How to Keep Campaigns On Brand and On Schedule

Brandfolder

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A Balancing Act

If marketers have learned anything recently, it's the importance of being nimble.

The marketplace can change quickly and without warning, and companies need to reach their customers where they are. The goal of any campaign is to combine efficiency with brand consistency.

Unfortunately, striking that balance can be difficult for marketers to maintain. Campaigns often have a lot of moving parts and an abundance of assets, which can quickly turn into disjointed and disorganized workflows. Plus, many of today's teams are also working remotely and asynchronously. The result is often reactive decisions that are inconsistent with brand guidelines.

The extra steps that come with ensuring brand consistency can complicate the campaign process even further, but the importance of doing so when it comes to marketing team goals is undeniable. Brand experience is increasingly tied to purchasing decisions and the repeat business of brand loyalty.

It is possible to keep your campaigns on brand and on schedule. This ebook will provide you with a guide for balancing campaign launch speed with brand consistency. We'll address some of the challenges marketers face and share strategies for campaign success.

Aligning Campaign
and Brand Strategy

Set Your Campaign Strategy

Campaigns should start with a strategy that clearly communicates and supports business objectives while adhering to brand guidelines.

Your strategy is a blueprint for how creative assets and messaging will be built into campaign execution. And it should tie back to a single source of brand truth.

Alignment across a brand's teams is essential. While it may sound obvious, campaigns can easily veer off brand when teams try to move too fast. To maintain consistency, you need a deep understanding of your target audiences and the channels where you aim to reach them.

Set Your Campaign Strategy

Identify your target audience

Before you can create and execute a campaign, you need to understand who you're looking to reach and how their values are tied to your company's. This is your target audience, and maintaining consistent messaging that's tailored for each of them is part of the quality customer experience that encourages brand loyalty.

In a study by 5W Public Relations, 83% of millennials said it's important that a company's values align with their own. It's a marketer's job to communicate those shared values in campaigns as core components of the brand — and it's worthwhile. When customers feel connected to brands, 57% will increase their spending with that brand, and 76% will buy from it over a competitor, according to SproutSocial.

A true connection with customers requires consistency. In fact, your customers crave consistency because it's how our brains are wired. According to Zendesk, 87% of buyers prefer brands that provide consistent customer experience across all channels. If an experience is positive, they'll return again and again. But when something doesn't align with what they know a brand to be, it interrupts the authenticity of their experience and sends them elsewhere.

To reach and engage your target audience, marketers need branding that's familiar at every touchpoint. Companies with well-defined, consistent branding achieve a 91% higher year-over-year increase in customer retention rate on average than those without consistency, according to the Aberdeen Group.

Interestingly, 95% of companies have brand guidelines but just 25% stick to them, according to Lucidpress. Brand consistency requires an organization-wide commitment.

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5W PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDY

57%
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SPROUTSOCIAL

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SPROUTSOCIAL

Set Your Campaign Strategy

Select your core channels

Once you identify your ideal customer, reach them using your primary marketing channels. A marketing channel includes any platform you use to communicate your brand messaging. Finding the right channel will be specific to your target audience.

In a digital world, you have a myriad of choices, and it's important to choose the right ones.

As you consider platforms, ask yourself:

Will it reach my target audience?

Will it help me effectively communicate my message?

Will it complement my other channels?

Will it allow me to gather analytics to measure ROI?

Effective campaigns use a mix of channels in order to reach target audiences at several touchpoints and stay top of mind.

Set Your Campaign Strategy

Select your core channels (cont.)

Here are some good places to start:

Email: Some methods of marketing never go out of style, and email is the leader in that category. Building a list provides you with a ready audience. Email has one of the highest ROIs, generating $38 for every $1 spent, according to Hubspot.

Paid: Paid methods include pay-per-click (PPC), ads and sponsored content, such as influencer campaigns. Today's options are very specific, allowing you to pinpoint your target audience down to the most minute details. Paid methods average about a $2 return for every $1 spent, according to a Google Economic Impact Study.

