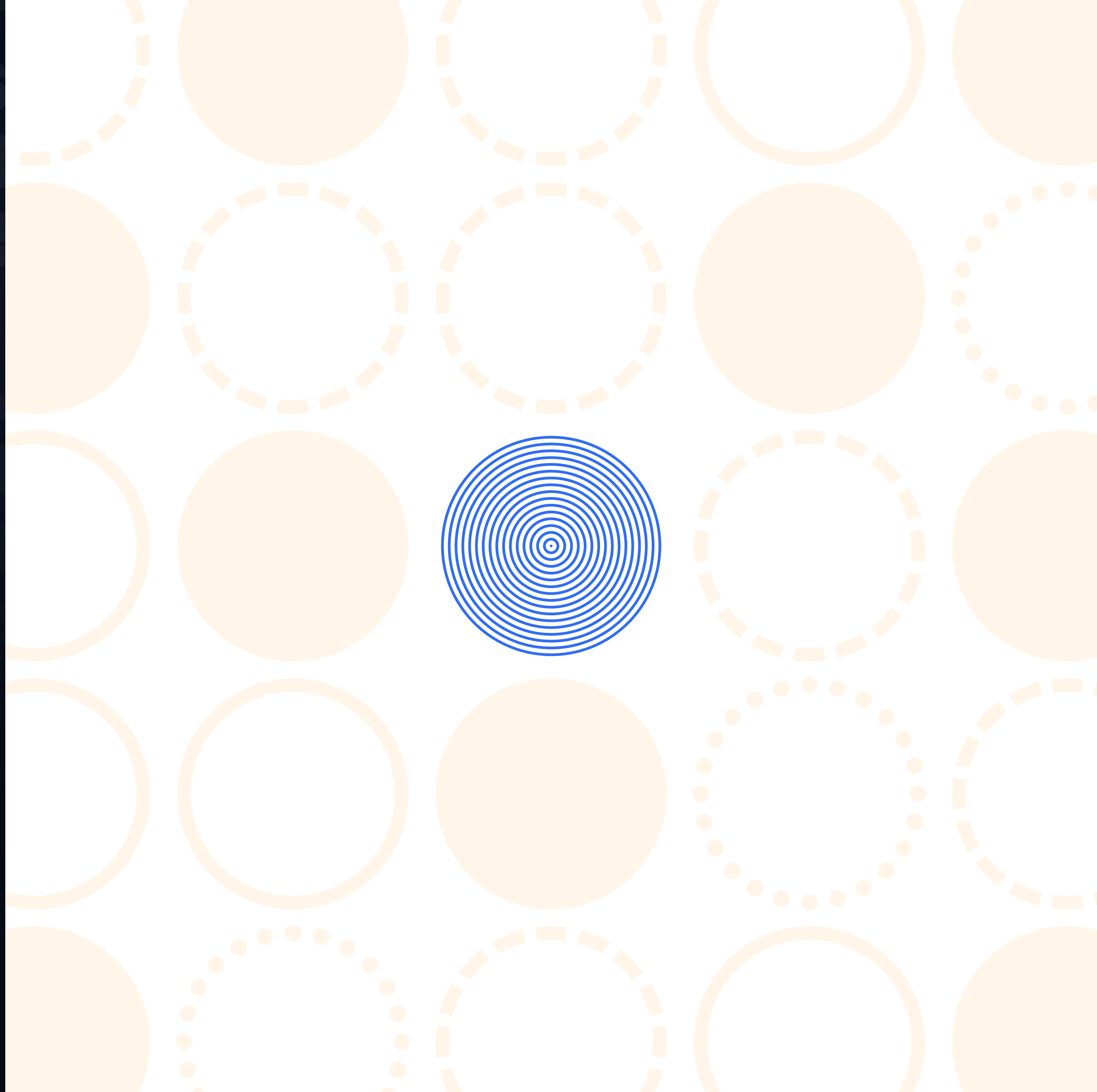# Crafting a Startup Brand: A Founder's Manual

A practical guide that teaches you how to build & establish your brand in the market.

This guidebook is presented by

GURZU

Brand is everywhere.

Branding has evolved from a mere logo to a comprehensive identity that permeates every aspect of a company's presence. As markets become increasingly saturated and consumer attention spans shrink, strong branding has never been more crucial.

From tech giants to nimble startups, companies recognize that effective branding is the key to standing out, building trust, and fostering loyalty. It's no longer just about recognition; it's about creating a cohesive experience across all touchpoints - digital and physical. For new companies and startups, thoughtful branding is a powerful tool to level the playing field. It allows them to communicate their unique value proposition, attract their target audience, and compete with established players.

As we dive into the world of brand guidelines, remember: in an era of endless choices, your brand might be your most valuable asset. Let's explore how to define, maintain, and leverage it effectively in the digital landscape.
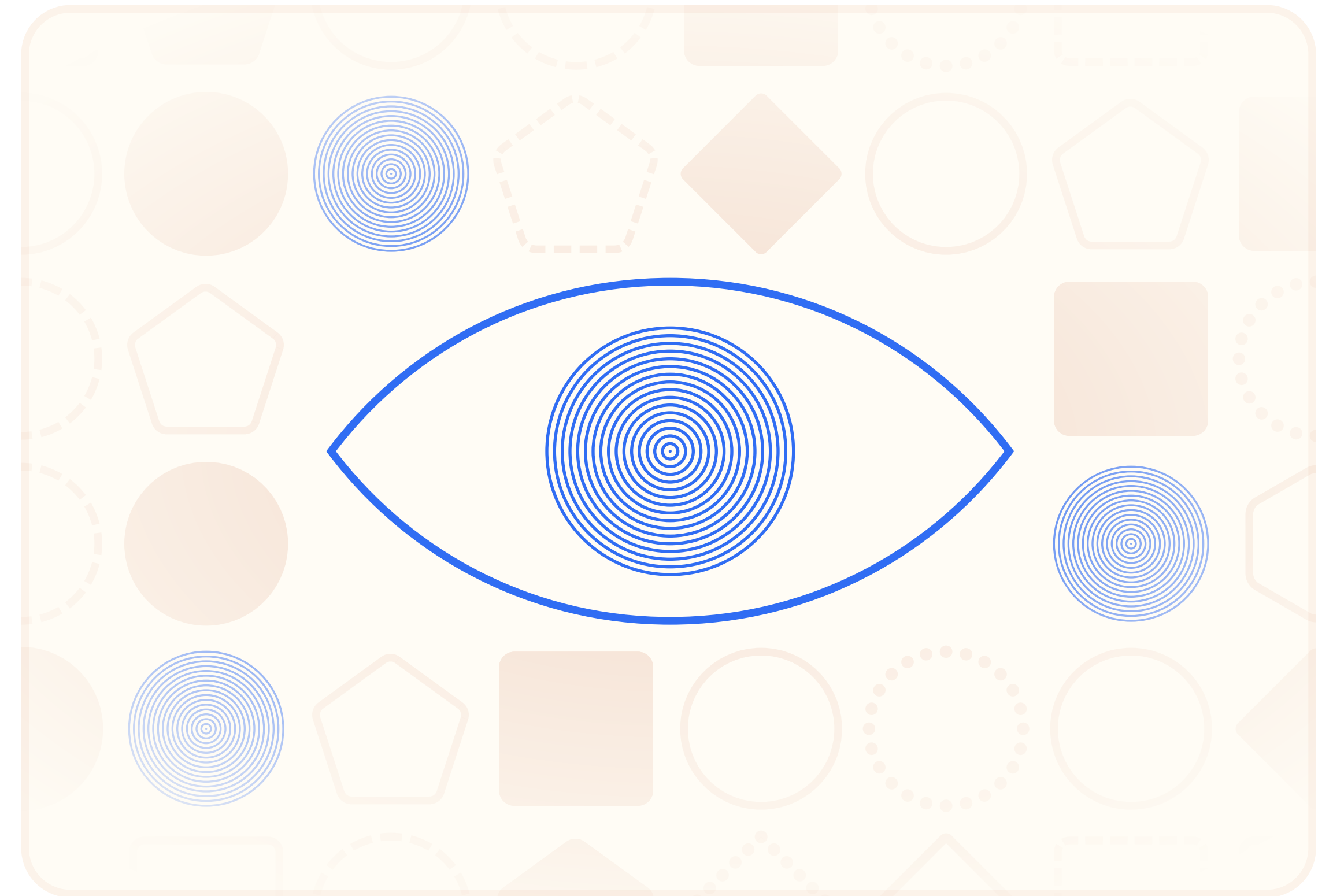

your attention is precious

Every second counts, and we're taking notes.

