

Helen +
Gertrude

Impact Report

2024



Introduction

Letter from Becca

Last year we created our [first impact report](#), not because it was required of us, but because we felt passionate about the work we were doing and wanted to celebrate the efforts everyone on our team had put into making Helen + Gertrude a more human-centered company.

Now, we're back for another year! As we continue to hold ourselves accountable, we know there will always be more work we can do. Taking care of one another, our communities, our clients, and their customers will be a lifelong journey. As we reflect back on 2024, and look to the future, that word keeps coming back to me, community.

Our brand strategists emphasize consumers' longing for community and connection in almost every project we touch. But we also find community in the clients who share our values, the volunteer work we do, and how our internal teams bond. Building community isn't just a feel-good strategy; it's literally what performs best on social media channels such as TikTok and YouTube Shorts. Understanding, participating in, and growing your community is just good business.

I'm pleased to share our 2024 impact report with you. Here you'll find examples of how we incorporated community into our company culture, drove real results with our clients, and even highlighted some of the great work they are doing in their communities!

Enjoy,



CEO + Founder



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A large, abstract orange graphic consisting of several thick, curved lines that intersect and flow across the dark teal background, creating a dynamic, organic shape.

Company Culture



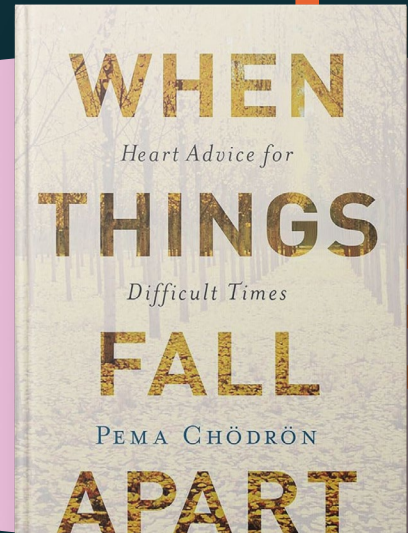
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Company Culture

Copywriter's Book Club

When Things Fall Apart

Our Copywriting team loves reading, good conversation, and learning from each other (ideally over great coffee!), so a book club felt like the perfect way to bring us together outside of our usual work.



We read “When Things Fall Apart” by Pema Chödrön together over several months, each taking a turn hosting the conversation at a local café. The book offers advice for navigating challenging times, rooted in a Buddhist approach. The author encourages readers to move toward fear and lean into uncertainty in order to find a deeper sense of connection and purpose, which sparked conversations related to both our work and our personal lives about stepping outside of our comfort zones.

In addition to the reading material itself, the book club was a great chance to connect with each other outside of the office in a relaxed and fun setting. We shared stories, reflected on our own experiences, and left each meeting feeling closer (and maybe a little more caffeinated).



“‘When Things Fall Apart’ is essential reading during tumultuous times like these, when the world feels groundless.”

Matt, Sr. Copywriter



“I loved the opportunity to read a book I probably wouldn’t have picked up on my own and talk about it with the team. Embracing discomfort isn’t something that always comes naturally to me, but this helped me realize how important it is.”

Sammy, Copywriter



I really loved this quote: “Courage isn’t the absence of fear, it’s being scared and doing it anyway.”

Jill, Creative Services Lead, Copy



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Company Culture

Building a Workplace Community, Responsibly

Throughout the year, we prioritize taking time to gather in the office (and virtually!) for celebrations, activities, and more, while being mindful of our community and our planet. In 2024, here were a few of our favorite moments:

01 Team “Buy Nothing” Swap

Last spring, we hosted an office clothing and home items exchange to encourage each other to clean out our closets while experiencing the benefits of shopping secondhand. We transformed the studio side of our office into a makeshift thrift store, loosely organized by size and type of attire. From jackets to shoes, to even non-clothing home items like lamps and décor, many of us walked away with a “new to us” find. All leftover items were donated to the Finger Lakes Coalition of Farmworker Serving Agencies at the Harvest Festival.

02 Summer Outing on the Water

For our annual Summer Outing, we enjoyed a cruise along the Genesee River and Erie Canal through the Corn Hill Waterfront and Navigation Foundation. In addition to learning about the history of the river and Rochester’s waterway transportation, we got to spend time together in a laid back, social environment. We wrapped up the day with dinner at Rohrbach Brewing Co., one of our favorite local, family-owned neighbors.

03 Showering our Parents-To-Be

In 2024, we welcomed three new Helen + Gertrude babies! We’re proud to build a parent-friendly workplace, and that starts even before our new members arrive. We hosted a joint baby shower brunch, where team members enjoyed brunch and mocktail mimosas while building their own custom flower bouquets. Each Mom and baby also received a book from Hippocampo Children’s Books, a local independent Woman/Latinx owned children’s bookstore in Rochester. And of course, we had to include a Helen + Gertrude denim jacket for our youngest team members!

04 Thoughtful Holiday Gifting

Each year, we gift our team members and clients with a small item to show our appreciation and gratitude around the holidays. In 2024, we had the chance to work with Scents by Design Candle Bar, a local, woman-owned business in Rochester, to create our own “Helen + Gertrude” themed candles. After careful consideration and testing, we decided on “Sage Advice + Vanilla Spice”: a warm, vanilla-scented candle that represents one of our brand colors (vanilla) and core brand archetypes (“The Sage”). We hope that every time a team member or client lights it in their home, they’ll think of us!



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Why Helen + Gertrude is one of the Best Places to work

"At Helen + Gertrude, I feel fulfilled. I'm not looking for anything better because I don't believe that it exists."

"I have worked for many organizations in the past and have always had one foot out the door looking for something better. At Helen + Gertrude, I feel fulfilled. I'm not looking for anything better because I don't believe that it exists. I feel like I'm at a place where my voice is heard and I'm given opportunities that allow me to explore and enjoy my job more so than any other place has or would allow. I'm given freedom, but I'm also given constructive criticism to help me be better and grow without feeling put down or out of my league. Leadership sees me as a person, not just an employee. To me, that is invaluable and I would be crazy to give it up."

- Helen + Gertrude Employee

"Before this job, I had been at 4 other advertising agencies but for no more than 1-3 years each. I've been at H+G for almost 6 years now and a HUGE contributing factor is the people and the deep connections we've developed, especially with my manager and the employees I manage. We know each other on a work and personal level, which makes for even stronger collaboration. Our culture committee puts a ton of effort into events and other activities—both in-person and virtual—to create a sense of belonging. I've been promoted 3 times during my duration here because my work has been recognized—and I've received training along the way to help me be successful in each role. Another aspect I love about H+G is that when you see an area of improvement, you can lead the charge to make it better. You're empowered to help with the change, especially with fewer layers of hierarchy. Furthermore, H+G is always ahead of the game when it comes to digital advertising and new technology. It's been like that since the beginning with pioneering social media like Facebook when it first arrived on the scene. We embrace best practices and implement yearly goals to ensure we're on top of what's new. Another big area to note is being a woman-owned business; I don't deal with "the boys' club" and proving myself and my worth/trying to alter myself to fit in as I did at previous jobs. Issues with patriarchy, misogyny, etc. are not a thing. I feel safe."

