

A FREE UNCOM MEDIA RESOURCE



The Brand Standards **Guide** **Checklist**

Everything that belongs in your brand standards guide, from the logo and color palette to trade show booths and merchandise, so nothing is left to guesswork.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Work through each section and ask honestly: do we already have this documented?

Anywhere you hesitate is a gap in your current brand standards.

Use it to audit an existing guide, or as the outline for building your first one.

CLARITY • CONSISTENCY • TRUST

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A Note Before You Start

Most organizations have a logo file somewhere and an unofficial sense of their brand colors. Very few have a real brand standards guide, a single document that tells every employee, vendor, and partner exactly how the brand should look, sound, and show up, in every situation.

That gap shows up everywhere once you start looking for it. One department uses a stretched version of the logo on a flyer. Another picks a font that is close enough. A booth at a trade show looks like it belongs to a different company than the website. None of these are big decisions on their own. Together, they quietly erode the thing a brand is actually for: being recognizable and trustworthy, consistently, everywhere someone encounters it.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A brand that looks different every time someone sees it is not really a brand yet. It is a logo with no rules attached.

This checklist walks through everything that belongs in a complete brand standards guide, the obvious pieces like logo usage and color, and the pieces most organizations forget, like social media alignment, trademark language, trade show design, and even what kind of merchandise is and is not on brand.

We built this at UNCOM Media because we have seen how much time, money, and credibility gets lost when a brand exists only in someone's head instead of on paper. Work through it section by section. Wherever you find yourself unsure of the answer, that is exactly the gap worth closing.

*With clarity,
The UNCOM Media Team*

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SECTION 01

Why Every Organization Needs a Brand Standards Guide

A brand standards guide is not a design document. It is an alignment document.

Its job is to make sure that everyone who represents your organization, employees, designers, vendors, printers, sponsorship partners, is working from the same set of rules instead of their own best guess. Without it, consistency depends entirely on tribal knowledge: whoever has been there longest, or whoever happens to still have the original logo file.

A real brand standards guide answers questions before they turn into inconsistent decisions. What font goes on a slide deck. How close another logo can sit next to yours. Whether a photo style fits. What is and is not acceptable to put your logo on. When those answers live in a shared document instead of in one person's memory, your brand survives staff turnover, new vendors, and fast growth without falling apart.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Every inconsistent use of your brand is a small withdrawal from the trust and recognition you have spent years building.

SECTION 02

Mission, Vision, and Values

Before a single color or font, your guide needs to say what the organization actually is.

Mission, vision, and values get blurred together constantly. Keep them distinct. Mission is why you exist today. Vision is where you are headed over the next five to ten years. Values are the handful of behaviors that actually guide real decisions, not the ones that just sound good on a wall.

MISSION STATEMENT

VISION STATEMENT

CORE VALUES (THREE TO FIVE)

WHY THIS MATTERS

Every visual decision later in this guide should trace back to these statements. If a design choice does not reflect them, it does not belong in the brand.

SECTION 03

Brand Positioning and Voice

Positioning is the sentence you could say out loud, from memory, that explains why someone should choose you.

Your guide should include a clear positioning statement, your primary and secondary audiences, and what genuinely differentiates you from the alternative someone would choose instead. It should also define brand voice: is your organization formal or casual, serious or playful, reserved or bold. Write down three words that describe how the brand should always sound, and a short list of words and phrases the brand uses and avoids.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

THREE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE OUR VOICE

WORDS AND PHRASES WE AVOID

SECTION 04

Logo Usage and Protection

The logo section is where most brand guides start, and where most brands are actually broken.

Document every approved version of the logo: full color, single color, reversed for dark backgrounds, icon only, and stacked versus horizontal lockups. For each one, specify minimum clear space, minimum size for print and for screen, and which file formats to use for which purpose, vector formats like SVG or EPS for print and professional design, PNG for digital use, never a screenshot pulled from a website or a document.



