



DESIGN GUIDE: NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS

A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING
WITH DESIGNERS TO BRING YOUR BUSINESS TO LIFE.

VERSION 2.0

BRAND

DIGITAL

SPACE

IMPLEMENTATION





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STRENGTHENING DETROIT'S COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS THROUGH DESIGN

Vernor. Grand River. Livernois. Gratiot. Jefferson.


From Eastside to Westside, every neighborhood in Detroit has a commercial thoroughfare that is home to shops, restaurants, grocery stores, and other local businesses. These districts are arteries threaded through the heart of the city, serving as gathering places for local communities and creating memorable experiences for visitors from near and far.

The businesses on these corridors touch thousands of residents daily in the places where they shop, eat, and are entertained. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Detroit businesses looked for new ways to deliver safe, healthy, and enjoyable experiences for employees and customers alike.

As stewards of Detroit's UNESCO City of Design designation, Design Core Detroit believes strongly in the power of design to achieve these local business goals. The creative problem solving skills of professional designers help businesses resolve challenges, retain existing customers, attract new clients and partners, adapt business models and spaces, and create a consistent and recognizable experience for customers. In short, good design is good business.

This second edition of our **Design Guide: Neighborhood Business** contains advice, tips, worksheets, and case studies developed to help Detroit businesses thrive and allow them to form productive relationships with professional designers. This content was co-created with 75 design professionals, service providers, and small business owners, who shared insight and expertise that demonstrates the value of design for business and helps facilitate mutually beneficial collaborations between designers and the businesses they serve.

Design Core wishes to thank Bank of America, NEI, and the many individual entrepreneurs, designers, businesses, and community support organizations who contributed to this work. Without your input, expertise, and support, this project would not have been possible. If your organization is interested in hosting interactive, hands-on design education workshops for your clients or constituents using this guide, or any others in our Design Guide series, please email info@designcore.org. We look forward to connecting with you.



Quote from Mayor Mike Duggan, City of Detroit:

"Vibrant and thriving commercial corridors are the heartbeat of a city's neighborhoods. They are gateways to a community, support small family-owned businesses, and serve as a source of neighborhood pride. That's why we are investing in revitalizing miles of our historic commercial corridors across Detroit. The Strategic Neighborhood Fund is making our streetscapes inviting hubs of activity, while speeding up neighborhood recovery and turning boarded-up storefronts into thriving small businesses. We're assisting small businesses through programs like Motor City Match, which has awarded grants to more than 1,600 businesses and helped 138 new brick-and-mortars open since 2015. We're providing construction and design grants to small businesses to improve their facades and ensure our been-ups are included in our neighborhoods' rebirth. This is the vision we're building, a vision built on opportunity with neighborhoods and their commercial corridors driving the future of the Motor City."



Simply Casual on Livernois Avenue. Photo courtesy of Rufus Bartell and Michael K. Farkas Jr.

The goal of this design resource guide is to empower and inspire Detroit's business owners through information, examples, exercises, and more.

Additionally, it's expected to serve as a starting point for businesses ready to engage in conversation or contract with designers. Through a combination of case studies, worksheets, and guided instruction, you'll gain an appreciation for design as an effective business tool and build the confidence you need to manage design projects for your business.



Bird & Bee store exterior in Capitol Park. Photo courtesy of Dailly Detroit.



Elwood Bar & Grill exterior on Adams Street. Photo courtesy of John D'Angelo Photography.

This guide aims to:

- 01 **Demonstrate** the value of design for small businesses in the city.
- 02 **Help** neighborhood businesses integrate a comprehensive design strategy into their annual business plans and budgets.
- 03 **Increase** competitiveness of new and existing local businesses and support Detroit's revitalization strategy for commercial corridors.
- 04 **Encourage** the development of inclusive and inviting spaces throughout the city.
- 05 **Preserve** the unique local identity and culture of neighborhoods.
- 06 **Grow** the market for local design professionals.
- 07 **Amplify** public awareness and eagerness for great design in neighborhoods.



Section 1

Introduction

GETTING STARTED WITH DESIGN

12 Context

15 Building Trust

16 Budget and Costs

17 Types of Designers

When you're done with this chapter you will:

1. Understand the importance of context and how to discover the context your business exists in.
2. Appreciate the importance of building trust with your designer and understand how to do so.
3. Understand the difference between budget and costs.
4. Learn basic information about the types of designers you may work with and the importance of working with a professional to develop your digital and physical brand.

