

Steven Chu

PRODUCT DESIGNER

Connecting people with their curiosity to explore.

explorer



community instructor



documentary photographer



aerial acrobatics



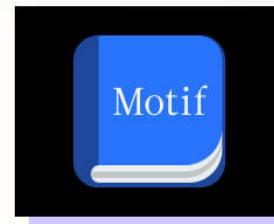
Hi, I'm Steven!



I'm passionate about tools that enable people to express their creativity and build new skillsets. For the last 4 years, I've led design on brand, web, and marketing at Motif, a photo book-making app for mac and iOS. Prior to that I was a UX consultant at Uniqlo and Marie Forleo.

Outside of work you'll find me shooting photography projects, performing aerial arts, and taking contemporary dance classes.

I love outdoor adventures and volunteer as a kayak instructor serving underresourced communities for a nonprofit called HarborLAB.



ABOUT ME

Design Philosophy

ABOUT ME

My Philosophy

Inclusivity

I believe design is more powerful when we consider and represent perspectives from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and abilities from the start.

Flexibility

Have multiple points of entry to learning a framework or mental model– so edge audiences can participate.

Simplicity

Functional over aesthetic.
Distilled over complex.
Minimize bells and whistles to allow for focus.

Motif

Refreshing Motif

Brand identity and responsive website redesign
for a photo book making app.

Devices: Desktop Tablet Mobile

Steven Chu

The Motif website is a responsive design featuring a clean, modern aesthetic. The top navigation bar includes links for Photo Projects, About Us, App, Download, and a search bar. The main headline reads "Turn your photos into this." with a call-to-action button "Download on the Mac App Store". Below this, there's a section titled "The proof is in the press." with links to various media coverage. The "Motif for Mac" and "Motif for iPhone & iPod" sections provide details on the software features. A central section titled "Make all of these with Motif." shows examples of photo books, calendars, cards, and canvases. The "How to get started" section provides instructions for both desktop and mobile users. Testimonials from satisfied customers are included, along with sections for "Overlay images" and "Customizable page colors and backgrounds".

PROJECT OVERVIEW



My role

- Lead designer
- Designed brand identity, UI component library, Visual design for responsive web
- UX Research

Who I worked with

- Growth Marketing Manager
- Engineer in India
- Copywriter
- Digital strategy agency in UK

Timeline

- 6 months

THE PROBLEM

Millennials are the largest cohort of site visitors but are 16% less likely to convert compared to GenXers and 32% less likely than Boomers.

GOALS

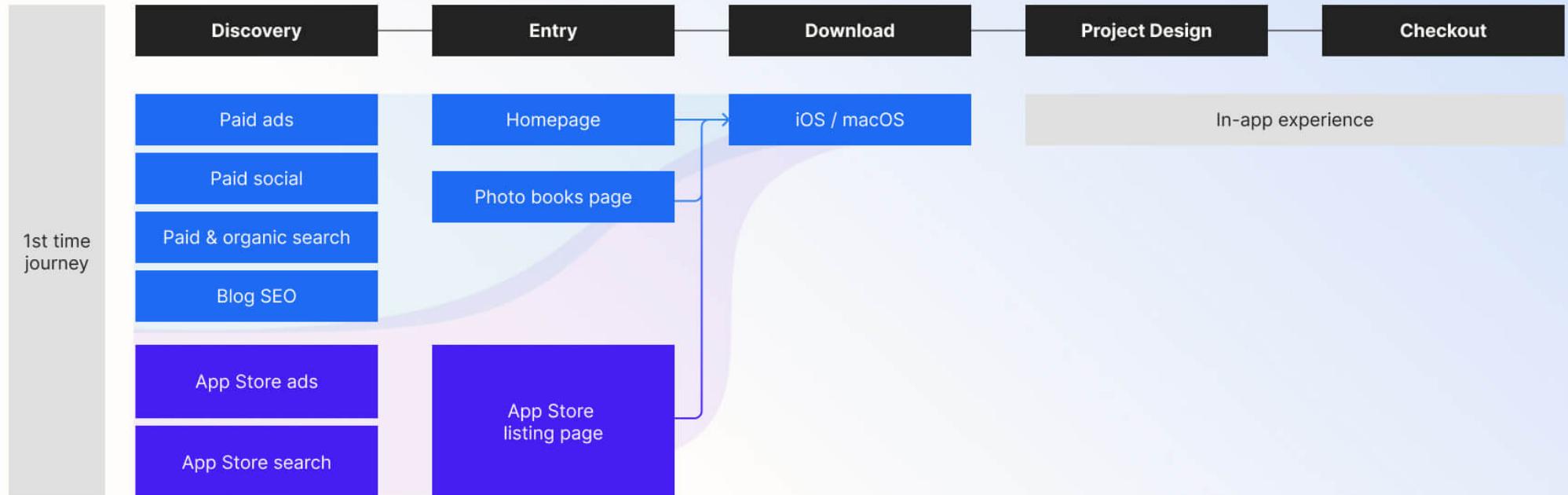
How can we engage more Millennials to adopt Motif?

Increase conversion rate closer to GenX and Boomers

Improve Millennials' perception and satisfaction with brand

JOURNEY MAP

We focus on the Motif website because it's the main funnel where web traffic is driven to download. The rest of downloads route directly through the App Store.



INITIAL USER INTERVIEWS

How do Millennials feel about the Motif site today?

Unclear path to get started

Text heavy and repetitiveness
buries key product info

Presentation feels dated and offers less products than competitors

Don't want to download an app



Customize Your Photo Book Covers

Surprise friends and family with a familiar face on the cover. Add a fitting title. Invite them in with a few favorite photos on the dust jacket flap. Wrap it up with a perfect photo for the back. Bring your story home.

A circular yellow callout highlights the top right image of a hand holding a book.

Hardcover Benefits

Hardcover photo books just give you more. The spine can be beautifully customized. Personalize each with the perfect title. Organize with colors. Start your very own set. Your collections of stories, with Motif.

With each hardcover photo book, a protective dust jacket is included.

Craftsmanship

Made to withstand the test of time.

Your photo memories will endure with our beautifully constructed, personalized photo books. Our hardcover books are secured using a two-stage binding process. First, the pages are bound together using a high-quality adhesive. Then, hidden staples are added for enhanced durability. They also feature anti-scratch, anti-scruff lamination to protect its exterior. Your cherished memories, preserved for generations to come. Then, hidden staples are added for enhanced durability. They also feature anti-scratch, anti-scruff lamination to protect its exterior. Your cherished memories, preserved for generations to come.

Paper. We Use the Best.
So your story will have the best canvas.

Your memories deserve the best, so we use premium paper for your photo book. Our papers provide true whiteness, bright colors, and no image bleed on the reverse side. So your photos are presented with optimal vibrancy. The silk finish makes for a smooth turn of each page. It's a difference you can feel when you touch the page.

Motif website – before

Apple photo products.

of

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Introduce a unified design language across channels, and improve website content and structure for navigability and clarity.

Constraints

- Limited time: redesign needs to go live by launch of new product category
- No 1st party purchase demographic data
- Dev technical constraints
- Pandemic vs non-pandemic behavior

Impact

55%[↑]

increase in organic downloads
among 25-34 year olds

31%[↑]

increase in overall conversion

2x[↑]

monthly traffic from 25-34 year olds



PRINCIPLES

Design Principles

Don't Repeat Yourself (DRY) in engineering is the practice of eliminating redundancy to manage unnecessary complexity.

Consistency builds trust. Give consistent wayfinding and design patterns across all decision-making touchpoints.

Build delight through little moments. Remind people to look for adventures in the everyday.

Educate at the right moment.

DESIGN EXPLORATION

To anchor our exploration, I started by defining our reason for being in this Brand Promise Roadmap:

Great books

come from

capturing great moments

that come from

living great experiences.