- Helen + Gertrude Employee



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Company Culture

Why Helen + Gertrude is one of the Best Places to work

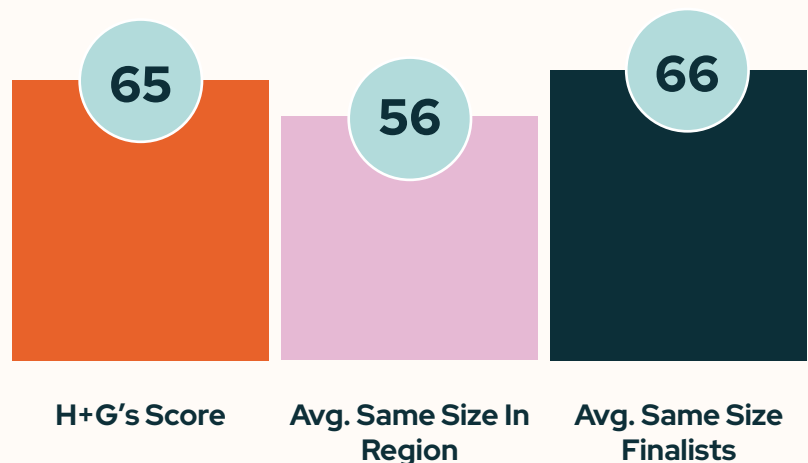
"H+G is unlike any other organization that I've worked at. The level of transparency that is shared from the leadership team has been so refreshing and really clues you in as to how things are going and what the path forward looks like. I really appreciate the thoughtful approach to including the whole team and how they create a safe space for open dialogue. Also, the benefits are really great and the flexibility (flex Fridays, etc) offered has had such a positive impact on my own personal mental health. To know that I work somewhere that prioritizes employees is second to none!"

- Helen + Gertrude Employee

"Helen + Gertrude really puts people first. It is clear from the flexibility we are given as employees, to the open conversations we share about agency performance/finances, to how we treat one another. When I take vacation I can genuinely sign off and TRUST that my coworkers will be there if things come up. When I need a mental health day I know I can be open about it and not feel guilt for taking one. It is clear we all are passionate about the work we do and want to create the best environment for everyone involved."

- Helen + Gertrude Employee

Magazine's Best Workplaces Finalists



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Company Culture

Time for Some High Fives!



Highfive to Amy Sadler

Creative Services Lead, Production

6.5 Years at H+G

"Thank you to Amy for being such a supportive team leader. You've been so great with delegating and empowering others with new responsibilities and making sure that everyone feels involved."

Highfive to Katie Drake

Media Strategist

2 Years at H+G

"Shoutout to Katie, queen of efficiency. She's been juggling a million projects while also helping to onboard our new M+I teammates. Just call her the Duchess of Hustle-shire"

Highfive to Molly Leo

New Media Designer

2.5 Years at H+G

High five to Molly for all of her work on the GBS advertorial and case study! From adding and removing graphs, adjusting logos, and making quick-turnaround changes, you're a star."



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Company Culture

Hannah On Authenticity and Vulnerability in the Workplace



Being vulnerable and authentic are some of today's popular buzzwords. That can seem counterintuitive because we're often told to project confidence, be the boss, and act like we have all the answers

As Brené Brown says, "Vulnerability takes courage." It's often seen as both a strength and a risk, but at Helen + Gertrude, we believe it's the key to growth—personally and professionally.

No one embodies this better than our marketing manager, Hannah Nelson. She drives all things internal marketing at H+G, and when she's off the clock, you'll find her adventuring with her dogs or planning her next getaway.

Here is some advice she has for balancing confidence and vulnerability—two forces that seem at odds but, in her experience, work best together.

Defining Authenticity and Vulnerability

Authenticity is when your actions align with your true intentions. You know your values and don't make decisions based on other's opinions of you. Vulnerability, on the other hand, is the strength it takes to maintain your authenticity, even when challenges arise. Being vulnerable means letting down your walls and knowing your protection comes from your true self; instead of masking or performing.

Barriers to Authenticity

When the environment doesn't promote authenticity and vulnerability, there can be a negative effect on someone who chooses to show such openness, leaving them uncomfortable or potentially hurt. People need to feel safe in their environment to be truly vulnerable and authentic. If someone feels judged or misunderstood, it is definitely more difficult to be authentic and vulnerable.



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Hannah On Authenticity and Vulnerability in the Workplace

The Power of Being Vulnerable

Some of my strongest moments have been my most vulnerable. There was a situation in which I reached out for help, stripping away all fears of judgment or any ego I had. I knew the longer I took to address the problem, the harder it would be to tackle. I was met with understanding and support, and felt truly seen because I was 100% authentic. We are all human, and vulnerability allows us to deeper understand the needs of ourselves and others.

The Rewards of Vulnerability

Being authentic and vulnerable allows you to:

Form deeper connections: How are we supposed to know who we are without authenticity? We learn everything that makes us unique—our likes, dislikes, passions, hobbies, etc.—from being our true selves. We often see similarities between ourselves and those around us and bond over experiences or interests that relate to us. We better understand each other when we look beyond the surface and show our authentic selves.

Gain confidence: Imposter syndrome is so real and I notice I need some affirmation and reassurance at times. However, at the end of the day, I know I am living authentically, and no one can take that from me. I did the best I could and showed up as I am. I know how I want to show up in this world, and have found confidence in my ability to be that person for myself and those surrounding me.

Trust yourself and others. When I am acting in alignment with my values and being authentic, I trust that those around me are as well. For example, I never speak negatively about people behind their backs and trust they are not speaking behind my back either. Authenticity and toxicity cannot coexist, and vulnerability allows for an environment of openness. I have no reason not to believe in the goodness of those around me and trust that they are being authentic.

Receive + provide support. There have been times in my life when I needed some extra support. I would not be where I am today without being vulnerable and honest with myself and the people around me. Luckily, I work in an environment where I am able to reach out for help before I feel like I am drowning. This is HUGE for mental health and being able to set people up for success.

Seek peace. There is so much peace when you are in tune with your values, emotions, and needs. Addressing our individual needs is hard if we suppress who we are and what our priorities are. The older I get, the more joy I find in just existing.



Company Culture

Hannah On Authenticity and Vulnerability in the Workplace

A Personal Mantra

"If you can't beat the fear, do it scared." This quote from Glennon Doyle is one that I've been able to apply across many sectors of my life. Most know I'm a fairly anxious person. From flying, to public speaking, to the wind hitting my window in a storm...

