

Developing Brand Guidelines

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Abstract

This research uses brand guidelines as an example of writing in the field of technical communication. This is done through both the explicit description of how to develop brand guidelines and in the use of the stated guidelines in the actual creation of the infographic. The CRAP principles of design and color theory were used when making the infographic, as well as consistency of font, sizing, spacing, and other elements of design. This project was created with a few different audiences in mind. As an infographic, it has the overt purpose of informing readers about how to create brand guidelines. However, it also has the covert purpose of showing readers how much thought goes into the presentation of a brand and how marketing tactics are used to entice consumers into parasocial relationships with brands. Additionally, this project serves to demonstrate that technical writing is about creating bland user manuals and terms and conditions pages. It's an exciting, multi-faceted, audience-centered field that has a variety of applications.

Brand Guidelines and Technical Communication

When considering the field of technical communication people often think about user manuals, terms and conditions, and other less-than-interesting documents that tend to be ignored unless absolutely needed. However, this is not all that technical writing consists of. The Society for Technical Communication defines technical communication as any form of communication with one of the three following characteristics:

- Communicating about technical or specialized topics, such as computer applications, medical procedures, or environmental regulations.
- Communicating by using technology, such as web pages, help files, or social media sites.
- Providing instructions regardless of the means or medium, or the technicality of the described task. ("Defining Technical Communication")

The last two aspects of this definition stood out to me the most when researching the technical writing field. As someone with an interest in digital literacies, I was drawn to exploring how communication via social media sites falls under the umbrella of technical communication. However, the instructional aspect drew me in the most. I'm the kind of person who appreciates explicit instructions when given a task that I'm unfamiliar with. While I enjoy creative freedom, I also like to have the less-obvious constraints of the situation well-defined and codified so I can know what is expected of me. With these two characteristics in mind, the aspect of technical writing that appealed to me most was brand guidelines. Specifically, I chose to explore the field of technical writing by doing a case study of two internal brand guides for major brands: Xbox and Snapchat.

In today's world, brands are everywhere, from the eerily specific ads you get when online to viral tweets on your Twitter feed. Many students are even encouraged to brand themselves to better market themselves to employers (Hyder). The audience of the infographic I created as part of this research was two-fold. On the surface, these guidelines are for students looking to develop a brand, whether for themselves, for a club they're a part of, or for a business they're starting. By following the advice laid out in the infographic anyone can put together a professional-looking marketing campaign for the content they're looking to advertise. Additionally, these guidelines also have a more meta-purpose of informing students about the thought and detail that goes into the creation of a brand to remind them that brands are not people. As I alluded to before, it's somewhat startling how pervasive brands are in our lives. Many of us tend to form parasocial relationships with brands, believing we have a strong tie with a brand because of their social media presence (Rheingold; Labrecque 135). With this infographic, I also wanted to call attention to the ways brands tailor their content to their target audiences. Brands put a lot of thought into what they want to convey to their audience, and it is important for users to recognize when they are being marketed to and the tactics brands use.

In the creation of the infographic itself, I mainly drew inspiration from what I had learned from studying the internal brand guidelines from Xbox and Snapchat, along with the CRAP (Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, Proximity) principles of design (Whybrow). While the infographic explicitly states how to develop brand guidelines, I also demonstrated to viewers how one could enact the rules within the text by following my own advice in the creation of the graphic. I took great care to ensure consistency of font, sizing, spacing, and other elements of design. I kept the infographic fairly minimalistic, following the proximity element of the CRAP principles. This minimalism keeps the reader's attention on the information, rather than distracting them with huge blocks of text or unnecessary pictures (Whybrow). Additionally, there are only two colors, baby blue and lavender, that when used in text along with black and white provide contrast with the background, another of the CRAP principles, making the

graphic easier to read (Whybrow). Also, these two colors are both associated with soothing, light-hearted emotions (Gremillion). As my purpose was to be informational, I chose calming colors rather than bright, exciting colors to reduce the emotional charge of the content.

In doing this research and creating this infographic, I not only got to learn about the field of technical communication, but I also got to take on the role of a technical writer. In completing this project, I found myself considering the audience of the piece much more frequently than I do in other writing, and I feel this is an aspect of technical communication that writers would benefit from transferring to other types of communication. Understandability is a major aspect of good writing, and it's easy to consider the reader when you're creating concrete instructions for your audience. I hope this infographic conveys not only how to develop brand guidelines but also that technical writing is an exciting and multifaceted career field. It's an important aspect of our lives, and there's much we can learn from this audience-centered field that we can apply to other types of writing.

