

BRANDING

Choosing and distributing fonts

Using and managing fonts to empower your brand communication



Templafy

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The unique ability of fonts to frame communication

A font is the name given to a particular design and style of a set of letters. There are many different fonts and each one expresses something different.

Fonts surround us every day – they're on the shop signs that we read, the letters that we receive, and the media apps that we use. Fonts contain the unique power to evoke the spirit of a brand within a letter design.

We interact with fonts in the world around us on a daily basis, but how often do we stop to consider what they are and how they work? Understanding fonts can aid the way in which we use them and empower organizations to utilize fonts to enhance their communication and express their brand.

Fonts contain the ability to frame how we interpret communication, and as such, are essential branding tools for every organization. An enterprise corporation needs to ensure that they are using a font which communicates who they are as a company and their brand values, but which is also appropriate for the multiple types of communication they use.

The image shows the letters 'A' and 'a' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The 'A' is uppercase and the 'a' is lowercase. To the right of the 'a' is a plus sign '+', also in the same blue color and font style. The letters are set against a white background.

This guide will explain the importance of fonts for organizations, detail the lifecycle of a font, and focus on the vital task of font distribution.

What is a font?

Since the creation of the printing press, fonts have framed written communication and been a core visual asset for brands.

Font is the term which represents the look which a specific set of letters has. In the type industry, this refers to a specific form, for example italic Century Gothic is a font, and bold Century Gothic is a different font. Most people interact with fonts in an Office setting, where the chosen font refers to the font family as a whole – the Century Gothic font family consists of Century Gothic in its regular, bold and italic forms.

A font, or typeface, is the way in which characters are depicted. An organization will commonly have a single chosen font which is used for internal and external communications, and even on physical products, such as branded or promotional materials.

Fonts are a vital tool for communication, as they are used to portray brand values and communicate information about the brand. Many factors must be considered when an organization is choosing a font, as a fitting font empowers the brand.

As fonts are typically used digitally, they are stored as a digital data file on computers in either OpenType or TrueType formats.

Within the type industry, the following terms are important:

TYPEFACE OR FONT FAMILY

This is how type foundries refer to a font with all types included. Font and typeface are often used interchangeably.

GLYPH


A glyph is one symbol within a set of symbols in a font, for example, each letter of a given alphabet is a glyph.

The importance of fonts

Fonts are a subtle yet powerful brand communication tool that organizations can harness to optimize their brand across all written communication.

The style and design of a font subtly communicates information to a reader. Most of us implicitly frame the information we are reading based on the font. Research has shown font choice impacts how information is interpreted – for example, college essays have received different grades based on font, and font choice has impacted how believable scientific findings were deemed to be.

This implicit power can be utilized by an organization. When a traditional serif font is used, stability is implied, whereas when a sans serif font is used, the modernity implies objectivity, and more cursive script fonts suggest creativity. Fonts offer a parallel to what an organization stands for: leading IT company CISCO uses a bespoke CISCO sans font which is clean and modern, mirroring their approach to computing. Neue Helvetica is used as the brand font for TEDtalks as it creates a neutral timeless feel that allows the font to take a backseat to highlight the importance of the spoken word.



~~This is a business document.~~



This is a business document.

In these ways, a font is an invaluable brand communication tool, as it visually gives the reader information about what the brand stands for. Fonts are used in a range of settings, from webpages to emails and documents, and every one of these is an opportunity to enhance the brand message by using an appropriate font.

When an organization has no clear font, and uses one for their website, another for emails, and another for official documents, it causes confusion for those interacting with their brand, and weakens the brand image.

The timeline of a font

Choosing a font for an organization involves several stages, whether you are designing a bespoke one or selecting one which already exists. Even if you are just selecting a font available within Office applications, most of these steps still need consideration.

1. LICENSING

Decide whether an existing retail font will be used or a bespoke one will be created, as the license type will be based upon this, number of users, and mediums of use.

2. REQUIREMENTS

Consider the technical and visual requirements of the font, such as where it will be used and in which formats, as well as accessibility requirements and text hierarchies.

3. BEGIN THE DESIGN PROCESS

Brainstorming meetings allow designers to communicate with brand managers to work out what the font should represent, and how this can best be depicted.