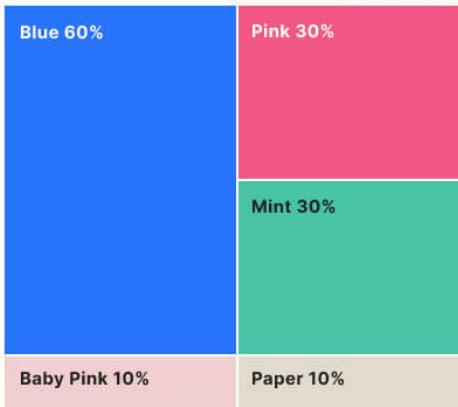
DESIGN EXPLORATION

Visual Identity

Brand Archetype

The Everyday Explorer

Colors



App Icon



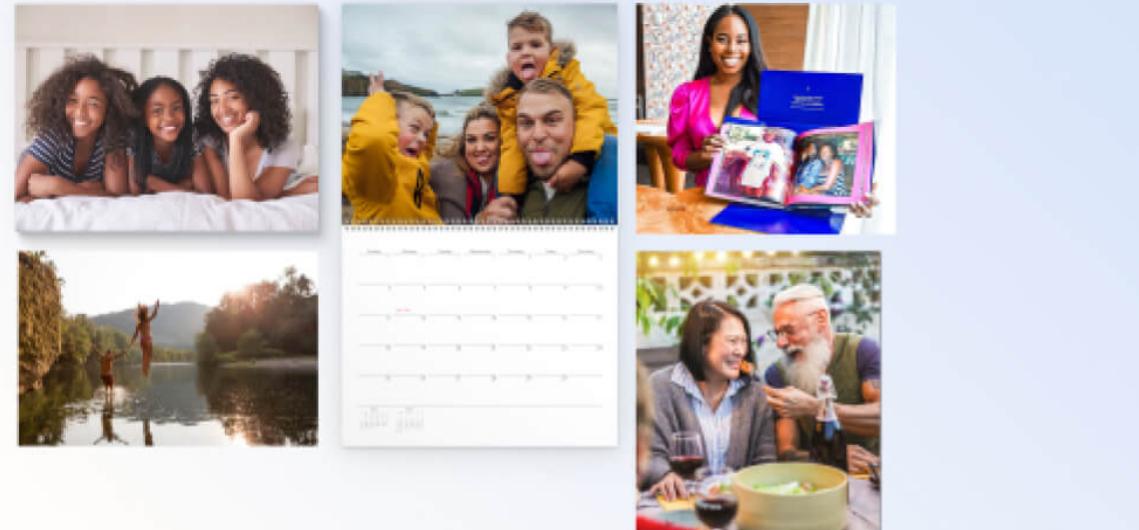
Typography

Hi. We're Motif.

Motif is a delightfully simple extension for Photos on macOS and app for iOS that helps create beautifully curated photo books, calendars, cards, and wall art.

Shapes & Patterns

Photography must feature a minimum diversity ratio of 1:3.



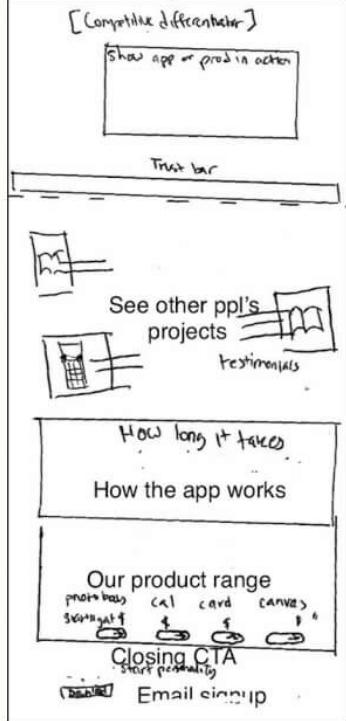
DESIGN EXPLORATION - HOMEPAGE

The homepage redesign concepts I explored aimed to balance courting new vs returning users.

Opt 1: Creator showcase



Preferred

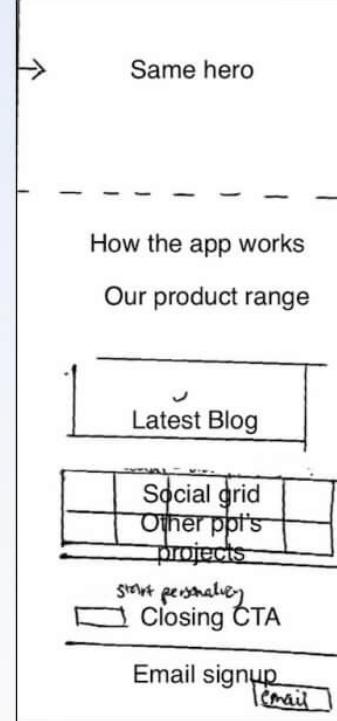


Opt 2: App focused

Selected



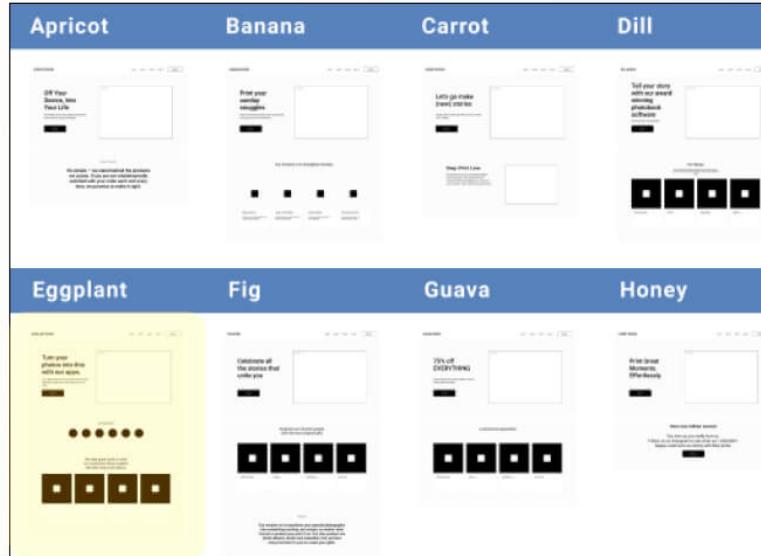
Opt 3: Inspiration resource focused



DESIGN EXPLORATION - HOMEPAGE R1

Using a blind validation study, I tested performance of our new USPs and layout against competitors. Motif rated near the top:

Tested layout & messaging of 7 competitors, brands obscured.



SurveyMonkey results for Likelihood to Buy score (1-10); sample size n=64

AGE	A (Artifact)	B (Chatbooks)	C (Photobox)	D (Cewe)	E (Motif)	F (Hofmann)	G (Snapfish & S)	H (LalaLab)
18-24	5.67	6.33	6	5	4.67	4.33	4	5
25-34	6.8	6.07	6	7.07	7	5.47	4.87	6.47
35-44	5.69	5.88	6.63	5.44	5.94	5.63	5.44	6.44
45-54	4.5	4.75	5.38	5.88	5.75	6.13	5.5	6.38
55-64								
65+	5	7	8	5.5	4	5	2	3
ALL F	5.53	5.73	6	5.83	6.17	5.63	5.7	6.03
ALL M	6.43	6	6.64	6.5	5.93	5.36	3.5	6.5
Total (who answered demographics)								
Total (including those who skipped demographics)	5.67	5.54	6.15	5.81	6.08	5.42	5.04	6.09

