

Brand Compliance

How to present your brand successfully in Microsoft Office

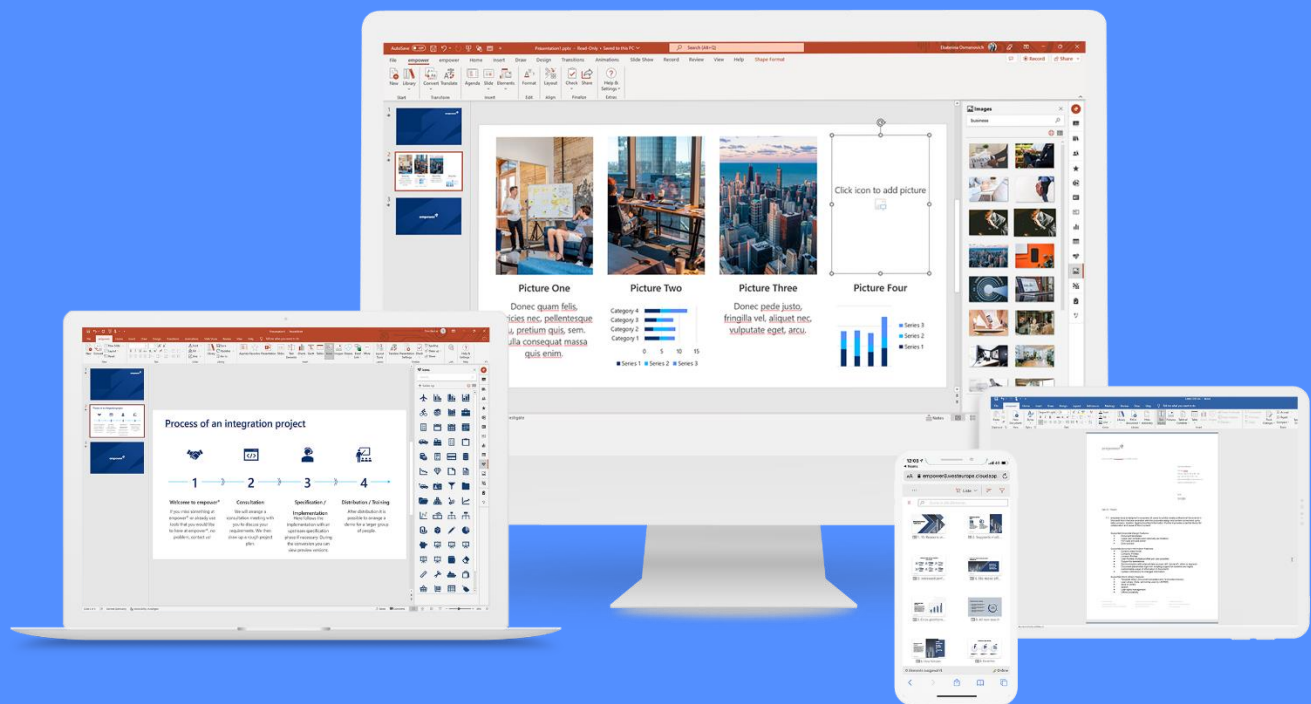
Introduction

The importance of brand perception increases as competition grows. The market moves faster than ever, and companies need to stand out from the competition, remain memorable, and survive long-term. This makes it essential to exercise, monitor, and optimize brand compliance in companies.

Many companies focus brand compliance on their online presence, i.e. a consistent appearance on social media, the website, etc. However, they neglect brand compliance in everyday documents and communications. They ignore how much potential they waste and how much damage this can do to their business.

Correctly implementing branding in everyday work takes employees a lot of time, effort, and stress. The tedious work they regularly put into correct implementation of branding causes frustration and drains work motivation. Most people give up completely and create documents with their own design. For them, it's more important to work quickly and efficiently than to adhere to the corporate design. The consequences of brand inconsistency are not clear to most employees. Moreover, that lost productivity and brand damage are significant hidden expenses for the company.

If you want to avoid those problems and are looking for a simple solution for brand compliance in Microsoft Office, be sure to continue reading. In this whitepaper, we discuss the role of Microsoft Office documents as brand ambassadors and explain the benefits brand compliance can bring to your organization and how to achieve it.



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01

Brand Compliance Overview



What is brand compliance?

The American Marketing Association defines “brand” as a name, design, symbol, or characteristic, or combination of these, that distinguishes a company and its products from other companies. Brand compliance refers to strategies and practices that present a brand or company in a consistent and compliant manner.