Social: In addition to paid ads on social media, companies should have a presence on the platforms their target audiences frequent. Social media is best for building relationships and engaging with customers. It's also where customers can share their stories — aka user-generated content (UGC) — which is one of the most valuable marketing assets you can have today. Consumers find UGC 9.8 times more impactful than influencer content when making purchasing decisions, according to Stakla.

Web: Just about every brand needs a website. As much as 80% of people research a company online before visiting a location or making a purchase, according to Blue Corona. Consider your website to be the hub of your marketing strategy, establishing and setting the tone for your branding.

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HUBSPOT
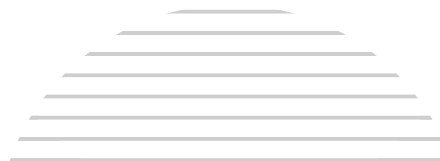
Audit Existing Assets and Campaign Activity

Speed to market requires campaign-ready assets. Get ready to execute your next campaign by performing a content audit, which is a systematic analysis of all your current assets. This process will help you account for what you have and double-check for brand consistency. While it takes time up front, it saves countless hours later, helping you avoid the risk of redundancy or missteps and providing insights that can weed out poorly performing content.

Here are the steps:

1. Take inventory of your content

Put the URLs of your content into a spreadsheet. If your company has a lot of assets, you can use a web crawler tool like Screaming Frog. Then add categories that will help you sort and compare. We suggest these:

CONTENT TITLE	CONTENT DESCRIPTION	CONTENT FORMAT
BUYER'S JOURNEY STAGE	TARGET KEYWORDS	TARGETED BUYER PERSONA
DATE OF PUBLICATION	WORD COUNT	OTHER CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Audit Existing Assets and Campaign Activity (cont.)

2. Collect relevant data

Look at the data behind each piece. If you used a web crawler tool, it probably generated data into a CSV file, since these tools usually work with Google Analytics. If not, access where you store your content data, such as Google Analytics, a CRM (customer relationship management), CMS (content management system) or DAM (digital asset management) tool.

3. Evaluate your content

Review each piece of content to ensure it's consistent with your branding and is engaging your target audience. Use a checklist to assess each piece's current value:

✓ Meshes with our brand identity and values.

✓ Aligns with our brand style guide.

✓ Is in use and searchable to internal and external audiences.

✓ Hits on pain points and needs of target personas.

✓ Is optimized for consumption based on its buyer journey stage.

✓ Engagement elements and calls to action are set.

✓ Is not duplicated or overlapping with other assets.

✓ Is aligned with a campaign and overarching business goal.

Once you evaluate your content, you can decide to keep it, update it, remove it or consolidate it with another asset.

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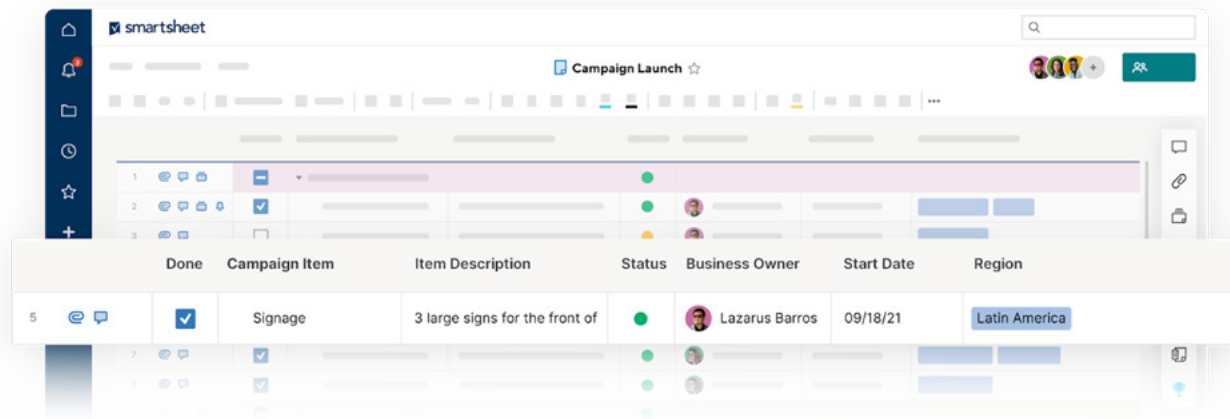
Audit Existing Assets and Campaign Activity (cont.)

