HubSpot + Brandfolder

How to Build Brand Consistency

A comprehensive guide from HubSpot and Brandfolder

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Introduction

Brand consistency, by the numbers

Of consumers,

86% say authenticity is key in supporting a brand

– STACKLA

81% will buy based on brand trust

– EDELMAN

For companies,

Revenue increased 33% from brand-consistent activities – LUCIDPRESS

Amount of value increased 20% for consistent brands

– BENEATH THE BRAND

In this guide, we'll define brand consistency and how to maintain it. We'll cover building your organization's brand architecture, setting a brand strategy, streamlining content creation for aligned campaign activity, and monitoring performance for continuous improvement.

First impressions. No matter what anyone tells you, they're not everything. Especially when it comes to your brand. You know what *is* everything? Consistency. It's how the best brands keep their audience coming back time and again.

In today's digital landscape, breaking through the noise is increasingly difficult. With competition across so many different channels, how do today's audiences decide where to direct their attention? It ultimately comes down to personally aligning with a company's values.

Your brand is built from carefully chosen elements. This includes not only visual aspects but also the mission and values that define your company's purpose. These values should align with the audiences you aim to reach.

As your brand presence takes shape across a growing number of platforms, inconsistencies in those brand elements will directly undermine their impact. Brand consistency builds a strong foundation from which audiences will better be able to understand a company. The result is brand trust, loyalty, and ultimately, the driving force of repeat business.

Chapter 1:

Evaluating the Current Brand

First, what is brand consistency?

Brand consistency is how an organization delivers messages aligned with its core values and mission, culminating in a cohesive brand experience.

Ultimately it comes down to how "on-brand" your company's communications and campaigns are with your established brand guidelines and identity. More than ever before, brands can be built in an instant, and in turn, they can fall just as quickly. Those brand details must be carefully thought through and communicated clearly to avoid limiting their impact.

Changing business objectives and priorities can complicate how brand guidelines are followed. A successful brand is one with longevity. Built up over time by being flexible enough to adapt to the current market trends and expectations while remaining consistent.

What is brand architecture?

The activities at an organization that can impact brand consistency are far-reaching. This is especially true for marketing, sales, customer experience and any other team that has an external presence. Keeping everyone on the same page relies on a clearly defined brand architecture.

Brands have different structures for defining how brand responsibilities are organized. Internal confusion will, one way or another, also reach potential customers. Making sure brand architecture is clear within your organization will help ensure your brand's message is clear in the content it produces.
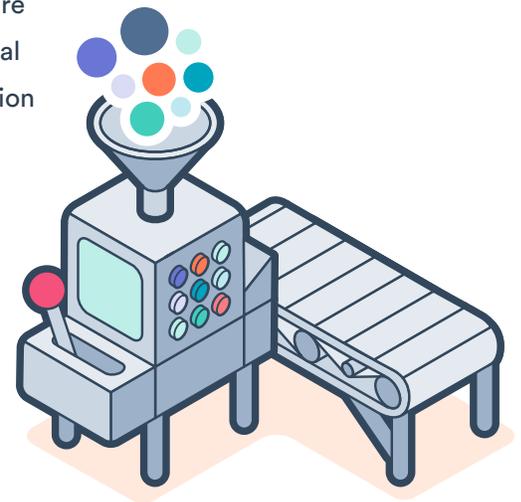
Common forms of brand architecture

BRANDED HOUSE

The most straightforward brand architecture is the branded house. In this case, the company has a single, overarching brand. Identifying these brands is simple, but as the size of the organization grows, it can get complicated. Some examples of the branded house include FedEx, Virgin and Google.

HOUSE OF BRANDS

In a "house of brands" structure, the master brand takes a backseat, giving the sub-brands the freedom to shine on their own. The sub-brands that fall underneath the house brand maintain some autonomy. This type of structure helps maintain brand consistency by reducing the number of teams and activities that any one brand needs to be focused on managing. For an enterprise organization, multiple smaller brands are simpler to maintain with consistency than one giant brand. A good example is Procter & Gamble whose sub-brands include Head & Shoulders, Crest and Tide.

HYBRID BRAND

Similar to the house of brands structure, endorsed brands are allowed to have their own identities. The difference here is that everybody knows that the master brand is behind it all. Typically the smaller brands are the most recognizable, but behind the scenes, brand consistency is coming from the top. Examples of hybrid brands include Sony Playstation, Nescafé by Nestlé and Polo (Ralph Lauren).

Audit Current Brand

If your brand isn't new, then it's bound to have pre-existing content. Any effort to truly establish brand consistency needs to first have a complete view of the current brand. What campaigns have been launched? What is the sales team using during outreach? What's featured, not only on our website but on other websites that mention us?

Answers to these questions will begin to paint a picture of where and how the brand is making an impression. Documenting these items in an audit will help identify where there is already inconsistency with your brand and allow you to form a plan for addressing those issues.