4. CREATION OF GLYPHS

If using a bespoke font, some glyphs will now be created, and discussions will explore whether these appropriately reflect the brand, and how they could be different.

5. TESTING

At this stage, some templates will be created in a mock-up design controlled environment, to see how the chosen font works for different documents and formats.

6. DISTRIBUTION

This needs to be considered from the beginning of the process, as when a font is chosen, every member of the organization must be able to access and use it.

Next steps

A font is rarely static after distribution. As a software, it can be adapted and changed, and different styles or language requirements added.

Choosing a font license

It's important to consider what uses the font will have, how long the brand is intending to utilize it for, and the communications in which it will be used.

The license type is the first decision to make, in order to set the specifications for the project. Deciding on the license includes taking into account factors such as how many users will be using the font and what mediums it will be used for – is the font strictly for web, or it also for an app, or is it for also business communications? What sort of communications are these, and who in the organization typically carries them out? If business communications are only handled by a few individuals, then fewer licenses are needed.

The license choices are typically either a one-time payment, which give the company the rights to the font for the rest of the time, or a yearly ongoing license. A large company may find it is a better investment to choose an ongoing license, as this can scale with the organization. Brands are changing visually every few years, for example due to refreshes or repositioning. This can be aided by font change, and in situations like this, it may be more appropriate to choose a license on a yearly basis.

A license typically includes varying uses, for example in Office documents, InDesign and Adobe software, and for web. It's usually for designers and those who create content, including those who send or display business communications. In an enterprise, this can be a very large number.

At this stage consider whether a bespoke font will be created, or a retail typeface will be chosen. It may be that there is already a font existing that is able to communicate the brand identity, but it may be that designing one is preferable. Working with a brand agency is helpful in order to gain awareness of the options.

It's important that how the font will be distributed to all those who require it is considered at this stage. If distribution is not considered at this stage, it may cause difficulties or hinder the process later.

Century Gothic

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

"You have a typeface at Templafy - Century Gothic - it's simple but modern, and chosen because it's part of the Office environment but actually quite distinct."

- Mathias Jespersen, Head of Playtype

Technical and visual requirements

At this stage, there should be awareness of where fonts will be used, and which different styles of type are needed for communication purposes.

Companies should have an idea about the type of visual typeface they are going to require as they begin the process. For example, whether it should be sans serif or serif, whether they want quite a traditional font or a modern font, and where it's going to be used.

Even when choosing an already designed font, there will be different typographic levels to select, for example bold, italic, semi-bold and so on. The different styles should be considered, for example bold, italic, semi-bold and so on. In order to consider this typographical hierarchy, knowledge of who communication is with, and the appropriate tone of messaging is required for communication. This already limits and defines some of the needs for the font.

Every possible use of a font must be considered, as brand communications are far-reaching. Types of written communication to consider include emails (both internal and external), webpages,

sales presentations, contracts, letters to customers, stationary, any physically printed promotional material such as marketing collateral.

Consider how most employees are communicating with prospects, partners and external companies. All these forms of communication need to suit the font that is chosen. It may be that the font will be for 40,000 users sat in an office, primarily using Office applications which then requires a stand-alone version for Office, but it may be that a more artistic style for posters and events is needed, and then a simplified version for a small number of internal employees.

It's also important to be sure that the font distribution will happen seamlessly, which may require liaisons with IT teams in order to ensure that there is a smooth and planned way for this to happen. Alongside distributing the font itself, templates where the font is used must be taken into account, as must any web-based font changes.

Technical and visual requirements

Aa

Heading

Aa

Sub-heading

Aa

Body text

Text hierarchies need to be considered when choosing a font. **Text hierarchies refer to where the different font styles are used and why.** For example, a letter may have a regular font for the body text but need a bold version for the heading within the email. A document like a contract may need several hierarchies of bold to emphasize the level of importance of each section. Even on a webpage, there may need to be one style for a **heading**, another for the **body text**, and another for **sub-headings**. Consider what the hierarchies of use are within your communications as you choose a font.

