

Prompting Patterns in Adobe Firefly

Team 5



October 29, 2025

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Who are we designing for?

Drew

Designer

Frequently uses Adobe products for work.



Mary

Marketing Intern

Has great ideas, but isn't artistic enough to execute them.

There is no "average user" in an emerging industry, but there are ends to a spectrum. We've identified our "Drew and Mary" as these ends, the former with Adobe experience and a designer's needs, and the latter without a background in design, but still with the need for designs to be made. They find themselves having the same problems, but for different reasons.

What's the problem?

Patterns across the suite and throughout Adobe products aren't consistent, leading to frustration in the user prompting experience.

Users who can't figure out how to get what they want won't stick around, and the model itself isn't the only factor leading to this confusion.

Our Findings

1

The product doesn't feel consistent with itself or with Adobe

Users found inconsistency in two main ways: seeing Firefly as being more "inspired by" Adobe products rather than modeled after them, and experiencing confusion with different layouts between suites [A3]. In both cases, this goes against the core design heuristic of maintaining consistency and adhering to standards (Krause).

2

Users aren't getting what they asked for

Users throughout interviews and across the internet consistently claimed that prompting in Adobe Firefly never gave them what they were expecting. When users would be specific, Firefly would only take some words while completely ignoring others, leaving users unsatisfied with how the product works [A3][A1a].

3

Not everyone goes about prompting the same way

Different users write prompts in very different ways. Some use short keywords, others write long sentences. Some only edit the prompt, while others might focus on the properties panel. This leads to both errors in prompting as well as different views on how screen space should be utilized [A3][A1a].

Our Solution

Utilize users' pre-established pattern recognition to make the experience feel natural. Firefly's tools will all follow a uniform pattern while taking inspiration from other Adobe products to make the entire Adobe ecosystem feel like home.

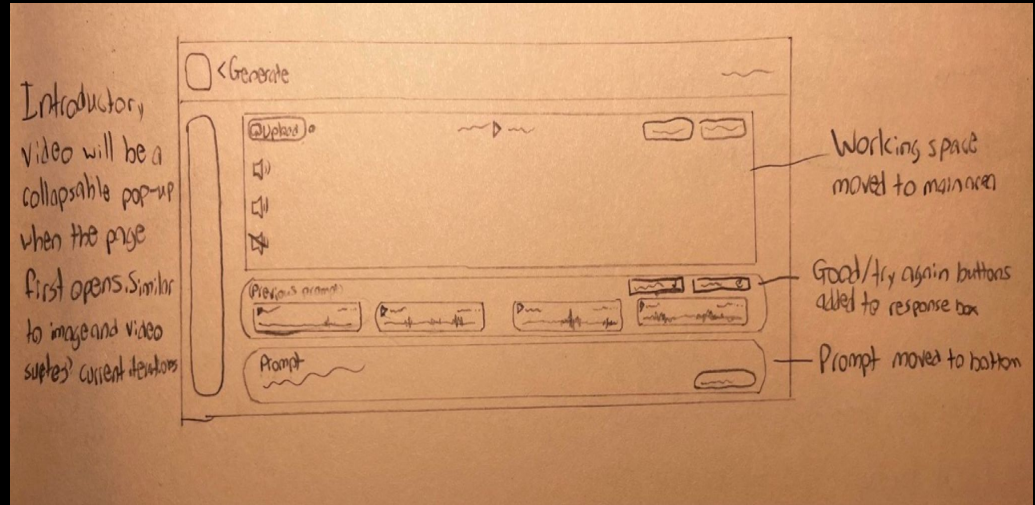
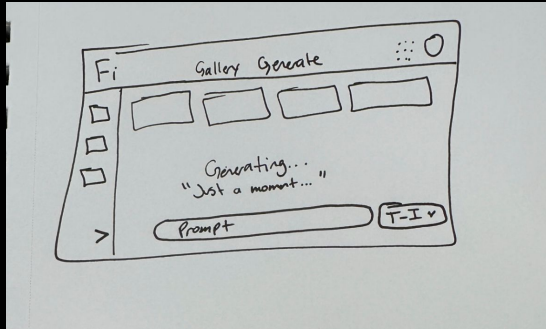
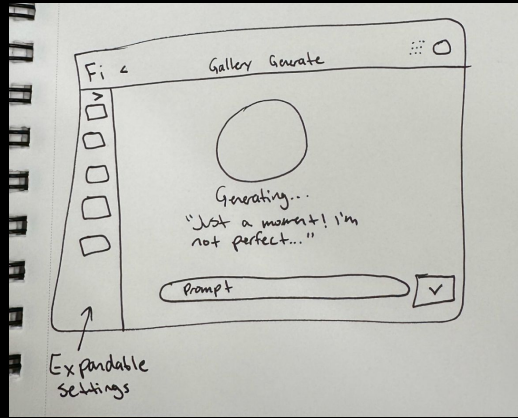
Blueprint

From our findings, we determined there were certain changes that would cohesively fit together to help solve the issue of consistency and mapped out how each is meant to be incorporated.

