



The Beginner's Guide to Branding



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Readers are saying...

From naming your brand identity, to selecting a color palette, the Beginner's Guide to Branding is an easy-to-follow, comprehensive tool, designed to help you cultivate consistent and timeless branding - a highly recommended read.

Callie Hegstrom



It felt like a 6 month design course that got absorbed, comprehended and appreciated in 30 minutes flat. All in all, a beautifully presented stash of invaluable design wisdom... It's a keeper. It's gonna live on my desktop.

Nicky Laatz



Learning about branding can be really confusing, But it doesn't have to be—this ebook cuts through the jargon and offers real advice to help build your brand.

Simon Stratford



This wonderful guide is not only for beginners, but for experienced designers and customers. Everything in this ebook is written in a specific sequence, which makes this comprehensible and useful. I would like to see this ebook in my library! Great work!

Julia Baranova



After working in branding for a number of years this is a great tool and really useful go-to guide that can be used by not only designers looking to create an effective brand identity but also by business owners wanting to get a better understanding of what branding entails before embarking on a branding project for their business. I would definitely recommend it.

Rene Murray



Introduction to Branding

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You probably hear the term branding being tossed around a lot. But what exactly does it mean?

In brief, branding refers to the elements that define the image, ethos, and tone of your company and its products. Think about iconic branding elements like Apple's logo or Taco Bell's slogan. Hear or see those things and you'll instantly know what the brand truly stands for.

As you read this ebook, remember these three pieces of advice:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.

Understand who you want to "get" your brand. The user who gets excited about an app that can automatically help sort emails would look for a very different kind of branding than someone looking for a mobile game to pass the time. Identify your target market, not just by demographics but also by tastes. Is it quirky? Businesslike? Cutting-edge? Retro? Once you've figured that out, you can start to create an identity that draws their attention—and business.

EVERYTHING COUNTS.

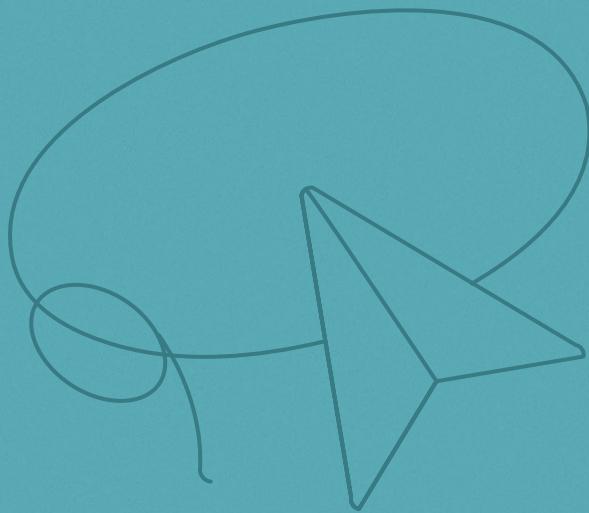
Keeping your brand consistent is key. That means that the graphic elements, copy, and any type of content all must be part of the same concept. Each one needs to be tailored to the preferences of your target consumer. If you are going with a streamlined, tech-obsessed look, for example, you should concentrate on finding angular (but legible) font styles that complement that contemporary style. It might also be a good idea to avoid pastels in favor of working with more dramatic colors. Similarly, make sure any promotions, whether on email or social media, reflect that identity.

MEMORABLE IS VITAL.

Standing out in the crowd is the only way to get your brand noticed. Taking some calculated risks can make that happen. If you are working on a portfolio site, going for monochrome can pay off—it's dramatic and can help highlight the images. Or, you can embrace your own creativity and create an immersive site where each element reflects a different time period or looks like a landscape, among other examples.

These are a few important points to bear in mind when creating a brand. Consider making a paper sketch of branding ideas to get a sense of how they look on the page before you actually create it.

Try to review concepts from a consumer's point of view. Would the brand identity & message you've created interest you? Are you the brand's target audience? 



What's in a Name?

Crucial Steps to Take Before Naming Your Brand

OWEN ANDREW

@owenandrew7

**The wrong brand
name choice can sink
your ship *before you
even set sail.***

Owen Andrew is a journalist and tech enthusiast from Southern California. When he's not writing or obsessing over the latest Apple product, he enjoys hanging with his three kids.

We are building brands in the age of technology. Because of the times we live in, public opinions of any given product are subject to the whims of first impressions and search engines. While brand loyalty extends beyond the brand name itself, the attractiveness of a company or product is often complemented by effective brand names that attract different kinds of customers. The trouble is, the naming and branding process can be difficult and time-consuming.

Brand names, like any other attribute of a business, require brainstorming and work-shopping before the right idea turns into the right concept. It's incredibly easy to pick something off

the top of your head, but it could turn out to violate trademark laws or have suggestive connotations. Taking the time to come up with the right brand name will inevitably save you money in the long run. Rebranding is an expensive process and potentially risky for business.

A handy article from [Entrepreneur Magazine](#) outlines a step-by-step process for naming your business:

1. Decide whether you will consult the experts.

There are plenty of branding firms out there that are willing to help you to come up with the right name. However, it depends on what you're willing to invest in the process. Using a firm is expensive. Only you can decide whether your team can come up with a brand on its own or you need to enlist help.

2. Come up with a goal for your brand name.

Decide exactly what you want to communicate to potential customers. It should relate to what you do and how you do it. What makes you stand out from other businesses?

3. Brainstorm different names.

The best brand names evoke an emotional connection and impart logical information at the same time. Try brainstorming from different angles.

4. Check for trademark violations.

There are simply so many trademarks in existence that you will have to check each of your top names to make sure it isn't already taken. You can work around trademarks by coining a new word or name.

5. Create a brand image for each idea.

Once you have settled on a few different options, create boards with designs for each brand name. Seeing the visual concept will help you decide.

6. Make the final decision.

Whether the decision is an executive one or a democratic one, you will have to choose the name that fits your business best.

After determining your new brand name, you should pair your brand-naming strategy with a marketing and ecommerce strategy to attract the right crowds. Your brand name should attract the masses, but you

also have to perform according to your brand name.

AVOID BRAND NAME MISSTEPS.

With so many bad names out there, it can be difficult to point out what exactly is wrong. However, there are some attributes, which when combined, make an exceptionally bad brand name:

1. Representing it with the wrong image

One of the biggest branding mistakes was committed by Burger King, which used an actor wearing a king mask in their commercials. They thought it would be funny, but it just came off as creepy. Be careful when selecting imagery to go along with your brand name.

2. Imitators

Consumers need to be able to trust your brand. If you imitate another brand, they will assume your services are also mere imitations.

3. Puns that are funny only to you

Obscure names are obnoxious, and they're even more obnoxious when they are turned into puns.

