

Softpath Design System

Version 1.0 | February 2026

Design Philosophy

"Editorial Tech" - The intersection of a technical publication and a personal editorial voice. Softpath should look like someone who thinks seriously about growth infrastructure, not just another consultant with a Calendly link.

Core Principles

1. **Asymmetric Tension** - Intentional visual imbalance. Left-heavy text with right-aligned accents, staggered grids, elements that break expected alignment.
 2. **Typographic Drama** - Dramatic weight and size shifts between hierarchy levels. Typography does most of the visual heavy lifting.
 3. **Red Does the Work** - Softpath red is the only accent color. Used sparingly but with purpose. Not decoration, but signal.
 4. **Data Aesthetic Without Data Viz** - Subtle nods to precision and measurement: grid patterns, monospace accents, structured layouts. Signals "analyst who codes."
 5. **Static Confidence** - No scroll-jacking, no entrance animations, no parallax. Interactions are subtle and purposeful. The design stands on its own.
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Color System

Brand Colors

Token	Hex	RGB	Usage
--red-primary	█ #D82C20	rgb(216, 44, 32)	Primary CTA buttons, active states, accent lines
--red-dark	█ #B52318	rgb(181, 35, 24)	Button hover states, pressed states
--red-light	█ #E84C42	rgb(232, 76, 66)	Rarely used - highlights if needed

Neutral Palette (Light Mode)

Token	Hex	Usage
--bg-primary	█ #FFFFFF	Page background
--bg-secondary	█ #F8F8F8	Card backgrounds, code blocks
--bg-tertiary	█ #F0F0F0	Hover states on cards
--text-primary	█ #1A1A1A	Headings, primary body text
--text-secondary	█ #4A4A4A	Secondary body text, descriptions

Token	Hex	Usage
--text-tertiary	█ #767676	Meta text, captions, timestamps
--border-light	□ #E5E5E5	Card borders, dividers
--border-medium	□ #CCCCCC	Input borders, stronger dividers

Neutral Palette (Dark Mode)

Token	Hex	Usage
--bg-primary	█ #0F0F0F	Page background
--bg-secondary	█ #1A1A1A	Card backgrounds
--bg-tertiary	█ #252525	Hover states on cards
--text-primary	□ #F5F5F5	Headings, primary body text
--text-secondary	█ #B0B0B0	Secondary body text
--text-tertiary	█ #808080	Meta text, captions
--border-light	█ #2A2A2A	Card borders, dividers
--border-medium	█ #3A3A3A	Stronger dividers

Color Application Rules

1. **Red is interactive** - Only use red for elements users can click/tap or for intentional visual anchors (section accent lines)
 2. **Links default to text color** - Links inherit `--text-primary`, red appears on hover
 3. **No colored backgrounds** - Sections use white/off-white, never colored washes
 4. **Dark mode is opt-in** - Light mode is default, dark mode respects system preference
-

Typography

Type Scale

Using a 1.25 ratio (Major Third) with 18px base.

Level	Size	Line Height	Weight	Letter Spacing	Usage
Display	64px / 4rem	1.1	700	-0.03em	Homepage hero only
H1	48px / 3rem	1.15	700	-0.02em	Page titles
H2	36px / 2.25rem	1.2	600	-0.01em	Section headers
H3	28px / 1.75rem	1.3	600	0	Subsection headers
H4	22px / 1.375rem	1.4	600	0	Card titles
Body Large	20px / 1.25rem	1.6	400	0	Lead paragraphs
Body	18px / 1.125rem	1.7	400	0	Default body text
Body Small	16px / 1rem	1.6	400	0	Secondary text
Caption	14px / 0.875rem	1.5	500	0.02em	Meta info, dates
Label	12px / 0.75rem	1.4	600	0.08em	All-caps labels

Font Stack

Primary (Headings + Body):

```
css
--font-primary: "Space Grotesk", system-ui, -apple-system, sans-serif;
```

Monospace (Code, Labels, Accents):

```
css
--font-mono: "JetBrains Mono", "Fira Code", "SF Mono", monospace;
```