CONTENT AUDIT

A full content audit benefits your brand in a number of ways. By knowing what documents, images, ebooks, blogs, videos, slide decks, and the like are already created, you can both identify brand inconsistencies and maximize available resources. These are some categories you can assign to your content during the audit:

- **Title**
- **Publish Date**
- **Campaign** (Is it part of a launched campaign?)
- **Asset type** (video, graphic, blog etc.)
- **Location** (Where does it exist?)
- **Metrics** (How is performance measured?)
- **Audience**
- **Language**
- **Funnel Stage**
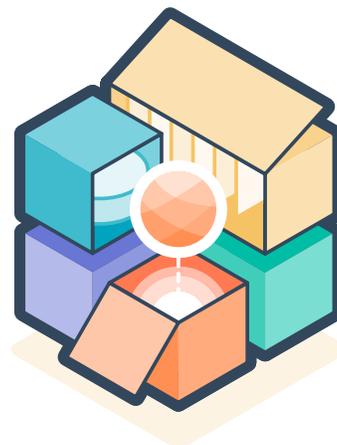
This information will organize how you address each piece. Getting them all in one place prevents any inconsistent content from slipping through the cracks or inadvertently making changes that have a negative impact on something that is currently bringing your brand value.

Certain content may be able to be repurposed or refreshed, limiting the amount of work needed to create new content. Some will likely turn out to be useless, and that's okay too. You'll be aware of that content, be able to remove it from circulation and make sure it isn't drawing the wrong kind of attention to your brand.
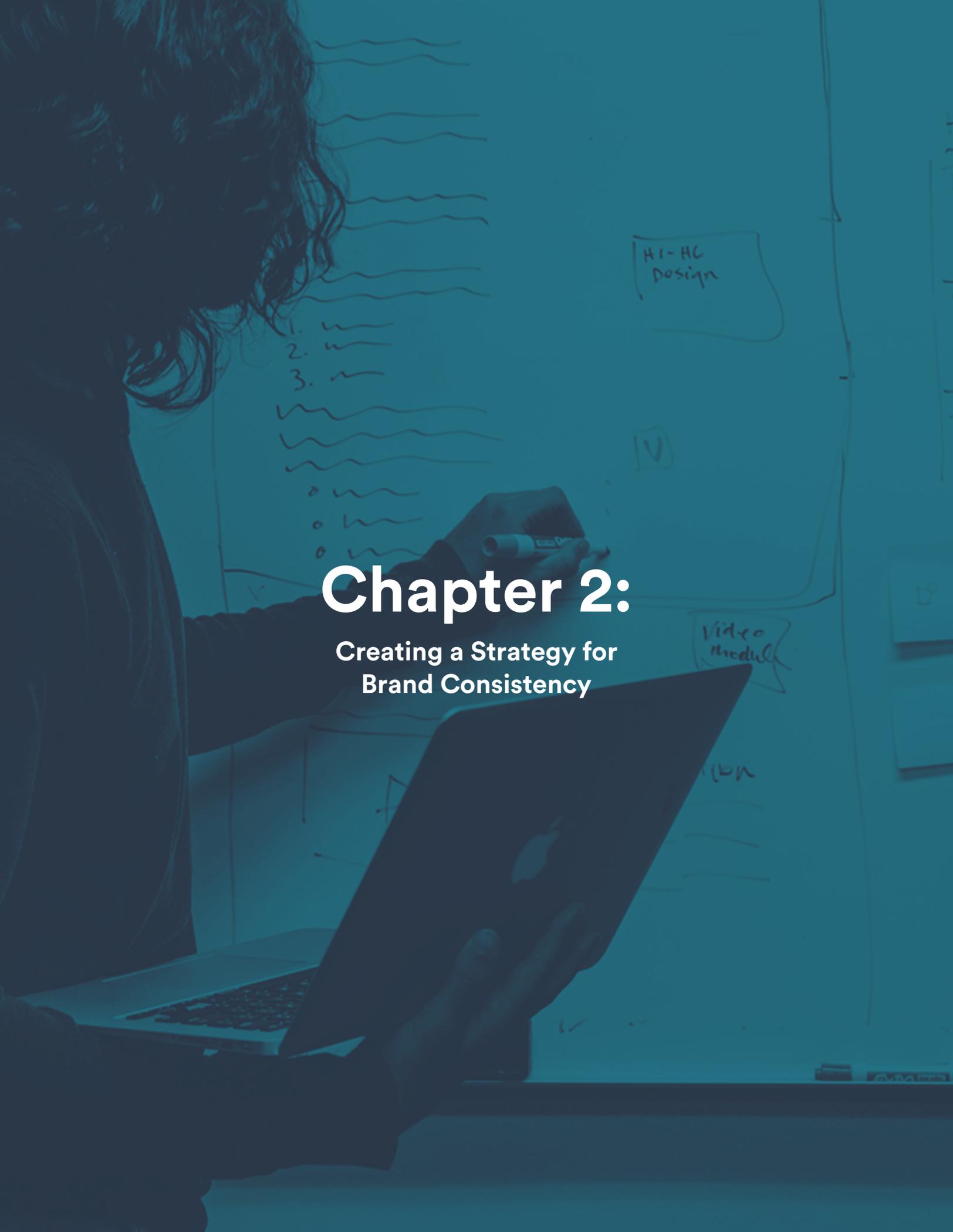
Chapter 2:

Creating a Strategy for Brand Consistency

Brand Strategy

A brand strategy is a long-term plan developed to help your company achieve specific goals. Brand consistency is core to how that strategy creates a unified experience for target audiences to build lifelong customers and engagement based on brand trust.