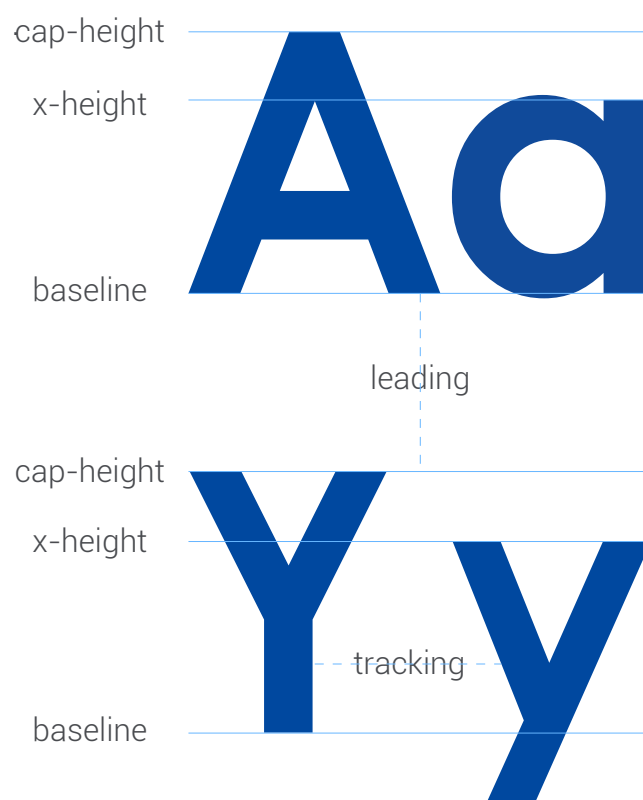
The design process

During the design process, designers and brand managers will discuss how to evoke the spirit of the brand through the chosen font.

The design process can take a very long time, requiring input from multiple areas of the organization, as different glyphs are considered, and the style of the font as a whole comes into being. On a practical level, this includes proportions, weights and readability of the visual styles, as well as considering whether something completely new will be chosen, or if it will be based on what the organization is currently using.

It's important for organizations to be aware of who they are as a brand, and what their brand message is. The vision, mission and aims of the brand can be captured in the font, and an organization needs to clearly know what these are in order for this to work. As font is such a powerful brand tool, it works most effectively when it really captures the essence a brand and what they want to communicate about themselves. A design team will work better when they have a clear understanding of who the client is, and for that, the client needs to understand themselves.

If an organization has a weaker understanding of themselves, and are not clear about where they stand as a brand, they will find it difficult to select a font that captures who they are.



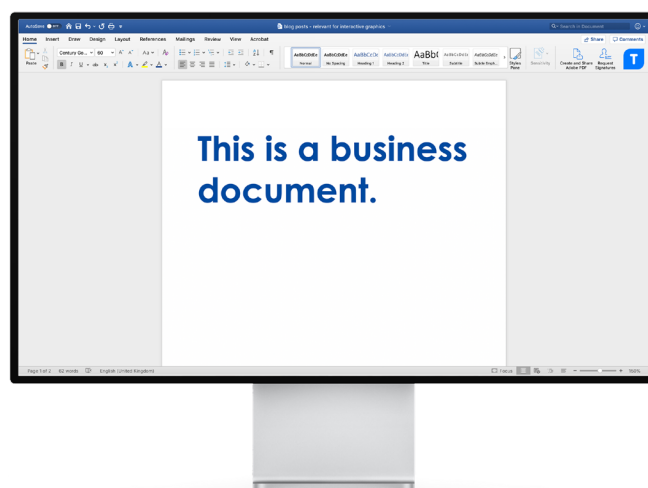
The testing phase

Fonts must undergo a testing stage to see whether the chosen styles work in the places where they are to be used or further adjustments are needed.

Once there is a proposed font, whether that is created afresh or chosen from existing fonts, it's important to test it in a controlled atmosphere, to see how it works within the communication type.

The testing phase should include setting up some document templates and seeing how the font looks and feels in them. Different teams of the organization should be involved in the process, as they can tell from different points of view how the communication would work.

If a bespoke font is being created, then it is not necessary for every glyph to have been finalized at this stage – instead, it is sufficient that some of them are done, and enough to understand how a document using this font would feel.



