ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to follow customer brand guidelines when creating eLearning content

When creating an online course, why is it important to set up a motion graphics project based on the graphic guidelines provided by customers?

What are a company's brand guidelines?

If you are approaching the creation of eLearning courses for the first time, you should know that **Brand Guidelines** are a kind of handbook in which you will find all the instructions on how to communicate a particular brand.

It is a set of guidelines that will allow you to go in depth into the rules on which the entire **visual communication** of the company is based and, you will understand, they must be followed very carefully.

It is a matter of checking, each time you start a new project, whether your productions are in line with the graphic and visual identity of your client and to set your activities, including motion graphics, on these guidelines.

Guidelines are important to create consistency across the entire company communication sphere, eLearning courses included.

You may be asking yourself: can I have a certain degree of **flexibility** in the design and development of motion graphics content?

Sure, you can set up graphics and animations on your own or by following the indications on the approved storyboard, but you will need to follow everything defined by your client's 'consistency' rules.

Brand guidelines are usually distributed via one or more pdf files and allow graphic designers, developers, marketers and, of course, creators of digital training experiences to follow the visual identity and tone of voice of the company.

This is an important advantage for the company: it is thus possible to create a code that all communication experts can interpret to create a product that is consistent with the corporate identity.

The structure of such a document can vary greatly depending on the company you are working with: a big corporation might create a very detailed brand guideline, while a start-up might create a much more concise document.

The use of guidelines in eLearning course content

Despite the extreme variability of the contents, within a brand book you can generally find all the elements that will be useful for setting up your motion graphics project such as:

The **logo**: this is the main element of a company's brand. It is an image that usually represents the name of the company and an associated graphic that could recall the values and identity of our client. It is a really important element that you can place in different places in your project.

When we are creating content for our eLearning courses, we will necessarily have to imagine where the client's logo should appear.

In my opinion, it is always a good idea to take a minimalist approach and only place the logo within the video content during the presentation of the course and in certain elements that might be useful for the learner.
If, for example, we are doing an eLearning course on computer security, it will be necessary to insert the company logo in the opening of the video with an animated logo opener and, probably, it could be inserted in some specific examples related to the company context (e.g. phishing mails)

Using such an approach will allow you to keep your client's style consistent across other brand elements without constantly referring back to the logo.

The **font (or typefaces)**: another important element of consistency and continuity of the corporate image is the type of font to be used. Usually the font is attached to the brand book or a link is provided to download it.
It is easy to install on your system (mac or windows) and other authoring or video editing software.

It may happen that there is not just one font to which a company's communication is entrusted.

In fact, the company may indicate a font associated with the characters of the logo and a totally different font for all communication and for the creation of graphics for eLearning courses. For this reason, you can ask the communication manager what are the boundaries according to which you can use one font rather than another for your course realisation strategy.

When you realise the content for an eLearning course, you will have to set your own line for using the font indicated by your client.
One of my rules is to divide texts into different types and associate them with a font variation, e.g:

- titles - for all titles at the opening of a paragraph I use bold and all characters in capital letters
- keywords - use an italicised semibold
- topics dealt with or to be dealt with later - in this case we prefer to use italics
- call to action - I use bold for the learner's call to action
- call for attention - here a mix of regular fonts with some words in bold is useful to highlight the importance of certain concepts in the text.

For each type of design you can set your own rules but, in general, it will be very useful to define a consistent line in order to achieve a linear design that is pleasing to the learner.

Colours: another very important annex to the brand book are the colours, true spokespersons of the corporate identity, allowing you to structure your eLearning course content in the best possible way.

When we leaf through a brand book we are first presented with the primary colours of the brand, i.e. those found in the logo. Next, the guidelines focus on all secondary or complementary colours that you can use for the composition of your content.

Colours are usually presented with three codes: a pantone code, i.e. a square showing the colour and its code composed of two fields, in the first of which there may be a word (e.g. red) or a two-digit number referring to the family to which it belongs (18 for the red family); the second code you will find is HEX (hexadecimal), which is proposed followed by a # and which you can insert within the colour tables of your content editing projects, whether static or dynamic; finally, another code you will find is RGBA a code that allows you to include opacity as well as colour tone.

You can also include all the colour codes required by your customer in the **DynDevice content creation platform** via the SCORM design tools and editor.

In fact, the "Create eLearning Courses" extension of the DynDevice LMS eLearning platform is full of eLearning authoring tools, you can try to import your already edited graphics with the right colour tones and create compositions suitable for the training units required by your customer.

When I produce the content for the client, as well as the **format for the course**, I first set my template for the motion graphics and structure all the colours of the boxes and placeholders as required by the brand guidelines. If I have decided to integrate

vector graphics, I retrieve the source file and modify the colours in order to respect the canons imposed by the brand book. It is a job that requires particular attention in the preparation of the materials but, if done critically and without exaggeration, allows for a certain continuity throughout the course.

Why do I say without exaggeration? Because very often it is really important not to 'tire' the user with too bright colours or with the same colour tones throughout the course! This is why you should rely on complementary colours and secondary colours recommended by the client's brand book to create a certain 'pleasant discontinuity'.

An example? When I make animated infographics for a project, I try not to use the main colour palette, but always the secondary one. This is mainly to create a 'break' within the storytelling of the course and to generate a photographic memory in the user (see this diagram? Remember it because it has different colours from those we have seen throughout the course).

The use of colours tends to depend on the taste and flexibility of our client but, if you take care of it, it will give you pleasantly designed products.

Tone of voice: The tone of voice is the way our client wants his brand to be told. The tone can be institutional or informal, playful or ironic, in short, it has several inflections. This element can be integrated both at the writing and design level (how do we set the voice over?) and at the graphic level (what kind of images do we use? Can we use animated characters?).

It often occurred to me that within the same organisation, there were differing opinions on the tone of voice to be used for eLearning courses. For this reason, each client within the company proposes their own vision of the course to be realised for them. The tone of voice for an IT security course may be authoritative but also, in a certain sense, informal and may only use photographic images to create a particular engagement with the people you will be speaking to.

Images: Within the client's guidelines you may already find some images to be used. Very often organisations rely on some communication agencies to make photographs and videos to be used for all their communication projects, eLearning courses included. For this reason, you can use their material or decide to rely on external libraries with commercial rights (a Google search will help you find plenty of them) that you can propose in the storyboard phase or in the product prototyping phase. In this case, the images used in the brand book are important above all as an indication of the 'identity character' of the company and will allow you to understand whether they prefer a bright, warm, cold image, etc.

In conclusion, use your customer's guidelines as a starting point and never as an end point. Try to keep the boundaries in mind but propose dynamic products, paying particular attention to the quality of your productions.

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