"I find fear in a lot of experiences. I realized a long time ago that I couldn't let fear control my life."

If I chose to let fear win, I wouldn't step out of my comfort zone. We've all heard that "growth occurs outside of our comfort zone" – and I completely agree. Many of my favorite memories are situations I just had to acknowledge my fears, accept they exist, and do the damn thing anyway."



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Environmental Sustainability



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Environmental Sustainability

Environmental Stewardship in Action: Our Partnership with Genesee Land Trust



In 2024, our agency deepened its commitment to environmental sustainability through our partnership with [Genesee Land Trust](#), combining strategic support with hands-on volunteer efforts.

The cornerstone of our commitment extends to organizational leadership. Here alongside a team of volunteers, Helen + Gertrude's CEO, Becca Post serves on the Genesee Land Trust Communications Committee. This includes support in shaping the messaging and strategies around climate change, DEIJ, and community outreach, and includes guiding the board and staff on communication tactics.

A key element of our contribution was developing a climate change communication strategy that specifically addressed equity within Rochester's Spanish-speaking community. This initiative recognized that environmental challenges affect communities differently and that effective climate action must be inclusive and culturally responsive. Our strategy particularly focused on reaching Latin residents, many of whom came to Rochester following climate disasters, ensuring that vital environmental information and resources were accessible to all community members.

We also participated in the Genesee Land Trust's community engagement initiatives. Team members joined the ROC Your Nature Challenge, a summer-long adventure designed to connect more people with [local preserves and natural spaces](#). This program encouraged exploration of eight popular preserves while raising awareness about local conservation efforts. We also witnessed significant moments in Genesee Land Trust's growth, including the [opening celebration of Deer Creek Woods](#), which featured a meaningful Haudenosaunee ceremonial white pine tree planting, symbolizing peace and environmental stewardship.



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Environmental Sustainability

Environmental Stewardship in Action:

Our Partnership with Genesee Land Trust

To demonstrate our commitment to our local community, we got our hands dirty (literally!). Eight team members participated in the United Way Day of Caring, dedicating a half day to revitalizing the El Camino trail. Through garbage collection, weeding, and mulching garden beds, we helped transform this vital community space into a safer, cleaner, and more welcoming environment for local residents and trail visitors.

Additionally, team members also experienced the mindful side of conservation through participation in the Genesee Land Trust's Full Moon Mindfulness Walk, demonstrating how environmental preservation can connect with personal wellbeing and connection to nature.

Through these diverse engagements, our agency has demonstrated that environmental sustainability isn't just about preserving natural spaces – it's about creating inclusive, accessible environments that benefit all community members. Our partnership with Genesee Land Trust reflects our belief that effective environmental stewardship must combine strategic thinking, hands-on action, and a commitment to equity and inclusion. Our partnership will continue into 2025.



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Amy & Meg's Tricks to Avoiding Food Waste on Set



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Tip 1

Buy biodegradable materials for props whenever possible both to position the brand as sustainability-focused, but also to avoid unnecessary plastics.

Tip 2

Avoiding waste all together is very challenging when working with food so plan to buy from local businesses to support your community.

Tip 3

Lean into imperfection. Low-fi content is wildly popular today in part because consumers have become disenchanted with perfectly curated and styled visuals. Imperfection doesn't sacrifice deliciousness either, a lived-in spread of food adds character and can lead to drool-worthy drips and crumbs.

Tip 4

Schedule shoots on days when lots of people will be on set who can take home any perishable food. If your shoot has non-perishables, hygiene products, or household items, drop them off to a local food pantry!

This year, we were able to donate leftover food props (food containers, napkins, cups, etc) to a FoodLink partner: Northside Church of Christ Meal Program. That means those unused items will be able to help those struggling with food security in Rochester.

The Sustainability Honor Roll

We believe sustainability is a collaborative effort. That's why we actively seek out and nurture partnerships with like-minded brands who share our vision for building a greener future. Here, we spotlight some of our most fruitful team-ups from the past year that made a positive impact.

"Plant Power Pro" Award



They believe that nature's best should be nurtured—not wasted. That's why they use organic, certified harvest-lands that are carefully maintained to ensure a thriving, sustainable future. After distilling the witch hazel, they recycle the remaining wood chips as nutrient-rich garden mulch. Their facility is heated with energy from their own production process, reducing waste and reliance on external energy sources.



"Riding Toward a Greener Future" Award

Taking the commuter rail isn't just the easiest way to get around the Boston area—it's the smartest choice for the planet. Last year alone, MBTA Commuter Rail riders helped prevent 400 million pounds of carbon emissions. And the commitment to sustainability doesn't stop there. The MBTA is powered by 100% certified renewable electricity, ensuring that every trip taken is a step toward a cleaner, greener Massachusetts.



"Cheese Making with a Conscience" Award

From the lush pastures where our Montbéliarde and Holstein cows graze to the careful hands that craft each wheel in the quaint village of Pélussin, France, we honor tradition while treading lightly on the earth. By supporting local dairy farmers, preserving artisanal craftsmanship, and prioritizing responsible dairy practices, Fromager d'Affinois proves that indulgence and sustainability can go hand in hand.



"Hometown Hero" Award

Healthy Living is a family-owned grocery store known for their high ingredient standards, local partnerships, and eco-friendly practices. This year, we worked together to create everything from in-store signage to a robust media plan—and we're just getting started. Their commitment to local communities and purpose-driven mission gets them an A+ in our book when it comes to a sustainable impact. And yes, their customers love a reusable bag!



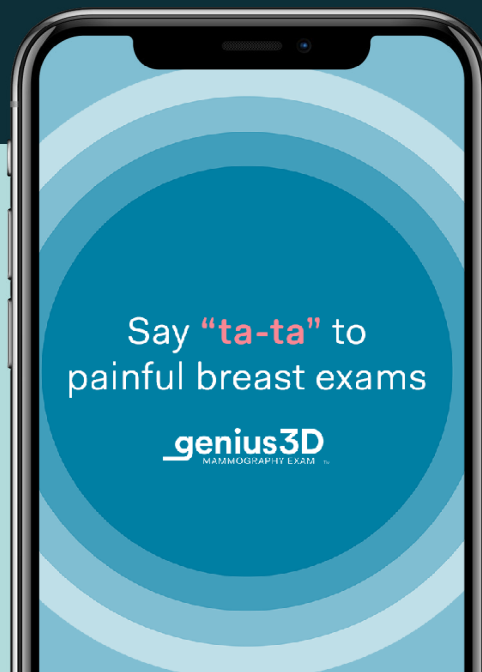
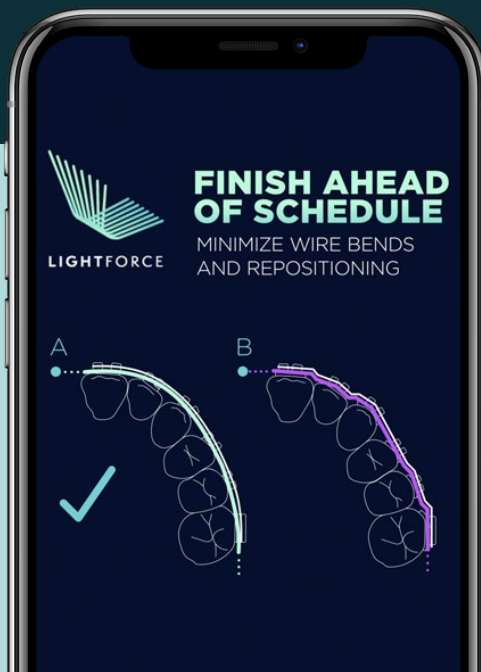
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Connecting Climate & Healthcare: The Climate Solutions Summit