The objective of this chapter is to help you understand where your business fits into the wider market, how a designer can help you create or improve your business, and how to connect with them. To be successful any local business needs to always consider the context they exist in and allow that to shape the way they operate.

Context

Designing with context in mind will improve the customer experience, in both digital and physical formats. Knowing what is most important to your customers will inform how different aspects of your business are designed. For example, a coffee shop website having the ability to process mobile orders paired with a front pick-up counter will support morning commuters who do not have a ton of time to wait for their breakfast. The business has been designed specifically for the context of the customer's life.



Whole Foods on Mack Avenue. Photo courtesy of JGA.

"Design partners, local artists, and fabricators joined with the Whole Foods team to create a fusion of food and place through reclaiming, re-purposing, and even re-imagining pieces of Detroit's past into an expression of Detroit's future."

JGA, Detroit Whole Foods



Pages Bookshop in Grandmont-Rosedale. Photo courtesy of David Lewinski Photography.

Ask yourself the following questions and others to understand how **place**, **people**, and **policy** affect your business.



Place

Place refers to the community in which your business is located and can be as specific as your block, street, or neighborhood, or as broad as the whole city or state.

- ① What other buildings, businesses, or spaces surround your business?
- ② What is the condition of each and what relationship do you have to them?
- ③ Are the sidewalks, streets, and surrounding spaces kept clean and safe?
- ④ Are there environmental or economic conditions affecting the business climate?
- ⑤ How might these conditions or factors affect your business or customers?



People

People refers to those with a stake in your business, including local residents, business owners, employees, and, especially, your customers.

- ① Who lives, works, shops, dines, or visits the area surrounding your business?
- ② What are other products or services are people buying in your community?
- ③ How many people do you employ and what are their needs during the work day?
- ④ What are the demographics of your current and future customers and how do they impact needs, desires, behavior, and experiences?



Policy

Policy refers to official or unofficial rules or local ordinances, as well as licensing and permit regulations.

- ① Is your corridor part of a Main Street Overlay or a Historic District?
- ② Does a local association suggest or enforce design guidelines for businesses?
- ③ Are you allowed to put merchandise, signage, or seating on the sidewalk?
- ④ What are the commercial building codes in your area?
- ⑤ What permits or licenses are required for signage, construction, or upgrades?

For more specific details on the policy requirements related to building and designing in your community, check with your city's planning and development department. In Detroit, you can connect with them at

<https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department>

"The Planning and Development Department is committed to working closely with the Detroit business community to help our beautiful city continue to prosper and grow. With that goal as our guide, we look forward to championing design excellence, and encourage businesses to engage with the Design Review and Innovation team early and often. We are here to address any potential concerns or challenges and provoke creative design solutions. We look forward to collaborating with you on your next project."

Antoine Bryant, Director of Planning and Development, City of Detroit



Photo courtesy of Design Core Detroit.



Bon Bon Bon Founder & President Alexandra Clark inside their Hamtramck shop. Photo courtesy of Bon Bon Bon.

Building Trust

Trust is at the core of every successful small business design project. If a business owner doesn't trust their designer to be open, honest, and to have their best interests at heart, the relationship and the finished product will likely not meet anyone's expectations, and vice versa. If a designer doesn't trust the business owner to participate in the process or to be responsive, the final project will be unsatisfactory for all.

"It starts with building trust. It is a participatory budget process with your designer. What impact can you afford? Your designer will more often present multiple options."

India Solomon, Go City Shares

What can you do to build trust?

- ① Treat each other with mutual respect.
- ② Ask questions.
- ③ Take time to understand each other and agree on the project goals and process.
- ④ Participate actively in the process.
- ⑤ Be forthcoming with information, including available resources and possible constraints.
- ⑥ Communicate openly and honestly in language easily understood by all.

Budget and Costs

One of the first questions a designer will ask a potential client when determining whether to engage in the work is, "what is your budget?" For many business owners, this triggers apprehension and distrust, because they assume the vendor will purposefully deliver a proposal or quote that uses every last penny of the budget. For designers, however, this is a critical piece of information and could save everyone involved a lot of time, aggravation, and additional costs.

