

IDUN DESIGN

BRAND GUIDELINES

Building Brand Guidelines That Endure

A practitioner's guide to writing brand standards that people actually use, from the studio that rebranded across 86 countries.

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Idun Design

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Preface: Why Guidelines Fail

A brand guidelines document that no one uses is not a failure of design. It is a failure of structure.

There is a statistic worth understanding before you commission your next brand guidelines document: 95% of organisations have brand guidelines, but only 25 to 30% actively enforce them. The gap between creating a guidelines document and having people actually use it represents, for most organisations, a significant and quietly accepted waste.

The failure mode is consistent. A studio produces something beautiful. Eighty pages. Exquisite typography. A cover that communicates authority. The client approves it unanimously. It is distributed. And then it sits, largely untouched, in a shared folder — while vendors interpret the logo freely, employees use the wrong typeface in presentations, and the brand drifts in exactly the way the document was meant to prevent.

A beautiful guidelines document that no one consults produces the same result as no guidelines at all. The measure of a brand guidelines document is not how it looks when it is closed. It is how quickly someone can find what they need when it is open.

This guide is a practitioner's account of what makes guidelines function: across different audiences, at different scales, in different contexts. It draws on 25 years of building brand identities — from a single-clinic rebrand in London's Harley Street to a company-wide identity programme deployed across 86 countries and 4,500 employees.

The principles do not change with scale. They only become more visibly consequential when the stakes are higher.

The Foundation Layer

Every brand guidelines document serves multiple audiences. The foundation layer is the only section you can require all of them to read.

What the Foundation Layer Contains

The foundation layer is not the full guidelines document. It is the 10 to 15 pages that establish what the brand is, what it believes, and what its core visual and verbal elements are. It is the section that a new employee should read on their first day, that a senior agency partner should read before briefing their team, and that a board member should be able to summarise after 20 minutes.

Brand Positioning	The one-paragraph articulation of what the brand stands for, who it is for, and how it is different. Not the mission statement. Not the values deck. The positioning — the sentence that makes every subsequent decision easier.
The Logo	The approved mark, its construction principles, and the clear space rule expressed as a value. Not "sufficient space" — a defined ratio.
The Colour Palette	The primary and secondary colours with values across all required modes: Hex, RGB, CMYK, and Pantone. No conversions left to the user.
The Typography System	The typefaces and their hierarchy. Weights, sizes, and line heights for the most common applications. Both print and web values where relevant.

The Tone of Voice

Three to five principles, each with a before-and-after example. Not "professional and warm" — the specific words and constructions that are and are not permitted.

What the Foundation Layer Does Not Contain

The foundation layer does not contain the brand's history, the rationale behind the logo's geometric construction, or the full suite of application examples. These belong in the application layers — audience-specific sections that are only read by the people who need them.

The discipline of keeping the foundation layer compact is the discipline of knowing your audience. If you cannot read the foundation layer in 20 minutes, it is not a foundation layer — it is a full document dressed in different language.

"Luxury is not a logo. It is the feeling that every detail — from the website to the wayfinding, from the business card to the bar menu — was conceived by a single, considered mind."

Geoffrey Idun — Idun Design

Structuring for Multiple Audiences

A brand guidelines document is not read by one type of person. Structure it accordingly.

The conventional approach is to produce one document and trust that each audience will read the section relevant to them. The better approach is to build the document with distinct layers: a foundation section that all audiences share, and application sections that specific audiences use.

#GRAPHIC DESIGNERS, ART DIRECTORS, STUDIO PARTNERS

01 — The Designer

Needs: Grid systems, spacing values, construction rules, type scales, image crop principles, file naming conventions, design rationale where relevant.

Does not need: Email signature instructions, vendor briefing notes, company name formatting rules.

#WEB DEVELOPERS, DIGITAL AGENCIES, PRODUCT TEAMS

02 — The Developer

Needs: CSS variables, web font stack, hex values, responsive behaviour rules, pixel-perfect measurements, accessibility contrast ratios.

Does not need: Print colour specifications, wayfinding system logic, photographic direction.