Why build a brand?
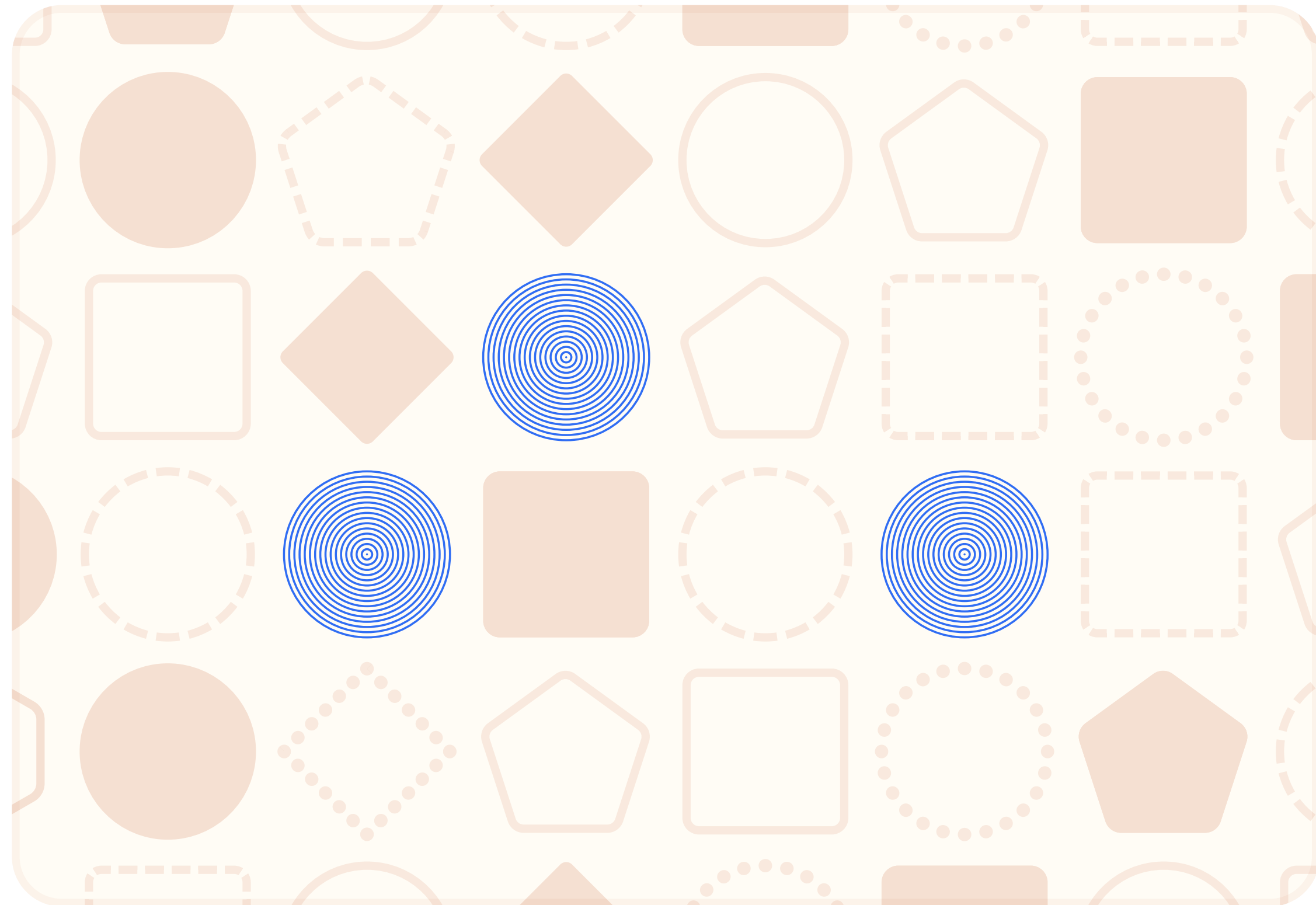

Consistency & Recognition

They ensure uniform brand presentation across all platforms, reinforcing brand recognition and recall. This consistency conveys professionalism and builds credibility with customers and partners.

Efficiency & Clarity

They streamline decision-making for teams, saving time and resources. They provide clear direction for both internal staff and external collaborators, reducing misunderstandings in brand representation.

WHY.BUILD.A.BRAND.WHY

Why build a brand?
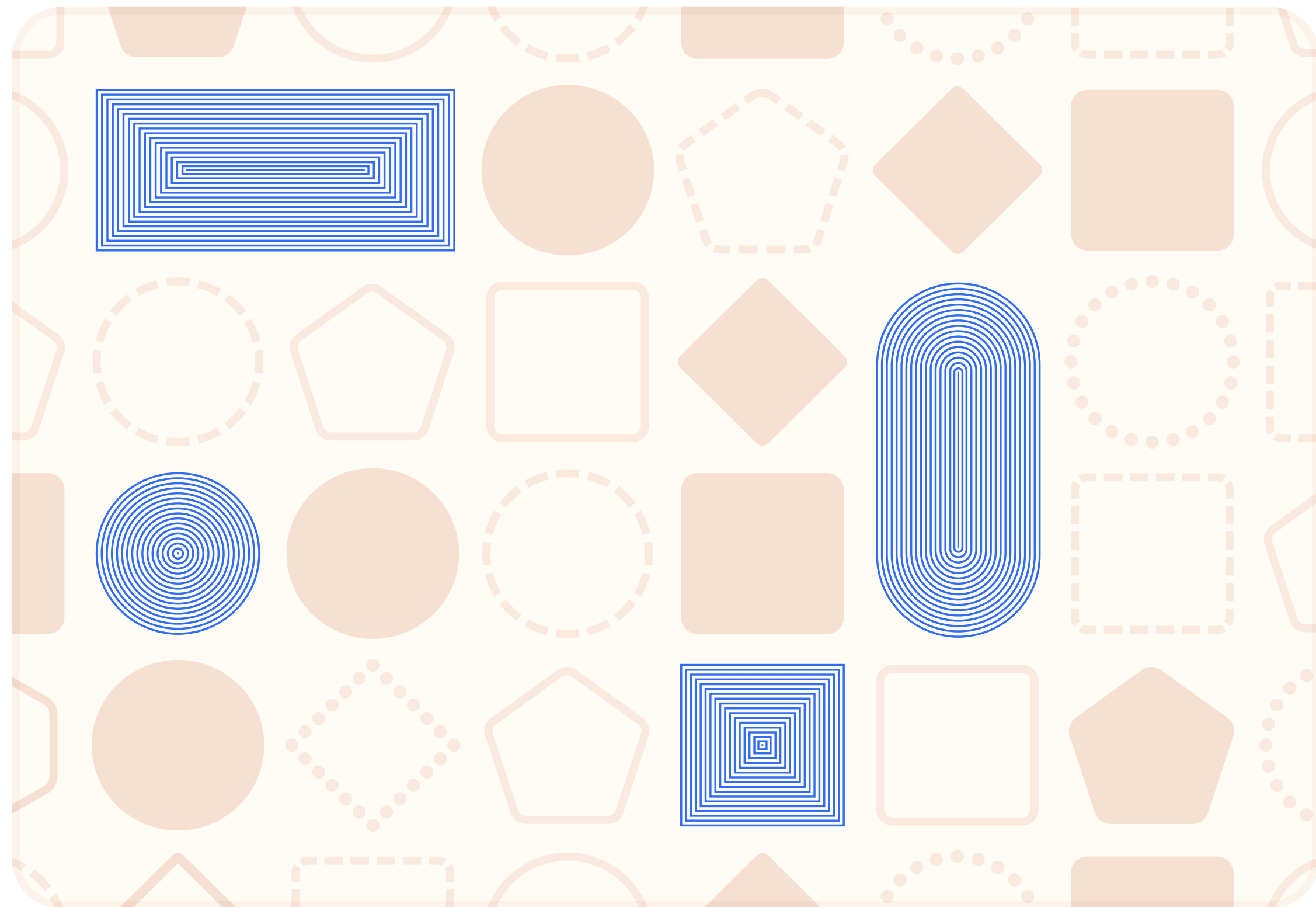
Brand Equity & Adaptability

Consistent guidelines builds and maintains brand equity over time. They also allow for flexible application across various media while preserving core brand identity, crucial in today's diverse digital landscape.
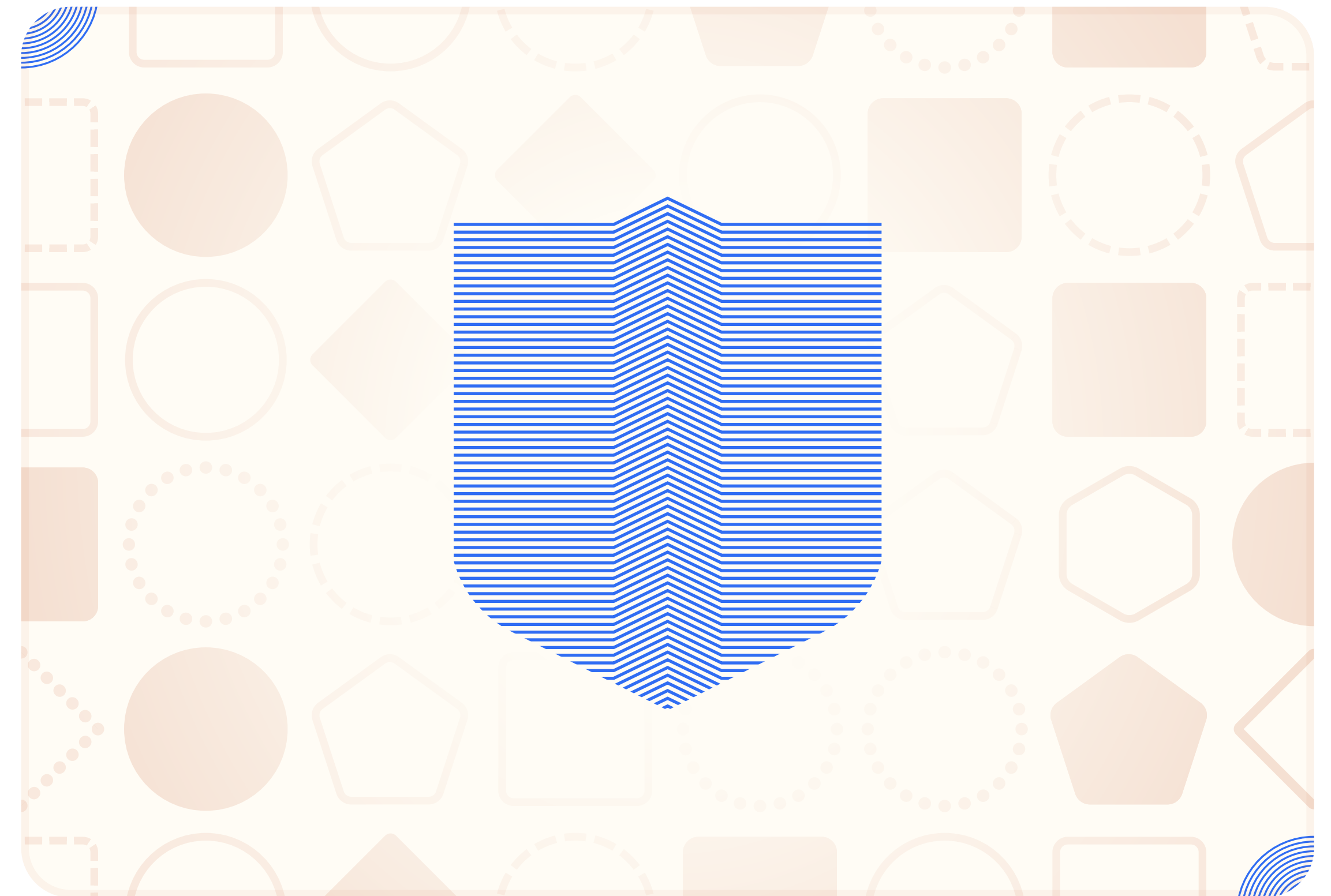
Control & Protection

They define proper usage of brand assets, preventing unauthorized alterations and maintaining control over brand representation in the market, and can offer some legal protection for brand elements.

Real world branding

Brand guidelines play a crucial role in real-world applications of branding.

They ensure consistency across various physical touchpoints, including:

Print materials

Signage

Event Marketing

Packaging

Uniforms

Office/Vehicle branding

By applying brand guidelines to these real-world elements, companies create a cohesive brand experience that bridges the gap between digital and physical interactions, reinforcing brand recognition and loyalty across all customer touchpoints.

