brandworkz®

The five principles of brand management

5 principles that will help you preserve the integrity of your brand (and the sanity of your mind)

So you've built a great brand. Now what?

A well-established and consistent brand is one of the holy grails of business. It's a huge – albeit intangible – asset for your company, and one of the magic keys for driving value. It bolsters your relationship with your customers, fosters trust and boosts adoption. And on top of that, your brand can also help you command a higher price. All of this is pretty important stuff – in any industry.

Unfortunately, it's really quite hard to get 'brand' right.

The thing is: glossy advertising and glamorous launches are exciting for your entire company. But the long, complex process of creating and establishing your brand – and the often angelic patience it takes to roll it out across subdivisions, departments, partnerships, geographies, channels, and regulations… well, these things tend to draw a much smaller crowd.

If you're reading this, you're probably one of the lucky buggers tasked with doing exactly that. And you know this better than most people: a consistent brand represents huge value to your business.

How to beat the brand anarchists
Yet, sometimes it can feel as if everybody were conspiring to undo your hard work: teams create off-brand collateral that makes you cringe, partners use outdated logo files, approval stalls because your Head of Compliance is on holiday. These things make brand value go straight out the window. They keep assets from being ready when people need them. And they're immensely irritating to marketers like you who are trying to move their brand, and their business, forward – but are constantly having to put out fires by hand instead. (Sound familiar?)

This playbook is about the 5 principles that will help you put an end to that. It's based on our experience helping hundreds of companies manage their brand faster, more consistently, and with more control - and make sure it represents their business in the best possible way. That's the bloody point, after all, isn't it?

What's in it:

- **A handy checklist** to help you assess how well your brand management processes are serving you now.

- **5 ways to handle the common obstacles** that are holding brand marketers back – and

- **what to look for** in technology that enables brand management in a complex environment (Hint: look for the highlighted three Cs – collaboration, consistency, and compliance)

- **A chapter on proving value:** How to demonstrate brand value and Return-on-investment-in-brand-management (erm…ROIBM?) to your stakeholders

- **…and a heartfelt plea** to empower your teams, start to actively manage and evolve your brand, and take your damn job back.

Ready? Let's go.

How well do your tools serve you today?
Take a good hard look at your own brand management experience

If you're anything like most marketers, you're using a mix of different tools to create and organise your collateral – from Digital Asset Management (DAM) to creative suites, CRM, Marketing Automation, collaboration tools such as Sharepoint, office templates and email. If your business is very small, this might even work for you (though, honestly: we doubt it works very well). But in a more complex organisation, it's more than likely that such a cobbled-together system will make brand management a crazy (and resource-intensive!) ride.

We've put together this nifty checklist to help you figure out where you are on the complexity (and brand management headache) scale. It's simple – the more boxes you tick, the more we'd recommend you look for a dedicated platform.

How many of these pains have you experienced?

- **Asset jam.** You often experience bottlenecks during asset production (e.g. briefing, design, approval, publishing)

- **Brand anarchy.** Colleagues and external partners use off-brand images and templates, and generally ignore your guidelines

- **Channel collapse.** You struggle to keep your brand consistent, especially across all channels

- **Manual labour multiplication.** You're spending a lot of time manually updating, and copying and pasting content and information between systems (this includes versioning torment)

- **Duplication fog.** There's no visibility of assets that other teams or regions have already created – so your organisation ends up producing loads of duplicates and variants

- **Outdated content.** You frequently find teams using archaic assets – and have no way of monitoring expiring content or image licenses

- **Compliance bother.** Regulatory compliance is a hard, manual slog – and slows everybody down: approvals take forever, and you need to produce audit trails for every piece of content

- **International free-for-all.** It's hard for you to monitor and manage the way international teams use your brand

- **Reactive working.** You're the number one go-to for anything brand-related. That's why you're spending too much of your time fielding requests for ad-hoc, low-level work instead of strategically evolving your brand

How many of these issues do you share?

None? Go, you! Your job is done here. Have an ice cream.

Up to two? You're probably fine for the next year or so.