4. Misspellings or strange spellings

A brand name should still be recognizable as a word. Companies like Apple, Google, and Twitter have achieved visibility through accurate spellings and simplicity. Is your name easy to pronounce? ☺

*Completely uninspired?
Check out [Naminum](#), an
online name generation
tool that helps you discover
interesting options to get
your creative juices flowing.*

The screenshot shows the Naminum interface. At the top, there's a dark header with the Naminum logo (a stylized 'N' icon) and the word "Naminum". Below the header is a search bar containing the placeholder text "Supply a word to generate names with (e.g. "Cerulean" or "Iris")". Underneath the search bar are four buttons: "Append", "Replace", "Prepend", and "Random". To the right of these buttons is a dropdown menu with options: "3 letters", "4 letters", "5 letters", "6 letters" (which is highlighted with a dark background), and "7 letters". Below this menu are four sub-options labeled "Abstract 3", "Abstract 4", "Abstract 5", "Abstract 6", and "Abstract 7". A large grid of generated names follows. The first column contains: nerdic, nereid, nereis, nerine, nerite, nerkas, neroli, and nerols. The second column contains: onlays, online, onload, onning, onrush, onsets, onside, and onuses. The third column contains: parred, parrel, parrot, parsec, parsed, parser, parses, and parson. The fourth column contains: pipers, pipets, pipier, piping, pipits, pipkin, pipped, and pippin. The fifth column contains: primed, primer, primes, primly, primos, primps, primus, and prince. A light gray banner across the grid says "Click a name to get more variations similar to it". At the bottom right of the grid, the URL "Naminum.com" is visible.

3 letters	4 letters	5 letters	6 letters	7 letters
Abstract 3	Abstract 4	Abstract 5	Abstract 6	Abstract 7
nerdic	onlays	parred	pipers	primed
nereid	online	parrel	pipets	primer
nereis	onload	parrot	pipier	primes
nerine	onning	parsec	piping	primly
nerite	onrush	parsed	pipits	primos
nerkas	onsets	parser	pipkin	primps
neroli	onside	parses	pipped	primus
nerols	onuses	parson	pippin	prince

Brainstorming a Name

A simple 6-step process to come up with 100 ideas

1

COMPETITORS

What name/s are your competitors using to brand their products? Include substitutes.

2

VALUE

What words encompass the most important thing your product does for its users? Use verbs.

Write down 15 words.

Write down 15 words.

3

LITERAL

Which words come to mind when thinking about your product's physical characteristics?

Write down 15 words.

4

ABSTRACT

Which words related to feelings or emotions best convey your product's key functions?

Write down 15 words.

5

COMBINATIONS

How could you combine (either by prepending or appending) any of the words in points 1-4 to form a new name?

Write down 15 combinations.

6

SYNONYMS

Find synonyms for the best 25 words that you came up with in points 1-4. Spend more time on your strongest ideas.

Write down at least 25 synonyms.

Designing a Brand Identity

GERREN LAMSON

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Creative Market

Gerren Lamson is an Austin-based designer, illustrator, and typographer. He is the Head of Design & Community at Creative Market, where he is a strong advocate for fellow makers. Gerren co-created Satchel & Sage in 2010 with his wife Morgana.

One of the most interesting projects that a designer can take on is designing a logo.

It can be daunting and stressful to come up with logo options based on market research, and stumble upon some “design magic” through the exploratory process. Narrowing it down to a final, approved logo and then seeing it out in the world can be a very rewarding experience for a designer.

However, most of the time, a logo is not enough. Large organizations with layers of management require a thorough brand identity system that provides a unified vision and tools that help everyone build the brand. But before we dig in, let’s define the difference (and relationship) between a brand, an identity, and a logo.

BRAND VS. IDENTITY VS. LOGO

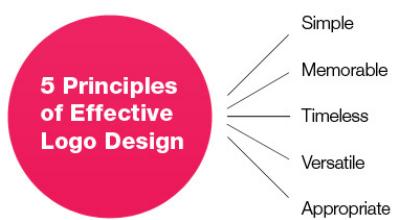
A brand or branding refers to the perceived image and subsequent emotional response to a company, its products, and services. It also represents the conversation that

customers are having with each other about the company, and how that spreads. My favorite definition about brand is the one Seth Godin gave:

A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another. If the consumer (whether it’s a business, a buyer, a voter or a donor) doesn’t pay a premium, make a selection, or spread the word, then no brand value exists for that consumer.

An identity describes the visual devices used to represent the company. Identity systems are visual components packages that are paired with style guidelines and used as a framework to ensure the corporate image is cohesive and consistent. Some of the visual devices that leverage the brand elements and style guidelines are as follows: stationery, marketing collateral, packaging, signage, messaging, and digital projects, among others.

A logo is the central, identifiable visual element that helps customers discover, share, and remember a company’s brand. Usually it’s in the form of an icon (mark or symbol), logotype, or combination of the two. The main purpose of a logo is summed up nicely as the five principles of effective logo design in this Smashing Magazine article.



Crafting an Identity

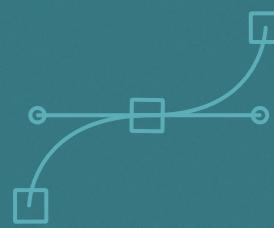
Designing a brand's visual identity is a fascinating 3-phase process:

How is the brand perceived & positioned? What's your heritage? Who is your audience and with which values & beliefs do you enter the market?



*Phase 1:
**RESEARCH,
VISION &
DESIGN BRIEF***

How will you represent this brand visually? Once you have a logo, how will you translate it into various design pieces? What will & should your overall identity look like?



*Phase 2:
**LOGO,
IDENTITY &
GUIDELINES***

Has the audience, market or your own brand shifted? Is it time for a change?



*Phase 3:
**MONITORING
& REBRANDING***

VISION & DESIGN BRIEF

This phase should be as thorough as needed—depending on the depth of research and size of the company. It's the most crucial part of the overall process, and should result in a design brief that guides the rest of the project.

Below is a list of foundational questions and key dynamics to explore and document through qualitative and quantitative methodologies. (Note: This is only a quick overview of the most complex part of this process.)

- How is the brand perceived against competitors in the market for products and services you're looking to provide?
- What is the positioning statement of your brand? Answer the what, how, to whom, where, why, and when questions.
- What is the heritage of your product type, and the origin(s) of its ingredients and fabrication process?
- Who is your audience? Are they digitally savvy? Where will your products/services have contact with them? How do you want that contact experience to make them feel, take action, and think about your brand?
- What values and beliefs should the brand have about the business and its mission in the world? If the brand was a person, what would its personality be? How would it look, act, and talk?
- What benefits do you want customers to associate with your brand? What is the vision of the brand that you want to create?

- Other brand image concerns: market awareness, emotional associations, value to the consumer, brand perception vs. consumer behavior, changes desired in the brand-consumer relationship over time.