#PRINTERS, SIGN MAKERS, MERCHANDISE SUPPLIERS, EVENTS COMPANIES

03 — The Vendor

Needs: CMYK and Pantone values, file formats accepted, bleed and crop specifications, paper stock recommendations, approved logo files in the correct format.

Does not need: Brand positioning copy, tone of voice guidelines, digital application rules.

#INTERNAL TEAMS, NEW JOINERS, LEADERSHIP

04 — The Employee

Needs: Email signature format, presentation templates, how to write the company name in different contexts, what the brand stands for in plain language.

Does not need: Print production specifications, grid mathematics, developer implementation notes.

Frictionless access is the operative principle. If a developer has to scroll through philosophy copy to reach the hex values, they will stop using the document. Structure by audience so that each person can navigate to exactly what they need without reading everything else.

What to Include And What to Omit

The question is not what could be in the guidelines. It is what must be, for someone using the brand to make the right decision without asking for help.

Non-Negotiable Inclusions

Every specification in the following list should be expressed as a value, ratio, or rule — not a principle. "Generous clear space" is not a specification. "Clear space equal to the cap-height of the wordmark, applied on all four sides" is a specification.

Logo Specifications

Approved mark in all variants (primary, monochrome, reversed). Clear space rule as a measurement. Minimum reproduction size. Prohibited applications with visual examples.

Colour Values

All approved colours with values in every required mode: Hex (web), RGB (screen), CMYK (print), Pantone (spot colour). Do not specify only hex and expect a printer to convert accurately.

Typography Hierarchy

Typeface names, weights, sizes, line heights, and letter spacing for every level of hierarchy: display, H1–H3, body, caption, label. Separate values for print and web.

Tone of Voice Rules

Three to five principles, each with a before-and-after example. Include a list of words and phrases that are and are not permitted. Do not use adjectives to describe tone without examples.

Do and Don't Examples For every major element, show common misapplications. A vendor who sees a visual example of what not to do is far less likely to make that error than one who has only read a rule.

Asset Location For every element that references a file (logo, typeface, template), include the exact location where that file can be downloaded. A link, not a department name.

What Belongs Elsewhere

The Brand Origin Story Narratives about the brand's founding, the inspiration behind the logo, or the design process. These belong in a brand book or internal presentation, not an operational document.

Exhaustive Prohibition Lists Guidelines that prohibit every conceivable misuse of the logo until the document becomes a list of forbidden things. Protect the identity; do not paralyse creative output.

Design Rationale The golden ratio behind the logo construction, the cultural references in the colour palette. Interesting to a designer; irrelevant to a print vendor. Keep rationale for internal presentations.

Outdated Examples Previous logo versions presented as "what not to do" alongside the current mark create confusion. Include only what is current. Archive old versions separately.

Writing Rules That Enable Without Constraining

The most consequential design decision in a brand guidelines project is not visual. It is linguistic.

There is a tension at the centre of every brand guidelines project: the more prescriptive the rules, the less creative oxygen remains. The less prescriptive the rules, the faster the brand drifts. The resolution is to distinguish between two categories of rule.

Category One: Identity-Protecting Rules

These are non-negotiable. They protect the elements of the identity that, if compromised, compromise everything. They are stated in declarative language with no room for interpretation.

DO

- + "The wordmark is reproduced in #141414 or #F8F7F3 only."
- + "Minimum reproduction size: 32px (screen) / 20mm (print)."
- + "Clear space equals the cap-height of the wordmark on all four sides."
- + "The primary typeface is Palatino Linotype. No substitution is permitted."

DON'T

- "Use the logo in a colour that feels appropriate to the context."
- "The logo should be large enough to be clearly legible."
- "Leave enough space around the logo."
- "Use a similar serif typeface if Palatino is unavailable."

Category Two: Application Rules

These establish direction without specifying an outcome. They allow a skilled designer to make decisions within the brand's logic rather than against a checklist. They are where the brand's character is expressed, not its mechanics.