Font Loading:

```
html
<link rel="preconnect" href="https://fonts.googleapis.com">
<link rel="preconnect" href="https://fonts.gstatic.com" crossorigin>
<link href="https://fonts.googleapis.com/css2?family=JetBrains+Mono:wght@400;500&family=Space+Grotesk:wght@400;500;600;700&display=swap"
```

Typography Rules

1. **Headings are tight** - Negative letter-spacing on H1/H2, creates density and confidence
2. **Body is generous** - 1.7 line-height for comfortable reading
3. **Monospace for precision** - Use for: dates, categories, code, technical terms, navigation labels (optional)
4. **No italics for emphasis** - Use semibold (600) instead
5. **Maximum line length** - Body text: 680px / ~75 characters

Spacing System

Using an 8px base unit.

Token	Value	Usage
--space-1	4px	Tight gaps, icon padding
--space-2	8px	Inline spacing, small gaps
--space-3	12px	Component internal padding
--space-4	16px	Card padding, list spacing
--space-5	24px	Section internal spacing
--space-6	32px	Between components
--space-7	48px	Between sections
--space-8	64px	Major section breaks
--space-9	96px	Page section padding
--space-10	128px	Hero/footer spacing

Layout Widths

Token	Value	Usage
--width-content	680px	Blog posts, long-form text
--width-wide	960px	Cards, grids
--width-max	1200px	Maximum container width
--width-full	100%	Edge-to-edge when needed

Components

Buttons

Primary Button

css

```

.btn-primary {
  background: var(--red-primary);
  color: #FFFFFF;
  padding: 16px 32px;
  font-family: var(--font-primary);
  font-size: 16px;
  font-weight: 600;
  letter-spacing: 0.01em;
  border: none;
  border-radius: 0; /* Sharp corners - no border-radius */
  cursor: pointer;
  transition: background 0.15s ease, transform 0.15s ease;
}

.btn-primary:hover {
  background: var(--red-dark);
  transform: translateY(-1px);
}

.btn-primary:active {
  transform: translateY(0);
}

```

Secondary Button (Outline)

```

css
.btn-secondary {
  background: transparent;
  color: var(--text-primary);
  padding: 15px 31px; /* Account for border */
  font-family: var(--font-primary);
  font-size: 16px;
  font-weight: 600;
  letter-spacing: 0.01em;
  border: 1px solid var(--border-medium);
  border-radius: 0;
  cursor: pointer;
  transition: border-color 0.15s ease, color 0.15s ease;
}

.btn-secondary:hover {
  border-color: var(--red-primary);
  color: var(--red-primary);
}

```

Text Button / Link Button

css

```
.btn-text {  
background: none;  
border: none;  
color: var(--text-primary);  
font-family: var(--font-primary);  
font-size: 16px;  
font-weight: 500;  
padding: 0;  
cursor: pointer;  
position: relative;  
}  
  
.btn-text::after {  
content: " →";  
transition: transform 0.15s ease;  
display: inline-block;  
}  
  
.btn-text:hover::after {  
transform: translateX(4px);  
}
```

Cards

Service Card

css

```
.card-service {  
background: var(--bg-primary);  
border: 1px solid var(--border-light);  
padding: var(--space-6);  
transition: border-color 0.15s ease, box-shadow 0.15s ease;  
}  
  
.card-service:hover {  
border-color: var(--border-medium);  
box-shadow: 0 4px 12px rgba(0, 0, 0, 0.04);  
}  
  
.card-service__icon {  
width: 48px;  
height: 48px;  
margin-bottom: var(--space-4);  
}  
  
.card-service__title {  
font-size: 22px;  
font-weight: 600;  
margin-bottom: var(--space-3);  
color: var(--text-primary);  
}  
  
.card-service__description {  
font-size: 16px;  
color: var(--text-secondary);  
line-height: 1.6;  
}
```

