

E-book

How to Translate Your Brand Identity Into a Consistent Style Guide

Walmart **Business**

Introduction

Every business wants to stand out against the competition and someday become a household name. To reach those worthy goals, businesses don't just need a strong brand identity—they need one that clearly communicates their values.

This e-book will walk you step-by-step through creating your own company style guide, including:

- Tone and voice
- Correct useage of logos and assets
- Color palettes
- Fonts and other elements that make you recognizable

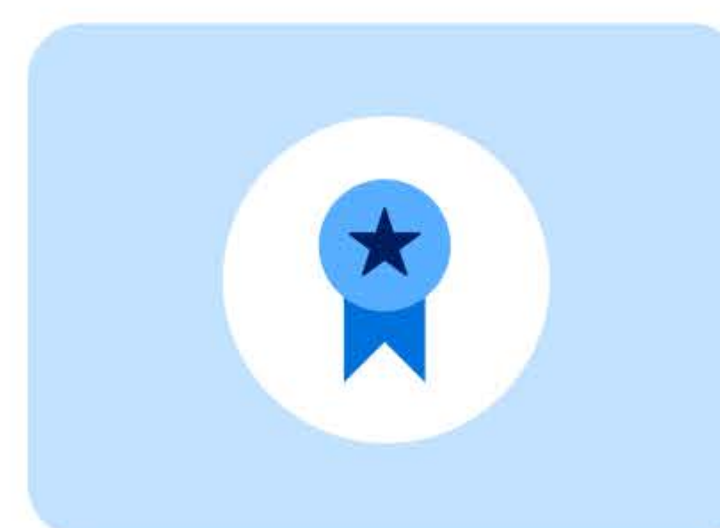


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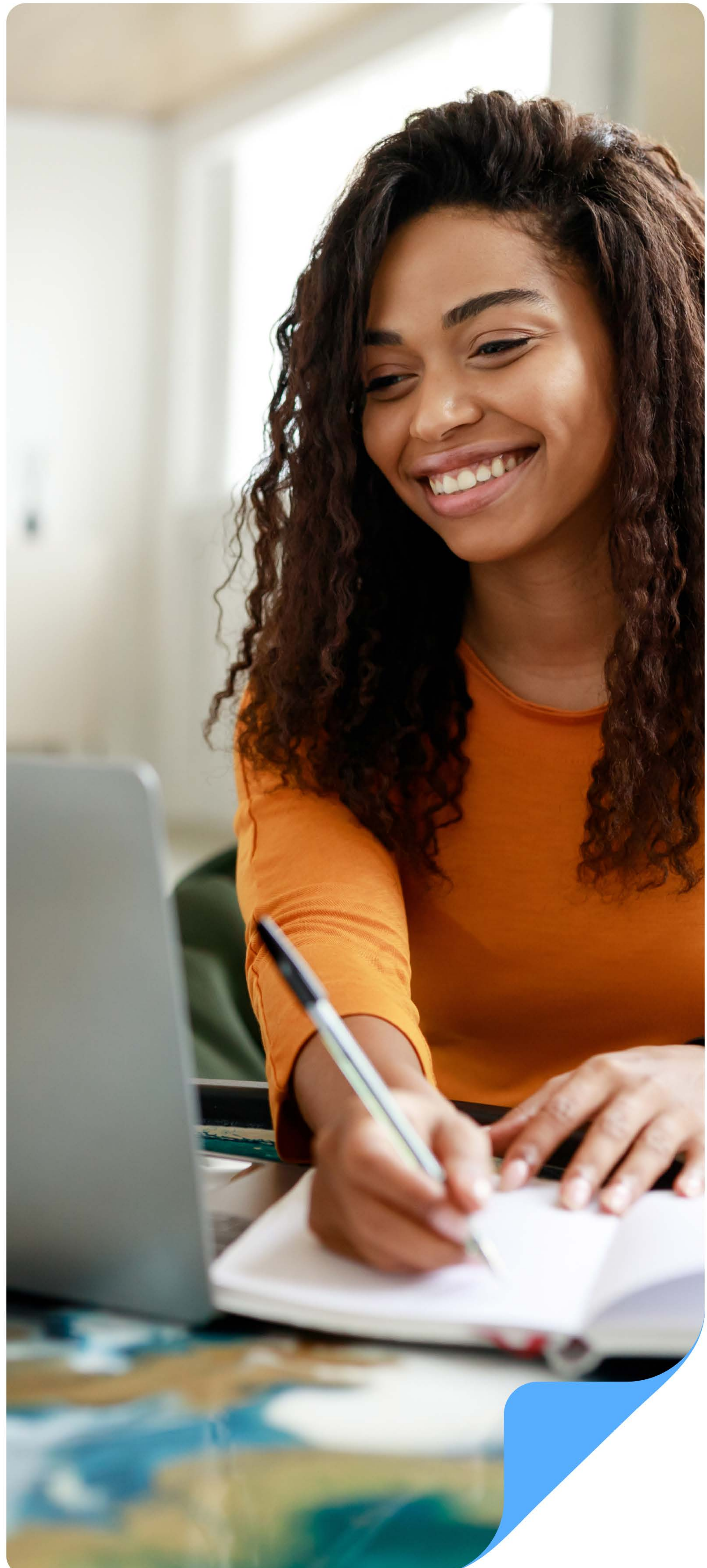
Establishing a consistent identity

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Think about some of the most recognizable brands in the world—like Walmart. You can probably recall the Walmart logo and brand colors immediately. Brand identity is more than just colors and logos, though.