In April, we had the chance to send two of our team members to the annual Climate Solutions Summit, hosted by the [Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genessee-Finger Lakes Region](#). The event's theme for 2024 was "Health and Equity in Action," and was designed to bring healthcare professionals and equity advocates together to explore the important connection between climate change and public health.

Healthcare is one of our [agency's main expertise verticals](#), and we have experience working on powerful campaigns related to [women's health](#) and [addressing disparities in healthcare access](#). Therefore, we were especially excited about this year's theme as an opportunity to learn more about incorporating climate action and a local Rochester lens into this work.

Keynote speakers at the Summit discussed the urgent health impacts that are already occurring worldwide due to climate change, from heat-related illness to respiratory conditions from poor air quality. A panel of healthcare providers shared "stories from the frontlines" of how they've seen climate change impact patient health, which was a reminder of how the environmental crisis isn't a future problem, but rather one that is already directly impacting lives daily.



Connecting Climate & Healthcare: **The Climate Solutions Summit**

We also had the opportunity to join breakout discussions on topics of our choice led by local experts, which ranged from conversations about Tree and Shade Equity to Indigenous Perspectives and Practices related to climate justice. Each discussion included an activity where we identified local barriers, opportunities, and key stakeholders who could become engaged to make progress on that specific issue. Given how easy it is to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of change that needs to happen to progress climate action, these activities were a refreshing way to examine exactly what steps can be taken locally.

Overall, the Climate Solutions Summit allowed us to think about healthcare equity through a new lens, and consider how climate change intersects with our work as marketers. We're excited to continue our involvement with the Climate Solutions Accelerator and take climate action, locally and beyond.



Environmental Sustainability

Grown with a Mission: Meeting Healthy Living's Local Farmers

Healthy Living is a natural foods grocery store with locations in northern Vermont and upstate New York. As part of our work creating social media content and digital campaigns together, we had the chance to meet several of their passionate local suppliers.



Finn and Roots: Bakersfield, VT

This hydroponic farm uses nutrient-rich water, fertilized by tilapia, to grow fresh greens and produce without the use of soil. This allows for food to be grown in diverse climates and regions, while usually requiring less water and land than traditional farming methods. Areas that might typically not be suitable for certain plants, such as the Northeast, can grow them locally, which reduces transportation emissions and mitigates the risks of unpredictable environmental challenges. And the result is fresh, delicious produce. Amazing!

Collar City Mushrooms: Troy, NY

Collar City Mushrooms is an indoor urban vertical mushroom farm. Similar to Finn and Roots, indoor growing allows for species to be grown locally that might not otherwise thrive in a Northeast climate—in this case, specific mushroom varieties like shiitake, oyster, and lion's mane. Plus, growing these varieties locally limits the carbon footprint associated with long travel distances.

Sisters of Anarchy: Shelburne, VT

This family-owned ice cream producer grows all of the fruit used in their products, with the help of nearly 100 on-site bee hives. Their farm includes thoughtful approaches to sustainability, like the use of a “fertigation” system that provides both water *and* fertilizer to crops and avoids excess water use, as well as Integrated Pest Management practices and strategic cover cropping. In addition to fruit, they also produce their own dry ice that's used to ship their creations all across the country.



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Time for Some High Fives!

Healthy Living Edition



Highfive to Caleb Ng

Junior New Media Designer

4 Years at H+G

"High five to Caleb for turning out some beautiful Healthy Living content! Every calendar gets better and better, thanks in no small part to your ingenuity and tinkering."

Highfive to Sammy Boyd

Copywriter

4 Years at H+G

"To Sammy, for killing it on Healthy Living Thanksgiving emails. So many emails due all at once, and they're all so joyful and informative."

Client Shoutout to Matt Kirsch

Copywriter

4 Years at H+G

"Really interesting piece from talented Matt Kirsch. Along with his great writing, I'm so glad you use my own writing, tweaking it when needed. It makes for emails, ads, blogs, etc. that are authentically HL."

Environmental Sustainability



Partnering with Sustainability



We are incredibly proud to collaborate with **Dickinson Brands Inc (DBI)**, a company that has been dedicated to crafting sustainable witch hazel products for over 150 years, spanning three trusted brands. Our partnership with the DBI team has profoundly shaped our perspective on sustainability and the role it plays in shaping business practices. Since its founding in 1866, DBI has consistently prioritized sustainable practices, from harvesting witch hazel on 33,000 acres of certified organic land to implementing energy conservation initiatives and other eco-friendly efforts.

For a major corporation like DBI, it's crucial to go beyond superficial environmental claims. Sustainability isn't just about adding a green leaf or a flower to the packaging—it's about embedding thoughtful, long-term practices into every facet of the business. By focusing on responsible sourcing, minimizing their environmental footprint, and continuing to innovate for the future, DBI sets a strong example of how large companies can authentically embrace sustainability in meaningful and impactful ways.

This is especially important among a new generation of consumers who are prioritizing sustainably-sourced products and increasing their awareness of brand ethics and environmental responsibility. In fact, around 50% of female consumers purchased more natural products this year than in previous years.¹ This group of newly conscious consumers is saying no to greenwashing and yes to transparent ingredient lists, authentic brand stories, and consistency in sustainable business practices.

1. <https://www.stellarising.com/blog/infographic-the-clean-beauty-consumer>



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Environmental Sustainability



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Partnering with Sustainability



We genuinely enjoy working with the DBI team, as we share a common commitment to both environmental responsibility and brand authenticity. The witch hazel shrub or small tree, *hamamelis virginiana*, is indigenous to the Northeastern United States. DBI organically harvests thousands of witch hazel plants from the wild woodlands of New England using sustainable methods to create products such as 100% Natural Astringent, Toners, Hemorrhoidal Treatments, and Postpartum Care.

Witch hazel tends to grow in dense stands that could stunt the under canopy of the hardwoods. By removing the witch hazel, it allows for seedlings on the forest floor to get more light and regenerate the forest over time. This shows the beneficial relationship between DBI's harvests and the health of the forest. The cut witch hazel will also regenerate so that it can be re-harvested about 10 or more years later.