Blog Card (Featured)

css

```
.card-blog-featured {  
  display: grid;  
  grid-template-columns: 1fr;  
  gap: var(--space-4);  
  padding: var(--space-6);  
  border: 1px solid var(--border-light);  
  transition: border-color 0.15s ease;  
}  
  
.card-blog-featured:hover {  
  border-color: var(--red-primary);  
}  
  
.card-blog-featured__meta {  
  font-family: var(--font-mono);  
  font-size: 13px;  
  color: var(--text-tertiary);  
  text-transform: uppercase;  
  letter-spacing: 0.05em;  
}  
  
.card-blog-featured__title {  
  font-size: 28px;  
  font-weight: 600;  
  line-height: 1.3;  
  color: var(--text-primary);  
}  
  
.card-blog-featured__excerpt {  
  font-size: 18px;  
  color: var(--text-secondary);  
  line-height: 1.6;  
}
```

Blog Card (Compact)

css

```
.card-blog {  
  padding: var(--space-5);  
  border: 1px solid var(--border-light);  
  transition: border-color 0.15s ease;  
}  
  
.card-blog:hover {  
  border-color: var(--red-primary);  
}  
  
.card-blog__meta {  
  font-family: var(--font-mono);  
  font-size: 12px;  
  color: var(--text-tertiary);  
  margin-bottom: var(--space-2);  
}  
  
.card-blog__title {  
  font-size: 18px;  
  font-weight: 600;  
  line-height: 1.4;  
  color: var(--text-primary);  
}
```

Navigation

Header

css

```
.header {  
  position: sticky;  
  top: 0;  
  background: var(--bg-primary);  
  border-bottom: 1px solid var(--border-light);  
  padding: var(--space-4) 0;  
  z-index: 100;  
}  
  
.header__inner {  
  max-width: var(--width-max);  
  margin: 0 auto;  
  padding: 0 var(--space-5);  
  display: flex;  
  justify-content: space-between;  
  align-items: center;  
}  
  
.header__logo {  
  display: flex;  
  align-items: center;  
  gap: var(--space-3);  
}  
  
.header__logo-mark {  
  width: 32px;  
  height: 32px;  
}  
  
.header__logo-text {  
  font-size: 20px;  
  font-weight: 700;  
  color: var(--red-primary);  
  letter-spacing: -0.01em;  
}  
  
.header__nav {  
  display: flex;  
  gap: var(--space-6);  
}  
  
.header__nav-link {  
  font-family: var(--font-mono);  
  font-size: 14px;  
  font-weight: 500;  
  color: var(--text-secondary);  
  text-decoration: none;  
  text-transform: uppercase;  
  letter-spacing: 0.04em;  
  transition: color 0.15s ease;  
}  
  
.header__nav-link:hover,  
.header__nav-link--active {
```

```
color: var(--red-primary);  
}
```