A consistent brand image ensures that customers associate product characteristics with the company. Positive experiences create an emotional bond with the brand. For example, anyone who hears “Kleenex” immediately thinks of paper tissues, “Elmer’s” is synonymous with glue, and everyone knows that someone who asks for “Scotch tape” means transparent adhesive tape. Those companies have achieved this effect through many years of internal and external brand compliance.

Imagine you are standing in a supermarket in front of two almost identical products in terms of price and features. The only difference is that you have already gotten to know and appreciate one product’s brand through different channels. Which product do you choose?

3 results of brand compliance



Uniform brand communication

- Consistent branding ensures professional appearance.
- High recognition value among customers, potential clients, and business partners.



Loyal Clients

- Positive memories are associated with the brand.
- Customers identify with the company’s values.
- Word of mouth and recommendations in case of customer satisfaction.



Increased sales

- Better relationships with customers thanks to brand compliance.
- Brand consistency can increase sales by 10-20% according to Marq.
- Recognition value promotes purchase decisions and strengthens position against competition.

How to ensure in-house brand compliance?

1 Ensure brand awareness

Piehler et. al demonstrated that whether employees have a deeper knowledge of the brand has a major impact on brand compliance. Therefore, ensure thorough and sufficient training.

2 Appoint responsible individuals

Give a person or a team responsibility for brand compliance. This way, employees have a designated contact person for questions regarding branding implementation.

3 Create and distribute a brand style guide

A detailed brand style guide helps employees easily and quickly look up your corporate design guidelines to use. Make sure this guide is easily accessible to all employees.

4 Provide resources and brand assets

For people to implement the corporate design according to the guidelines, you need resources. Provide them with the right logos, images, and templates in a centralized and easily accessible location.

5 Provide tools

There are a variety of tools, software applications, and add-ins that make brand compliance easier and reduce much of the workload.

What are the challenges of brand management when creating documents?

The biggest questions about brand compliance in Microsoft Office is: are employees skilled enough in Microsoft Office to implement corporate design without spending hours doing it? And are the required brand assets available? Many employees are familiar with the various functions in Microsoft Office, but not with topics such as formatting, branding, and design.

Brand assets are likely scattered throughout the digital infrastructure of the company. Even if people work quickly in Microsoft Office, a lot of document creation time gets lost searching for brand assets.

As a branding team, it's getting harder to maintain control of the brand. More and more departments and locations are involved in the process and want to be heard in branding discussions. A framework needs to be in place so that they can apply the branding properly and not create brand silos.

Branding teams face the challenge of acting quickly. If product names or brand design evolve to improve market positioning, it can take a long time for changes to be recognized and implemented in all documents. Any rebranding involves a transition phase in which employees may not be brand compliant due to a lack of training and resources. This must be minimized. Branding always must react quickly to the competition, or even be ahead of it, while the company's values and vision have to continue uninterrupted.

Even though consumers and clients are considered the largest groups that brands target, they are far from the only stakeholders that should be factored into branding. For brand management teams, employer branding and internal branding are important in addition to the company's own brand, thus addressing another target group – employees – differently.



Consequences of brand inconsistency

1 Damaged trust

- Poor brand compliance prevents customers from developing a strong emotional connection to the brand.
- Brand inconsistency makes a brand look inauthentic to customers.

