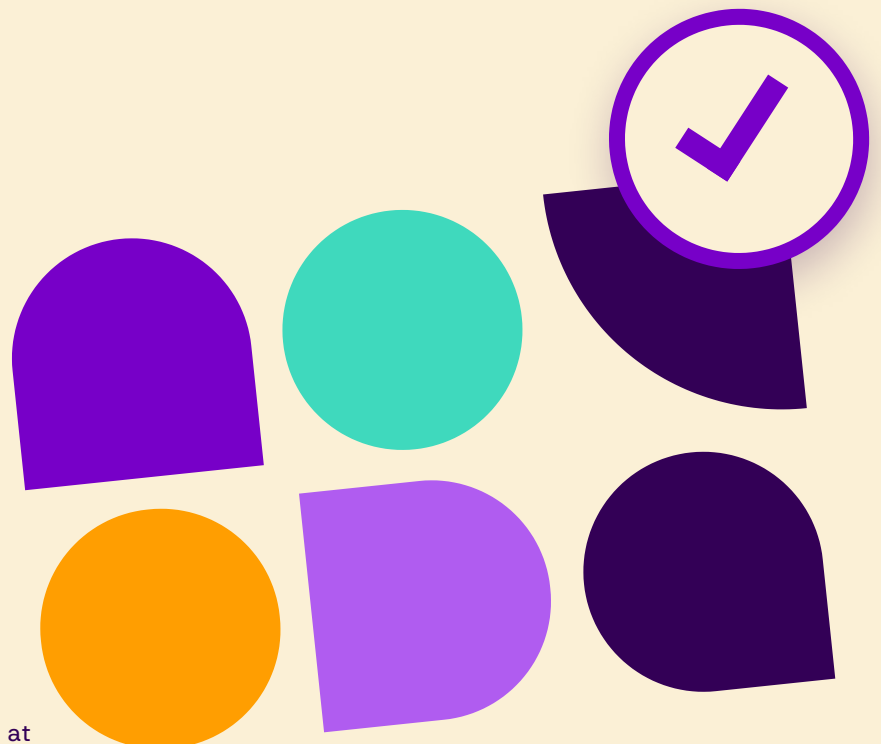


FREE RESOURCE

PRODUCT APPROVALS

The Product Approvals Playbook

A practical framework for faster, more consistent brand assurance: stages, turnaround targets, review checklists and the metrics that show it is working.



MADE FOR

Brand assurance, creative and product teams at licensors and agencies

Four stages, one shared clock

Approvals are where the brand meets the shelf. When they run on email threads and shared drives, reviews stall, feedback gets lost and licensees miss retail windows. A clear, shared process protects the brand and speeds up revenue at the same time.

The four stage model

1

Concept

Sketches, mood boards and product idea. Is it on brand and inside the contract scope?

2

Pre production

Final artwork, color callouts, packaging and legal lines on the real dieline.

3

Production sample

Physical sample from the approved factory. Quality, color match and safety.

4

Final and marketing

Shelf ready product plus retail, ecommerce and social assets.

Stage	Who reviews	Suggested target turnaround*	Must have before submitting
Concept	Brand assurance, category lead	3 to 5 business days	Agreement reference, category, target retailer, launch date
Pre production	Brand assurance, legal for trademark lines	3 to 5 business days	Approved concept ID, final art files, packaging dieline
Production sample	Brand assurance, quality or compliance	5 to 7 business days	Approved pre production ID, factory name, test reports
Final and marketing	Brand assurance, marketing	2 to 3 business days	Approved sample ID, asset list, channel and go live date

*Targets are a starting point. Align them with the review times written in your agreements, and publish them to licensees so everyone plans to the same clock.

Set the rules once, share them with every licensee: where to submit, which files each stage needs, target turnaround per stage, what happens when a review is overdue, and who to contact. Put it in the kick off pack for every new agreement.

What to check, every time

Scope check (every stage)

- ☐ Product category is licensed in this agreement
- ☐ Territory and channel match the agreement
- ☐ Agreement is active and not in sell off
- ☐ Licensee is current on reporting and payments
- ☐ Factory is on the approved list

Brand and creative

- ☐ Correct style guide version and approved assets
- ☐ Character, logo and color usage follow guidelines
- ☐ Tone and placement fit the brand positioning
- ☐ No unapproved co branding or third party IP
- ☐ Copy and translations reviewed

Legal and packaging

- ☐ Trademark and copyright lines present and correct
- ☐ Licensing hologram or authenticity marks, if required
- ☐ Barcodes, country of origin and age grading
- ☐ Required warnings and regulatory labels per territory
- ☐ Licensor contact or website, if required

Quality, safety and sustainability

- ☐ Sample matches approved pre production art
- ☐ Safety test reports attached and in date
- ☐ Materials and sustainability commitments met
- ☐ Factory audit status valid
- ☐ Number of production samples received as contracted

Fewer rounds, faster launches

Write feedback licensees can act on

Vague feedback is the biggest cause of resubmissions. Use one structure for every comment:

Part	What to include	Example
Where	Exact location on the file or sample	Front panel, top left logo lockup
What	The specific issue against the guideline	Logo clear space is below the minimum in the style guide
Fix	What a passing version looks like	Increase clear space to guideline minimum, resubmit art only
Status	Approved, approved with changes, or rejected	Approved with changes, no new concept needed

Common rejection reasons to brief licensees on up front

- Outdated style guide assets or logos
- Product outside the licensed category or channel
- Missing or incorrect trademark lines
- Color mismatch between art and sample
- Safety documentation missing or expired
- Factory not on the approved list
- Changes made after approval without resubmitting
- Marketing assets submitted after go live

Quick win: Share a one page "how to get approved first time" guide with every new licensee at kick off. It is the cheapest way to reduce rework on both sides.

Six approval metrics worth tracking

What gets measured gets faster. Track these six metrics monthly per licensee and per category, and review them in licensee business reviews.

Metric	How to calculate	Why it matters
Average review time	Days from submission to decision, per stage	Shows whether you are the bottleneck
First pass approval rate	Approved on first submission ÷ all first submissions	Signals licensee readiness and brief quality
Resubmissions per product	Total submissions ÷ products approved	Each extra round costs both teams time
Overdue reviews	Open submissions past the target turnaround	Early warning for missed retail windows
Concept to shelf time	Days from concept submission to final approval	Links brand assurance to revenue timing
Approved but not reported	Approved SKUs with no sales in royalty reports	Finds launches that stalled or went unreported

Self check: how mature is your approvals process?

All submissions arrive through one channel, not email and drives	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Every submission is linked to its agreement automatically	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Licensees can see status without chasing your team	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Review times are tracked and reported	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Approved products connect to royalty reporting	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Score 1 (not at all) to 5 (fully). Under 15 means there is real time to win back.

NEXT STEP

Run approvals in one place, linked to every agreement

Flowhaven Product Approvals gives you configurable stages from concept to production, workflows that reflect what each agreement allows, annotated feedback, real time status for licensees and a full audit trail.

[Book a demo](#)

Flowhaven is the licensing relationship management platform built natively on Salesforce, trusted by approx 100 licensors, agencies and brands across sports, entertainment, gaming, music, lifestyle and art.

