**LUCIDPRESS GUIDE**

# Branding for Real Estate

Lucidpress

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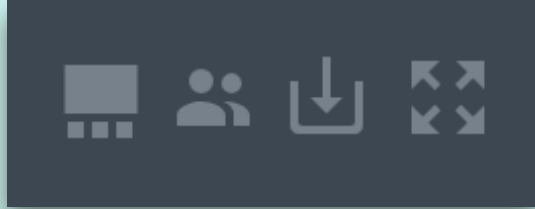
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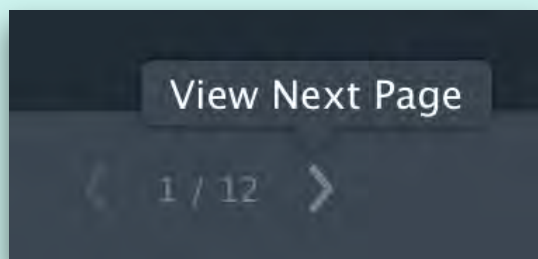
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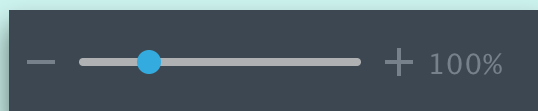
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Now, on to the good stuff ⇒

Introduction

YOUR BRAND **MATTERS**.

From the moment someone comes into contact with your brand, a relationship starts to form. It starts off simply enough—a logo here, some colors there—but ultimately, that relationship could change the course of your business. One by one, the signals you send paint a picture of who you are and why you exist.

And it's up to you to make sure you're sending the right signals.

That's a pretty tall order when you consider all the times and places people interact with your brand. You could spend all day, every day closely monitoring it, and mistakes will still slip through. An agent prints out flyers with an old, outdated logo. A broker forgets to update the fonts and colors in the latest annual report.

You think, "There's got to be a better way." There's got to be a way to keep everyone marching to the same beat, carrying the same flag. And you're right—there is. We hope to illustrate that in this guide by laying the foundation for great branding and giving you a chance to evaluate and reflect on where you are today, and where to go from here.

This is for the marketing directors who want to protect and elevate their agency's brand. The graphic designers who know their time can be better spent than updating another newsletter. The brand managers who understand the power of a story well-told.

Your brand *matters*. And if you're ready to build and grow that brand into a consistent, compelling force that drives your business, this guide is for you.

CHAPTER TWO:

Branding Quizzes

Which areas of branding should your agency focus on? We've prepared 5 mini-quizzes based on the content of this guide that should help you evaluate your brand's strengths and weaknesses. Think about these questions as you read through the guide, and pay special attention to the areas where you notice your brand could improve.

SECTION 1: BRAND IDENTITY (CH.3)
TAKE THIS QUIZ ONLINE

1. *What is brand identity design?*

2. *Does your brand consistently use the same logo?*

3. *Do you have access to contextual versions of your logo?*

4. *Are all internal company communications delivered using the same font?*

5. *Do all marketing materials (ads, print, digital) share a similar look & feel?*

6. *Are your organization's core values & mission prominently displayed for employees?*

7. *How developed is your brand's voice?*

SECTION 2: BRAND MANAGEMENT (CH.4)
TAKE THIS QUIZ ONLINE

1. *What is brand management?*

2. *Does your organization use online software to store & share brand assets?*

3. *On the whole, how well do partners & vendors represent your brand?*

4. *Do you provide partners & vendors with brand assets such as logos & colors?*

5. *Is your brand represented consistently on social media?*

6. *When you consider your organization's brand, how well-known is it in all the places and markets that you serve?*

7. *Who in your organization has primary responsibility to manage & protect how your brand is used?*

SECTION 3: BRAND CONSISTENCY (CH.5)
TAKE THIS QUIZ ONLINE

1. *Consider the consistency of your brand in all the places it appears. Is it consistent or inconsistent?*

2. *How would you rate your brand guidelines in the following areas?*
   a. How current they are
   b. How easy they are to find
   c. How effective they are
   d. How easy they are to follow

3. *Have you discovered instances of employees "going rogue" and creating materials that don't conform to brand standards?*

4. *How often are materials created that don't conform to brand guidelines?*

5. *Are your branded materials protected from unauthorized changes? How so?*

6. *In what formats do your branding guidelines exist?*

7. *If your brand was always presented consistently, how much do you estimate that your organization's revenue would increase?*

SECTION 4: SALES ENABLEMENT (CH.6)
TAKE THIS QUIZ ONLINE

1. *Do your agents have access to branded templates they can update and use during the sales cycle?*

2. *How much time does your graphic designer or design team spend on updating existing materials?*

3. *Has your designer or design team expressed frustration about feeling overwhelmed or being a bottleneck?*

4. *Which people are able to create or modify branded marketing, communication & sales materials?*

5. *Where is the biggest bottleneck in your current creative process?*

6. *How long does it take your marketing or design team to deliver on requests for new materials?*

7. *How long does it take your marketing or design team to deliver on requests for updated or customized materials?*

SECTION 5: PRINT & DIGITAL COLLATERAL (CH.7-8)
TAKE THIS QUIZ ONLINE

1. *Which of the following print materials does your agency*

regularly use?
   a. Brochures
   b. Postcards
   c. Flyers
   d. Letterhead
   e. Business cards

2. *Which of the following digital materials does your organization regularly use?*
   a. Banner ads
   b. Social media graphics
   c. Slide presentations
   d. PDF documents
   e. Newsletters

3. *Does your agency provide agents with branded business cards or business card templates?*

4. *Who is responsible for creating social media content, including graphics?*

5. *Do your brand guidelines cover digital colors (RGB) and print colors (CMYK)?*

6. *Does your agency use "form-fill" software to create marketing materials?*

7. *How often does your brand update its printed materials (manuals, banners, brochures, posters, etc.)?*

REVIEW YOUR ANSWERS

How did you do? Were some areas more problematic for your brand than others?