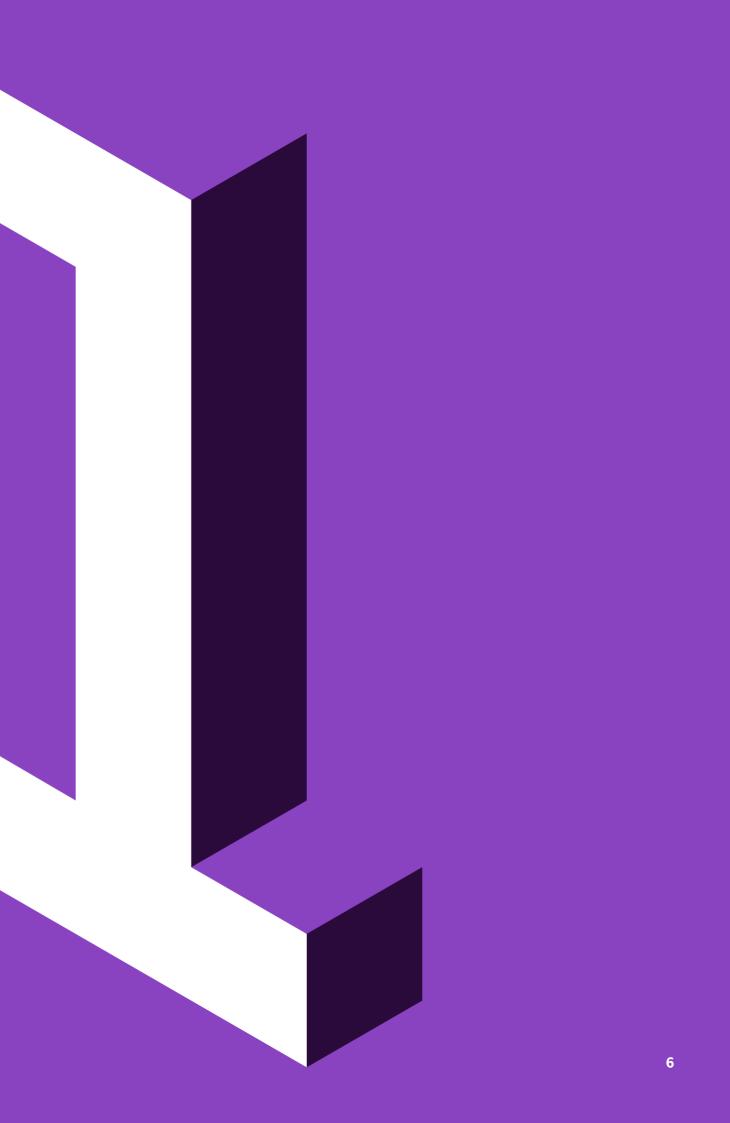**Three or more? Then we strongly suggest you read on.**

In the following chapters we'll take a look at the five principles that eliminate most of the agony above, and make modern brand management possible – and we'll talk about what to look for in technology that can support you in the process.

Principle #1
All things brand need to live in a central, accessible place

For high-volume asset production to work, collaboration (between departments, teams, partners, markets, etc.) needs to be possible. So while brand marketers should be in control of the process, they shouldn't have to do all the work themselves. (Right?!)

- You might argue that the worst brand disasters happen when you give non-marketers the power to produce their own assets. And you may be right. But it's important to remember that no-one actually sets out to butcher your brand. If they produce off-brand collateral, it's usually for one of two reasons:

1. The correct brand assets (like pictures, logos, and templates) are too hard to find

2. They don't have any information on brand usage – or the guidelines aren't user-friendly enough (we'll talk more about this in the following chapter)

What you can do about it:
Make brand guidelines and resources available to everyone.
Don't hide them in a private folder or your lead designer's head. Make sure everyone with a stake in brand collateral (and that's pretty much everyone who communicates on behalf of your business!) knows where to go, and that it's easy to access. (That doesn't mean that everyone needs access to the whole shebang. Defined user roles and permissions are a good idea if you want to control who gets to download and use which bits.)

Help users identify the correct assets.
A large chunk of a brand managers' time can be taken up by requests for logo files – and that's a huge waste of time! The lowest of all the low-hanging fruits is giving your users a way to self-service, and self-service without getting it wrong. One way to do this is through e.g. a 'logo finder' – a simple decision tree tool that gives users the correct, approved logo version for their specific usage needs, right there and then (and no excuses!).