Digital brand applications

DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS.DIGITAL.BRAND.APPLICATIONS

In today's digital-first world, brand guidelines are crucial for maintaining consistency across various online platforms.

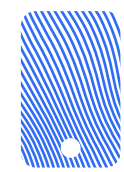They help shape the brand's digital presence in the following areas:

Websites

User Interfaces

Social media

Mobile apps
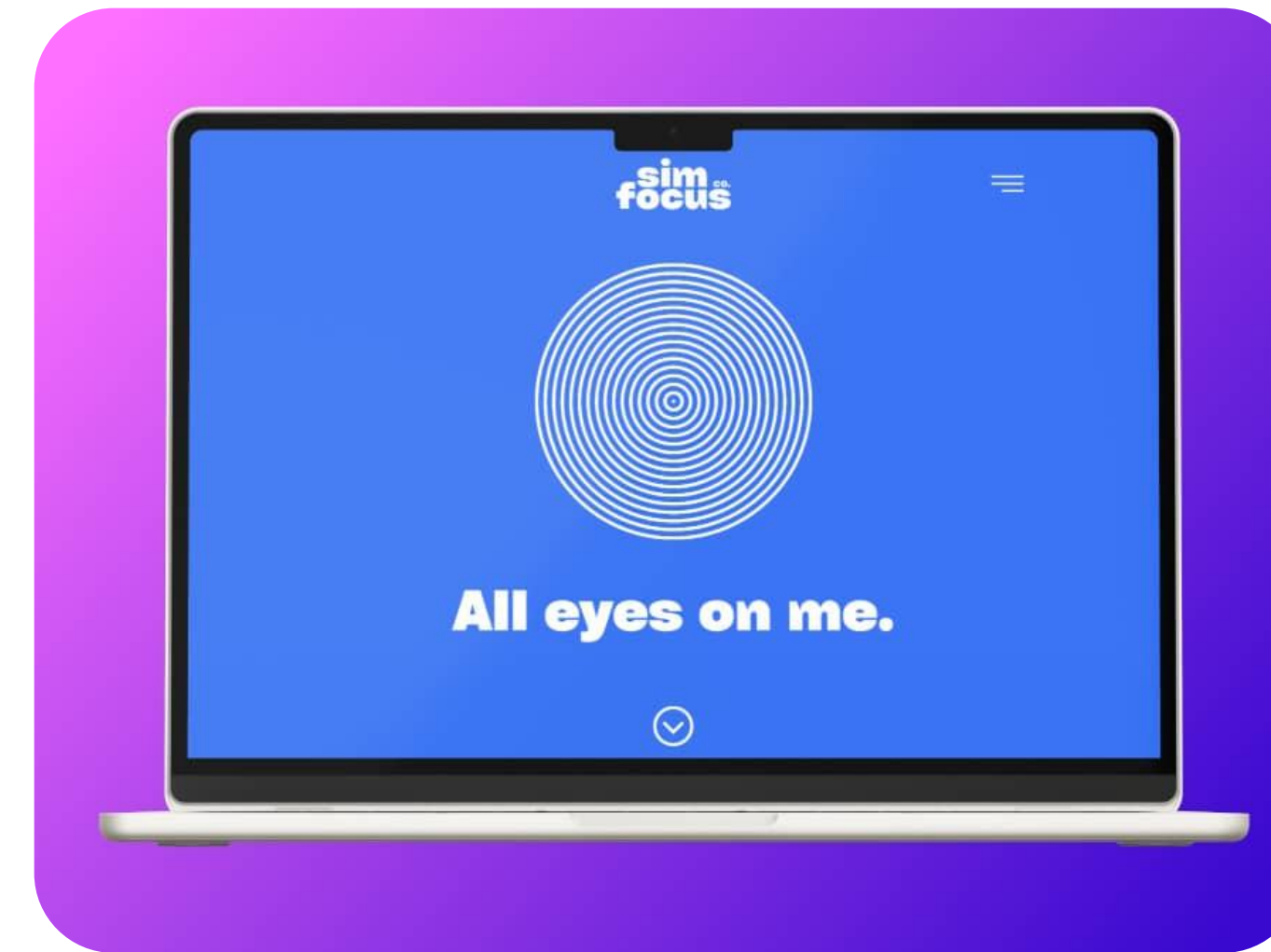
Email Marketing

Digital Content

Digital ads

E-commerce

By applying brand guidelines to these digital touchpoints, companies create a unified online presence that reinforces brand identity, improves user experience, and builds trust with their digital audience.

Brand essence

Brand essence is the core of your brand's identity—the fundamental character that defines what your brand stands for and makes it unique. It's the intangible quality that resonates emotionally with your audience, encompassing your company's purpose, values, personality, and promises. This essence guides all aspects of your brand strategy, ensuring consistency across touchpoints and differentiating you in the marketplace.

A well-defined brand essence builds recognition, loyalty, and meaningful connections with your target audience. It's the authentic, enduring heart of your brand that inspires both your team and customers, driving business success through a cohesive and powerful brand identity.
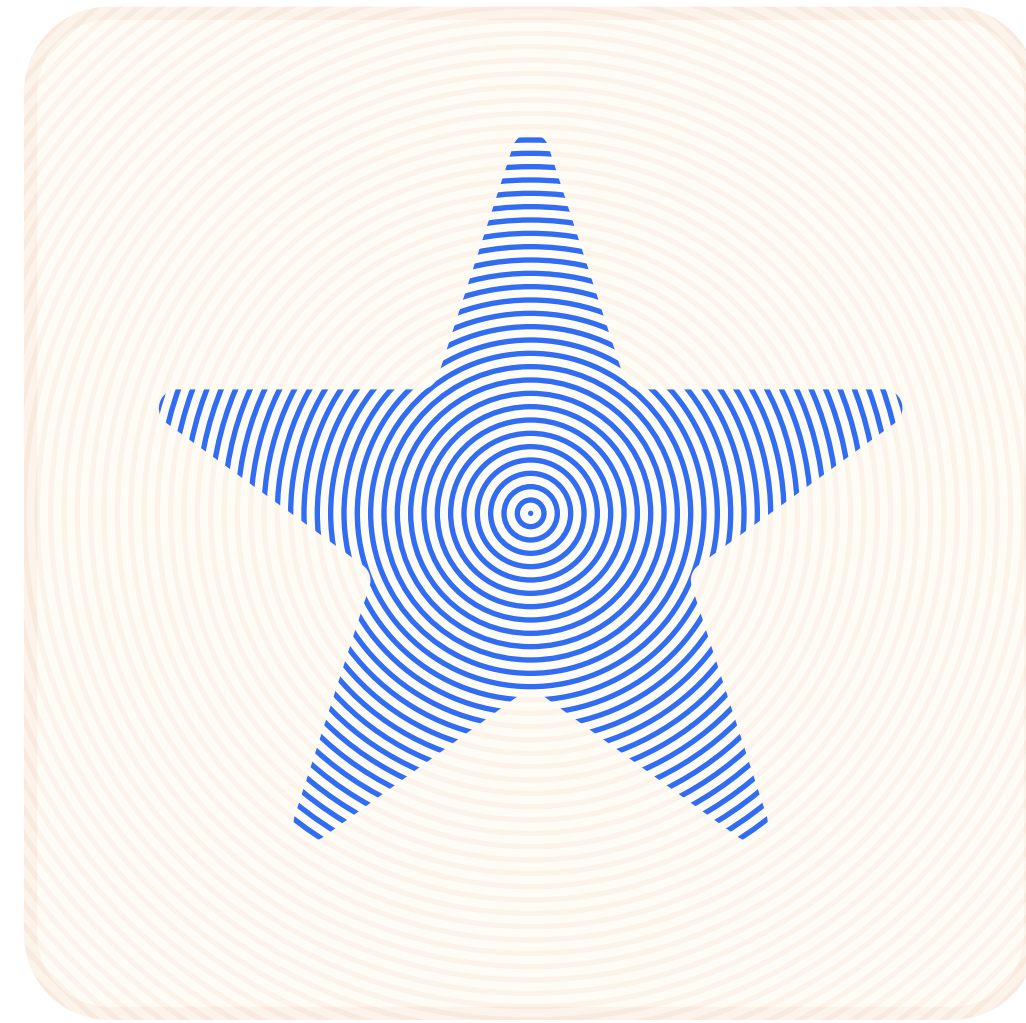
Brand essence
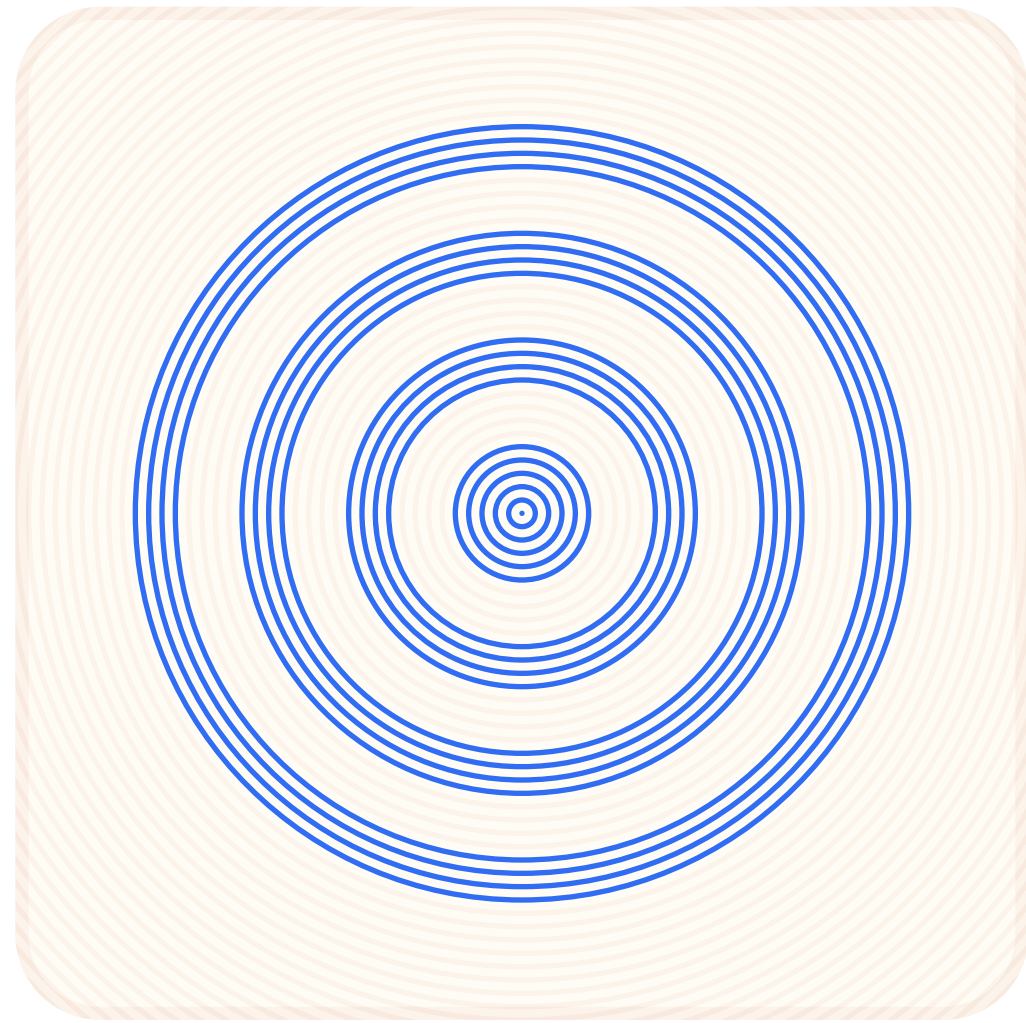
Mission and Vision

The mission statement articulates your company's purpose and reason for existing. The vision statement complements this by describing the future state your company aims to achieve. Together, they provide direction and inspiration for your brand's journey.

