

SILENCE SPEAKS

UX ENGINEER INTERN @ VSA PARTNERS
NEW YORK CITY, NY / MAY 2020 - AUGUST 2020

CHALLENGE

With COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter movement, many things have changed in 2020. There were different ways as to how companies responded and marketed themselves. Along with other creatives at VSA Partners, I was tasked to *evaluate the changes in Generation-Z's expectations and build a digital campaign narrative.*

ROLE : UX ENGINEER

- Collaborated with designers and illustrators to ideate and develop a functional site.
- Took on UX design responsibilities such as conducting user research and creating users flows and design system.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

We conducted qualitative interviews with young consumers as well as business executives to see how they expect their brands to expand.

As young consumers come into their spending power, brands that cannot engage with them risk serious losses. Brand values must shine through in all macro and micro decisions, not just in external messaging. As a digital generation, Generation-Z keeps tabs on what their favorite brands are doing, whether brands publicize it or not. Our key findings:

Gen Z demands transparency, authenticity and empathy from brands, and they won't hesitate to use their spending power to advocate for it.

Gen Z wants to know that brands are not only listening, but actively deconstructing the norms that have created this moment, even if it's uncomfortable. They reject going back to "business as usual."

Gen Z is critical because they care. They see brands as influencers who can facilitate lasting change. For brands struggling to gain Gen Z's approval, there's a simple solution: ask them for input.



Figure 1b: Personas

To have a better understanding of our target audience, we conducted a persona workshop and formed two personas based on a collection of industry professionals who work for a young-adult-facing corporate that addresses social issue.

Primary Persona



Data-Driven
Dave

Male, Early 30s, Liberal,
Brand Specialist at a
not-so-proactive
company

SPECIALTY AND ROLE

Brand growth / brand strategy / product portfolio management / media trends / market research / project management

GOALS

To create on-brand messaging that resonates with Gen Z

STANCE REGARDING BLM

Is personally active in the movement, but is apprehensive about how to engage at work

Secondary Persona



Advocate
Anita

Female, Mid-40s,
Liberal, CEO of a
relatively progressive
brand

SPECIALTY AND ROLE

High-level strategy / decision making / leadership

GOALS

To expand her business in an ethical manner

To gain a better understanding of Gen Z's preferences and how that relates to her business

STANCE REGARDING BLM

Supportive, and trying to use her influence to impact the rest of the company

SOLUTION IDEATION

Following the research phase, we decided to build a site and develop 3 actions brands can take to tackle the problem:

Action 1: Unlearn to Relearn - Listen to the people on the ground. Learn their stories and truths. Amplify their voices.

Action 2: Speak Up with Purpose - Find comfort in vulnerability and be capable of empathy.

Action 3: Take a Stand - Brands should use their platform for meaningful action. To put their money where their mouth is. To elevate voices within the community — not speak over them. To provide resources and change the world.

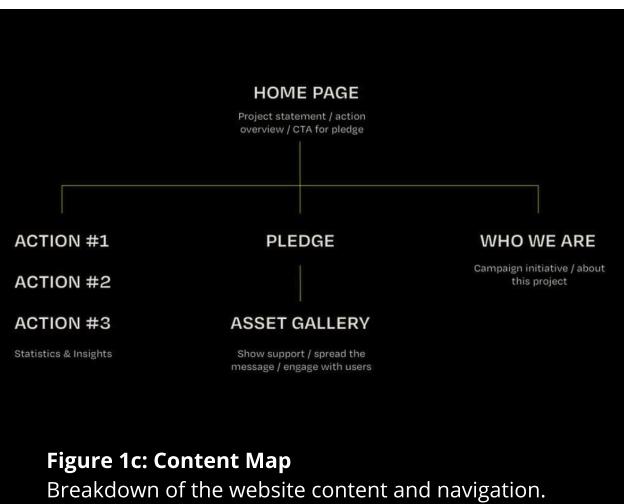


Figure 1c: Content Map

Breakdown of the website content and navigation.