DESIGN EXPLORATION - HOMEPAGE R1 FINDINGS

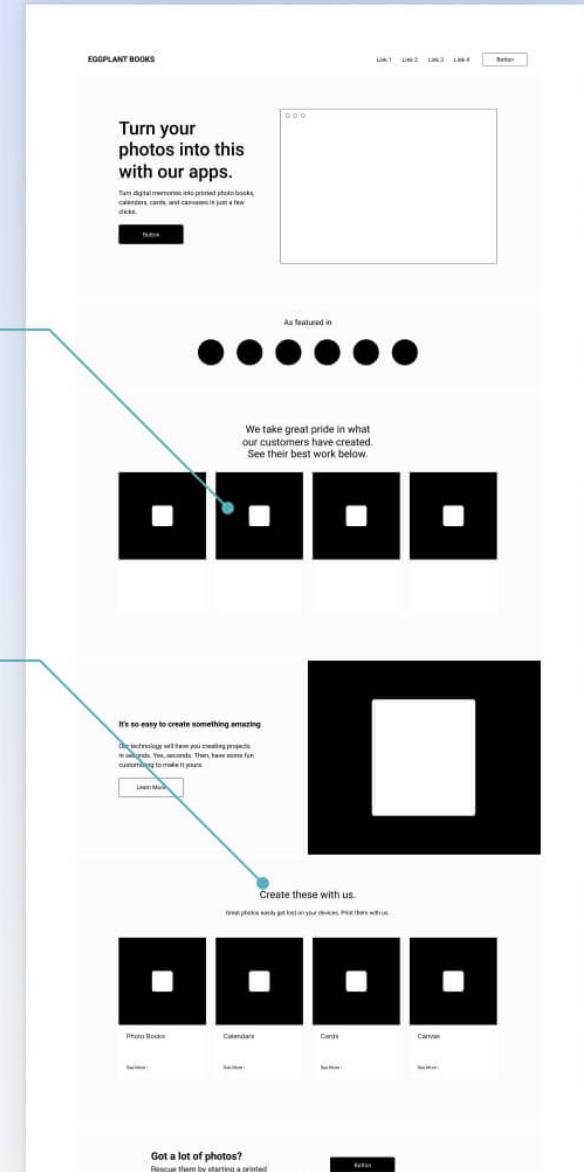
However, feedback was clear:

1. Multiple respondents voiced disinterest in seeing other people's projects

"See the created stuff from customers ..maybe, but what about their reviews?"

2. They wanted product range and pricing up front

"The actual product is featured way too far down the page. And tone doesn't seem as witty or as defined as the previous examples."



DESIGN EXPLORATION - HOMEPAGE R2

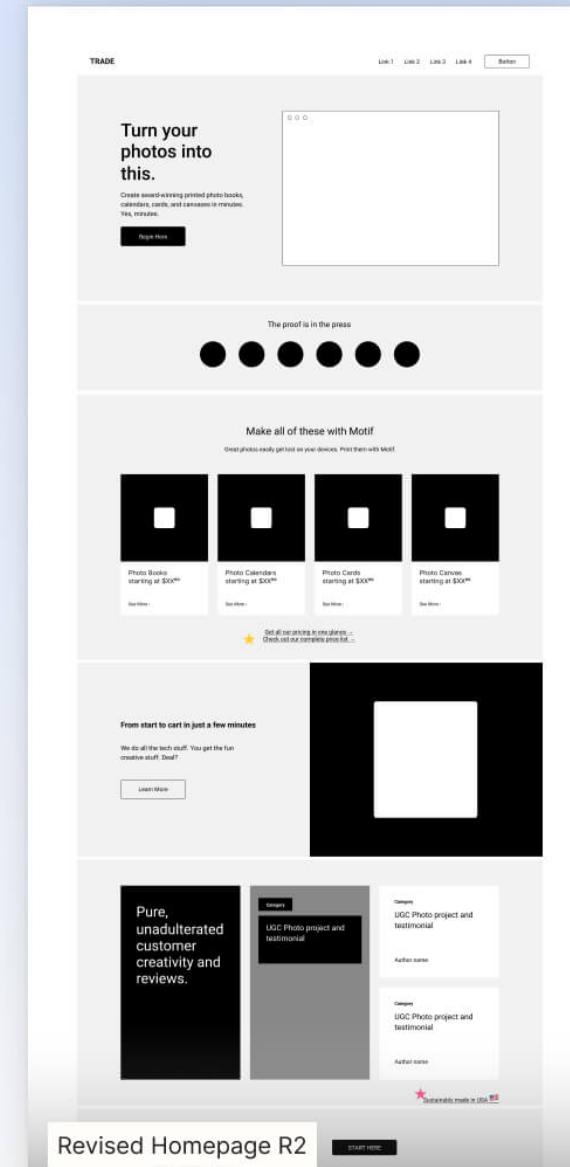
In our second iteration, we revised:

- Copy to be wittier
- Moved pricing to top
- Reviews to bottom
- and integrated ideas and feedback given to other brands:

Survey open answer Likes and Dislikes compiled across all brands surveyed.

What people like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Simple, to-the-point copy. I.e. "Snap, print, love"⚠ Guarantee✓ Succinct site -- can read all copy in 30 seconds✓ Pricing transparency⚠ Examples of products⚠ Reviews⚠ Prominent discount⚠ "Made in USA" line (agreed - sustainable made in the USA?)⚠ "Award-winning" line✓ Showcasing customers' projects⚠ Language about giving gifts (occasions hub!)

People didn't like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Flowery language✓ Lack of pricing transparency (remedy - link to pricing page?)✓ Vague language✓ Assumptions about visitors (generally people disliked the "strengthen families" line)✓ Language that doesn't have anything to do with product i.e. "sunday snuggles"✓ Salesy copy✓ The word "software" and the idea of downloading an app.✓ What exactly is an "app"? ← so we should emphasize how easy it is to create with Motif and that it runs within Photos✓ Wordy copy✓ Too large of a discount✓ Little emphasis on quality