Brand Values

Brand values are the fundamental principles guiding your company's behavior and decision-making. These core beliefs shape your organization's culture, influence strategies, and inform how you interact with customers, employees, and stakeholders.

Brand Personality

Brand personality defines the human characteristics attributed to your brand. It shapes your brand's voice and tone, ensuring consistent and relatable communication across all touchpoints. This helps build emotional connections with your audience.
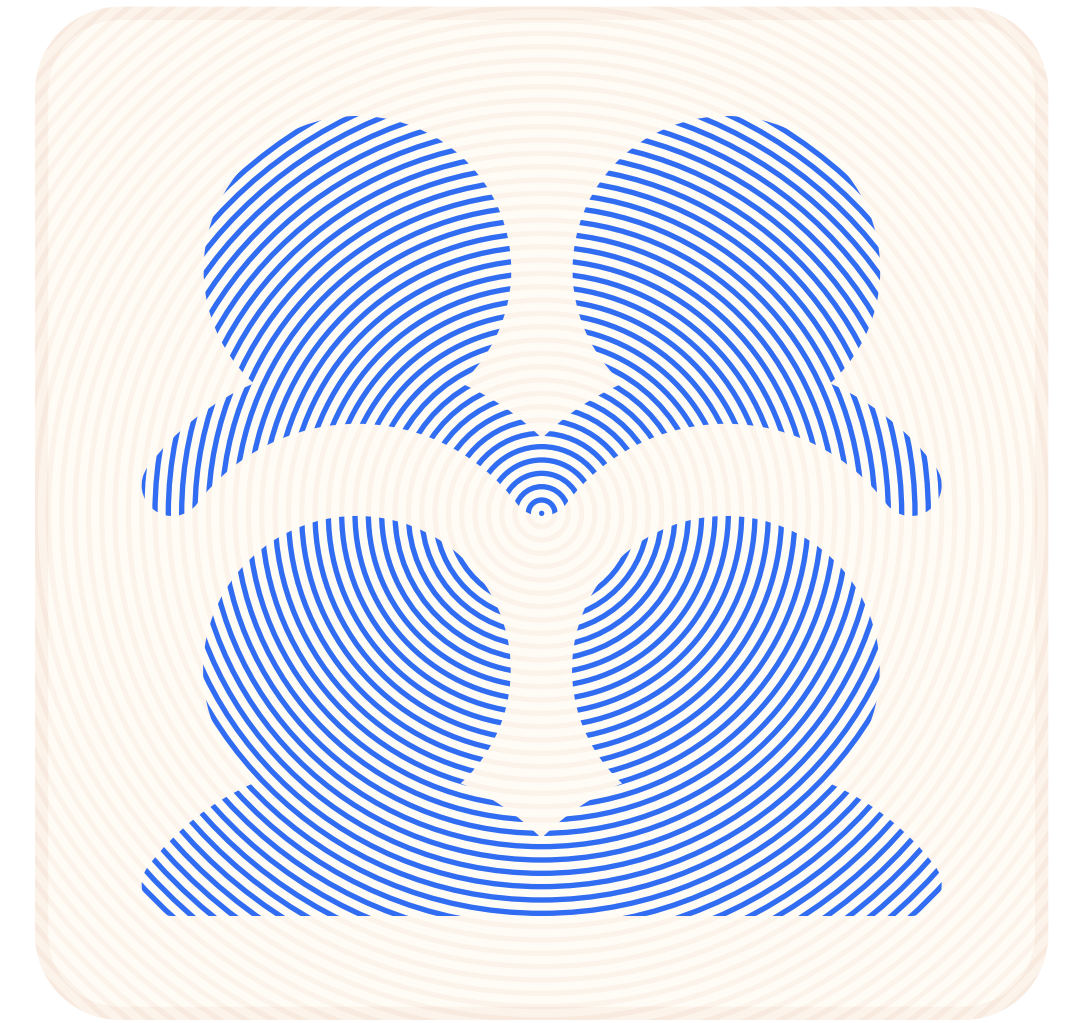
Target Audience

Your target audience is the specific group of consumers your brand aims to serve. This includes demographics, psychographics, and behaviors. Understanding your audience helps tailor your brand strategy to effectively reach and engage your ideal customers.

Visual identity

Visual identity is the collection of graphic elements that represent your brand visually. It's the face of your brand, creating instant recognition and conveying your brand's personality at a glance. A strong visual identity ensures consistency across all platforms and touchpoints, reinforcing brand recall and building trust with your audience.

In today's digital-first world, your visual identity needs to be versatile, working seamlessly across various applications while remaining distinctive. Consistency is key, as it reinforces your brand message and builds brand equity over time.
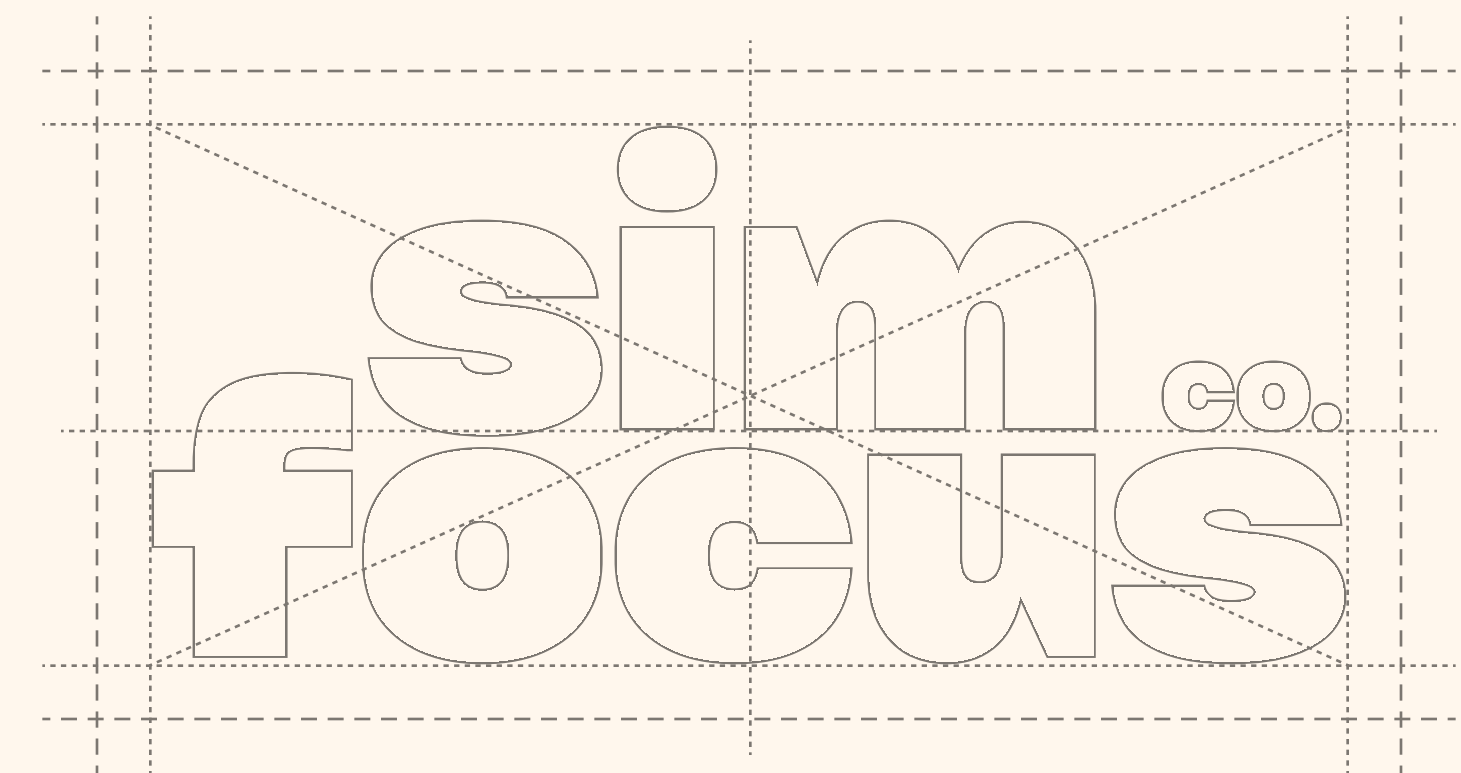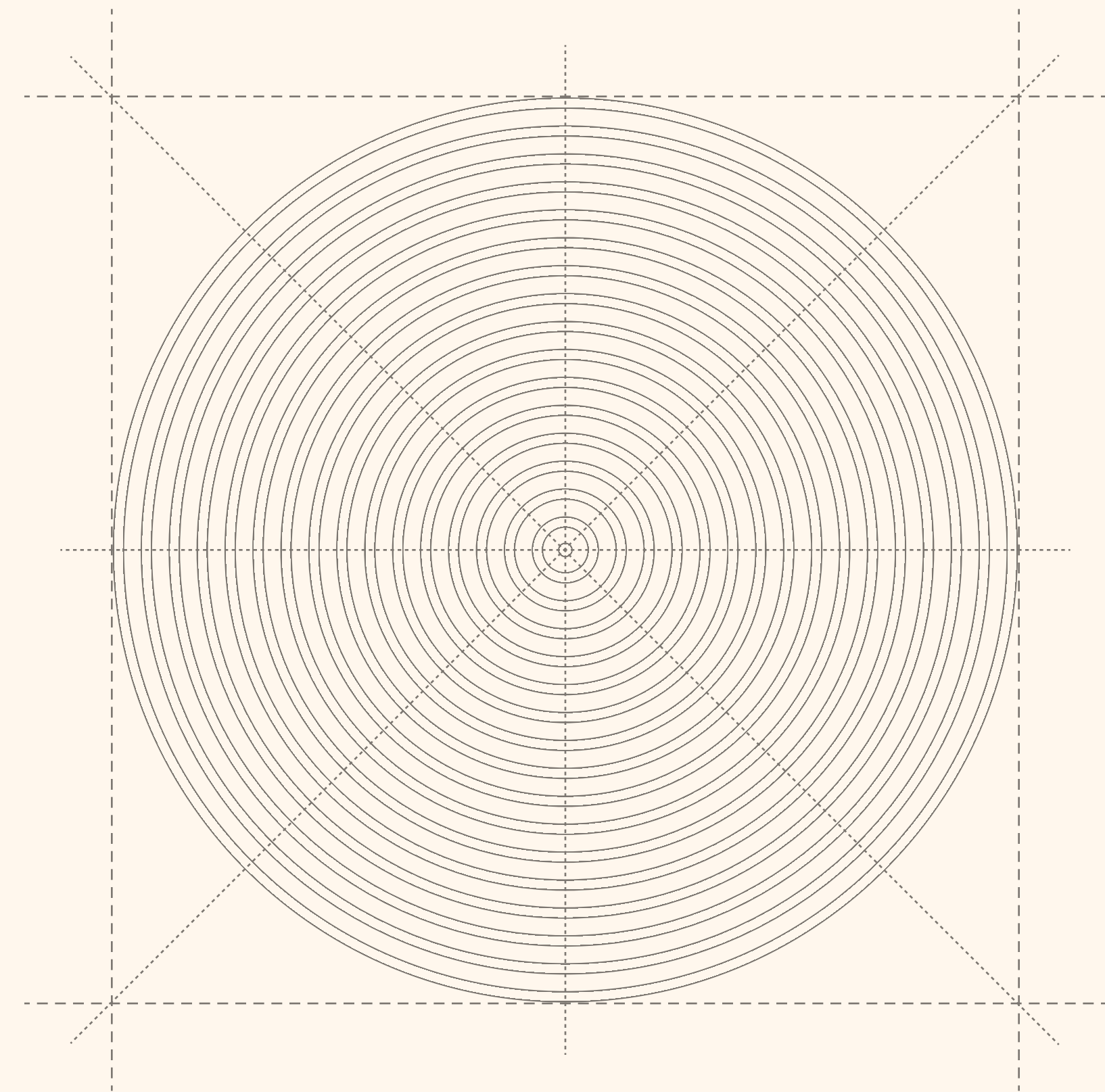
Fundamentals