As you can tell, it's complicated. Two agencies who I think do a good job with their brand research are Landor and Ei. It shows in the way that they describe their completed work as challenge-and-solution projects.

The design brief

It's important to have a design (or creative) brief if the brand identity project is bigger than one designer doing work for a small local business.

A truly effective design brief should contain summaries from the research phase, such as: target audience(s), messaging objectives, values and mission of the brand, and the brand's products/services offering. It should also include budget, project schedule, file formats for delivery, and other practical needs.

If you're looking for tools and help on how to write a design brief for a brand identity project, explore the following: Logo Design Brief, 99designs, and Just Creative.

PHASE 2: LOGO, IDENTITY, & GUIDELINES

After the research phase is complete and a design brief has been created, it's time to start designing the logo and identity system.

The logo

There are many ways to start designing a logo, but most often you'll see designers begin by sketching out dozens if not hundreds of iterations on paper. The process of getting concepts down on paper and creating variations of those ideas can unlock new directions to explore and final solutions that you wouldn't have normally arrived at when starting on the computer. After selecting your best sketched concepts, you should start iterating on them digitally.

Here's a peak behind the curtain of a few logo concept sketches as they became final digital solutions:



Firefox Logo by Martijn Rijven of Bolt Graphic, art direction by Wolff Olins



ITV logo by Matt Rudd of Rudd Studio



Greenpeace Airplot Logo by Airside

The identity system

The identity system usually starts after the logo is complete. The purpose of the identity system is to form a systematic visual language around the logo—one that complements the design thinking of the logo and offers a family of useful, flexible elements that will help to design marketing and business collateral. Here are some examples:



Fortaleza 2020 by Guivillar



Patina Restaurant Group by Mucca Design



Handsome Coffee Roasters by Ptarmak

The style guidelines

The style guidelines contain and prescribe the logo usage rules, typeface system, color palette, layout guidelines, and more. They exist so that others can create design collateral and marketing materials that will have a cohesive look and voice.

Style guidelines have traditionally been produced as print and web-ready PDFs. They're the core of the identity design, and usually accompany the logo, templates, fonts, and other resources packaged together to make designing for the brand easier. Style guidelines are in-depth rules about logo usage, styling, and layout, and are always interesting to browse through.

Here are a few style guidelines of popular brands:

- [Skype \(pdf, brand page\)](#)
- [BestBuy \(Euro Guidelines\)](#)
- [BBC](#)
- [Adobe](#)
- [Apple](#)
- [Google](#)
- [Walmart](#)

Looking for more? Dig into this list by [Logo Design Love](#).



These days, the documentation that a designer must deliver has a heavy digital skew, with an emphasis on development-ready files, such as Style Tiles, Element Collages, Style Prototypes, SASS documentation, a logo/brand download page, among others.

Don't forget to check out our simple Creative Market [brand page](#), and download the logo if you want to promote and share Creative Market.

PHASE 3: MONITORING & REBRANDING

Lastly, after a new brand identity has launched, it's important to monitor and care for it, as it's a living and breathing thing that interacts with your customers. Honestly, that's a loaded statement as there are many ways to properly care for a brand. Regardless, over time, if your target audience shifts, the market evolves, or the brand's products and services change, it may be time for a rebrand. The main challenge with rebranding is trying to maintain familiarity and consistency so that your customers will remember you.

There are two exciting sites that give an inside look at what happens when prominent brands get rebranded: [Rebrand](#) and Under Consideration's [Brand New](#). Here is a quick sampling of their short before and after case studies:

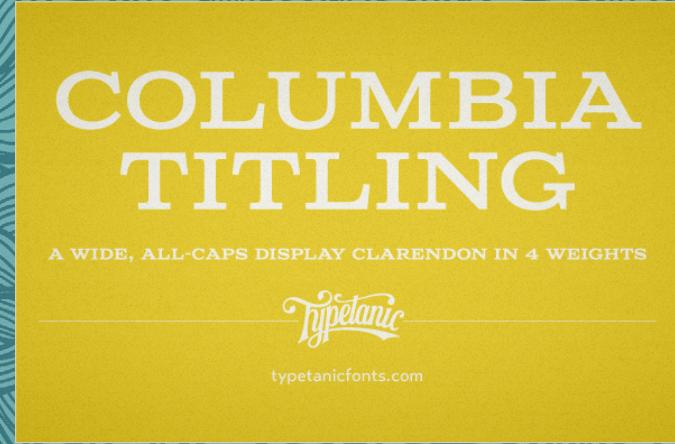
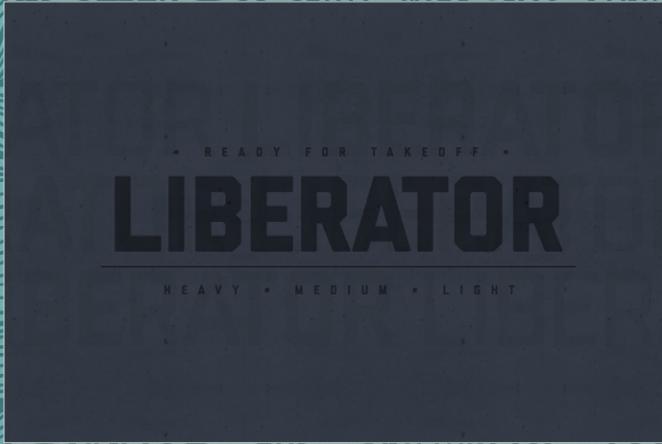
Learn more about each of these branding projects: [Emma](#), [Bishop of London](#), [Apple Worldwide Developers Conference 2013](#), [Cancer Research UK](#), and [Google SketchUp](#).

RESOURCES FOR BRAND IDENTITY DESIGN

If you're starting a new brand identity or rebrand project, we've collected some Creative Market resources that might help get you started. Check them out in the next page. 



BEFORE AFTER



The 5 Steps to Visual Branding

C.S. JONES

@thecsjones
Webcomicry

C.S. Jones is an installation manager for an ISP by day and a writer, artist and photographer by night, contributing regularly to Creative Market and various other arts and design blogs. He also has his own, which can be found at Webcomicry.com.

Your whole company is your brand, from the lowest-ranking employees' uniforms to how the CEO communicates.

There are many different ways to define a brand. Entrepreneur's John Williams calls it "your promise to your customer." Copywriting legend David Ogilvy described it as "the intangible sum of a product's attributes." re:Design's Paul Biedermann gets a little more philosophical, defining it as "the essence of one's unique story."

In my opinion, it's everything. Your whole company is your brand, from the lowest-ranking employees' uniforms to how the CEO communicates. But one of the most important aspects is visual branding: the overall appearance of your company.

In this article we're going to break the process down to the basics, analyzing each major component and how it fits into the whole.

Let's start with...