What makes these products even more remarkable is that they are not only sourced from nature but also offer multiple uses, ensuring that they are versatile and practical. This thoughtful approach minimizes waste and maximizes the value of every product, making them both environmentally conscious and highly effective for their consumers.

We are excited to continue to work together to provide consumers with transparent brand information and natural skincare products that the whole family can enjoy!

Helen +
Gertrude

**T.N. DICKINSON'S
CLEANSE,
SOOTHE
& TREAT
(ALMOST)
EVERY "THAT."**



Going Greener, Together

2024 was the fifth year of our agency's Sustainability Committee (aka "The Green Team"), which started as an informal way to chat about taking eco-friendly action in our office and the wider community. One of our main goals is to make sustainability engaging and approachable, especially given how easy it is to fall into anxiety or overwhelm when talking about everything that needs to be done for the climate.

Here are a few of our team's highlights from 2024:

01 "What If We Get it Right?" Team Book Club

We met monthly to discuss Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's latest book, "What if We Get it Right?" a collection of interviews with experts in industries ranging from farming, to the law, to fashion design. While acknowledging the growing crisis and various challenges related to climate, Johnson also shared possibilities and moments of inspiration for how we, as a global community, can "get it right" when it comes to our planet.

"A strong community foundation is the key to driving lasting sustainability efforts."



Allison Kunz, Senior New Media Designer

"The possibilities of climate action can be exciting and inspiring, and it's important to consider how we could truly 'get it right.'"



Sammy Boyd, Copywriter

"The Venn Diagram! What you're passionate about + things to make a climate impact. You know I love a graph moment."



Tegan, Media + Insights Lead

"Figuring out how to have productive conversations that identify and solve industry-specific problems may be the key to making a big enough impact.."



Amy, Creative Services Lead, Production

"There are a hundred different ways people can get involved in protecting our planet. Our power comes in finding and building community. Find your people."



Becca, Founder + CEO

Going Greener, Together

02 Anti-Green Wash Training

Our team completed the [Institute for Advertising Ethics \(IAE\)](#)'s "Green Shield" course, which provided an integrated framework for assessing green washing, and how to combat it in marketing communications. One of the most relevant takeaways to our work at Helen + Gertrude was being as intentional and specific as possible when describing any environmental benefits of a product or brand. Words like "Eco-Friendly" or "Green" are abstract, unregulated, and can often be used for intentional or unintentional green washing. If using these words, marketers should be clarifying exactly what they mean with verifiable data and science-based comparisons—or better yet, using even more specific terms like "Organic Certified" or "100% plastic free."

03 Earth Month BINGO

To kick off Earth Month, our team created a custom BINGO board filled with sustainable actions like "Eat vegan for a day," "Donate to a climate action organization," and "Plant a native species to your state." From mid-April to mid-May, team members competed to complete 1 or more BINGOs. Everyone who completed at least one BINGO received a gift card to [Impact Earth](#), a local store for sustainable home goods. Our grand prize winner, Tegan, received a gift card to the Rochester Public Market so she can continue buying in-season, locally-grown food. We've hosted more formal "Sustainability Challenges" in the past, but we found that this straightforward, easy-to-play game encouraged more people to participate—a win for our team culture *and* for the planet!



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Social + Community Impact



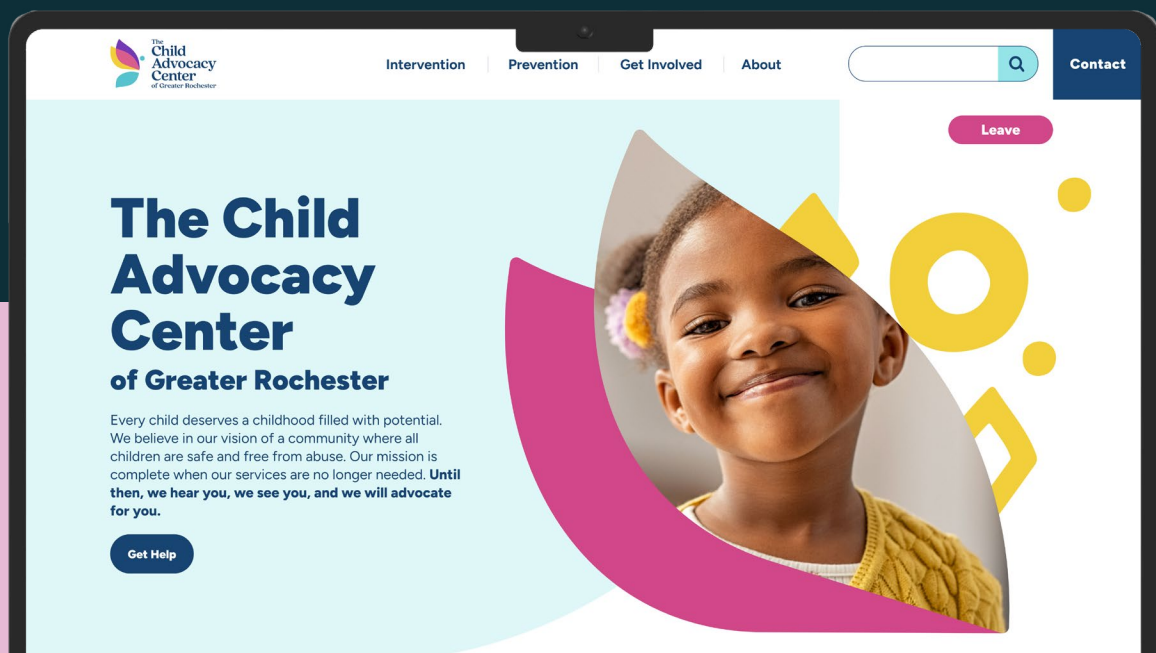
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Designing Inclusively:

Website Design with Accessibility in Mind

More than 5.35 billion people are online, making up over 66% of the world's population.¹ Many of these users navigate a variety of websites daily, but the real question is, are these websites accessible to more than just the average user? Surprisingly, according to WebAIM, a staggering 96% of the top 1 million websites fail to meet accessibility standards. With such a high percentage of websites lacking accessibility, it's clear that this oversight negatively impacts countless individuals with disabilities.

You might be wondering, what makes a website accessible—or inaccessible? How can we contribute to web inclusivity? Accessible design ensures that individuals with a variety of disabilities—such as visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive impairments—can navigate and interact with a website. This includes people who are blind or have low vision, those with hearing impairments, and individuals with limited mobility. With that in mind, it is crucial that creative teams follow ADA (American Disabilities Act) compliance rules to promote equal opportunities for everyone to access information and services, regardless of their limitations. The following include some of the most important design tactics that the Helen + Gertrude team uses to ensure accessibility on every web project.



