



eBook

Five Steps to Build Brand Consistency

A Roadmap For Distributed Marketing Teams

PICA9

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About the Author

Kevin Groome is the founder of Pica9, Inc., a provider of web-based marketing solutions.

Pica9, Inc is a leading provider of web-based brand logistics software solutions, with an active user community that spans more than 50 globally recognized brands, such as Marriott, Liberty Mutual, and more than 100,000 local businesses. The company's customers represent a portfolio of some of the most valuable brands around the globe today. Every day Pica9 helps its clients protect, leverage and activate more than \$50 billion in brand driven market value.

Mr. Groome has extensive experience developing marketing technology for global brands. He understands the practical realities and unique demands of local level marketing. His keen sense of current technologies and the needs of marketing professionals has contributed to his success as a marketing technologist, industry visionary, and entrepreneur.

Introduction

For designers and marketers of multi-location businesses, brand consistency is paramount to delivering on your brand promise. Organizations devote tens, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop brand guidelines that are meant to provide a reliable and predictable customer experience.

Designers, agencies, and marketing teams agonize over logos, colors, typography, layouts, and messaging guidelines. Rules are codified into brand books and binders. Marketers devote valuable pieces of their budgets to distribute these guidelines across internal staff and partner networks.

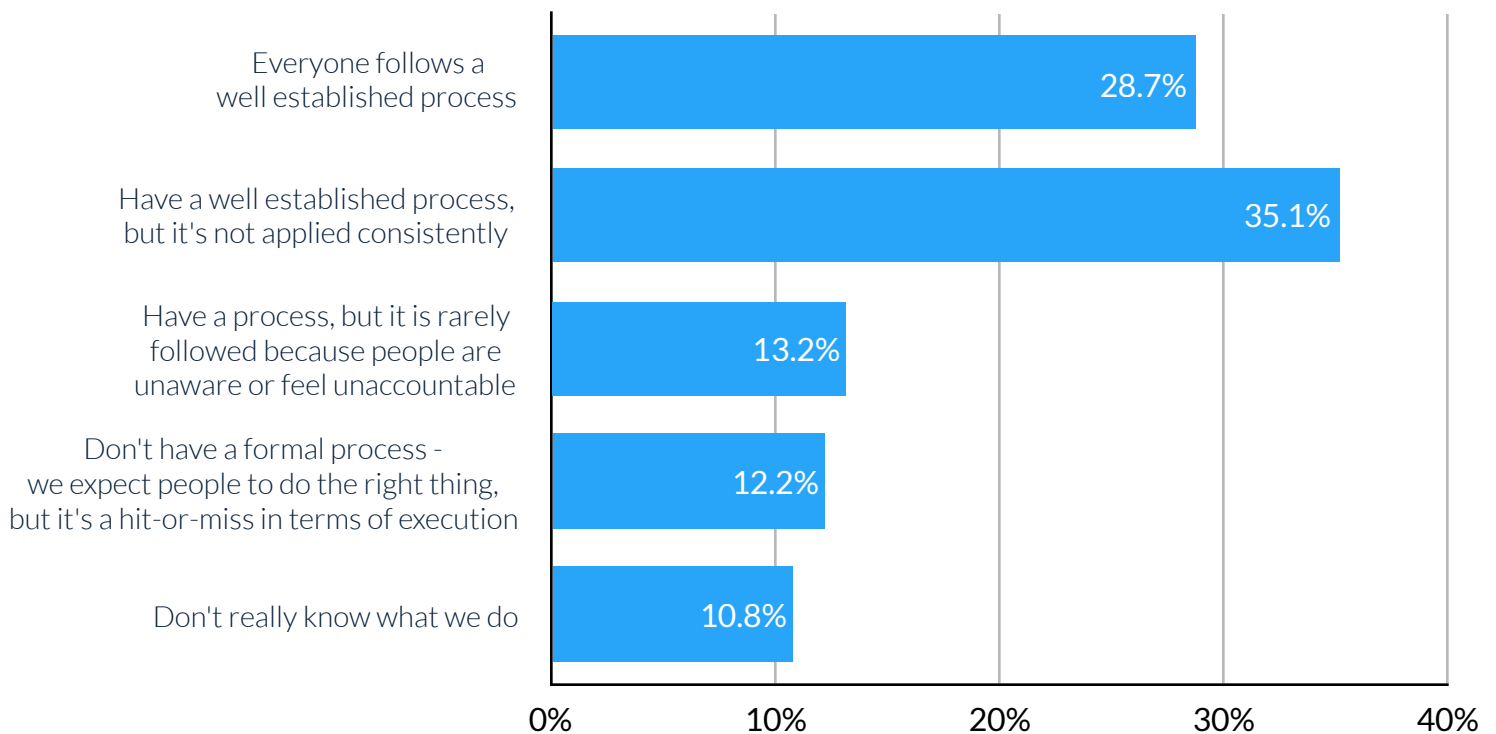
The result? Too often that work sits unused on shelves.

