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Inspired. Precise. Purposeful.

Shared standards should answer everyday questions

By Gyata Tabiri · Revised November 2, 2026

A brand guide earns attention when it helps someone make the next piece. If the person still has to guess which logo, type treatment, or layout variation to use, the guide may be complete as a document and incomplete as a working reference.

Begin where the questions repeat

Which asset is current? What can a local chapter change? How should a long message fit? Those are practical starting points for guidance. I would give recurring uncertainty more attention than a rare detail included simply to make the guide look comprehensive.

Distinguish recognition from repetition

Two messages can share an identity without sharing an identical layout. The hierarchy needs to respond to what is important in each one. I want the system to make the fixed decisions recognizable while leaving enough room for the content to communicate.

Look at the system in use

The Pennsylvania Chapter gallery brings together my communication artwork and also serves the chapter organizer, secretary, and chairman. It offers a practical place to examine consistency across messages. The wider NPP-USA case study explains the identity work behind that context.

Let repeated exceptions teach the guide

If people regularly need the same variation, it deserves examination. Perhaps the reference is unclear, the source files are difficult to find, or a rule no longer fits the work. I would review that pattern before treating every departure as a failure to follow instructions.

A good standard settles the questions that should not need repeated debate. It leaves people with more attention for the choices that genuinely depend on the message.

Read alongside: Naming shared decisions in code · Keeping reusable materials adaptable.