Designing Inclusively:

Website Design with Accessibility in Mind

Keep it Simple

Keep all the language clear and concise on the website. Try to avoid long jargon or complex sentences that may confuse individuals with cognitive impairments.

Provide Alt Text for Images

Use alt text for all images, so screen readers can describe them for users with visual impairments. Be sure to follow the guidelines below to streamline this process.

- Describe the image, and be specific. Use both the image's subject and context to guide you.
- Keep alt text fewer than 125 characters. Screen-reading tools typically stop reading alt text at this point.
- Jump right into the image's description. Don't use "photo of ..." or "image of" It's clear that it's an image and those characters are essentially wasted space.
- Include relevant keywords. One or two keywords that reference your post content or product is fine.
- Include branding elements and relevant search criteria for your products or services.

Contrast, Contrast, Contrast

Make a conscious effort to ensure there is high contrast between text and background colors. Without high contrast, users with visual impairments may not be able to fully intake the information provided.

This goes beyond just looking high contrast, this also needs to be tested using helpful sites like [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#) or [Coolors Contrast Checker](#).

Designing Inclusively: Website Design with Accessibility in Mind

Design Clearly

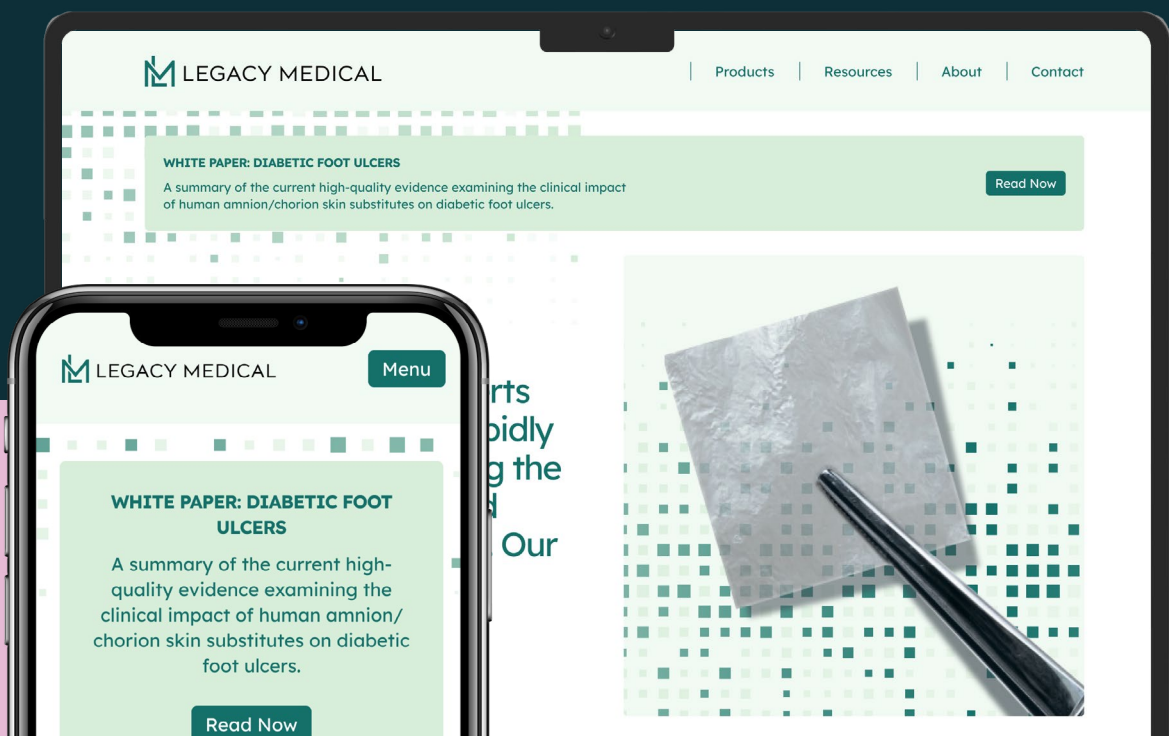
Always design with a proper structure and hierarchy system. Proper heading tags include H1, H2, and more to organize and improve navigation time for screen readers.

Don't Forget Mobile and Tablet Usage

Design with a responsive layout so the website functions well across all devices, including smartphones and tablets. When designing responsive layouts, it's important to consider adjusting button sizes to ensure users with motor impairments can tap accurately, especially on smaller screens. This functionality may be crucial depending on the target audience. For example, websites aimed at children or the elderly might need to make buttons slightly larger to improve usability.

Keep Image and Video File Sizes to a Minimum

Fast load times are not just a nice-to-have. Consider users who may not have a strong internet connection. Websites that are bogged down by large file sizes not only disrupts the user's experience but may also leave your website unusable for them causing a negative attitude toward your brand.



Designing Inclusively:

Website Design with Accessibility in Mind

Accessibility Projects with Helen + Gertrude

In 2024, we collaborated with [The Child Advocacy Center of Greater Rochester](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping child abuse victims, to develop a brand new website. A key objective of the project was to create a site that was not only accessible to children but also safe and educational. Through our initial research, we found that children respond poorly to unnecessary complexity, especially when it makes it unclear what action they should take on a website or app. We also discovered that leveraging familiar design patterns from previous online experiences would help children navigate the site more easily. With these insights in mind, we focused on keeping the design simple, using branded color blocks to clearly separate information in a digestible way for both children and adults, and ensuring a consistent hierarchy throughout the site.

In addition, the team worked on enhancing the accessibility of the [Legacy Medical](#) brand's website. The primary goal was to redesign the site to make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate. One of the key elements of this project was the complete restructuring of the site's navigation system. The team focused on simplifying the navigation to ensure users could easily find the information they needed, without feeling overwhelmed. This streamlined approach wasn't limited to just the main menu but extended to other critical elements of the site, including data and ordering information. By improving the clarity and organization of these sections, the team ensured that both new and returning visitors could interact with the site more efficiently, making their experience smoother and more intuitive. The result was a more accessible, well-organized site that prioritized ease of use for all users.

It's the seemingly small things that count: Client Testimonial

"I'm colorblind and have never had an agency take that into consideration when presenting their work!"



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Social + Community Impact

Time for Some High Fives!

Website Edition



Highfive to Allison Kunz

Senior New Media Designer

4 Years at H+G

"High five to Allison for all of her hard work on the BEAUTIFUL website wire frames for CACGROC! They look incredible and are so thorough."

Highfives to The CACGROC Team

"Huge high five to the Bivona website team who stayed behind on our Summer Outing to make sure the website was ready-to-go for launch day. Your hard work is very impressive, and the site looks INCREDIBLE."

"CACGROC Team! There will never be enough high-fives for your incredible work! Everyone should be so proud!"



Highfive to Noah Kay

Senior New Media Designer

4 Years at H+G

"High five to Noah for being a rock star with all things website!"