Works Cited

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Infographic

DEVELOPING BRAND GUIDELINES

When working to build a following, having consistent brand rhetoric is key. Putting brand guidelines into place helps maintain cohesive brand identity so everyone is on the same page. Take some time to consider what you want your brand to be, then use the points below to create guidelines so your audience recognizes your work on sight.

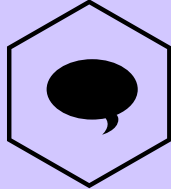
BRAND PRINCIPLES



MESSAGING PRINCIPLES



CREATIVE PRINCIPLES



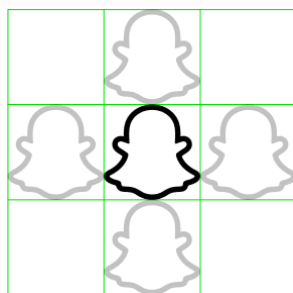
VOICE/TONE

These principles serve as the signposts for all creative approaches and design decisions made for the brand. The colors, words, and tone you use matters; users will interpret your brand differently based on these principles. You don't want your brand to seem too serious if you're marketing toward children, for example.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

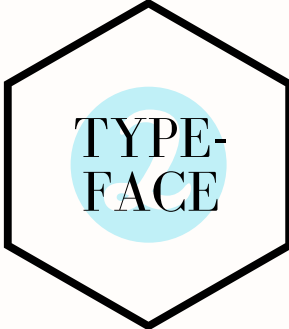
Visual rhetoric is extremely important in branding. Your brand principles will only appeal to users if they can easily identify them as part of your brand - and that's where the visuals come in. In branding, a story is only as good as the package it comes in.

Snapchat logo empty space guidelines



Be sure to have downloads easily accessible of your logo(s), as well as rules for how much white space is required around them and how they should be styled in different contexts.

Having one or two font families at most is important for having an easily identifiable brand. Be sure to specify when each family should be used, what weights are acceptable when, and what min/max font sizes are.



Full range of Snapchat's typeface - Graphik

- Graphik Thin
- Graphik Thin Italic
- Graphik Extralight
- Graphik Extralight Italic
- Graphik Light
- Graphik Light Italic
- Graphik Regular
- Graphik Regular Italic
- Graphik Medium
- Graphik Medium Italic
- Graphik Semibold Italic
- Graphik Bold
- Graphik Bold Italic
- Graphik Black
- Graphik Black Italic
- Graphik Super
- Graphik Super Italic



Xbox color codes and proportions



Choosing one main identifiable color for your brand helps users recognize it on sight. Be sure to also consider the proportions of which secondary and neutral colors are acceptable, and provide HEX, RGB, CMYK, and PMS codes for your designers.

BEING INTENTIONAL

When creating guidelines for your brand, it's important to be intentional - think about the effect of your choices on your audience. Every decision should be deliberate, from defining your overall brand principles to choosing design elements that fit those principles. If your brand rhetoric is consistent, your user base will be consistent as well.

Color

PMS	HEX	RGB	CMYK
Snap Yellow #SNA001	#FFFC00	255 252 0	0 0 95 0

We love yellow. It is one of our most important brand elements. Say hello to Snap yellow.

Snap Inc. "Color." Brand Style Guides, 2020, static.brandingstyleguides.com/2021/02/Snapchat_Brand_Playbook.pdf.

Snapchat's brand color isn't yellow for no reason; they chose yellow "because no one else did. It's bright, fun, and we own it" (Snap Inc. 10). This intentional choice solidified the Snapchat brand into what it is today.

If your brand is fun and flirty, your chosen audience can be drawn in with bright colors and a fun, but easily readable, font, while more serious brands should go for muted colors and a basic typeface.

Convergence Rhetoric



Lindsey Wright is a senior at the University of Central Florida majoring in Writing and Rhetoric and minoring in Linguistics and Political Science. She is a peer tutor in the University Writing Center and an assistant editor for *Stylus: A Journal of First-Year Writing*. Her work has been previously published in *Convergence/Rhetoric* and *IMPRINT*; she also served as an editor for *IMPRINT*'s 19th issue. After graduating in Spring 2022, Lindsey plans to attend graduate school for either Linguistics or Rhetoric and Composition. In her free time, she loves to sing, read, and spend time with her dog, Zero.