At this stage, discussions are likely to occur surrounding the different types of font that are needed, whether there needs to be a different weight to the letters, or a separate hierarchy of the typography.

Font distribution

The distribution is a step that needs to have been considered throughout the process, as this enables it to be utilized by all employees.

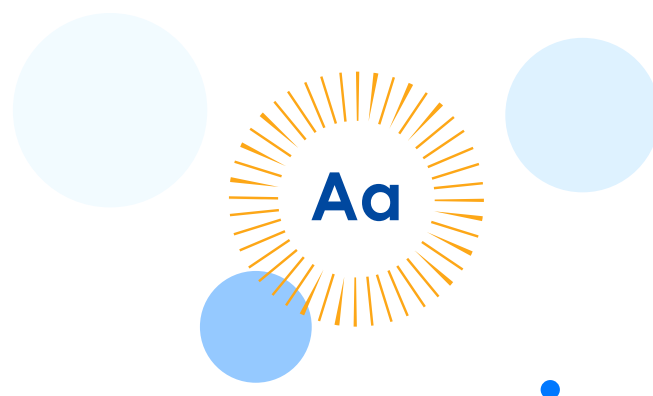
Once a font has been chosen, it then needs to be rolled out to the entire organization. Fonts are a software package, which need to be installed for use on each individual computer for employees to use them.

If the method for this has been considered throughout the process, it can be a relatively easy step. Using a solution such as Templafy's Font Distributor tool will allow all members of an organization to have access to the new company font in all Office applications immediately.

Other solutions include storing the font on a company intranet, or installing it to different computers manually. These methods require an IT team or administrative access for all computers, and are often time-intensive.

Deploying font is just part of the roll-out, as the other part is ensuring that these fonts are actually used by employees.

This means updating and distributing templates to contain the company fonts, and ensuring employees are aware of the importance of using the chosen font. If this is not communicated appropriately, the brand will be weakened through employees using different fonts, as some continue to use the old one.



Next steps

Font management is a continuous process

The font process is rarely over when a font has been installed for all global uses, as updates are often necessary as the organization's visual identity grows.

Choosing and deploying the font is rarely the end of the font process. It's common for new styles to be added, or slight changes to be made after the font is distributed.

Often, amendments include adding a new style, for example a semi-bold where there was previously just a bold and a regular, as employees have found that a new level of hierarchy is needed.

With an enterprise organization, it may be that communication now needs to be accessible for a different alphabet, and more glyphs need creating accordingly.

Depending on the method of distribution, updates may require the font package to be installed all over again, and distributed to every user in the organization. Using a font installer which automatically updates is one way of removing this difficulty, and enabling your organization's new font to be flexible and responsive to the organization's needs.

A large, bold, blue sans-serif font sample showing the uppercase 'A' and lowercase 'a'.A large, bold, blue sans-serif font sample showing the uppercase 'A' and lowercase 'a'.A large, bold, blue sans-serif font sample showing the uppercase 'A' and lowercase 'a'.

Templafy's Font Distributor

Templafy's Font Distributor instantly distributes fonts globally to employees without requiring IT resources.

Templafy's Font Distributor provides a simple way to roll-out fonts to an entire organization.

Fonts require installation on every individual computer, meaning every computer needs a copy of the font package, which then requires updating every time the font is amended. This can be problematic, as there is no governance over ensuring the correct versions are used, and it is a time-consuming task to ensure everyone has the correct fonts. It is also difficult to control fonts and ensure that employees are using the correct one in all communication.

Templafy's Font Distributor offers a unique possibility for organizations to bypass IT and instantly deploy fonts to all employees.

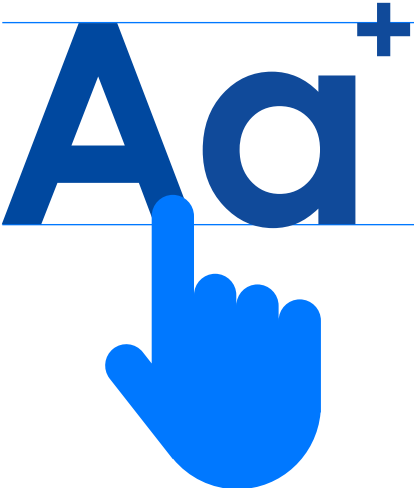
Through Templafy, fonts are loaded as part of the Office package, and are registered and can be used on computers without employees needing to download the font package.