Key Objects and their Interactions

- Expandable settings
 - Properties panel that can be compacted or expanded based on user needs
 - Consistency with Adobe
 - Backed up by interviews and secondary research article
- “Thinking” and “Can make mistakes” warning when generating
 - Indicator that pops up after submitting a prompt to be generated
 - Consistency across AI models
 - Industry standard
 - Used by canva, chatGPT
 - Helps user understand the common issue “I’m not getting the result I expected”
 - Technical issue, but we get around it
 - Incorporate Adobe help article
- Audio suite conforming to Image/Video layout
 - Workspace top right
 - Prompt below
 - Settings left
- Ability to switch between suites directly
 - Button within suite
 - Same button and location for all suites, with options for targets being the only difference

Final Design Sketches



Consistency Issue #1

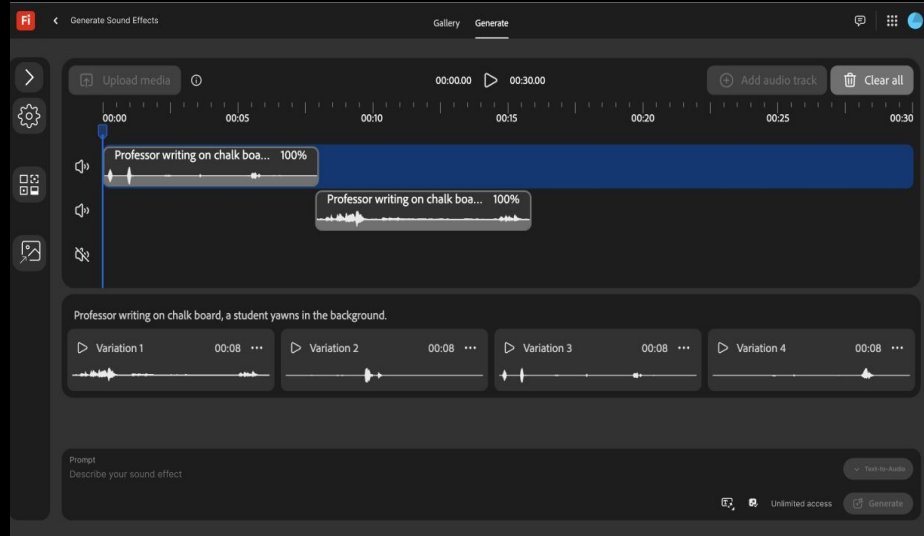
Lack of Standard Interface

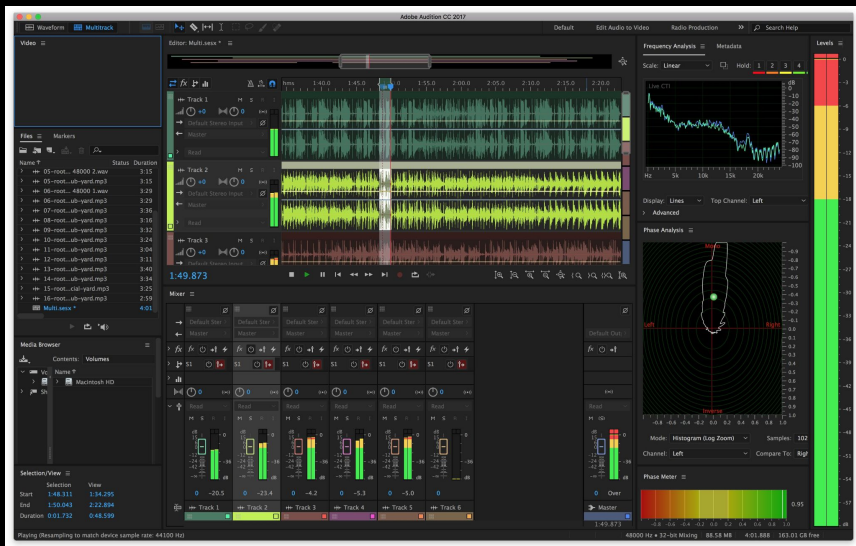
The text to sound effects suite currently features a significantly different interaction layout than its image and video counterparts, leading to unnecessary confusion.



Uniform Interface Design

To conform to Firefly's established design pattern, we adjusted the location of most intractable elements to fall in line with the locations of similar elements within other tools. The prompt field was relocated to the bottom of the screen, properties anchored to the left (more on this later) and the tracks interface above the prompt. This design comes with the added benefit of matching the layout of its Adobe cousin, Audition.