COLORS

Your color palette should be the first thing you pick out. Colors are the best starting point towards conveying the mood you want. As you do so, make sure you keep the common meanings of each color in your mind so that you can tap into them: bold, bright colors symbolize energy and dynamism. More subdued pastels calm the viewer. Warm colors and earth tones radiate down-to-earth comfort. Cool colors calm the viewer and subliminally inspire trust. Pinks and purples can symbolize sensuality and opulence.

Once you have a general idea as to which colors you want to use, you need to figure out what shades of them will best complement each other. There are many online generators, like Adobe Color CC, Palleton, and Color Hunter that you can use to explore different hues. Alternatively, pick out a pre-made library from a searchable database via a site like COLOURlovers.

As a final tip, once you've selected your colors, arrange them with the ones you expect to use the most first. These will serve as your base colors, and the rest will complement them.



This brand proposal for nutrition supplement company Nativetech makes brilliant use of bold colors arranged in simple, geometric shapes.

ICONOGRAPHY

In the words of Peter Gould: the logo is not the brand, it is the gateway to the brand. It should hopefully offer a preview of the kind of experience the customer will get from using your products. Generally, you also want to keep your iconography as clean and simple as possible, with a distinctive design that can be easily identified from far away. In an increasingly saturated world, design is trending toward the simple, the reader friendly, and the straight-to-the-point.



For a stunning example of hard-hitting and focused design achieved through simplicity, check out [this concept ad campaign](#) for the French Postal Service.

However, don't take these as universal commands. Plenty of businesses, especially ones that pride themselves on luxury and craftsmanship, are still able to draw customers into their detail-oriented worlds with lush and ornate design.



Designer [Ben Johnston](#) is making quite a name for himself with his stunningly detailed and intricate illustrations and ad campaigns.

TYPOGRAPHY

Like iconography, typography should also symbolize your company's overall "feel." As an example, look at Caterpillar's solid, robust logo.



Now contrast that with Hallmark's script font that suggests handcrafting, sensitivity, and sentimentality.

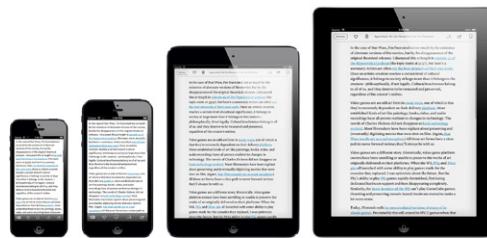


Once you've picked out your header text, you'll need to choose tasteful body fonts that complement it while continuing to contribute to your brand image. A thorough guide to that process can be found [here](#). The short version, though, is that while you want your header text to be big, bold, and jump out at you, body text is meant to stay subdued and in the background.

PRODUCT & ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

Web design is primarily composed of shapes, colors, and type, so that is essentially covered by the last three entries. Where design enters the real world, however, is a whole different animal, requiring the consideration of layouts, textures, and three-dimensional shapes.

If your business sells the kind of products that need to be designed, it goes without saying that this is a crucial component to your brand. You should go out of your way to make sure that the aesthetic quality of the products is in line with the experience that the customer will get by using them.



Apple's products are clearly all designed with sleek simplicity in mind. From [The Week](#)

The same goes for your brick-and-mortar store, if you're the kind of business that requires one. Where possible, everything from the furniture to the lighting to the way the customers move through the store should go to enhance their brand experience and get them into the "mood of the company."



This [concept shoe store](#) turns a mundane shopping experience into a futuristic escape from reality.

That leads us to our final entry, the element that doesn't quite fit with the others, but makes them all fit together:

COHESIVENESS

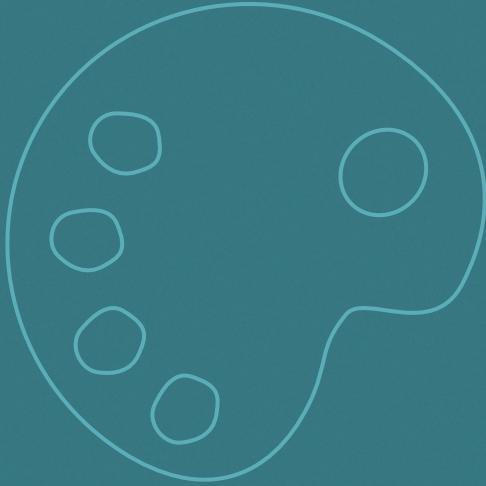
As we mentioned in the [brand identity article](#), the first step towards creating an identity is to come up with a brief that sums up what you're trying to achieve in your design scheme. That's because, in order to be effective, all your design elements have to work together to tell the same message, and should look like they are all part of the same whole.

One of my favorite examples of harmony in design is in Eight O'Clock Coffee, whose website, packaging, and advertising are bold, modern, and lively. Just like the product.



From [Double Take Studios](#)

Finally, feel free to break any of these rules in the name of interesting design, but you should at least know them beforehand so you can break them with a purpose. ☕



Choosing Color & Type

Building the Foundation of a Brand Identity System

LAURA BUSCHE
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Creative Market

Creative Market is a platform for handcrafted, mouse-made design content created by independent creatives around the world.

Colors can evoke different *emotions*, *associations*, and *responses* that affect how your brand is perceived.

"Color: what a deep and mysterious language!" (Words from French artist Paul Gauguin) Put simply, color choices can make or break a design. In fact, research has shown that color can increase brand recognition (by up to 80%), memory, engagement with a design piece, text comprehension, among many other factors.

Fortunately, we are far from the times when our color choices were limited to a small batch of natural pigments. Our options are no longer whatever colors minerals, animals, and plants had to offer. Synthetic pigments and the screen have made our lives

increasingly easier, while making deciding infinitely more complex. With such an overwhelming amount of color options, selecting a palette for a design project has become excruciating, to say the least. The Colourlovers community has indexed nearly 8 million user-named colors, while there are over 16 million possible hexadecimal color combinations.

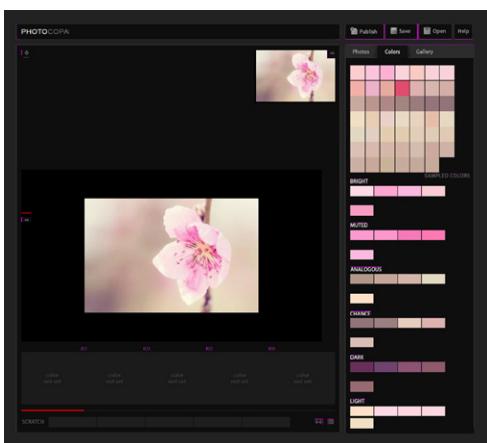
Overwhelmed yet? No need to worry. We asked top designers from the Creative Market community to share their best tricks and advice for creating stunning color palettes. Take note of these 10 insider secrets and bring them into your next branding project:

1. Capture inspiration on the go.

Callie Hegstrom, the talented designer behind Make Media, suggests: "I snap photos of gorgeous color schemes (like flowers, or sunsets),

and later sample those colors directly in Photoshop or Illustrator. It's also a great way to match text or graphics with any photo you're working with to make sure your work is cohesive."