Create a living, breathing, single point of truth.
Modern brands are always evolving. One reason users work with outdated assets is plain ignorance – i.e. they simply don't know they've been updated. That's why your brand centre should be the definitive place to go for the latest brand information – and ideally, alert users to new versions of assets they've downloaded. Needless to say, such a platform should be made for the dynamic nature of brand - and needs to be dead-easy for marketers to maintain. That includes simple updates, and expiry control that stops folks from using outdated or out-of-license materials.
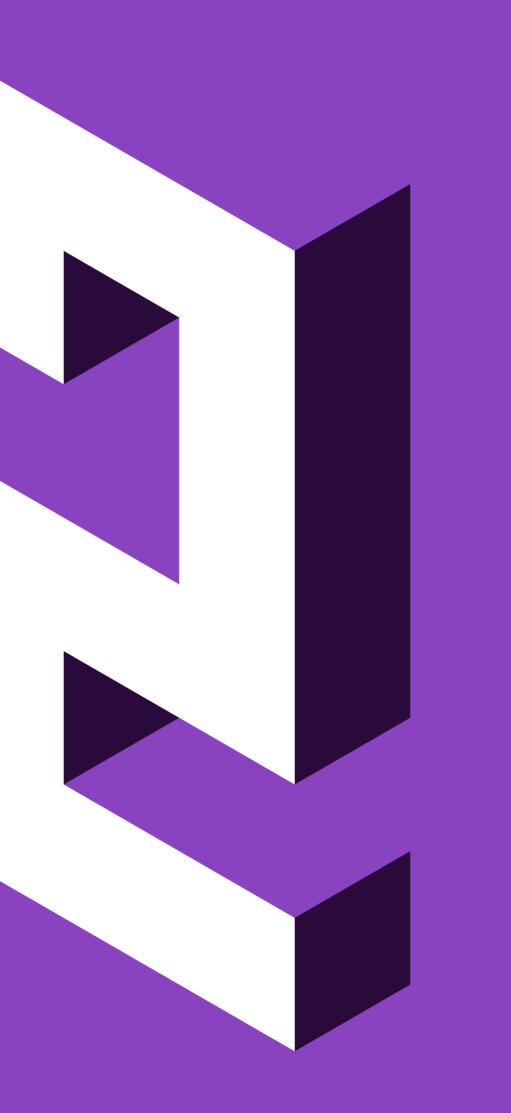
Look for tools that have:
Digital asset management functionality PLUS

- Permission management

- Expiry control

- User-friendly asset guidance

Principle #2
All users are empowered to create on-brand collateral

When you're collaborating with colleagues and partners on brand content, keep in mind that they're usually not marketing pros (the poor sods). Brand guidelines can be hard for them to comply with if they don't know them inside out. That's why the user experience (UX) of a brand management tool is so crucial: whatever you work with, it must be intuitive and easy-as-pie for anyone to do the right thing, and produce assets that are consistent with your brand.

The reason DAMs fall short for brand management is that they just hold stuff – images, templates, etc. But they don't guide their users in any way, or help them create or adapt on-brand assets. And if you've ever seen 400-page-strong brand guidelines, you know just how hard it can be to find that specific application example you need – or generally know what to do.

What you can do about it:

Invest in a platform specifically made for brand management.
A brand management tool should go beyond simply storing assets. It will be a live platform with interactive functionality that links assets straight through to up-to-date templates, application examples, the relevant guidelines, and already signed-off collateral your teams can use. And it should help to manage these things, not just store them. (That includes expiry control, easy updates, lifecycle management, and a whole lot more. We'll dig deeper in the next chapter).

Take the risk out of self-service
Such a tool gives brand managers like you the control they need to let users create their own collateral. By providing partially editable templates (e.g. a brochure into which partners or franchisees can place their logos, and addresses) through a self-service function, they allow people to fulfil their ad-hoc requirements quickly, without messing with your brand, or needing brand management's help. (That's of course, unless you want to help. We'll talk about this in principle #3: workflows).

Celebrate successful campaigns and materials
Toot your own horn. Use your brand management platform to share all of your marketing materials with stakeholders and users. Showcasing your work is one of the best-kept secret in brand management – for three reasons:

1. It inspires people. Professional materials and best-practice content give your teams something to aspire to – and re-use. This tends to drive consistency, and – because everyone can see what already exists – massively reduces duplicate work.

2. It makes hard work work harder. Re-using good work is great for budgets and general efficiency – but more importantly, it also boosts the adoption of successful campaigns, and promotes best practice. Take mobile UX, for instance: if A/B testing has shown you that a blue "buy now" button with rounded corners gets the best conversions in your app, you can help everyone in your business build from that finding – and give them a shortcut to success.

3. It's the bedrock of your business case. There's no better way to demonstrate the value of brand management to your stakeholders than to show them all your sexy campaigns and assets in one place. It's a terrific way to build internal confidence in your brand, rally the troops, and earn some much-deserved kudos.

