

Creating an ecommerce shop for AWS and Aim High Ink

GOAL

To build an ecommerce shop as part of a collaboration between AWS and Aim High Ink to allow AWS employees to purchase custom screen printed apparel for themselves or for their respective departments through the Aim High Ink website.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

Representatives between Aim High Ink and AWS, and a design team which consists of the executive director of Aim High PDX, the executive assistant, a representative of AWS and me as the media and tech lead.

INITIAL STARTUP PROCESS

Around February 2021, AWS made a purchase request for a six item, 350 bundle of apparel which equated out to over 2000 items. At the time, this was the largest purchase order ever made through Aim High Ink. After the items were distributed, the overall reception of these items were highly regarded and by September 2021 a plan was laid out to establish a partnership between AWS and Aim High Ink.

In early September, a meeting between the executive director and a representative from AWS spoke about creating a shop dedicated solely to AWS employees where they can make purchase requests for screen printing services that are uniquely customized for each of their departments. Once confirmed that this project was a go, I was given the task to make an ecommerce store for this partnership.

CREATING THE FOUNDATION OF THE SHOP

At the time of writing this article, there has been no formal confirmation about what items are going to be in the store, but there is a general idea of what would be big ticket items that AWS employees gravitate towards.

Displaying these items was the main priority and they needed to have options to select specific logos that are going to be screen printed onto the apparel. I also included what size apparel were needed and the color of the garment that was selected. I used a combination of Figma, Adobe Dimension and Adobe Photoshop as my tools utilized for the graphics, and the Aim High Ink website is hosted on the static site generator Squarespace, which allows for some customization on top of the general styling and development options Squarespace offers.



A visual of the customization process of a t-shirt through the website

THE GENERAL IDEA BECAME MORE THAN JUST A SHOP

By the beginning of October, more meetings were held and more ideas came into fruition, as including a cover page, a story of how everything began, a donation webpage, and also a volunteer page was to be added somewhere as part of the welcoming experience to the shop. The build of the layout helped with organizing the content into sections, and it also solved the problem of the limitations that Squarespace has when it comes to customizing the layout on the website.

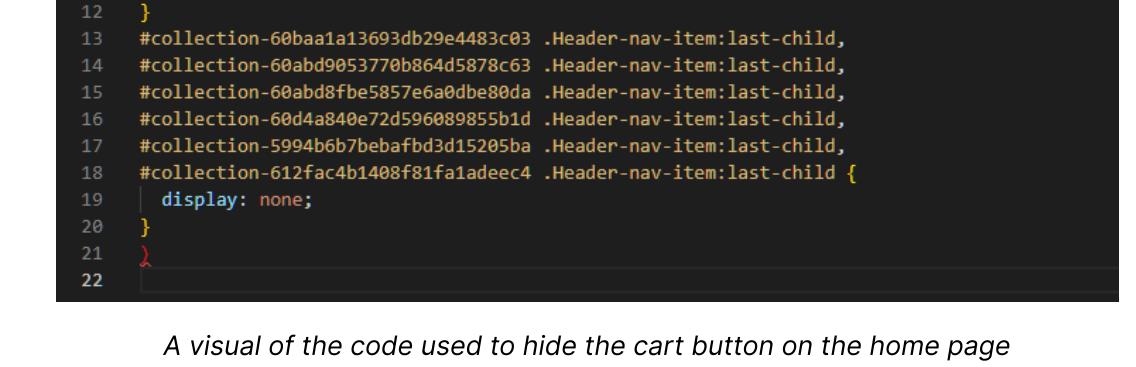
THE DESIGN PROCESS

I started off by figuring out how to highlight the partnership between AWS and Aim High Ink. I immediately drew my attention towards the colors used for each organization.

A visual of color palettes used for the home page of AWS/Aim High Ink website.

With the color schemes in mind, I devised a way to include the presence of both organizations throughout the entire shopping experience.

The welcome page is what most employees see most often when first introduced to the site, and so I went with a simple rectangular banner design of 2 triangles separated by a bold golden line for the background, all colors representing AWS and Ink.



A Visual of the AWS/Aim High Ink home page

The lighter dark matte blue (#242C36) is one of the text colors used for the AWS logo while the darker matte blue (#0B131F) represents Aim High Ink's main logo's color code. The text I went with includes bold white lettering for a pop effect that contrasts well on top of the darker background. After presenting this to the AWS representative along with the rest of the Aim High team, I was given the approval that the front page design is what they were looking for. Proceeding forward I was able to implement elements of this to the ecommerce page right after. Text Fonts, logo placement, associated pictures of team interaction, and a donation button that leads to AWS' direct donation page were all included on each webpage to emphasize that AWS and Ink are invested in showcasing their collaboration with each other.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Squarespace has almost full control over the layout of the shop, so building the foundation for it was almost straight forward. Besides the minimal options to set whether some items, navigation, and menus would be located in a fixed position somewhere on the website, everything I did was just plug and play. A majority of my time was creating the graphics for each item, which I used a combination of tools such as Figma as my prototyping tool, Adobe Dimension for my 3D graphic displays, and Adobe Photoshop to layer certain items with logos. As a side note, the majority of the custom code that I've added was towards the About, Volunteer and Donate pages, which included custom HTML, CSS, and Javascript.