Ask Your Designer

- If fee will be hourly or based on deliverables
- If they will be hired on retainer as a contract employee for a specific project or as an actual employee
- What they are capable of doing, i.e. capacity

Factors that can impact the cost of a design project

- Existing assets or constraints
- Time delays due to incomplete communication, indecision, lack of consensus, or perfectionism
- Level of complexity
- Being indecisive or making multiple revisions to things previously agreed on
- Selected materials and finishes
- Code requirements, including mechanical, electrical, and structural for physical space projects
- Unexpected problems inside walls or other elements of an existing structure

Work closely with your designer from the beginning to establish expectations and be as realistic as possible about how much time it will take your team to participate in the process and keep the project moving.

"Budget is what a business has set aside and cost is the price the design agency has quoted. A lot of the time the budget will be short of the true cost. It's important to budget enough from the beginning and find out what the true cost is by getting a couple different quotes from agencies months before beginning the design process."

Cristina Magaña, Modish Creative Co.

Types of Designers

Even within the various design disciplines, there can be several different titles for designers or creative professionals, and it can be difficult to know which you need for the type and scope of project you're considering. Some larger firms will include many of these creative specialists in house. Other times, a team of independent professionals may come together to work on a project. This diagram will give you a basic understanding of who does what.

Keep in mind, that just like every project, every designer is different. Some work as a team, while others work individually, and many have multiple skills and specialties to offer. It's unlikely you will need to hire every type of designer described here, but this will give you a basic understanding of the types of designers available.

Hiring A Designer

Many design projects for small businesses can be initiated with a simple Scope of Work (SOW). However, sometimes the project is larger and more complex and may require a full Request for Proposal (RFP) process, particularly if there is any government or institutional partner involved.

→ **SOW and RFP templates** are included in Section 5 along with sample questions for interviewing a designer.

Full List of Creative Industry Sectors



COMMUNICATIONS

Advertising
Audio/Sound Services
Graphic Design
Branding
Marketing
Print Production
Public Relations
Publishing
Social Media
Videography



VISUAL/FINE ARTS

Arts Organizations
Art Venues
Interactive Art
Museums/Galleries
Music
Performing Arts
Crafts



INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Consulting
Corporate R&D
Co-Working Spaces
Government R&D
Incubators & Accelerators
Post Secondary Education
Professional Trade Groups
Small Business Services
University R&D Labs



DESIGN

Architecture
Engineering
Industrial/Product Design
Design/Build Makers
Packaging
Textiles
Urban/Landscape Systems



SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

AR/VR
Health & Medical Devices
Mobile Apps
Responsive Tech
Robotics
Custom Software



DATA

Big Data
Big Sensor
Embedded Computing
Parallel Computing
Telecommunications



ENTERTAINMENT

Animation
Educational IT
Film & Digital Media
Gaming
Video Editing
Toys
Theme Parks/Recreational Venues



Section 02

Brand Design

ESTABLISHING YOUR BUSINESS IDENTITY

21 Brand Basics

24 Phases of Brand Design

31 Resources

When you're done with this chapter you will:

1. Understand the value of a cohesive brand for your business.
2. Have resources you can use to help build your brand.
3. Discover the different phases of brand design.

"Whether they are trying to stay small or grow, small business owners have a unique story to tell and they can tell that story through branding. They want customers to have a one-of-a-kind experience that will keep them coming back. Businesses that want to grow understand that if they perfect their brand strategy, their story can be told elsewhere without losing integrity and their message will stay consistent. This allows them to take their services or products across the country and even the world."

Cristina Magaña, Modish Creative Co.

Brand Basics

The objective of this chapter is to help you understand what a brand is and why defining and designing your brand is a necessary step for any successful business. Your brand should be at the core of all design decisions, including the look and feel of your website, your exterior, and your customer's in-store experience.

Brand Strategy

Brand strategy, sometimes called your brand platform, is your organization's mission, personality, promise to your customers, and, ultimately, your competitive advantage. It includes the thinking, feelings, and expectations of your target market. It is a means of identifying and distinguishing your organization from another and a way to align your values with your customers as well as employees, partners, board members, and neighbors.

"The importance of an overall brand strategy and the research to support it is valuable and cannot be overemphasized. Both are vital and probably the most important phases in creating a brand. The strategy and any research that is done will set the tone and influence the direction for the visual expression and voice of your brand."

Bill Bowen, Octane Design

What is a "strong brand presence?"

"Brand identity isn't just a logo or an advertising campaign; it's the way a brand presents itself to the market and interacts with its audience. There's no aspect of a company that's not a part of its brand identity."