The Challenge:

Establishing Brand Guidelines Across Marketing Teams

Only 28% of B2B marketers worldwide follow a well-established process regarding company message development implementation, according to a recent poll by Statista¹. This challenge adversely impacts the marketing team's ability to help drive revenue, improve compliance or deliver superior customer experiences.

The extent of implementing a company-wide message development process according to B2B marketers worldwide.¹



In this eBook, you'll learn the strategies and tactics to ensure brand consistency at all levels. You'll be able to enable your marketing teams to be more agile, drive better campaign results, and improve revenue.





Step 1: Focus on Better Tools, Not Stronger Rules

It's not that stakeholders think brand consistency is unimportant. But as it turns out, developing and implementing a brand compliance framework ends up being less important than whatever else they're trying to get done at the time. Win a new client. Solve a customer problem. Save the company money. Make the company money. Whatever it is, it's urgent—and if brand consistency gets in the way, then it gets left on the cutting-room floor.

As a marketer, designer, or brand visionary, if you accept that this is the underlying attitude toward brand consistency in most major, distributed organizations, then you have two options:

1. You can try to enforce consistency by becoming a brand cop (not easy or fun).
2. You can try to weave the brand into the fabric of your organization seamlessly and watch consistency develop without staffers even thinking about it.

To say it more simply: You can try to impose stronger brand-consistency rules. Or you can give your colleagues better brand-consistency tools.

The most successful enterprises understand that brand consistency is about much more than design alone. The disciplined use of fonts, palettes, and layouts is critical, but just as necessary are how your brand produces and uses content—from concepts and headlines to product descriptions and dealer/franchisee listings, to the smallest details in your legal disclaimers.

All of this content needs to be on-voice, on-brand, and at the fingertips of your users—not just in one channel of communication, but in all the channels that you and your marketing partners are using today.

Of course, the more distributed your marketing operations are, the harder it is to achieve brand consistency at scale. That's why distributed marketing platforms (DMPs) make the most sense for the vast majority of large-scale brands. But a legitimate commitment to brand consistency has to begin at in-house. So, let's cover the steps you can take to make sure your brand foundations are strong.



Step 2: Find the Gaps and Protect Brand Equity

How can you tell if your brand is under siege from the rising price of inconsistent execution? **Here are the four signs and symptoms that inconsistent branding is costing your company big money – whether in lost revenue, high costs, or decreased customer and partner satisfaction.**

1. Low brand awareness relative to competitors or outbound spend level.

Spot Check: *Has your team asked these questions?*



- Do you often find local assets that violate brand standards in significant ways?***
- Are old/outdated brand assets getting used after their “expiration” date?***
- Does your website have lower organic search traffic than your main competitors?***

When brand execution is inconsistent, marketing activity can reduce rather than improve brand awareness. You heard that right. More dollars misspent can adversely impact brand awareness levels relative to your competition.

To get a handle on the severity of this problem for your brand, you can, if you’ve got the budget, commission a formal brand awareness survey. If dollars are short, and you’re trying to get your finger on the pulse of the market, you might try an informal “long-tail” brand survey of your own.