4. Make final recommendations

Evaluating your content will provide insights that can help you improve your brand's creation efforts and address any potential problems. Make recommendations based on your findings. For example, you may identify a gap in your content you need to fill, or you may decide to increase your focus on creating a specific type of content.

5. Implement action plans

Then put those recommendations into action. In fact, this step is critical; otherwise, the time spent on your content audit was wasted. Clearly communicate the objectives of the audit to your team and assign tasks for executing the plan. Using a project management platform such as Smartsheet is an easy way to provide accountability and visibility into next steps.

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Enable Your Stakeholders to Get to Market Faster

Getting campaigns to market quickly means arming stakeholders with relevant details, messaging and content to ensure all teams are on the same page. And that coordination depends on a single source of truth for the files and collateral used across your brand.

When complete brand details are centralized, visible and accessible, marketers become empowered to efficiently launch campaigns. Too often, teams have to track down assets or waste time duplicating content that already exists. Avoiding this gets your campaign messages to market faster. And as messaging evolves to meet customer needs, resources need to be updated to keep everyone and every campaign current while avoiding delays.

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Streamline On-Brand Content Distribution

Content distribution should follow a clearly defined process. In fact, efficiency depends on it. Instead of reinventing the wheel with every campaign, create best practices for your organization. You can start by addressing these four steps.

Step 1: Provide Teams with Access to Brand Assets

Marketing teams and outside agencies collaborate on a variety of tasks, including branding, messaging, asset creation and more. When that work is at all disjointed, inefficiencies surface in those workflows and slow down campaign execution. Actions that hinder progress include email requests for files, resizing requests and redundant work.

A Harvard Business Review study found that collaboration within organizations can improve productivity, profitability and customer satisfaction. When campaign collaboration takes place across multiple platforms, productivity is limited. Establishing a single source of truth can eliminate these inefficiencies by providing visibility, access and accountability. By streamlining collaboration, companies get to market faster.

One of the assets your teams need collective access to is a brand style guide. This document becomes your branding bible and a guide for everything that comes with creating content and campaigns.

Of course, there's more to any brand than its guidelines alone. The content that's created with those details in mind needs to be efficiently distributed to maximize its value. This may not be quite as simple as it sounds. Too much access opens the door to assets' being used as part of purposes they aren't intended for. Having too many limitations sends you back toward square one, where content isn't easily found and time is wasted.

Some parts to include in a brandguide:

- Your brand's story
- Your mission
- Brand values
- Brand voice
- Visual identity

Step 2: Establish a Process for Personalization

Even the best creative teams need help delivering assets marketing needs while staying on brand. This is especially true as campaigns become more targeted and brand experiences become more personalized.

Facilitating this work includes the creation of creative briefs, reports and feedback forms. These are all items that will multiply depending on the degree of personalization your marketing team is hoping to achieve.
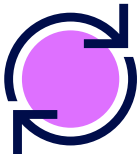
With this increased production also often comes the need for a work management system, which adds efficiency to brand activities by providing visibility, accountability and automation to workflows that move a project along its path.

Step 3: Create Templates for Customized Brand Activity

Today's customer expects campaigns to be relevant and localized. According to research from Instapage, 74% of customers are frustrated by content that's not personalized.

When you personalize your brand experience, you increase brand affinity. For example, your website can drive sales by gleaning customer information, browsing history and past sales to generate relevant campaigns. In fact, Instapage's study found that personalized homepage promotions influence 85% of consumers to buy while personalized shopping cart recommendations influenced 92% of shoppers online.