A cohesive strategy includes every branch of an organization and permeates across a brand's daily activities. Since some teams are naturally more immersed with your brand than others, giving everyone a central source of truth is a crucial step to success. In this chapter, we'll cover how a brand is built with consistency in mind.

BUILDING BRAND ELEMENTS INTO GUIDELINES

The first step to maintaining brand consistency is establishing exactly what you aim to be consistent with. This is where a fully developed brand guide comes into play. It's a one-stop shop for all things needed to create for your brand.

Where do your brand elements live? Brands can avoid many brand consistency issues from ever happening in the first place when teams know where to find those details. A brand guide should be clearly communicated, widely available and easily accessible.

Free Resource: Brand Guide Template

Important Elements of a Brand Guide

LOGO

A logo is arguably the most memorable piece of a brand's collateral. For example, when you think of Nike, can you see the swish? If you hear McDonald's, does the image of those Golden Arches flood into your mind? Logos provide an opportunity for customers to automatically associate products or services with any given brand itself. Making sure everyone has easy access to the right format and a high-quality version of this important asset is essential.

Over 60% of marketers admit they have to use Google to find their own logo.

Important Elements of a Brand Guide (cont.)

TONE AND VOICE

What does your brand sound like? Are you irreverent? Silly? Professional? Academic? All of the above? This may fluctuate somewhat between channels. Emails may be more formal, and social media may be more casual. That's totally fine! But there should still be a unifying factor; a blanket mission statement or mantra that all content adheres to. Remain true to your mission statement, both when promoting the positive aspects of your brand and when responding to negativity.

COLORS

You know branding is done well when seeing certain colors immediately calls to mind a particular brand – even when those brands' names are nowhere nearby. A good color scheme can go a long way. As you know, there are an unlimited amount of colors out there and when it's even slightly off, people will take notice.

FONTS

Similar to colors, that are about as many variations as you can imagine and even slight inconsistencies will catch people's eye. It can be hard to distinguish which fonts should be used when. Having clear guidelines for which fonts should be used as headers, descriptions, body copy and so on, will streamline the way teams put it to use and help remove the uncertainty that leads to inconsistency.

IMAGES

The images you share, regardless of the platform, should take into account all of your other elements. This means they should reflect the tone your brand has set out for itself, follow your color palette and include your brand's logo. Be methodical in your selection, approvals and permissions to guarantee that your visual identity is just as strong as your written one.
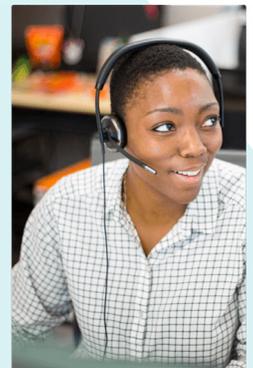
Creating Buyer Personas

Who is your ideal target customer? To most effectively target your customers, you need to know who they are.

A buyer persona is like a character profile of your ideal customers: who they are, what they want, what their lives are like, challenges they face, who they interface with or are influenced by, the tools they use, and more. These details help you understand their underlying motivations for engaging with your brand and pain points your product aims to solve.

Personas help add real world context around the brand you're trying to build. All creative, blogs, white papers, and other inbound content should be designed with buyer personas in mind to make sure you're speaking their language. This helps your brand connect with customers on a more personal level, and identify topics where there is mutual interest.

Free Resource: Make My Persona

Important Components of a Buyer Persona

DEMOGRAPHICS

By understanding some of the key demographics for your target market – i.e. gender, marital status, personality traits, age range, or income level – you begin to get a sense of who your customers might be and can begin to narrow down their range of interests.

ROLE AND SENIORITY LEVEL

This is particularly important for all the B2B folks out there. Even though you're selling to a business, you're still dealing with a person within that business. What authority do they have in the decision-making process with regards to making this purchase? Better understanding their role and decision-making power helps you frame the conversation with them in a way that's aligned with their specific goals.

Important Components of a Buyer Persona (cont.)

DAILY ACTIVITIES

If you can piece together your buyer personas' routine on a typical day, you'll have insight into what occupies their time, and what is and isn't important to them. If you can align consistent messaging around what your customers care about and link it to a relevant value proposition, then your brand could have a place in their natural thought process.