Tools like [Photocopa](#) make it easy to turn your photos into color palettes. Just upload and explore the different hues used in the image.

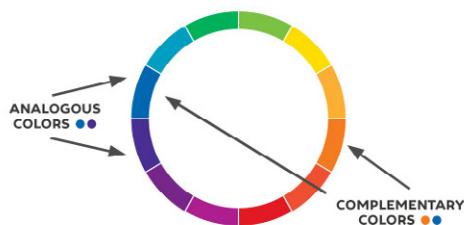


Callie Hegstrom (@MakeMediaCo) gets her inspiration from real-life color palettes.

2. Use your color wheel.

Artist Marc Chagall came up with a pretty amazing quote to remember what works in terms of color combinations: All colors are the friends of their neighbors and the lovers of their opposites. In the quote, friends stand for analogous colors, those that are side by side on a 12-part color wheel. On the other hand, Chagall refers to complementary colors as Lovers, tones that are

directly opposite each other on the wheel.



Cindy Kinash, the Vancouver-based designer behind [Cultivated Mind](#), explains, "When painting watercolor flowers, a good way to show shadows is to add an analogous color."



In this piece by Cindy Kinash, light blue is paired with darker blue and purple to create a sense of depth.

This tip works for almost everything else you can think of. Play with analogous color schemes to add shadows to your titles or borders to your backgrounds. These colors usually blend well because they are closely related. Find unique combinations by simply matching colors to their neighbors on the wheel!

3. Borrow from interior design.

Different design fields share common challenges when dealing with color. Interior designers have to harmonize spaces using textures, objects, and color schemes that blend well together.

In this respect, British designer Elena Genova (from [MyCreativeLand](#)) offers some key advice: I do like

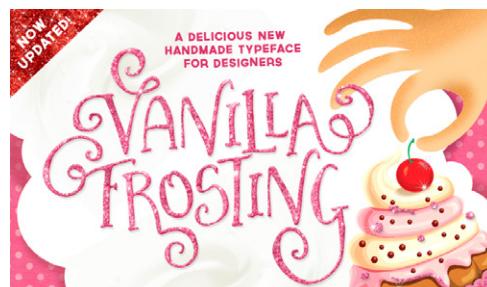
the interior design rule that is pretty much applicable to graphic design too: 60% – dominant color, 30% – secondary color, 10% – accent color. If you'd like to introduce a fourth (and so on) color, split the secondary color (or perhaps the dominant but never the accent).



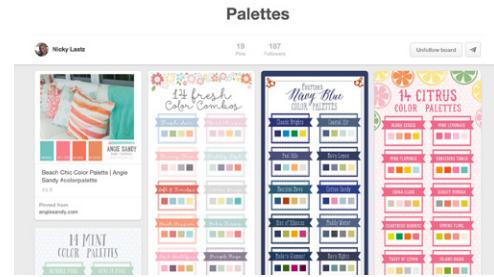
4. Save what works.

Nicky Laatz, who owns a [typography and design shop](#) at Creative Market, shares how she stores stunning color palettes for later use:

Whenever I see a picture or photo with colors that I love, or that really seem to go well, I screenshot it or pin it for later. Then, when it's time to find a good color palette, I go to all my saved images for inspiration and I always find something appropriate.



Vanilla Frosting, one of Nicky's top fonts, features this colorful image inspired by bakeries.



Nicky keeps a Palettes board in her [Pinterest profile](#), where she stores attractive color schemes for later use. You can see the relationship between the inspiration she gets from pins like "14 Citrus Color Palettes" and the color schemes in products like Vanilla Frosting.

5. Break out the trusty Pantone set.

Sometimes a digital color wheel just won't cut it. It can be inspiring to look at a physical color swatch, and that's exactly what Pantone sets provide. Designer Callie Hegstrom breaks out her trusty Pantone Color Bridge set whenever she wants to select colors the old-fashioned way. She explains, "Sometimes it's nice to have a physical guide that doesn't just rely on screen colors. It's also helpful if a client has a very specific color need, and they want to see physical samples."



The nice thing about Pantone swatches? Not so old-fashioned after all! Every Pantone color comes with its HEX equivalent. You can use hexadecimal colors in any color picker.

6. Bring in colors from nature.

Our eyes are used to admiring natural color schemes. If you take your inspiration from the environment, suggests Gary from the [CO-OP](#), "The color combinations are endless." Landscapes, foliage, fruit, among others are all amazing sources of inspiration. Gary designs in South Africa, where he built his online shop, and is constantly influenced "by the bright South African sunshine. The colors are warm and striking."



Colored backgrounds like Forest Green, Fire Red, and Apple Green are examples of Gary's technique. Bringing in tones from nature, he created [60 watercolor textures](#).

7. Stick to 3 or 4 colors.

Unless you're going for a full-on rainbow look, avoid combining an excessive amount of colors. Rodrigo

German, a Chilean graphic designer who owns a [typography shop](#) at Creative Market, recommends using three colors to make your graphics look cleaner. When using more than three, he suggests adding textures to tone down some of the additional colors.



In this piece for his *Marty* font, Rodrigo sticks to three main colors: pink, black and green. He also plays with texture to achieve the right amount of contrast.

8. Match color to your brand's mood.

Consider the topic that you are trying to portray in your brand identity project. Is it sports, fashion, beauty, or business? From there, think about a specific mood that you would like to associate with the activity. Is it a cute fashion flyer, or an aggressive sports brochure? Is it feminine, cheerful, serious or elegant?

Salome, the designer behind [Graphic Box](#), suggests coming up with a rough definition of the color theme before you go ahead and work on the details. For example, I need a romantic purple or I want a cute pink.



For her [fall graphic kit](#), Salome relied on earthy greens and worn-out reds.

9. Search Pinterest for themed palettes.

Pinterest holds an impressive amount of color palettes curated by creatives all around the world. Ian Barnard, creator of *Vintage Design Co.*, explains his search process below:

"If I was doing a design for a beach-themed poster, I would do a simple search under 'Summer Color Palettes' and choose one."



This is what a simple search for "Summer Color Palettes" looks like on Pinterest. The best part? You'll get color inspiration from different design fields: interiors, fashion, graphic, and even event design.

10. Follow sites for color lovers.

Colourlovers is a creative community where people from around the world create and share colors, palettes, and patterns. Join the site and explore over 3.7 million user-created color palettes to inspire your ideas.

Choosing the Right Typeface

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A strong typeface dictates what message your brand is trying to convey, what the tone is, and even who its creators are.

