



Email Signature Branding



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Answers to All Your Email Signature Branding Questions

Branding. What a hot buzzword with a lot of room for correct and less correct definitions. You can put pretty much any word in front of branding and get yourself a viral article on HuffPost or Mashable. Why? Well, first, it's because these sites have phenomenal branding. And because everyone is talking about branding, but not a lot of people are adding value to the conversation. Truth is, very few know the full extent of the power of a brand and the many pieces that come together to build it.

Here at Xink cloud-based email signature management, we are just obsessed with one small, vital, but usually overlooked aspect of branding. Which one? We are utterly obsessed with your email signature branding.

Think of how many emails you send every day. Then

multiply that number by the number of employees in your company, by five days a week, by 50 weeks a year. The email signature is not only your most frequent place to promote your brand, it's also probably the cheapest place with some of the least amount of time commitment (when automated and regulated correctly.)

That's why we are dedicating this entire eBook to making sure that you fully understand what makes for great email signature branding by answering all your questions.

What is your brand?

In a nutshell, your brand is what people say about you and your business when you're not around. It's you and your company's reputation. It's not just what you write or say, it's how you say it, how you look when saying it, your colors and logos, the language you use, and so much more.

Most importantly, your brand is the impression you leave with your customers and future customers. How you develop your brand across every communication medium affects whether it is a lasting impression or just a barely heard ping in the cacophony of branding impressions each of us receives every day.

We like the way they define it at Design&Function magazine: "Telling great stories through well-designed experiences will make your customers remember and ultimately love your brand."



In reality, like your reputation, you don't have complete control over your brand, which makes it even more essential you do whatever you can to monitor and manage the aspects you can control. That's why digital branding has become a multinational, multi-billion-dollar experiment.

What is digital branding?

With the invention and ample addiction to the Internet, you can, depending on what you do, get away with being a hack and still succeeding, so long as you build a strong digital brand online. Your online branding is everything you say and is said about you online. This includes your social media, your website, your emails, and any press or news.

If your company doesn't have a digital branding strategy dispersing mention of your brand and your benefits across multiple digital platforms, you may as well be driving a Model T to work.



Why does online branding matter?

Whether it's potential customers, investors, or dates, before jumping into bed with you, you're going to get Googled. They are going to see if you show up on DontDateHimGirl.com or DontWorkwithThatGuy.org. They are going to see if you have anyone in common on LinkedIn or Crunchbase. They are going to think about any conversation had and examine every email sent. They are going to compare your website and socials with your competition. As your competition becomes more advanced in its branding and as budgets continue to tighten, your branding can be that excuse not to hire you.

But, if you brand yourself and your company right, you are positively able to shine online. You have more opportunity than ever to highlight your strengths, your experience and your respectability, all digitally.



Why does digital branding consistency matter?

Without branding consistency, there is no such thing as a brand.

When branding is maintained across an organization, it shows that you have your stuff together. You show teamwork, unity and customer service. It shows your business is detail-oriented and good with implementation and follow through. And your employees become brand advocates with every tweet or email they send.

The University of Texas - San Antonio, like many multi-site businesses, mandates certain levels of quality and consistency in email signature. They even have this on their public webpage:

The administration of UTSA believes that all faculty and staff email signatures are a direct representation of the university's viewpoint, and thus mandate that it be consistent and professional.

"Consistent email signatures deliver a visually coherent look across university departments and offices. Just as our business cards follow a standardized approach, email signatures should be consistent. Consider your email signature your digital business card, and include the appropriate information."



What does your email say about your brand?

Your digital branding starts in your inbox.

Your email is your most regular direct branding contact with your customer. Since we've already agreed that email is your biggest opportunity for more daily branding impressions - with around 87 percent of all your company communication going across email - we need to examine what email says about your brand. Here are some things to check:

Are company email addresses consistent?