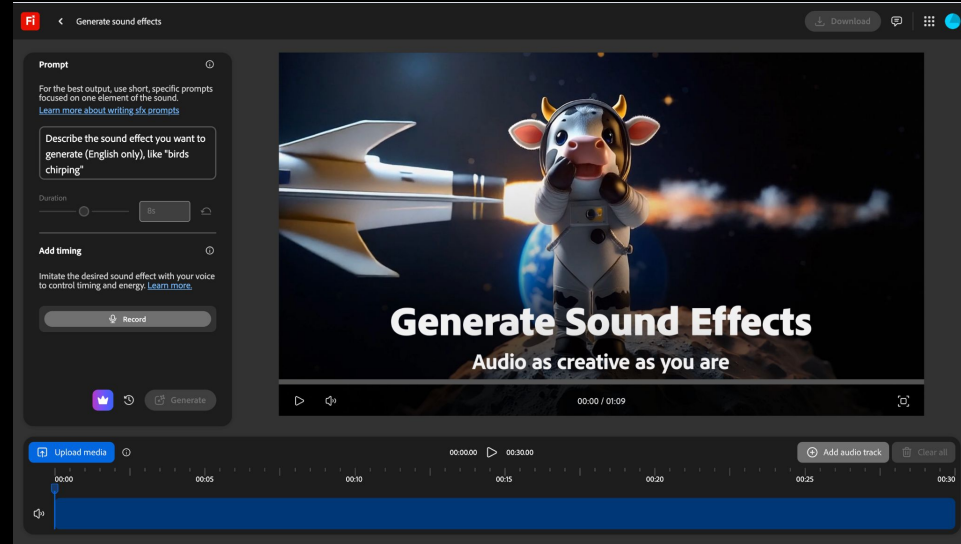


How does this help Drew and Mary?

Both user types are able to comfortably explore all of the suites without having to go through another learning curve. Building off of their established pattern recognition will allow them to focus on what they want to achieve more than how they can achieve it. Drew in particular will be able to comfortably switch between Firefly and Adobe's other audio editing tools such as Audition without having to remember how each one works individually.

Consistency Issue #2

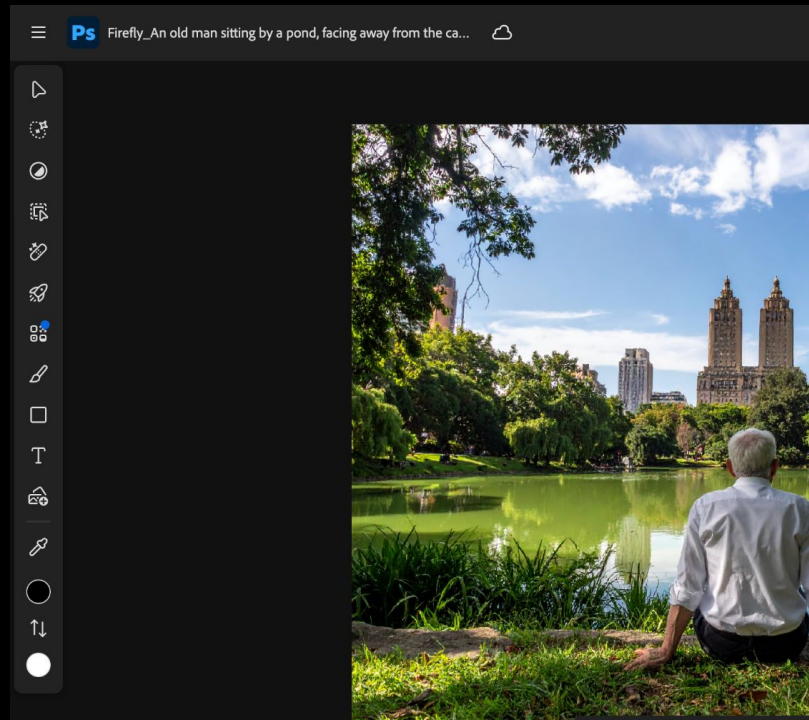
Properties



The properties panel lacks a single identity within Firefly, neither defining itself as something of importance nor aligning with similar functionalities in other Adobe products, leaving a lot to be desired by users of all types.