Look for tools that:
- Have great UX: Brand marketers and other users should find it easy to navigate the platform and quickly do/find/update/download what they need

- Combine self-service (for all users) and control (for the people in charge of brand management)

- Let you showcase best practice to show your teams the art of the possible, and avoid requests for endless variants of the same.

Principle #3
Your workflows are automated (and that includes compliance!)

Brand asset production gets very complicated, very quickly. Doing things by hand – such as updating files, copying/pasting between systems, emailing artwork for approval, etc – is not only a thankless task. It's also potentially dangerous. These processes don't add value, they increase the risk of human error, and often cause severe delays. That's why a good brand management tool eliminates manual work wherever possible – to manage complexity, ensure compliance, and keep your workflows, well… flowing.

When each asset in your organisation is produced as a one-off, the chances of a missed approval, or final check and proof-reading, are enormous. And that means that brand consistency and compliance are pretty much impossible to guarantee. Yikes.

The compound complexity of brand assets

But even if you do have a basic workflow management system in place (if so, congrats! Few organisations do.), it's unlikely to do justice to the reality of brand asset production – which, let's face it, can be incredibly complex. Here's why:

No-one else does things your way. Your workflows – for requesting, creating, approving, and publishing a brand asset – are unique to your organisation. Certain departments need to be involved, certain steps followed, and certain people need

to sign things off. At a minimum, that'll involve Brand and Marketing, as well as copy and design resources.

It's not exactly a neat and tidy process, is it? In most cases – and especially if your industry is highly regulated – it's way more complex than that. You have to include oodles of departments and functions in the process: various departmental stakeholders, Compliance, Legal, Partners, etc. Add to that mix the tons of iterations a creative asset goes through (If an image changes, who needs to see and approve that? How about copy? Cool to use? Or does it have to go back to Legal?), the many assets you're probably producing in parallel, the frequently changing data and copy that goes into them, the deadlines you're trying to hit, and the audit trail you have to file for each single piece, and it becomes clear:

If you're producing brand stuff without some very good automation, let's just say you'll be camping out in the office for the next few months, on a bed of spreadsheets, getting your dinners from the vending machine and you'll maybe, if you're incredibly organised, see your family at Christmas for a few hours before it's back to work. Or else. Soz.

Let's face it: you need *sophisticated* automation

A mature brand management tool can help with all of the above. But, when you evaluate vendors, be absolutely certain they offer advanced workflow capabilities. This is important. Do not compromise on their tool's ability to handle complexity. Because if it can't, you will have to. So make sure it's

- **Customisable.** So you can tailor it to your business environment; and rest assured the correct process is followed for every single project (When is that ever that case now?).

- **Made for complexity** – and able to deal with branching, parallel approval flows, and multiple iterations without going into meltdown

- **Flexible and contextually sensitive enough** to revert to simpler workflows where those are enough – to save time

- **Integrated with Web-to-Publish.** So that any new artwork that's created automatically goes into the approval workflow (and nothing falls through the cracks!)

- **Automatically handling compliance for you.** A fully digitised process that creates an automatic digital audit trail for every single asset you create.

This is about strategy as much as it is about process: only when you can fully trust your software to follow the right steps – however complex – in the right order, every time around, will you be able to allow yourself to take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