That means that everyone uses the company domain and all emails follow the same pattern, usually first.last@companydomain.com or firstlast@companydomain.com, or flast@companydomain.com. It should be done in such a way that anyone can guess an email by just knowing the name.

David G. May

President, GUSTUR



P: 619 965 9917

M: 619 985 6333

E: david.may@gustur.com

W: gustur.com



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Are name displays consistent? Not only does making sure the name displays the accurate employee name but also the job title help you stay out of spam and promotions folders. Plus, the email display name is what distinguishes an email as coming from someone who cares enough to update this function and lets you know the email is from a real person.

Does everyone use the same font? You should limit choices within your company email policies. Everyone should be encouraged (or forced) to use black font and one of the most popular fonts that everyone automatically has installed, like Arial or Times New Roman. Your company website and printed marketing use a singular font (or should), as should your most popular form of communication.

Is there a proper email header? Email branding starts from the top down. If you're investing in the designing and printing of corporate letterhead, it'd be especially ridiculous if you didn't similarly brand the top of email. I'm pretty sure you're drafting a LOT more emails than penning snailmail letters anyway, right?

Are you tracking email opens? Nowadays, knowing if someone read your email is very powerful information.

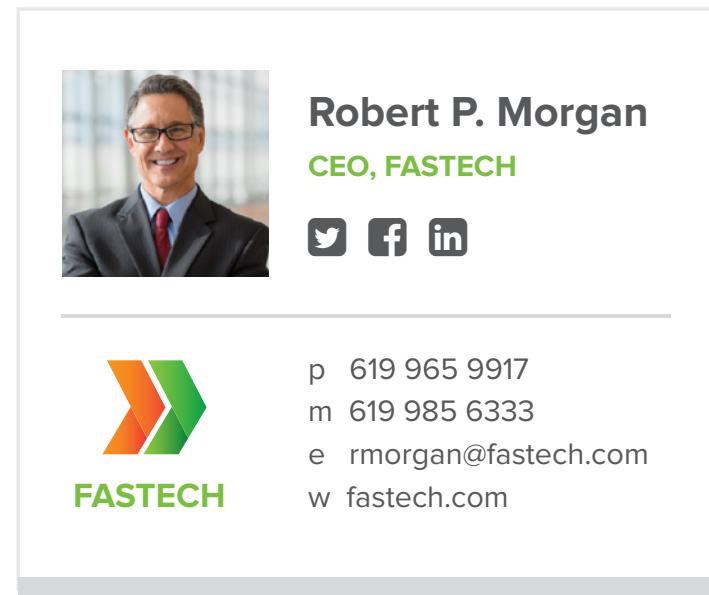
Is everyone's email signature consistent? This is a whole topic unto itself that we are ready to dive into right now.



What is email signature branding?

Your email signature is an essential part of your corporate identity and leads to more brand impressions than the pricier business cards, stationery, pens and any other tangible branding tool combined. You can personally brand your email or you can create company-wide brand consistency across this medium you are using to communicate most.

Email signature branding, as you can guess, is assuring consistency, professionalism, messaging and lasting impressions at the end of each email you send. And it's not just about the words you use and the info you share. Your email signature branding strategy can include images, ads, further calls to action, and traceable marketing campaigns.



What does your email signature say about you?

If done correctly, when your customers and prospects are receiving around a hundred emails a day, a professional email signature can make you stand out from the competition and the cacophony. So let's now ask you a few questions in order for you to evaluate the current state of your email signature branding and how you are already using it (or not using it) to distinguish yourself and your business:

- What aspects of your brand are you broadcasting?
- Does it look like the rest of your branding?
- Does it offer the same messaging as the rest of your branding?
- What further action does it compel the recipient to take?
- How does your email signature look on your phone? iPad?
- Does it open on any device?
- Do they have to download anything to view it fully?
- Does it slow down the email load time?