Important note! These quizzes are not meant to be taken as a "pass or fail" assessment of your brand's value. Rather, they're designed to gauge the challenges and opportunities your brand might be facing today in order to provide the best recommendations.

Now that you know which branding areas to prioritize, let's dive in.

Brand Identity Design

Marketing mastermind Seth Godin once defined a brand as "the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another." And that's a great, all-encompassing definition that acknowledges the intangible aspects of what makes a brand.

But there are also tangible assets that play a hugely important role in communicating what your brand is about—like your logo. These assets fall into a sub-section of branding called **brand identity design**.

Brand identity is the face of the brand. It's the visual component that represents all those larger emotional and philosophical traits. It includes logos, typography, colors, packaging and messaging, and it complements and reinforces the existing reputation of a brand.

Brand identity attracts new customers while making existing customers feel at home. It's both outward- and inward-facing.

IT'S VITAL THAT BRAND IDENTITY BE **CONSISTENT.**

Because it represents and reinforces the emotions of a brand, the message portrayed by brand identity design needs to be clear, and it needs to be the same no matter where it's displayed.

For real estate brands, this is tremendously important. Clients are looking for someone they can trust with their life-changing purchase decisions. When they encounter an inconsistent brand, it sends them a message—and not a good one. It tells them that this brand doesn't take itself seriously enough to tell the same story. They wonder what other inconsistencies lie beneath the surface. How can they trust your agency to follow through on its promises when your brand identity keeps shifting?

To manage brand identity, agencies need a system that helps them stay consistent while still having the speed and flexibility to succeed in today's market. Components of this system might include a style guide, brand management software, and employee training.

Now that we have our definitions, let's take a look at the main components of brand identity design. As you read, take inventory of your brand's assets and make note of any gaps and opportunities you discover.

INTERNAL BRAND IDENTITY

These five assets aren't usually shared with the public, but they should be evident in all that you do. These are the core values and mission that drive your agency toward success, and they set the tone for how agents, partners and customers should be treated.

The five are:

1. Brand purpose
2. Positioning statement
3. Value proposition
4. Marketing personas
5. Key messaging

BRAND PURPOSE

What is your organization here to do? The brand purpose (also called a mission statement) aligns everyone behind the same vision. It should express the values and goals of

the organization, which may evolve over time. This single sentence should remain relevant for around 10 years.

Examples:

- "Metro Brokers is committed to providing the finest full-service real estate brokerage by employing the most professional, well-trained and ethical real estate practitioners in the nation."

- "The mission of the SRES Council is to promote member success by providing high quality training and tools necessary to position the SRES designee as the trusted real estate resource for the senior market."

- "To enable real estate professionals to make more money in less time while exceeding the expectations of home buyers and sellers." *(Market Leader Inc.)*

POSITIONING STATEMENT

The positioning statement is an expression that defines your brand's most compelling benefit. Unlike the brand purpose, a positioning statement is made within the context of the market and your competitors. Because of this, it'll likely remain relevant for only about 18 months.

Examples:

- "Norris & Company Real Estate is Vero Beach's premier upscale real estate firm. They specialize in luxury waterfront homes and condominiums, particularly in Vero Beach and Indian River County, FL."

- "Established in 1965, Lincoln Property Company develops and manages residential communities, retail, commercial, office, industrial and mixed-use developments in Texas and the southwestern United States. Lincoln Property Company is currently one of the largest development and management companies for military families of all branches of the service."

Further reading
3 steps to build brand consistency offers a step-by-step process to think through your purpose and positioning statement.

VALUE PROPOSITION

What are the key features and benefits of your brand, products and services? How does your agency differ from the rest, and what makes you the better choice? These are

tough questions, but the answers are invaluable. In markets where properties and services are similar, your brand offers one way to be unique.

MARKETING PERSONAS

Real estate thrives on relationships, especially those built in person. But, you're not always face-to-face with your clients, especially when you're creating marketing materials. In those cases, it helps to have well-defined marketing personas. Having a clear concept of who you're marketing to will help you and your team promote a consistent, resonant brand message.

Consider these traits:

- Job title & income
- Age, gender, location
- Education level
- Family & hobbies
- Values & fears
- Goals & challenges
- How you can help

KEY MESSAGING

What language resonates most with your audience? Market research, like surveys and focus groups, can

highlight what really matters to your clients. Once you've discovered what works, key messaging helps to standardize the framework and phrases that drive your point home.