Revised Homepage R2

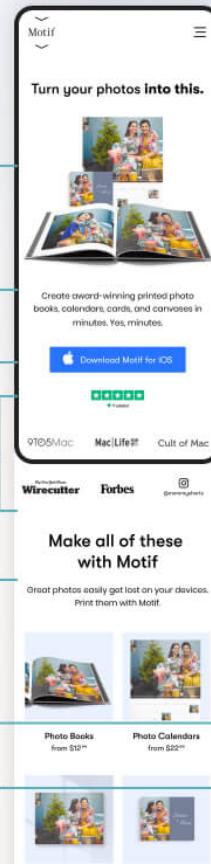
DESIGN EXPLORATION - HOMEPAGE

Homepage Final

Before



After



Product focus

Value statement

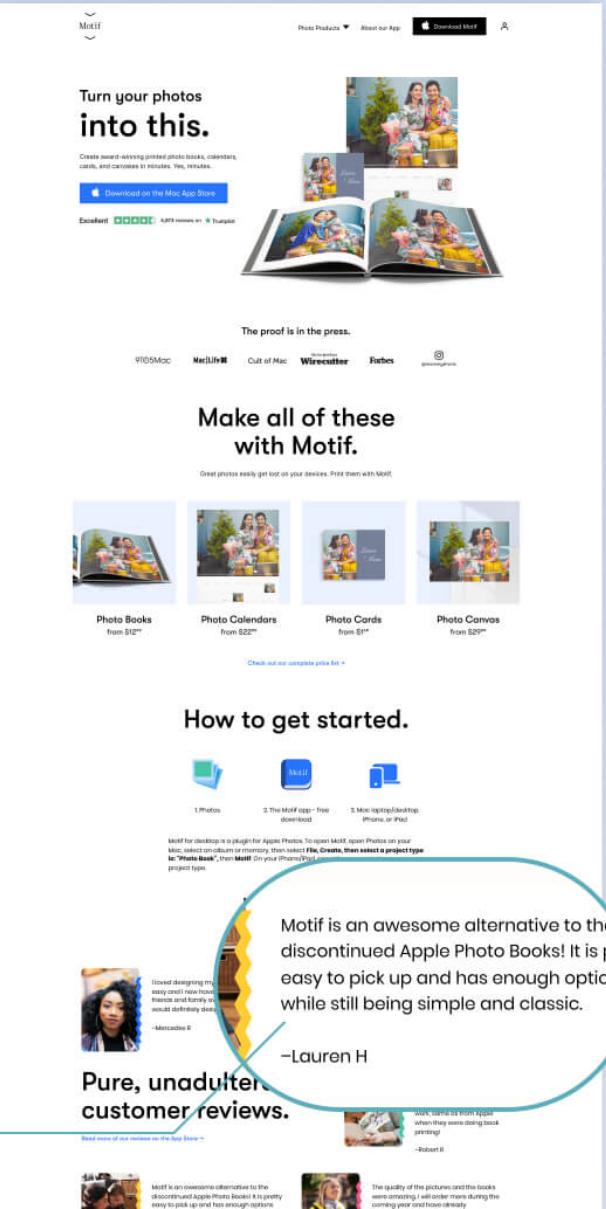
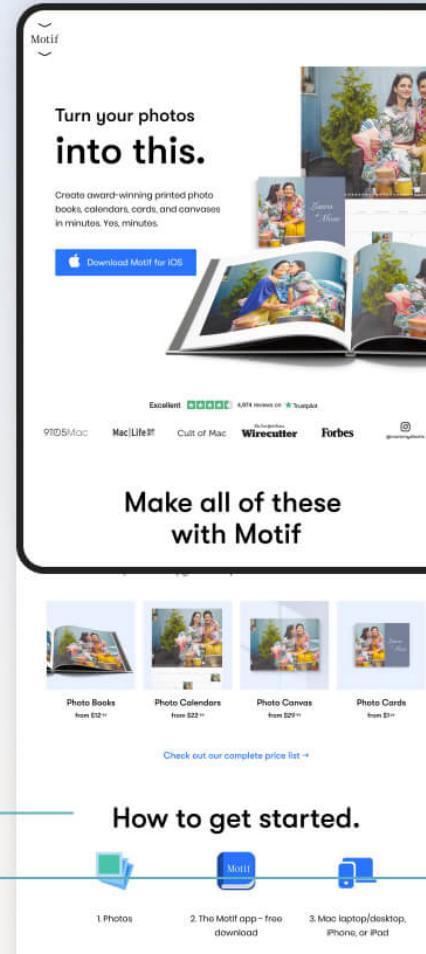
Global CTA

Trust builders

Product range

Action steps

**Testimonials addressing
Fear Uncertainty & Doubts**





Thanks! Your order has been placed.

Check your email for order confirmation and delivery information.

SHIPPING TO:

Pansy Chau
305 Orchard Ln.
Pinegrove, CA 91234

ORDER DETAILS:

Order No: 12345
Card Ending In: 9995
Promo Code: Motif15
Order Total: \$179.95

ARRIVES:

Nov. 9 - Nov 16



Share those memorable moments with your friends by giving them

Premium Photo Paper

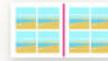
- It's the best in producing true whiteness, bright colors, silk finish, and no image bleed on the reverse side.

Shipping

- Your project is protected in a premium matte sleeve and corrugated cardboard container.

Sustainable Materials

- We've earned the Environmental Protection Agency's highest score for our energy and emissions reduction programs. Learn more about our efforts [here](#).



Overlaid images

Overlap your photos to create a stylish collage effect.



Aa ↻

Customizable page colors and backgrounds

Choose from unlimited colors and a host of patterns to compliment your creations.

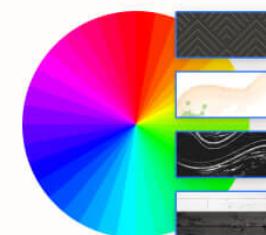


Photo calendar features

- Showcase large imagery with 13 x 10" size
- Luxury paper with a silky smooth finish
- Durable silver wire-o binding
- Customize any date box with text and photos for birthdays, anniversaries, and special dates
- Create collages with the editor adjusting layout grid
- Automatically insert your best images with the Autoflow algorithm
- Add color, themes, and patterns to page backgrounds



Track shipment page

ARRIVES	STATUS
Monday AUGUST 17 4 DAYS LEFT	ON IT'S WAY
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10
11	11
12	12
13	13
14	14
15	15
16	16
17	17
18	18
19	19
20	20
21	21
22	22
23	23
24	24
25	25
26	26
27	27
28	28
29	29
30	30
31	31

ARRIVES

ON IT'S WAY

SHIPPING ACTIVITY

ARRIVED

DEPARTED

ORIGIN SCAN

DELIVERY DOCUMENTS

Get Text Updates About Your Delivery

Mobile Number

SIGN UP



Motif

Account Addresses Orders

Account settings

Personal Information

Johnny Walker
johnnywalker@gmail.com

Connected Accounts

- Google
- Facebook
- Apple

Password

[Change password](#)

Delete account

Permanently delete your account and data.

[Delete my account](#)



Data privacy guarantee

Motif uses your personal information only to communicate with you about your Motif orders, product features, and app enhancements. Additionally, if you opted into receiving marketing messages from Motif, we will let you know about product news, tips, and special offers.

We do not sell your personal information for any reason.

MOMENTS OF DELIGHT

Theme gallery: animated previews

Fun Fact: I set up a master template and created these animations in Canva on \$0 additional budget spend

Result: +17%[↑] in interactions YoY over prior image carousel

Themes

Select the right theme to complement your photo project story. Click or tap to apply instantly.

Classic



Portfolio - Black



Portfolio - White



Gold on Diamond

Positive



Good Day



Holiday

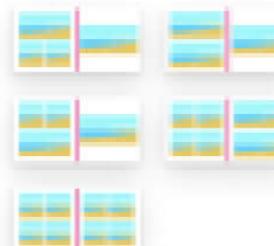


Romantic Dinner



Page layouts

Choose the right amount of photos you want in each page.



MOMENTS OF DELIGHT

Product previews in the nav menu

Fun Fact: These nav components are part of the MVP design system I shipped. Menu states include:

- ① Desktop micro-animations and imagery changes
- ② Mobile product grid
- ③ Logged in account view

Result:

+77% ↑

in Desktop interactions

+20% ↑

in Mobile interactions

Header Nav

Enjoy free expedited shipping + 15% off with code ShiftNow.

Photo Products ▾ App Features Download Motif

Photo Books Hard or soft covers in 4 sizes

Photo Calendars Customize from 12 to 24 months

Photo Cards Flat and folded custom cards

Photo Canvas NEW Your photos on stretched canvas

Photo Books

Photo Books

Photo Books

Photo Books NEW

Johnny Walker johnniewalker@gmail.com

Account Settings

Orders

Addresses

My Referrals

Support

Sign Out

Photo Products ▾ Photo Products ▾

Photo Books Photo Books

Photo Cards Photo Canvas NEW

App Features App Features

Addresses Addresses Addresses Addresses

Nav - Right | Campaign

Responsive menu component states

RESULTS

Business impact

Google analytics data:

55% 

organic downloads
among 25-34 yo's

31% 

overall conversion

2x 

monthly traffic
by 25-34 yo's

User research data:

4 to 6.15 

(out of 10) improvement in
Likelihood to Buy rating

"This site looks more premium but simple compared to the mass market options so I'd say anyone mid-20's to 50's could use this..."