Branding expert and author Lida Citroen even takes it a step further by writing this about how email signature affects your brand perception:

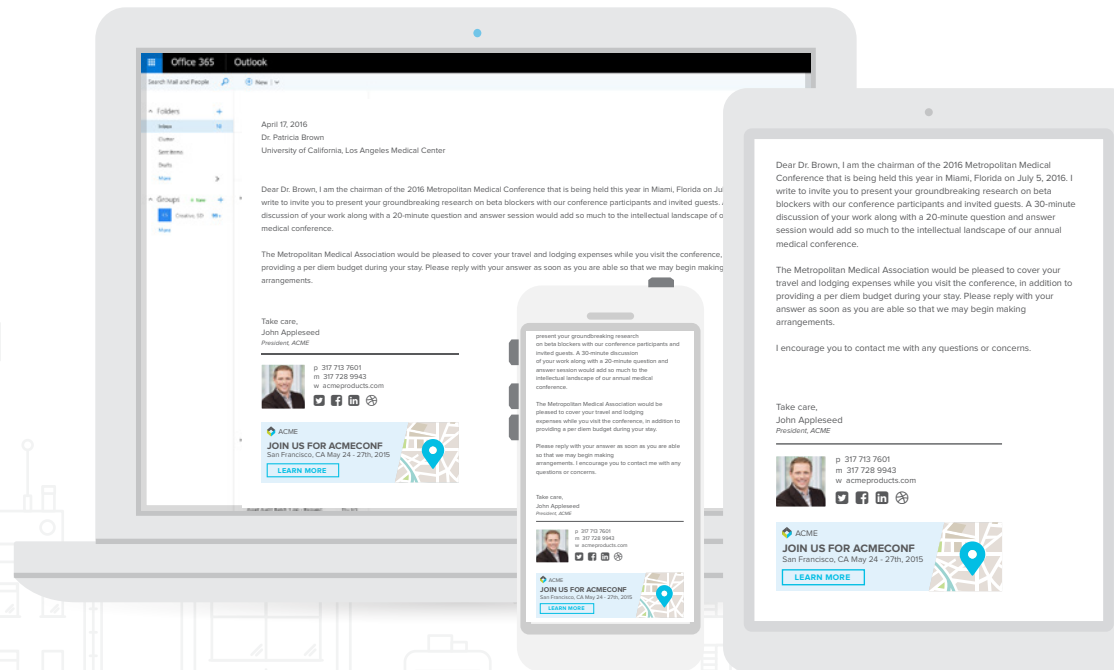
"How do you want to be perceived? Are you striving to be seen as approachable? Then, provide multiple ways of reaching you. Looking to be positioned as exclusive and discreet? Then less might be more."

Why is organization-wide consistency important to email signature branding?

First, it's the most popular way to communicate so why wouldn't you standardize it across your business?

Certainly, if nothing else, not having branding consistency in this medium means your company comes off as unprofessional and not detail-oriented.

Think of the email signature the same way you think of business cards: they reflect upon your organization's brand. This is why every employee's card looks the same and contains the same basic information because each flows from a uniform design template. It's just common sense that your email follows suit.



Don't let email signature branding standardization kill personalization

While your email signature branding shouldn't be an afterthought, the most important part of your email should be the content - what you are trying to say. That's why Xink focuses on making your email signature consistent, professional and automated so you don't have to worry about it, all the while making sure it isn't a distraction from the main message you are trying to send.

When you institute a policy of common branding, that doesn't mean you're going all corporate and controlled. You need to make it clear that, while your colleagues must use your official email branding, they should also show gratitude, forethought and personality when they individually sign emails before the automated signature.



What are the risks of NOT having cross-organizational email signatures?

Some people include their job title; others cite their department. Some link to the company website; others call out the company's social networks (or their own). Some prefer hyphens or periods to parenthesis in listing a phone number; others want to abbreviate "Parkway" as "Pkwy" or "Pkwy." Still others include an inspirational quotations or favor overly-ornate fonts. And then there are the ones that put up pictures of their kids or their favorite lazer cat meme.