Walmart is also synonymous with affordable prices on a wide selection of household essentials, an experience that's consistent across physical locations and online storefronts. A customer knows what to expect from Walmart, and can count on it wherever they are.

That's the value of having a consistent brand identity.



Turning brand values into something more

You may not know where to start with your style guide, but keep in mind that you're not starting from scratch.

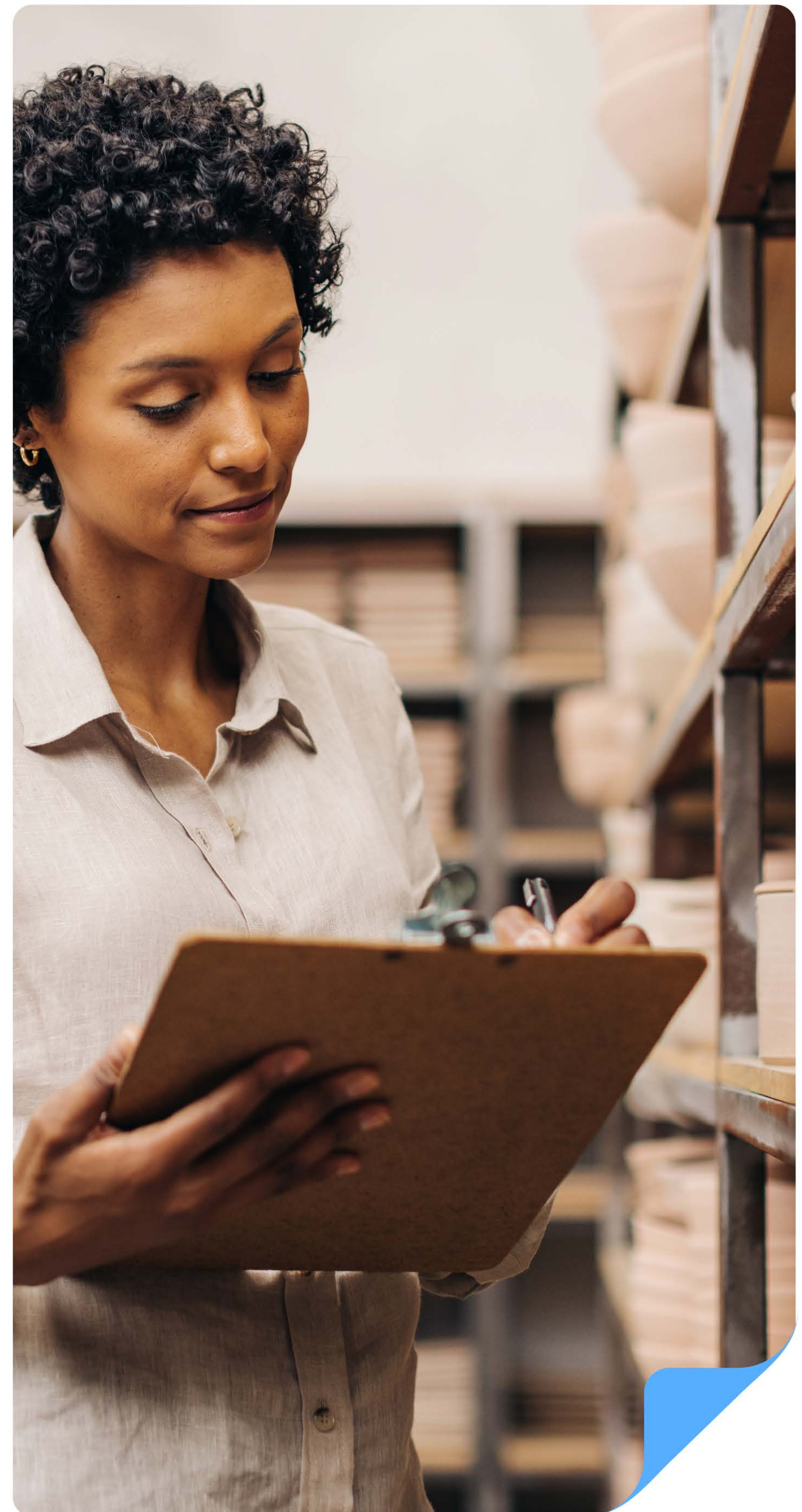
You built your business on a foundation of hopes and goals, and you can draw from that motivation to answer a few questions:

What is your mission?

Why did you start your company and what do you hope to accomplish? You should be able to communicate the answer to those questions in a brief mission statement (more on that later).

