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The Asset Naming Convention Quick-Audit Checklist

A step-by-step diagnostic for creative leads and IT/DAM managers looking at a chaotic shared drive.

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How to use this audit

Built for creative leads, IT, and DAM managers staring at a shared drive nobody trusts.

1 **Sample**
Pull a random sample of 20 files from your shared drive or cloud storage.

2 **Walk the parts**
Work through the suffix check, the folder depth check, and the tribal knowledge test.

3 **Tally and compare**
Count your red flags, check your score, then see what a clean naming formula looks like.

THE 4 PARTS

PART 1 The “Wild West” Suffix Check

PART 2 Folder Nesting & Path Depth

PART 3 The “Tribal Knowledge” Test

PART 4 The Blueprint Solution

PART 1

The “Wild West” Suffix Check

Look at a random sample of 20 files in your shared drive or cloud storage. Check every red flag you spot.

- [ ] **The Infinity Loop**
  Multiple variations piling up: _final, _final_v2, _final_APPROVED, _final_FOR_REAL.

- [ ] **The Anonymous Author**
  Files named after initials or a first name only (e.g., J_Banner_Ad_v3.psd), with no organizational context.

- [ ] **The Date Vacuum**
  No creation or version date, so nobody can tell if a file is from 2024 or last week.

- [ ] **Special Character Hazards**
  Spaces, symbols (#, $, !), or ampersands that break web links and DAM search algorithms.

EXHIBIT A

J_Banner_Ad_final_v2_APPROVED_real.psd
Three red flags in one file name: the Anonymous Author, the Infinity Loop, and the Date Vacuum.

PART 2

Folder Nesting & Path Depth

Check how deep your team has to dig to find a core asset.



Seven levels down. Your asset is in here somewhere.

- [ ] **The "Matryoshka Doll" Trap**
  Assets buried more than 3 to 4 levels deep, like the path above.

- [ ] **Orphaned Folders**
  "Misc," "Old Stuff," or "Temp" folders untouched for over a year that still hold active assets.

- [ ] **Inconsistent Hierarchies**
  Departments (e.g., Social vs. Product Marketing) use opposite folder structures for the same type of campaign.

PART 3

The “Tribal Knowledge” Test

Answer honestly about your current ecosystem. Every “No” is a red flag.

1 **The 60-second logo test** ☐ Yes ☐ No
Can a brand-new designer find the correct, up-to-date master logo file within 60 seconds without asking anyone?

2 **Documented, not remembered** ☐ Yes ☐ No
Is your naming convention written down in a guide, or does it live only in senior team members’ heads?

3 **Archive on wrap** ☐ Yes ☐ No
When a project wraps, is there a mandatory archiving protocol, or do finished files sit in active production folders?

4 **Named owners** ☐ Yes ☐ No
Can you point to a named owner for every top-level folder?

5 **Metadata beyond the filename** ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do files carry searchable metadata (client, campaign, status, usage rights), or does everything depend on the file name?

SCORE IT

Tally your red flags

Count the boxes you checked in Parts 1 and 2, then every "No" in Part 3.

Parts 1 and 2: red flags checked _____ out of 7

Part 3: questions answered "No" _____ out of 5

Total red flags _____ out of 12

0–3	**Solid footing** Your conventions mostly work. Document them before they drift.
4–7	**Cracks showing** People are compensating with memory and workarounds. Time to standardize.
8–12	**Wild West** Designers are hunting daily. A naming standard will pay for itself.

A rough guide, not a formal benchmark.

THE AH-HA MOMENT

What the hunt costs you

~1 day

a week is what knowledge workers spend looking for internal information, according to McKinsey Global Institute research. The widely cited version: 1.8 hours a day, or 9.3 hours a week.

DO YOUR OWN MATH

designers × hours lost per week × billable rate × 48 weeks

Example (illustrative numbers):

10 × 2 hrs × $100 × 48 =

$96,000 a year

YOUR TEAM

_____ × _____ × $_____ × 48 = $_____

Estimates vary (IDC has put it as high as 2.5 hours a day) and describe knowledge workers broadly, not designers specifically. Treat this as a prompt to measure your own team.

PART 4

The Blueprint Solution

A glimpse of a standardized naming formula: five parts, always in the same order.

1	Brand / Client	ACME
2	Project or Campaign	SummerPromo
3	Asset Type / Dimension	Leaderboard728x90
4	Version / Status	v1
5	Date (YYYYMMDD)	20260601

EXAMPLE OF CHAOS

summer_sale_banner_FINAL_v2_edited.psd

EXAMPLE OF CLEAN OPS

ACME_SummerPromo_Leaderboard728x90_v1_20260601.psd

- Underscores between parts; no spaces or special characters.
- Dates as YYYYMMDD, so files sort themselves in order.
- One status at a time, never stacked like _final_v2_APPROVED.

Ready to tame your shared drive?

Want help turning this audit into a naming standard your team actually follows? Let’s talk.

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Free to share. Pass this checklist along to anyone wrangling a messy shared drive.

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