This responsibility has to be removed from the end users and managed by a central department.



Who should run your company's email signature branding?

You need to maintain brand consistency whether you're the completely distributed team of a start-up or a multinational company. How we see it, you have three choices:

1. You can have everyone control their own email signature. (But we already talked about the risks of that.)
2. IT could do it.
3. Marketing can do it.

Who do we think is the right choice? Marketing should be in charge of branding, of course!

Of course, digital marketing consultant Jonathan Rick spent a whole post describing step by tedious step of how to get your whole staff on board, something that



maybe your marketing department won't have time for:

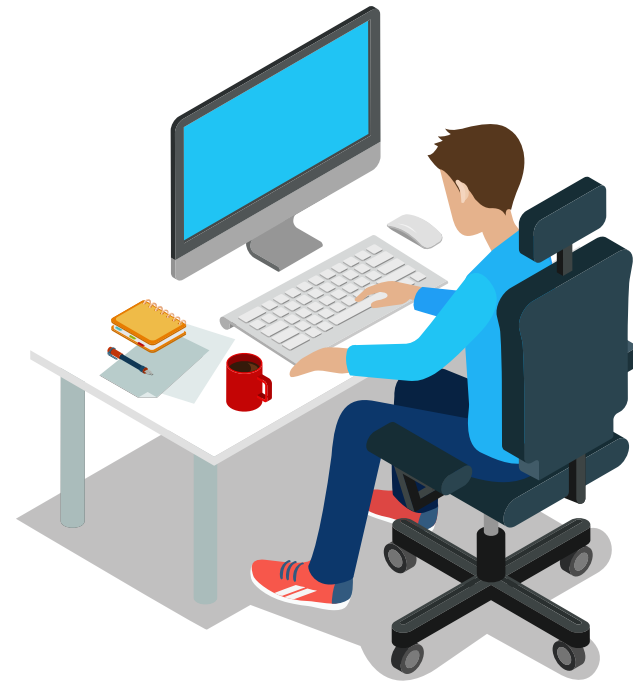
“A tip: make sure to announce and explain this change before you implement it. An all-staff email from your CIO and her HR and/or communications counterparts should suffice.

Is it really an IT initiative? Yes. Left to their own devices, people won't implement the signature or won't do it right. Some will complain about technical difficulties; others will raise aesthetic objections. Without a policeman, chaos will ensue.

Is this a time-consuming and tedious project? It is. And, to be sure, the payoff appears to be modest. Yet it's through such seeming minutiae that good brands distinguish themselves from great brands."

We agree with the second part - your email signature is a way to distinguish yourself as a great brand. And yes, to the first part, manually implementing cross-company email signature branding is mind-numbingly tedious. But it doesn't have to be this way. You can use an email signature marketing tool like Xink to automate it all for you

With email signature software, it finally takes the burden off your IT department, puts everything in the cloud, and lets you take the reins to create strong



brand impressions in just a couple of clicks.

That's exactly how marketing and connectivity manager at Oporto, Portugal's hotel chain HF Hotéis Fenix, Hervé Sébastien Marrinhas uses Xink email signature management software.

“We found Xink because we had a problem because we have multiple locations... lots of computers and lots of devices sending mails, Mac, Windows, Windows 8, Windows XP.

Before Xink, we had the challenge to have the same signature in all the places,” said, “Everybody put their own signatures with Santa Claus upon their name and each person put special titles for their action. It was very confusing because you could talk to the same location with three different messages.” He said, “We were not able to obtain a harmonization in terms of image and titles too.”

Marrinhas said that, with Xink, he likes that he is “able to manage the correct logos, the correct images you want, the correct titles. You can’t even touch it -- as soon as you come to the company, we give you a title and you keep it It was more reliable for us. We stopped having Super Managers.



Marrinhas said that two years ago he started to use Xink to create consistent messaging and branding, and now “it does the same thing, and we are also able to broadcast the message. We see that this message has a very high return on investment,” when they use Xink to promote events, openings, holidays and special deals.