It's funny how many fonts there are out there, but people still end up using inappropriate typeface all the time. Anything that uses letters, numbers, and symbols, whether it's a sign outside your store or the report you need to submit to your boss, requires a specific typeface that makes all the difference.

Some fonts may come across as casual, while some may look formal and professional. Others show a fun and carefree identity, while some give you an impression that they're meant to be used for more serious things. This is what typefaces do. They give any text they are used on its own personality, allowing people who read it to identify with it more effectively.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A TYPEFACE

Great text using the wrong font does

not only ruin the entire design, it also ruins the entire message. You wouldn't want to trust your taxes to an auditing firm whose name uses a font like Comic Sans or Chiller, would you? I mean, how in the world could you take them seriously?

Before you choose a typeface you must ask yourself a few important questions. The answers to these questions will lead you in the right direction to finding the perfect typeface.

Is it legible enough?

Let's face it, fonts were created to give life to the text, but there are times when font designers overdo it and end up creating typefaces that can barely be read. Some fonts may also be too thin to read, while some may be so bulky that it's hard to distinguish one letter from another when an entire word is spelled out.

Make sure that the font is legible by checking if each and every letter can be easily read, and if they can still be distinguishable should they be placed beside other letters. Is the shape taking up too much space? Do the strokes lack definition?

If legibility is your goal, here are some great, easy-to-read fonts that come in a variety of weights:

How much emphasis do you need?

Some fonts give more emphasis to text compared to others. The font Impact, for example, stays true to its name as its width makes the letters stand out over other typefaces. Some fonts also come in varied styles to allow you to lessen or improve the



amount of emphasis that it gives. Helvetica Neue, for instance, also gives you options for light and ultra light, aside from the usual bold and italic styles.

How do you know what kind of emphasis you are looking for? Figure out where the text will be placed. Is it going to be used for the brand name? Then choose something that would be easily distinguishable. And if you're looking for a font to use for the tag line beneath that brand name, then make sure that there is just enough emphasis for it to be noticed without overshadowing the name above it.

Is it appealing to the audience?

In choosing the right font, you have to figure out what personality your audience has. What would appeal to them the most? What's their age bracket? Are they the fun type, or are they the serious type? Once you have this all figured out, you could finally choose the kind of font that you believe would appeal to them the most.

The font Gotham has a beautiful contemporary design perfect for audiences who are modern, confident, and secure. However, this font is also President Obama's favorite font, with all his banners, flyers, and other campaign material using this specific typeface. So you may want to use this if you want a contemporary look, but think twice if you think the association with the person using it a lot may not be fitting for what you need.

If you're looking for a professional look but would still want your text to pop out, avoid using Times New

Roman as a default. The font has been overused and comes across as boring and devoid of creativity. Now look at Apple Garamond and compare it with the previous font. Isn't the second one friendlier to look at, and a lot more stylish? However, this font is associated with the Apple brand, as it's the one they used in all their marketing materials. So if you're speaking to a loyal Samsung crowd, then this would be the worst choice.

Does it represent your brand and goals?

If you are designing material for a learning center for toddlers, do you think fonts like Garamond or Baskerville would be appropriate? Definitely not. Because you want to have a colorful, fun, and lively façade, you could be better off with something that would show just that.

Go back to the brand and what it represents. What are your goals? What image do you want the brand to have? What do you want your audiences to think the moment they see the final design? If the font you choose aligns with your brand and its goals, then this is the perfect font for you.

Once these questions have been answered, then you may be on your way to achieving the design that you want.

If you're looking for fonts that are uniquely appealing, check these out:

CRITERIA TO USE WHEN CHOOSING A TYPEFACE FOR YOUR BRAND

And so, once you get to the drawing board and start creating the design

that you need for your brand, have a checklist ready for the things that you must consider.

Pairing

You will need more than one font to make a design work, especially if you're working on a brand application like a webpage. This is why pairing matters. You have to make sure that the fonts you use are similar enough to complement each other, but different enough to show the distinction between them.

Size

Better readability would also mean using larger sizes. Brand names would have to be large enough to be noticed, but not too large that they overpower the tagline (if it exists). Text bodies would have to be readable enough, but should not be so large that they start taking up too much space on the page.

Hierarchy

Every design involves hierarchy. For example, a brand's name should have the top rung of the ladder, and often has the most emphasis. Taglines should be less prominent than the name, but not too small that all emphasis is taken away from them.

Leading

Leading is the amount of space given between each line of text. Figuring out how much leading you need would depend on the font you use. The smaller the font, the less leading required between the lines. Bigger fonts require larger leading.

Tracking

If leading decides how much space there is between lines, then tracking decides how much space there is between letters. The spaces should not be too small that it becomes hard to make out one letter from another, but not too wide that a single word takes up a whole lot of space even if it uses a smaller font.

Color

Of course, color is not exactly one of the main aspects that comes with choosing a font, but it greatly affects the end product, so this should also be given serious consideration. If your font is already light enough as it is, then avoid using light colors and go for more solid ones.

Always have this checklist handy when designing your brand's identity system.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON FINDING THE PERFECT TYPEFACE

Here are a few final words that could help you decide what font or typeface you need for your design:

Have an outline of the identity system that you're building

Having a clear outline of the entire project on a page can help you plan the number of fonts that you need, as well as how you are going to lay everything out.

Look at other designs for inspiration.

There are so many amazing creative designs out there that show how

the right choice of font creates a masterpiece. Find some of them and use them for inspiration. Here's a great resource to do just that: [Design Inspiration: Sites and Tools for Boosting Creativity](#)

Stand out to be noticed.

Of course, getting inspiration from other designs does not mean that you will make your design very similar to it. You have to find ways to make your design stand out. Don't be afraid to experiment and be bold with your choices.

Do research about the font.

Make sure you do some research about the font you're using. Using Trajan as a font for a page that discusses Ancient Greece, for example, would be a little awkward once you're asked to explain your choice. This is because Trajan was actually a Roman Emperor that came much, much later than the period of Ancient Greece.

Avoid clichés.

Stop using Comic Sans for funny text, and stop using Papyrus for anything related to Ancient Egypt. This makes the entire design too predictable, and makes it appear to lack creativity. (Actually, stop using Comic Sans and Papyrus altogether.)

With this guide on choosing the perfect typeface for your project, are you ready to create a masterpiece? ☺





Creating Brand Applications

What happens when your brand goes live?

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As beautiful as your identity design may look in a retina display, brands only come alive when their audiences get to *interact* with them.

Applications in various mediums (paper, screen, billboards, etc.) often mark the beginning of a customer's relationship with a brand.

Consider the first time you ever saw your favorite brand's identity system. Were you biting that burrito when you spotted a logo on the wrap? Did an amazing billboard in the subway surprise you? Received an impressive business card from someone who worked for the company? As you've probably realized by now, creating pieces that truly represent your values and identity is key to generating

a lasting, positive impression. Sometimes the first impression is the only one you'll ever get to make.