-Allie, millennial interviewed from the UK

Design impact

Shipped MVP design system and web UI components across international markets

Created brand book documentation in Notion

Improved design→dev handoff through collaborative weekly demo meetings; educated devs to implement using reusable code blocks from component library

Reduced dev time for a new page by 2.5 weeks (from 5.5 to 3 weeks) by improving team processes



Reducing development friction for email designers at Uniqlo

Project summary

Led service redesign and front-end development to help Uniqlo increase output in email production

Role

Internal UX consultant

Result

In 2 weeks, I cut email coding time from 40 minutes to 5 minutes

Interesting Fact

Achieved on \$0 budget spend



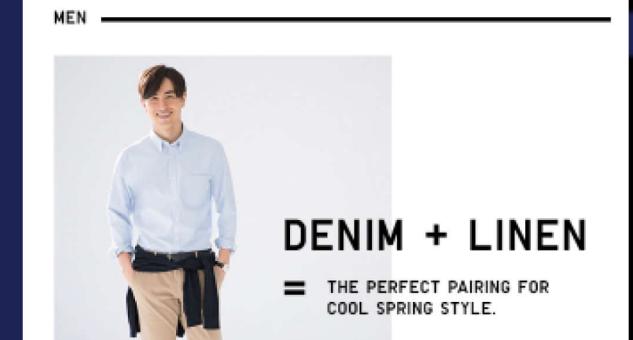
WOMEN

RELAXED,
BREEZY, AND
OH-SO
COMFORTABLE,



THESE PAIRINGS ARE READY FOR ANY FUN THE WEEKEND THROWS YOUR WAY.

PANT
\$29.90



MEN

DENIM + LINEN

= THE PERFECT PAIRING FOR COOL SPRING STYLE.

PROCESS

In this 2-week service redesign for Uniqlo, a global e-commerce retailer, I worked individually on-site to help them scale up email production.

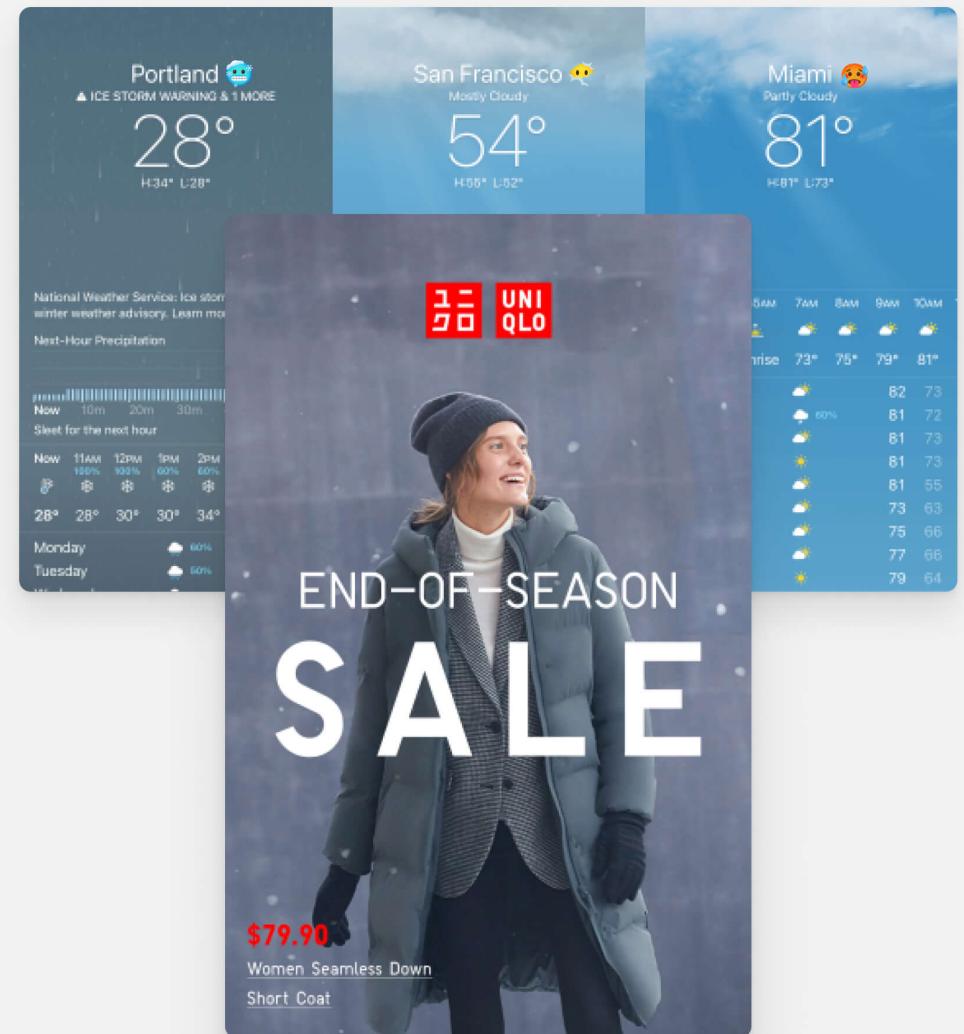


BUSINESS OVERVIEW

Uniqlo wanted to personalize their email experience so subscribers would not get the same undifferentiated content.

But that meant they needed to produce and ship more custom content.

The same email is sent despite regional weather differences.



KEY USER

Through initial interviews, I identified my project users as the **2 email designers**. They were at max capacity with their existing workload: designing and coding 7 emails a week (1 sent daily).

Designer Emmy



AGE

27

OCCUPATION

Email Designer

LOCATION

New York

TECH SKILL

Medium

PLATFORM

iMac



Dreamweaver

Needs to accomplish

- Design, code, and QA emails.
- Assemble email code blocks without error
- Handoff final working code to email manager

Needs to feel

- Tools and processes are reliable
- Not stressed, struggling, or frustrated
- Able to predict her workload bandwidth

Considerations

- No coding knowledge but tasked with coding & QA
- Frustrated with Dreamweaver software constantly locking up and crashing

I chose to focus my investigation on the development segment of Emmy's journey. She was losing the most bandwidth here—which limited her from taking on new projects.



Designer Emmy's journey for shipping an email

Planning

Once a week

Feels stretched

Emmy doesn't have the operational capacity to take on project requests

Design

4 - 8 hours

Feels confident

Emmy spends the bulk of her time compiling assets and designing concepts

Review & approval

Once a week

Feels tentative

Emmy is concerned that management revisions can add significant unaccounted time to reworking email designs



Development

40 mins - 4 hours

Feels uncertain

Emmy doesn't like how this segment unexpectedly delays and throws off her scheduled workload

Handoff

to manager to ship

Feels relieved

Shipping helps Emmy feel progress on her workload before next week's email cycle starts

RESEARCH

How were 2 designers with no coding background working around email code and QA tasks?

I conducted **1 day of contextual inquiry** followed by a **task analysis** of their current process to find out.

laborious

40 minutes
to build each email

uncertain

1 - 3 hours
lost to bugs

6 software
freezes per hour

frustrated

For the designers, uncertainty and lack of reliability were the main challenges behind coding time currently varying from 40 mins to a costly 4 hours per email.

PAIN POINT 1

Finding code to use
isn't easy

PAIN POINT 2

Don't know if past
emails are bug free

PAIN POINT 3

Manual code editing
introduces mistakes

PAIN POINT 4

Dreamweaver
software is slow and
clunky

RESEARCH

In task analysis, I found clusters of mentally demanding, repetitive steps—steps a system could take over and streamline.



I search across old emails for code I can copy+paste

Where's the beginning and end of this code block?