2 Diluted image

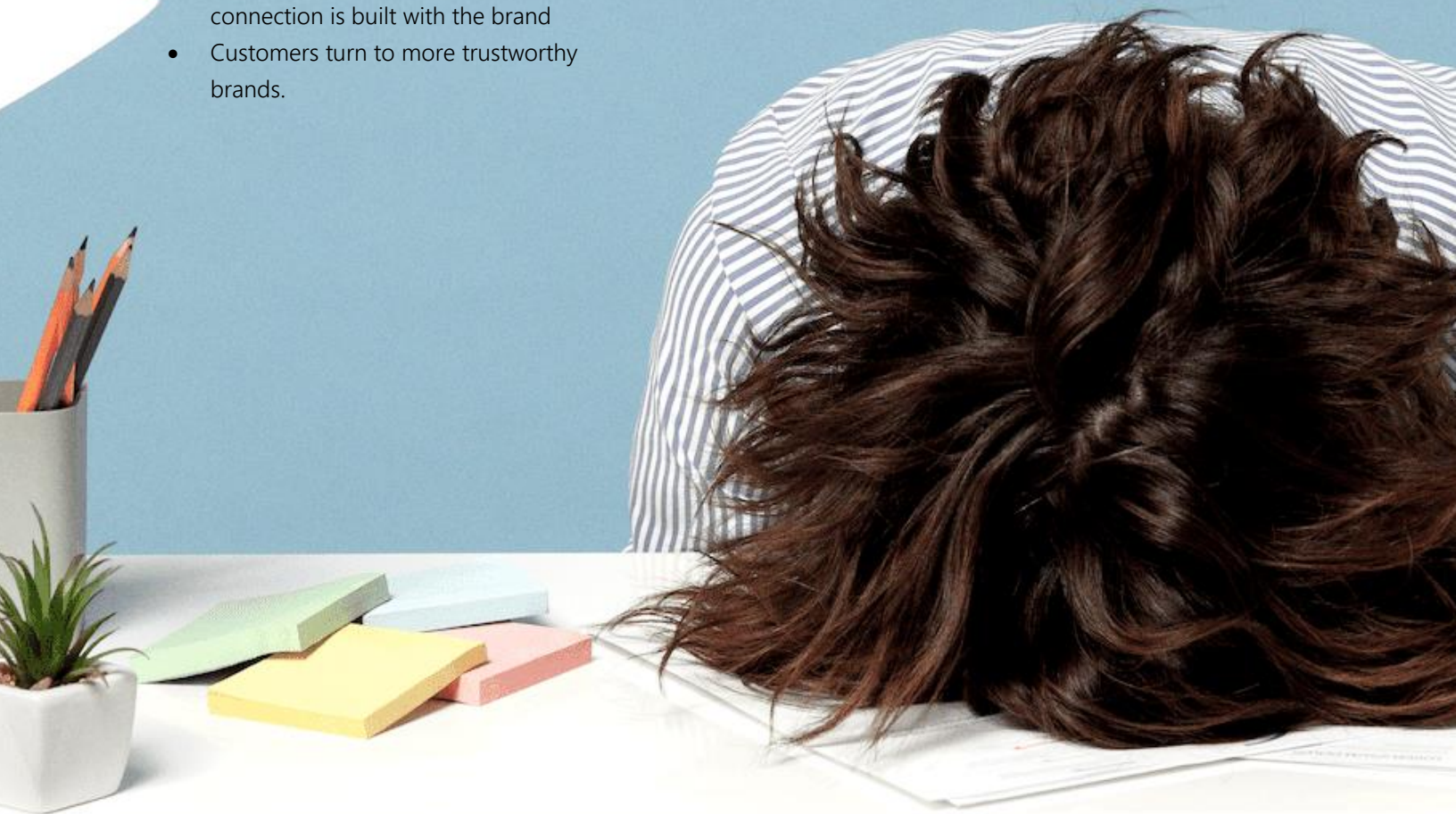
- Lack of brand compliance makes a company appear unprofessional and chaotic.
- Brand inconsistency leads to a decrease in brand recognition and a decline in the company's competitive position.
- Inconsistent and incorrect communication can be perceived as spam.

3 Fewer sales

- Lack of recognition leads to fewer repeat-buys and loyalty from customers.
- More difficult to retain customers in the long term because no emotional connection is built with the brand
- Customers turn to more trustworthy brands.

4 Slower growth

- Prospects choose competitor's product due to lack of trust and recognition.



02 Brand Compliance applied

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Internal Branding

As the name suggests, internal branding is directed inwards, at employees. It's about "ensuring that employees implement the brand benefit promise made to relevant external target groups" (Burmahn and Piehler).

Internal branding helps employees behave in a way that's consistent with the company's brand identity. It provides them with resources to communicate the company's vision to customers. During her research on internal branding, Stefanie Salomon made the following discovery: *employees are the brand experience*, because every contact that users have with a company is about employees. These interactions create positive or negative associations with the company.

The 4 pillars to successfully implement internal branding are:

Knowledge:

Employees must be sufficiently informed about corporate identity. The company's goals and values should be communicated extensively. In many cases, this involves first creating a functioning communication structure within the company. Employees should be trained how this can be reflected in their behavior and day-to-day work.

Commitment:

Knowledge of the brand's values does not automatically ensure implementation. Of course, implementation can be encouraged through training and guides. But the best results are achieved when employees feel so connected to the company's values that they want to communicate them as part of their job.

Ability:

Employees must be able to implement required brand behavior. If a department in the company works internationally, for example, employees must have appropriate language and cultural skills. If their work consists mainly of document creation with Microsoft Office, they must have corresponding Office skills or be trained up.

Systems:

As Salomon states in her paper, "A highly motivated and qualified employee will not be able to solve tasks in line with the brand identity if he or she is not supported by systems."

Companies must create structures that enable employees to represent the brand in the best possible way without frustration. And they need to do this company-wide because, as we now know, every employee is a brand ambassador.

Next, let's look at three areas where any company regularly communicates with the outside world. These are particularly crucial for brand presentation and brand experience.