The Font Distributor allows changes to be controlled centrally, meaning updates are provided immediately to all employees across the organization. If a new color or font needs to be added, this can be done easily. Similarly, up-scaling or downscaling font users is a simple task.

Templafy also enables the chosen font to be set for default use in document templates, ensuring all content and communication will contain the correct font, utilizing the font investment and empowering the brand.

Templafy solution

Using and managing fonts to empower your brand communication



Templafy's Font Distributor adds types to the admin platform, where they can then be distributed across the entire organization immediately with **one-click installation** - no matter how many countries and users.



Expert opinion

Expert opinion:

Mathias Jespersen, Head of Playtype



"The distribution of font is critical for a successful design. Even though we're in 2020, you'd think that this has been solved ages ago, but it has not."

Playtype is a Copenhagen-based type foundry, and Mathias Jespersen, Head of Playtype, has been working with typefaces for more than 20 years. Playtype has a broad clientele and are passionate about furthering education around type. We spoke to Mathias to find out more about typefaces.

What do you love about the work you do?

"We are on a longer mission of talking about type for people who do not have any relation to type. People can see it's a letter, but different to another letter, and something to spark curiosity. People think of font and think of what you can do in Office applications, and they say the fonts are already there, and you have to explain that you can also do new ones, and people are ignited and can see significant differences."

Why are you so passionate about type?

"All the small details in a typeface add up to something that looks very different from typeface to typeface."

Typically people cannot see the precise detail, but it's like a fashion brand, or like a piece of music – you can see the subtle differences from fashion brand to fashion brand, and hear the subtle differences from artist to artist, and that's how typically a typeface is then perceived. All the small details in the different glyphs add up, so as western humans we understand the Latin script natively, we see that shape of an 'e' or 'r' or whatever, and we can get the meaning right away. But we also get the artistic value that is often put into it - some sort of flavor, be it wide, narrow, very dark, very light, very contrasted, flourished details, all kind of visual elements that, repeated in the right way on different letters, creates this visual experience that a typeface is. So, whenever you write anything, it just feels like one coherent set of letters that expresses something. That's the whole typeface story, and that's what brands are acknowledging more and more. So many brands have done that hundreds of years ago, but that's the core idea of a typeface, that this specific combination of glyphs can give an expression."

Expert opinion

What's the most important thing to consider when choosing a typeface?

"Whether it's licensing a retail font or creating a bespoke one, a company about to choose a font need to know who they are – they need to have an awareness of what their core values are. This way we won't choose something that will just look good, but instead can find something that is really them, and really invokes who they are. We spend a lot of time getting into how a brand feels, and figuring out the story it should tell. We believe that's where the real value comes in."

Can you tell us about a client you loved working for?

"We worked with the Municipality of Copenhagen, and had to create a type that fit all kinds of people receiving it, and reflects Copenhagen in a way that is still accessible whether it's a very serious letter about taxes, or posters about a festival in the city, or small signage on the streets about snow – all kinds of things. They needed one unified voice that is totally apprehended and experienced by people, so that was the technical requirement – how this should be used. The more artistic expressive part was the feeling, but combining those was super important. It was a very

long year and a half process of getting the right human touch which is functional and also fits the design vision. It needed to show both old and new Copenhagen, and show and reflect the people living in the city, and something that works now and in the future. And we had this image throughout of what that would be, and we really managed to capture it in the font. And some of the feedback we received both internally and from real life Copenhageners was that it was very friendly and felt nice to be in touch with, and it's wonderful because it means we achieved that."

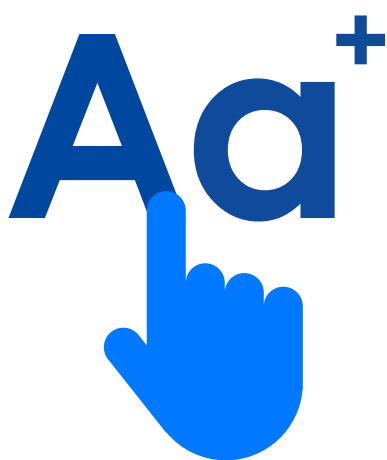
What's the most satisfying thing about your work?