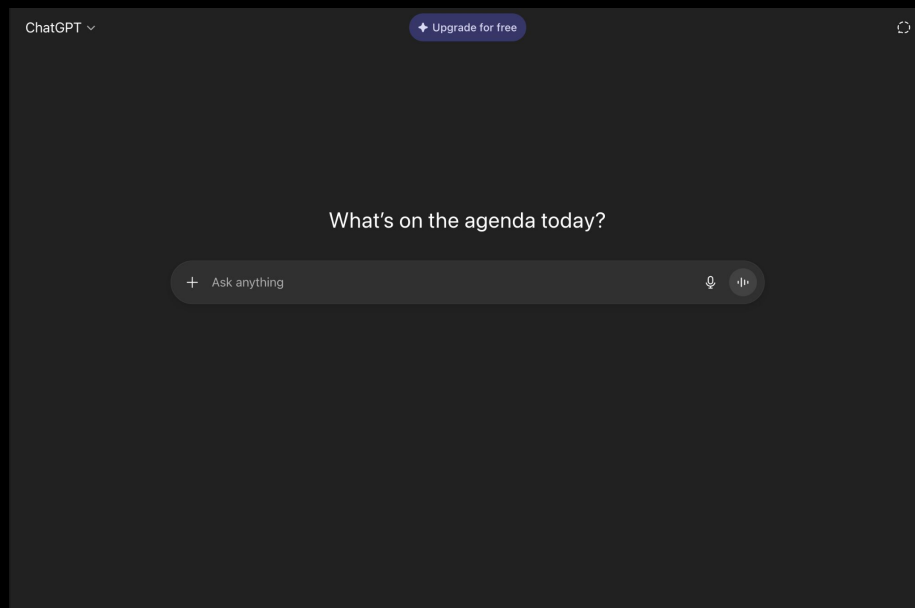
How is Drew affected by properties?

Drew is used to working in Photoshop, which is a prime example of the collapsed side panel that appears across many Adobe products. He's grown accustomed to frequenting the panel whenever something needs a small change, but likes how it stays out of the way when he's working on an image. When he went to try out Firefly, he liked how much he could specify with the properties alone, but was disappointed by how confined it felt.



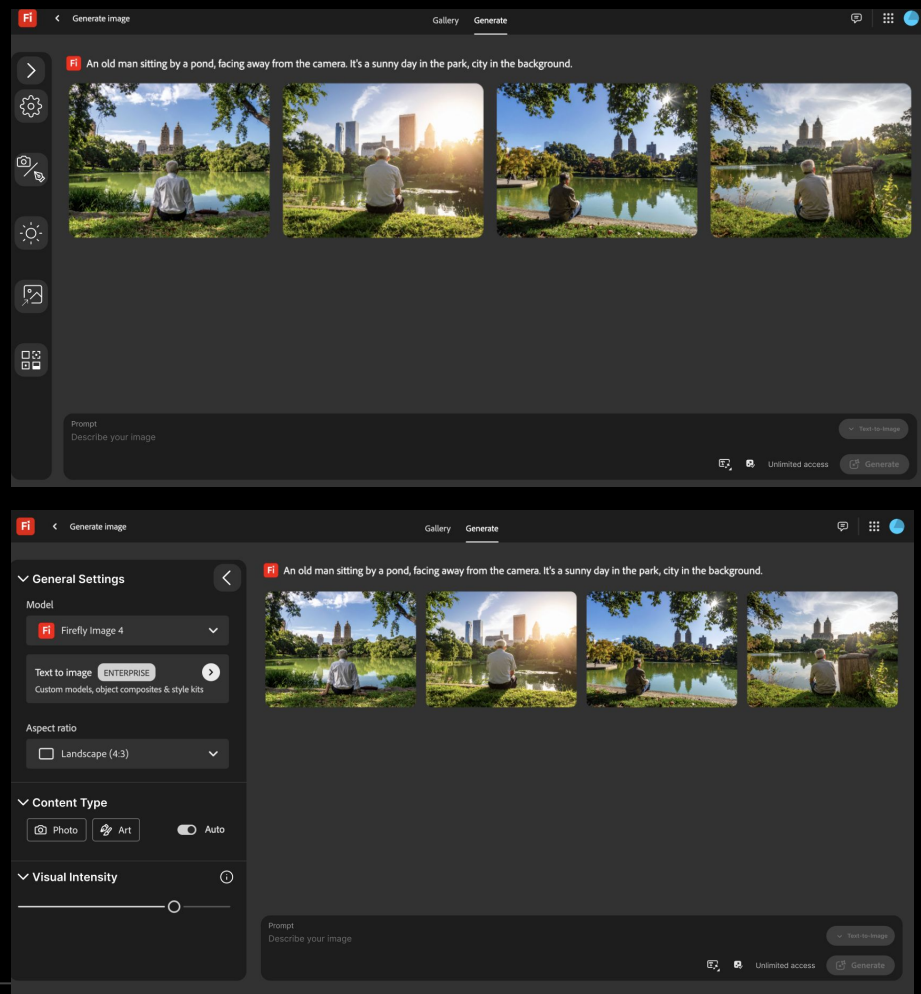
How is Mary affected by properties?