DO

- + "White space is used generously across all communications."
- + "Images are cropped to reveal detail rather than context."
- + "Body copy is set at no smaller than 9pt in print applications."
- + "Photography is lit for warmth rather than clinical precision."

DON'T

- "Layouts must use exactly 40mm margins on all pages."
- "Images must always be cropped to show the product in full."
- "Body copy must be set at exactly 10pt in all print applications."
- "All photographs must be taken between 10am and 2pm in natural light."

The goal is to remove the decisions that should never be in question — logo colour, primary typeface, core colour palette — so that the decisions that require creative judgment can be made quickly and confidently, within a framework the brand has defined.

Visual Identity Specifications

Every specification in this chapter is expressed as a value. Not a principle — a value.

LOGO SYSTEM

Logo Specifications

Primary Mark	Full wordmark: IDUN DESIGN
Clear Space	Cap-height of wordmark (approx. 80% of mark height) on all four sides
Minimum Size (Screen)	120px width
Minimum Size (Print)	28mm width
Approved Colours	#141414 on light — #F8F7F3 on dark — #C4A46B accent applications
File Formats	SVG (preferred, web) — PNG (screens, presentations) — EPS (print production)

COLOUR SYSTEM

Primary Colour Palette

The palette is built around four primary values and two supporting values. No other colours are used in primary brand applications.



Dark Matter

#141414

Hex: #141414

RGB: 20, 20, 20

CMYK: 0, 0, 0, 92

PMS: Black 6 C



Parchment

#F8F7F3

Hex: #F8F7F3

RGB: 248, 247, 243

CMYK: 1, 1, 2, 0

PMS: 9180 C



Burnished Gold

#C4A46B

Hex: #C4A46B

RGB: 196, 164, 107

CMYK: 18, 32, 64, 0

PMS: 7508 C



Stone

#888880

Hex: #888880

RGB: 136, 136, 128

CMYK: 28, 22, 28, 8

PMS: Warm Grey 9 C

Supporting Values



Charcoal

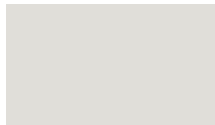
#3A3A3A

Hex: #3A3A3A

RGB: 58, 58, 58

CMYK: 0, 0, 0, 77

Dividers (dark)



Dove

#E0DED9

Hex: #E0DED9

RGB: 224, 222, 217

CMYK: 5, 5, 8, 3

Dividers (light)



Muted Light

#B8B8B0

Hex: #B8B8B0

RGB: 184, 184, 176

CMYK: 20, 16, 20, 3

Supporting text



Obsidian

#2A2A2A

Hex: #2A2A2A

RGB: 42, 42, 42

CMYK: 0, 0, 0, 84

Mid-dark panels

TYPOGRAPHY SYSTEM

Type Hierarchy

Display / H1

Palatino Linotype Italic — 64–92pt print / clamp(48px, 6vw, 80px) screen — Leading: 1.05

H2

Palatino Linotype — 36–50pt print / clamp(32px, 4vw, 50px) screen — Leading: 1.1

H3

Palatino Linotype — 22pt print / 22px screen — Leading: 1.25

Body Copy

Calibri / Helvetica Neue — 10–11pt print / 16px screen — Leading: 1.65–1.75

Labels / Captions

Calibri / Helvetica Neue — 8–9pt print / 11–12px screen — All caps, letter-spacing 2–2.5pt/px

Web Font Stack

"Calibri", "Helvetica Neue", Arial, sans-serif (body) — "Palatino Linotype", "Palatino", Georgia, serif (display)

Tracking — Labels

2.5px / 2.5pt minimum — uppercase applications only

CSS Variables

--font-disp: "Palatino Linotype", "Palatino", Georgia, serif — --font-body: "Calibri", "Helvetica Neue", Arial, sans-serif

Tone of Voice Standards

Tone of voice is not a personality description. It is a set of decisions about language — specific enough that a copywriter who has never met you can write something that sounds exactly right.

Authoritative Without Arrogance

Write as the most experienced person in the room — one who has nothing to prove. State your position without hedging. Do not qualify every claim.