Who is your ideal customer?

The way you communicate with your audience must be tailored to that audience's distinct identity. That means you'll have to appeal to their needs and pain points. Age, location, occupation, ethnicity and education are just a few factors that determine how a consumer responds to corporate messaging.



What are your brand values? Your company's values are a key part of its overall brand identity. Not only do they impact how you portray your company to the world, but they also guide internal communications and policies. Examples of brand values include sustainability, innovation, quality, integrity, continuous learning and education and customer service.

What are your business goals?

Do you want to expand your service area? Grow brand awareness? Gain a reputation for top-notch customer service? Your goals should tie into your mission statement and drive your values.

The importance of market research & critical analysis



According to the Small Business Administration, “Market research helps you find customers for your business. Competitive analysis helps you make your business unique.” In other words, you need to have a deep understanding of both your customers and your competitors.

Start with digging into the factors that affect your customers’ purchasing decisions. Surveys and questionnaires are effective for this type of market research. You can create your own or partner with a

Here are some tips to help you design your survey:

- **Ask direct questions with multiple-choice answers.**
If your survey data is too vague, it’s not useful. Keep the questions brief and to the point. Provide two to five answers to choose from, along with a write-in box.
- **Keep it short.**
People are busy and less likely to finish your questionnaires if it’s dozens of questions long. Aim for 10 questions at most.
- **Test your messaging.**
Are consumers aware of your brand? Do they know your stories? Are your values appealing to them? Asking specific questions about your current branding will help you know what’s working and what could use a rethink.
- **Ask about your competitors.**
It may feel a little risky to ask your customers about your competition, but learning what they like and dislike can help you uncover features of your existing business to amplify—or change.
- **Follow up as needed.**
In some cases, the answers to your survey questions may uncover themes that require closer examination. Perform follow-up surveys and refine your queries to dive deeper.



Focus groups can provide even more context to the info you collect in your surveys. These groups allow participants to elaborate on their thoughts and can teach you a lot about how your target customer thinks. Be sure to use a skilled moderator to keep the conversation moving forward.

Finally, don’t feel like you have to gather every data point on your own. Use existing resources to enhance your research. The SBA even [has a list](#) of free government resources to get you started.



Craft your “why”



By this point in the process, you should have a clear idea of your company’s values. Using those values as a compass, tie them together in a purpose-defining mission statement. Your mission statement is your company’s “why”—the reason you started it in the first place. For example, Walmart’s mission statement and purpose is “Help people save money and live better.”

With a strong brand identity, a mission statement to back it up and clear values and goals, **you’re ready to craft your company style guide.**



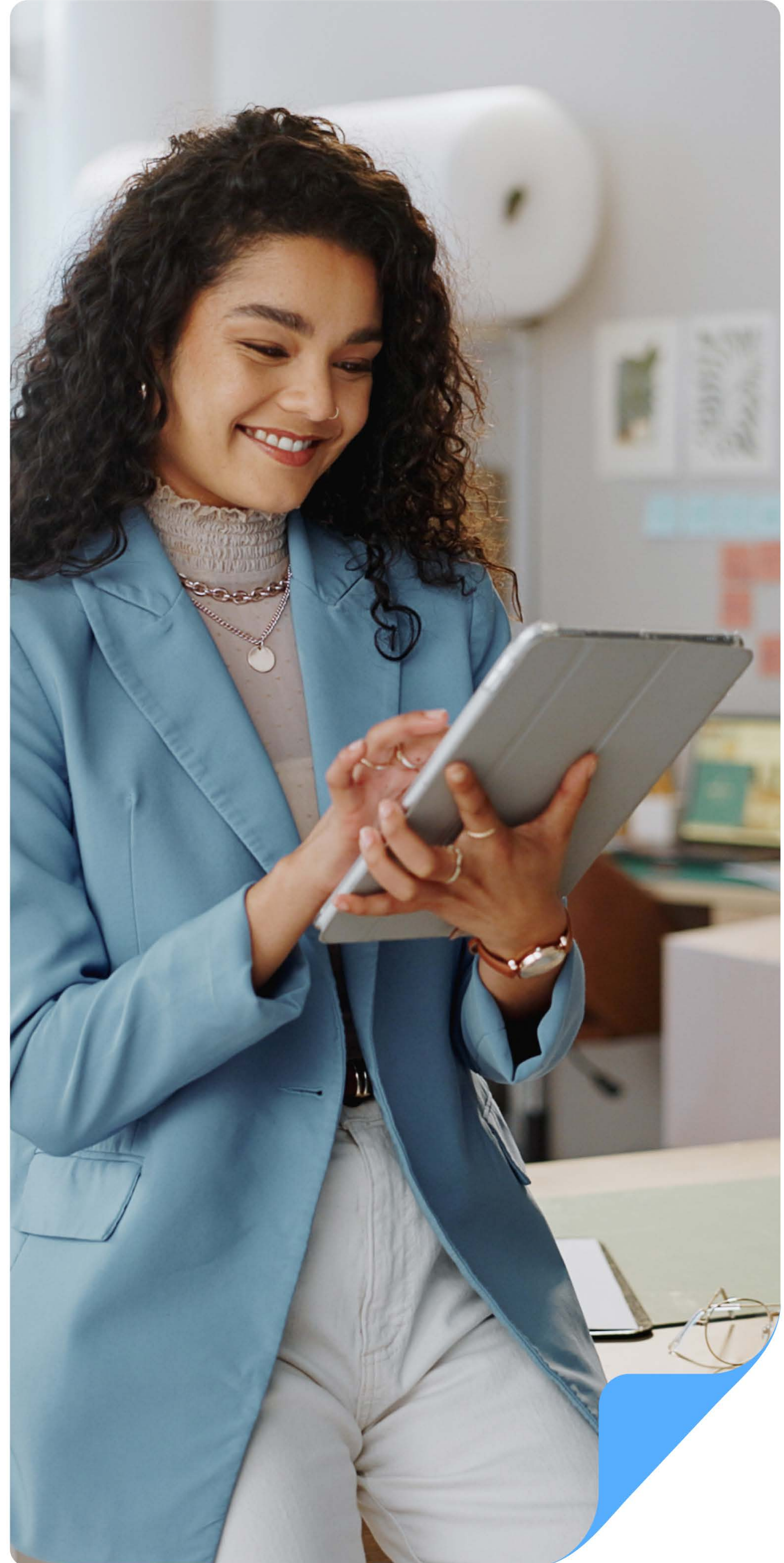
From vision to execution: crafting a style guide