HR (employer branding)

Employer branding is a subcategory of corporate branding that addresses a very specific stakeholder group: employees. The goal is to present a strong employer brand to potential and existing employees. Employer branding not only attracts employees, it also helps to retain them and improve the company's image, thereby increasing corporate value.

The first point at which applicants encounter employer branding is in a job advertisement. Then they get confirmation of their application being received, often in the form of an e-mail. If the candidate qualifies, an interview appointment is scheduled, also by e-mail, to get to know each other. This first contact process is crucial for the applicant's first impression of the company.

Visually well-structured and brand-compliant job advertisements and e-mails are essential to create a good impression. The employment contracts that follow the application process, as well as onboarding materials, also represent the company. If documents look randomly designed, they give the impression of a chaotic employer. That leads to skepticism among applicants as to whether the company is a good fit. So special attention should be paid to these documents.

Good employer branding influences not only recruitment, but also employee motivation. Sensibly implemented branding ensures that new employees identify better with the company and act in accordance with the company's vision. Aligning the vision of the company with the employees' own values creates loyalty, motivates them to embody the mission of the company in the course of their work, and inspires willingness to act and commit themselves beyond their contractual tasks.

But motivation withers when employees spend hours each week searching for the right brand assets, formatting slides, and manually updating templates and e-mail signatures.

Brand control in employer branding requires:

- Central management of e-mail signatures to ensure consistency in communication.
- A central template library, allowing quick and uniform creation of job descriptions, onboarding documents, and internal communications.
- Integration of corporate design in Word and PowerPoint enables faster and easier brand compliance in HR documents.

Sales

Every day, sales people create quotes, presentations, and product overviews. Sales contacts create the first impression of your company and products to potential customers. Implementing brand compliance in all these documents often becomes tedious and tempting to ignore. But it's especially important to the sales team because, according to Elise Dopson, strong branding leads to loyal customers and around 33% more sales.

To attract customers, sales people create tailor-made presentations and offers. Pictures, videos, product and price information all must be painstakingly gathered and quickly included in documents so as not to keep prospects waiting. Document content simply has a higher priority than branding.

Some companies counteract this by creating templates. But templates may not apply to every case. Depending on the industry, product, and customer there are an infinite number of possible combinations. Summarizing these into a few or even a single template is impossible, while creating templates for each scenario means losing track of them all.

Brand control in sales:

- Brand guidelines integrated directly into Microsoft Office ensure correct selection of colors, fonts, and font sizes.
- A central asset and template library enables quick and brand-compliant compilation of offer and product presentations.
- An automated design check confirms compliance with corporate design; deviations from the branding can be automatically fixed with just a few clicks.

Marketing

For marketing departments, branding is the foundation of their daily work. Branding teams usually include employees from the marketing department or are a separate team within the marketing department. Any corporate communication measures must convey the company's message and values to the target audience, both in terms of content and visuals. Therefore, the marketing team must ensure that brand guidelines are readily available and applied throughout the company. The same applies to all brand assets.

Over time, a company's values and corporate design may change. Marketing departments face the challenge of developing a new corporate design and implementing it throughout the company. Implementation must complete within the shortest possible time, correctly and thoroughly to minimize any period of brand inconsistency.

A coherent brand must be presented to business partners. This includes consistent use of the logo and defined fonts in communication via e-mail and business documents, or presentations. If brand compliance is missing, e-mails can quickly be dismissed as spam and invoices can be mistaken for fraud attempts. That leaves an unprofessional impression on business partners.

Brand control in marketing:

- Corporate design settings in Outlook and central management options ensure visually consistent e-mails and correct signatures.
- Integrated brand guidelines in Word and PowerPoint ensure consistent and professional presentations and documents.
- A central library delivers up-to-date templates and quickly accessible brand assets.
- Conversion capabilities automate the transition of existing presentations to a new design and simplify rebranding projects.

03

Brand
Compliance
Software

Make brand compliance a self-runner

An abundance of vendors claim to support brand compliance. Software options are overwhelming and more are constantly being added. Finding the right tool for your company seems like an impossible task.

The first thing to consider is what features your brand compliance software should bring to the table. Are you looking for software that helps you customize your media according to corporate design? Or would you prefer a tool that helps employees apply the corporate design to documents without any effort on their part? Or maybe you're just looking for a way to make Word, Excel, and PowerPoint templates available to employees centrally so they can easily create brand-compliant documents.

Most brand compliance tools and software focus on optimizing companies' online presence. They allow companies to simplify campaign management, project management, and workflow management, or to plan, execute, and analyze content posting. Brand management in corporate-owned documents is often neglected.