Overall task	Steps	Sub-steps	Sub-sub-steps
	1 Setup base HTML	1.1 Locate base HTML	1.1.1 Open email archive on server 1.1.2 Open HTML files 1.1.3 Compare HTML files to design requirement *cognitive load 1.1.4 Choose best match *risk carrying over hidden bugs
	2 Check if header in base HTML matches design requirement. If yes, skip 3.	1.2 Open file in code editor 1.3 Save as new HTML file *risk overriding original file	
	3 Input header HTML	3.1 Locate header HTML	3.1.1 Open email archive on server 3.1.2 Open HTML files in viewer 3.1.3 Compare header in HTML files to design requirement *cognitive load 3.1.4 Choose best match 3.2.1 Open code editor 3.2.2 Select header HTML *risk copying wrong HTML 3.2.3 Copy header HTML 3.2.4 Select header in base HTML 3.2.5 Paste new header HTML, overwriting base HTML *risk pasting in wrong section 3.2.6 Save changes 3.2.7 Refresh preview in viewer 3.3.1 Update title 3.3.2 Update preheader 3.3.3 Update free shipping banner info 3.3.4 Save changes 3.3.5 Refresh preview in viewer 3.4.1 Debug code if necessary *cognitive load 3.4.2 Save changes 3.4.3 Refresh preview in viewer
Code email	4 Update existing body block HTML (repeat as needed)	3.3 Update custom fields inside code block 3.4 Check if header matches design requirement. If yes, do 4. If not, do 3.4.1	4.1 Identify body blocks matching design requirement 4.2 Update custom fields: Do 5.3 and 5.4 4.3 Delete unused body blocks *risk of incorrect deletion
	5 Input body block HTML (repeat as needed)	5.1 Locate body block HTML	5.1.1 Open email archive on server 5.1.2 Open HTML files in viewer 5.1.3 Compare body block HTML to design requirement *cognitive load 5.1.4 Choose best match 5.2.1 Select HTML block *risk copying wrong HTML; cognitive load 5.2.2 Copy HTML block 5.2.3 Select insertion point in base HTML with cursor 5.2.4 Paste HTML block into base HTML *risk pasting in wrong section 5.2.5 Save changes 5.2.6 Refresh preview in viewer 5.3.1 Update table cell width 5.3.2 Update table cell link url(s) 5.3.3 Update image file url(s) 5.3.4 Update image alt text 5.3.5 Update image width 5.3.6 Update image height 5.3.7 Save changes 5.3.8 Refresh preview in viewer 5.4.1 Debug code if necessary *cognitive load 5.4.2 Save changes 5.4.3 Refresh preview in viewer
		Update custom fields inside code block. For each body block image section, do 5.3.1 - 5.3.8. When all sections are updated, do 5.4 *risk omitting input field	

Legend

- Current steps
- Steps system can do
- Issues
- Steps that can be eliminated

PROBLEM

The designers needed an organized and reliable system to build emails frictionlessly.

Project constraints

- \$0 budget
- Limited to free solutions

Success metrics

- Build time per email
- Number of bugs encountered
- Employee satisfaction

To gather ideas and approaches, I moved into brainstorming:

Create a library of
pre-coded blocks
(needs to be easy to access)

PAIN POINT 1

Finding code to use
isn't easy

Replace manual
coding with
(and eliminate copy+paste!)

PAIN POINT 3

Manual code editing
introduces mistakes

PAIN POINT 2

Don't know if past
emails are bug free

PAIN POINT 4

Dreamweaver
software is slow and
clunky

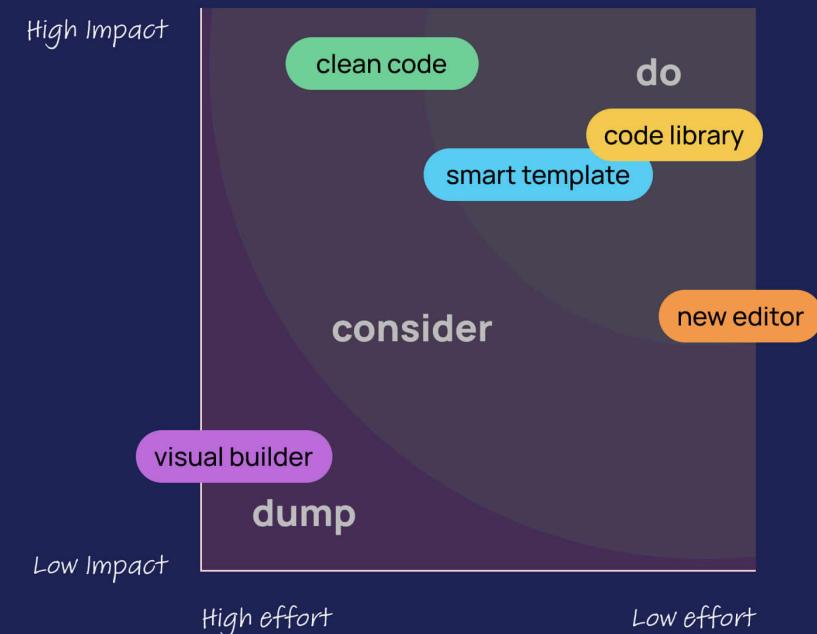
Set up a clean
master template
(a bug-free source of truth!)

Switch to a fast,
reliable code editor
(preferably with modular
block templating)

*Moonshot idea: Build a drag & drop visual email builder
(a la Mailchimp or Squarespace)

I prioritized the possible solutions based on their potential to lower build time per email:

- 1 clean code Critical to do first: Solves time lost to bugs by eliminating existing errors. Prerequisite for 3.
- 2 new editor Ranked 2nd because it's a prerequisite for 4 and enhances usability for 3. Solves crash issues pain point.
- 3 code library Reduces build time. Prevents time lost to future bugs by eliminating repetitive error-prone tasks. Required for 4.
- 4 smart template Reduces build time. Prevents time lost to future bugs by eliminating repetitive error-prone tasks.



To lower build time, the new system must:

- Eliminate existing bugs
- Prevent future bugs
- Streamline build workflow

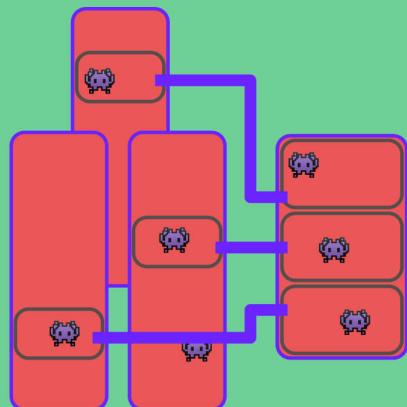
1

clean code

First I rewrote the master set of code over 2 days in 3 stages to give the designers a clean foundation to work from:

Stage 1

I compiled the most frequently used content blocks in a new master set



Stage 2

I debugged and rewrote each block as concise, bulletproof code



Stage 3

For final QA, I merged all blocks back together and retested until no blocks conflicted with each other



I'm clean from my header to my footer!

Next I researched and trialed competing code editors—choosing Sublime for the easy win.

	Dreamweaver	Zurb (Framework)	VSCode	Sublime Text
Team's existing familiarity	✓	✗	✗	✓ Already installed on team computers
Stability	✗	✓	✓	✓
Speed	✗	—	✓	✓+ Moderate
Snippet setup difficulty	N/A	Complex	Moderate	Moderate / Easy
Snippet ease of use	N/A	Complex	Moderate / Easy	Free*
Price	License	Free	Free	*For unlimited eval

PROTOTYPING AN EMAIL CODING SYSTEM

③ code library

Code editor chosen, I now set up a permanent home for the code blocks. Any content block Emmy needs is now easy to access.