Personalized marketing requires a lot of assets, and scaling content can put a company at risk of going off brand or off schedule. However, templates help streamline customized content production while maintaining brand consistency. Having preapproved templates for assets allows different teams to personalize and localize messaging and imagery before sharing.

74%
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INSTAPAGE STUDY

85%
of consumers, who see personalized homepage promotions, buy.

INSTAPAGE STUDY

92%
of shoppers are influenced by online shopping cart recommendation.

INSTAPAGE STUDY

Step 4: Outline a Process for Creating and Storing Assets of All Types

From intake to ideation to approval to distribution, asset creation involves many steps. And with a wide variety of content types in the works, those steps can vary greatly. While the creative process can get messy, you can remove roadblocks and bottlenecks by better defining that process. Put brand guardrails in place by using creative briefs, kick-off meetings and review sessions with stakeholders to help streamline the creative team's work.

A project management system that automatically helps move work along can save time in the creation and approval process. In any case, the end goal should be giving team members a central location for proofing and version control on the way to completion.

Campaigns also need a well-defined approval process. To the right, is a sample outline of the steps.

- ✔ Identify stakeholders who need to approve the project.

- ✔ Assign tasks for the project while providing necessary background material and a deadline.

- ✔ Submit the first draft. Creative turns in the asset for review.

- ✔ Begin reviews by one or more people, with a defined hierarchy of approval.

- ✔ Gather feedback and make revisions.

- ✔ Get final approval.

- ✔ Store final version(s) and tag with appropriate keywords so it can be easily retrieved and added to campaigns.

- ✔ Distribute assets across campaign activities and make readily available for future use.

A project management system that automatically helps move work along can save time in the creation and approval process.

Launch On-Brand Campaigns with Efficiency

Identify and Align Teams That Touch Brand Content for Distribution

Once you have a centralized system, you will need to identify who will need access to your content and at what level. Not everyone needs the same access. Set up permissions for your team by identifying what information and abilities each person needs. You should consider who needs what type of access at your organization. Try grouping them into levels based on expected usage:

Basic User – Which users need simple access to campaign content? They should be able to easily search, view and download content relevant to their role.

Heavy User – Who should be able to upload, share and structure the way content is distributed? Regardless of how and where you decide to distribute content, some users will need permission to organize it.

System Ownership – Which stakeholders should have the most control over content distribution? This could include the ability to view analytics, upgrade or change systems and manage payment, among other things, depending on the platforms in use.

Depending on your organization, stakeholders may include:

- **The creative team**
- **Internal project managers**
- **Executives**
- **Retail partners**
- **The website development team**
- **The customer service team**
- **Salespeople**
- **Marketing professionals**
- **Product development teams**
- **Demo teams**
- **Clients**

Activate & Leverage
Brand Presence

Distribute Approved Assets

Keeping campaigns brand consistent can be one of the most common steps that slows their launch. It's also one of a campaign's most important aspects. But these dynamics don't need to be at odds with one another. Having a set workflow and approval process in place will enable you to get to market or pivot to meet new customer needs.

An Up-to-Date Digital Presence With CDN Links

Just because a campaign is launched doesn't mean it's complete. As campaign activities take effect, there may be updates to make or automations in place to offer more dynamic experiences. Distributing assets in this way can be done more efficiently with a content delivery network (CDN). A CDN is a type of "behind the scenes" system that leverages servers around the world based on user location to deliver your content as quickly as possible.

In a variety of ways, content can affect your website load times. The ability to quickly make adjustments to on-page content can be essential to maintaining healthy web vitals, and that's another benefit of CDN links. Customer experience is vital when it comes to launching campaigns. Seconds matter, and any missteps can negatively impact campaign results. Research shows that 37% of site visitors will bounce if a web page takes longer than five seconds to load.

However your campaign content is distributed, brands need to be sure it's always available and current to the customers it reaches.

37%

of site visitors will bounce if a web page takes longer than five seconds to load.

