

Branding Checklist



This handy checklist will help you avoid the most common brand pitfalls and align your work to our brand identity standards.

If you'd like to learn more about any of the elements of our brand identity system, the page numbers below will help you quickly find the right section in the big book of brand, [Cisco Identity Standards for Brand Alignment](#).

Before you start:

- We're available to help with brand questions. Get in touch or send us work for review: askbrand@cisco.com.
- Briefs help! Have you completed a creative brief for your project?
These questions can get you started: Who is my audience? What do they care about? Why should they care about my offer? What do I need them to know? How do I want them to feel? What do I want them to do? Am I talking with them in a way they can relate to? How does my work fit with our business objectives? With other communications and campaigns? How will I measure my success?
- Are you looking for writing help? We have free weekly drop-in [office hours](#).

Our Messaging, pages 17-27

- Does your message fit with our corporate and brand messages?
- Is the tone of your project positive? We focus on the positive and optimistic aspects of our products and solutions. We don't market using fear, uncertainty or doubt.
- If you use humor, is it appropriate? Does it work, globally? Does it sound like Cisco? Our guide to humor can help you think about how to do it right. [\(link to come\)](#)

Our Language, pages 28-40

- Is your writing easy to understand? Learn how you can check your score and simplify your writing [here](#).
- When you read it out loud does it feel natural and sound conversational?
- Does it make your case boldly? Is it as short and relevant as possible?
- Do you paint a picture of what we make possible? Do you immediately connect that to how we make it happen in ways that no one else can?
- Have you sent your project through [editing](#)?

Our Logo and Tagline, pages 41-72

- Give the logo space. It shouldn't have to compete with images or words. It should have padding all around it equal to the height of the tallest "capsule" shape in the logo.
- Is it easy to see? Make sure there is adequate contrast so the logo stands out.
- Only use the logo once. The templates we offer include the logo where needed.
- Don't use the logo as a graphic or as part of an illustration.
- Are you using images as logos, to represent a Cisco group, program, solution, product, or event? There is only one logo at Cisco. Using other marks dilutes our brand.
- For Video: Use one of our existing animated logos. The Cisco logo should only be at the end, after the call to action.
- Use our tagline in any Cisco communication, except co-branded communications.
- The copy "TOMORROW starts here." can appear alone, or as the title of the piece, never buried in the body copy. The wording should never be altered.
- When you use the tagline with our logo, use one of the designs provided [here](#).

Co-Branding and Other Logos

- Are you using any logos from other companies? If so, we need explicit, written permission to show them.
- If you are including other companies' logos, are their relationships to Cisco clear? Context is important and often legally required. Please send co-branded treatments to askbrand@cisco.com for review.
- Are other logos visible? Logos or copyrighted material shown (even those shown inadvertently, such as on a device, beverage, t-shirt, etc.) need to be removed by cropping, blurring, masking, etc.

Our Typography, pages 73-96

- Are you using CiscoSans? It's our typeface and we should use it for everything. There are two exceptions: use Arial for live text on web pages and in presentations.
- Are you using the lightest typeface weight that works? (For bigger text, use a lighter weight type style. For smaller text you may need to use a heavier weight type style.)
- Is all text in a consistent size, weight, color, case, and face for each text block or thought?
- Is text left justified? Right justified is a second choice. Avoid centered text.
- Are you using sentence case or Title Case? Title case should be reserved for titles, column heads, and callouts. Avoid ALL CAPS.
- Is there enough contrast so that people can read your copy easily? We comply with all regional legal accessibility requirements.

Our Colors and Gradients, pages 97–119

- Are the colors used all from one Cisco color palette? Compare your document with the Cisco palette you've chosen. Does anything stick out?
- Reds and oranges should be used sparingly, as accents only.

Our Graphics and Textures, pages 120–138

We call the bridge shapes in the top of our logo, “capsules” or “the graphic element”.