First, establish your must-have features versus what you can do without before you start looking for brand compliance software. Very important: involve employees who'll use the software when compiling acceptance criteria. After all, they know best the day-to-day difficulties and problems that arise and are most likely to have good ideas about how to solve them.

Then consult with your IT department to determine what requirements brand compliance software must meet so that it can be easily integrated with existing software and programs.

Keep in mind that many software programs aren't available in every language. The best software won't do your employees any good if it's in English and they don't speak enough English to use it. Or if customer service is only available in English and no one can communicate problems in their native language.

Investigate existing reviews of a software candidate. What advantages and disadvantages have users shared? Do other departments in your company already use the tool and will they tell you about their experiences? Ask the vendor if their brand compliance software can be trialed before making a final decision.

Selection criteria for brand compliance software

1 Adaptability

Does the brand compliance software only offer templates, or is it capable of implementing your corporate design?

2 Access rights

Does the brand compliance software allow you to assign rights and decide who can view or edit which documents?

3 Brand asset management

Does the brand compliance software offer a way to centrally manage assets and make them quickly accessible?

4 Integration

Can the brand compliance software easily integrate into the company's existing digital environment? Or do other programs need to be updated or replaced?

5 Data protection

What is the privacy policy of the brand compliance software? Is it cloud-based? If so, where is the server location? What is the privacy policy there?

6 Usability

Is the brand compliance software intuitive? Or do users need intensive training before it can be used effectively?

Advantages of brand compliance software

1 Increases employee satisfaction

Brand compliance software eliminates a major source of frustration and time-wastage for employees: design compliant document formatting.

2 Increased efficiency

The time employees normally spend formatting documents and searching brand assets can now be spent on more important tasks.

3 Employee loyalty

Satisfied employees stay longer in a company whose values they identify with. This also increases their motivation to excel.

4 More consistent brand presentation

Brand compliance software helps present the brand in a uniform way and thus appear professional to customers and business partners.

5 Increased productivity

If employees spend more time on their actual tasks instead of making cosmetic corrections, this increases productivity and the company's profitability.

Ensure brand compliance with empower® Brand Control

We at empower® know Microsoft Office like the back of our hand and understand exactly where the time guzzlers lie when it comes to adhering to corporate designs. Our experts have applied this knowledge and developed a solution that helps to comply with the corporate design throughout the company.

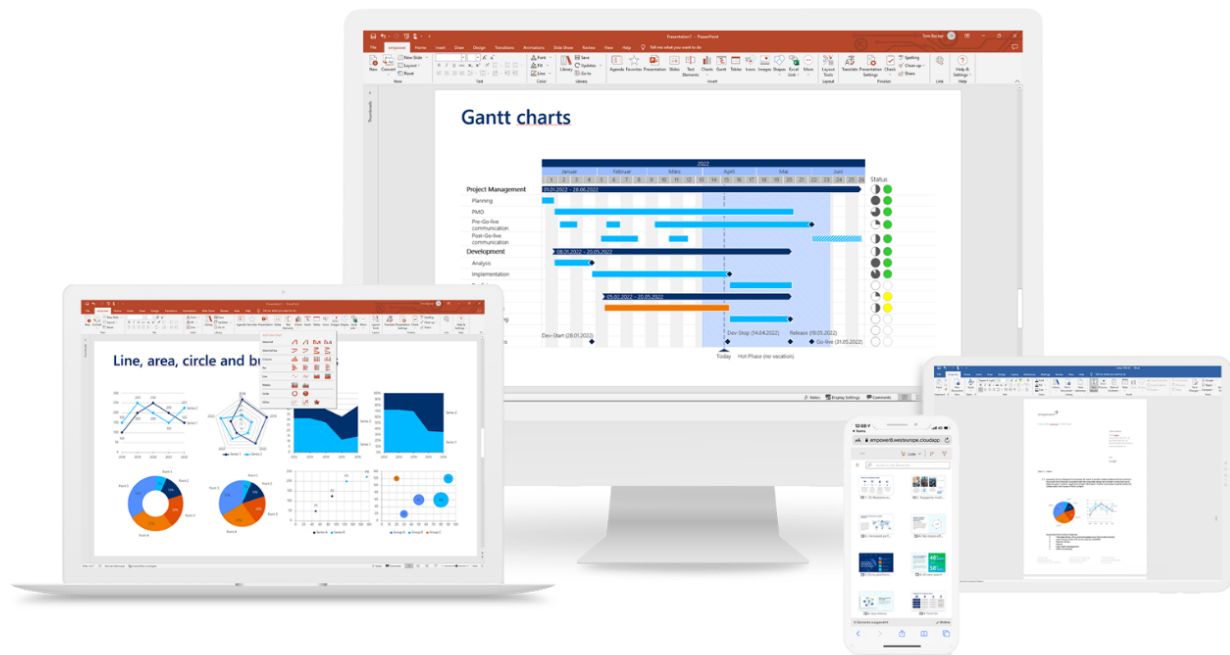
We are also a Microsoft partner company. Our solutions integrate seamlessly with Microsoft Office 365 applications and are 100% compatible.