Further reading
The 7 key elements of brand identity design

EXTERNAL BRAND IDENTITY

Once you have an internal brand identity, it becomes easier to design an external brand identity that shows the world what you're about.

These five assets will represent your brand wherever it goes: online, in print, and even in person. They're the most visible,and the most recognizable. Unfortunately, they're also the most vulnerable to inconsistency, because so many people need to use them.

The five include:

- Name & logo
- Slogans & taglines
- Color palettes
- Typography
- Tone & voice

NAME & LOGO

The brand vitals. Good ones stand out because they're meaningful and memorable. Because logos are the asset that gets used and shared the most, it's doubly critical to make sure everyone has access to current, approved versions.

Suggested files:

- High-res EPS file for print
- Med-res TIFF file for office use
- Low-res JPG or PNG for web

Suggested variations:

- Color
- Black-and-white
- "Reversed-out" (for dark backgrounds)
- Favicon & app icons

Further reading
It doesn't happen often, but if a new name is on the table, check out our post on how to pick a great brand name.

SLOGANS & TAGLINES

Slogans and taglines are mostly used in advertising. Good ones are impactful and easy to recall. After all the care put into refining these short phrases to perfection, it'd be a waste not to use them properly.

Examples:

- "Above the Crowd" *(RE/MAX)*
- "Let Us Guide You Home" *(Compass)*
- "Smarter, Bolder, Faster" *(Century 21)*
- "We'll Get You Moving" *(Allen Tate)*
- "Where Dreams Come Home" *(Corcoran)*

Further reading
If your current slogan feels stale and out-of-date, review our tips on how to write a rock-solid tagline.

COLOR PALETTES

According to a report titled *Impact of Color on Marketing*, up to 90% of a customer's immediate judgment about a brand or product is based solely on color. Your brand's color palette is an essential part of its story and visual identity. They set the tone for your audience.

Colors have marked psychological effects on us; they can impact our thoughts and feelings either positively or negatively. In another report titled *Exciting Red and Competent Blue*, it's said that they can even affect our purchasing preferences.

Clearly, color counts—which means consistency is critical. While in older days, knowing your Pantone shades was enough, managing color palettes has become more complicated in the digital age. Hex codes are required to bring your color palette to the web, and if you want to market anything in print, you need to know your CMYK colors, too.

Further reading
The importance of color in brand storytelling

TYPOGRAPHY

Typography plays a unique role in your brand identity, and nearly no facet of design causes more controversy than font choice. (For example, when you next get a chance, ask a designer for their thoughts on Helvetica.)

It's more than fonts, though. When used effectively, typography can catch and keep an audience's attention.

The size, shape & placement of different fonts will enhance your message and direct the focus to where you want it most.

Strong brands consistently work with a selected set of font styles that appear in everything they produce. This helps them build a personality and deliver messaging more effectively.

For example, Nike uses bold, blocky letters in its advertising. Like the logo, this font gives the impression of strength and movement—perfect for a sports apparel company that urges its audience to "just do it." Imagine how much the impact of that sentiment would be lessened if the brand used light, lowercase letters.

Put simply, the font you use can enhance or undermine your message. Too many brands play fast and loose with typography because it's hard to enforce, but it's a brand element that requires consistency to be effective.

Further reading
Improve UX by using typography like a pro

TONE & VOICE

Brand voice is the conduit through which you communicate who you are, what you do, and what you can offer. It's the medium that your clients (and the public) use to get to know you, and developing a strong voice will increase brand recognition and loyalty. Getting it wrong, on the other hand, can turn your branding into a constant uphill struggle.

We all have our own voice, and tones can vary with context. However, when representing a brand, multiple voices and asynchronous tones are confusing. Your brand needs a distinct voice that expresses its personality.

Think of a few key words that describe the personality you're aiming for: "Inspiring, knowledgeable and formal" or "Aspirational, tantalizing and passionate," for example. Once you've nailed down a clear, succinct understanding of your intended voice, meet with your team and discuss it so that everyone's on the same page.

Further reading
Developing a brand voice as an architecture or design business

All of these elements work together to build a holistic picture of your brand. Every piece of your business should align with your branding to deliver a familiar experience to your clients every time they interact with you. The strongest brands, essentially, are the ones who learn to tell their story compellingly and consistently over time.

Brand Management

WHAT IS BRAND MANAGEMENT?

The term is slightly misleading. Brands aren't merely managed—they're shaped, guided and cultivated over time. Although you can't control every experience a person has with your brand, you can drive and influence their perception. Brand management will help you establish, position and maintain your brand's image in the eyes of your customers.

The task is enormous, but it might be easier to conceptualize if we break it down into phases: **establishing**, **positioning** and **maintaining** the brand.

ESTABLISH THE BRAND

This is the creation phase, where all the assets outlined in the previous chapter are drafted, iterated and finalized. It encompasses the big ideas about your brand as well as the nitty-gritty details of logos, fonts and colors. This phase

should have a definitive beginning and end, with a strong brand identity as the result.

If you join an agency after the brand has been established, you probably won't participate in this phase—that is, unless you're faced with the formidable prospect of rebranding.

POSITION THE BRAND

This is the communication phase, where sales and marketing help to spread the word and build expectations around your brand. Each piece of communication must align with the brand identity established in the creation phase, which means every brand player needs easy access to current brand assets.