PINGDOM
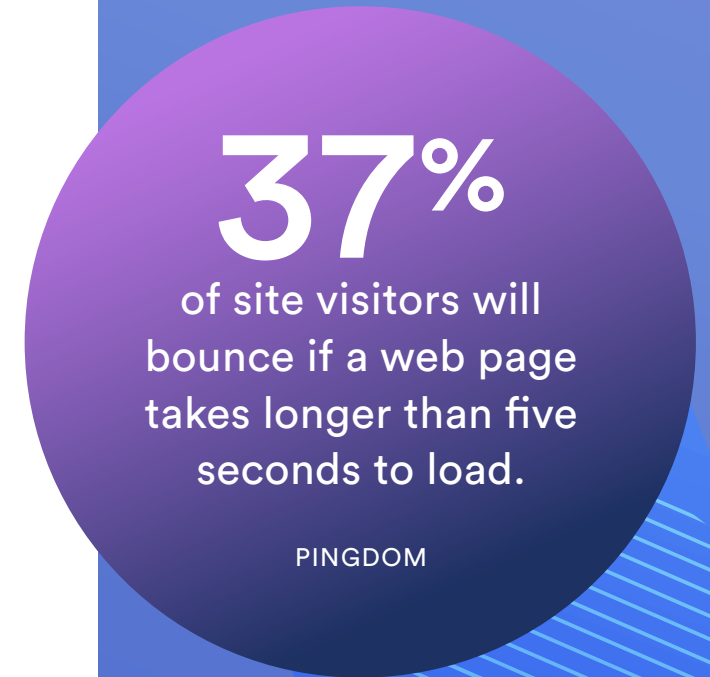
Share Brand With External Partners

Marketing teams often rely on outside agencies and freelance talent. But the further you venture outside of your organization, the greater the risk of losing brand consistency. This means that working with external partners requires extra steps for maintaining brand control.

First things first, you should still be able to share your brand guidelines, but vendors will never be as close to them as you are internally. Be sure the most relevant elements are reiterated in briefs that are handed off and brought up when discussing the finer points of a project with those teams directly.

The way you share necessary content and files needs to be considered as well. Identifying an approved collection of assets organized for a specific campaign is easier said than done. This is particularly true when exchanging over email, where important information is quickly buried in endless threads. Be sure to keep track of what's been shared and how it's been shared to ensure external partners only have access to relevant content.

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Monitor & Measure Performance

Get a Full View of Brand Placement and Asset Usage

As campaigns launch, it's important to keep track of where your brand content is placed and how it's performing. This data can come from a variety of sources and get complicated in a hurry. All the numbers in the world don't do much good without context. Be sure that your data sources are collected into a dashboard or centralized view for quicker analysis as well as the ability to share and be easily understood by other stakeholders.

Marketers can gain lots of insights from having visibility into brand placement and asset usage. For example, knowing which files are being used and which aren't can help teams make better decisions on future campaigns. You'll know what types of assets to focus on and create more of and which types you should stop assigning and investing resources in.

In some cases, team members don't know what they don't know. If you see that an asset is underutilized, you can check to see if they know it's available. Visibility is key to maximizing asset usage.

Maintain the Content Life Cycle

Each piece of your content has a life cycle, and monitoring its path through those stages can help leverage its full value while moving from one to the next. Generally, the content life cycle has seven stages:

PLAN

In this stage, marketers create a strategy that aligns content ideas with business goals. Proper workflows and guidelines help you control branding.

CREATE

With a plan in place, teams can begin to create content that supports specific business. This step involves brainstorming, implementing, collaborating, reviewing and approving assets.

STORE AND ORAGANIZE

Once assets are created, they're stored in an organized way so they can be easily accessed in order to speed up campaign launch.

EDIT AND APPROVE

At the edit and approval stage, content is checked against brand guidelines to ensure consistency. An online collaboration platform can facilitate quick revisions.

PUBLSH AND DISTRIBUTE

Approved content moves into the publish and distribute life cycle. Unfortunately, 78% of assets go to waste, and a trackable method of distribution helps maximize their use and your ROI.

