

CHECKLIST

PRE-LAUNCH BRAND KIT SETUP



Checklist

PRE-LAUNCH BRAND KIT SETUP

This checklist guides you through building a professional brand kit from scratch, transforming abstract business values into concrete visual assets. By following these steps sequentially, you'll create a consistent visual identity that builds trust and eliminates the "Trust Gap" between your product quality and your brand perception.

1. Step 1: Define Your Brand's Strategic Foundation

Select 3-5 core brand adjectives

Choose specific, distinct adjectives that describe your brand personality (avoid generic terms like "quality" or "professional"). These should include emotional descriptors (how customers should feel), descriptive terms (nature of service), and stylistic qualities (personality). This foundation ensures every visual

decision reinforces your business strategy rather than personal taste.

□ **Apply the Cocktail Party Test**

Imagine your brand as a person at a networking event and describe how they dress, speak, and how others describe them after they leave. If the description is "nice" or generic, refine your adjectives until they're memorable and distinctive.

□ **Define anti-adjectives for each core adjective**

For each selected adjective, identify what you are NOT (e.g., "Fast" but not "Rushed"). This creates boundaries that prevent your design from drifting into the wrong territory and clarifies the precise meaning of each brand attribute.

□ **Identify your brand archetype**

Choose one primary archetype (Creator, Innocent, Rebel, etc.) that aligns with your adjectives and business goals. This serves as a strategic safety check—if your archetype conflicts with your adjectives, resolve the disconnect now before making visual decisions.

2. Step 2: Build Your Strategic Mood Board

□ **Gather 20-30 reference images from adjacent industries**

Look outside your direct competitors to find visual examples that embody your adjectives. Search for photography styles, textures, typography, and color

harmonies that match your strategic foundation. The further from your industry, the more unique your identity will be.

- ❑ **Filter images through your target audience's perspective**

Remove any image that might confuse or alarm your ideal customer, even if you personally love it. Ask: "If my ideal client saw this image, would they feel the adjectives I defined?" Delete anything that creates cognitive dissonance with your business promise.

- ❑ **Organize images by visual characteristics**

Group your curated images by lighting style, color temperature, composition type, and texture. This helps identify patterns in what you're drawn to and ensures your selections are strategically aligned rather than randomly collected.

3. Step 3: Select Your Color Palette Using the 60-30-10 Framework

- ❑ **Choose your 60% Primary (neutral anchor) color**

Select a neutral foundation color (white, off-white, light gray, or dark charcoal) that creates breathing room for your content. This dominates your brand real estate and provides the canvas for other colors to shine.

- ❑ **Choose your 30% Secondary (brand identity) color**

Select the color people will associate with your brand, mapped directly to your core adjectives. Document the

precise Hex code (for digital), RGB values (for screens), and CMYK values (for print) to eliminate guessing.

- **Choose your 10% Accent (call-to-action) color**
Select a color that contrasts sharply with your other colors to command attention. Use this sparingly for buttons, notifications, and links. This guides the eye exactly where you want it without overwhelming the design.
- **Validate color choices against psychology and audience expectations**
Ensure your colors communicate the right emotional signals (e.g., blue for trust, green for growth) and don't contradict your business promise. A financial consultant using chaotic neon colors creates cognitive dissonance that destroys trust.

4. Step 4: Establish Your Typography System

- **Select your Headline font (personality voice)**
Choose either a Serif font (traditional, established, high-end) or Sans Serif font (modern, clean, accessible) that embodies your brand adjectives. This font appears in large titles and injects personality into your communications.
- **Select your Body font (utility voice)**
Choose a highly readable font for paragraphs and descriptions that allows readers to absorb information

effortlessly. Prioritize legibility over creativity—this font must be invisible to enable smooth reading.

□ **Apply the Rule of Two**

Limit yourself to only these two fonts across all brand materials. This restriction creates consistency and prevents the visual chaos that comes from mixing multiple typefaces randomly.

□ **Define tracking (letter spacing) based on brand positioning**

Increase tracking (add space between letters) for luxury, elegance, and high-end positioning. Decrease tracking (tighten space) for impact, urgency, and modern energy. Document this specification for consistent application.

5. Step 5: Create Your Wordmark Logo

□ **Build a simple wordmark using your headline font**

Type your company name in your selected headline font rather than creating a complex symbol or icon.

Wordmarks provide immediate recognition—when people see your logo, they instantly read your name without guessing.