Look for tools that:
- Automate workflows

- Let you customise workflows to your needs

- Automate approval for any artwork created in the system

- Create automatic digital audit trails for each asset (trust us: it's a game changer)
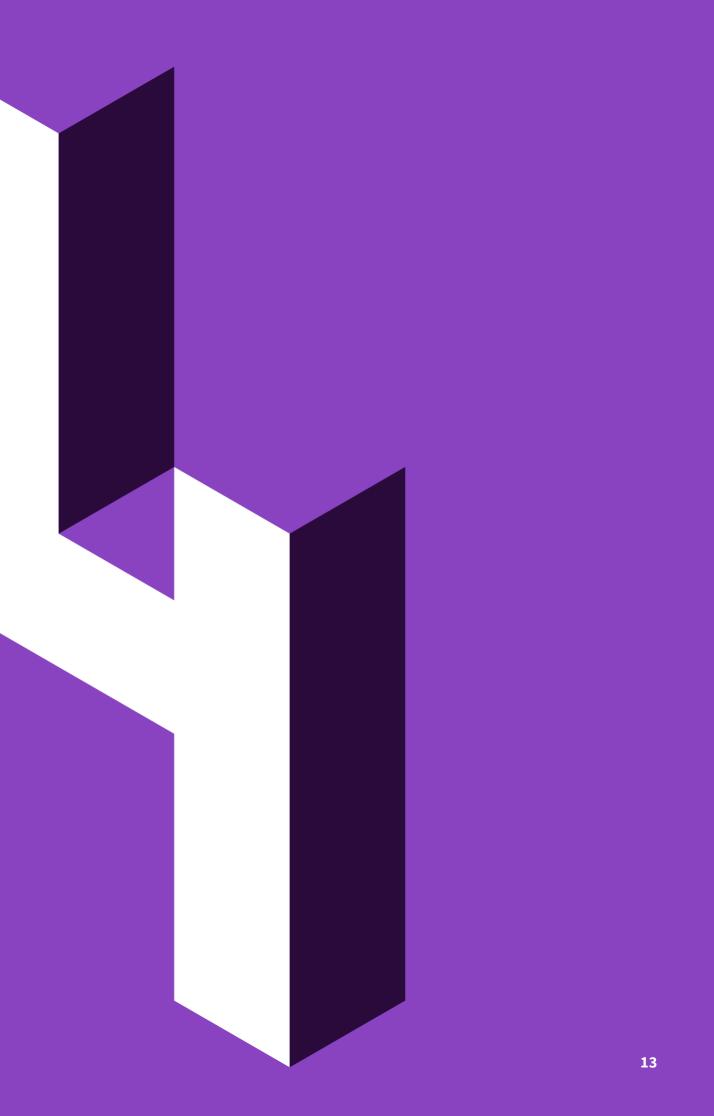
Principle #4
Your brand management platform boosts the performance of all your other digital tools

Your business may not be the most advanced when it comes to digital transformation – but there's a good chance your marketing department is. Most marketers are pretty digitally savvy – in many organisations, they've been the first to embrace new tech, drive insight from analytics, and adopt digital tools. Any brand management platform you use should help facilitate these digital transformation efforts – not add another silo.

Tap into the power of digital

Brand management presents a fantastic opportunity to make processes in your business more digital, and pioneer better ways of working. A digital tool will help you streamline and accelerate the creation of brand assets, and solve issues with collaboration and versioning. Its analytics will give you a much better understanding of the typical glitches and bottlenecks in your process (so you can get rid of them!). But the real magic happens when it becomes the central part of a living, breathing tech ecosystem.

A central platform to turbo-charge your tech stack

You've probably already got a few useful marketing tools that do important jobs for you: CRM (e.g. Salesforce), CMS (e.g. Wordpress, or Sitecore), creative tools (e.g. Adobe), analytics (e.g. Google), maybe an ecommerce suite (e.g. Magento), and possibly a few apps that are specific to your industry (such as Ellucian Banner if you're in Higher Education). But be aware: the more dedicated tech you use, the more complex your operations are likely to become.

As long as you're using all of these tools in isolation (and are still manually copying and pasting data and assets between them), you'll never benefit from their full digital capabilities – and let's face it, you'll lose control over versions in no time at all. That's why a good brand management platform should act as a central single source of truth for Marketing, and feed your digital assets straight into the other tools in your stack. In addition, it should:

- **Integrate with any tools that you use** – and pull the latest data straight into your assets (whether that's a report, a timetable, or a customer address, etc). It should also sync when updates come through.

- **Be an integrated tool** – that can fill any gaps you may have in your tech stack – and help you roll out brand activities at scale (even if you don't have all the specialised tools).

Tools that automate workflows and the power to orchestrate your best tech will help you to take brand management to the next level. They're the core elements that allow you to take yourself out of the everyday, low-level management processes, and only get involved when you're strategically needed – all while boosting speed, quality, consistency, and the efficiency of the process.

The next chapter – and the last of our 5 principles – is about proving these things with cold, hard numbers. And proudly demonstrating – to the rest of your business - the value of a tough job done well.

Look for tools that:

- Natively integrate and sync with your Martech stack

- Have brand management capabilities of their own (e.g. Web-to-Publish).

Principle #5
Better brand management adds value to your business – and you can prove it

Brand managers and marketers may feel the pain of broken, inefficient brand management processes – but quantifying their cost to the C-suite is a whole other matter. To the business decision-makers, a better departmental process – for its own sake – means little; better outcomes mean everything. That's why brand marketers should always be able to articulate the direct relationship between better brand management, higher brand value, and higher overall business value to their bosses.

