HOW TO MANAGE YOUR FONTS TO IMPROVE YOUR WORKFLOW

Would A Font Management Solution Make A Difference?

Fonts Are One Of The Building Blocks Of Great Marketing. Are You Treating Your Fonts Right?

Fonts are a blind spot for many creative teams.

Like the air we breathe, fonts are essential to a healthy design environment. And for those of us lucky enough to work in a creative profession, there seems to be no end to the freedom and flexibility the right fonts can offer us.

But how well do you really know your fonts ?

> After all, fonts are often treated like design elements even though they are licensed as software.

This unfortunate misunderstanding can lead to costly font errors, lost productivity, and even exposure to litigation from font noncompliance. When fonts occupy a blind spot in your design workflow, we call this creative chaos.

When creative chaos creeps into the workflow of your daily work, change can be uncomfortable, even unnerving. For example, many designers already have a process for selecting fonts for their next design project, even if this process takes a lot of time or exposes them to risk. If there was a way to automate this process so creative professionals could have more time to invent amazing, that would go a long way towards controlling creative chaos. Certain font management solutions can do this and much more.

In order to help you gain a better understanding of your fonts, we've compiled some questions you can ask yourself. When you look at how fonts affect every stage of your creative workflow, you'll be better equipped to select the best font management solution for your team.

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Eight Questions To Ask Yourself

01 Where do you keep your fonts now?

When did you first learn that the system fonts on your computer were just the beginning? Once you begin to explore the world of typography, it's a double-edged sword. If you work with fonts every day, you understand how the right font can enhance your designs. But as you accumulate more and more fonts, finding the right font for every new project can turn into a nightmare. If you save them all on your local desktop, that might make it more difficult to compare them when you're brainstorming different designs. It's even worse if some of your fonts live on flash drives or machines that you don't normally use. And if the end user license agreements (EULAs) for any of those fonts include expiration dates, it might be hard for you to keep track of which ones are still valid.

02 Who needs access to fonts? Just you, your design team, or your entire organization?

It's rare that anyone works in a vacuum. Even if you run your own design shop, you'll still need to share fonts with your clients. Every font you purchase includes a certain number of licenses for specific types of media. Keeping track of licenses is crucial if you manage a team of designers, and it's even more urgent if you need to distribute fonts to team members beyond your design and marketing teams.

When it comes time to share your work with others, how do you make sure they see the exact same fonts you see? Having enough licenses is part of the answer, but also remember that no two fonts are exactly alike. Even if you have enough licenses, if someone hasn't activated your font in the program you used to create your design, they might get the dreaded "font missing" notification. Or, the program will automatically substitute another font that's close to the one you intended. Either way, these types of swaps can cause confusion and delays in your daily workflow, especially when it comes to the approvals process. The more people who need access to your fonts, the more challenging it can be to keep track of them manually.

03 How do you share fonts with your team members and other project stakeholders?

Let's say you own a certain number of licenses for each font you work with. How do you make sure the right people have access to the right fonts at the right time? If you share fonts by email, it's almost impossible to monitor who has what. The problem is compounded if you try swapping fonts on flash drives, especially in this era of remote work. And if you work with freelancers, contractors, or other vendors who need access to your fonts, how will you make sure they get what they need? When you share fonts with your team, you need to consider security, visibility into licenses, and accessibility. Otherwise you might set the stage for more delays or risk exposing yourself to legal liability.

04 What's your process for purchasing new fonts?

When you need to purchase new fonts, who has the final say? Does this decision rest with each individual designer on your team? Or is there someone who oversees all new font purchases? If it's the former, you might be spending more on fonts than you need to. But even if all new font purchases must be approved before they can move forward, how do you know you're getting the best value? Think about it this way: if you're responsible for monitoring your current font usage and purchasing new font licenses for your team, you need to know who's using your fonts, and for which types of projects. And once you buy those licenses, how do you know if your team uses every one? Buying too few licenses and then sharing them with others can put you at risk of litigation. But buying too many font licenses is an unnecessary waste. How do you strike the right balance?

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05 Have you ever lost time on a project because someone used the wrong font?

Every font has its own unique personality, and every font behaves a little bit differently when you use it in your work. And that means the difference between the right font and the "almost right" font can be huge. It's the difference between an enthusiastic response and looks of uncertainty when you present work to clients. Quite simply, the wrong font can erode your brand, slow down approvals, and torpedo post-production.

How do you keep track of exactly which fonts appear in all of your teams' projects? If you can't manage this aspect of your creative workflow, you can't measure its impact on your productivity. You can do better. You deserve a success story, not a mystery novel.

06 How do you organize and compare your fonts?

Acquiring fonts is one thing, but organizing them in a clear, consistent manner requires an entirely new approach. If your designers store their fonts locally and preview them one at a time, this can be a major bottleneck that slows down production. With a font manager, these roadblocks will disappear.

Can you and your teammates quickly find any font in your collection based on a few simple characteristics? What if you wanted to sort your fonts by project, style, type foundry, or client? Searching and sorting are a good first step, but you need more than one step to reach your goals. What if you needed to compare different fonts within a group to select the right one? Once you find what you're looking for, how can you be sure it's the exact right font? And what if you wanted to see all the fonts that were used in certain documents over the last six months? The right font manager can transform your team's workflow and remove countless obstacles.

Artwork by: Jon Tyson on Unsplash

07 How much of your team works remotely?

One question that has come up again and again in our discussion: how can you be sure that the fonts you select are exactly the right fonts for a certain client or project? There used to be only one way to be sure, and that was to manually install the right fonts on everyone's machines. But the nature of work has changed. Remote work, freelancers, and contractors are common. It's become commonplace to hire contractors, bring on freelancers, and work remotely.

Many designers still bring their personal font collections with them to new projects, and many creative professionals still trade fonts among themselves. On top of this, just because two fonts have the same name, doesn't mean they're actually the same. Small differences like font type, version, and character inconsistencies can add up to big changes in the final versions of your projects.

As more and more of your team members work remotely, it's even more important to make sure that everyone's using exactly the same fonts at all times. Your remote team members can be just as productive as they were when they were all together in the office – if not more so. But font consistency is key.

08 Which creative tools do you work with every day?

Whenever you open a creative tool to start a new design, you need to check a few things first. If you're opening an existing document to make changes, you need to make sure you're working on the current version. It's a good idea to check the color pallet to make sure you're adhering to the correct style guide for the project. And of course, you need to ensure you have the right fonts.

How often do you open a new document and check for the correct fonts? If the right fonts aren't activated when you open an existing document, how much time do you spend looking for them?

This process can be a roadblock in anyone's workflow, and it's even worse if you work in more than one creative tool at a time. Now, multiply this game of font hide-and-seek across your entire team. Think of every time they open an Adobe Creative Cloud app or Sketch, only to encounter the dreaded "font error" message. At this point, they typically have two choices: stop what they're doing to find the missing font, or accept the suggested substitute. But as you know, looks can be deceiving. Just because two fonts have the same name doesn't mean they're the same. And substituting one font for another can lead to big changes in kerning, leading, and tracking, which can play havoc with your designs.

Fortunately, there's an alternative. The best professional font management solutions offer font auto-activation. That means you and your team can avoid these roadblocks, since you'll always have the right fonts available at the right time. Do more with your fonts and create your best work.

Searching for the best font manager isn't a question of one-size-fits-all.

Not everyone has the same font management priorities, and your needs in this area will depend upon your answers to the questions above. Continue your journey by comparing our font management solutions. See what's possible when you **calm your creative chaos** and **invent amazing**.