

# Communications for dialogue & advocacy



Branding & house style

# Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.	YOUR BMO BRAND IDENTITY & HOUSE STYLE.....	3
3.	YOUR LOGO.....	6
4.	BRAND COLOURS.....	8
5.	CORE COLOURS .....	8
6.	FONT.....	9
7.	PHOTOGRAPHS.....	9
8.	LETTERHEADS AND EMAIL SIGNATURES .....	10
9.	SIGNAGE.....	11
10.	PRODUCTS .....	11
11.	PROMOTIONAL ITEMS.....	12
12.	STYLE GUIDE .....	12
13.	BRANDING GUIDELINES.....	14

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# Communications for advocacy

## Branding & house style

### 1. Introduction

Business member organisations (BMOs) engage in private public dialogue and advocate an improved business environment. An essential component of dialogue and advocacy is communications; indeed, arguably advocacy is all communications. Your brand and house style are important elements in the way that you communicate. Inter alia, they communicate your values and thus need careful thought.

Every communication that you make will reflect your brand. If communications are perceived as haphazard and disjointed, then that is how the organisation will be perceived. If everything that you publish is seen to fit a consistent and professional style, then that is how the organisation will be seen. Branding is about much more than just a house style, but that is a good place to start.

The objective of this handbook is to assist BMOs to create a uniform and coherent set of communication materials which reflect your BMO and its values. This handbook will help you to develop your own realistic and unique branding and house style manual, which is user-friendly and accessible for all your staff.

By the end of this handbook you will:

- Understand the importance of brand & house style;
- Be able to start developing your BMO brand & house style; and
- Be able to create brand guidelines for your BMO

### 2. Your BMO brand identity & house style

A brand identity is a powerful, visual concept that organisations use to bring together their core values and convey this to their stakeholders in a compelling and visual way. This visual identity can be communicated through your website, letterheads, policy briefs, email signatures, banners, caps, and pens to name a few communication tools and channels. According to the Stanford Social Innovation Review,



A decade ago, the dominant brand paradigm focused on communications. Executives believed that increased visibility, favourable positioning in relation to competitors and recognition among target audiences would translate into fundraising success. Branding was a tool for managing the external perceptions of an organisation, a subject for the communications, fundraising, and marketing departments.

In contrast, the emerging paradigm sees brand as having a broader and more strategic role in an organisation's core performance, as well as having an internal role in expressing an organisation's purpose, methods, and values. A strong brand is increasingly seen as critical in helping to build operational capacity, galvanise support, and maintain focus on the social mission.



To assist your BMO in developing a brand, you may want to consider the following:

## 2.1 Differentiate yourself

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Why should people engage more with your organisation instead of another one? That is the question that drives differentiation. It is great that there are so many organisations tackling business issues, but this also means donors and members have a wide choice in whom they wish to support. This is why it is so important to show how your organisation is different and provides value. Most organisations, however, face the challenge of distinguishing themselves from comparable organisations. Some ways to set your work apart is to emphasise your differences:

- **Where you work** – Are you the only organisation working in a particular region?
- **Your method** – Is your approach to problem solving different to that of other organisations?
- **Your goal** – Do you have a specific goal for your work that others are not pursuing?

## 2.2 Be relatable

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Being able to relate to another person is essential to forming connections and it is just as important that your stakeholders can relate to each other and the people you help. If someone takes an interest in your organisation, they might just join.

## 2.3 Be a thought leader

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Positioning your organisation as a leader and progressive entity can be an effective brand strategy. The ideas people have about your organisation can impact your engagement, advocacy work and credibility. Consider how you can adopt some of these brand strategies to influence the way your organisation is perceived by the public.

## 2.4 Reasons why a strong brand is important for your organisation

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Good branding increases the value of an organisation and can motivate employees. The idea is that a brand builds a strong identity and that in turn can entice new membership and retain members.

So what exactly is a brand? The short answer: a brand is indeed everything. A brand represents the sum of people's perceptions of an organisation's service to

its members and other stakeholders, its reputation, advertising, logo etc. When all of these parts of the business are working well, the overall brand tends to be strong. On the other hand, you may well know an organisation that offers excellent products or services but has a tarnished brand due to poor customer service.