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The more your company grows, the more important it is to have a consistent communication style.

Your marketing is spread across email, social media, paid ads and more, often handled by different employees.

Those employees need to speak with the same brand voice. That's what your style guide is for; it gives employees and other stakeholders a reference that ensures consistency.



Elements of an effective style guide



Tone & voice

While voice and tone sound similar, they're not exactly the same. Your tone will change to suit the situation—an announcement for Veteran's Day wouldn't have the same tone as one for Valentine's Day—but your voice will remain consistent throughout. It can be helpful to make a list of what your brand voice is (knowledgeable, confident) and what it isn't (inauthentic, overly serious). When describing your brand voice, use clear descriptions.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Uplifting and empowering
- Professional but approachable
- Cozy and comforting
- Unapologetic luxury
- Humorous and conversational

While your company's tone may not always remain the same, you should give your team a general idea of what to aim for. Is it generally conversational or more formal? Does it have a sense of humor?



Think about the audience you'll be communicating with and the tone that best appeals to them based on your research.

Spelling & grammar



How do you feel about Oxford (also known as serial) commas and em dashes? Now is the time to let your inner grammar nerd run free. While our language does have some hard-and-fast rules, many words, phrases and uses of punctuation are still up for debate.

If you don't specify which to use, your communications will suffer from inconsistency, which can make it look like your business doesn't pay attention to small details.

Here's what your style guide should include:

- **Basic grammar rules:** These rules might include hyphens and dashes, punctuation rules, quotation marks (curved or straight?), spacing and how to write titles of various forms of media (such as italics for movie titles and quotes for song titles). If you don't have strong style preferences, default to an existing style such as [AP](#) or [MLA](#) for consistency.
- **Spelling:** In cases with commonly inconsistent usage (such as Wi-Fi vs. WiFi or e-book vs. eBook vs. ebook), state which version should be used. This also applies to company-specific products, brands and phrases.
- **Numbers:** When should a number be written out and when should you use a numeral? How should your team write measurements? Don't forget dates and times, too; use specific examples.

