

## Project Overview

When I joined the *University of San Diego* as the *Career Events & Marketing Coordinator*, I stepped into a fast-moving environment just one week before a major event. That first event gave me a chance to observe quietly, but as soon as it ended, I shifted into exploration mode. I wanted to understand how we marketed our programs, especially since these events happen every single year.

What I discovered was a clear UX opportunity: there was no system. Flyers varied widely in tone, layout, and quality, even when promoting the same event. One asset might go out two months ahead, another a week before, but there was no visual or strategic connection between them. No templates. No timelines. No consistency. Internally, posts were uploaded ad hoc with no clear ownership or structure. Externally, students were left to interpret scattered, off-brand messaging that lacked clarity or excitement.

Even more surprising: as the official “*marketing coordinator*,” I wasn’t empowered to make or publish decisions without approval, while student interns often were. Rather than feel discouraged, I saw a design challenge. I realized that the cyclical nature of our event calendar made it perfectly suited for a repeatable, scalable marketing system. One rooted in structure, intentionality, and brand consistency. **So I built it.**

**I created a comprehensive, plug-and-play collateral library for every major event.** Each campaign now includes a full asset set: a main announcement, three “story” posts released one week out, a bold day-before reminder, a same-day post, and a thank-you message the day after. These were designed in multiple formats (print, email, social, story) and optimized for both accessibility and ease of editing. All of them live in one centralized system and are clearly labeled, organized, and instantly reusable. From a UX standpoint, this transformation addressed two major audiences:

- Internal users now have a clear, consistent, and accessible system. One that saves time, reduces confusion, and eliminates redundant work.
- Students now experience marketing that feels cohesive, thoughtfully designed, and genuinely engaging. The messaging is clear. The visuals are polished. The storytelling is intentional.

This wasn't something I was asked to do but it was something I knew had to be done. I designed over 50 brand-aligned assets with long-term scalability in mind. They're reusable for at least two years as-is, and easily refreshed beyond that with minor visual updates. What started as a simple audit turned into a full UX redesign of how we present ourselves as a department. And now, instead of improvising, our team has a dependable, user-centered system that supports better outcomes for everyone.

## **The Problem**

When I first started asking questions about our department's marketing process, I was told to "*check the Drive or look through our Canva account everything's there.*" What I found instead was a loose collection of flyers and assets, all created at different times, in different styles, by different people. It wasn't a system, it was a collection of one-off efforts stitched together over time.

This was surprising, especially in a university setting where most events follow a predictable yearly schedule. In an ideal scenario, a well-organized team would have:

- A marketing calendar outlining what gets posted and when.
- Pre-built, reusable assets for recurring events.
- Visual consistency that supports both institutional branding and departmental identity.
- Clear ownership of who's doing what and why.

Instead, we were working reactively. Flyers were often created from scratch each time, with no templates, no consistency, and no long-term reuse. Deadlines were fluid, strategy was unclear, and visual styles varied wildly, even for the same event. Without a structured plan, even high-priority outreach became a last-minute scramble.

For internal team members, this meant spending unnecessary time searching, recreating, or second-guessing what to use. For external audiences like students or employers, it meant receiving materials that lacked cohesion and visual credibility. All which diluted the professionalism and clarity of our

messaging. What stood out most was how little ownership existed. Even though I was hired as the “*Marketing Coordinator*,” I discovered that key publishing decisions were often made informally, with minimal coordination.

Marketing had become a shared task with no shared system and that made it harder for anyone to do their best work. **But beyond the logistics, I saw something deeper: the absence of a user-centered mindset.** Marketing wasn’t being treated as part of the user experience. It wasn’t being shaped with intention, clarity, or design in mind. **But marketing is UX.** It communicates value. It builds trust. It signals who we are and what we offer. Without structure, we weren’t just being inefficient, we were missing the opportunity to engage our audience in a meaningful way. That’s what I set out to change.