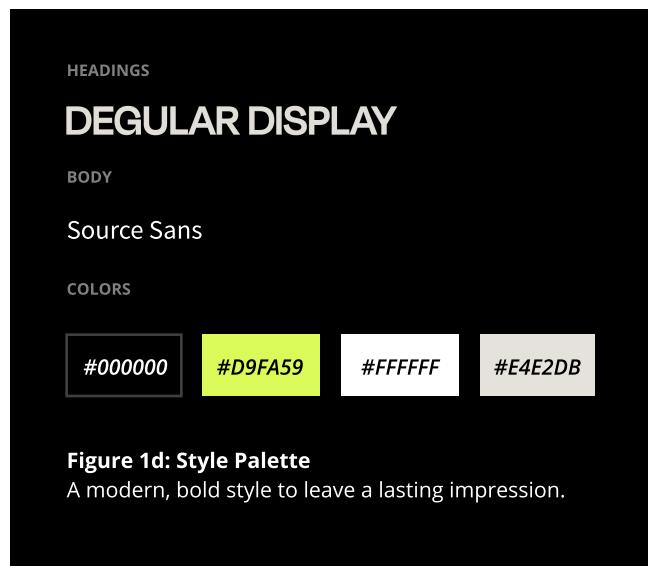


Figure 1d: Style Palette

A modern, bold style to leave a lasting impression.

Figure 1e: Main Page Breakdown

(Below) Initial splash page that fades away.

(Left) Home page that provides swift navigation.



Dynamic banner with an animated background that provides preview into a short informative film.

Actions Items that act as hyperlinks to respective pages with more facts and information.

Upon hovering, Action Items change colors and reveal contrasting visuals in order to catch attention.

Black and white images were incorporated throughout the site to provide more candid, solemn statements.

A banner at the bottom encourages individuals and companies to sign a pledge to commit to their actions.

Footer navigation provides quick access throughout the site and complements the hamburger side menu.

The diagram illustrates the main page breakdown of the Silence Speaks website. It starts with a screenshot of the home page on the left, which features a laptop displaying the main headline "SILENCE SPEAKS." and a subtext "Breaking yours is the first step to change." An arrow points from this home page to the main content area on the right. The main content area consists of several sections: 1. A dynamic banner with an animated background showing a protest scene, with the text "Gen Z believes Silence Speaks louder than words. So we use our voice, and we use it for change." and "We support brands that do the same." 2. A section titled "WHAT IS SILENCE?" explaining that social and worldly issues drive Gen Z's brand loyalty. 3. Three action items: "ACTION 1 UNLEARN TO RELEARN" (with a black and white photo of a person speaking into a microphone), "ACTION 2 SPEAK UP WITH PURPOSE" (with a black and white photo of a person speaking at a podium), and "ACTION 3 TAKE A STAND" (with a black and white photo of a protest). 4. A large banner at the bottom encouraging users to "USE YOUR VOICE" and "SIGN THE PLEDGE". 5. A footer navigation bar with links to "Silence Speaks", "Facebook", "Twitter", "Instagram", "YouTube", "Who We Are", "Contact", "Sign the Pledge", "Meet Gen-Z", and "Top". A circular button labeled "SIGN THE PLEDGE" is also visible in the footer.