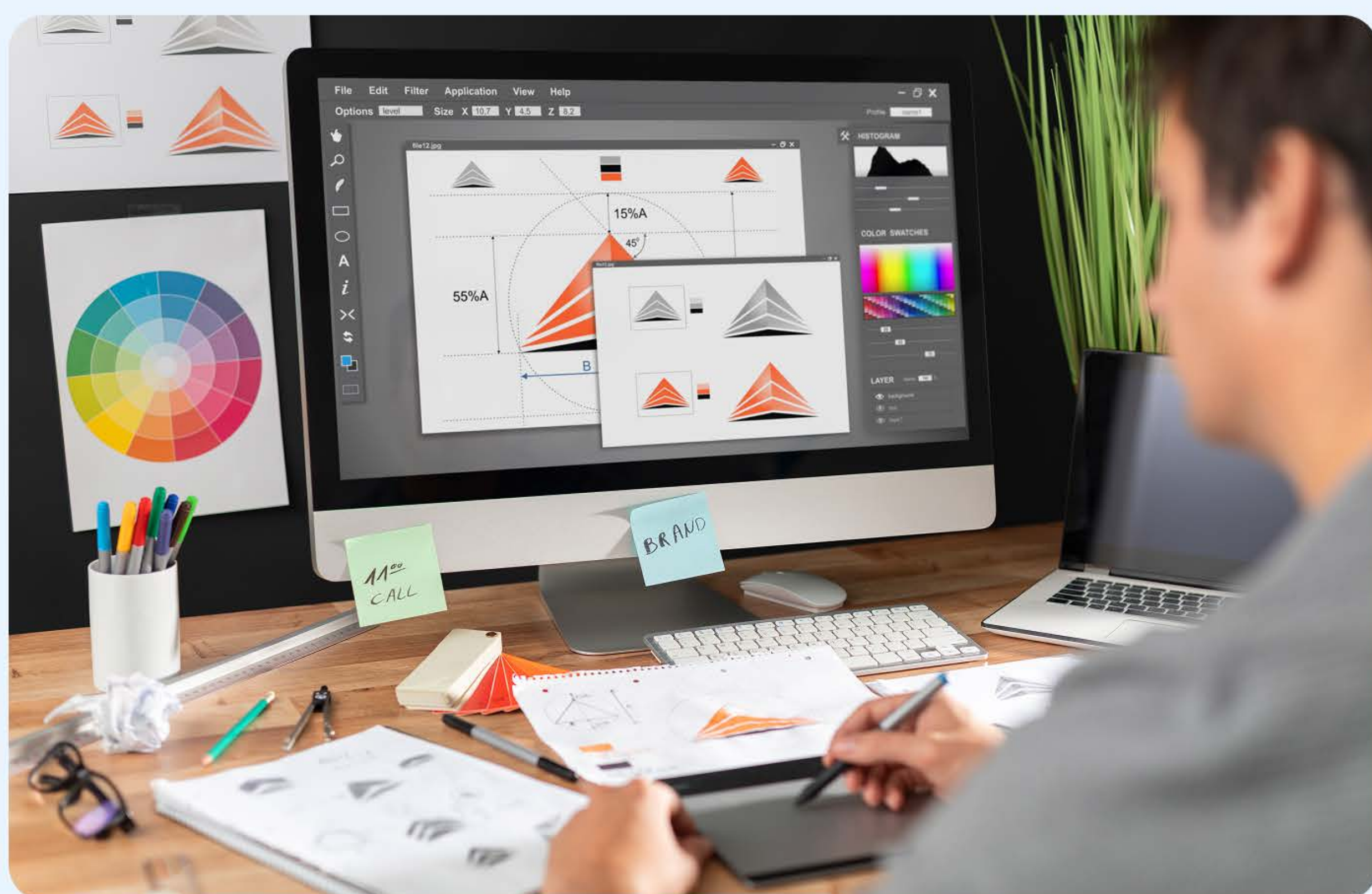
Visual elements

If you don't already have a logo and color scheme for your business, now's the time to make those decisions. According to graphic design platform [Canva](#), "Color can play a major role in consumer decision-making. Without even knowing what your product is about, customers initially rely on brand colors to decide whether or not they want to engage and learn more about your brand." Different colors provoke different psychological responses, so choose the color palette that reflects your company carefully. Use your voice and tone as a guide—do you want to immediately draw attention with reds or be a calming presence full of blues and greens?

Using the colors you've chosen as inspiration, create several versions of your logo and include them in your style guide. You should provide instructions about when to use each version. Does your logo always need to be the same size and shape, or are there variations? When is it appropriate to use which version?

This goes for any additional brand assets; include them in your guide with publishing guidelines so that your employees are always following the best practices you've set. Be sure to also include file size, shape and format guidelines for blog posts, social media accounts and anywhere else your branding might appear.