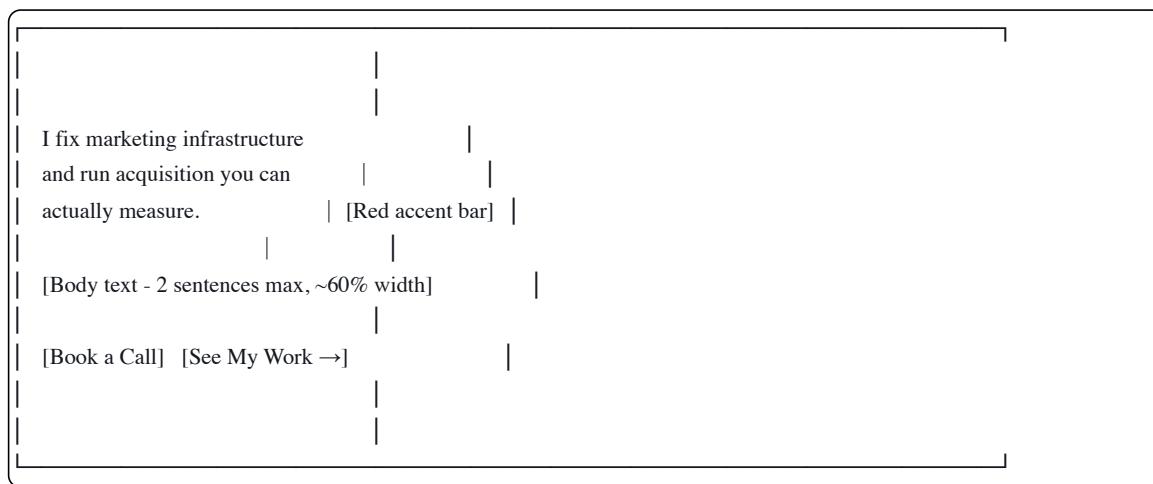
Section Dividers

Accent Line

```
css  
.section-header {  
  display: flex;  
  align-items: center;  
  gap: var(--space-4);  
  margin-bottom: var(--space-6);  
}  
  
.section-header__title {  
  font-family: var(--font-mono);  
  font-size: 12px;  
  font-weight: 600;  
  text-transform: uppercase;  
  letter-spacing: 0.1em;  
  color: var(--text-tertiary);  
}  
  
.section-header__line {  
  flex: 1;  
  height: 1px;  
  background: var(--red-primary);  
}
```