The empower® Brand Control solution is available in Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Excel. In all applications, the empower® ribbon is available. It provides all the functions of the empower® Brand Control solution in one place and at your fingertips for use in your documents.

Brand compliance simplified

Via the empower® ribbon, users can easily access the design-compliant fonts, colors, templates, etc. and apply them in Office. When opening the applications, the current template is already opened automatically.

That makes it easy for users to stick to your brand – not to ignore it.

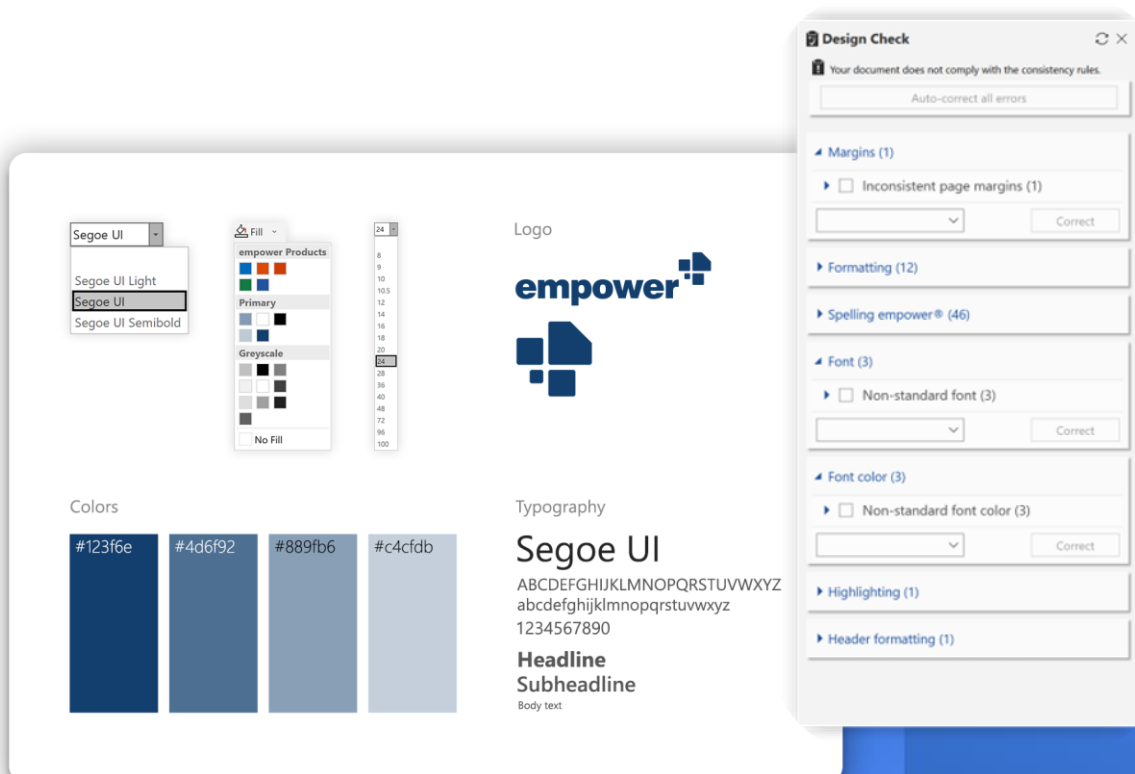


Corporate design check made easy

The empower® Design Check and Consistency Check examine your slides for corporate design compliance.

The Consistency Check reviews your text. Discrepancies such as double spaces or different spellings are displayed as errors. You can choose whether to display errors by error type or by slide. Users decide whether they want to correct errors themselves or use the auto-correct feature in our Consistency Check.