Let us take a look at how a strong brand impacts on your business:

### **2.4.1 Branding improves recognition**

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One of major components of your brand is your logo. Think of how we instantly recognise the simplicity of the Safaricom logo or the simple, but powerful use of the colour blue in Nakumatt branding. As the “face” of a company, logo design is critical because that simple graphic will be on every piece of correspondence and marketing tool you use. A professional logo design is simple enough to be memorable, but powerful enough to give the desired impression of your organisation.

### **2.4.2 Branding creates trust**

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A consistent approach to business and your membership base can build loyalty, credibility and trust. People are more likely to be persuaded by an organisation that appears polished and legitimate. Emotional reactions are hardwired into our brains, and if we like something from the outset, we tend to stick with it. The idea is to win your member over in the early stages and be consistent so that you retain this member.

### **2.4.3 Branding supports advertising**

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Advertising is another element of your brand. Targeted at the right audience and in the right way, through the use of different communication tools (policy briefs, fact sheets, press releases etc) are vital ingredients, which assist you in building your BMO brand. Be careful though, as if you focus too narrowly you may miss out on appealing to and including your members' needs. But focussing too broadly, risks you coming across as being too general and failing to create an impression and missing out on attracting new members and other stakeholders.

### **2.4.4 Branding builds value**

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Perception is everything and if you invest in a strong brand it can really boost the perceived value of your BMO, though not for profits often have an additional challenge. According to WireMedia ([www.wiremedia.com](http://www.wiremedia.com)) "One of the biggest problems that non-profit organizations can have in terms of branding is the issue of being confused with the organizations doing similar work." WireMedia goes on to suggest that



Making your non-profit recognizable and distinct from other organizations with similar goals or areas of focus will help [...] because your message will be unique and well-defined.



### 2.4.5 Branding inspires employees

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Communicate clearly to your employees your company's vision, mission, goals and objectives. This in turn will ensure everyone is on the same page and is working towards the same goals. This is a form of branding and can instil a sense of pride and loyalty in your employees. Employees are often motivated by more than just work. Presenting a strong brand can influence employees to rally around and work towards a common goal.

### 2.4.6 Branding generates new members

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Branding enables your company to get referral business. Referrals can be made possible when your organisation has delivered a quality service to their stakeholders. The most profitable businesses, small and large, have a single thing in common. They have established themselves as a leader in their particular industry by building a strong brand.

## 2.5 The importance of a house style

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Branding and house style go hand in hand. One cannot function without the other. Incorporating a house style into your daily work ensures consistency. According to Wikipedia,



A house style guide (or manual of style) is a set of standards for the writing and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, organisation, or field. A style guide establishes and enforces *style* to improve *communication*. To do that, it ensures *consistency* within a document and across multiple documents and enforces *best practice* in *usage* and in *language composition, visual composition, orthography* and *typography*.



More details, especially on the use of written English, are given in section 12.

## 3. Your logo

Your logo is the most instantly recognisable symbol of your organisation on a national and even global scale. It expresses what your organisation stands for in a strong, confident and clear manner. When deciding on a logo, study your organisation's vision and mission statements and come up with ideas based around this. It is wise to hire a graphic designer to come up with a colourful and simple logo in different high resolution formats, which will stand you in good stead for years to come. Consider how powerful certain brand logos are. Why do you think their logos are so memorable?

As well as your logo you may want to consider a slogan. Many BMOs have already incorporated a slogan into their branding strategy; you might want to revisit your slogan and aim to make it short and punchy for maximum effect. Examples of slogans include: "Local voices. International impact", "Your private sector one-stop shop" and "Knowledge for everyone".



### **3.1 Using your logo**

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Your logo should be bold and simple, preferably incorporating a strong colour. It should be used in a clearly protected space. It should not be distorted, stretched, or squeezed, nor recreated in any other typeface. These elements are of a fixed size and position relative to one another and should not be altered in any way. Never attempt to recreate the logo and always use the master artwork supplied.

### **3.2 Using a professional graphic designer**

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If you are going to invest in something, invest in your logo. It is a very good idea to get a professional designer to create your logo in different formats and in high resolution. Here's a quick lesson on the different formats of the logo a professional designer will come up with when designing your logo.

Vector versus pixels: Vectors are made of lines and are scalable to any size without becoming blurry or pixelated.