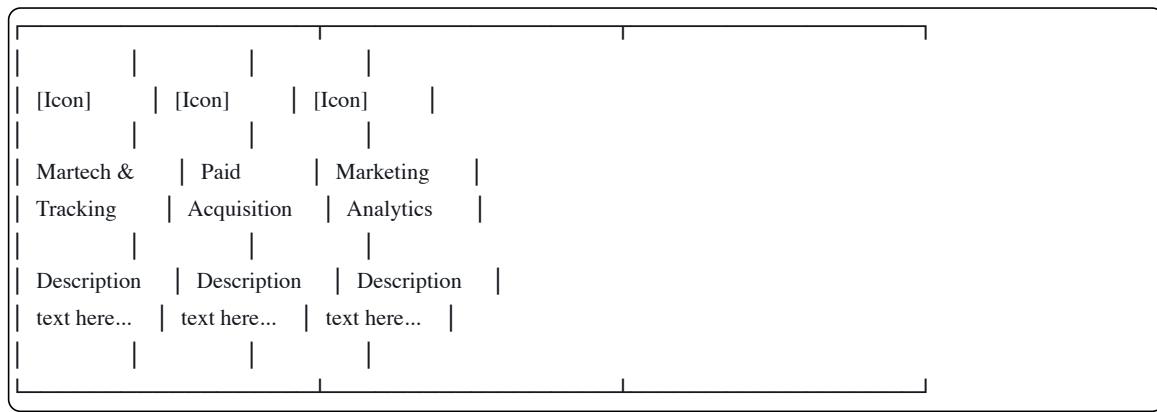
Layout Patterns

Homepage Hero



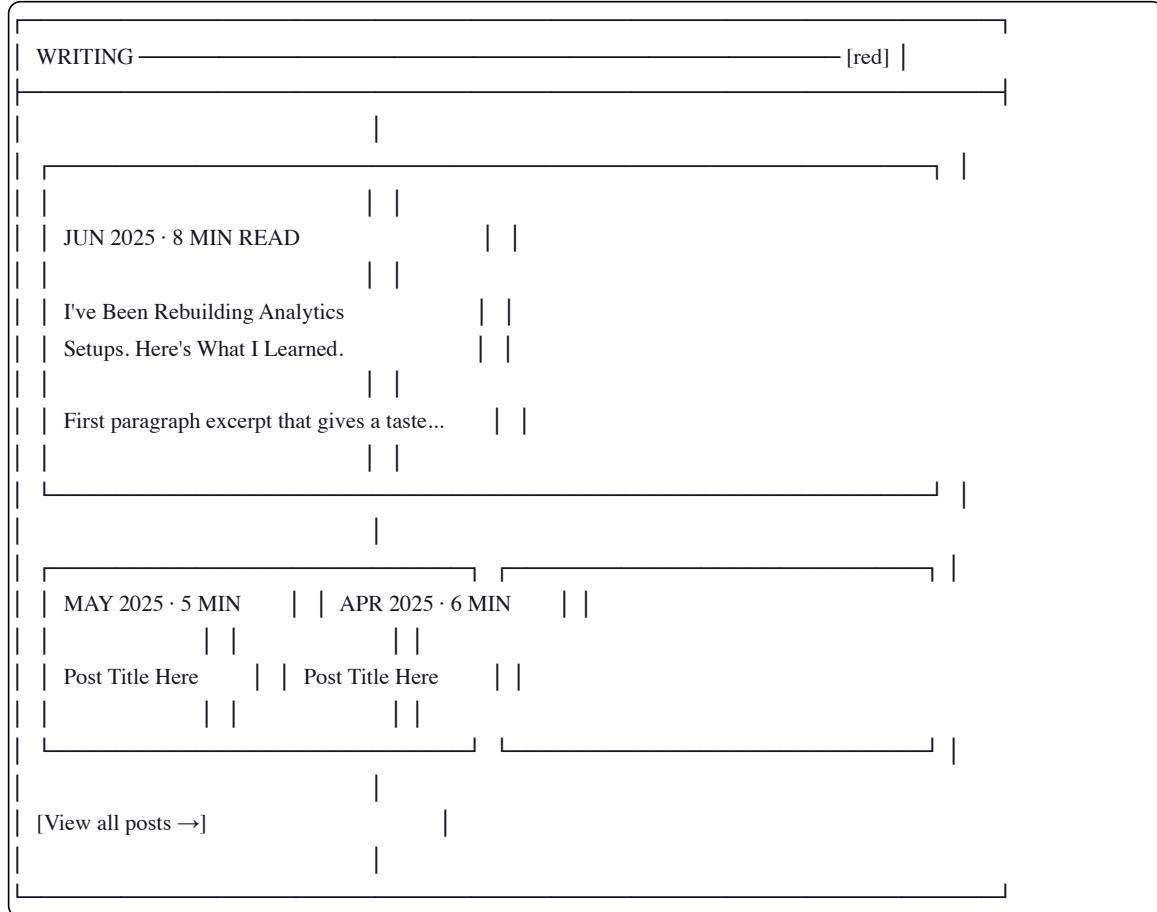
- Hero text is left-aligned, occupies ~60% of width
- Red vertical accent bar on the right side
- Generous vertical padding (128px top/bottom)
- No background image, no gradient

Service Grid



- 3 equal columns on desktop
- Stack to single column on mobile
- No rounded corners on cards
- 1px border, subtle shadow on hover

Blog Section (Homepage)



- Featured post takes full width with larger typography
- Secondary posts in 2-column grid below
- All posts link to full articles

Visual Elements

Grid Pattern Background (Subtle)

Use sparingly as a section background:

```
css
.bg-grid {
  background-image:
    linear-gradient(to right, var(--border-light) 1px, transparent 1px),
    linear-gradient(to bottom, var(--border-light) 1px, transparent 1px);
  background-size: 32px 32px;
  background-position: center center;
}
```

Accent Bar

Vertical red bar used in hero and as visual anchor:

```
css
.accent-bar {
  width: 4px;
  height: 120px;
  background: var(--red-primary);
}
```

Code Blocks

```
css
.code-block {
  background: #1a1a1a;
  color: #e5e5e5;
  font-family: var(--font-mono);
  font-size: 14px;
  line-height: 1.6;
  padding: var(--space-5);
  overflow-x: auto;
  border: 1px solid #2a2a2a;
}

/* Always dark, even in light mode */
```

Responsive Breakpoints

Breakpoint	Width	Usage
-bp-sm	640px	Mobile landscape
-bp-md	768px	Tablet portrait
-bp-lg	1024px	Tablet landscape / small desktop
-bp-xl	1280px	Desktop

Mobile Adjustments

- Navigation collapses to hamburger menu at `--bp-md`
 - Hero typography scales: Display 64px → 40px
 - 3-column grids become single column
 - Horizontal padding increases: 20px → 24px
 - Section vertical padding decreases by ~30%
-

Icons

Use Phosphor Icons (regular weight) for consistency: <https://phosphoricons.com/>

Service Icons:

- Martech & Tracking: `ph-plugs-connected`
- Paid Acquisition: `ph-target`
- Marketing Analytics: `ph-chart-line-up`