No one should have to waste time tracking down assets or creating their own facsimiles. This is the perfect time to make sure your assets are widely available to anyone who uses them. Otherwise, your efforts to create a strong brand identity are severely diminished.

MAINTAIN THE BRAND

Once your brand has gone to market and is resonating with an audience, it's time to move into the maintenance
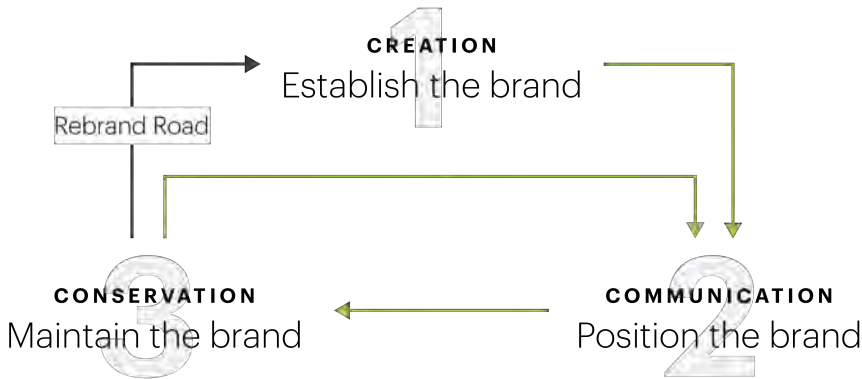
phase. You should monitor what's said about your brand online, including social media posts and reviews, so that you can jump in where appropriate. These are opportunities to reinforce your brand with loyal customers and to improve brand perception when a customer has had a poor experience.

Further reading
4 easy tips for effective online brand management

The maintenance phase also includes brand hygiene: making sure that assets are updated and available for new channels and mediums.

Positioning and maintaining the brand are phases without distinct conclusions. Most brands will move back and forth between them as they execute marketing campaigns. Picture them as a cycle, where positioning is *pro*active and maintenance is *re*active. These two phases complement each other to deliver a consistent, compelling brand message.

CREATION
Establish the brand

Rebrand Road

CONSERVATION
Maintain the brand

COMMUNICATION
Position the brand

BRAND MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

The internet has transformed brand management, and it's much more involved today than it was a couple decades ago. Brands have a large number of channels to deliver their message—and customers have the ability to voice their opinions more powerfully than ever before.

Consider this: **93**% of customers read online reviews regularly, and **80**% of them say they're influenced by their online research.

Here's another one: **88**% of customers would be less likely to buy from a brand that has unanswered complaints on social media.

If you aren't participating and driving these

conversations online, your silence could be killing your brand's image.

But it's not just the response that matters—it's the story your responses tell. Your website and social media channels are extensions of your brand, and consistency matters online just as much as it does in the physical world. A lack of consistency will make your brand less memorable and less trustworthy.

Again, we find that empowering your agents with a strong brand identity—and crucially, the tools to represent it well—is a cornerstone of success and future growth.

DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

Perhaps the biggest impact the internet has had on brand management is the way we organize and share brand assets across a variety of channels.

When brand management was popularized in the 1960s, a company's marketing was handled by a tiny group of trained experts. Copy and art were produced to very strict specifications, delivered to printing presses, then shared with a mass audience on billboards, print ads and television. Controlling consistency wasn't very difficult

because all the marketing passed through the same few hands.

Even a decade or so ago, online brand management was fairly simple. If you launched an online advertising campaign in 2000, you basically had three channels to worry about: your website, your emails, and banner ads. There was no Facebook, no AdWords, and no panoply of digital services like we have today.

Web 2.0—with all its social media and advertising networks—has made brand management infinitely more complex. Rather than mass media, you have segmented channels. Rather than a tiny group of marketing experts, you have a whole network of people producing content for your brand. Think about it: marketing, sales, public relations, human resources, vendors, partners, agencies... Today, nearly *everyone* is a marketer.

The problem is, not everyone knows how to create content that's on-brand.

One way to combat this problem is **digital asset management**. DAM software acts as a repository for branded files. (Think SharePoint or Google Drive.) By collecting these resources all in one place, anyone who needs to use a logo or a letterhead can access them. Users

log into the database, download the files they need, and go on their way.

Even though this is miles better than trading files via email—or biking across town to deliver a logo on film like in the old days—it still leaves the problem half-solved. Agents can download logos, fonts and documents, but do they know how to use them in a way that 1) demonstrates good design, and 2) maintains brand compliance? If you've witnessed stretched logos and clashing color palettes, you already know the answer.

"Okay," you might be thinking, "So sometimes an agent uses the wrong colors or too many fonts. What's the big deal?" It might seem like small potatoes—is there really any harm in having an inconsistent brand?

Well, that's a good question—and we intend to answer it in the next chapter.

"A brand is a living entity—and it is enriched or undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures."

—Michael Eisner, former CEO of Disney

Brand Consistency

Your brand is shaped every day by the thousand small gestures clients get from your company. A gesture might be an interaction with one of your agents, a post on your brand's Facebook page, or a direct mail postcard.

If all these things contribute to building your brand, it's vital to be consistent with the message that each gesture is communicating.