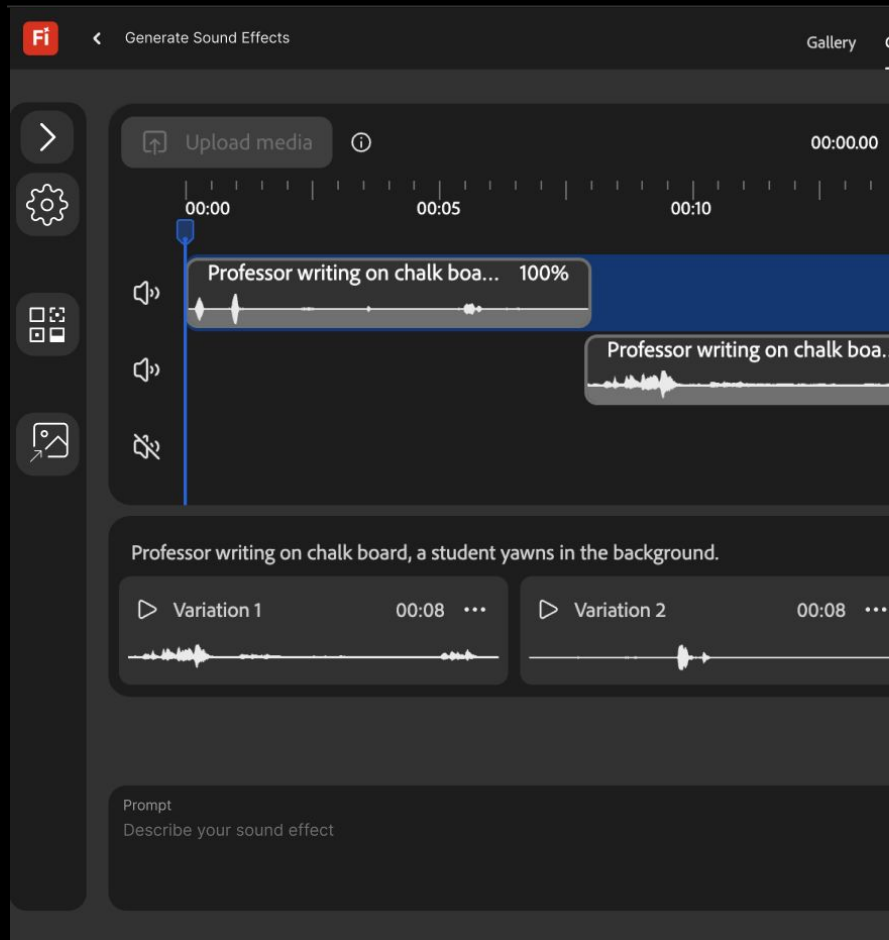
Mary isn't familiar with all of the features of the properties panel, instead preferring to let the prompt do the work. She's grown accustomed to other generative AI models needing nothing more than a prompt to give her what she needs, so she finds Firefly's properties panel to be an unnecessary waste of her screen space. She's considered using it to help when she gets an output that missed some words in the prompt, so she still likes knowing it's there.



Properties Panel Adjustment

To work around the issue of multiple ways of going about prompting, the properties (or settings) bar has been made into a collapsible and adjustable menu. This allows more prompt-focused users to make use of greater screen real estate while not taking away options from users who want to specify the details. This approach comes from two key findings: some interviewed users had input about not feeling the need to use the properties panel at all, while others wanted it to be a more core part of the experience. The structure itself mimics the properties bar featured in other Adobe products, giving an experienced Adobe user a sense of familiarity without taking away functionalities from another user.



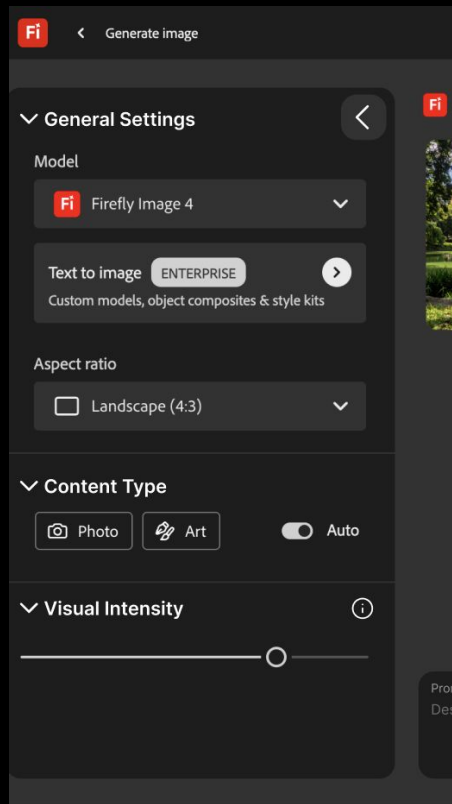


Across other suites

Since each suite has unique properties to be tweaked, the panel needs to adapt to different properties. This dynamic approach to the properties panel also leaves room for new features to be added as firefly evolves. Adaptability is something that other Adobe products like Photoshop have benefitted from throughout their development, so leaving this room now will open the door to new features later on.