Guidelines for visual content



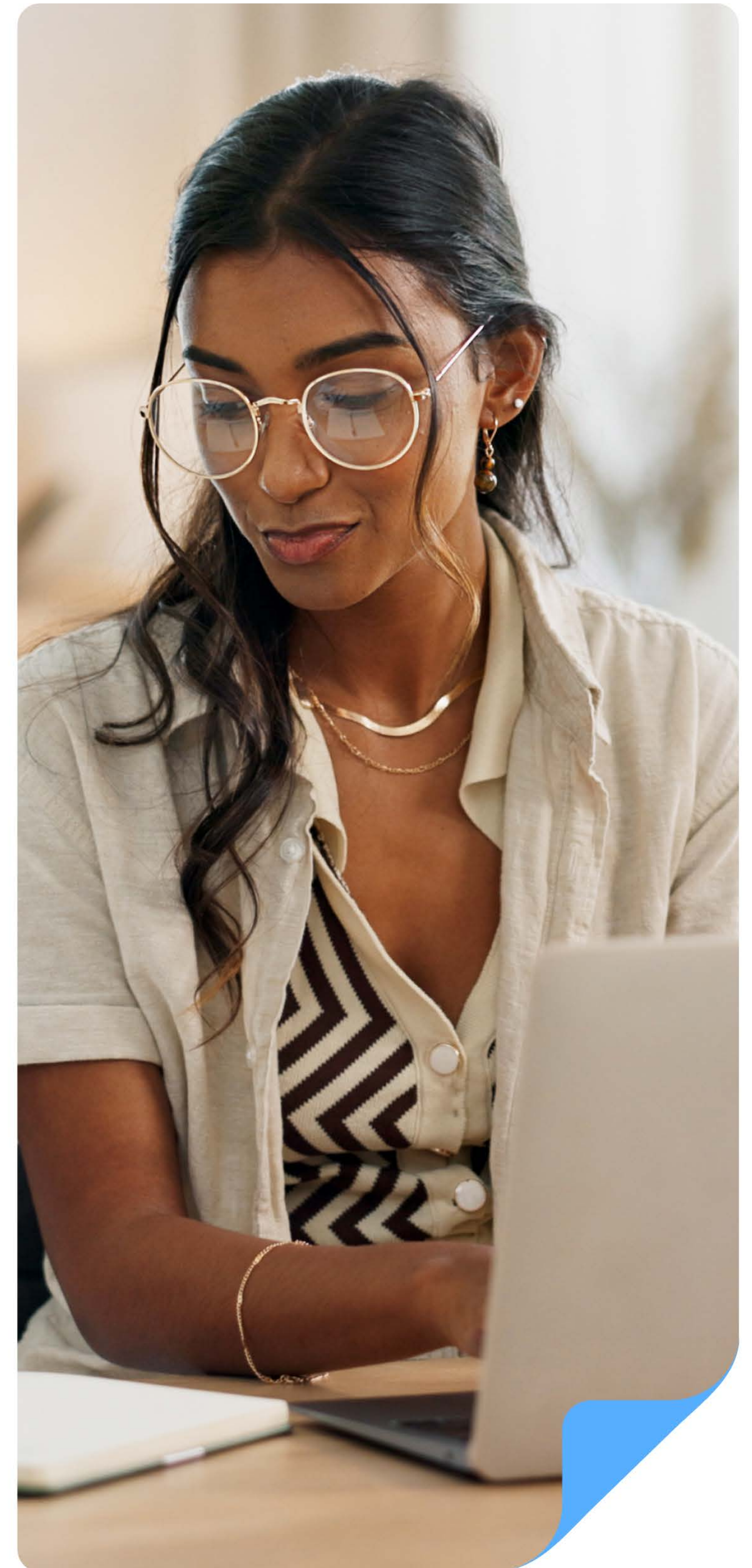
Just as you need specific guidelines for written content, you'll also have to provide directions for the visual assets accompanying that content. That includes not just logos and branding, but also stock photography and videos.

- **File sizes:** Different websites and apps have their own file size limitations or standard sizes and shapes. List the maximum file sizes for any social media or content platforms you use.
- **File types:** Be as specific as you can be about the types of files to use for each potential scenario. JPG, PNG and PSD are just a few options for images, for example.
- **Video lengths:** Whether you're working on a paid video ad campaign or creating organic marketing content, you'll need to know how long is too long. This includes social media guidelines as well as best practices; for example, though you can post in-feed videos of up to 60 minutes on Instagram, that's not necessarily the best way to build engagement.
- **Image sourcing instructions:** Some companies have internal photo libraries, while others use services like iStock. Make sure your team knows where to source images and video so they don't waste time or money.
- **Image preferences:** Photography platforms have hundreds of thousands of images to choose from, so be specific about the type you want to use. For example, decide whether bold colors or a more muted palette better suits your brand.

Guidelines for written content

From website landing pages to the company blog, you'll need specific instructions that go beyond the basic grammar guidelines you've already established. These directions should include:

- **Title case or sentence case:** Should every word in a headline or section header be capitalized, or just the first one? Both styles are widely used, so state your preferences or defer to your chosen style rules (like AP or MLA).
- **Character and word counts:** Give your team an idea of how long (or short) their content should be. For blogs, this will be measured in word counts (for example, 1,000 words); for headlines and shorter social media posts, length is often measured in characters because space is limited. The character length of posts and titles might be determined by the content management system (CMS) you use, so check that first.
- **Citations:** If you're sharing research from another company, you need to cite your sources. Decide whether a link will suffice or you'd prefer a footnote at the bottom of the page.
- **Boilerplate:** A boilerplate is a standard block of text that appears at the end of press releases and other communications. Your boilerplate should only be a paragraph or two long and summarize your company's unique value proposition, as well as providing background information.
- **Calls to action:** The call to action (CTA) should direct consumers to the next step in the journey. They should direct readers to perform a specific action, whether that's buying a product, downloading an app or scheduling a demo. Do you want your team to pull from a library at random, or suit specific CTAs to specific platforms?