ISSUES ADDRESSED

An issue that came up was the complexity of creating the checkout process for the shop. It was brought to my attention that there would be two ways that people were to make purchases:

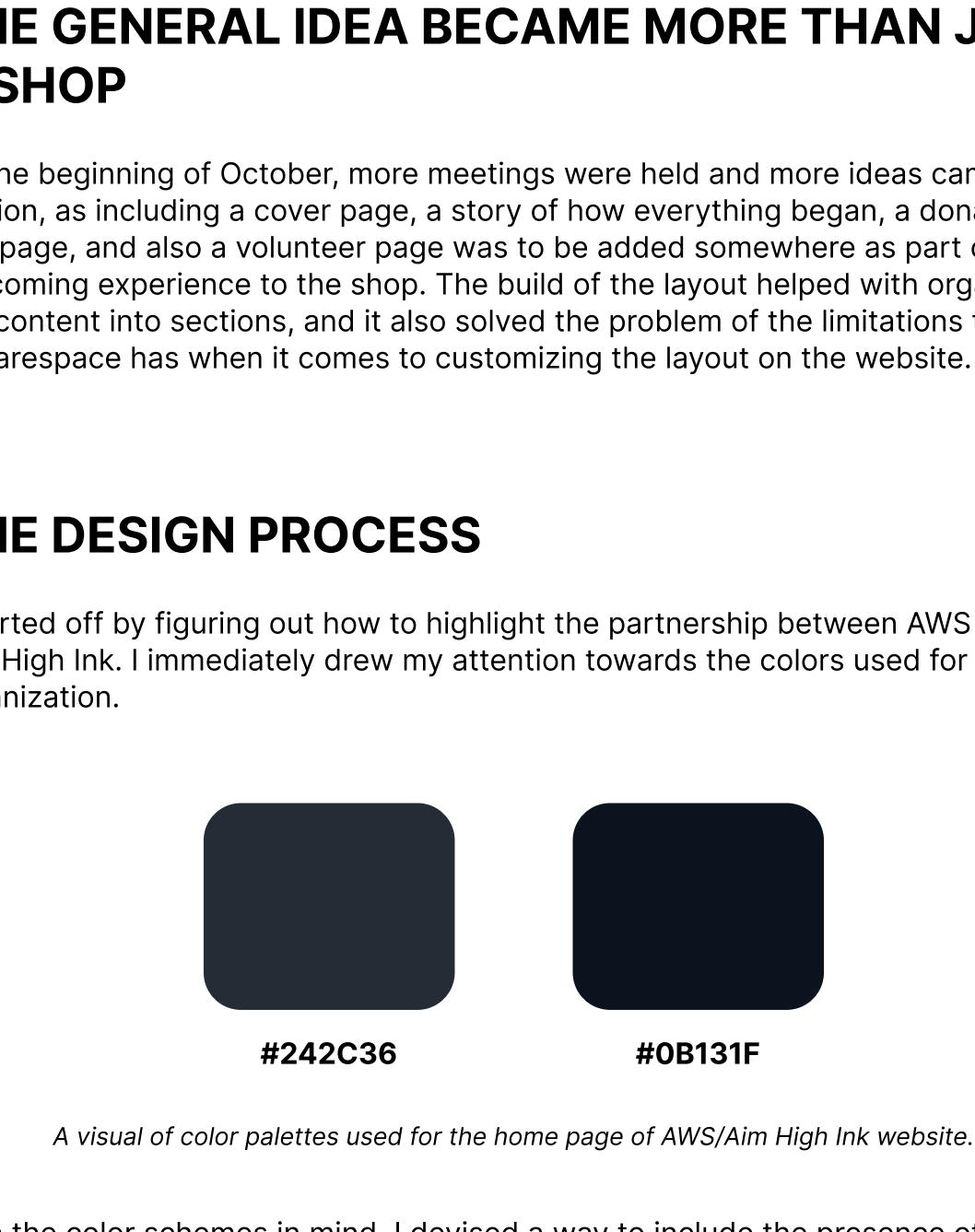
- The employee buying apparel and paying directly through the website
- An employee making a purchase request from their supervisor and the supervisor would submit payment through an external option outside of the website's checkout process.

The editing tools in Squarespace are straightforward, but are limited in customization. There is no linear option that allows you to make a purchase request without going through the entire purchasing process, which includes a billing address and credit card info. I did however find a loophole to solve this issue, and I made it as straightforward as I could get the process to be. With the help of Aim High's executive assistant, we came up with a plan which later on was implemented to create an entire section for people wanting to make a purchase request and inputting the payment method and who will pay. I also included discount promo codes that would drop the price down to \$0, which allowed for the purchase to bypass filling out credit card information. We also discussed this issue with the AWS representative, and thankfully AWS has an internal system which can collect the invoice once the purchase request has been made and they will receive this info to provide the required payment back to Ink.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

This entire process was a first for me in many ways. This was my first time designing an ecommerce platform, and it was the first time I was able to work on something that a huge enterprise like AWS would be continuously using for their employees.

As the acting designer and developer for all of Aim High's websites, I've already had experience injecting custom code into Squarespace for a unique look compared to many templates that Squarespace offers. With the AWS ecommerce store, however, it forced me to try new and unique ways to display specific webpages and components for AWS on the Aim High Ink website without it being easily found by the general public. Even something simple as having the cart button to show on the AWS pages and not the rest of Aim High Ink's website took a few days to identify the correct id and classes for each page and component for it to display correctly and in the right position.



A visual of the code used to hide the cart button on the home page

I have learned different techniques and ways to build an ecommerce site and to create designs that can help integrate one business's identity into another business's website while still keeping themes for both. This has opened an even bigger toolbox for me to utilize when working on future projects, and I know that my work in web design and development will continue to improve when given the opportunities to do so.