BEFORE	AFTER
Geoff brings extensive experience in brand design across multiple industries.	Geoffrey Idun has spent 25 years building luxury brand identities. He currently leads conceptual design at Goldman Sachs.

Specific Over General

Name the client, the result, the discipline. Concrete nouns over abstract adjectives. Numbers and proper nouns earn trust in a way that descriptors do not.

BEFORE	AFTER
The rebrand produced excellent results across global markets.	The rebrand delivered a 252% increase in inbound leads in the first month, across 86 countries.

Restrained Precision

One strong sentence is worth three average ones. British English throughout. No exclamation marks. No hyperbole. No "passionate about design".

BEFORE	AFTER
We are incredibly passionate about creating stunning, innovative brand experiences that really resonate!	Every engagement begins with the same question: what does this brand need to feel coherent at every touchpoint?

Active Voice

Every sentence begins with what the subject does, not what is done to them. Passive constructions slow the eye and dilute authority.

BEFORE	AFTER
A rebrand of the Evalueserve identity was led across 86 countries.	Geoffrey led the Evalueserve rebrand across 86 countries.

PROHIBITED LANGUAGE

Words and Phrases Not Permitted

-
- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| — Passionate about design | — Creative solutions / bespoke solutions | — Innovative / innovative approach |
| — Helping brands tell their story | — Scroll-stopping | — Killer strategy |
| — World-class | — Seamless experience | — Holistic approach |
| — Cutting-edge | — Game-changing | — Synergy |
| — Leverage (as a verb) | — Going forward | — At the end of the day |

Application Examples

Rules are understood intellectually. Examples are understood in practice. Every rule in this document corresponds to an example below.

BUSINESS CARDS

Business Cards

- Front: Wordmark only (primary dark or reversed on dark stock)
- Back: Name, title, email — set in body typeface at 8.5pt
- Clear space rule applied on all four sides
- Stock: Uncoated minimum 350gsm — no lamination
- Typeface: Calibri Light for name and title — never bold

EMAIL SIGNATURE

Email Signature

- Name: Full name — Calibri 10pt Dark Matter
- Title: Title — Calibri 9pt Stone (#888880)
- Contact: email@domain.co.uk — Calibri 9pt Stone

- Company: Idun Design — Palatino Italic 9pt Burnished Gold
- No logo in email signatures (renders inconsistently across clients)
- No straplines, inspirational quotes, or social media icons

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations

- Slide background: Dark Matter (#141414) or Parchment (#F8F7F3)
- Headline: Palatino Linotype — white on dark, Dark Matter on light
- Body: Calibri 18pt minimum — never below this size in a presentation context
- Accent: Burnished Gold (#C4A46B) for section labels and key figures only
- Images: Full-bleed or with defined white space — never centred with visible crop marks

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media

- Profile image: Logo mark (if mark exists separately) — or wordmark on dark background
- Content: Brand colour palette and typefaces as primary system
- Photography: Consistent with art direction principles — not stock photography
- No third-party logos without written approval
- No promotional hashtags in profile bio

PRINT COLLATERAL

Print Collateral

- File format for supply: PDF/X-1a or PDF/X-4 — 3mm bleed on all sides
- Colour mode: CMYK throughout — no RGB values submitted for print
- Fonts: Embedded — never outlined unless specifically requested
- Proofing: Physical proof (not screen proof) required before final run
- Paper: Minimum 130gsm for marketing materials — 300gsm for business cards

The Evaluateserve Scale Test

The most useful test of a brand guidelines document is not how it looks when it is closed. It is whether it holds up when applied by people who have never met each other, in different languages, on different continents.

+252%

Increase in inbound leads in the first month following the rebrand

86

Countries in which the new identity was implemented

4,500

Employees introduced to the rebrand at the India HQ launch

Specify Rather Than Describe

Every design element was expressed as a value. Not "generous spacing" but a defined spacing unit. Not "predominantly dark" but a specific ratio of dark to light. Specificity removes the need for interpretation, which is the primary point of failure when guidelines cross cultural and language boundaries.