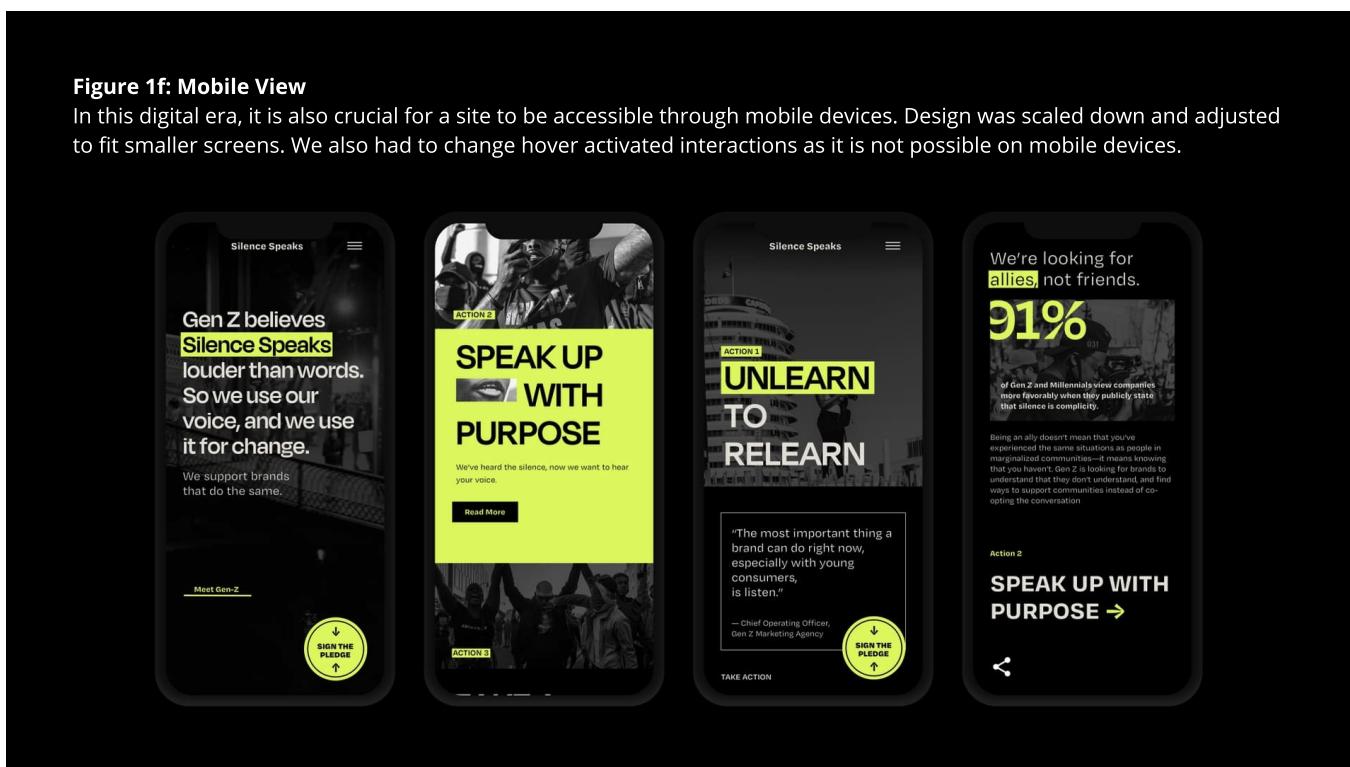
CREATIVE PROCESS - BEHIND THE SCENES

In addition to creating personas, there were other important steps taken before delving into designing and developing the site.

Competitive Analysis - We analyzed other websites with unique modules, interactions and designs in order to have a more holistic understanding of how to translate our creative concepts into an engaging site. From doing so, we understood that we needed *expressive animation, immersive storytelling, and minimalism*.

Mood Board - We collected pictures of UI elements that we thought would best fit our goal. This included different font styles and color palettes as well. This has helped us build our style palette as seen in Figure 1d. We were inspired by *simple yet striking* designs that send clear messages.

Low-fidelity Prototypes - We sketched out our designs and produced basic mockups which allowed us to go through iterations of design and ensure our design would provide the best user interface.



OUTCOME

Although it was a remote internship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, working at a design agency was an insightful, unique experience. As a UX engineer, I loved that I was able to still code and practice my engineering background while getting to be a part of the creative process, particularly with the design and research side.

More specifically, I am glad to have worked on a project that focused on social good during a difficult year for a lot of people around the world. The final product still has some bugs and needs to be improved on its responsive design, but I also gained new insights from this experience. Something I would do differently next time would be to focus on mobile design first and then expand to desktop version from that, rather than vice versa. I have learned that it is a lot harder to scale down a desktop site into a mobile version given limited space and gesture capabilities. It is easier to scale up from the mobile version and take advantage of the extra space when doing so.