Just enter your brand name in Google. Switch to the images view. Then, scroll down – not just a little, but a lot. What you’re looking for is not the way your colleagues at headquarters are implementing and utilizing your brand image. You’re looking for all the different ways your partners and staffers in the field are using, and perhaps abusing it.

Don’t overlook the more egregious examples. Analyze them, and look for patterns in the misuse you witness. It will add impact and urgency to your pitch to leadership for funds to help address your brand consistency problem.

Learn More: [Attribution and Brand Awareness: 5 Techniques for Measuring Local Marketing](#)

2. Dissatisfaction among dealers, resellers, retailers, and franchisees.

Spot Check



Do your promotions often suffer from low adoption at the local level?

Do your largest revenue producers at the local level often “go their own way” with regard to local promotion?

Do you know how many times a specific asset (template, image, promotion) has been used by your field marketers?

Your downstream marketing partners depend on the brand to help sell effectively, so they may express angst if the brand isn’t providing the business lift they anticipated when signing on. Of course, in many cases, these local marketers are both the cause and victims of brand inconsistency.

As a brand marketer, your job isn’t to point fingers; it’s to identify the source of the problem and solve it as fast and as effectively as you can.

The fastest way to assess the engagement of your partners with brand materials is usage. It speaks louder than surveys or focus groups, so make sure that you take the time to monitor usage, no matter how sophisticated or simple your brand management technology might be. Track frequency of usage per asset, distribution of usage across your user community, and lifespan of an asset.

Learn More: [The Top 5 Questions CMOs Need to Ask Local Marketers.](#)

This post is a deep dive into leveraging local marketing automation and helping local marketing affiliates follow brand standards, guidelines, and overall marketing strategy.

3. Elevated production costs due to rework or production errors.

Spot Check



Does your creative team spend more than 20% of its time fulfilling one-off requests from the field?

Do you find yourself repetitively repurposing the same brand assets for use by different local marketers?

Is morale in your in-house agency low because they are viewed as “execution” rather than “strategic/creative partners”?

In large, distributed operations, it can be challenging to get a precise picture of the efficiency of your marketing operations expenditures. So, if you can, get your in-house or third-party agency to add just one detail to their job tracking routines: determining whether an assignment constitutes a “one-off” request.

The higher that number goes, as a percentage of your total throughput, the less efficient your marketing operation is likely to be.



4. Decreased marketing activity, especially in field or vertical markets.

Spot Check



What percentage of your field marketing community is using local creative-production resources?

How often does the average field marketer execute a promotion, and how does this frequency compare to your competitors?

When something is difficult to do safely and effectively, people tend to avoid trying in the first place. The inability to act out of fear of the unknown is where brand consistency problems become corrosive—creating a kind of downward spiral from which it can be difficult to emerge.

What are the signs of trouble? When field offices or marketing partners have given up on the DIY approach with your tools and have opted instead to bring in local talent. That's more expensive, of course. But there's something even more worrisome.

Remember that every creative has a natural urge to do something new and different. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, except that you are trying to achieve a consistent implementation at the local level – not additional rounds of ideation. Which means that one marketer's brilliant idea, is another marketer's brand dilution.



The problem of brand consistency can have a significant financial impact—and fast. Let's find out now what you can do to address the issue at its source—and solve it for good.

Step 3: Always Activate Assets: DAMs v. DMPs

Once you've got your organization's leadership committed to the brand consistency journey, it's time to start thinking further afield. For example, you may have a dealer-network or franchisee community that needs to activate the brand in local or vertical markets. Or, you might have a distributed sales force that, while part of the same corporate entity, operates in a highly independent manner.

In both cases, you face a significant challenge from a brand consistency perspective. These communities are often extremely limited in their access to marketing and design software. They often lack formal training in marketing and branding and may not even recognize when execution doesn't measure up from a brand consistency point of view.

Finally, like internal stakeholders, distributed marketers are often time and resource-constrained, making their commitment to brand consistency tenuous at best.