Build Application Examples Before Writing Rules

The instinct is to write the rule and then illustrate it. The more reliable method is to build the application first and then derive the rule from it. This ensures that every rule in the document corresponds to a real design decision, not a theoretical one.

Design the Document as If It Were the Brand

Guidelines that are consistent in their own typography, spacing, and colour communicate that the standard is real. Guidelines that are inconsistent in their own presentation implicitly communicate that inconsistency is acceptable.

*"Geoffrey managed to create the best brand guide I have seen till date." —
Sandra Winkler, Former AVP Marketing, Evalueserve*

Maintaining Living Guidelines

A brand guidelines document is not a one-time project. It is a living system that must evolve as the brand evolves.

The most common mistake after delivery is treating the guidelines as final. Every time the brand adds a new channel, a new audience, or a new service, the guidelines become incrementally less accurate. Over two or three years, without maintenance, a well-built document can become a source of inconsistency rather than a corrective for it.

When to Update

A new digital channel is launched	Social platform, podcast, newsletter, or app — each requires channel-specific guidance that the original document did not anticipate.
A new audience segment is added	If the brand begins addressing a new market, the tone of voice and application guidance should reflect that audience's expectations.
A supplier or agency is onboarded	Every new external relationship is an opportunity to identify gaps in the guidelines. If the agency is asking questions the document should answer, update the document.
The positioning shifts	A change in what the brand stands for requires a review of every rule. Some will hold. Some will not.
A significant visual update is made	A new typeface, colour, or logo variant requires the guidelines to be updated before the asset is distributed.

Format and Access

First Generation: The PDF

A static document, designed to be read, downloaded, and referenced. Effective for established relationships and infrequent updates. The limitation: old versions circulate alongside new ones with no clear indication of which is current.

Second Generation: The Living Document

A web-hosted or platform-managed guideline (Frontify, Notion, Corebook) with real-time updates, version control, and direct links to asset downloads. This is current best practice for most organisations managing multiple suppliers or distributed teams.

Third Generation: Queryable Guidelines

Structured documentation that can be interrogated by AI systems, allowing a team member or vendor to ask a question in natural language and receive an accurate, rules-based answer. Emerging rather than established — but moving quickly.

Quick Reference Card

The single-page summary. Print this and keep it wherever you work.

ELEMENT	SPECIFICATION	NOTE
Logo — Clear Space	Cap-height of wordmark on all four sides	Non-negotiable. Apply in all contexts.
Logo — Min. Screen	120px width	At any smaller size, use the mark only (if available).
Logo — Min. Print	28mm width	At any smaller size, check legibility with a physical proof.
Primary Colour — Dark	#141414 / CMYK 0,0,0,92 / PMS Black 6 C	Default application on parchment backgrounds.
Primary Colour — Light	#F8F7F3 / CMYK 1,1,2,0 / PMS 9180 C	Default application on dark backgrounds.
Accent Colour	#C4A46B / CMYK 18,32,64,0 / PMS 7508 C	Labels, rules, and selective highlights only.
Display Typeface	Palatino Linotype (serif) — Italic for hero copy	Never substitute with another serif.
Body Typeface	Calibri / Helvetica Neue — Regular or Light	Never bold for extended body copy.
Body Size — Screen	16px / 1.65 line-height	Minimum. Go larger; never smaller.

Body Size — Print	10–11pt / 1.65–1.75 leading	Minimum. Use 9pt for captions only.
Label Style	All caps, letter-spacing 2–2.5px/pt, 8–10px/pt	Body typeface, never display typeface.
Tone — Prohibited	Innovative, bespoke, passionate, seamless, cutting-edge	See Chapter 06 for full list.
Tone — Required	British English. Active voice. Specific nouns.	Always. No exceptions.
Print File Format	PDF/X-1a or PDF/X-4, 3mm bleed, CMYK	Confirm with print supplier before supply.
File Formats — Logo	SVG (web), EPS (print), PNG (screens)	Never supply JPG for logo applications.

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