How can email signature branding promote company culture?

With email signature automation, you can have a customer-facing email signature with all your contact info, socials, company website and the like and then you can have internal email signatures that help promote your company culture and values.

I used to work for Wiley publishing and we, like many companies, even had an internal catchphrase, as part of a campaign that promoted employee engagement: [“Wiley: The Place to Be.”](#) Implementing internal email signature branding gives you another place to reinforce company culture and its core values. Take advantage of this space to recognize publicly team members for work that exemplifies those values.

Other companies use internal email signature messaging to wish happy holidays, announce exciting news or to give away prizes. We know of at least one manager that uses Xink to make sure teammates have read to the end of important internal emails by



adding a G-rated joke or trivia question. Others add a link to a tracked page or use the email signature automation to ask for employee feedback.

Remember, if you do any sort of hiring or work in human resources or public relations, your company culture should be reflected in your external email signature as well.

Social media is certainly part of your brand. Should it be part of your email?

Citroen suggests to “Keep social media links and icons to a minimum, unless you are a social media consultant! I see links to all sorts of social platforms, and when I visit them, the individual is not active there. If you are most focused on LinkedIn and YouTube, for instance, then list those.”

As with everything, focus on your objective. Are you trying to make a sale? Then social media probably isn't the best idea, as it adds an unnecessary call to action. Social media links are a good fit for your customer success and marketing teams, but a distraction to put in your sales emails.

And as Citroen says, please only put links to the social media in your email signature (and website!) that you are active.



General Rules for Email Signature Branding

As with all kinds of branding, there is a lot more we could cover than in a mere ten-page guide. We covered all the overlying questions and concepts up top and now we want to give you a checklist to help guide your email signature branding, including some solid advice for branding in general.

- Before starting to implement email signature marketing, think of your business objectives. If you are a business software like us, you'd probably want to encourage people to sign up for a free trial. If you're a retail store, perhaps you want to offer a coupon.
- KISS. Journalism's first rule of Keep It Simple, Stupid works here as well as in many other places. Only include what is absolutely necessary (ie: no inspirational quotes or reminders to think before you print.)
- Don't attach an email signature. They are often blocked, fill up your own inbox with excessive

attachments and make your email load slower and thus less likely to be read.

- Remember your email signature shouldn't be too long. It's a useful addendum not the reason to send. Like the citation at the end of a book, it provides further information like contact info. But it can also be taken advantage of to close more deals.
- How many lines?
- Always have a plain text signature alternative for anyone who has images turned off — this can still include a full URL and a call to action.
- Use an email signature software to enforce it across branches and departments.

What should (and shouldn't) go into your email signature

Use social media icons. If they lead to the accurate active accounts and help you increase your recognition.

- Customer-facing job like sales or real estate? Definitely include a smiling headshot!
- Match signatures to company logos and correct user details
- Don't forget to include a link to your website to drive traffic. Type out the full website URL and hyperlink it. (Don't get fancy with QR codes either!)
- Don't use big files.
- Don't include a fax number — it's not 1996.
- Include one reachable phone number, not seven.
- Want to seem like a multinational brand? Include your area code too.

- Include individual extensions so you don't clients don't get stuck on hold.
- Include your company logo - in HTML not as an attachment.
- Only provide contact information where you can actually be contacted. Do you really need to have your mailing address capping off each email?
- If you're going to have something as boring as a disclosure statement, you better make it look like the rest of your sleek corporate branding
- Adding a disclosure Statement ensures compliance but can be longer than your email body. Make sure it's formatted to be read when necessary, not to overshadow your content