PAIN POINTS

What keeps the buyers up at night? How do you validate and connect on an emotional level? Part of brand consistency includes also being resourceful. Are you providing valuable information that addresses real world issues? The brands that earn brand loyalty often provide solutions outside of their product alone, providing genuine support that makes their audiences' lives better.

OBJECTIONS

Every business faces objections. While personas can provide guidance, individuals are more complex. The way unique situations are addressed must remain true to brand values. As potential customers work through their concerns, they'll want to see that your brand not only talks the talk but walks the walk.

AFFILIATIONS

What groups do your buyers belong to? Where do they get their information? What causes are they passionate about? A better understanding of what they (and their business) find important will help you identify common goals and better reach them where they choose to be. Everyone wants to be part of the club of their choice, your brand could be one of those choices.
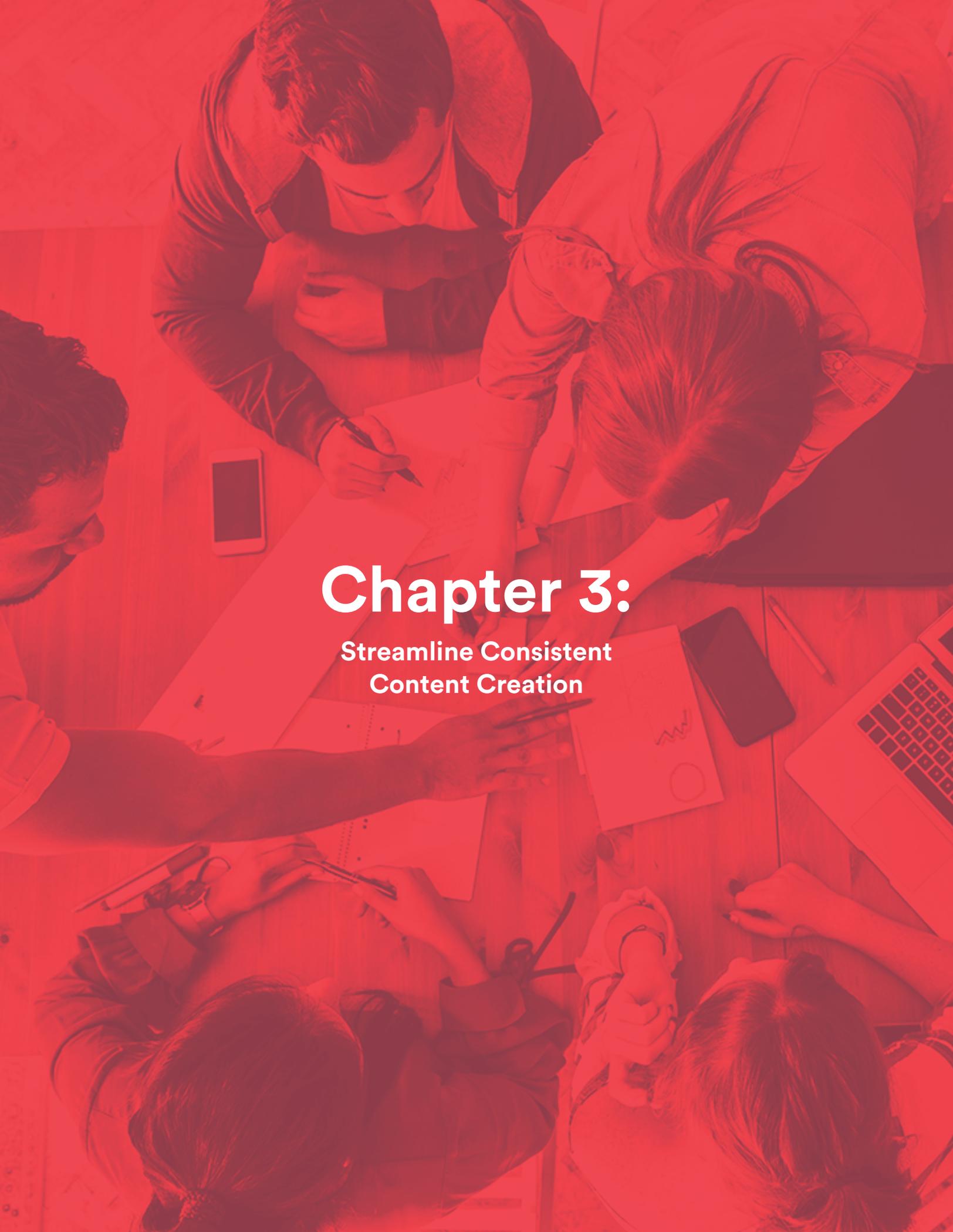
Chapter 3:

**Streamline Consistent
Content Creation**

With any growing brand comes a need for increased content production. As you look to support the various teams and campaigns, the speed of that production can be at odds with your brand consistency efforts.

Approvals, permissions and other safeguards that ensure only on-brand content are put to use can inevitably lead to bottlenecks. These steps are necessary to maintaining brand consistency but they don't need to become a roadblock to other business objectives or efficient growth. This chapter covers how content production can be streamlined without jeopardizing brand consistency.