## **The Solution Part A – Visual Design System**

The first step I took was diving into the official University of San Diego branding guidelines. I treated these as my foundation. I did not look at these guidelines as restrictions, but as a creative framework to build something cohesive, polished, and deeply on-brand. My goal wasn’t just to follow the rules. **It was to create a recognizable visual identity for the Career Development Center (CDev) that students and staff could instantly identify across platforms.**

To do that, I designed a unified color scheme, character style, and tone that would stretch across all events and all formats. While the visual characters and illustrations changed slightly to reflect the nature of each event (e.g., *Spring Career Fair* vs. *Psychology Showcase*), the visual language remained constant. Fonts, colors, layout styles, spacing, and tone stayed consistent. This created an experience where someone could instantly say, “Oh, this is a Career Center event.” Each campaign followed a simple narrative arc: from building anticipation (“*Find Your Calling*,” “*Level Up*”) to preparing with clear tips (“*Bring Your Resume*,” “*Dress to Impress*”), to closing the loop with a thank-you or reflection after the event.

In this way, each flyer wasn’t just a one-off announcement. Instead, it was a small chapter in a cohesive student-centered story. To ensure consistency across formats, I carefully adjusted each asset based on its platform. A wide web banner might include additional background elements to fill space

elegantly, while a vertical Instagram story version might simplify content to maintain clarity. But no matter the shape or size, every version carried the same voice and visual DNA. **It was brand cohesiveness in action and it was design with storytelling and flow.**

I treated each visual decision as part of the UX. Fonts were readable. Contrast ratios were checked. Assets were built natively to their platform dimensions (e.g., 1080x1080 for social posts, 1920x1080 for stories). Nothing was stretched, squeezed, or repurposed without care. Everything was crafted intentionally, with the end user, the student, always in mind. Even the questions I asked myself during the process reflected a UX mindset:

- *“How can I make this instantly clear to a busy student?”*
- *“What’s the feeling I want this to create?”*
- *“How do I design this to be both engaging and effortless to understand?”*

The end result was more than a set of clean flyers, **it was a student-first visual system that elevated the Career Center’s identity and created a stronger, more unified presence across campus.**

## **The Solution Part B – Scalable Marketing Structure**

Beyond the visuals, I created a repeatable marketing system designed to support our department for more than a single semester. I structured each campaign to follow a consistent rollout pattern:

- 1 Month Before: A main informative flyer goes out across all platforms to share the key event details (date, time, location).
- 1 Week Before: A series of engaging “story” assets are released every other day. These are more than just reminders. They’re narrative-driven content, like “Do’s and Don’ts” or helpful tips. They’re fun, student-focused, and tied directly to the event experience.
- Day Before: A high-visibility version of the flyer with a bold “Tomorrow” callout helps reignite awareness.

- Day Of: The original main flyer is reused as a final push.
- Day After: A “Thank You” version of the flyer closes the loop. Creating a full circle that supports anticipation, engagement, and reflection.

This timeline would serve as the baseline process for all major event marketing, giving the team clarity on what should go out and when. To make this structure scalable, I took time to organize all assets intentionally in both Canva and Google Drive:

- Canva folders are labeled clearly by campaign name (e.g. “*Engineering & Computing Fair – Marketing Campaign*”), reinforcing that each asset is part of a full system.
- Drive files are named for clarity and reuse, like:  
Main\_E&C\_Fair\_Handshake\_25\_1200x300px or  
Day\_Before\_E&C\_Fair\_25\_8.5x11in.

This allows anyone to search, locate, and use what they need without additional help. I also designed the entire system to be future-ready. I built marketing assets for every major event a full year in advance, across all formats and sizes. Even better, the materials were designed for multi-year reuse. The foundational structure, layout, and brand cohesion can stay in place for at least two years. And when we’re ready to refresh, a simple update to the character set, color palette, or story content is all it takes to make them feel new again.

That makes this system not just scalable but sustainable.