- Are you only using the capsule shape vertically? We avoid using this element horizontally, and never use it at an angle.
- Be subtle with them when you use them. They shouldn't be distracting.

Our Icons, Illustrations, and Infographics, pages 139–194

- Any rogue logos? We don't create logos for products, solutions, programs, events, or groups. Cisco is a master brand company, and we only have one logo.
- Are the icons used taken from those provided in Brand Exchange? If not, have you chosen a design vendor from the [Preferred Vendor list](#)?
- If you are using illustrations, are you using an approved style? For example, hand-drawn graphics are not a part of our visual identity
- Do all your graphic elements add meaning? Is our logo in an appropriate place? Upper left or lower right are the preferred locations.
- Illustrations and infographics are visual media, are you using as few words as possible?
- Is there a call to action, to drive viewers to more information?
- If the infographic will be shared outside of Cisco.com, is there a [legal copy](#) block in the footer?

Our Photography and Video, pages 195–258

Are all your photos and b-roll video from Brand Exchange? If not, are there assets in Brand Exchange that you can use instead?

- Brand Exchange is the primary source for photos and b-roll. If you're purchasing stock, does it follow our guidance? If you need to purchase outside stock photography or b-roll, use the style guide (pages 209–218) to make sure that your work looks like it's from Cisco.
- If you are cropping photos, be careful. Avoid cropping through people's heads, arms, or anything else that might look wrong later..
- Do your photos or footage depict real or possible situations? People should look natural and authentic. Use natural lighting and avoid clichés.
- Do the people look healthy? Photos of people should have natural coloring, don't add tints over flesh tones.
- Is it in focus, well framed, and well lit?
- **Are you using any copyrighted materials (images, footage, or music)? Have you secured the rights to use them?** Are you complying with any other requirements for use?

Video Specific

- Does the music add to your story? It shouldn't be distracting or overly dramatic.
- Have you secured legal rights to the music you are using? We can give you access to a large selection of music, at no cost to you, and the rights are already cleared.
- Can the voices be heard clearly over the music? Over background noise? Nothing should compete.
- Can people understand what the speakers are talking about? Do they appear natural and comfortable?
- Are your illustrations/animations/motion graphics aligned with our style?
- Are you posting your video on Cisco.com? For best practices, hosting and publishing guidelines, and analytics requirements, you'll find what you need to get started [here](#).

For Collateral

- Use our authoring and production templates on the Brand Exchange [here](#) to save time, money and effort.
- If you need to create a custom template, start by making changes to our existing collateral templates. That will help all our collateral look more consistent. Keep that goal in mind as you make your changes.

For Digital

- Did you follow the Cisco.com [engagement process](#)?
- Are you creating anything digital that will be visible to the general public, external customers and/or partners? Going through the [Digital Check In](#) will make sure that best practices are followed.

For Software

- New Software / Digital Identity standards will be available early March 2015.

For Product Industrial Design

- New Product Industrial Design Language standards will be available late April 2015.

Our Events

- Are you using Cisco approved vendors who have been trained in events? Refer to page 76 in the [Cisco Events and Trade Shows Standards and Guidelines](#) for a current list.
- Are you and your vendor using the [Cisco Events and Trade Shows Standards and Guidelines](#) and the templates included with the guidelines? Using them will save you time and money and create a better, more consistent experience for attendees.
- Everything else in this checklist applies at trade shows and events too, have you checked the rest of the list?

Our Merchandise

- Are you using a [Cisco approved merchandise vendor](#)?
- Are you using an [approved design vendor](#) for the graphics for your merchandise?
- Is your design and message distinctive and unique to Cisco?
- Is your merchandise high-quality, reflective of a Fortune 100 Company and something you would want to own?
- Are you designing t-shirts? This [guide for t-shirts](#) includes templates, cost-saving tips, standards and policies.
- Refer to pages 70 and 71 in the [Cisco Events and Trade Shows Standards and Guidelines](#) for more info about merchandise.