Establish Creative Workflows

Content is how you showcase the knowledge your business is built around. Your content allows your customers to begin to identify with the topics and issues you value.

It can offer advice, provide thought leadership on something timely, give a step-by-step guide to solving a particular problem, or just tell an anecdote that your customers will find relatable.

Whichever types of content your brand aims to create, the process of getting those assets from concept to distribution deserves a focus on efficiency. Together, the steps of that process make up your creative workflow.

What is Collaborative Work Management (CWM)?

Collaborative Work Management is a tool designed to organize the way teams plan, capture, manage, collaborate, automate and report on work, like **Smartsheet**. Projects can span multiple teams and include different layers of approval making the ability to manage workflows within a single platform vital to collaboration. Throw in remote or external teams and production nearly grinds to a halt without it. As your brand's workflows take shape, CWM can provide a system for ensuring that projects stay on track and on brand.

Some workflows are clear and others, not so much. In order to support the creation and growth of those processes, the discipline of creative operations has emerged to help creative teams be more effective.

What is Creative Operations?

Creative Operations – also known as "Creative Ops" – is a fast-growing role that supports the work of creative professionals. It's a practice that's taken hold mostly at enterprise-level companies and in-house creative agencies, but its application is relevant to any creative team.

Learn more about Creative Operations here.

As projects and creative requests come in, creative operations keep workflows running. With a deep understanding of brand guidelines, the function of the creative op can keep projects progressing through completion without other teams needing to double-check for brand consistency. This frees the creative team to work on the creative tasks and getting finalized content in the hands of those that need them more quickly.

Personalize Brand Activity

Not only has the volume of content and creative production increased but so too has the expectation for more personalized brand experiences. Targeted digital campaigns and dynamic content have allowed brands to reach audiences more directly. It's great for the customer experience, but problematic for a company's creative workflow.

Personalized content multiplies the steps and number of assets needed to support any given campaign. Instead of a single asset with a single message, numerous versions are designed to be hyper-targeted to individual audiences. With each added moving part to the process comes the potential for brand inconsistency to slip through the cracks. It's something to keep in mind when adding personalization to your content and adapting your brand consistency strategy to meet that creative workflow.

Create Brand Templates

What if there was a way to streamline the creation of personalized content, reduce the creative team's workload, and put a lock on brand consistency at the same time? Sounds too good to be true but there is one strategy you can use that does just that. Many brands have turned to templates to support variant content usage. A brand template gives your creative team the ability to create a single asset that can then be edited by other stakeholders in the organization.

There are different ways you can go about creating templates, but they should include these properties if they're truly going to impact content creation and maintain brand consistency:

LOCK DESIGN ELEMENTS

The power of designating exactly which elements of your template should be solely in the hands of those owning brand consistency. Your creative team should have the ability to assign how teams can customize aspects like text, images and colors. This could mean giving specific options for how those elements can be customized or locking them in place.

APPROVAL SETTINGS

Even with tight control over the creative elements of a template, they likely will need to go through an approval process. It's no secret that approvals can be one of the greatest bottlenecks to creative production. It's important to think through what your organization's steps are and how you can add efficiency to that process while also maintaining version control.

FORMATTING OPTIONS

Custom and personalized content isn't of much use if it doesn't fit the specs that stakeholders need. And sending those repetitive tasks back to the creative team defeats the purpose of templates in the first place. Make sure that when a template is designed and released for use, download and sharing options are made available to suit each purpose of that asset.

Chapter 4:

Activate Brand Presence

Now that you've built a strategy around brand consistency and added workflows that streamline creative production, it's time to put those assets into action.

While you've laid the foundation for your brand presence, you'll need to take steps to ensure that voice is amplified across channels. In this chapter, we'll cover the importance of keeping all teams that touch your brand on the same page while opening the door to content distribution.

Build a Central Source of Truth

The unfortunate truth is that 78% of a brand's assets go to waste. That adds up to a lot of time and money. This is often the result of teams simply losing track or not knowing what content exists.

Assets can end up collecting dust in a variety of ways:

⚠️ **Buried in an email thread**

⚠️ **Stored locally on someone's computer**

⚠️ **Added to a disorganized cloud storage folder**

⚠️ **Multiple platforms with multiple versions**

⚠️ **Stakeholders are unsure how to search**

It all amounts to chaos and it's the enemy of both efficiency and brand consistency. Instead of wasting time searching for an asset they might not even be sure exists, stakeholders will often just request them directly from the creative or marketing team. They may decide it isn't worth the time and give up. Or worse yet, try to create their own asset. How hard could it be, right?

A central source of truth eliminates confusion by providing a single location for all teams to access their brand needs. This is done most effectively with digital asset management (DAM) and there are some main focus areas when aligning teams for content distribution.

Asset Organization

The most important aspect of building a central source of truth is creating a clear structure for asset organization.