It's fun to do more for a client, but the most satisfying thing is when former clients come back, and say 'okay, now we need these styles', or just 'now we need some italics' when it's for a typeface you did years ago, or even a brand had a font years ago and wanted it retouched or updated, to fit them 'now' and suit digital forms, but still keep the core principles. That journey is fantastic, and underlines that people take it seriously, use it well, everyone did a good job and figured out the right sort of use, because it has stayed and stuck for a long time.

"Power of serving the client and reaching them and updating the font is really powerful, and does the job that we are interested in, we want to make the type available for the client without any hassle, we have designed it and we want them to be using it."

Expert opinion

"Templafy is super interesting for us because the distribution of fonts is critical for a successful design."



One update distributes fonts to all users

Many updates to distribute fonts to all users

Conclusion

An invaluable brand asset

Fonts are an invaluable brand asset, and using them is a powerful communication tool across multiple mediums.

Fonts frame the way in which communication around your brand is interpreted. They have the power to promote trust and stability, excitement and entrepreneurship, modernity and future-proof ideas, and so much more.

Fonts are only becoming a more powerful visual asset. As workplaces become more digital, more and more brands see the value in an accessible font which provides a clear brand identity.

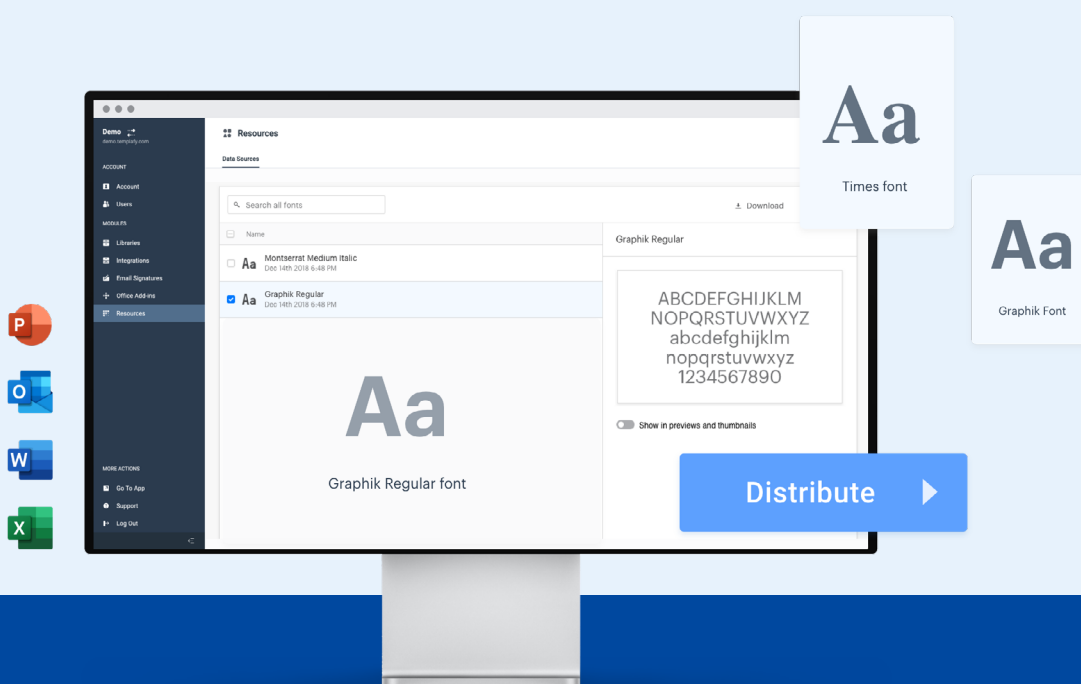
When an organization uses a font effectively, they harness their brand and communicate their brand message to every single individual who interacts with them. This has huge potential, and means the use of font is a vital visual asset.

Although the process of choosing or designing a font can be complex, it is an invaluable brand investment and, with tools like Templafy, you can be certain that it will always be correctly used throughout the organization.



Interested in finding out more about font distribution?

Get started



Templafy

Learn more at templafy.com