What type of designers might work with brands?

While a graphic designer or creative director will often lead branding projects, you should be prepared to interface with other creative subject matter experts that may play a part in creating your brand image.

This may include brand strategists, researchers, photographers, illustrators, typographers, web designers, print specialists, sign installers, or muralists.

¹ <https://www.adroll.com/blog/10-elements-of-a-strong-brand-identity>



Boston Edison logo color variations. Designed by and courtesy of Hexagon Creative.

Brand Identity

A well-designed brand should wrap around your customer's experience and tell your business story all the way through each process or customer touch point. Once the brand strategy has been crafted, your identity design follows. Brand identity includes all of the visual ingredients that will be used in any branded collateral, as well as instructions on how to use them. Beyond simply a logo, your brand identity includes a color palette, typefaces, icons, illustrations, graphic styles, tone of voice, and taglines. Brand consistency across all channels (in store, online, in printed materials, over the phone) is key to reinforcing an authentic experience and establishing a successful brand identity over time.

"The value of branding is immeasurable. Without it you are missing one of the most important tools needed to build a successful business."

Kimberly Jones, Skin Bar VII

Brand Assets

Think about brand as the spine of your business. It is the underlying support structure from which all other assets should extend. Brand assets are all of the different aspects that communicate what your business is, from print and packaging, to digital design presence, to the interior and exterior of your space, that use the brand elements to create a full picture that accurately reflects your business.

Define Your Needs

Sometimes the terms "brand guide" and "style guide" are used interchangeably or even described combined as a "brand style guide," but you may only need one, the other, or both. This is why it is important to confirm what you will receive from your designer at the end of the project. More details might cost more money.

- Both translate to digital and physical assets
- Both need to be used consistently on all platforms to deliver a polished, professional experience for your customers

BRAND GUIDE VS. STYLE GUIDE

Brand Guide and Style Guide are often used interchangeably. While both documents define your company's identity, a Brand Guide defines the look and feel of your brand, while a Style Guide focuses on how your brand sounds. Talk to your designer about whether you need one, both, or a combination of the two in order to successfully execute your brand experience. A great brand designer can work with you to develop a set of guidelines that have everything you need in order to establish your brand.

What is in a Brand Guide?

"A Brand Guide is a document that details a company's visual identity, along with rules and guidelines for any public-facing communication. Brand Guides set forth rules for official logo usage, font type and color, typography, and tone, along with the brand's mission statement, positioning, identity, and values."²

Mission and Values

A mission statement introduces your audience to the brand story and your values are the core principles that define your business. Both your mission and values should be used to guide the design choices outlined in your Brand Guide.

Logos

Different versions of your logo and different applications (ads, documents, billboards, etc.), along with any spacing, color, and alignment requirements.

Color Palette

A set of brand colors with a primary palette for materials and a secondary palette for accents.

Hex codes, RGB numbers, CMYK details, or Pantone names should be included to ensure they're easy to find.

Typefaces

Font styles and families and spacing and sizing guidelines.

Graphics

Signature photographs, illustrations, and icons.

Guidelines about the type and style of graphic elements to use and what to avoid should also be included.

What is a Style Guide?

"A Style Guide ensures clarity and consistency across written communications while maintaining brand identity and integrity.

Depending on your organization, your Style Guide might include grammar and web standards, copy patterns, voice and tone guidelines, content types with examples, a word list (and a blacklist), and brand basics. How extensive the Style Guide is will depend on your organization's needs."³

"A brand is much more than your logo—it is a feeling that your customer has about your product, service, or experience. The way we help guide how customers feel about our brand is to use meaningful brand messaging (what we say), visuals (how we look), and actions (what we do). When you align your values through these channels, your brand becomes a powerful way to attract your ideal customer."