When thinking about how to organize content, consider these questions:

- **Which teams need access?**
- **What campaigns are we running?**
- **What types of assets do we have?**
- **Which audiences are these assets designed for?**

You likely won't need to take into account each of these details but it will help identify the structure that makes the most sense for your business. Knowing which assets are most likely to be relevant to the right groups of your company will allow them to self-serve their needs and get content into use.

Taxonomy and Tagging

While you may know where to look, you still might not always know exactly which asset you're looking for. Oftentimes you have a project or purpose in mind for an asset, but it might be just right for another purpose you haven't even considered yet.

This is where taxonomy and tagging helps. When uploading assets for distribution, attaching relevant keywords will make them more searchable. Think about how people are searching for assets and what terms they'd typically use. Be sure to attach any relevant terms to all your assets, streamlining their search for any purpose.

Permissions and Approvals

Asset distribution isn't always straightforward. With different versions and iterations in the works, brand consistency depends on making sure the wrong assets don't accidentally fall into the wrong hands. When building your central source of truth you'll need to add steps for approval so that content is immediately distributed when ready and permissions so that users only access the correct assets.

Extend Brand Externally

We've now covered how brand consistency operates inside your brand. But there's a whole other piece to the brand presence puzzle. External teams and relationships account for a significant portion of many brands' activity.

These external relationships can include agencies, contractors, publications among others. And their involvement with your brand can take place at any point of the content creation and distribution processes. Naturally, brand guidelines are just as important – if not more so – than what you've established internally.

Collaborate with External Partners

Extending the reach of your brand beyond the confines of your organization opens the door to brand other consistency concerns. By providing those same brand guidelines, those issues can be mitigated.

The longer and closer a relationship is with an external partner, the more familiar they will become with your brand; but their activity will still fall outside of your established creative workflow. Access and oversight of work that's done with external teams will often involve additional steps.

Get an understanding of your partners' workflow. With that insight, you'll be able to more easily adapt your own to align with those expectations.

Communication can be a challenge. The same tools and face-to-face interaction you benefit from internally daily don't exist with these relationships. This includes access to your central source of truth for brand content. If working extensively with these partners, it's important to have a strategy ahead of time to ensure those bottlenecks don't get in the way of productivity. How will you get external partners what they need? And how will you do it securely? Collections and portals found in DAM are one quality option. Much like permissions, you can create a group of assets, specific to what your partner needs. You then send a simple link that grants partners access to those assets and those assets alone. It works the other way as well. A feature like "share links" provides one way to bridge the gap. These are a unique, secure URL designed to receive content from external partners, directly into your DAM for review.

Implement Across Digital Channels

In every way, a company's content is its brand online. It's the company's salesperson, its store, and its marketing department. It's the company's story. More and more a brand's presence is a digital presence. There's a good chance that your digital activity represents the majority, if not the only type of interaction audiences have with your brand.

Some of the primary digital channels for brands today include:

WEB

Your website is the face of your company. Make sure your site is simple to understand and navigate, your logo transitions seamlessly from page to page and that the little details like the font and color palette remain constant. Those design elements, however small they may seem, are an essential part of the brand.

Check out some of the best website examples here.

SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the things that set digital marketing apart from traditional marketing methods is the opportunity to create a two-way conversation with your customers. Whether it's paid or organic, this is what social media is all about for brands. Since maintaining an effective presence on every single social platform simultaneously is impossible, it's important to determine which ones will best help you reach your target personas.

Check out some of the best social media campaign ideas to try out here.

EMAIL

Email remains an integral and effective piece of a brand's marketing strategy. From newsletters to product updates, it's often the most direct way to reach your customers with important information. The frequency, design and types of email communications you send can have a large impact on your brand.

Check out some of the best email marketing campaigns here.

Adding Dynamic Content

Keeping your brand consistent across channels should be covered by the guidelines you've placed in the creative workflow. But what happens when those change? If you're going through a rebrand or updating a piece of content, it can be challenging to find every instance where it's been used. Not to mention the amount of time it can take to go and replace those necessary assets one by one. But there could be a better way.