For all these reasons, if your distributed marketing community exceeds even a few dozen locations, you're probably facing one of two pressing problems:

1. Either your distributed marketers are creating marketing executions outside of your view, inflicting untold damage on brand consistency and equity.
2. Or, they are inundating you and your central marketing team with one-off requests that keep you from focusing on the strategic insights and programs where you can add the most value to the brand.

If these problems ring a bell, it's time to start thinking about putting a distributed marketing platform (DMP) in place.

According to the experts at Forrester Research, DMP partners “provide a modular, marketer-friendly way to manage money, people, content, and brand strategy.”²

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- Vendor Landscape: Marketing Resource Management, Forrester

Phrased a bit more concretely, a DMP enables you to deliver the right templates, images, and text content to the right marketing partners at the right time for them to activate your brand in their markets consistently and effectively.

It's common to think that a Distributed Marketing Platform is just another term for a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system. But in fact, a DMP incorporates a DAM's ability to deliver or distribute assets, and adds the ability for distributed marketers to customize and recombine assets to meet their local needs, always operating within clearly articulated brand guidelines and rules.

By doing so, a DMP like [CampaignDrive](#) solves the problem of constrained resources, software, and skills at the edge of your marketing network, by transforming the notion of static assets, where appropriate, into dynamic, customizable marketing tools.



Step 4: Build it Right - The ABCDs of DMPs

If your DMP is going to live up to its full potential to deliver excellent results, you've got to know your ABCs—and D's:

A – Architecture:

Users today are willing to live within brand rules, provided the brand tools are easy to find and easy to use. **Make sure your DMP offers the capability to architect your system and organize templates and assets in ways that are naturally intuitive to you and your users in the field.**

Also, make sure that you can fine-tune the search experience to make your assets easily discoverable. Local marketers today have to contend with a more complex marketing mix than ever before. Your DMP needs to make their lives easier by combining all the most common tactics under a single login and a single user experience.



B – “Building Blocks” Of Content:

The experts at Gartner call this “atomizing” your content.³ That means creating small content blocks that can be combined and recombined to suit the needs of a unique customer or group of customers at a specific point in the customer journey.

Often, the people who are in the best position to decide what a customer needs at that particular moment in time are those who are closest to the customer—your field-based marketing partners.

So, you want to make sure your DMP gives you the flexibility to organize and atomize your content in the way that works best for your business and fits best with the marketing channels - email, web, social, traditional - you use the most.

When marketers take the time to develop content as reusable components, you will find yourself giving your users in the field an

impressive amount of freedom with which to craft unique experiences for customer engagement. At the same time, the experience will be smooth for your field marketers to master—precisely because they are assembling those experiences from pre-approved components, without having to face the problem of the “blank page” on their own.

Make sure your DMP gives you the flexibility to organize and atomize your content in the way that works best for your business and the marketing channels you use the most.



C – Control:

It stands to reason that DMPs will raise significant questions to brand-designers about the degree to which local customization is compatible with the goal of brand consistency. The answer to that question is that the right DMP will empower the brand to exert precisely the level of control it needs over each type of document and with each kind of user community, to achieve just the right balance of brand consistency, user-friendliness, and production efficiency.

Your DMP should make it easy to see at a glance how your brand is getting activated at the local level. It should also allow you to drill down all the way to the individual user or location level, to provide coaching and guidance when it's needed. And, it should allow you to export, aggregate, and correlate that brand-activation data with revenue, so you can detect patterns, reinforce best practices, and identify problem areas fast.

Most users today want to combine the right degree of freedom with fast, accurate document customization. They want content tailored automatically to their needs, and to be able to select between different creative executions, based on their understanding of their local market.

Make sure your DMP can serve up these options in an intuitive, point and click manner.



D – “Drag and Drop” User Experience.

With more channels to manage and more messages to deliver, local marketers today want a user experience that combines ease of use with a feeling of freedom and control. That means rigid and clunky interfaces just won't cut it anymore.