Color meanings

Colors evoke emotions and convey messages, playing a crucial role in brand perception. Understanding color psychology helps in selecting a palette that aligns with your brand's personality and resonates with your target audience.

Love, passion, power, heat, fire, energy, blood, danger

Warmth, cheerful, clarity, social, fun, retro, inviting

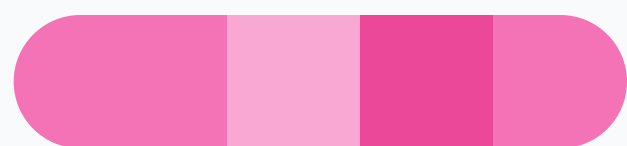Happy, youthful, summer, energetic, optimistic, jubilant

Natural, organic, growth, stable, positive, healthy, trust

Confident, trust, secure, loyal, clean, calm, success, cold

Elegant, modest, creative, royal, mystical, respectable

Romantic, caring, sensitive, youthful, feminine

Logos styles

Logos come in various styles, each with unique characteristics that can represent different aspects of a brand. From simple wordmarks to complex combination marks, the type of logo you choose can significantly impact your brand's visual identity and recognition.
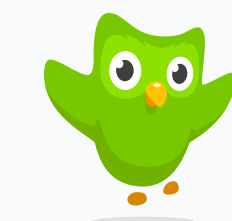
Pictorial

Letterform

Emblems

Wordmark

Abstract

Mascot

Logo design

Your logo is the primary visual representation of your brand. It should cover design variations, minimum sizes, clear space requirements, and guidelines for proper usage across different mediums.

Anatomy of a logo

Logomark

Slogan

sim focus co.

Logotype

YOUR ATTENTION IS PRECIOUS

Types of logo colors

ORIGINAL

sim focus co.

sim focus co.

sim focus co.

sim focus co.

Full Color

Monochrome

Grayscale
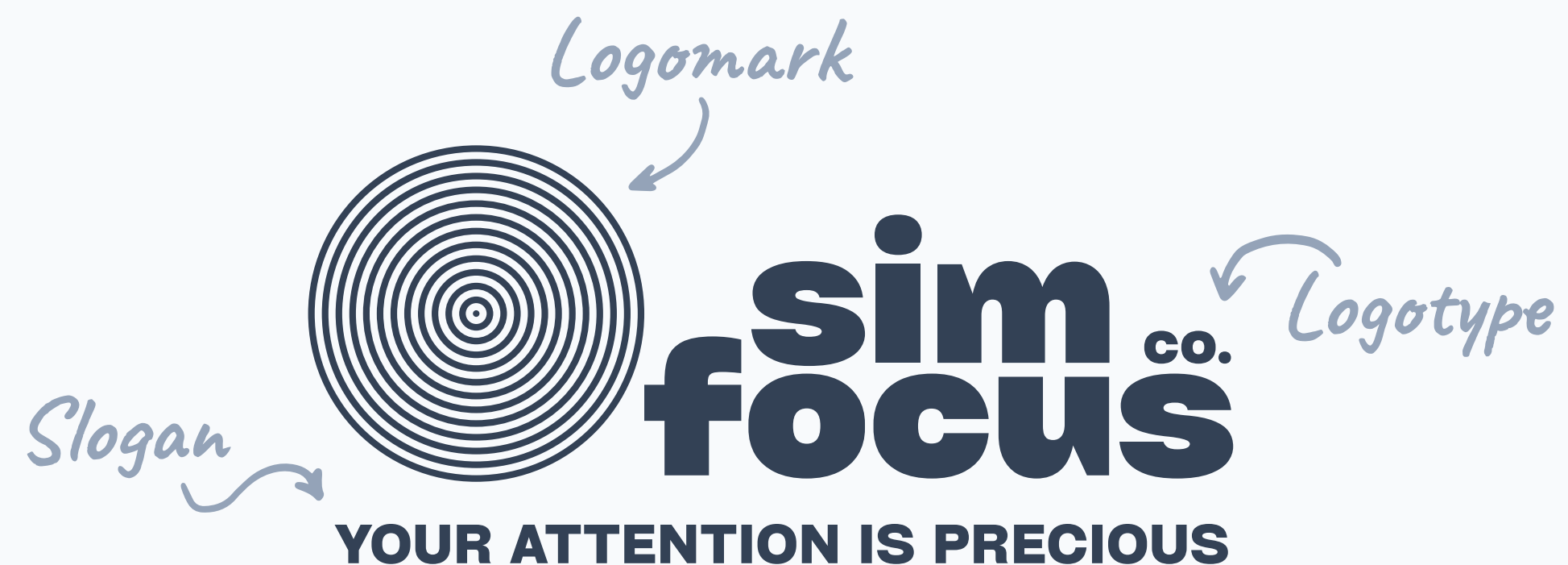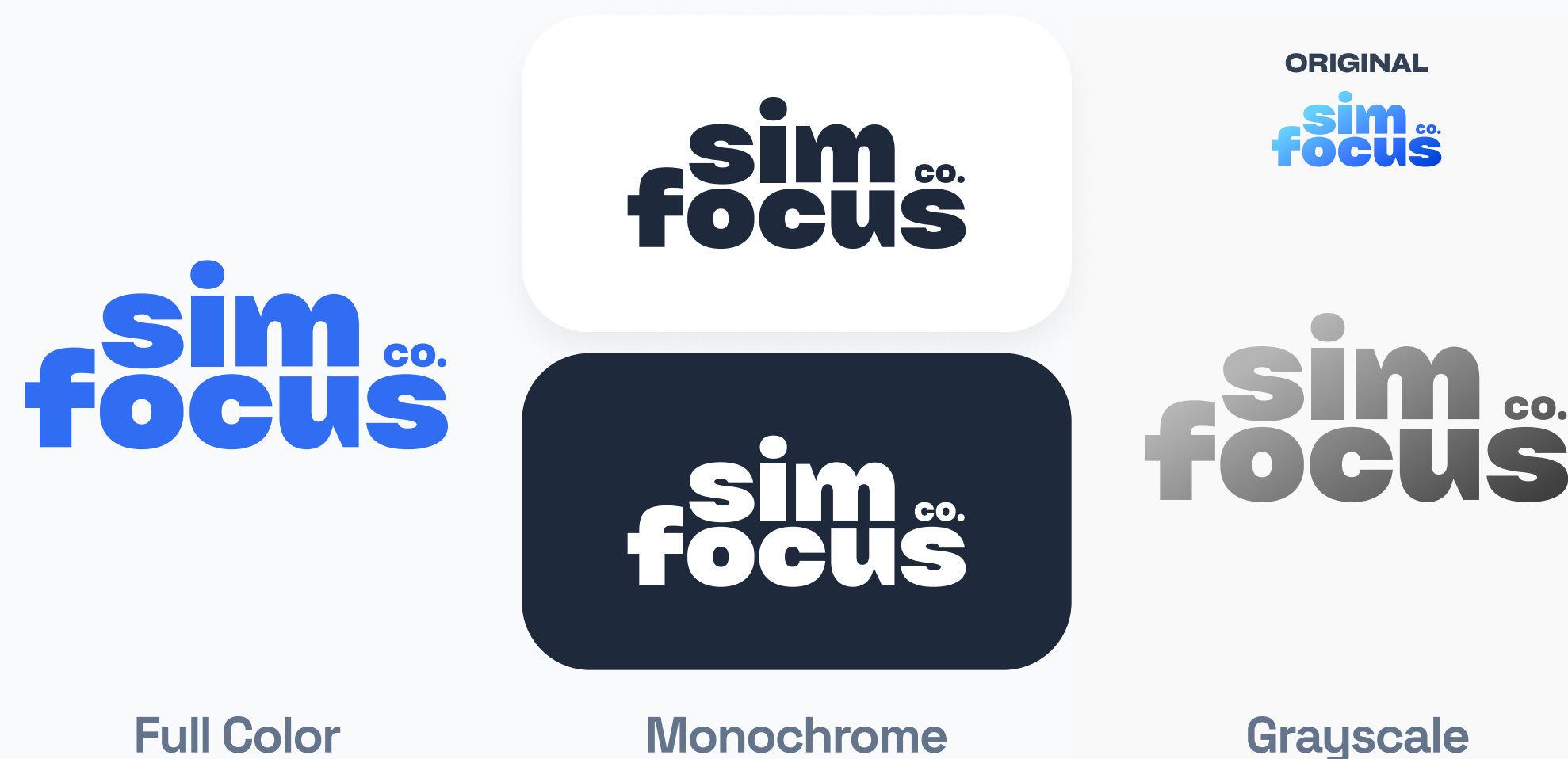
Logo design