If I were to leave tomorrow, the team would still have everything they need. The assets are accessible, editable, labeled with care, and built to work across print, social, and digital platforms. No guesswork. No bottlenecks. No unnecessary workload. And most importantly, it makes life easier for everyone. Now, when someone thinks “*how is this being marketed?*” they already know. If the event is a month away, they expect the first flyer. A week out? Story assets are on the calendar. And if someone needs to print something last-minute, they can open the folder, grab the file, and be done in seconds. It reduces cognitive load, empowers team independence, and creates a smoother, more effective marketing workflow. All by design .

Beyond internal ease, this system elevates how our department is perceived. From the outside, it's immediately clear that our marketing is intentional, student-centered, and strategically planned. Signaling a team that is organized, professional, and user-focused in everything we do.

## Outcome

While this work hasn't been formally measured yet and organizational dynamics have made recognition challenging, the value of this system is clear. I built something that didn't exist before: **a complete, student-centered marketing system grounded in structure, clarity, and intentional design.** Internally, my efforts created a fully scalable foundation that has already made our work easier. Major event marketing is now completed a year in advance, organized, and immediately accessible to anyone on the team. There is no need to start from scratch, no need to ask around. That alone removes friction and gives everyone more time and headspace to think creatively instead of reactively. The system I created doesn't just eliminate repetitive work, it amplifies capacity.

Externally, the difference is tangible. Students are no longer encountering generic or inconsistent flyers. They're engaging with branded, high-quality, story-driven content that feels intentional because it is. Every asset was designed with UX principles in mind: clear hierarchy, strong contrast, purposeful layout, and a sense of narrative that invites students in. As the campaigns roll out, students will begin to recognize the Career Center's voice and visuals, which builds trust and anticipation over time. It's marketing that speaks directly to them not at them.

Though formal feedback has been limited, one thing is consistent: this work stands out. Whether or not it's openly acknowledged, I've seen the quiet impact. The look of surprise when I shared the full campaign system, the subtle shift when someone realizes we're no longer playing catch-up. Even small acts of reuse, like when my director recently used one of my thank-you poster templates to celebrate scholarship recipients, show that the system is already adding value. And for me, that's the real measure of success:

- Systems are in place.

- Quality is elevated.
- UX is front and center.
- Students are better supported.
- And I've created space for the team to think bigger than "*just make a flyer.*"

This case study represents the kind of designer I am: observant, systems-minded, driven by clarity, and always looking for the human behind the interaction. Even in a setting where that approach hasn't always been understood, I remain committed to using UX thinking to create meaningful, lasting change.

## Reflections & Lessons Learned

This project was another powerful reminder that UX is everywhere. A flyer may seem simple but if it leaves a student more confused than before, if it fails to excite or inform, that's a UX failure. If our own team isn't sure how or when things are marketed, that's a UX failure. And if implementing structure is seen as disruptive rather than helpful, that signals a deeper organizational UX breakdown. I also learned to appreciate the massive difference between working reactively and working with intentionality and foresight. That shift is hard to put into words, but it's easy to feel. Especially when viewed through a UX lens. It's not just a better process; it's a different mindset. One focused on long-term clarity, not just short-term fixes.

In terms of execution, I wouldn't change much. I didn't act impulsively. I prepared. I read four books (two on UX, two on marketing), I researched our current systems, I followed USD brand guidelines precisely, and I consistently cross-checked my actions with my job description. I built every asset in good faith, always with the goal of improving our student experience and making our department stronger. **If anything, this project solidified my identity as a UX designer.** It showed me that UX thinking doesn't require a formal title . **Ux thinking, it's a mindset, and it naturally showed up in the way I approach problems.** Bringing UX principles into an environment not used to them wasn't always easy.

But it taught me an important truth: **UX is about making systems work better for the people they're meant to serve.** Sometimes change meets resistance. But a UX designer's role isn't to play small or stay quiet. A UX designer's role is to advocate for users and build with clarity, logic, and purpose. That's exactly what I did. And that's what I'm most proud of: I didn't wait for permission to fix a broken system. I saw the friction, understood the problem, and designed a better experience. I'm confident that any UX designer would have done the same and I'm even more confident now that I'm one of them.