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When considering DMPs, look for a modern, clean interface that delivers a “drag and drop” experience wherever possible. Users are highly visual and want to see the effects of their edits in real-time. And when it comes to user training, demand video tutorials that are specific to the needs of your user community, and your content library.

You'll be amazed how this combination will drive user adoption—and adoption is the metric on which all success depends.



Step 5: Manage Your Business, Not Your Vendors

Self-service environments sound great to most organizations, particularly at a time when agency-of-record relationships are giving way to internally driven marketing operations. But it's important for you and your team to decide clearly what self-service means to you—and to devote the resources necessary internally to achieve that goal.

First, look for a vendor that truly embraces the self-service model and a platform that allows you to structure the user experience and content libraries in a highly flexible way. Don't stop with vague promises of self-service; closely examine the administrator experience - asset tagging, template upload, campaign management, etc.. Insist on looking at real-world examples of everyday brand management chores to determine what your company is in the most need of.

Second, make sure that you appoint a champion for your DMP who is dedicated to winning adoption in the user community, and achieving success against clear benchmarks and goals. Note: for a major brand, this is likely to be a full-time job.

Once you've identified your DMP leader, make sure to give them the time and space to embrace the platform—not just from a user experience point of view, but also from the administrator perspective.

What you're aiming for is independence over the long haul. If you invest properly in the opening months of the relationship, it will pay dividends for years to come.

Third, make sure that your vendor is committed to producing training materials that are unique to your system architecture and your content library. Emphasize video tutorials rather than lengthy manuals, and try to segment tutorials into short (less than five minute) lessons. Remember that your user communities are more often learning by watching rather than reading.

Finally, in the pursuit of independence, look to your vendor to bring you insights and experiences from other brand communities and incorporate those lessons into the evolution of your brand management ecosystem.

Although every brand is unique in its voice and architecture, they all share in common the challenge of motivating and organizing users in the field.



Conclusion

Once you've embarked on the journey to improve brand consistency, you'll begin to see more opportunities. You may find that your user community embraces the opportunity to exercise freedom within a framework and that your DMP becomes a source for marketing innovations. Or, maybe users want more self-service assets, and you find opportunities to create automated, data-driven campaigns at greater scale.

Either way, you will begin to develop a better understanding of your user community as marketers—identifying active and engaged partners and those who are on the sidelines. And, you'll begin to develop different service models to address the folks who want to do marketing on their own, those who want to work in close collaboration with the brand, and those who prefer a “concierge” who markets on their behalf.

Whatever lessons you learn along the way, you'll be able to build on the fact that local marketing executions are

helping to build rather than erode brand equity, and you'll find that the economic metrics of your marketing operations (cost per execution) keep on improving over time. Those are the tangible benefits of brand consistency—and you can begin achieving them today, one step at a time.

Whatever lessons you learn along the way, you'll be able to build on the fact that local marketing executions are helping to build rather than erode brand equity, and you'll find that the economic metrics of your marketing operations (cost per execution) keep on improving over time.

Learn More: [How Enterprises Can Increase Efficiency and Protect Brand Equity](#)

This blog explains why enterprises need to provide brand designers and local marketers tools to make operations more nimble, empowering them to create more and manage less.

Leveraging Brand Power for Local Impact with CampaignDrive

CampaignDrive by Pica9 is a distributed marketing platform that helps corporate and local marketing and design teams collaborate and streamline the creative asset production process. We maximize brand value for global enterprises by enabling local partners to quickly execute and distribute personalized brand materials.

Corporate design and marketing teams can develop and distribute on-brand assets that local marketing teams can easily access and customize, eliminating the need for corporate to respond to one-off requests and empowering local teams to quickly respond to market forces.

Learn how to streamline your national and local marketing efforts with our self-service distributed marketing platform. **[Request a demo with our expert marketers today.](#)**

To learn more about how to implement brand compliance initiatives in your organization and power your local marketing initiatives, **[connect with a CampaignDrive expert today.](#)**



Sources

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