Spacing

Proper spacing ensures the logo stands out and remains legible. Define a clear area around the logo, often based on a specific element of the logo itself, to prevent crowding by other design elements.
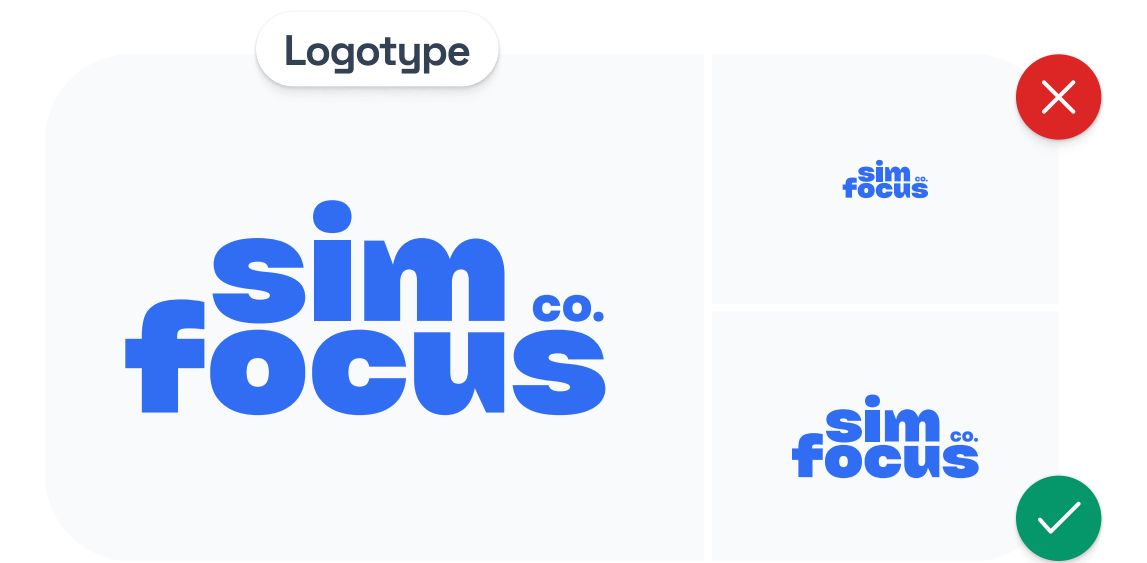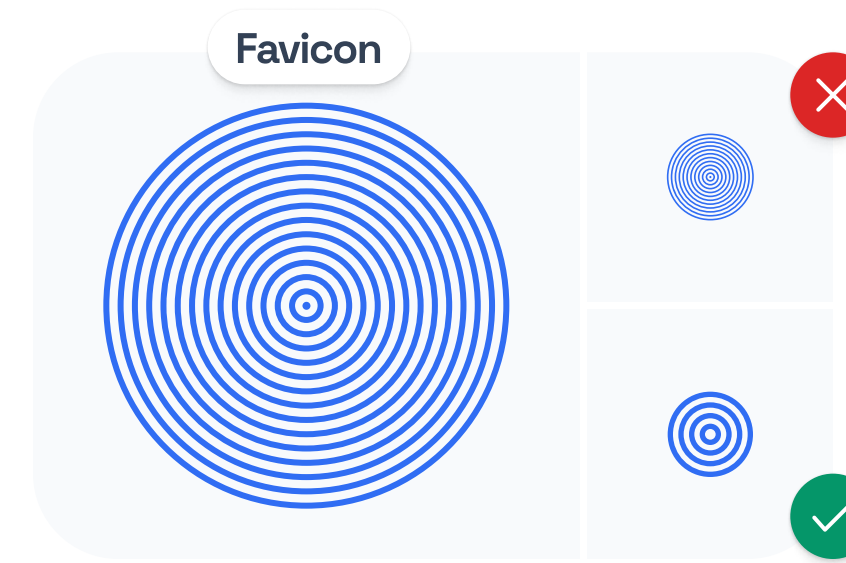

Sizing

Establishing minimum sizes maintains logo legibility across various applications. Standard formats often include minimum widths for digital use (e.g., 100 pixels) and print use (e.g., 0.5 inches).