EXAMPLE: PRIMARY LOGO LOCKUP, ON DARK BACKGROUND, WITH DEFINED CLEAR SPACE

DO

- Use only approved source files
- Maintain clear space on all sides
- Use the reversed version on dark backgrounds

DON'T

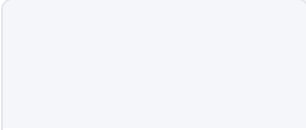
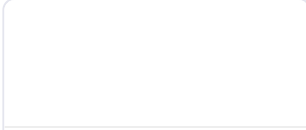
- Stretch, rotate, or skew the logo
- Recolor it outside approved variations
- Add drop shadows, outlines, or effects

SECTION 05

Color Palette

Every brand color needs an exact, documented value, not a description.

Define a primary palette and a secondary or accent palette. For each color, list the HEX value for digital use, RGB for screens, and CMYK or Pantone for print, so a color never has to be eyeballed from a screenshot again. Note which colors are approved for backgrounds, which are reserved for accents and calls to action, and which combinations meet accessibility contrast standards for text.

			
Primary HEX / RGB / CMYK	Accent HEX / RGB / CMYK	Neutral HEX / RGB / CMYK	Base HEX / RGB / CMYK

Shown here as a layout example. Replace with your organization's own documented values.

SECTION 06

Typography

Typography is brand voice you can see before anyone reads a word.

Name a primary typeface for headlines, a secondary typeface for body copy, and an approved web-safe fallback for situations where the brand fonts are not installed or licensed, such as email or shared documents. Establish a clear size and weight hierarchy so a headline, subheading, and body text are always recognizable at a glance, regardless of who built the document.

HEADLINE

Aa Bb Cc

SUBHEAD

Aa Bb Cc

BODY COPY

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg

CAPTION / LABEL

AA BB CC**APPROVED FONTS AND FALLBACKS**

SECTION 07

Photography and Visual Style

Two photos taken on the same day can feel like they belong to different companies if there is no documented style.

Define the mood, lighting, and color grading your photography should follow. Specify whether people in photos should be candid or posed, what settings are on brand, and what to avoid, generic stock photography, mismatched lighting, or imagery that does not reflect the people you actually serve. Include guidance on cropping, aspect ratios for web and social, and how photos should be treated when logos or text are placed over them.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Photography is often the first emotional impression of a brand. Inconsistent imagery undercuts even a perfect logo and color palette.

SECTION 08

Social Media Brand Alignment

Social media is often the most inconsistent brand touchpoint of all, and the most visible.

Document approved profile photos and cover images for every platform, along with correct sizing for each. Define how the brand voice translates to captions, comments, and customer replies. Include guidance on hashtag use, how team members should identify the organization in their own bios, and how a personal post differs from an official one. If multiple people post on behalf of the brand, this section is what keeps the account sounding like one organization instead of several.



Profile and cover images are correctly sized for every platform in use.



Bio language matches the approved positioning statement.



Caption voice and tone matches the rest of the brand.



A clear process exists for who approves posts before they go live.

SECTION 09

Trademark and Legal Usage

Protecting a brand legally is as important as protecting it visually.

Note whether your name, logo, or tagline are registered trademarks, and how the TM or ® symbol should be used, and where, typically on first mention in a document rather than every time. Include guidance for co-branding with partners or sponsors, what approval is required before another organization uses your logo, and how your brand should be referenced correctly in press materials, contracts, and third party marketing.

REGISTERED TRADEMARKS AND WHERE THEY APPLY

WHO APPROVES CO-BRANDING OR PARTNER USAGE

SECTION 10

Print and Digital Applications

Show the brand in use, not just in isolation.

Include real examples or templates for business cards, letterhead, email signatures, invoices, presentation templates, and proposal documents. For each one, note exact placement of the logo, approved colors and fonts, and margins. This is often the section people reference most, because it turns abstract rules into something they can literally copy.