Storing code blocks is achieved through snippets. Below is Uniqlo's snippet library in Sublime Text

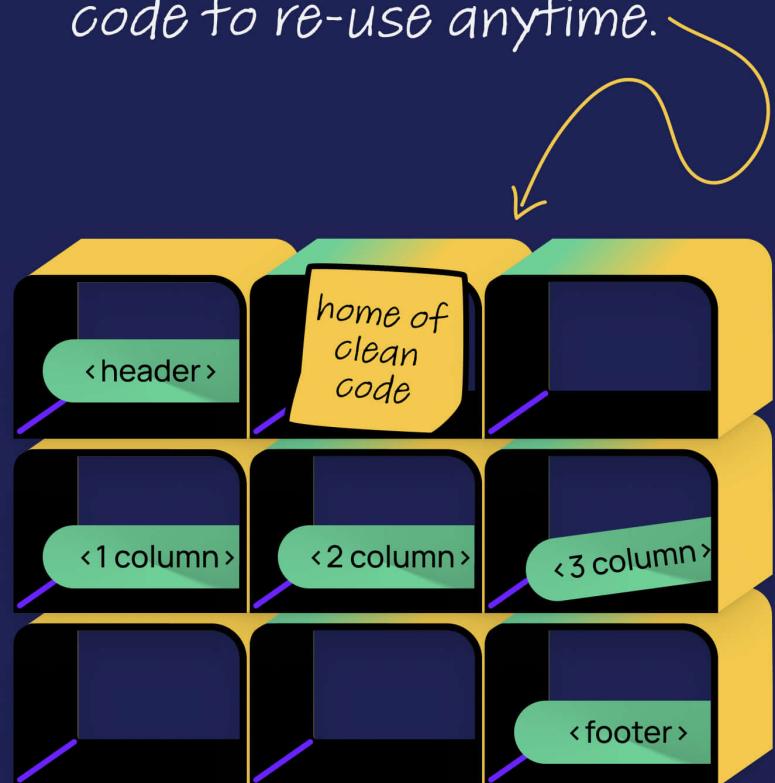
A screenshot of a Sublime Text window titled "Uniqlo Email Template.html". The code editor shows the following content:

```
1 Snippet:  
2  
3 Snippet: Table Row Spacer  
4  
5 Snippet: UNIQLO: Footer Template  
6  
7 Snippet: UNIQLO: Header Template  
8  
9 Snippet: UNIQLO: 1-column Table Row  
10  
11 Snippet: UNIQLO: 2-column Table Row  
12  
13 Snippet: UNIQLO: 3-column Table Row  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20 No more Frankensteining multiple files to make an email again. Thanks, code library!
```

The snippet library contains several entries, each starting with "Snippet:" followed by a template name and its associated tab completion key.

Ps. What's a snippet?

Snippets are like cubbyholes where you store blocks of code to re-use anytime.

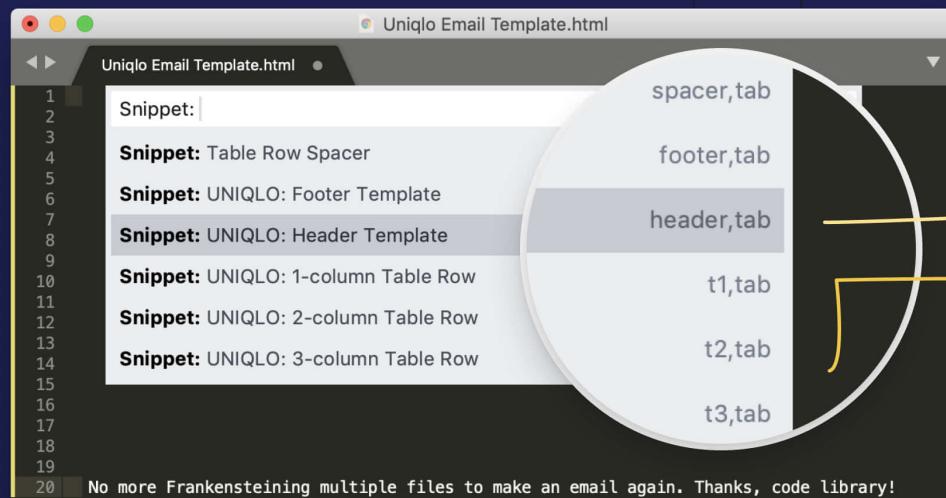


PROTOTYPING AN EMAIL CODING SYSTEM

3 code library

To use a snippet, Designer Emmy will type the shortcut name + [tab] to expand the code stored inside.

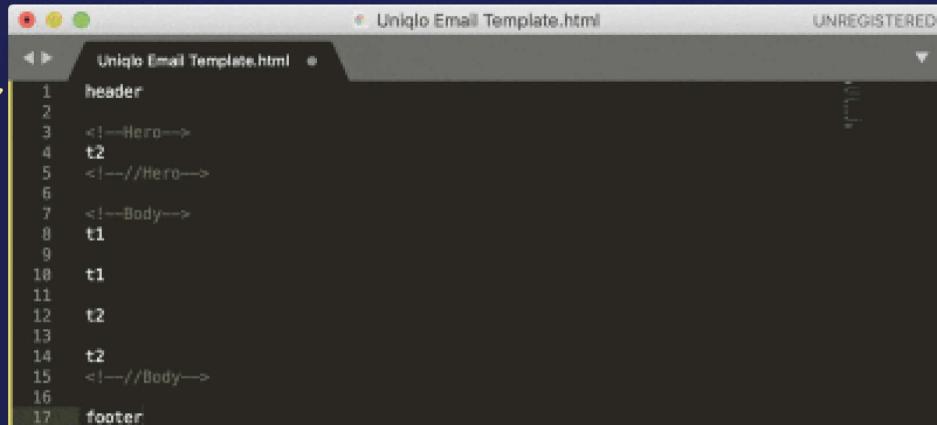
Uniqlo's snippet code library in Sublime Text



A screenshot of a Sublime Text editor window titled "Uniqlo Email Template.html". The code editor shows lines 1 through 20. Lines 1-6 are empty. Lines 7-14 contain snippet definitions starting with "Snippet:". Lines 15-19 are empty. Line 20 contains the text "No more Frankensteining multiple files to make an email again. Thanks, code library!". A circular callout highlights the snippet definitions in lines 7-14. The snippets listed are:

- Snippet: Table Row Spacer
- Snippet: UNIQLO: Footer Template
- Snippet: UNIQLO: Header Template
- Snippet: UNIQLO: 1-column Table Row
- Snippet: UNIQLO: 2-column Table Row
- Snippet: UNIQLO: 3-column Table Row

Animated demo of shortcuts expanding into full code via [tab] key



A screenshot of a Sublime Text editor window titled "Uniqlo Email Template.html". The code editor shows lines 1 through 17. Lines 1-6 are empty. Lines 7-16 contain expanded code for snippets. Line 17 contains the word "footer". Lines 15 and 16 show the expansion of a snippet. The expanded code includes placeholder markers like "<!--Hero-->" and "t1", "t2". A curly arrow points from the snippet definitions in the first screenshot to the expanded code in the second screenshot.

4 smart template

Each code block will then prompt Designer Emmy with which values she needs to fill in.

She no longer has to decipher what code to edit—simplifying her process, while also limiting the ability to introduce future errors.

Visualization of the new prompted fill-in approach

Enter the height once, fill-in all places automagically:

2 column layout

< table code

< column 1

< image

image file url

width

height="3_"

alt text

< column 2

< image

image file url

width

height="3_"

alt text

/table >

TESTING & FEEDBACK

5 days into piloting the new system,
Emmy remarked:



I don't know what I would do without these blocks!