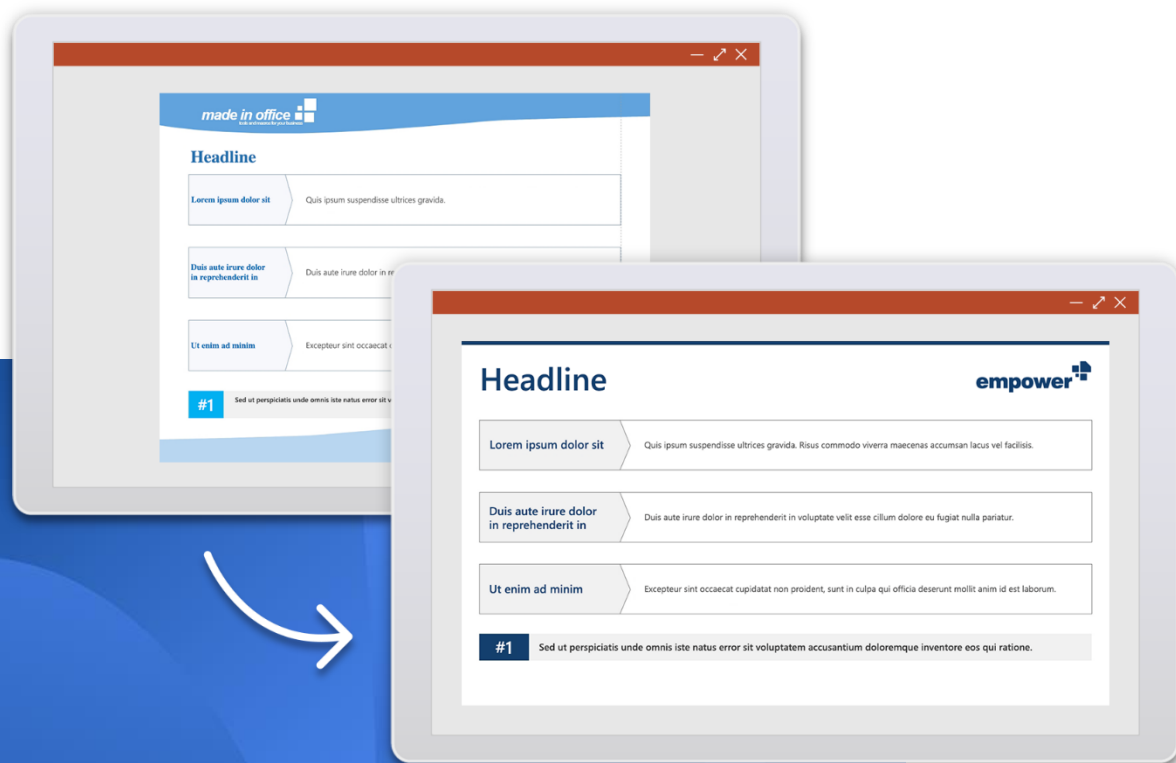
The Design Check confirms whether all slides comply with corporate design. This super practical function reviews the entire presentation regarding the font colors, sizes, and types, as well as general corporate design requirements. It validates whether all slides comply with the current design master. Any deviations detected can be corrected automatically with a few clicks.



From old to new at lightening speed

Speaking of a design master: the empower® Brand Control solution includes the ability to easily convert old presentations into a new design. You can select whether the conversion should be done for the entire presentation or only for individual slides. From 4:3 to 16:9? No problem either.

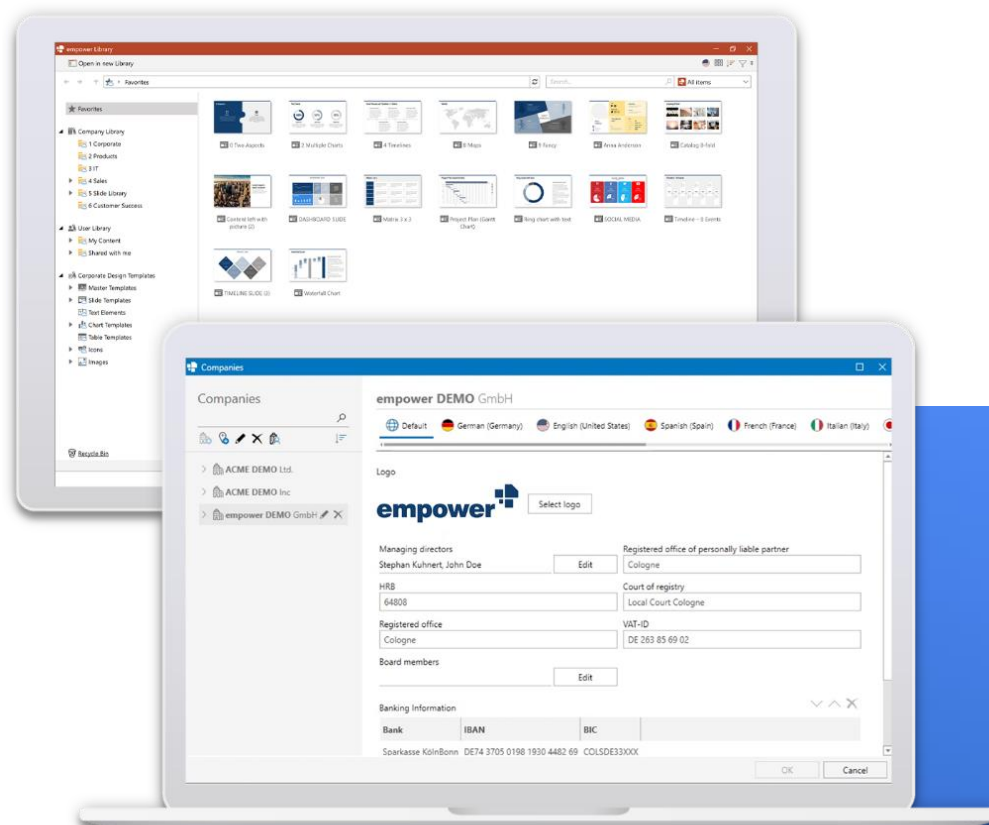
No one has to manually copy and reformat all slides from old presentations into a new design. Especially in the context of a design relaunch, this function is a real time saver. Your brand benefits from the new design being applied directly and automatically in Microsoft Office.