Publishing guidelines

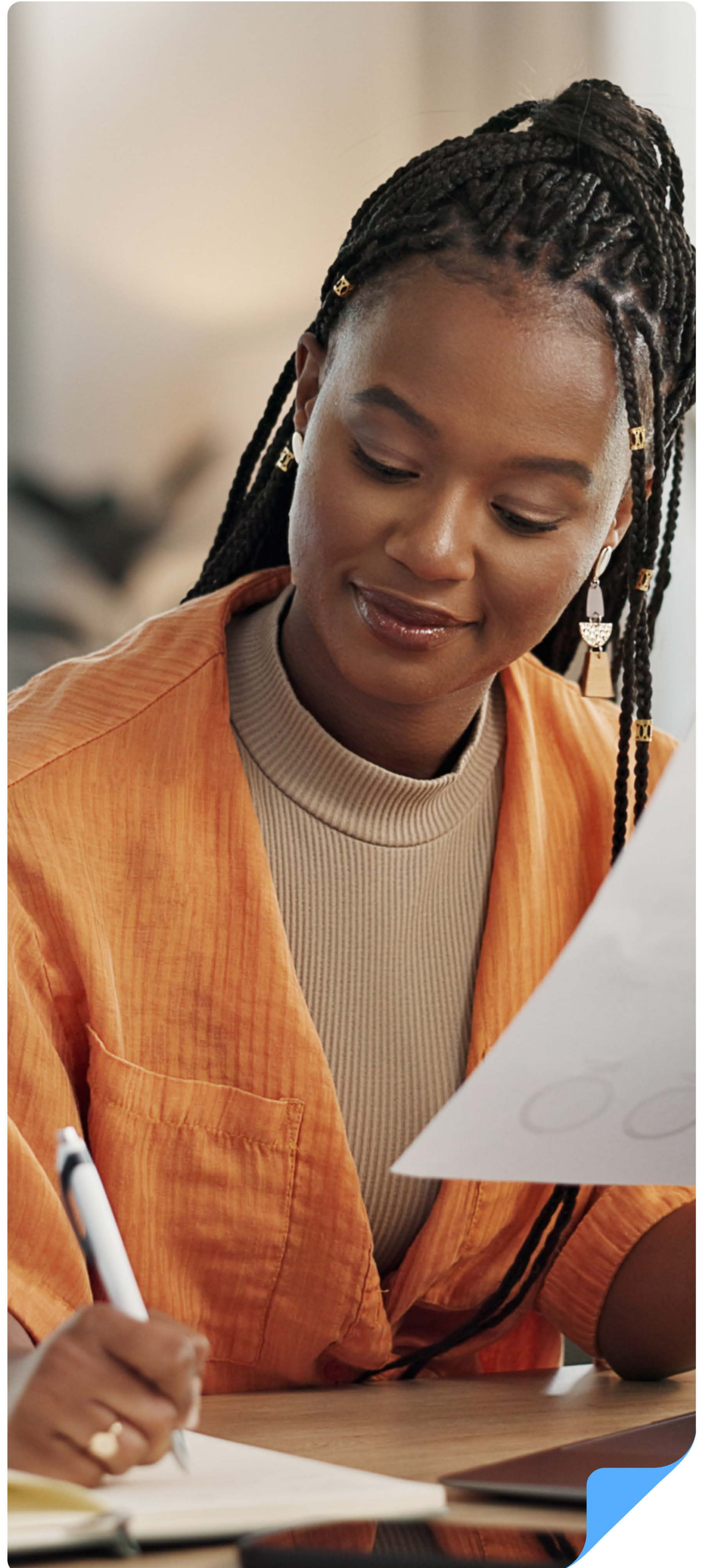
Even though your identity remains consistent throughout all company communications, you'll have to adapt how you deliver your message through different types of content. Provide guidance for social media, blogs, images, videos and internal messaging. These guidelines should include the best times for publishing, how often you publish, when to use different versions of your logo and other company assets and any specific language your employees should use (or avoid).

Glossary

The final part of your style guide will be a glossary of terms commonly used in your industry.

Provide a brief definition of each word or phrase. In some cases, you may need to provide more explanation of the proper usage of the term.

You might have already covered some of your glossary contents elsewhere in your style guide, particularly in the section with common misspellings, but include them in the glossary anyway. This way, employees have an alphabetized, easy-to-reference resource when they need to remember the spelling and grammatical intricacies of a single word.





Distributing your style guide

After you've finished your guide, it's time to share it with your team and collect feedback.

Start with the company leaders and make your way down. Make sure all employees have access to the document and provide a channel for feedback. You can expect to make some minor revisions for clarification, which is why it's a good idea to distribute internally before a wider release.

Once that process is complete, it's time to share it far and wide. Marketing agencies, influencer partners, freelance artists and writers, vendors —provide a copy to anyone who might need it.

Nurturing a living document

Language evolves over time, and the way you talk about your brand will, too.

To keep your guide up to date, schedule a regular audit; every six months to a year should be enough. Add to it as new issues surface.

There will be times when you need to make changes with more urgency outside of the regular audit period. Create a workflow for this process and assign responsibility for making immediate changes. This way, you're not scrambling to figure it out in the moment. You'll also ensure that these emergency changes don't fall through the cracks.



