross all media (only company's full name is used vs acronyms)? Is the name written or spoken differently in different situations?
Photography styles/ subject matter	Is your product photography or brand imagery consistent? Is the subject matter and styles used consistently across all your designs?
Patterns/Textures	Do you use a consistent pattern in backgrounds or as a decorative element in your designs?
Graphics	Do you have a consistent style for graphics (ex. flat, geometric, hand-drawn, simple, detailed)? These may include illustrations, icons, charts, or any other graphical element.

Representation of Brand's Personality

How well does your visual identity represent your brand's personality?

Design Element	Questions
Logo	Does your logo's design represent your brand's personality through its use of colors, font, or imagery?
Colors	Does the psychological meaning behind your brand's color palette's align with your core message? See for reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_psychology#Brand_meaning

Fonts	Does the personality of your brand's fonts match your brand's personality? Ex. Bold, delicate, formal, artistic, etc...
Typography	Does the use of typographic styles accurately reflect your brand's personality? Ex. Large, bold headlines, clean, organized paragraphs, etc...
Company name usage	Does your company's name represent it's personality? Ex. Does it sound too formal or too casual?
Photography styles/ subject matter	How accurately does the style and subject matter of photography used in your marketing collateral reflect your brand's personality? Are they bold and bright, dark, sophisticated, formal, informal, color, black and white or monochromatic? If the subject matter includes people, are they posed or candid? Is the style of your photography well-suited for your type of industry (ex. sports vs. fashion).
Patterns/Textures	How are patterns and textures used as accents to your design and to reflect your brand's personality? Do the patterns used reflect aspects of your logo? Do they reflect technology or nature? Do they add a roughness such as in grunge textures?
Graphics	If your marketing collateral use graphic elements such as charts, illustration, or icons, how well do they match the personality of your brand? Are they bold and colorful? Flat or three-dimensional? Hand-drawn? Simple or detailed?

Appeals to Target Audience

How well does your visual identity appeal to your company's target audience?

Design Element	Questions
Logo	Does the style of your logos - color, fonts, graphic, appeal to your target audience? Does the design itself connect with your customers, whether inherently or due to a connection built up over time?
Colors	Does your brand color palette appeal to your target audience demographics (age, gender, personality). See for reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_psychology#Brand_meaning
Fonts	Do the personality of the fonts used in your marketing collateral represent the personality of your target audience? Would sans-serif or serif, geometric or calligraphic, bold or thin font styles better appeal to your customers?
Typography	How does the typographic style used in your marketing collateral impact your customer's perception of your brand? Are the typographic styles used in your marketing collateral large and bold, simple and elegant, playful?

Company name usage	Does your company name connect with your target audience? Would they prefer it to sound more or less formal?
Photography styles/ subject matter	Does the style and subject of photography used in your marketing collateral appeal to your target customer? Do your photographs show people and if so, do the people shown appeal to your audience? Would they relate better to other types of images? Does the style of your photography appeal to your audience? Is it better suited for a different demographic?
Patterns/Textures	Do patterns and textures used in your marketing collateral appeal to your target audience? Examples: grunge textures, technology patterns, natural textures, etc...
Graphics	Does the style of graphics used in your marketing collateral appeal to your target audience demographic? For example, if your demographic is young children, would a simpler, more cartoonish style of graphics be more appealing?

Differentiates from Competitors

How well does your visual identity differentiate itself from your top competitors?

Design Element	Questions
Logo	Does your logo stand out from competitors while still representing your brand? Is there a different style or imagery than what is typically used by logo designs for companies within your industry that still achieves the goal of representing your brand and appealing to your specific target audience?
Colors	Companies within the same industry tend to use similar colors within their branding. However, color can be utilized as a distinguishing factor for your brand that helps your customers to identify you over your competitors. Is there another color palette that can be used that matches your brand's personality and speaks to your target audience, but it not the same as what your competitors are using?
Fonts	Are the style of fonts used in your marketing collateral similar to your competitors or do you use different styles of fonts to help you stand out? Is there another font that matches your brand's personality and speaks to your target audience, but is not the same ones your competitors are using?
Typography	Is your use of typographic design in your marketing collateral similar to your competitors or do you use it to help your brand stand out? Is there another typographic style that matches your brand's personality and speaks to your target audience, but is not the same style your competitors are using?

Company name usage	Does your company's name help to distinguish your brand from competitors while still representing its personality and value proposition?
Photography styles/ subject matter	How is photography and photographic styles utilized to help differentiate your brand from your competitors? Does the subject matter speak specifically to your target customer niche? Does it represent a unique value proposition that distinguishes your company from competitors?
Patterns/Textures	Are the patterns and textures displayed within your marketing collateral used as a distinguishing element to represent your unique brand?
Graphics	Do the style of graphics used in your marketing collateral distinguish your brand from competitors? For example, if your competitors are all using geometric vector icons on their website, could your brand use hand-drawn icons instead?

Branded Marketing Collateral

Are the appropriate types and amount of branded marketing collateral being utilized? The following are some of the more common types of branded marketing collateral that can be created to develop a cohesive brand identity.

A NOTE ON LOGO USAGE: One of the primary goals of any logo design is that it works well across all media. After determining which marketing collateral may be most effective for your business, look at your logo's design to determine how well it works in a variety of formats from small on business cards and mobile devices to large on billboards. Does it work on both light and dark backgrounds? Does it look good on different materials such as paper, glass, metal, embroidery, or anywhere else it needs to be displayed?

Marketing Collateral	Application
Business Cards	Do you meet your potential customers in person, at networking events, trade shows, workshops or any other situation that would allow you to share your contact information on a business card?
Brochures, flyers, rack cards	Do you present information about your company at events such as trade shows, workshops, or speaking engagements?
Letterhead/ Envelopes	If you utilize printed letters and mail for your communications, the stationary your company uses can be designed to reinforce your brand - include your logo, color palette, font families, etc...
Post Cards	Direct mail can still be an effective form of marketing for some companies, if done correctly. When utilizing direct mail, be sure to also utilize your brand's visual identity for the design.

Print Ads	Print ads should clearly and succinctly promote your brand's message, coupled with your brand's visual identity elements - logo, photography or graphics, color palette and patterns.
Signage, Billboards and Posters	Signage, billboards, and posters have a very short amount of time to serve as a display of your brand's messaging, and visual identity elements. Make sure they are as simple and clear as possible while still remaining effective.
Banners and Trade show Displays	If your company presents at trade shows or conferences, branded booth materials such as banners and panels can be created to reinforce your brand's visual identity.
Websites and Landing Pages	Websites are the online hub for all your marketing and branding activities. Read the "Design and Branding" section of our Website Audit for an in-depth breakdown of how to ensure your website is cohesive with your company's brand. https://apxdsgn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Website-Audit-Worksheet-APX-Design.pdf
Emails	All brand design elements can be utilized in your email templates. Another branding element that can be utilized in your emails is the signature - be sure to include your logos, fonts and color palette. Note: emails are limited on what fonts can be used since they must be installed on the recipient's computer to ensure they display correctly. If your fonts are not standard to all computers (ex. Arial, Times), be sure to replace them in your emails with one that is.
Social Media	Your social media profile image, cover image and images you post should all be designed to reinforce your brand's visual identity.
Video	Intro and outro graphics, music or animations can be utilized in your promotional videos. Your brand's fonts and typographic styles can be used for titles. Graphic and image styles, color palettes, and patterns should all adhere to your brand's visual identity standards if utilized.

For questions or for assistance with implementing any of the strategies discussed in this audit, contact jpribble@apxdsgn.com