REPORT

Analyze and report data to learn what resonates with your audience. This stage helps you improve your content plans so you create the most relevant assets for your brand and campaign.

PRESERVE ASSETS

At the end of a campaign, you can choose to preserve an asset for future reference or refresh it for future use. Preserving assets in a separate archive helps ensure only current content is used.

Staying up-to-date with your content life cycle helps you clean up your assets.

60%

of the content created by the world's leading brands has little to no impact on consumers' lives or business outcomes and is considered clutter.

MARKETING WEEK

71%

of brands who get content right have a correlation between content effectiveness and brand impact.

MARKETING WEEK

Analytics-Guided Strategy

One of the biggest challenges for marketers is determining which asset offers the best ROI. Instead of making reactive decisions, attach analytics to your established and future brand goals using Google Analytics.

Identify the right key performance indicators (KPIs) for each type of asset. Assets can have more than one metric. For emails, you'll want to track your open rate, conversion rate, opt-out rate and click-through rate. For a blog post, look at the average time spent on the site, new versus returning visitors, bounce rate, page views and traffic sources. Look at video's views, view duration, click-throughs and shares. And measure your social media content by looking at applause rate, landing page conversion rate, post reach and followers and fans.

Analytics can be powerful because they provide insights on your efforts and outcomes. It helps to have a centralized reporting tool that can provide an accurate picture of your assets' ROI that can help with decision-making.
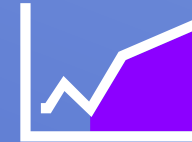
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How Brands Put These Pieces Together

Speed to market and brand consistency are the two essential elements of a good customer experience. As market trends evolve, however, striking this balance becomes more difficult. Marketing teams that set up systems to work in harmony and leverage available assets can rise to the challenge, launching relevant on-brand campaigns faster and more efficiently.
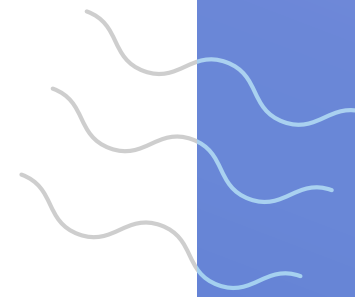
Build a Single Source of Truth of Brand Access

Ultimately, being on brand means keeping everyone on the same page, and generating speed to market requires streamlined access to campaign materials. Spread across multiple platforms, it's difficult to achieve either.

On the surface, folders and cloud file storage platforms seem like good organizational tools, and in some ways they are. But without full control over that structure, it's only a matter of time before you see six versions of one campaign all marked "final" or can't gain access to the asset you need. These are among the reasons folders can create more questions than they answer, especially on cloud-based shared drives where each person has their own naming and organization system.

A central source of truth for content use across brand activities is essential to launching campaigns with more efficiency. At its core, this is exactly what a digital asset management (DAM) platform is designed to do. DAM is a complete library of all a brand's approved and most up-to-date files. The result is assets organized in a way that any stakeholder knows exactly where to go to find what they need.

With a tag-based system (as is often the case with DAM), instead of spending time wandering through a maze of folders, teams can find what they need based on relevant descriptions and keywords, much like a search engine.

A central source of truth for content use across brand activities is essential to launching campaigns with more efficiency.

Build a Single Source of Truth of Brand Access (cont.)

Without the right tools in place, stakeholders often have no idea what's available to begin with. If pressed for time, they will most likely sap time from other teams with asset requests or, even worse, make an ill-advised attempt at creating their own version of the asset they need. Instead, a DAM provides a single point of collaboration for the organization. It keeps everyone current, on-brand and on the same page, which saves time for everyone involved with campaign execution.

By applying these strategies and gathering the right tools, you can empower everyone on your team to do their best work. And Brandfolder can provide the centralized environment for maintaining brand consistency by offering a single source of truth for creative operations.

Curious how a global company with 23 markets remained on brand?

Take an inside look at how PF Chang's made worldwide campaign launches more efficient and effective.

LEARN MORE

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