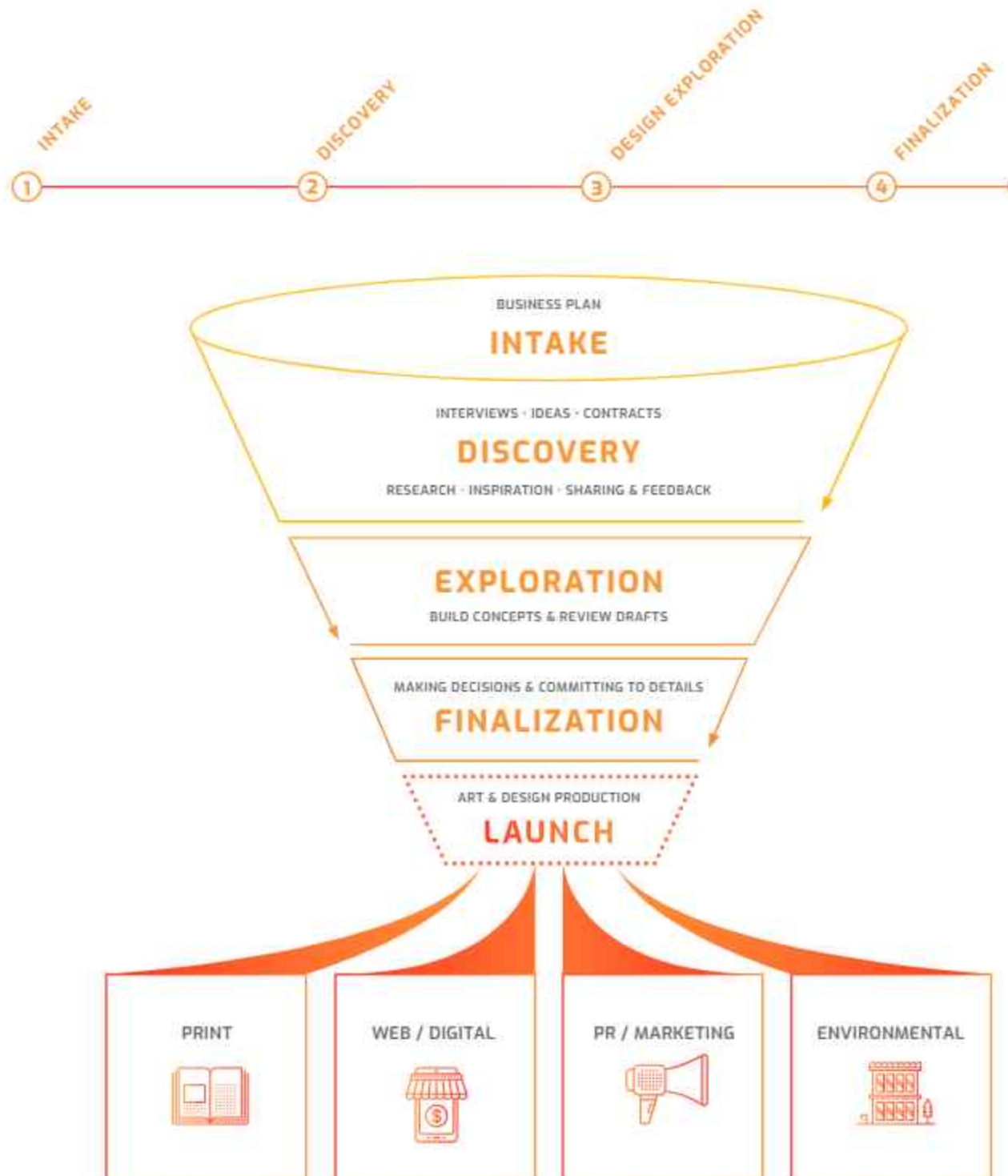
Jenn Maine, Principal and Director, Studio Inccognita, LLC.

2. <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-create-a-style-guide#what-is-a-style-guide>

3. <https://uxmag.com/articles/the-elements-of-a-style-guide>

Phases of Brand Design

All good designers and firms will have a process. If we think of design as a problem-solving tool, it is really more about the process than the solution. These subsequent pages will cover the general process that you may work through with your designer(s) in establishing a visual and experiential presence for your brand.





PHASE 1: INTAKE

The very first step in the process—the intake—is where the designer and business owner get to know all they can about one another and the business. It is where you establish the baseline for what will be created and how you want your business to fit into the market. The intake phase may include:



General Intake Questions:

Who are you, and what is the nature of your business?

What do you hope happens after this project is completed? What problem does it solve for you?

What, if any, existing assets do you currently have? (e.g., logo, images, etc.)

What do you feel is the biggest challenge in getting this product/image across to customers?



Define Goals:

What are your business goals for a new or refreshed brand?



Budget:

How much makes sense to invest to develop your brand?

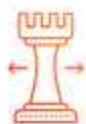
How much revenue do you hope to gain from your investment in this project?