Everything you need in one place

In addition to practical design functions, empower® Brand Control also offers a template library to centrally manage slide and chart templates, images, and other assets. Employees access the brand assets directly from their Office applications and apply them directly to their documents instead of spending a lot of time searching for the right template.

You can also manage e-mail signatures easily and centrally with empower®. Central management ensures that e-mail signatures adhere to corporate design and include correct legally required information. Furthermore, you can add images or banners to employees' e-mail signatures. That makes it easy to run e-mail signature advertising very quickly and subtly inform your correspondence partners about your latest news.



Perfect integration

If desired, other systems can be integrated into the empower® Brand Control solution. For example, Icons8. With Icons8 you have icons immediately at hand and can easily insert them into your documents and presentations.

Existing DAM systems such as Frontify or Picturepark can also be integrated. Employees can access images directly within PowerPoint and insert them into their presentation or document without changing systems. This makes questionable Google images a thing of the past.

Especially for companies that operate internationally, DeepL language translation integration is essential. If you already have a DeepL subscription, you can easily integrate it into the Microsoft Office applications. You can translate documents 1:1 without losing formatting. Your people will save a lot of time by not having to copy texts into a translator and paste them back into the document.

How to set up the empower® Brand Control solution

1

Submit your corporate design

We integrate your corporate design guidelines into our solution for you so that it's perfectly tailored to your needs. This includes font, font colors, font sizes, and your corporate design colors.

2

Create master documents

If you wish, we work with you to create a new design master for Microsoft Office.

3

Install

The Microsoft Office empower® add-ins will be installed on employees' devices.

4

Use

Our solution is immediately available to employees in their familiar Office applications, so they can easily create design-compliant presentations and documents with the help of the empower® features.

04

empower®
Brand Control
as Opportunity

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Advantages of the empower® Brand Control solution

Saving time

In our global Office study, we investigated how much time employees waste on formatting when using Office applications. Every week, on average each employee creates around 3 presentations, 5 documents, 3 Excel spreadsheets, and 115 e-mails. This takes up 24 hours of their time every week, over half the working hours in a 40-hour week. One third of this time – 7.44 hours or almost a whole working day – employees spend just on formatting documents.

With empower®, people work 20%-30% more effectively in Microsoft Office and have more time for more important tasks.

Intuitiveness

On the empower® ribbon you find all empower® features neatly summarized. To apply corporate design you don't have to do anything else, because your design guidelines are directly integrated into Microsoft Office. All features have been optimized for usability and are intuitive to use.

Of course we also provide you with training units.

Consistency

Despite the nearly 8 hours employees spend formatting in Microsoft Office each week, on average only half of all documents conform to corporate design. We've already examined what this means for your company.

According to our study, thanks to the use of empower® you can increase corporate design compliance for Office documents by around 50% and your employees can focus on content rather than appearance.



A good way to stand out from the competition and increase brand awareness is to use everyday documents as brand ambassadors. Brand compliance in your documents, presentations, spreadsheets, and e-mails leads to a more professional appearance towards customers and business partners. It also improves your employer branding and ensures a higher identification with your company's values by your employees.

The empower® Brand Control solution simplifies compliance with corporate design guidelines when working in Microsoft Office and ensures that your brand is presented as intended so that your brand investments really pay off. Thanks to empower®, your employees can work more efficiently in Microsoft Word and represent the brand consistently in documents and e-mails without additional effort. You no longer need to choose between brand and efficiency.



Contact us

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the empower® Brand Control solution, please [contact us](#).

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