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Optimization Tactics with Noah



Image Optimization

When optimizing images for web, you should only need 2 general file types depending on the circumstances:

SVG is a vector format for icons, text, and logos. Their file size is tiny, and should always be used for any vector element.

WebP is for raster images and a file format specifically for web. They're much smaller than PNGs and JPEGs in the vast majority of situations, and generally should be used over the alternative.

Video Optimization

MP4 or **WebM** should be the two file formats used for native video hosted by the site.

All modern browsers support the H.264 codec, so MP4 is currently the most widely supported format among all browsers.

Hosted video used as a background element should ideally be no larger than 20MB.

Gif elements should ideally be no larger than 5MB.

Font Optimization

WOFF2 enjoys wide browser support and the best compression—up to 30% better than WOFF. The reduced file size leads to quicker download times.

Social + Community Impact

Rolling Up Our Sleeves During United Way's Day of Caring with the Genesee Land Trust

The United Way Day of Caring is the largest community-wide volunteer event across our region, serving Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne, and Wyoming counties. Volunteers connect with co-workers, friends, and family to spend the day helping hundreds of local nonprofits. In 2024, Helen + Gertrude volunteered with The Genesee Land Trust. We helped do some spring cleaning on one of Rochester's premiere urban nature/hiking trails, Thomas R. Frey Trail at El Camino, a 2.25 mile multi-purpose pedestrian greenway. In addition to getting a workout, it was a great way to connect with the local community and see the impact of hands-on work that makes a tangible difference in our neighborhoods.



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Social + Community Impact

Donation Matching

13

**Organizations
Supported**



\$6,546

**Donated
+154% YoY**



114 Hrs
Served +54% YoY



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Social + Community Impact

Donation Matching

Organizations:



Excess production supplies and materials were donated to the Finger Lakes Coalition of Farmworker Serving Agencies and CACGROC



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Social + Community Impact

Our Work Outside of Work

Amy Sadler + The Center for Youth: Seeing Beyond The Lens

Photography has always been my bridge to human connection—a means of sharing stories that deserve to be told.

I was initially brought on to photograph the people involved with the Farash Foundation grant project, which is focused on providing hands-on support for the youth participating in its programs. The team gave me a lot of their time to better understand their history and hopes for the future so that I could infuse that into this project.

Sitting across a table—or a camera—and learning about what brought them to CFY or what it provides for them was hugely inspiring. I greatly benefit from being allowed into their world, even briefly, to better understand the challenges our city faces and the amazing people within it who are making a difference.

My greatest reward is providing a safe space where my subjects can be themselves and ultimately see themselves through unbiased eyes. The youth I've worked with are talented, clever, and kind humans who are deeply deserving of the services that CFY provides.

One sentence from the team has always stood out to me: "They have so many other places they could be right now, and we are just so glad that they chose to come here." It speaks volumes to the importance of having and protecting a physical space and a sense of community for these kids.

Sometimes, I struggle to take a portrait beyond being a nice image of someone to an image that truly matters. Being a part of this project fuels my desire to use my experience (both technical and human) to make a difference in our community and support an organization so that it can continue to strengthen its services.



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Our Work Outside of Work

**Séamus Spencer + Rural
West Virginia: A Grassroots
Community**



I consider the organizing work I do outside of Helen + Gertrude to be work. It takes time, effort, focus, and skill in the same way my role as a design lead does.

We have no true organization, and are called to action as needed. Sometimes, that looks like putting out a call for donation for a specific cause. Other times, that looks like teaching someone what seeds need to go in the ground at first thaw.

We know who has the skills we need when problems surface, and put together teams to address them quickly and efficiently.

Often, my community work informs my Helen + Gertrude work on many skills. It's where I learn to be a better leader, to be empathetic, to work with diverse groups of people, and so on.

I believe everyone has a moral duty to help the people around them—to the greatest extent of their capacity. Whatever skills you have, whether it's organizing, fundraising, mentoring, cooking, writing grants, you have an obligation to your community to share those skills and make sure everyone's needs are met.



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Social + Community Impact

Our Work Outside of Work

Jill Duff + American Advertising Federation of Greater Rochester: Weaving Connections



My former creative director at The Martin Group (now Martin) encouraged me to join the Buffalo Ad Club board and I ended up really loving it. When I moved to Rochester, it was a no-brainer to join the professional organization here called the American Advertising Federation of Greater Rochester.

During my six years on the board of directors, I served as the communication chair, social chair, vice president, president, and immediate past president. It's been the most rewarding to foster meaningful connections on the board with students and professors, old and new members, and even those I have yet to meet.

And if you know me, you know I like a good party. During my year as president, we planned, promoted, and executed 20 kick ass events. These included a record-breaking Spirit Showdown fundraiser to critical conversations on disability representation, and piloting a new event on Black-owned businesses showcasing social media's transformative power.

All of the programming I was involved in fueled my passion for event planning and gathering people for a greater purpose.

Helen +
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The Impact of Feminine Care Product Marketing



The intimate care product category continues to grow at a rapid pace due to the rising demand and changing attitudes towards feminine care products. While this industry continues to grow, it must also continue to learn and evolve to better [promote feminine care products](#) in an educational and responsible manner. It is important that brands focus on education, debunking health myths, and promoting inclusivity through body positivity language and imagery.

Market Growths and Demand

- The global market for feminine hygiene and sexual wellness was valued at \$28–30 billion in 2020, expected to grow at a 5% CAGR to reach \$38–40 billion by 2025.
- There has been a notable rise in demand for “female wellness” (783%) and revenue (176%), indicating a significant shift in consumer behavior.

Challenges and Myths

- While some products like pelvic floor trainers and supplements are beneficial, others, like vaginal washes and TikTok trends (e.g., yoni pearls, vaginal steaming), are based on harmful myths.
- Authenticity and responsibility are crucial when entering this market. The challenge is balancing rapid growth with accurate, responsible messaging.

The Impact of Feminine Care Product Marketing



Transparent Brands

- Doctor-endorsed or founded brands are more trusted in the intimate care market.
- Shifting the conversation towards normalizing bodily processes and promoting body confidence is essential, much like how skincare brands tackled acne stigma.

Expanding Product Categories

- The intimate care market now addresses a broader range of needs across different life stages (puberty to menopause).
- Menopause-related products have seen a significant rise, reflecting demand for solutions beyond fertility and pregnancy.

Engaging Content

- Platforms like Reddit and TikTok offer insights into consumer concerns and should inform content strategies.
- Engaging, positive content should focus on empowerment and body positivity, avoiding language that induces shame.
- Collaborating with health professionals or influencers for endorsements can enhance credibility and connect with consumers.

Social + Community Impact

Championing Women's Health through Smarter Cytology Solutions

We were proud to continue our work with Hologic in 2024 by partnering with their Cytology division, which creates innovative products for cervical disease screening. Our team collaborated on creating ads targeting relevant healthcare professionals, as well as promotional assets for an in-person educational symposium.