In many organisations, "brand" is considered a desirable asset - but also a fluffy one. And that's the crux of the problem. Unless marketers can talk about brand in terms of measurable big-boy KPIs, they'll find it hard to get buy-in for a new way of doing things.

Priority #1:
Demonstrate that brand value means business value

Consistency drives brand value. Which translates into value for your business. Here's how: a consistent brand increases awareness of your business, differentiates you from your competitors, and builds customers trust. And that, in turn, is likely to drive repeat business and let you command a higher price. Ker-ching.

Some of these aspects may be less tangible than others. But all of them can be measured. (see the boxout for a list of a few common ones – but make sure to define and measure your own targets!)

Make a habit of tracking and reporting on brand KPIs. Memorise three important ones so you have them ready at all times. They'll give you the cold hard numbers you need next time you need to demonstrate the value of your department, the need for another hire – or the budget for a brand management platform.

Some common brand KPIs …and how to measure them

KPI	Why it matters	How to measure it
Brand awareness	Potential customers already know about your business – that brings you a step closer to being in the consideration set	Focus groups/surveys; direct web traffic (URL searches); search data; social media sentiment analysis
Brand perception	The ultimate measure of the sentiment your brand generates in the market	Survey results; social listening; YouGov measure it by tracking a number of sub-KPIs ("buzz", "likelihood to recommend" etc.)[1]
Customer trust	Drives steady revenue through repeat business, as well as advocacy	Retention/churn rates; social media analysis
Repeat business	Customers are happy with your service or product (and more likely to recommend you)	Renewal data (e.g from Sales, or CRM)
Customer satisfaction and advocacy	Customers are actively raving about you – and recommendations from a trusted source carry more weight than any marketing you can create	Customers are actively raving about you – and recommendations from a trusted source carry more weight than any marketing you can create
Percentage of enterprise value	It puts a price on the value of brand (which is not usually visible in a company's balance sheet)	Experts are still debating the best way – one of them suggests calculating your return on assets and comparing it to your industry's average ROA for the same period – the difference is what your brand has contributed.[2]

Priority #2:

Demonstrate that better brand management means more time for brand value

And there's another performance aspect you can report on: the efficiency of your own operations.

Think of life before and after a brand management tool. Think of all the time and resources that used to be wasted – and can now be recovered, e.g.

- The hours spent responding to ad-hoc requests and emailing logo files

- The time spent project-managing the production of individual assets – or manually managing content and artwork updates

- The resources spent on the duplication of files across teams and markets

- The time and money that went into fixing a compliance breach

- etc

A good brand management platform can not only help you do these things faster and better. It can also help you do new things – such as identifying your most-used assets; understanding user behaviour; finding the bottlenecks in your processes and eliminating them; and gaining the ability to measure time-to-asset, before and after.

This may sound like a pure productivity play – but make no mistake: these things matter not only in terms of efficiency (and more control over brand for you). Much more crucially, they matter because they give you back the time you need to focus on creative tasks, strategically manage your brand and take your business to the next level. And that's huge.

How to demonstrate brand management value

- Make sure you own, track, and know the brand KPIs that are relevant to your business

- Explain that brand consistency, brand value and overall company value are directly related

- Use analytics to demonstrate the time and resource savings that brand management software can deliver – and how that helps you focus on the big-picture brand strategy

Brand marketers and managers: take your jobs back

If you've read this far then we think you'll believe us when we say: building and maintaining a strong, consistent, recognisable, and valuable brand – without a dedicated tool to manage it – is kind of mad.

In our experience, no business with even an inkling of an idea of the value of brand would risk their brand being distorted, damaged, or watered down. Obviously, they'd want their brand marketers to drive their business forward – not fight logo wars. And of course, they'd want to give their employees the power to make that happen.

In our experience, all of the above is true. It's just that businesses aren't sufficiently aware how hard good brand management really is. And we hope this playbook will help explain (to other decision-makers) why brand managers need a dedicated tool to help them do their tough jobs. We've seen it often: once they get it, they're usually up for investing in brand.

So, if you're looking to take back control of your brand, produce consistent, market-ready materials at speed and scale, and finally go back to focusing on strategic work, then rest assured: you're absolutely not asking for too much. Start the conversation, and make it happen. We'd be delighted to help.

This playbook has been brought to you by Brandworkz. We make the brand management platform that has helped hundreds of brand-savvy businesses take control of their brand, bring it to life across formats and channels, and drive real value from it.

We can help you do the same.

Get in touch

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