Jpegs (like photos) are made of pixels and will eventually appear blurry/pixelated if enlarged too much.

RGB versus CMYK: use RGB for screen use and use CMYK for print.

An EPS version can be dragged into illustrator or placed in a page layout programme like InDesign (can be scaled to any size). EPS files are generally only used by designers and printers.

A PNG file has a transparent background. Useful if you are placing the logo on e.g. a pale beige background - just make sure it does not appear across a busy background that renders the logo illegible.

Logo sizes are suggested for the most commonly used paper sizes for either portrait or landscape formats. Please note, the logo does not increase in size if your publication is in landscape format. When positioning the logo on the page or other print product, always place the logo in the top left. Ensure the margins and the logo is set to the dimensions specified above.

Smashing Magazine recommends that you follow five simple principles when you are designing a logo. They explain that a logo should be distinctive, appropriate, practical, graphic and simple in form, and convey the your intended message. So, they say, logos should be simple, memorable, timeless, versatile and appropriate. If you want to read more about this, see <http://baf.fyi/logotips>.

#### 4. Brand colours

Colour is a vital element of your BMO's brand. It helps you stand out and maintain unity when balanced with strong photography and consistent typography. The palette is an extension of who you are and the vibrant community you inhabit. Colour is a fundamental part of your visual language. Consider the logo to the right. What does it say about the organisation?



#### 5. Core colours

It is a good idea to define a consistent colour, which runs through all your BMO's communications materials. Below is an example of using core colours to reinforce your visual identity. For example, the Imperial College London uses the following colour palette, and achieves results by being uniform in its logo, branding materials including stickers, calendars, posters and banners etc. The website design is also based on these colours.

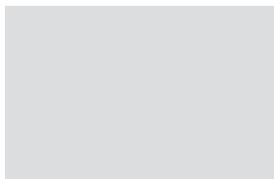
Look up an influential organisation online. Identify its core colours. What do you like or dislike about them? What core colours would you choose for your BMO?



Navy: CMYK-100.55.0.85; PMS-539; RGB-0.33.71; HEX-#002147



Imperial Blue: CMYK-100.61.0.45; PMS-541; RGB-0.62.116; HEX-#003E74



Light Grey: CMYK-0.0.0.15; PMS-Cool Grey 2; RGB-235.238.238; HEX-#EBEEEE

Source: The Imperial College London website <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/brand-style-guide/visual-identity/brand-colours/>

## 6. Font

Along with your logo and colour palette, your font helps create cohesion between multiple communication tools. The Business Advocacy Fund uses font Segoe UI in point size 11 for example. The font and size chosen should be fully consistent with your organisation and communications strategy. A variety of weights and styles allowing for scope and creativity in application is a good idea. Use of the following weights could also be considered:

- Normal
- *Normal Italic*
- **Bold**
- ***Bold Italic***

## 7. Photographs

It is always a good idea to have a library of stock images taken by your BMO from past events etc. When using your own photographs in print publications and social media platforms consider the following:

### 7.1 Image size

When using photographs in print materials, all visual material have to be a high enough resolution to print. What you see on screen does not translate to the printed form. When most people take digital photos the camera's setting is 72 dpi (dots per inch). For successful print, the pictures must be at a minimum of 300 dpi. As a rough guide, if your file size is in KB (kilobytes) rather than MB (megabytes) it will not be high enough quality.

### 7.2 Increasing image resolution

If your original image is under 300dpi then resizing it to 300dpi simply expands the pixels, it does not improve the quality, as it is not possible to add more information to the original picture. In some cases, it can actually degrade the quality.

If your original file is very small and low resolution then you may have to accept that it is simply unusable for print. You can get advice from your designer, who will tell you if images are suitable for print.