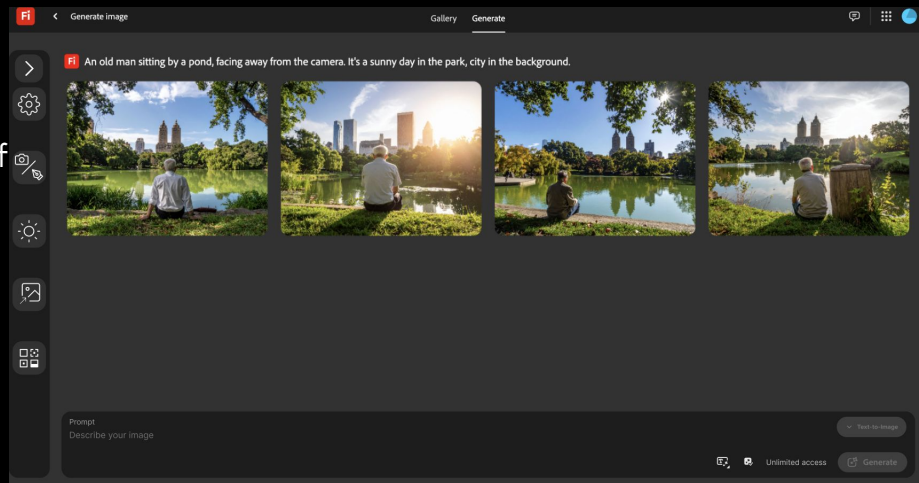
How does this change help Drew?

Drew is able to feel more comfortable using a familiar feature without losing any functionality. He's able to resize the panel to his desired size and adjust the properties as he pleases, compacting it back down when he wants to focus on the outputs.



How does this change help Mary?

Mary is happy to feel less overwhelmed by the options in front of her. She's able to put in a prompt, more clearly consider her options, and leave with what she needs, all without distractions. If she ever feels like the model isn't understanding what she's asking for, the panel is still there for when she needs it.