Hologic is a leader in women's health, having developed the first liquid-based Pap test ("ThinPrep® Pap Test"), which has helped contribute to a significant decline in cervical cancer rates in the last 20 years. Their Genius™ Digital Diagnostics System is one of their latest innovations, which uses AI to help clinicians identify more potential cancers. Cervical cancer remains the fourth most common cancer in women globally, and early detection plays a crucial role in medical outcomes. Therefore, as the creators of the first and only FDA-cleared digital cytology system, it was important for us to find a way to communicate the significance of Hologic's new technologies to healthcare professionals—knowing that the end result could help save lives.

Engaging Content

We created digital display ads targeting healthcare providers and laboratory professionals to boost awareness of Hologic's cervical health product portfolio. Messaging focused on workflow efficiency benefits, such as hands-free processing and single-sample collection, as well as benefits to patients, such as maximizing their peace of mind through fewer false positives.

Making a Splash at ASC's Annual Meeting

We also partnered with Hologic to help promote their educational symposium at the American Society of Cytopathology's (ASC) Annual Meeting in Orlando, FL. Their goal was to generate buzz around their evening symposium, which featured speakers discussing their experience with the Genius™ Digital Diagnostics System. We helped create an overall theme and banner design for the event, as well as a promotional email, social ads, a digital animation, and physical flyers and foam boards for promotion throughout the conference. Overall, this helped to drive additional interest around Hologic's AI-powered diagnostics solutions, and solidify their role as a leader in the women's health space.



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Business Ethics



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Investing in Our Humans: Training and Development

We understand that our uncommon denominator is our people—and more importantly, how they work together. In 2024, our training initiatives reflected our core belief that exceptional work emerges from collaborative, connected teams who continually invest in their collective growth and understanding.

Our cross-functional approach has always been core to our agency, with creative and media teams seamlessly integrating their expertise. This year's training programs were deliberately designed to further strengthen these collaborative muscles, ensuring that every team member not only excels in their individual role but also understands how their work interconnects with their team members.

Building Effective Teams

Our "Building Effective Teams" training went beyond traditional team-building exercises. By exploring team dysfunctions and developing strategies to transform potential barriers into bridges of understanding, we reinforced our commitment to creating a workplace where diverse talents are better together.

Service Excellence

Service excellence, for us, is more than a technical skill—it's a human-centered philosophy. Our training emphasized understanding customer experiences through empathy and strategic thinking. We introduced the ETC model as a powerful framework for exceptional customer interactions: Express Empathy, Take Action, and Check Back. The model helped equip our teams to approach each client relationship as a unique, nuanced partnership, rather than a transaction.



Investing in Our Humans: Training and Development

Empowering Leadership through Intentional Communication

Our managers' "Write It Down" training expanded on our efforts to conduct transparent, respectful workplace communication. By developing improved documentation skills, our leadership team can have more productive conversations with clarity, fairness, and mutual understanding—critical components of human-centered practices.

Staying on Top of Security in a Digital Landscape

Digital security has become more intricate and challenging than ever before. Our improved monthly training addresses the rapidly evolving landscape of cybersecurity, from AI-powered phishing attempts to sophisticated social engineering tactics and expanding remote work vulnerabilities. We recognize that digital risks are no longer static—they're dynamic, interconnected, and increasingly sophisticated.

Cultivating a Learning Community

Beyond formal training, our teams created book clubs and knowledge-sharing initiatives for organic learning and connection. These programs included topics on professional development but also shared interests such as climate advocacy—building a community through common interests rooted in curiosity.



Business Ethics

Average Time Spent at Helen + Gertrude

Average Tenure with the Team: 5 years

Celebrating 10+ years of working together:
Tegan, Becca, Leire, Kenzi



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Highfive to Kenzi Nelson

Art Director

11 Years at H+G

"High five to Kenzi for all of her thoughtful and creative work on 2024 planning so far! It's shaping up to be our best year yet"

Highfive to Leire Bascaran

Co-Founder + Chief of Strategy

15 Years at H+G

"LEIRE!!! I really don't know how she does it but as our fearless leader, she's knee-deep in every project and always willing to dig a little deeper if we need her!"

Highfive to Tegan Jenner

Media + Insights Lead

10 Years at H+G

"Tegan has been leading the media team charge for the past few months with such grace and compassion, she truly looks out for all of us, and we are so thankful to have her. Thanks Teegs for keeping our sanity in check <3"

Highfive to Becca Post

Founder + CEO

15 Years at H+G

"Becca, thank you for being an amazing new biz partner in crime and checking in on my mental wellbeing. Your support uplifts me and helps me stay sane while we crank out these pitches. I'm so grateful to have you as a thoughtful, caring CEO – Chief Encouragement Officer."

Measurement and Goals



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Measurement and Goals

Moving Forward Together: What's Ahead in 2025

As we reflect on the meaningful work accomplished in 2024, our vision for the coming year forms around a simple yet powerful concept: "Level Up." This theme will guide us as we continue to strengthen our human-centered approach across our agency including, how we nurture our team members, to how we collaborate with clients and engage with our broader community.

Leveling Up Our People

As you have read through this report, we recognize that our greatest asset has always been our people. The workplace landscape has transformed dramatically over the past five years, and we're committed to evolving with it. In 2025, we will reinvest in our team by creating more intentional space for life's continuous complexities while fostering an environment where professional growth thrives.

We'll continue building on our successful flex Friday model, aiming for all employees to successfully be able to sign off on Friday afternoons more often than not. This investment in work-life balance represents a stepping stone toward our longer-term vision of a four-day work week – a structure that research increasingly shows boosts productivity, creativity, and overall wellbeing.



Moving Forward Together: What's Ahead in 2025

Creating a More Equitable Workforce

We have selected Create In Purpose to be our DEIA partner in 2025, with a commitment to completing two comprehensive learning sessions for our entire team. Additionally, we'll conduct a company-wide inclusion survey to establish baseline metrics and identify meaningful opportunities for growth.

Upon selecting a program, we're setting an ambitious goal of a 95% completion rate for our mandatory Anti-Greenwashing training program. This education will strengthen our ability to create authentic, meaningful messaging that resonates with diverse audiences while avoiding harmful marketing practices. We will also introducing learning opportunities around rainbow-washing, as well as Breast Cancer pinkwashing.

An Invitation

If you're a brand seeking a human-centered agency that values authenticity, sustainability, and equity – we're your people. We believe that the most impactful work happens when we bring our full humanity to the table, creating communications that resonate on a deeper level because they're rooted in shared values and genuine connection.

As we move forward together into 2025, we remain steadfast in our belief that taking care of one another, our communities, our clients, and their customers is a lifelong journey – one that we're committed to walking with purpose, integrity, and heart.





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