

“Contrary to popular belief, designers are not artists. We employ artistic methods to visualize thinking and process, but, unlike artists, we work to solve a client’s problem, not present our own view of the world. We thrive on constraints, but we hate compromise. If a design project is to be considered successful—and success is the true measure of quality—it must not only add an aesthetic dimension, but solve the problem at hand.”

—Erik Spiekermann, Design is a Job, Forward

FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW

TASK

For your final project, you will be designing a marketing-focused landing page for a start-up company. You will be provided with two sample briefs—you must select one to move forward with.*

This project will kick off at the first class meeting, and will take the full eight weeks to complete, with regular check-ins along the way. You will be creating a variety of smaller design deliverables and process documentation that demonstrate your process leading up to your final design. You will be giving a formal design presentation of your progress at both the mid-term and final reviews. Your instructor will be acting as your client.

* You can also choose to work on a project for your current employer or your own start-up/idea. However, we *strongly recommend* that you use one of our creative briefs, as we have all of the supplemental materials that you need to produce a successful project and have simulated what a real industry design brief would look like. The lessons have been planned around the structure of the provided materials. If you want to design your own project, you must consult with your instructor to manage the scope and feasibility.

GOALS

To successfully complete this project, you should:

- Express a clear design vision.
 - Demonstrate an understanding of thoughtful design process and decision making.
 - Create a presentation that clearly articulates the rationale behind your design decisions.
 - Address both the primary and secondary audience, as defined in the brief.
 - Balance aesthetics with the client’s communication goals and the user’s expectations and usability needs.
 - Meet all of the requirements, deliverables and deadlines listed in this document.
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REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES

MID-TERM REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES

For the MID-TERM REVIEW you will be creating a presentation deck that includes the following:

- A project objective and design strategy statement.
- Research that reflects a visual survey of similar businesses and an exploration of key concepts articulated in the brief.
- 2 or 3 moodboard options that each suggest distinct design directions, yet still respond to the brief.
- A grayscale layout wireframe that abstracts elements to articulate the relationships between them on the page.
- 2 or 3 color scheme options, each applied to your layout wireframe to reflect hierarchy.
- 2 or 3 typographic palette options.

FINAL REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES

For the FINAL REVIEW you will be creating a presentation deck that includes the following:

- A project objective and design strategy statement.
- Research that reflects a visual survey of similar businesses and an exploration of key concepts articulated in the brief.
- 1 final moodboard that suggests the design direction, based on feedback from your client.
- A grayscale layout wireframe that abstracts elements to articulate the relationships between them on the page.
- 1 final typographic palette, based on feedback from your client.
- 1 final color scheme, based on feedback from your client, and applied to your layout wireframe to reflect hierarchy.
- 1 element board that defines styles for each state of the main interactive elements needed on your landing page.
- a one-page style guide that annotates all of the final design elements
- Your complete landing page design, showing a responsive design composition at desktop, tablet and smart phone breakpoints.
- Any additional supporting sketches, writing, or design studies that help show your process and support your thinking.

BONUS

Neither of the start-up clients represented in the briefs have a logo. While a study of branding and logo design is outside the scope of this course, you may elect to design an original logomark for your client. If this is a path you choose to pursue, be sure to include your process (sketches and studies), as well as rationale explaining how your logo represents the client's core values as part of your final presentation.

This is optional — if you don't want to design a logo, you can get around this by carefully typesetting the company name in a font of your choosing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING STARTED

MAINTAIN FOCUS

- Define a clear objective and strategy and return to them throughout the life of the project to make sure your design solution is staying on track.
- List the project constraints and use them as a jumping-off point. If you find your project is losing focus, make sure your design is conforming to the constraints.
- Moodboards aren't just for organizing thinking around a design direction. Use them to tell a story about your target audience, to assemble examples of best-practice UI elements or to organize your thinking around any aspect of the project you'd like to coalesce your thinking on. If you choose to make any additional moodboards, be sure to include them as part of your presentation deck.
- At every step of the project, ask yourself: Am I answering the brief? Am I honoring the content? Am I being kind to the user? What am I communicating with this design?

RESEARCH

- Each assignment includes readings and bonus readings. Keeping up with the reading isn't just a way to make sure you're prepared for class each week — they're also there to provide inspiration points. It may be helpful to refer back to them throughout the course, especially if you're stuck on a particular aspect of your design.
- You will be creating a Pinterest account as part of the course. Pinterest allows you collect images and notes for both inspiration and research. Pin the examples from the readings, pin screenshots of designs and apps you like or feel or relevant, pin examples from designers or typographers you respect. Each unit includes suggestions of material to add to your pinboard. If you keep up with image collecting on Pinterest throughout the course, you'll have a rich resource to refer to for inspiration and research.

TIPS

- Do not copy someone else's existing design solution, even if you make a few changes to the layout, fonts, colors, etc. — you'd still be copying, not designing.
 - Do learn from existing best-practice UI patterns, and be smart about how to incorporate those patterns into your design.
 - Keep a notebook: sketch, make lists, write down anything you hear or think of that might spark an idea or solution.
 - Take breaks. Sometimes walking away from something for a while is just the thing to spark an idea or clear a mental block.
 - Don't save everything for the last minute. Each of the deliverables required for the final project is incorporated into the homework each week. Keeping up with the homework also allows you to get feedback along the way.
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RESOURCES

TYPE & FONTS

- Google Fonts: hundreds of high-quality open-source web fonts. (You can download .ttf fonts by adding fonts to your collection and clicking the download arrow in the top right of the screen.)
<http://www.google.com/fonts/>
- The League of Movable Type: a collection of high-quality open-source typefaces that are licensed for use on the web, and available for download as .otf font files.
<https://www.theleagueofmoveabletype.com>

PHOTOGRAPHY

The following are a few collections of free high-quality images that you can download and incorporate into your designs. If you use any photography, be sure to attribute the photographer in your style guide annotations.

- Little Visuals: <http://littlevisuals.co/>
- Unsplash: <https://unsplash.com/>
- Picjumbo: <http://picjumbo.com/>
- Pixabay: <http://pixabay.com/>
- Flickr Creative Commons license: <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>

ICONS & SYMBOLS

- FontAwesome: a web-friendly, open-source icon font. You will need to open “glyphs” under the type menu in Illustrator to access these icons. In your style guide, remember to attribute the icon designer in your annotations.
<http://fontawesome.io/>
 - The Noun Project: another source for creative commons (open-source) icons. You will need to search for individual icons and download them one at a time as either png files if you are working in Photoshop, or svg files if you are using Illustrator. To gain free access to these icons, you will need to create an account and agree to attribute the icon designer in your design. For the purposes of this class, you may assume that your client would pay for the icon, so attribute the icon designer in your style guide, not in your polished landing page design.
<http://thenounproject.com/>
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