Content delivery network (CDN) links can be a useful tool for the brand consistency toolbox. If your assets are stored in a digital asset management platform, you may automatically have a CDN link available for every asset. When adding content to digital locations such as your website's content management system (CMS) or an email build, a CDN link can be copied directly into the appropriate field or HTML for publishing. The real beauty though, comes when you need to update those assets. Because CDN links are dynamic, when you replace an asset with a more up-to-date version in your DAM, it will update that asset wherever the associated CDN link is used.
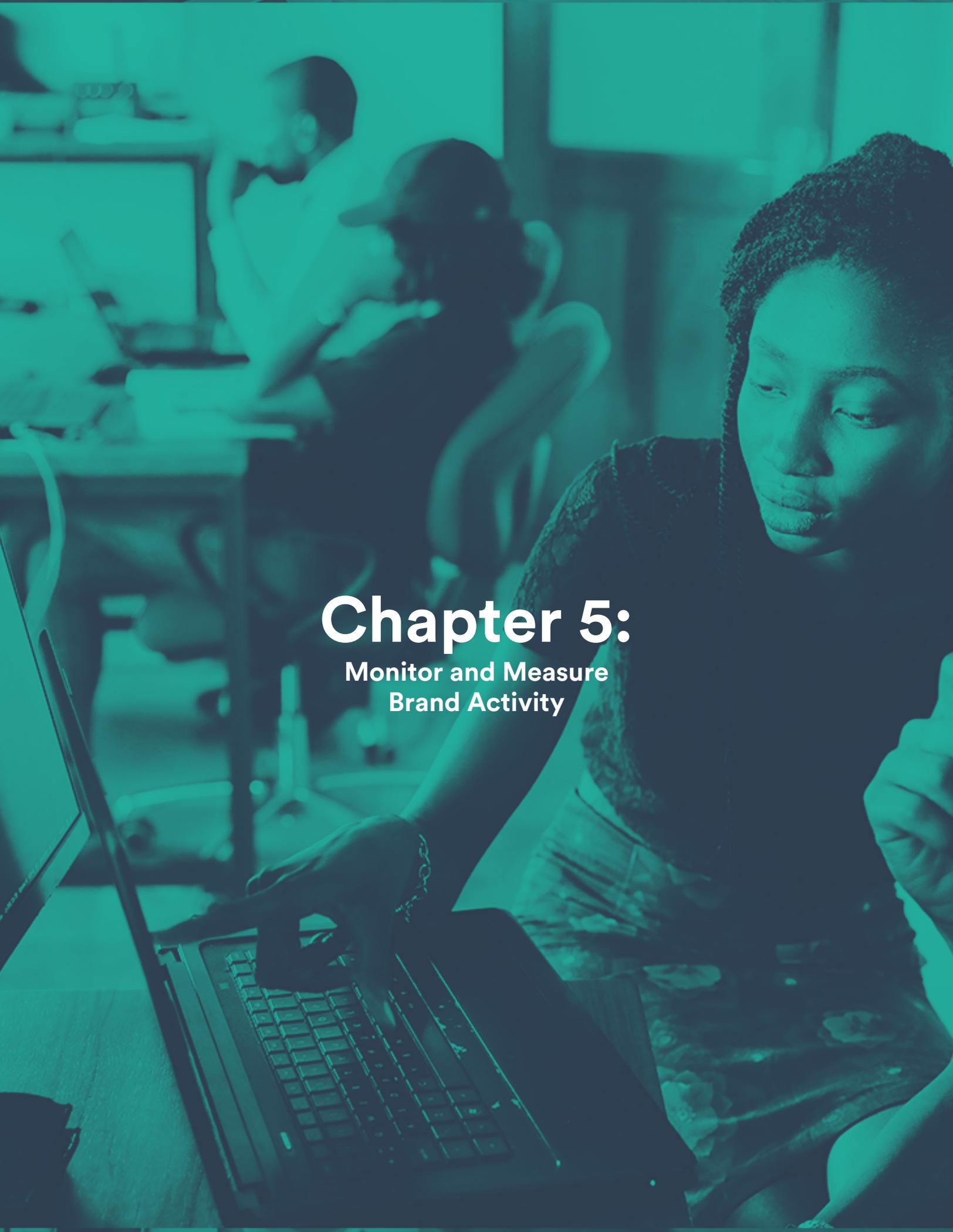
Chapter 5:
**Monitor and Measure
Brand Activity**

Once your content is put into play, your brand presence will (with a little luck) begin to grow. But how will you know? Keeping track of where your brand is finding success and where it isn't is vital to continuous improvement.

As you learn about your brand, things will change. And with change comes the potential for brand inconsistency. Monitoring your content means evaluating metrics, but also keeping track of what content exists where. Your control of brand consistency extends only as far as what your brand creates and circulates. Still, you'll want to also monitor how others are mentioning and interacting with your brand. Together, all this information will paint a more accurate picture of the impression your brand is leaving.

Knowing When and How to Improve Your Brand

Before jumping right into the results, decide ahead of time which types of brand consistency incidents need immediate attention. Then, develop a response plan and assign teams to handle each outcome.

Which types of issues will which teams handle? If there's an off-brand logo you notice is in use, what steps need to be taken to replace it and make sure it doesn't happen again?

Being prepared for these instances is critical for maintaining the good brand you've built up. But the key is timeliness. Any problem can be resolved, but the longer you wait to respond, the greater the potential for negative impact on your brand.

Metrics to Measure

Not all aspects of your brand were created equal. As you continue to optimize with brand consistency, you need to have an eye on asset performance. To begin the process of monitoring your brand, here are some metrics that you can measure to begin seeing the full picture of how your brand is interacted with and perceived by the public:

KEYWORDS

Monitor your keywords to determine which one(s) result in the most click-throughs to your homepage.

BLOGS

See which blog content drives the most comments, social shares, and inbound links.