What impact does brand consistency (or inconsistency) have on your business? We've asked ourselves the same question—then we set out to answer it.

Working with a research firm called Demand Metric, Lucidpress published a report called *The Impact of Brand Consistency*. Together we surveyed over 200 senior

marketing leaders at companies of all industries and sizes, asking them how consistent their brand marketing was. We also explored their beliefs about the impact and value of brand consistency.

- **Download the report**

Analyzing the data from this study provided several key findings:

Compliance

- Nearly **90**% agree that it's important to present their brands consistently in all the places people might encounter them… but less than **half** are doing so.

- Further, less than **10**% say that their brand presentation is very consistent.

- Almost all organizations have branding guidelines, but only a **quarter** have formal guidelines that are consistently enforced.

- Over **60**% report that materials are always, often or sometimes created that don't conform to brand guidelines.

- Nearly **half** report that it takes a week or more to fulfill requests for new branded materials.

Impact

- **71**% say that the greatest negative impact of inconsistent branding is that it creates confusion in the market.

- Consistent brands are **3-4x** more likely to enjoy excellent visibility than those with inconsistent presentation.

- Organizations with brand consistency issues estimate, on average, a **23% increase in revenue** if their brand was always presented consistently.

Consistent brands are more visible, and highly visible brands act like magnets, attracting customers while conveying the brand promises, reinforcing value, and encouraging loyalty. Careless or inconsistent presentation of your brand robs it of these powers—and as a result, you miss out on clients, sales and revenue.

Managing a brand well by presenting it consistently has a real impact on growth. Imagine driving a **23% lift in revenue** just by enforcing brand compliance. This

finding alone should compel any agency to make brand consistency a high priority.

But before your agency can improve its brand consistency, you have to understand where you are today. And when it comes to creating branded content, most agencies tend to fall into one of two traps: the "Wild West" and the brand prison.

THE "WILD WEST"

Comic Sans on your flyers. Bright pink and orange Twitter graphics. Logos stretched as far as the eye can see. Welcome… to the wild, wild West.

This is what happens when there's no formalized system of brand guidelines—or, even if those guidelines *do* exist, they're not actively being enforced. If your agency doesn't have a designated brand champion, it's up to each agent to make sure the brand is represented consistently. In other words: if it's everyone's job, it's no one's job. This is the perfect recipe for poor brand consistency.

Is your agency tumbling through the Wild West? If so, you'll notice these characteristics:

- No brand guidelines (or guidelines are not enforced)

- Everyone creates their own content without guidance or direction

- Brand presentation is highly inconsistent

Time to challenge this mindset to a showdown, because this town just ain't big enough for the both of you.

THE BRAND PRISON

On the other side of town, there is complete and total lockdown. Leave your pens and documents at the door, because in the brand prison, only the guards have the right to be creative. Hope you didn't have any big ideas.

This is what happens when *no one* can create branded content except for corporate marketing or design teams. And while that might have worked in the old days—and for certain types of brands today—it's an undue burden for modern real estate brands. Who has time to wait a week or more for an updated brochure design, property flyer, or Facebook image? Not only that, but agents usually enjoy adding some personal flair to their marketing collateral. Unfortunately, the company has decided that it's too risky to trust its employees with any branding whatsoever.

Is your agency stuck in the brand prison? If so, you'll notice these characteristics:

- Corporate creates all content (bottleneck)

- Designers are overloaded and stressed

- Employees often "go rogue" and create their own content

Time to gather your allies and map an escape route, because it's time to break out of this joint.

Further reading
How to survive the democratization of content creation

Now, in contrast, imagine a world where agents, admin, partners & vendors are empowered to create customized and beautifully branded materials all on their own. These are the organizations that have escaped the Wild West and the brand prison. They've recognized and embraced the world of modern branding by empowering their teams with the tools and processes needed to create consistent, on-brand content.

These are the consistent, highly visible brands who will capture the market's hearts and minds... and their wallets.

Sales Enablement

WHAT IS SALES ENABLEMENT?

For real estate, **sales enablement** is the process of providing your brokers and agents with the information and tools they need to market, sell and lease property more effectively.

This process involves creating systems and materials that will empower your sales teams to take advantage of the tools, data and information available to them—and to do so in a way that is both time- and cost-effective.

In the past (and present, in many companies), agents and brokers have relied on a small team of graphic designers who struggle to turn around creative requests quickly enough. This creates a bottleneck, where overworked designers build up a backlog and leave desperate sales reps waiting.

Subsequently, sales reps end up creating their own content, often misusing the logos, colors and imagery that make up the company's brand. This practice is simply poor brand management, and it's becoming harder for marketers and managers to police.

With designers and agents using a range of programs company-wide—from professional graphic software like InDesign to something with basic design capabilities like Microsoft Word—consistency is impossible. With so many different files stored across the network, keeping track of the various documents and their many versions is a challenge.

With today's technology and software, it shouldn't be so difficult. There are web-based platforms that can serve as a graphic design tool, a central template library, and an easy-to-use customizer all in one.

Switching to such a system would likely be a big change to the way your people are used to working, and as with all substantial changes, it requires an advocate to lead the way.

If you're prepared to be that advocate, here's how you can help.