□ **Apply hierarchy to multi-word names**

If your business name has two parts, make one word bolder or larger than the other. This creates visual rhythm and tells the eye what's most important (e.g., bold "SMITH" with lighter "Consulting").

- ❑ **Define clear space requirements**
Establish an invisible border around your logo (typically the height of one letter) that no other text or graphic can intrude upon. This ensures your logo is never crowded or obscured in any application.

6. Step 6: Establish Your Photography Guidelines

- ❑ **Define your lighting style**
Decide whether your brand uses hard, bright light (modern, clinical, energetic) or soft, diffused light (calm, organic, approachable). Document this as a non-negotiable rule to ensure every photo feels related.
- ❑ **Define your color temperature**
Choose whether whites in your photos appear cool/bluish (tech-focused, modern) or warm/yellowish (inviting, nostalgic, organic). Never mix these—temperature inconsistency creates jarring visual vibration.
- ❑ **Define your composition style**
Decide if photos should be minimal with lots of negative space (calm, organized) or busy and detailed (energetic, abundant). Ensure this aligns with your core adjectives and apply consistently.
- ❑ **Create a visual DNA checklist for image approval**
Document specific criteria for approving any image (lighting, temperature, composition, subject matter). This checklist prevents the "Frankenstein effect" where unrelated photos break your visual consistency.

7. Step 7: Standardize Your Supporting Elements

- ❑ **Select one icon style and commit to it**
Choose either Outlined icons (modern, light), Filled icons (bold, substantial), or Hand-drawn icons (human, creative). Find an icon pack or library where all icons come from the same designer to guarantee consistency.
- ❑ **Define texture usage rules**
If using textures (paper grain, geometric patterns, marble), establish that they only appear as subtle backgrounds at 10-20% opacity. Textures must never compete with text—they should be felt rather than seen.
- ❑ **Document forbidden elements**
Explicitly list what is NOT allowed (e.g., "No cartoon illustrations," "No gradient effects," "No drop shadows"). These prohibitions are as important as permissions in maintaining consistency.

8. Step 8: Assemble Your Master Brand Guide Document

- ❑ **Create a multi-page PDF with five essential sections**
Build your Brand Bible with: (1) Core Values and Voice (your adjectives), (2) Logo Usage (with clear space rules), (3) Color Codes (Hex, RGB, CMYK values), (4) Typography Hierarchy (headline and body specifications), and (5) Imagery Style (examples with explanations).

- ❑ **Add "Do" and "Don't" visual examples**

For each rule, show side-by-side examples of correct and incorrect usage with clear visual markers. People learn better from examples than text—a comparison with a red "X" over incorrect usage trains the eye instantly.
- ❑ **Export as a universally accessible PDF**

Save your guide as a standard PDF that can be opened on any device without specialized software. Consider creating a "View Only" link in Canva or similar tools so you can update it centrally without emailing new versions.

9. Step 9: Organize Your Digital Asset Library

- ❑ **Implement a professional naming convention**

Name all files using this structure:
BrandName_Element_Color_Usage (e.g., "Acme_Logo_Primary_Blue_Digital.png"). This allows instant searching and eliminates confusion about which file is current or correct.
- ❑ **Save logos in multiple formats**

Create and store JPG versions (for photos with solid backgrounds), PNG versions (for logos with transparent backgrounds), and vector files (SVG or EPS for designers and printers). Each format serves a specific purpose.
- ❑ **Create organized master folders**

Build a cloud-stored "Brand Kit" folder with two subfolders: "01_Print" (CMYK codes, high-res vectors)

and "02_Digital" (RGB codes, PNG logos, social templates). This prevents using print files on websites or digital files for printing.

10. Step 10: Conduct Your Initial Brand Audit

- Grade all existing touchpoints against your new standards**
Review social media profiles, website header, invoices, email signatures, and business cards. If an asset doesn't match your documented fonts, colors, and logo usage rules, mark it for immediate update.
- Update high-impact areas first**
Prioritize consistency across: profile pictures on all platforms, website navigation design, invoice templates, team email signatures, and any printed materials. These touchpoints have the highest customer visibility and impact on trust.
- Establish a consistency maintenance schedule**
Set quarterly reminders to audit new materials and accounts. As you grow and add platforms or team members, visual consistency becomes harder to maintain—scheduled checks prevent "brand debt" from accumulating.