## 8. Letterheads and email signatures

### 8.1 Letterheads

The content of letters is covered in unit 4.3 preparing written documents. However, in terms of branding, letterheads from your organisation could look something like this:



### 8.2 Email signatures

In terms of clear communication, it is wise to set up an email signature using your logo can be a strong way of conveying your message. Email signatures should use your chosen BMO font and could follow this style:

Name

Job title

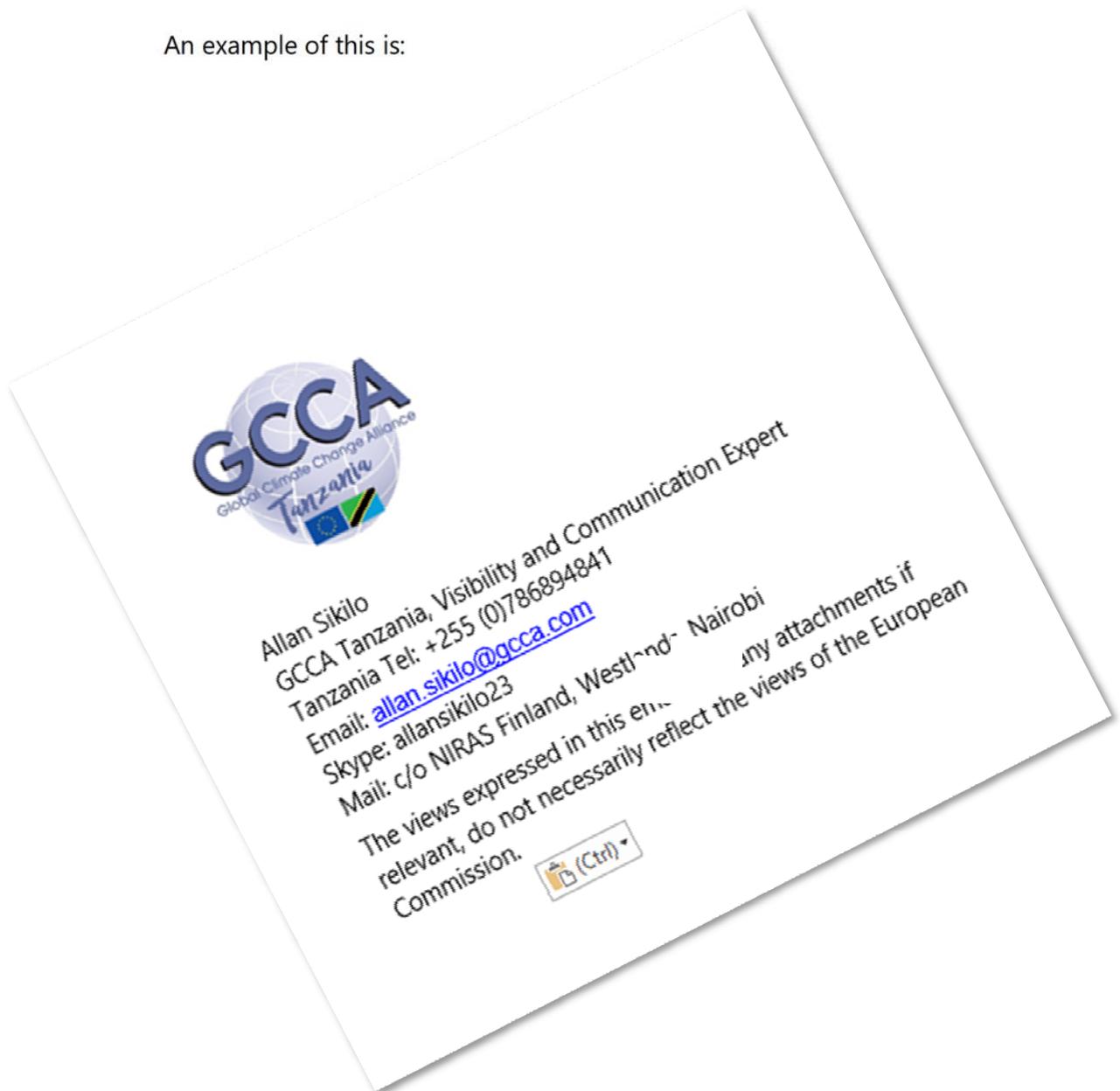
Department / Division (if relevant)

BMO address

Tel: +254 (0)XXXX XXXX (using the international dial format helps overseas recipients)

At the bottom of your signature, you could add a sentence directing viewers to a particular service or that is relevant.