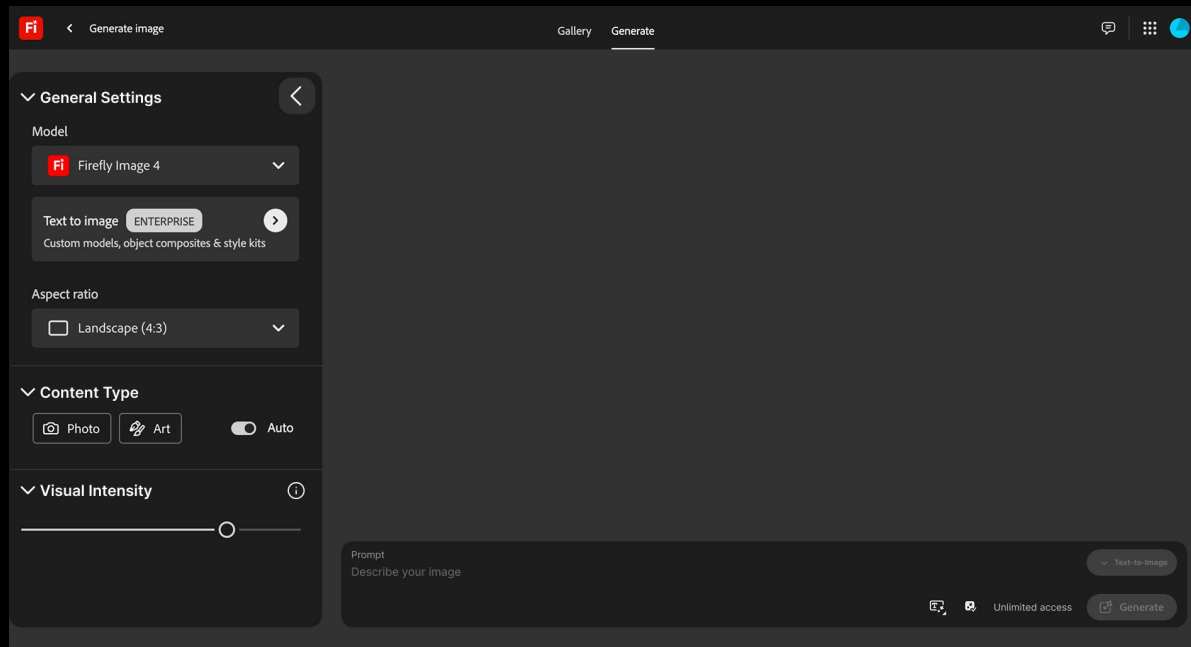
Consistency Issue #3

Navigating Between Suites

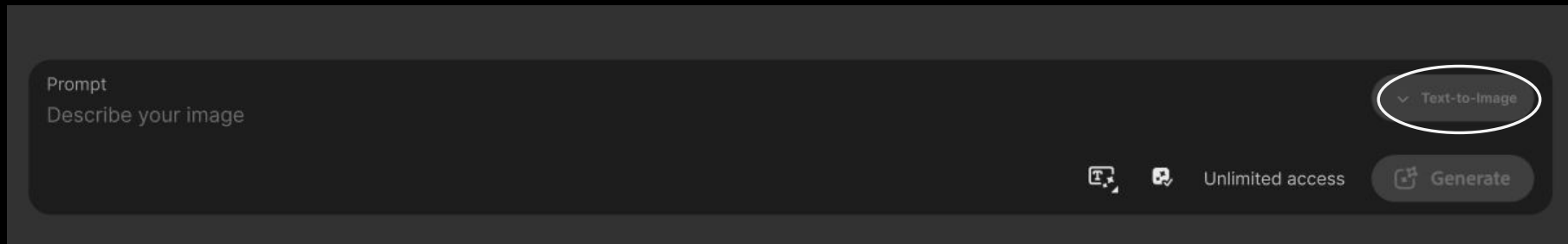
Users have to return back to the home screen in order to switch between Firefly suites, leading to an overall feeling of separation between the tools.

Quick-Switch between Suites

Users like Drew and Mary are both happy with what they've seen in the first suite they came for, but want to be able to immediately use another tool to add to their work. Firefly currently doesn't allow this to happen in a fluid process, so adding the ability to change what you're generating right from the prompt will bridge this gap.



Quick-Switch between Suites



The button's central location doubles as an ease-of-use feature as well as a reminder to the user that there's more Adobe has to offer.

By also allowing the user to continue with the work they've completed, the process can go to another level of a pattern. Each user might have a different thought process when it comes to how they phrase a prompt, but having the ability to switch at an instant can reinforce these thought patterns into Firefly as a whole.

Consistency

Issue #4

Prompting Errors

Error Acknowledgement /
Manage User Frustrations

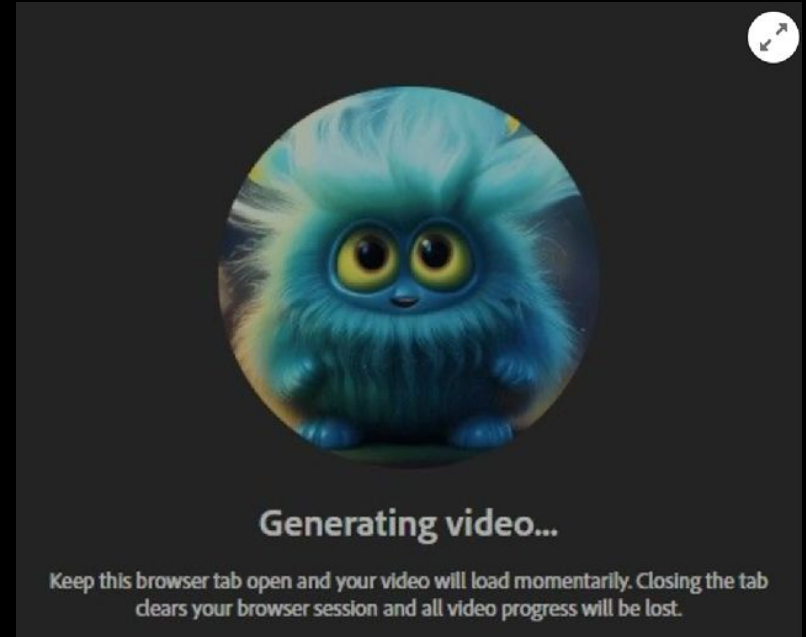
"Thinking" Reminder

Differentiating processing from lags

- Because AI responses are expected to be instantaneous, any pause of delay can lead to the assumption that the system is facing a performance issue rather than it is processing the request. This can lead to user frustrations, decrease platform engagement and adaptation.