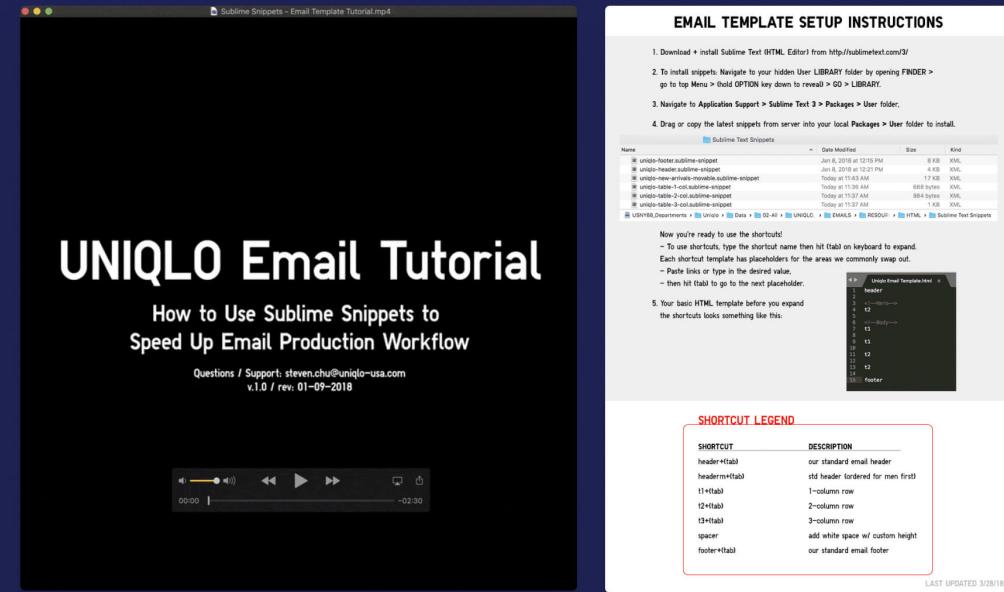
Preliminary testing

2 days

- Before onboarding Emmy, I tested the new system over 2 days with the team's build queue and was able to build emails consistently in ~2-3 minutes
 - I found this method to be a significant improvement in speed and accuracy

Documentation

- Next I created a video walkthrough and shortcut cheat sheet so Emmy would have docs to refer back to as she piloted the new system independently



Training documentation: video walkthrough and shortcut cheat sheet

Piloting period & feedback

3 days + rolling feedback

- Emmy's new email build time: ~5 mins
 - Team manager's main feedback was to add a men's header variant and add more shipping banner variants

Code email

BEFORE VS AFTER TASK ANALYSIS

Before: 40 minute manual process

Overall task	Steps	Sub-steps	Sub-sub-steps
1 Setup base HTML	1.1 Locate base HTML	1.1.1 Open email archive on server	
	1.2 Open file in code editor	1.1.2 Open HTML files	
	1.3 Save as new HTML file <i>risk overriding original file</i>	1.1.3 Compare HTML files to design requirement <i>cognitive load</i>	
		1.1.4 Choose best match <i>risk carrying over hidden bugs</i>	
	clean code	HTML matches design requirement. If yes, skip 3.	code library
2 Change header HTML	3.1 Locate header HTML	3.1.1 Open email archive on server	
	3.1.2 Open HTML files in viewer	3.1.2 Compare header in HTML files to design requirement <i>cognitive load</i>	
	3.1.3 Choose best match	3.1.4 Open code editor	
	3.1.5 Select header HTML <i>risk copying wrong HTML</i>	3.1.6 Copy header HTML	
	3.1.7 Select header in base HTML	3.1.8 Paste new header HTML, overwriting base HTML <i>risk pasting in wrong section</i>	
3 Input header HTML	3.2 Insert header HTML in code editor	3.2.1 Save changes	
		3.2.2 Refresh preview in viewer	
	smart template	3.3.1 Update title	
	3.3 Update custom fields inside code block	3.3.2 Update preheader	
		3.3.3 Update free shipping banner info	
4 Update body blocks (repeat as needed)	3.4 Check if header matches design requirement. If yes, do 4. If not, do 3.4.1	3.4.1 Debug code if necessary <i>cognitive load</i>	
		3.4.2 Save changes	
		3.4.3 Refresh preview in viewer	
	clean code	4.1 Identify body blocks matching design requirement	
		4.2 Update custom fields: Do 5.3 and 5.4	
5 Input body block HTML (repeat as needed)	4.3 Delete unused body blocks <i>risk of incorrect deletion</i>	5.1 Locate body block HTML	5.1.1 Open email archive on server
		5.1.2 Open HTML files in viewer	
		5.1.3 Compare body block HTML to design requirement <i>cognitive load</i>	
		5.1.4 Choose best match	
		5.2 Insert body block HTML in code editor	5.2.1 Select HTML block <i>risk copying wrong HTML</i>
			5.2.2 Copy HTML block
			5.2.3 Select insertion point in base HTML with cursor
			5.2.4 Paste HTML block into base HTML <i>risk pasting in wrong section</i>
			5.2.5 Save changes
			5.2.6 Refresh preview in viewer
		5.3 Update custom fields inside code block <i>For each body block image section, do 5.3.1 - 5.3.4. When done, do 5.4</i>	5.3.1 Update table cell width
			5.3.2 Update table cell link url(s)
			5.3.3 Update image file url(s)
			5.3.4 Update image alt text

After: 5 minute automated process using code library and fill-in prompts

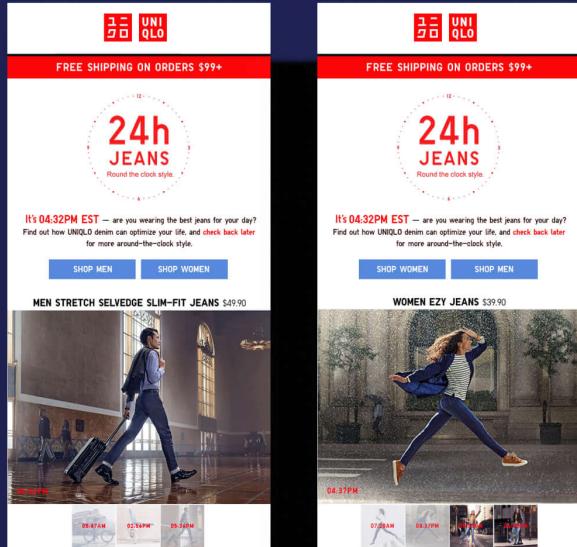
Overall task	Steps	Sub-steps	Sub-sub-steps
1 Start new HTML	1.1 Open code editor	1.2 Create a new empty file	1.3 Save new file as HTML file
2 Input header HTML	2.1 Type header shortcode	2.2 System inserts header HTML	2.3.1 Update title
	2.3 Follow system prompt to update custom fields inside code block	2.3.2 Update preheader	2.3.3 Update free shipping banner info
	2.4 Save changes	2.5 Refresh preview in viewer	
3 Input body block HTML (repeat as needed)	3.1 Type body block shortcode	3.2 System inserts body block HTML	3.3.1 Update table cell link url(s)
	3.3 Follow system prompt to update custom fields inside code block	3.3.2 Update image file url(s)	3.3.3 System calculates image width
		3.3.4 Update image height	3.3.5 Update image alt text
	3.4 Save changes	3.5 Refresh preview in viewer	
4 Input footer HTML	4.1 Type footer shortcode	4.2 System inserts footer HTML	4.3.1 Update free shipping banner info
	4.3 Follow system prompt to update custom fields inside code block	4.4 Save changes	4.5 Refresh preview in viewer

Legend Current steps Steps the system can do Issues Steps that can be eliminated

Emmy now builds fast – focusing only on inputting key values while the system handles the rest.

- Busy work eliminated
- Technical tasks transferred to the system

With emails now built in 5 minutes instead of 40, Emmy gained bandwidth to segment creative and deliver a personalized subscriber reading experience.



Example of gender-segmented email with “dynamic creative” after new coding process rollout.
The featured product in the hero is dynamic and rotates based on the time of day email is opened

Outcomes

- New achievement of 21 emails shipped weekly (a 200% increase)
- No lapse in regular workload while developing new solution in parallel
- Implemented solution into production in 2 weeks
- Cost \$0 additional business spend
- Improved content through geo-based product recommendations, live polls, creative alignment with social team, and more resources put toward product education

Lessons

- Frictions faced by internal teams can greatly impact front stage experience without end users ever knowing why

FINAL THOUGHTS



What sets me apart

I enjoy looking for strategic opportunities both back-of-house and end user-facing to improve the end-to-end experience.

I'm excited by participating in different communities and cultures, which helps me build empathy and deliver experiences for a range of markets.

Having worked in business, people, design, and development roles— I think across disciplines and actively collaborate to understand needs and the broader impact of initiatives.



Thank you!

Steven Chu

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