GIVE AGENTS TEMPLATES THAT LOCK DOWN THE BRAND ASSETS

In the previous chapter, we discussed brand consistency, and it's important you keep that in mind when you're looking for technology that will power your sales enablement program.

The key is to find a piece of software that will let you (or your designers) create lockable templates. These templates will be customizable to a degree, but they'll also have certain elements locked down (like logos, contact details, key data and messaging).

With sales templates that are already on-brand, you're making compliance much easier for your sales reps. They can access these templates on-demand and easily customize them to meet their needs. Yet, crucially, you're still retaining total control over the way the brand is presented.

DECREASE DEPENDENCY ON GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Introduce an effective sales enablement process and you'll be giving your agents the autonomy they need to produce content themselves. With a smarter system that involves lockable templates, you'll be able to decrease the dependency on your designers.

A system that depends on design requests being submitted at least two weeks in advance is a failing system. In a fast-paced environment where things need to move quickly, this kind of timeline just doesn't cut it. Rather than failing to provide each agent with the right materials, at the right time, and in the right format, your goal should be to put processes in place that will allow them to act independently.

If you switch to a system where designers can create templates with locked brand assets, you'll be cutting down the amount of time each design takes. No longer will they have to coordinate with sales reps to gather the specifics of a property, event or promotion. Instead, they can simply create the branded template and make it available to the agents who will fill in those details themselves.

Here's the thing: your agents are likely already creating content anyway, but it's probably taking them a lot longer than it should. By providing them with templates and an easy-to-use system that lets them make customizations, you're letting them keep the independence they've become accustomed to while speeding up the design process.

STREAMLINE THE SALES PIPELINE

In taking the steps to implement lockable templates and decrease dependency on graphic designers, it's worthwhile to consider other ways to maximize a change like this and streamline other processes.

An empowered and supported agent is a productive one, so by giving them quick and easy access to the tools they need, you're increasing their overall chances of success.

You can further reduce bottlenecks by implementing a sales enablement system that includes one central document library. Consider how much time is wasted each week, month or year across an entire team of agents who are constantly having to search through email chains or chaotic file folders for the latest version of a document.

Now instead imagine one central library where the latest version of a document can be updated, automatically saved and then accessed by all. Better, right?

Similarly, another feature you should build into your sales enablement program is a cloud-based storage system. Storing files in the cloud means they can be

accessed from any device at any time, as long as the user has access to the internet and the correct credentials—a valuable feature for agents on the move.

Overall, a successful sales enablement strategy that uses templates held in one central, cloud-based library will both reduce dependency on your designers and empower your sales teams. Ultimately, it'll mean your agents and brokers will have what they need, when and where they need it.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Print Collateral

Real estate has always been an extremely competitive industry. Only the most beautiful, original, eye-catching ads rate more than a passing glance, and it seems like print media often plays second fiddle to the digital world. But not always.

Trade shows, exhibitions and open houses are just a few areas where print collateral is vital to engage with potential clients, showcase your properties, and promote your services. Yes, local is lucrative. Successful real estate marketing thrives on a judicious combination of print and digital exposure. This is why it's important to use software that integrates your print and digital marketing requirements.

Features you should look for:

- Ready-to-use, customizable designer templates

- An easy-to-use platform that supports in-house design and publishing, from initial document creation to document approval & printing

- Advanced features to secure your documents and lock down assets so your brand is never compromised

- An online, invite-only communication channel to enable real-time collaboration among designers, brand managers, sales agents & marketers

- One-step print & ship integration with delivery to your office, clients, and local areas

Here's a step-by-step overview of how this software would support print marketing for real estate agencies.

STEP 1: *Choose or create templates that double as online and print marketing*

To optimize your integrated print & digital marketing strategy, first identify the documents you want to include in your campaigns and how you can best repurpose them.

- Printed postcards can be popped into the mail, displayed artfully at appropriate venues, and even used as giant business cards at exhibitions. Digital

versions can be posted on social media sites like Instagram and Facebook.

- Traditional printed business cards are not just calling cards, but miniature advertisements for your business. Attach a digital copy to your email signature and upload a copy to Twitter. You can quickly create a fresh tweet every day—an agency event, a new release, or even advice on buying real estate.

- Brochures and booklets printed on luxurious, waxy paper can showcase your agency's portfolio most elegantly. Publish digital versions on business networks like LinkedIn. Combine one with a personalized post about your agency's success stories.

- Create flyers and posters to display at business networking events, community ventures, festivals, markets, and open house promotions. Pinterest fans can be mobilized to spread the word about new listings.

- Printed stationery should always include a custom letterhead. Use it for PDFs, too, or attach it to digital correspondence as a signature file.

STEP 2: *Customize your chosen templates*

Find the perfect templates to customize with your logo, fonts, brand colors, images & text. Some examples to inspire you: a business card, a newsletter, a postcard, a Twitter post, a Pinterest post or a Facebook post.

You'll want to ensure brand consistency with the same colors across print & digital campaigns. This will require both RGB colors (optimal for computers) and CMYK (optimal for print) colors.

Create an image gallery that you and your agents all have access to in the cloud. To make it easy to find images, you can upload folders (e.g. photographs of the team, your logo in different sizes, properties categorized by location, etc.). Use high quality images—at least 300 dpi.