Becoming a brand with Walmart Business



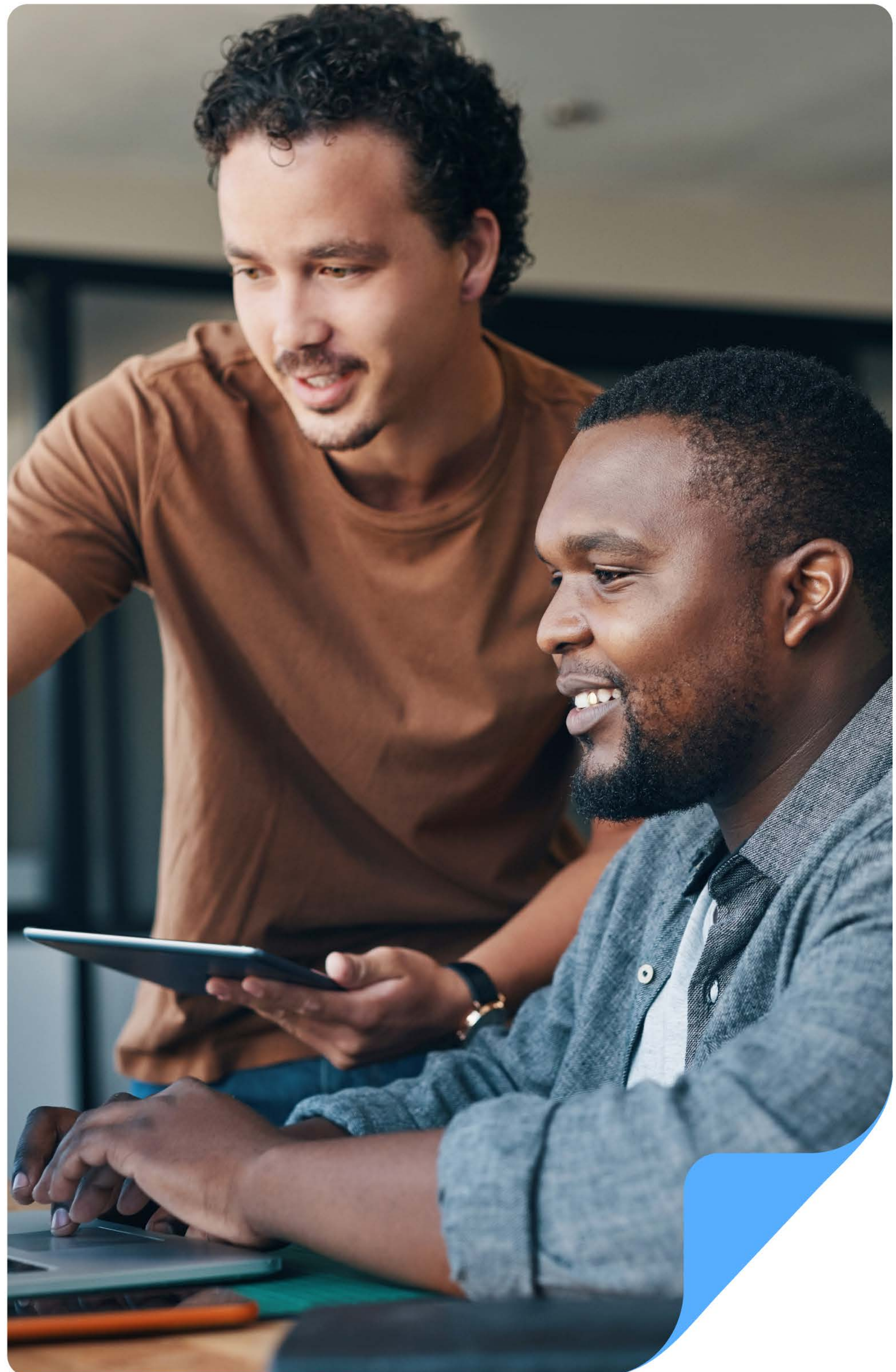
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Ultimately,
a brand is more
than a collection of
logos, colors and
grammatical styles
—but those
elements are
necessary
parts of crafting
a corporate identity.

With a comprehensive
style guide at your disposal,
you and your team can
build up your business
while embracing the values
upon which the company
was founded.

Of course, you'll need help along the
way—and Walmart Business is there
for you. Our ever-growing selection
of products for the office,
breakroom, job site and more gives
you an easy way to stock up while
saving money.

For even more value, consider [Walmart Business+](#). You'll get free shipping with no order minimum,¹ free delivery from stores on orders over \$35,² and 2% back in Walmart Business rewards on orders of \$250 or more.³ That could add up to over \$500 in savings a year!⁴ A Core membership allows you to manage five user accounts, and as your business grows, you can scale up and enjoy even more benefits.
[Click here to learn more.](#)



¹ Excludes most Marketplace items, freight items, and items with location surcharges.

² Restrictions apply.

³ Rewards can only be used toward future purchases on Walmart Business. Additional terms apply.

⁴ Savings based on 1 free \$35+ delivery order vs. \$9.95 fee and 1 free shipping order under \$35 vs. \$6.99 fee biweekly, plus 2% Walmart Business Rewards on monthly order >\$250 (average value of \$400).



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