Logomark

SIMPLIFY WHEREVER POSSIBLE

Logotype

DON'T MAKE IT TOO SMALL

Favicon

CONSIDER FOR SMALL SIZES

Main logo
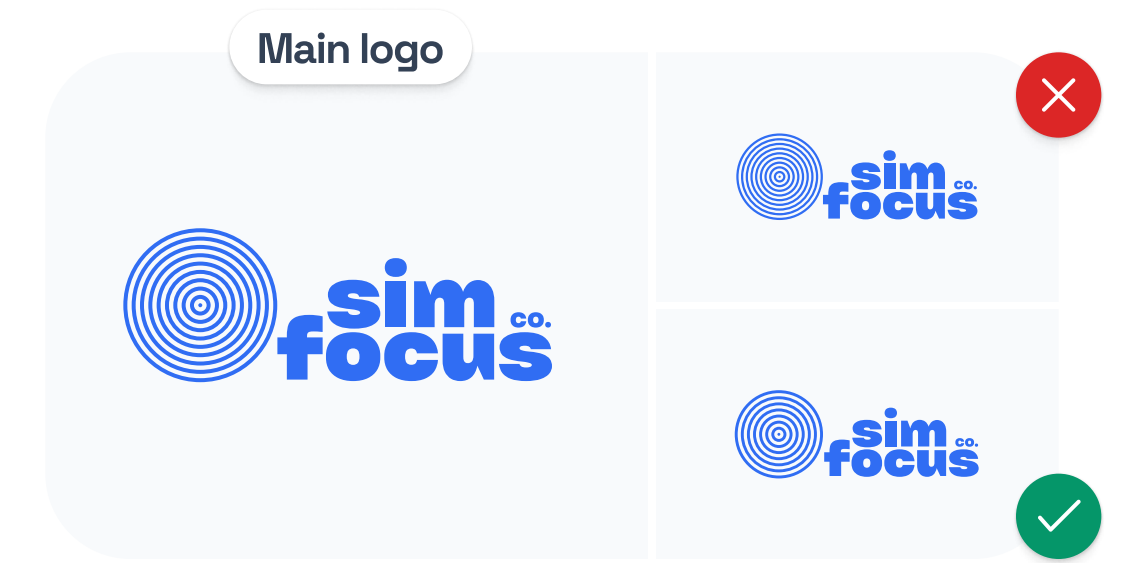
Logo design

The do's
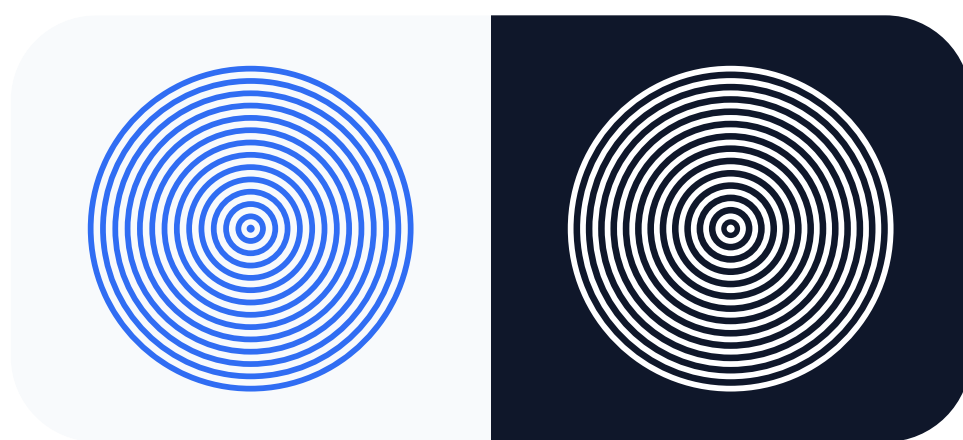
CREATE LIGHT & DARK VERSIONS

PROPERLY ALIGN SLOGANS
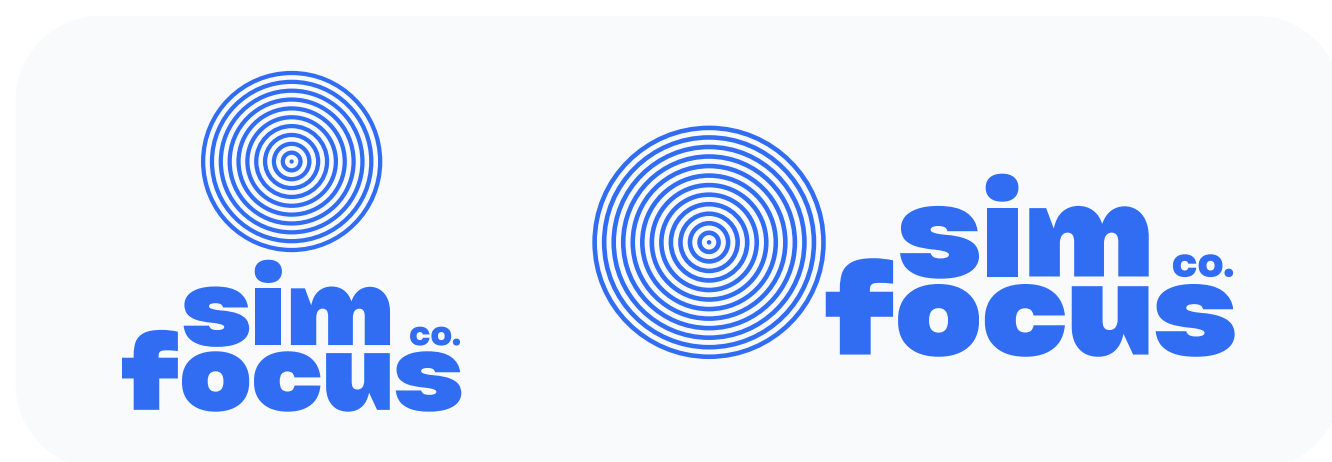
CREATE DIFFERENT LAYOUTS FOR DIFFERENT CASES

PLAN OUT YOUR LOGO TO BE RESPONSIVE AND SCALABLE

The don'ts
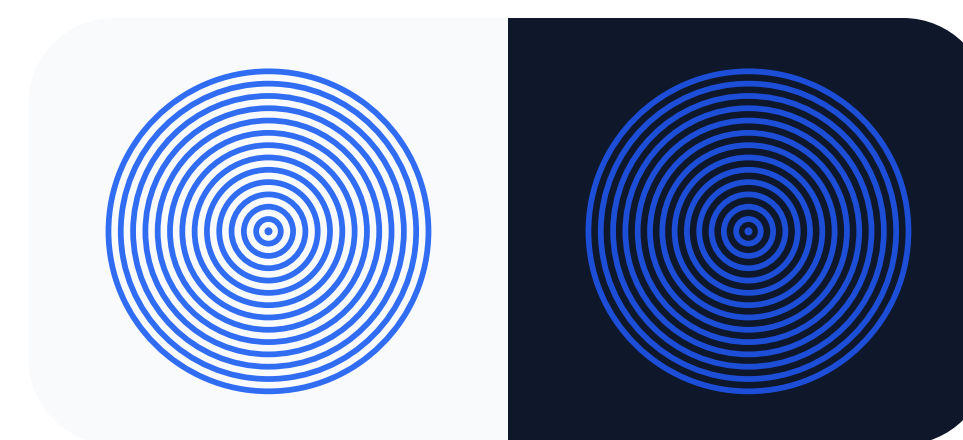
FIX COLORS FOR DARK & LIGHT MODES
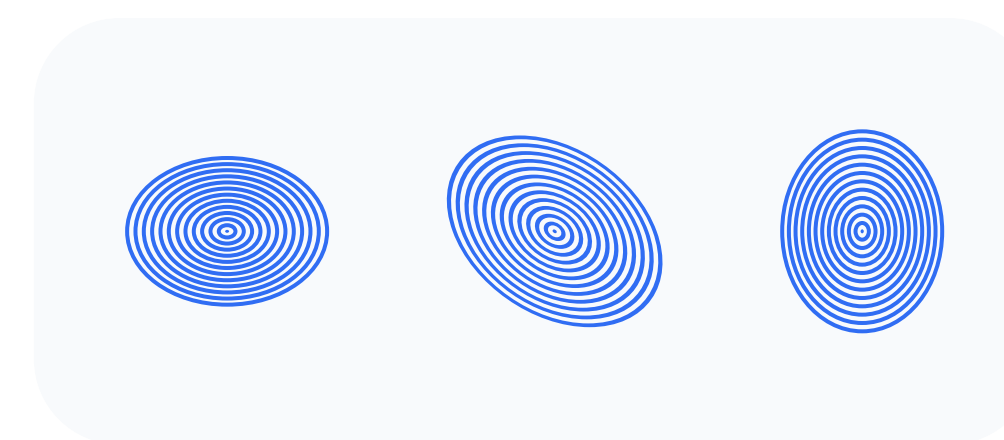
DON'T SKEW OR SQUISH

DON'T USE NON-BRAND COLORS

DON'T MODIFY ELEMENTS OF THE LOGO
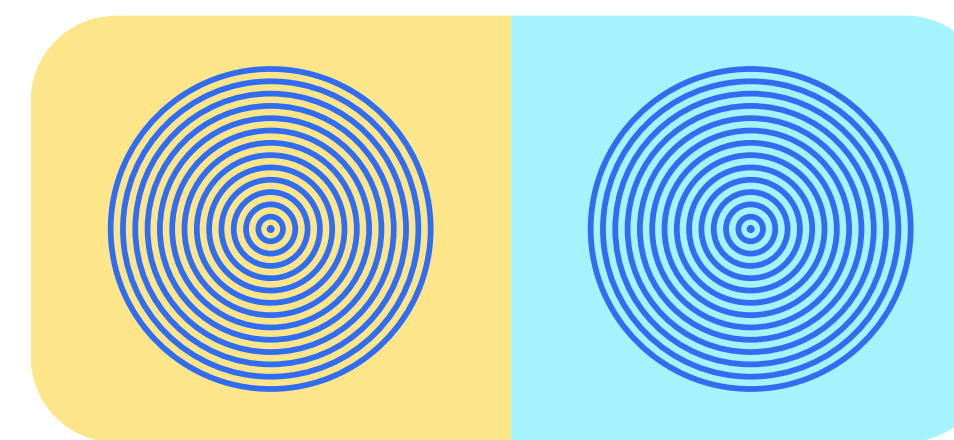
USE PROPER BACKGROUNDS

AVOID SHADOWS OR GLOWS

Color palette

Define your brand's primary and secondary colors, including their specific values (HEX, RGB, CMYK). Provide guidance on color usage and combinations to maintain visual consistency.

Types of brand colors

Marine
#306DF3
Brand, Accent
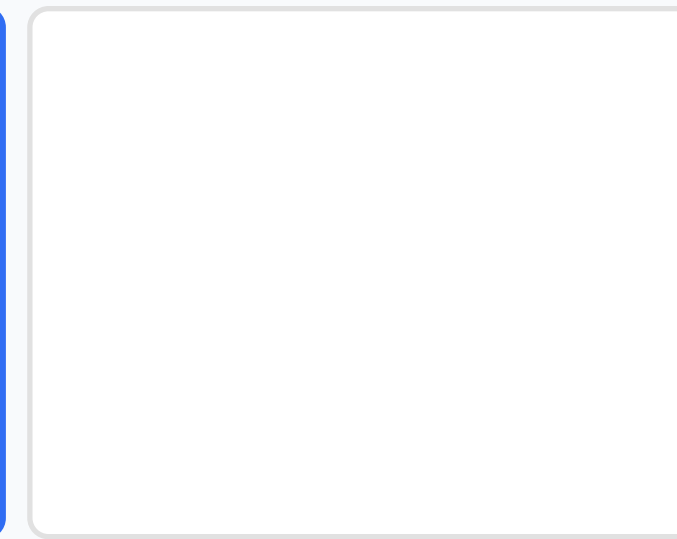
Pearl
#FFFFFF
Surface

Midnight
#0F172A
On Surface

Color variations

Typography

Typography plays a crucial role in brand identity, conveying personality and ensuring readability across various mediums. A well-defined typography system enhances brand recognition and maintains consistency in all communications.

Primary fonts

The main typeface that embodies the brand's personality, often used for headlines and display text to create strong visual impact.

Secondary fonts

Complementary typefaces used for body copy, supporting text, and longer content to ensure readability and consistency.

Cy Grotesk

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJj

1234567890()[]{};',.?/+'

~!@#$%^&*()_`"|-<>:

Bio Sans

Aa Aa **Aa** *Aa* *Aa* **Aa**

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ĀāĂăĄąĆćĈĉĊċČčĎďĐđĒēĔĕĖėĘęĚě

0123456789!"#$%&'()*+,-./:;<=>?@

VISUAL IDENTITY

Typography

Hierarchy in typography

H1	**Headline**
H2	**Headline**
H3	**Headline**
H4	**Headline**
H5	**Headline**
H6	**Headline**
SUBTITLES	Subtitle here **And here as well**
BODY	Body text goes here **Body text goes here**
BUTTON	Click me **CLICK ME TOO!**
CAPTION	Tell me something about you **Something you should know**
OVERLINE	**WHAT WE DO BEST**

Hierarchy in action

OVERLINE

HEADLINE

SUBTITLE

BODY

BUTTON

SERVICES

Consultation

Bringing solutions directly to you

Our consultation service brings expert knowledge and tailored strategies to your doorstep. We work closely with you to understand your unique challenges, offering personalized solutions that drive growth and efficiency in your business or project.

Give us a call   COMPARE COST →

Typography

The do's

Hello there
How are you?

MAINTAIN CONSISTENT FONT USAGE

Headline
Subtitle OVERLINE

FOLLOW ESTABLISHED HIERARCHY

Small type

ENSURE READABILITY IN ALL SIZES

About Us
WHO WE ARE

USE PROPER LINE SPACING & KERNING

We complement
each other

CHOOSE FONTS THAT COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

The don'ts

This doesn't
look good, does it?

MIX TOO MANY DIFFERENT FONTS

About Us
At the heart of our company is a passion for innovation and client success. With years of industry experience, we've built a team of

AVOID OVERLY DECORATIVE FONTS

Who we are.
A little about us

1.81:1 - Fail

IGNORE TEXT & BACKDROP CONTRAST

WHAT WE MAKE
Products

STRETCH OR DISTORT FONTS

At the **HEART** of our company is a <u>passion</u> for <u>INNOVATION</u> and **CLIENT SUCCESS**. With years of industry experience, we've built a team of dedicated PROFESSIONALS committed to delivering **exceptional**

OVERUSE ALL CAPS OR UNDERLINES

Imagery style

Visual imagery is a powerful tool for communicating your brand's essence and connecting with your audience. A consistent imagery style reinforces your brand identity and creates a cohesive visual narrative across all platforms. For photography, define your preferred lighting, color treatment, composition guidelines, and subject matter focus. Consider whether your brand leans towards candid or posed shots, studio or on-location settings. If illustrations are part of your visual language, specify the style, color palette alignment, and any character design guidelines.

Provide clear image selection criteria, including the desired emotional tone, cultural representation, and relevance to brand values. Offer guidance on image placement in layouts and how to combine imagery with text and other design elements. By clearly defining your imagery style, you ensure that all visual content aligns with your brand identity, creating a strong and recognizable visual presence across all touchpoints.

Iconography

Iconography plays a vital role in visual communication, offering a concise and universal way to convey information. Your brand's custom icons should reflect its personality and maintain consistency across all applications. Define a clear design style for your icons, whether they're flat, outlined, filled, or a combination. Specify the level of detail, stroke weights, and corner styles that align with your overall brand aesthetic.