Leave your logo aside for a second and start thinking how you will actually put it in front of your audience. Rather than operating alone, your identity system must come through via a variety of vehicles. Take a look at some of the most popular brand applications and think about how any or all apply to your current project:

- Outdoor/Indoor Signage
- Websites & Landing Pages
- Business Cards
- Letterhead & Stationery
- Menus & Catalogs
- Flyers & Brochures
- Email Headers & Signatures

- Social Media & Other Forms of Content Marketing
- Packaging
- Online/Offline Ads
- Annual & Other Types of Reports
- Merchandising
- Uniforms
- Tradeshow/Event Displays
- Stamps & Stickers

Brands in different industries will face unique challenges when trying to apply their identity system to a specific set of instruments. As you build a strong set of brand applications, consider the following questions and tools.

With which applications of the brand will a potential customer interact throughout his entire experience?

Draw the entire customer life cycle and figure out which touch points require branded instruments. A useful graphic tool to think about this journey is the Get-Keep-Grow framework introduced by Steve Blank and Bob Dorf in *The Startup Owner's Manual*:

CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE STAGE	WHAT IT ENTAILS	SAMPLE BRAND APPLICATIONS TO CREATE
GET	Generating awareness, interest, consideration, and purchase.	Ads, merchandising, business cards, event displays, signage, flyers, and brochures, menus and catalogs, content marketing imagery (blog, social media, etc.), websites and landing pages, among others.
KEEP	Doing everything in your power to retain the customer: loyalty programs, product updates, satisfaction surveys and check-in calls, among others.	Letterhead & stationery, email headers & signature, merchandising, reports, content marketing imagery, among others.
GROW	Generating additional revenue from a single customer by stimulating upsell, next-sell, cross-sell, and referrals.	Letterhead & stationery, menus and catalogs, ads promoting discounts for repeat buyers, landing pages that stimulate upsell for existing customers.

Who is the audience for each of these potential applications? Customers? Investors? Suppliers? Partners? Employees?

Get complete clarity as to who will be looking at these applications and ask relevant questions about this audience. Who are they? What are they looking for? What kind of visual appeal and messaging would work best to convince them? Do they have a preference for specific types of brand communications (e.g. online only, environmentally friendly, paper-based?)

How will we preserve a consistent, recognizable identity across various applications?

Look at your entire set of brand applications holistically. Do the different items preserve a certain unity? Does everything look like it comes from the same brand? Consider how extensible your identity system is. Could we easily create new applications based on the patterns that we're currently using?

With which call to action is this brand application related? Is it being communicated clearly?

“Design is not just how it looks, it’s how it works.” (Steve Jobs). Consider the practical value of the applications that you’ve just designed. Your organization has decided to invest in this project with a specific conversion goal in mind. Figure out what that goal is and make sure that it translates well in the different pieces that you have created. Will they help achieve this goal? ☀

Thinking about the actual function of these brand applications will also strengthen the business case for hiring your services in the future.



While controversial, Airbnb's new brand identity was well implemented across different channels. Innovative applications like keychains were considered in addition to more traditional pieces like business cards.



Checklist

Make sure you think about these brand applications

SIGNAGE	
	Outdoor
	Indoor
	Tradeshows / Events
WEB PRESENCE	
	Website
	Landing page/s
	Partner sites
	Badges
	Banners
	Sponsored sites
	Email
STATIONERY	
	Letterhead
	Business Cards
	Stamps
	Invoices
MERCHANDISING	
	Stickers
	Swag

COLLATERAL	
	Menus & catalogs
	Flyers & brochures
CONTENT MKTG	
	Social media profiles
	Ebooks
	Infographics
	Blog headers
ADVERTISING	
	Online ads
	Offline ads
FOR TEAM USE	
	Annual reports
	Internal memos
	Guidelines
	Handbooks
	Uniforms
PACKAGING	
	Bottles, boxes & bags
	Tags

Designing With Your Brand's Voice

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Why is it that some brands take a piece of our heart? What is it about their design that makes us feel connected, amused... delighted?

There are now over 2 million apps in the iOS and Google Play stores combined, and if that doesn't make your head spin, let's talk about the 876 million websites and 212 major social networks competing for your users' attention.

Fellow makers, it's a challenging market out there. As our generation becomes exposed to increasingly amusing products, we cannot help but wonder how can our brand break through the clutter? Users are tired of the lifeless language that a vast majority of products still force upon them. They are done with the tired interfaces that they've had to deal with for decades. Instead, users are looking for genuine experiences that bring comfort, ease and, why not, a sense of connection.

Sophisticated consumers call for effortless experiences. Effortless

for them, that is. Us? We are responsible for doing whatever it takes to provide such an experience while differentiating our brand in a meaningful way. That means putting in the extra hours to make sure that our product does not speak robot, but human. And, while this all sounds very complicated, I've narrowed it down to three simple steps:

1. Finding a Brand Personality
2. Defining a Brand Voice
3. Translating it into User Experience



Let's go one step at a time:

PERSONALITY: WHAT MAKES YOUR BRAND HUMANE & WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The American Psychological Association (APA) has defined personality as the "unique psychological qualities of an individual that influence a variety of characteristic behavior patterns (both overt and covert) across different situations and over time."

Our personality influences the way we think, behave, and feel with regard to everything that surrounds us. Similarly, as users interact with your product, they are expecting a friendly language that guides them through a specific flow of events. By linking your brand with several traits that are

traditionally used to describe human personalities, you can build a more relatable story that consumers will engage with.

In other words:

People relate to people, and if your brand feels like “people,” they’ll relate to you, too.

VOICE: A SIMPLE TEMPLATE TO DEFINE YOUR TONE

Defining our brand personality gives us a better idea of how we should face the user. It elucidates what is the voice telling the story. Keep this idea of brand voice close to heart, as it will help you make that crucial translation from “robot-speak” to human. A well-defined voice will impact the different stages of your user’s experience with the product, and will also become an essential asset for sales collateral, social channels, and even customer support.

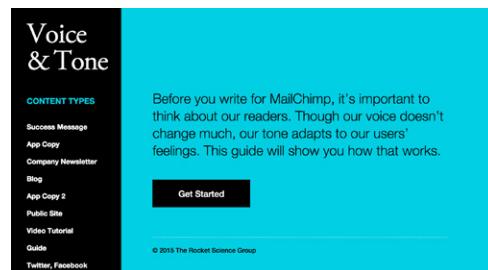
Terms like voice, tone, and language can be confusing. Just bear in mind that voice is the overall style in which your brand expresses, while tone is a variation in that voice to reflect a particular attitude or respond to a specific situation. Language, on the other hand, refers specifically to your use of words. In a nutshell, your brand uses a specific language to address different situations with particular tones that reflect its overall voice.