EMAIL

Find out which email content drives the most forwards and reconversions, and to what segment of your list that content goes, so you can better align future email campaigns with other content that elevates your brand.

LANDING PAGES

Learn which landing pages result in the highest purchase volumes and most lucrative average sales per customer.

LINKS

Test which links get the highest click-through rates on different platforms and make sure they're up to date, regardless of what campaign(s) you're currently running.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Find the social media content which results in the most engagement, and track whether that engagement leads to revenue-driving behavior in the future, and at what rate.

MENTIONS

Monitor your mentions on social media, and specifically those mentions including questions so you can keep a pulse on how people are talking about your brand.

GROWTH RATE

Measure the growth rate of your social media accounts by selecting a reporting period. Then, calculate your new followers over that specific period by dividing your new followers by your total followers.
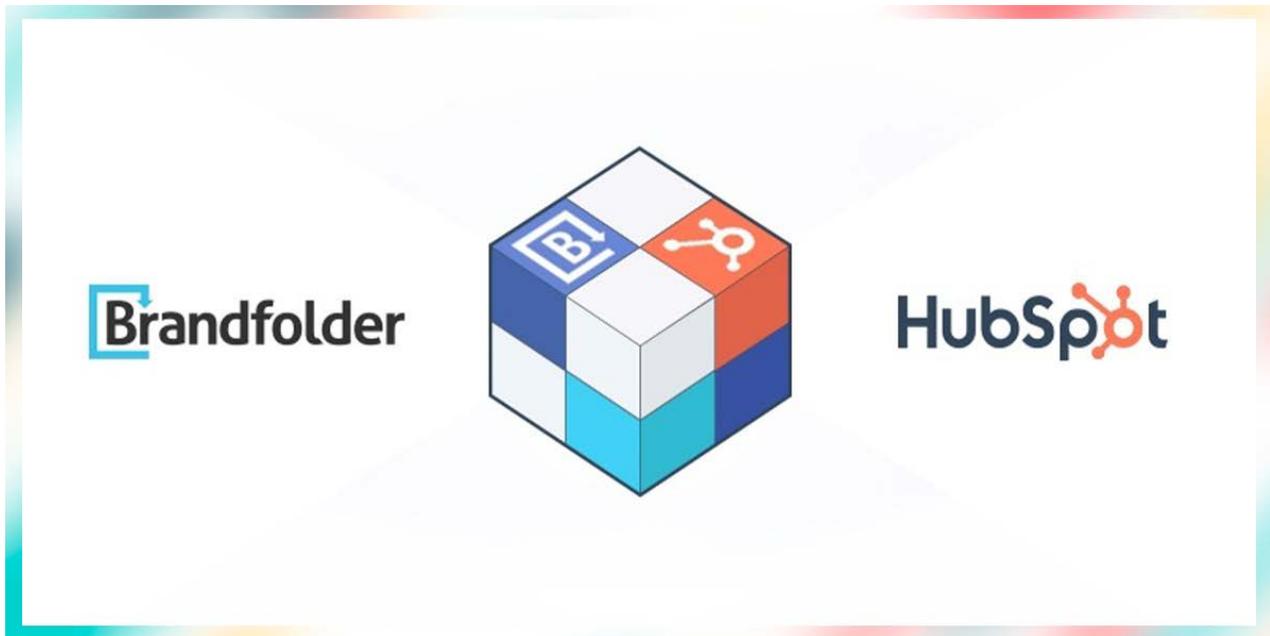
Conclusion

**How Brands Put These
Pieces Together**

In many ways, brand building has remained similar over time. The customer is still always right and brand recognition is still one of the main goals. What's different is the way you get there and the tools available to make it happen.

Brandfolder + HubSpot Media Bridge:

Seamlessly connecting customers with brand-consistent content via CRM and DAM.

Audio and visual content are becoming essential to how brands reach their audience. Taking that content through completion and distribution is now simplified with the Brandfolder + HubSpot Media Bridge. **Learn more about it here.**

Customizing, tracking and sharing media is now simpler than ever by connecting your CRM and DAM. See how Media Bridge will enable HubSpot App Partners to provide our shared customers the ease of use and power they deserve.

There is more opportunity than ever, but there is also more competition. Audiences have also adapted. Through all the noise, individuals have had to adapt the way they learn about and choose the brands they decide to interact with. It's a more conscious effort all around. The result is customers looking to identify with brands they can trust with their attention and companies looking to provide that value through genuine brand consistency.

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Brandfolder

An intuitive way for your stakeholders to find what they need, when they need it.

Distributing your assets shouldn't be a struggle.

Brandfolder helps teams at manufacturing and consumer goods companies easily distribute the right digital assets to all internal and external stakeholders.

With Brandfolder, it's easy for users anywhere in the world to access the correct asset versions from a cloud-based, single source of truth. Pull SKU or product information directly from your PIM into Brandfolder.

See how Brandfolder helps FINIS launch efficient and effective campaigns:

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