Establish a grid system for icon creation to ensure proportional consistency. This grid should dictate the size, spacing, and alignment of elements within each icon. Provide guidelines on icon usage, including recommended sizes for various applications and how to pair icons with text or other design elements. Consider creating icon families for different purposes or categories within your brand. By maintaining a cohesive iconography style, you enhance your brand's visual language and improve user experience across all platforms.
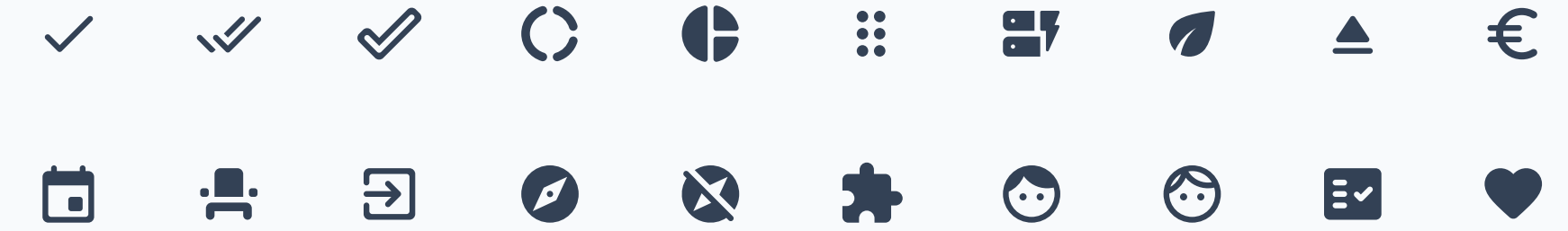
**FILLED**

OUTLINED

ROUNDED

DUOTONE

SHARP

Digital applications

In the modern digital landscape, your brand's online presence is often the primary way customers interact with your company. Consistent application of your brand across various digital platforms is crucial for building recognition, trust, and loyalty. This section delves into how to effectively translate your brand guidelines into the digital realm.

Digital applications of your brand go beyond mere visual consistency. They encompass the entire user experience, from the first impression to ongoing interactions. Your digital presence should not only look like your brand but also feel like it, creating a cohesive and immersive brand experience across all touchpoints.
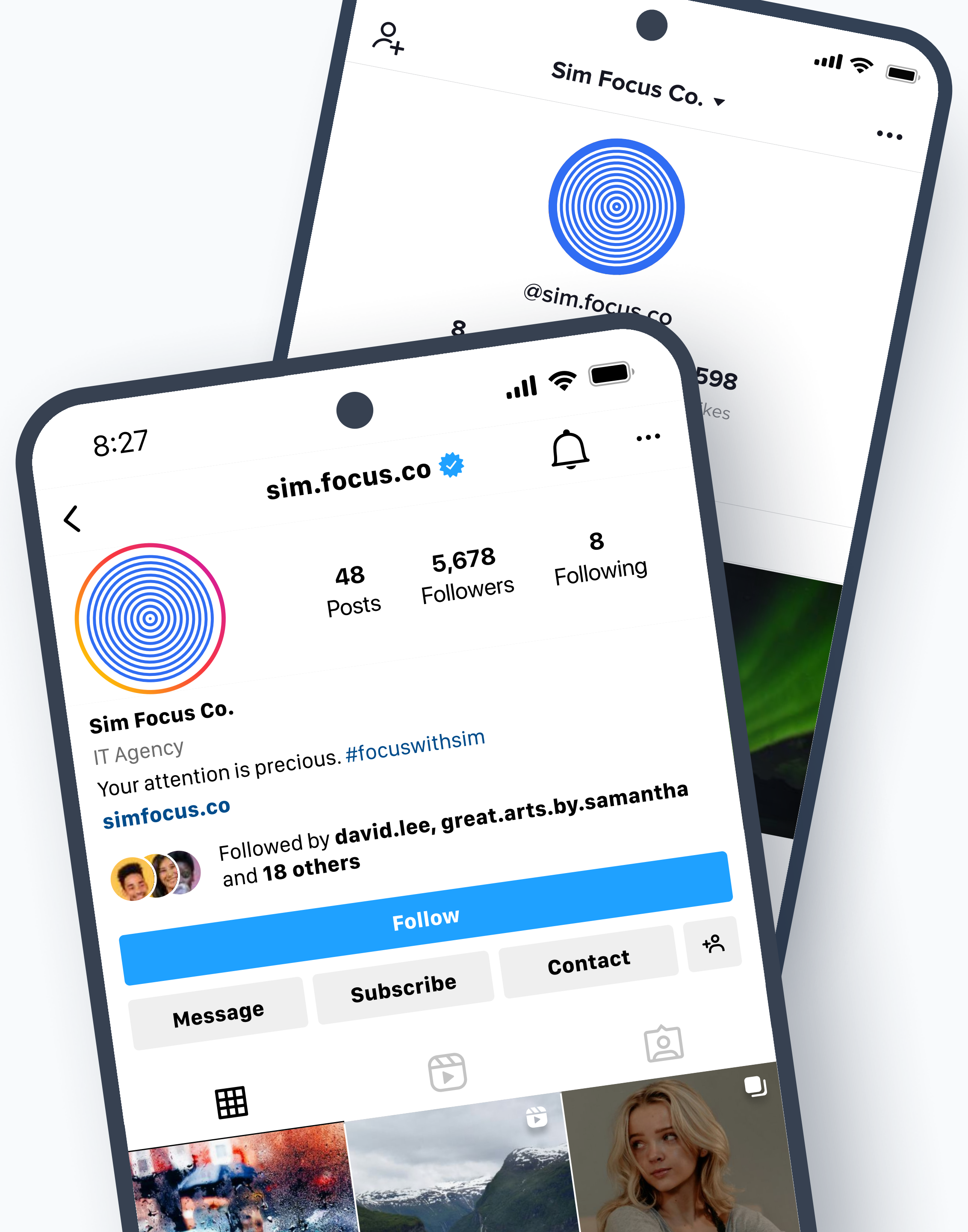
Website design

Your website is often the first comprehensive interaction users have with your brand online. Ensure that it reflects your brand identity through:

Consistent use of your color palette and typography

Proper logo placement and sizing

Layout that aligns with your brand's personality (e.g., minimalist, bold, playful)

Navigation structure that reflects your brand's voice and priorities

Responsive design to maintain brand consistency across devices

Mobile app design

Mobile apps require special consideration due to their unique interface and user experience:

App icon design that's recognizable and aligns with your brand

In-app color scheme and typography that match your brand guidelines

Custom UI elements that reflect your brand's style

Consistent use of your brand's tone in all text elements

Animations and transitions that suit your brand's personality

Social media

Social platforms are key for brand visibility and engagement. Maintain consistency through:

Profile pictures and cover images that align with your brand identity

Post templates that incorporate your brand colors and fonts

Consistent tone of voice in captions and responses

Branded hashtags that reflect your company's values or campaigns

Visual content (images, videos) that adhere to your brand's style guide

Voice and Tone

Your brand's voice and tone are essential components of its identity, shaping how you communicate with your audience across all digital platforms. While voice remains consistent, tone may vary depending on the context and platform.

Writing Style

Establish guidelines for your brand's overall writing style. This might include:

- Level of formality (casual, professional, academic)
- Use of humor or wit
- Sentence structure preferences (short and punchy vs. longer, more detailed)
- Use of literary devices (metaphors, analogies, etc.)

Example: "Our brand voice is friendly and approachable, using simple language and short sentences. We aim to explain complex concepts in easy-to-understand terms."

Language and Terminology

Define specific language choices that reflect your brand:

- Industry-specific terms to use or avoid
- Preferred words or phrases that align with your brand values
- Words or expressions to avoid
- Stance on using trendy language or slang

Example: "We use technical terms when necessary but always follow them with simple explanations. Avoid jargon that might confuse our audience."

Adapting Tone

Provide guidance on how to adjust tone while maintaining consistent voice:

- Website: Generally more formal, comprehensive information
- Social Media: More casual, conversational, platform-specific considerations
- Email: Varies based on purpose (marketing vs. customer service)
- Mobile App: Concise, action-oriented language

Example: "On Twitter, our tone is snappier and more casual. For LinkedIn, we maintain a more professional tone while still being approachable."

Remember, your voice and tone should align with your overall brand personality and resonate with your target audience across all digital touchpoints.

User Experience (UX) Guidelines

Effective UX design ensures your brand is not just visually appealing, but also functional and user-friendly across digital platforms. These guidelines help maintain a consistent and positive user experience.

Accessibility Standards

Ensure your digital presence is usable by people with diverse abilities.

- Use sufficient color contrast
- Provide text alternatives for images
- Ensure keyboard navigation is possible
- Follow WCAG 2.1 guidelines

Navigation Structures

Create intuitive navigation to help users find information easily

- Use clear, descriptive labels
- Implement consistent menu structures across pages
- Limit main navigation items to 5-7
- Provide visual cues for current location

Call-to-Action Principles

Design effective CTAs to guide users towards desired actions.

- Use action-oriented, concise text
- Make buttons stand out visually
- Place CTAs in prominent locations
- Ensure adequate clickable area for mobile users

Form Design

Create user-friendly forms to improve completion rates.

- Group related fields logically
- Use clear, concise labels
- Provide helpful error messages
- Minimize required fields
- Ensure form elements are properly sized and spaced

Digital Marketing Materials

Email Templates

Email templates are pre-designed layouts for your brand's email communications. They ensure consistency in style and structure across various types of emails, from newsletters to promotional campaigns.

- Use brand colors and typography
- Include logo in a consistent location
- Design for mobile responsiveness
- Balance text and images effectively

Banner Ads

Banner ads are graphic advertisements displayed on websites. They come in standard sizes and formats, designed to attract attention and drive traffic to your website or landing page.

- Follow standard web ad sizes
- Keep messaging concise and clear
- Include a prominent CTA
- Ensure brand elements are easily recognizable

Landing Pages

Landing pages are standalone web pages created specifically for marketing or advertising campaigns. They're designed with a focused objective, usually to convert visitors into leads or customers.

- Align design with the referring ad or email
- Use a clear, compelling headline
- Keep forms short and simple
- Ensure fast loading times

Digital Brochures and Presentations

These are digital versions of traditional marketing materials, designed for online viewing or downloading. They provide detailed information about your products, services, or company in an engaging, interactive format.

- Use brand-consistent layouts and color schemes
- Include high-quality, relevant images
- Maintain a clear hierarchy of information
- Ensure readability on various devices

Implementing & Maintaining Brand Guidelines

Creating a digital brand guideline document

Compile all brand elements and rules into a comprehensive, easily accessible digital document.

Include interactive examples and downloadable assets for practical application across teams.

Keeping guidelines up-to-date

- Regularly review and update guidelines to reflect brand evolution
- Establish a process for proposing and approving changes
- Maintain version control to track revisions over time
- Communicate updates clearly to all stakeholders and team members

Training and onboarding team members

- Develop training materials to educate new and existing team members
- Conduct regular workshops to reinforce brand guidelines and best practices
- Create a quick-reference guide for common brand application scenarios
- Establish a system for addressing questions and providing ongoing support
- Encourage feedback and suggestions from team members to improve guidelines

A handbook by

GURZU