Based on the personality you just found, take a few minutes to answer the following questions about your voice:

- What would my brand say and how?

- How would my brand speak to users during the different stages of their experience?
- What does it hate?
- What does it absolutely love?
- Try some lateral thinking: What is your brand’s favorite drink/meal? Why?

Once you have come up with answers to these questions, it is important that you put your newly-defined brand voice on paper. Creating a set of guidelines and examples will help everyone on your team align around a common language. Take a look at Mailchimp’s Voice & Tone site for an outstanding example of such a handbook.



I’ve created a template to help you capture a language that reflects your brand’s voice. To fill it out, define a list of words that you’ll use to express excitement, encouragement, concern, regret, and gratitude. A success message, for example, would express excitement, while an alert message would display concern. Also come up with a few sample phrases that show how that word could be used in context.

Check it out in the following page.

Template

Create & express a genuine brand voice

VOICE TO EXPRESS	WORD BANK	SAMPLE PHRASES
Excitement 		
Encouragement 		
Concern 		
Regret 		
Gratitude 		

TRANSLATION: 10 WAYS TO BRING YOUR BRAND VOICE INTO DESIGNS

No matter which framework you are using to visualize the entire user experience (journeymaps, flowcharts, sitemaps, storyboards, and the like), your brand's voice can and should be incorporated in every stage. Here are some common places where you can start bringing in the vocabulary and tone that you just defined:

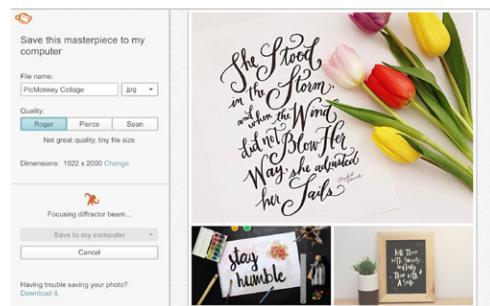
- Signup flow
- Call-to-action
- Onboarding
- Landing pages
- Notifications
- Emails
- Collateral
- Support flow

Translating robot-speak can be a daunting task. You might feel like you are crossing the line more than once. Are we being too casual? Will this scare users away? Is slang OK for a purchase button? Going back to the template above will help you stay on-brand, and regular A/B testing will allow you to experiment within reasonable risk limits.

To inspire you, I've collected eight stellar examples of brand voices that have been translated into the user experience flow. Most of these focus on microcopy, those seemingly little words and phrases that mean everything to your user:

1. PicMonkey's Creative Preloader Text

The lesson: If your brand's pet is a tech-savvy monkey, feel free to let him "focus a diffractor beam" to compress your user's files.



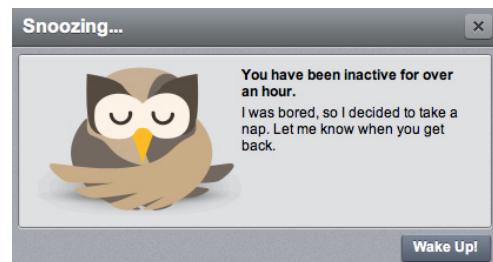
2. Virgin America's Witty Comments

The lesson: Humor helps ease tension, and some industries (like air travel) could definitely use more of it. And yes, Virgin, life isn't a beach.



3. Hootsuite's Ultra-honest Sleep Mode

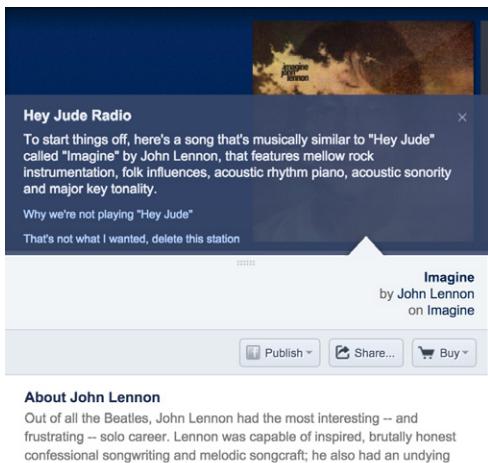
The lesson: The user is draining unnecessary server resources. Take a nap and let them know they're slacking off, in the nicest way possible.



4. Pandora's Touché Station Intro

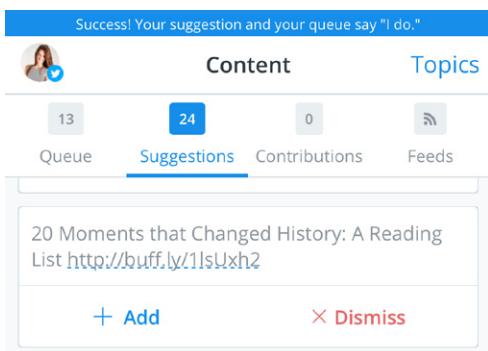
The lesson: If you've gone through the trouble of building a highly complex algorithm ([Music Genome Project](#)),

you might as well start a conversation with me about why that matters.



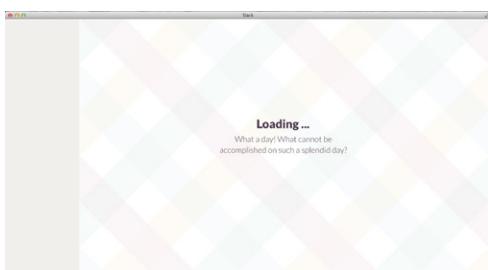
5. Buffer's Candid Notifications

The lesson: Use successful actions as an opportunity to celebrate your brand's personality. And if that happens to be quick-witted and funny, then so be it.



6. Slack's Refreshing Welcome Message

The lesson: Sometimes users are overwhelmed. Face it, embrace it, and make it a part of your mission to become the best part of their day.



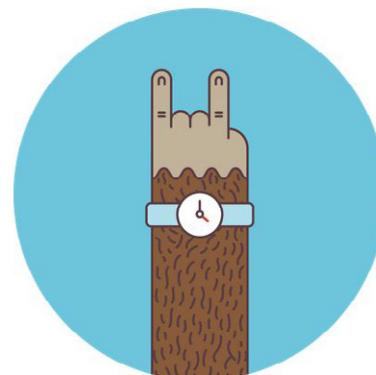
7. Waze's Thoughtful Advice

The lesson: Let users know you have their best interest in mind. Especially when they're messing up and your app needs to toss out a panic alert.



8. Mailchimp's Glorious Reminder

The lesson: Sometimes a line of code that reads "success" can mean so much more for your user. I mean, yes, your app did manage to send out an email, but what's behind that? Take some time to celebrate your user instead of your skills. This is their moment of glory!



Rock on!

Your email has been scheduled.

Thanks!

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