Managing user expectations

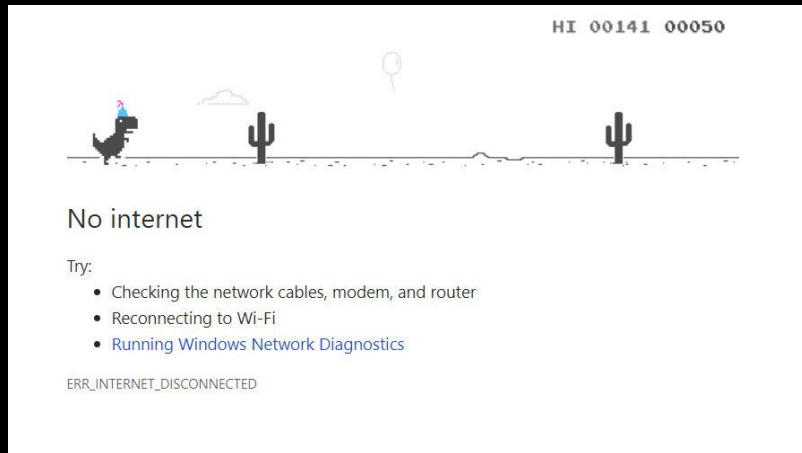
- According to Steve Krug's, "Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability" (2000). Krug emphasizes the importance of constant feedback to the user. A simple loading spinner or progress indicator can go a long way, telling the user, "Hey I hear you, please give me a moment... I'm working on it." Such a small and immediate response is essential for maintaining a positive user experience.



"Thinking" Reminder

The Psychological value

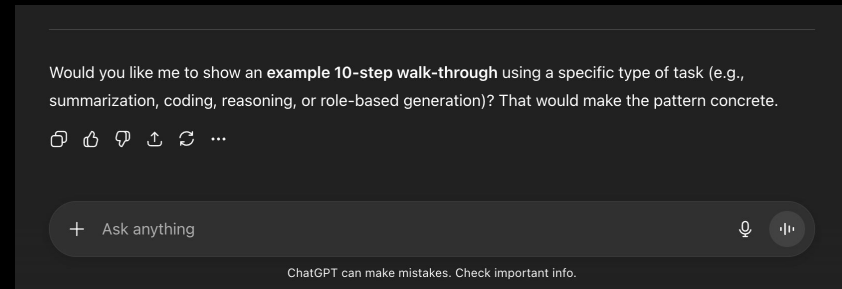
- Furthermore if we take in to account the psychological value of a thinking icon, it is well known in human -computer interaction research. Research studies such as, "Can Online Wait Be Managed? The Effect of Filler Interfaces and Presentation Modes" (Lee, Chen, Illie, 2012) confirm that loading animations or icons can manage user patience. This works by achieving cognitive absorption, where the user's attention captures the visual element, leading to temporal dissociation (a state where the wait time feels reduced). As mentioned a simple loading icon, can replace the anxiety of an uncertain wait with an explained wait, making processing more tolerable. (Take a look at google's dinosaur game when the connection is lost, sure you might feel annoyed but the game/message helps the user feel less frustrated.)



"Thinking" Reminder

Testing the principle

- We keep in mind that the effectiveness of the tool relies on the user's tolerance for waiting. This being said, It may not solve all delay frustrations BUT it significantly reduces it compared to no message.
- Take Drew and Mary, who currently have no concept of Firefly as thinking, and are instead treating it like a google search. When the model takes too long for an inaccurate result, they might be tempted to think its ineffective. Our approach lets Drew and Mary understand that Firefly is like other engines such as ChatGPT, seeing that there is value in treating the interaction differently and continue using the service through the mistakes.



ChatGPT both reminds the user of its reliability as a model and of the importance of iteration every time they submit a prompt.

The Future

Users can grow familiar with the Firefly suite as being an extension of the Adobe ecosystem, which allows for future integration of Firefly tools into other products such as Photoshop, Audition, After Effects, and more.

The Firefly tools themselves are also able to be built upon, opening up opportunities for additional features to be added if the opportunity arises.



Thank you

Interested in Hearing
More?

Let's talk

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Appendix

1. Project Master Doc
 - a. Secondary Research
2. Figma Prototypes and Sketches
3. Interview Responses
4. Reddit Responses

Citations

Any research that is directly mentioned should have a citation here

1. Krause, Rachel. "Maintain Consistency and Adhere to Standards (Usability Heuristic #4)." *Nielsen Norman Group*, 16 Jan. 2024, www.nngroup.com/articles/consistency-and-standards/. Accessed 27 Oct. 2025.
2. Nielsen, J. (2024, January 24). *Time Scales of UX: From 0.1 seconds to 100 years*. Time Scales of UX: From 0.1 Seconds to 100 Years. <https://jakobnielsenphd.substack.com/p/time-scale-ux>