APPLICATION	WHAT TO STANDARDIZE
Business Cards	Logo placement, contact font, paper stock, size
Email Signature	Font, logo size, colors, layout, legal disclaimer text
Presentation Template	Title slide layout, fonts, chart colors, footer format
Letterhead and Documents	Margins, header and footer placement, approved fonts

SECTION 11

Trade Show and Event Standards

A trade show booth is your brand at full scale, often standing next to a competitor's.

Document booth graphics, banner stand design, signage, and tablecloth or backdrop colors. Include guidance for staff apparel at events, badge and lanyard design, and how giveaway materials and printed collateral should look next to each other. The goal is that someone walking the show floor recognizes your booth as the same organization as your website and your social media, without needing to read the sign.



Booth graphics and banners use approved colors, fonts, and logo versions.



Staff apparel is consistent and on brand.



Printed materials at the booth match the current brand standards, not an outdated version.



Signage is legible and correctly sized for the venue.

SECTION 12

Branded Merchandise

Not everything deserves your logo on it.

Define what kinds of merchandise are actually on brand, apparel, drinkware, notebooks, tote bags, tech accessories, and which are not worth producing. Set a quality standard: cheap, poorly printed merchandise can damage a brand more than having no merchandise at all. Note approved logo placement and minimum size for embroidery versus print, and which colorways are acceptable on which product colors.

CONSIDER

- Items people will actually use again
- Quality that reflects the brand's standards
- Simple, legible logo placement

AVOID

- Low quality items that wear out fast
- Overcomplicated designs shrunk to fit
- Items with no real connection to the brand

SECTION 13

Brand Governance and Approval

A brand standards guide only works if someone actually owns it.

Name a brand steward, the person or team responsible for maintaining the guide, approving exceptions, and answering questions. Document where the current logo files, templates, and this guide itself live, so there is one source of truth instead of five different versions saved on five different laptops. Establish a simple approval process for new materials before they go public.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Brand Steward	Owns the guide, approves exceptions, keeps it current.
Design Approver	Reviews new materials before they are published or printed.
File Owner	Maintains the single source of truth for logos and templates.

SECTION 14

How to Implement Your Brand Standards

A finished guide that sits in a folder no one opens has not actually changed anything.

Roll it out deliberately. Share it with every employee, not just the marketing team, since anyone can end up creating a flyer, a slide, or a social post. Walk new hires and vendors through it as part of onboarding. Audit existing materials, business cards, templates, social profiles, signage, against the new standards and fix what does not match. Set a review date, at least once a year, to keep the guide current as the organization grows.

 Share the guide with every department, not only marketing.

 Add it to new hire and new vendor onboarding.

 Audit existing materials against the new standards.

 Update outdated templates, signage, and profiles.

 Schedule an annual review of the guide itself.

SECTION 15

Quick-Start Checklist

A short version of everything in this guide. Use it to see, at a glance, what your organization already has documented.

- ☐ Mission, vision, and values are written down.
- ☐ Positioning statement and brand voice are documented.
- ☐ Logo usage rules, clear space, and file formats are defined.
- ☐ Color palette is documented with exact HEX, RGB, and CMYK values.
- ☐ Approved fonts and hierarchy are established.
- ☐ Photography style and imagery guidelines exist.
- ☐ Social media profiles and voice are aligned across platforms.
- ☐ Trademark and legal usage guidance is included.
- ☐ Print and digital templates exist for common materials.
- ☐ Trade show and event standards are documented.
- ☐ Merchandise guidelines are defined.
- ☐ A brand steward and approval process are named.
- ☐ A rollout and annual review plan exists.

A FINAL NOTE

A brand standards guide is not about restricting creativity. It is what makes every future decision faster, because the hard choices were already made once, carefully, and written down.

YOU HAVE THE BASICS DOWN

Now Let's Build The Real Thing.

A checklist can show you the gaps. Closing them, with a brand standards guide built specifically around your organization's mission, voice, and visual identity, is where UNCOM Media comes in.

[SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION](#)

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