An example of this is:



## 9. Signage

It is likely that you will be looking at signage for an event. Designing large signs, tear-drops (extremely effective placed outside on a street pavement near the event) and pull-up banners are great tools to use and serve as backdrops and punctuate events reinforcing your BMO brand. A tip is to print out banners, posters, in fact any printed material in a matte finish. A gloss finish can reflect harshly in brightly lit conference halls etc. and can look cheap and nasty to be frank.

## 10. Products

Leaflets, brochures, hub caps, pens, notebooks etc.... all can be useful in communicating your BMO brand.

According to the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions

 Publications should always be tailored to the audience in question, and focus on the intended results of the action, not the financial and administrative details. Texts should be short and simple, and photographs used where possible to illustrate the action and its context.



If possible, photographs should be of the people involved in the action, rather than the officials responsible for its management. In general, all material produced in paper form should also be made available in electronic form, so that it can be sent by e-mail and posted on a web site. For material in paper form, distribution capacity (mailing lists) should be considered. All leaflets and brochures should incorporate the basic elements of your visual identity, i.e. your logo and the organisation details, contact name, address, telephone and e-mail details.

Branding should also be considered when producing policy briefs for your BMO. Use your organisation's logo at the top and do not forget to include contact details.

The same can be applied to PowerPoint presentations, be sure to use your company font, logo and colour palette. Make sure the look and feel is consistent throughout.

Your website too!

## **11. Promotional items**

All kinds of promotional items (such as t-shirts, caps and pens) can be produced as supporting material for information and communication activities. Before taking any decision on the production of such items, consult with your stakeholders to ensure products are consistent with the brand & house style of your organisation. On certain promotional items (e.g. pens and badges) where it is not possible to include much, at least your logo and slogan should appear.

## **12. Style guide**

If you stick to the advice of the Economist Style Guide, then you are unlikely to go far wrong. See [www.economist.com/styleguide/introduction](http://www.economist.com/styleguide/introduction). Here, are some pointers that will help you:

Abbreviations: do not use full stops in abbreviations.

Apostrophes: this can be a challenge. Apostrophes are used in two circumstances: to indicate ownership and to indicate abbreviation. The first is easy to remember because if you can turn the sentence round and use 'of', then you can use an apostrophe instead. So, the "the coffee of Brian" can be written as "Brian's coffee". You will quickly spot that many BMOs should have apostrophes in their name, but are inconsistent in their use. SCEA for example is the Shippers' Council of East Africa" (because it is the Council of the Shippers). Apostrophes are also used in abbreviations such as don't instead of do not. In general, you should not use these abbreviations but spell out the word in full. It's and its causes a

problem. In this case, the genitive, its, has no apostrophe; with the apostrophe, it is an abbreviation for it is.

Articles: writers in Africa have a tendency to omit 'the' and 'a'. Please include them.

Capitals: do not feel that you need to capitalise words, even in titles and headings. In general, you should only use upper case where the word demands it.

Dashes: dashes in text cause no end of bother if we are going to be consistent. You may have noticed that Microsoft Word will often change what you type. If you type a pair of numbers with a dash in between, such as 10-12, then it will stay short. If you put a dash between two words, without any spaces, it will also stay short, as a hyphen, such as long-term. If you type the dash with a space before and after, it will lengthen automatically - as here. And if you put two dashes between words, without a space before or after, it will lengthen even more--as here. It's preferable for the dash with a space before and after, but it's better to be consistent.

Footnotes: if you use footnotes, put the reference number immediately after the word(s) to which it refers. Do not use endnotes.

Justification: there is no need to amend the justification, as it is set in the styles, but in general, text should be left-justified.

Percentages: in text spell per cent in full (and as two words); if used in tables or parentheses, then it is acceptable to use %.

References: try and use the Harvard style. Harvard is a style of referencing, primarily used by university students, to cite information sources. Two types of citations are included:

In-text citations are used when directly quoting or paraphrasing a source. They are located in the body of the work and contain a fragment of the full citation.

Depending on the source type, some Harvard Reference in-text citations may look something like this:

"After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe..." (Fitzgerald, 2004).

Reference Lists are located at the end of the work and display full citations for sources used in the assignment.

Here is an example of a full citation for a book found in a Harvard Reference list:

Fitzgerald, F. (2004). *The great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner.

Spaces: do not put two spaces after a full stop. Typists were taught to do this to make more space between sentences, but modern word processors do this automatically, so there is no need.