UI Icons:

- Arrow right: `ph-arrow-right`
- External link: `ph-arrow-square-out`
- Menu: `ph-list`
- Close: `ph-x`

Icon sizing:

- Navigation: 20px
 - Service cards: 32px
 - Hero accent: 48px
-

Animation

Allowed Interactions

```
css
/* Button hover */
transition: background 0.15s ease, transform 0.15s ease;

/* Card hover */
transition: border-color 0.15s ease, box-shadow 0.15s ease;

/* Link underline */
transition: opacity 0.15s ease;

/* Arrow nudge */
transition: transform 0.15s ease;
```

Forbidden

- Page load animations
 - Scroll-triggered animations
 - Parallax effects
 - Hover scale > 1.02
 - Any animation > 300ms
 - Bounce/elastic easing
-

CSS Custom Properties (Complete)

css

```
:root {  
  /* Colors - Light Mode */  
  --red-primary: #D82C20;  
  --red-dark: #B52318;  
  --red-light: #E84C42;  
  
  --bg-primary: #FFFFFF;  
  --bg-secondary: #F8F8F8;  
  --bg-tertiary: #F0F0F0;  
  
  --text-primary: #1A1A1A;  
  --text-secondary: #4A4A4A;  
  --text-tertiary: #767676;  
  
  --border-light: #E5E5E5;  
  --border-medium: #CCCCCC;  
  
  /* Typography */  
  --font-primary: "Space Grotesk", system-ui, -apple-system, sans-serif;  
  --font-mono: "JetBrains Mono", "Fira Code", "SF Mono", monospace;  
  
  /* Spacing */  
  --space-1: 4px;  
  --space-2: 8px;  
  --space-3: 12px;  
  --space-4: 16px;  
  --space-5: 24px;  
  --space-6: 32px;  
  --space-7: 48px;  
  --space-8: 64px;  
  --space-9: 96px;  
  --space-10: 128px;  
  
  /* Layout */  
  --width-content: 680px;  
  --width-wide: 960px;  
  --width-max: 1200px;  
  
  /* Breakpoints (for reference - use in media queries) */  
  --bp-sm: 640px;  
  --bp-md: 768px;  
  --bp-lg: 1024px;  
  --bp-xl: 1280px;  
}  
  
@media (prefers-color-scheme: dark) {  
  :root {  
    --bg-primary: #0F0F0F;  
    --bg-secondary: #1A1A1A;  
    --bg-tertiary: #252525;  
  
    --text-primary: #F5F5F5;  
    --text-secondary: #B0B0B0;  
    --text-tertiary: #808080;
```

```
--border-light: #2A2A2A;  
--border-medium: #3A3A3A;  
}  
}
```

File Structure (Jekyll)

```
softpath/  
|   └── _config.yml  
|   └── _layouts/  
|       |   └── default.html  
|       |   └── page.html  
|       |   └── post.html  
|       └── home.html  
|   └── _includes/  
|       |   └── header.html  
|       |   └── footer.html  
|       |   └── card-service.html  
|       |   └── card-blog.html  
|       |   └── card-blog-featured.html  
|       |   └── card-project.html  
|       └── section-header.html  
|   └── _posts/  
|   └── _sass/  
|       |   └── _variables.scss  
|       |   └── _reset.scss  
|       |   └── _typography.scss  
|       |   └── _layout.scss  
|       |   └── _components.scss  
|       └── _utilities.scss  
|   └── assets/  
|       |   └── css/  
|           |       └── main.scss  
|       |   └── images/  
|           |       └── fonts/  
|   └── pages/  
|       |   └── about.md  
|       |   └── services.md  
|       |   └── work.md  
|       |   └── blog.html  
|       |   └── projects.md  
|       └── contact.md  
└── index.html
```

Checklist Before Launch

- All custom properties defined
- Font files loaded with `font-display: swap`
- Dark mode tested
- Mobile breakpoints verified
- All hover states work

- Navigation accessible via keyboard
- Code blocks styled
- 404 page designed
- Favicon and OG images set
- Page load < 3s on 3G