

Communication inventory

When an organization is successful, it grows and expands. This means that new products or projects are added to the portfolio, the number of locations increases and the scope of the organization broadens. As the quantity of staff and activities increase, the organization's visual armaments grow as well. Every expansion brings with it more of everything – more logos, more signs, more stationary, more forms etc. If no one keeps an eye on uniformity and consistency this can easily avalanche out of control. Negative effects could be a lack of identification of employees (they don't feel part of the same organization), a lack of intelligibility for customers and other outside stakeholders (they don't understand how it all fits together) and a hard time for communicators (as there are no standards or even different standards throughout the organization).

One step to gain back control over communication and strengthen corporate identity, thereby ensuring that the organization communicates with a single “face”, is the communication inventory (in its simplest form also called a design audit). It aims at getting a comprehensive overview of all communication material recently produced and currently used by the organization. Its goal is to enable a simplification and standardization of communication elements.

In a first step all material (print, broadcast, online, merchandise is collected) is collected that was either produced in the previous year or was produced earlier but is still actively used in communication. In a second step it is all presented together to the communications team as well as other involved parties (consultants, department heads etc.) briefing them to get an overall impression and to think about several detailed aspects (see below). Eventually the findings are discussed and collected during a small workshop or meeting.