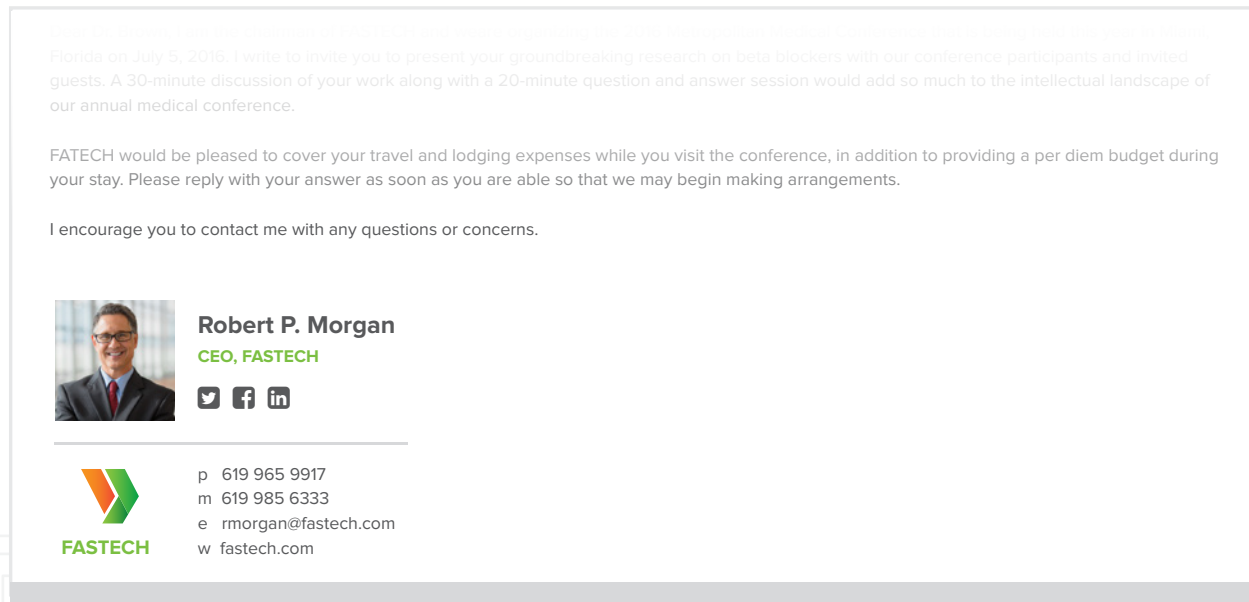
You can use an image or banner ad but don't make it just a solid email signature block that won't show on people that block HTML and downloads. Or people have to choose to Display Images. It could mean that you get flagged to Promotions as an advertisement.

- Don't attach a disclosure statement as an attachment to every email sent.
- Stick to your key colors. A rainbow has its place after a storm, but for your email signature, stick to maximum your main two colors.

- Believe it or not, your font is part of your company branding.

the font type and size of your key contact details should be the same as the body of the email. This consistency means that the message flows easily down to the signature rather than looking like it has just been stamped at the bottom.

- But don't use unusual fonts because people will get errors that they can't open it on their phone or it'll reformat to a different sized font.



Test your own email signature branding

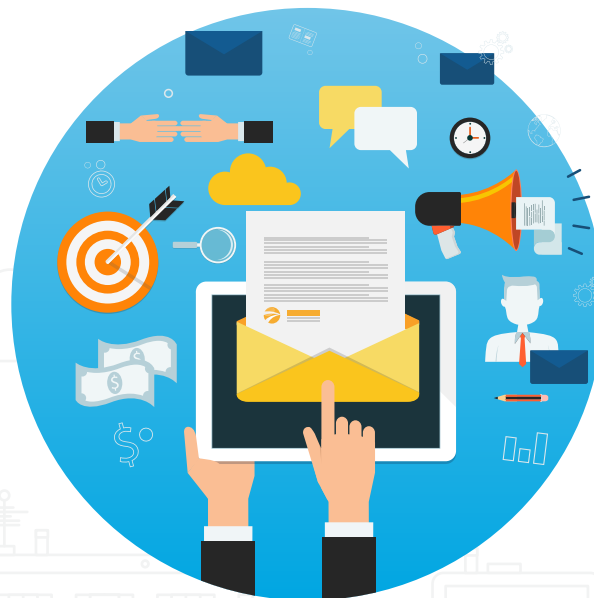
- Check it on a smartphone, tablet, desktop, everywhere!
- Test sending on a smartphone, tablet, desktop anywhere!
- Make sure that you aren't giving any free advertising to Blackberry, iPhone or whichever phone you're sending from
- Be mindful of the load-time and weight of graphics. Big, bold email signature blocks with images, pictures, logos, and bright colors can be attractive, but they can also be cumbersome. Consider that many emails are read on mobile devices. These graphics can be overwhelming.
- But make sure it'll look good in Plain Text too