Spelling: use English spellings rather than American spellings (set your language proofer to English!)

Split infinitives: the Starship Enterprise is well-known "to boldly go", but we would prefer you not to split your infinitive.

For more information and inspiration on branding you may want to visit IGA's own style guide available at [iga.fyi/style](https://iga.fyi/style).

UNICEF USA has a comprehensive style guide: <https://www.unicefusa.org/sites>

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has a provocatively named style guide: This is not a brand. This is a space. ODI brand identity guidelines. See [iga.fyi/odibig](https://iga.fyi/odibig).

There is an introduction to a selection of brand and style guides available at [iga.fyi/sbGuides](https://iga.fyi/sbGuides).

### 13. Branding guidelines

It is possible to create a consistent and distinctive look for your BMO by selecting a set of colours, developing a standard page layout and introducing some graphical elements.

Ask yourself the following questions to form your branding guidelines

- Why is an identity required?
- What materials are required as part of the development of the look and feel of our organisation? For example, an annual report, a poster or signage.
- Are there any existing publications from your organisation that should be taken into account?
- What is your budget?
- Do you have a specific deadline?
- How does your mission statement reflect your brand?
- What is your slogan?
- What are your BMOs unique characteristics?
- What is your logo going to look like?
- What colours best reflect your organisation?
- Which font are you going to use?
- Iconography – are there any images you might want to include in your branding?
- Photography/graphics – what are the photographs of? What are the graphics of?
- Distinct: does it stand out among competitors and catch your audience's attention?
- Memorable: It makes a visual impact. (Consider Apple: The logo is very memorable, they only include the logo—not their name—on their products.)
- Scalable and flexible: can it grow and evolve with the brand?

- Cohesive: Each piece complements the brand identity.
- Easy to apply: is it intuitive and clear for designers?
- What is your house writing style?
- How will you present your stationery and email signatures?
- Photography, what type of images will you use?
- What will your website look like? How will it provide a service?
- Look at your home page. What will you now do differently?

Finally, try to ensure that all staff work under the single umbrella of your BMO brand identity. Follow the steps set out in this handbook to begin to create your own branding guidelines. Good luck!

### Further reading



- Kylander, N. & Stone, C. (2012), The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector, Stanford Social Innovation Review (see <http://baf.fyi/npoBrand>)
- Stanford Social Innovation Review [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_role\\_of\\_brand\\_in\\_the\\_nonprofit\\_sector](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_role_of_brand_in_the_nonprofit_sector)
- Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. <https://ec.europa.eu>



This series of advocacy competence handbooks – divided into modules and units – is intended to support business member organisations (BMOs) to engage in public private dialogue and to advocate improvements to the business environment. You are free to use the units and other materials provided that the source is acknowledged.

#### Foundation Unit

##### 0. Introduction to advocacy & dialogue

##### Module 1: The policy process

###### 1.1 Understanding policy and regulation

###### 1.2 Policy analysis

###### 1.3 The process of formulating and reforming policy

##### Module 2: Policy positions

###### 2.1 Identifying, understanding & framing issues

###### 2.2 Preparing policy positions

###### 2.3 Influence & argumentation

##### Module 3: Communications

###### 3.1 Communications & public relations

###### 3.2 Media relations & use of social media

###### 3.3 Interview skills

##### Module 4: Written communications

###### 4.1 Branding & house styles

###### 4.2 Writing press releases

###### 4.3 Preparing written documents

##### Module 5: Managing advocacy projects

###### 5.1 Planning an advocacy project

###### 5.2 Budgeting & financial management

###### 5.3 Evaluation of advocacy

##### Module 6: Managing a BMO

###### 6.1 Leadership, strategy & business planning

###### 6.2 Governance and ethics

###### 6.3 Members and member services

##### Module 7: Research

###### 7. Research methods



The Business Advocacy Network is an initiative of Irwin Grayson Associates and can be found at [businessadvocacy.net](http://businessadvocacy.net). IGA can be found at [irwingrayson.com](http://irwingrayson.com) and contacted at [david@irwin.org](mailto:david@irwin.org). You can follow David Irwin on twitter at [@drdaavidirwin](https://twitter.com/drdaavidirwin).

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