Upload any custom fonts so that they're accessible to everyone on the team.

Always preview your designs for font size, readability, visual clarity and orientation so the final print job will be perfect.

STEP 3: *Share the creative vision*

Collaboration should be easy, especially with cloud-based

software. You can share your documents, invite your team to bounce ideas around, or set up a time to video chat. With the right permissions, only the people you approve will have access to view or edit a document.

STEP 4: *Lock down valuable brand assets*

One great advantage of Lucidpress is that your agency's corporate designers can lock down the core elements of your brand—e.g. logos, fonts & colors—but anyone at the agency can still add their own special touch to a presentation or campaign. This way, the brand stays consistent, but your sales team gets to infuse their own personality into their marketing.

STEP 5: *Print & deliver*

Realtors can reduce spend and improve productivity by using online printing services. If you design and order prints from the same company, you know they're going to look exactly as intended. Your software should print and ship to any location, whether you're receiving a stack of brochures at your office or distributing direct mail postcards in a local area.

If you follow these steps, your team should feel confident in their ability to design and deliver professional real estate marketing materials. But, what about digital marketing—how does the process change?

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Digital Collateral

In the last chapter, we reviewed some of the print collateral you can use to market your business in the real world. In this chapter, we'll quickly cover digital collateral—the materials you use online to promote your brand, products and services. For example:

- Social media graphics
- Infographics
- Banner ads
- Slide presentations
- Sales proposals
- Videos

Whether you're in real estate, hospitality or healthcare, your online presence plays an important role in how your brand is perceived. Digital collateral can help you quickly deliver messages that influence public perception. Let's look at a few ways to use digital collateral on two of your most prominent online platforms: your website and your

social media profiles.

ON YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is the "home base" of your online presence. Because you have control over your website's design and presentation, it's a great place to showcase digital collateral. From your homepage to services pages and other landing pages, all offer opportunities for you to share relevant content.

For example, you can share slide presentations, flyers, tip sheets, or even eBook downloads with your visitors. A flyer could advertise upcoming events, such as an open house. An informational lookbook can make an impressive free gift for visitors to download and peruse. Printable checklists are a valuable resource for potential clients. Get creative and think about what content might resonate with your audience. Every interaction is a chance to build your brand and leave a stronger impression.

A note about images: You already know that your image is one of your most valuable real estate assets. Spend a little more on professional photography and headshots—and skip the cheesy stock photos. It might take a little more investment, but your brand will stand out and look better for it.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Increasingly, brands are expected to be present and relevant on social media. This trend is reflective of today's consumers—your potential clients—who now have an average of 5 social media accounts each. These people expect to find brands, products & services on their favorite social platforms.

However, social media can be tricky. Each platform has its own culture, and brands need to be fluent in a platform's culture to be understood and appreciated. For example, the way you speak to clients on Pinterest could be very different from how you speak to them on LinkedIn.

Of course, we now know that successful brand marketing is deeply rooted in consistency. How can brands speak differently across multiple platforms while still maintaining their brand identity? You'll have to use elements like color palette, fonts, images and voice to set the right tone. Tailor to the platform, but never lose the integral pieces of your brand's identity.

Further reading
How to achieve brand consistency on social media

Let's take a look at five major social media sites and how you can best use them to reach your audience.

Facebook

With a stunning 1.5 billion users, Facebook is the heavyweight of social platforms. It offers great organic reach, as well as detailed targeting for paid advertisements. You can drive traffic to your website by sharing links—but don't stop there. Great images are key to attracting attention, and video performs even better. You can host live streams to interact with your fans in real time, like hosting a question-and-answer session.

Twitter

Did you know that the majority of world leaders have a Twitter account? More than any other platform in this list, Twitter thrives on news. It gives you a snapshot of what's happening around the world at any given moment. Thanks to hashtags, it's easy for your brand to jump into trending conversations as they unfold—just make sure to do your research first.

Instagram

Over 40 billion photos have been shared on Instagram.

It's a rapidly growing platform for visual content, which makes it a perfect match for real estate. Instagram is a great place to show off beautiful homes, both inside and out. The platform lends itself well to inspirational content, so you could easily showcase home décor ideas, gorgeous backyards, and happy families.

Pinterest

Although this platform skews female, don't let its reputation fool you—40% of new signups come from men. If you're looking to connect with millennials, they use Pinterest as much as they use Instagram. Interestingly, it's also a highly visual platform. Users create boards dedicated to different topics, then they collect pins to populate those boards. It's a hub for wishes and ideas, making it the perfect place to show off enviable properties.

LinkedIn

In real estate, building relationships with clients is critical, but it's also important to network with your peers. LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, which makes it a valuable channel for building thought leadership. One advantage to advertising on LinkedIn is that you can segment your audience by

industry and job title—which is great if you're targeting a certain income level.

Further reading
How to build a social media campaign for real estate

You might not jump onto all these platforms at once, but each one offers compelling benefits for your brand. Determine which one (or two) would be the best fit for your brand right now, then add more as you feel comfortable. There are plenty of others outside this list that you could consider, too, like Tumblr or Snapchat.