- Use Table Tags to make sure things stay well formatted, no matter what device
- Use HTML for flexibility to design the email exactly how you want (this may take a designer) — it will work on all major email programs and mobile devices

Your email signature can (and should) go beyond contact info

- Turn every email into an advertising opportunity with an attractive, but HTML-coded, promotional banner, this could include your latest product or sale.
- Create email signature banner marketing campaigns, assign campaigns to different senders
- A/B test rebrands in your email signature
- A/B test new ads in your email signature
- Create different messaging whether it's the first email or down the chain
- Create different messaging based on internal and external audience
- Use email signatures to reinforce company cultures and branding
- Use different signatures for reply — think about the sales funnel - the third in a chain of emails is much further down and you want different messaging to convert. Plus, you don't need to give all the contact again and again and again, better use something that converts

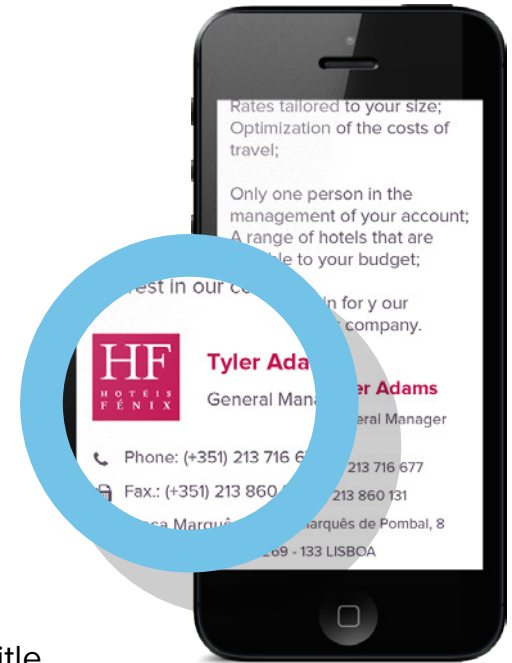


How to handle images in your more visual email signature

- We are visual creatures: images can significantly increase the click-through rate and drive traffic to your desired location
 - Turn every email into an advertising opportunity with an attractive promotional banner, this could include your latest product or sale.
 - If you have a corporate brand, don't just copy paste it off your website - brand your email signature too!
 - HTML code your logo. Repeat: Do not attach it.
 - Don't scale images — send them the size they should be because if you send a 1000-pixel image, no matter what size you scale it to, it's returning to a 1000-pixel image when it's opened.
 - Keep social media icons 20 x 20 pixels or smaller — Keep images and icons as small as possible so they are clear no matter what screen size.
- *Keep entire image and email signature under 500 by 500 pixels or else your email will take long to open

and then look odd.

- If you include a lot of small images in your email signature and load them all separately (instead of coding), each image will have its own title appearing like the image above for some email clients. To avoid this, consider creating one big image which includes all of your images. This way you will only create one image title.
- Don't just have your entire signature as an image, if the recipient doesn't click 'display images' they will not see your email signature. Again, always have a Plain Text alternative.



Your Famous Last Words

When all else fails, your email signature is your famous last words! What would you want to be remembered for?





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