Another note about images: Each social media site requires different post formats and sizes. To make your visuals effective, you'll have to create custom images to fit each one. Don't worry, you don't have to memorize a list of measurements. If you start with **social media templates**, you can create pixel-perfect posts in no time using your brand's fonts, colors & images.

Case Studies

By making it this far, you have absorbed a veritable mountain of information about real estate branding. From the history of brand management to the impact of brand consistency, you've seen how each building block fits together to create a strong, cohesive brand. Whether in print, in person or online, the interactions you have with your clients (and potential clients) represent an ongoing conversation that either strengthens or weakens your brand promise.

So, what does this look like in practice? If you were to take the advice in this book, how would your business change?

We asked two of our own real estate clients how Lucidpress helped them streamline their creative process, shorten the sales cycle, and improve perceptions of their brand.

Reinhart Real Estate

THE COMPANY

Founded nearly 50 years ago and headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Reinhart Real Estate is a brand with a legacy. As part of the Real Estate One Family of Companies (the 8th largest brokerage in the nation), Reinhart has grown tremendously over the last few decades. But with great growth comes great challenge when it comes to maintaining the brand.

THE CHALLENGE

With dozens of brokers and agents across the greater Ann Arbor area, marketing director Mary had her job cut out for her. Agents and brokers aren't trained to be graphic designers, but many of them were creating their own marketing collateral, with each piece looking different from the last.

Even the essence of Reinhart's brand—their logo and colors—was getting stretched and misused. "Reinhart red"? Who had time to match that exact hue when there were homes to sell? As a result, most of the designs ended up looking off-brand and unprofessional. From Publisher to PowerPoint, designs were all over the board… which meant the Reinhart brand was, too.

THE SOLUTION

Mary knew they had a brand management problem, but she wasn't sure how to solve it. She researched several platforms and came across Lucidpress. After testing out the editor, she realized she might have found the solution. The simplicity of its drag-and-drop design, accessibility for any and all team members, and the speed at which she could create and share templates convinced Mary to implement Lucidpress for her team.

And what about maintaining brand compliance? "Lucidpress makes it much easier for them," she observed. "They can just log in, easily open a template, throw a couple pictures in and update the text—without inadvertently changing the brand. Things were way too complicated for them before. I think this will encourage our agents to do more marketing."

By streamlining the creative process this way, Mary hit two targets with one stone. Not only are agents empowered to create more marketing, Reinhart's brand is protected and represented with seamless consistency. And as we know from our research, consistent brands are 3 to 4 times more visible than inconsistent ones, so their marketing efforts go even further.

Chestnut Park

THE COMPANY

Chestnut Park is one of Ontario's leading luxury real estate firms. Partnering with over 300 agents, they serve a wide range of clients looking to buy and sell residences across the province. With so many agents, Chestnut Park understandably requires an exhaustive amount of marketing collateral to grow and maintain the business.

THE CHALLENGE

Stuck in a whirlwind of rogue collateral and edit requests, managing graphic designer Philip was beyond bogged down. Instead of devoting his time and talents to new creative projects, he was continuously assisting agents with small tweaks to existing collateral.

Beyond that, marketing director Maria had her own challenges, too. The third-party template maker that agents used to print their marketing collateral required design requests to be submitted 2 to 3 weeks in advance. Once they were finally ready, agents could input their information into a form—but they couldn't see what it would look like on the final design.

This lengthy and frustrating process compelled many agents to forego it entirely and create their own, improperly branded materials. But, Maria knew that a

brand as luxurious as Chestnut Park couldn't afford to be careless anymore.

THE SOLUTION

One of the agents suggested that Maria look into Lucidpress, and she was impressed with its simplicity. She knew her agents would appreciate the ability to update their collateral quickly and see how the final design would look in advance. The lockable templates helped to protect the brand so it wouldn't be compromised when agents created or updated their materials.

Lucidpress helped Maria's team cut down their content creation from 2 to 3 weeks to a matter of minutes. "From feature sheets to buyer guides to new letterhead, we can set up templates for them and allow them to create this collateral very quickly now," she reported. "We can get them up and shareable within a matter of minutes."

"We are a luxury brand, and we can't make mistakes," she explained. "We know we need to stay competitive and elevate not only the corporate brand, but agents' brands as well." With Lucidpress, all levels of the Chestnut Park brand remain consistent and polished so it can outshine the competition.

Conclusion

Congratulations. You have made it through our complete guide to real estate branding. We hope this book has given you a solid foundation of branding principles and an illustrative variety of real-world examples.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Now it's time to incorporate what you've learned into the day-to-day management of your brand. Whether your agency's biggest opportunities lie in brand consistency, sales enablement, or another aspect of branding, you can use your leadership to drive positive change and help your agents recognize the power and impact of a well-executed brand.

For more thought leadership on branding and design, you can follow our blog at *www.lucidpress.com/blog*.

You can also find us on your favorite social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

If you're looking for a software solution to streamline your agency's creative process, shorten the sales cycle, and improve brand consistency, we'd love to talk to you. Visit our real estate software page to see how Lucidpress can help you institute changes that benefit your brand and keep your agents productive and happy. You can request a no-obligation demo of our real estate marketing tools, or sign up for a free account to try it yourself.

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