Stakeholders:

Who are your internal and external stakeholders, i.e., customers, employees, vendors, etc.?

How do each of these stakeholders intersect with your business?



Defining the Competition:

Who are the other local players in your same business space?

What do they do that works well and where is there opportunity for improvement and differentiation?



PHASE 2: DISCOVERY

Following the intake period comes the discovery process. This phase is where designers and business owners begin diving deeper to tease out opportunities, conduct due diligence, secure copyright, and acquire access to any platforms, servers, or pre-existing content needed before moving into the actual creation process.



Research:

A key step is to browse the web beyond Google to learn more about your industry, visual trends, best practices, historically relevant details, and any other hidden gems that can help craft an identity. Additionally, try going beyond the web and actually walk into stores or restaurants.



Inspiration/Visual Benchmarking:

This is a transitional step that moves us into the visual realm. Your designer will look at existing images or designs with you to determine what inspires you and what aesthetics you are drawn to. [See moodboard exercise in Section 5.](#)



Identify Collateral:

Work with your designer to finalize the list of deliverables or collateral that will need to be created. A basic package typically includes a logo, color palette, typeface, business card, letterhead, and envelope. A restaurant, however, will also need menus, while a salon may use a brochure. Every business is different, so make sure to work with your designer to identify your unique needs.

Brand assets and inspiration. Courtesy of Unsplash and Who's That?

"75% of the design process is not the visuals. It's the process and the right connection with the right person."

Kari Paine Design and Photography

During the discovery process, you may want to:

01. Register your social media handles
02. Register your domain name
03. Ensure that you don't violate copyright or intellectual property

→ [Discover more about the importance of digital branding and each element involved in Section 3 Digital Design.](#)



PHASE 3: DESIGN EXPLORATION

At last, this is where the magic begins. Design Exploration is the apex of the brand process, where designers will interpret all data and materials collected during Intake and Discovery and format initial concepts for your brand look and feel. The goal is to come up with a concept that's flexible, dynamic, and memorable.

Content Creation:

Designers will begin sketching, pulling typefaces and colors, and formatting document structures. A photoshoot or purchase of stock images may come into play here.

Once ready, you and your designer will review and respond to initial design drafts. This is a crucial time for exchanging feedback and making sure what you're seeing aligns with your expectations, goals, and context.

The Revision Process:

Consider questions like these to ensure a successful conversation with your design team:

1. Does it solve for the problems identified in the brief?
2. Does it meet the level of design you expected?
3. Do you understand how this direction was reached?

Ask yourself the following questions, to determine whether the graphic elements and colors that you see align with your expectations, goals, and context:

1. Are they authentic? Are they true to your company history and culture?
2. Are they relevant to your audience?
3. Are they remarkable and unique?

Photo Shoot Alternatives

If conducting a photo shoot for your brand is not in your budget, stock photo websites are a great alternative.

Make sure the images are rights free or work with your creative team to purchase a license.



Logo sketches for The Good Rug. Courtesy of Subtle Design Co.



Illustration style exploration for Coriander Kitchen. Courtesy of Subtle Design Co.

"Branding is consistent, visual storytelling. Repetition is important to making an impactful memory."

Cristina Magaña, Modish Creative Co.



So how do you provide the most valuable feedback to your designer?

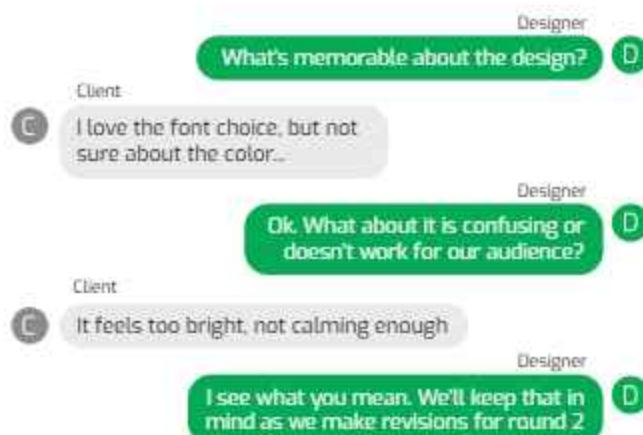
Poor Example

Being as specific as possible when providing feedback will help your designer respond appropriately. Here, the business owner fails to convey exactly why they don't like the design and how it differs from what they are looking for.



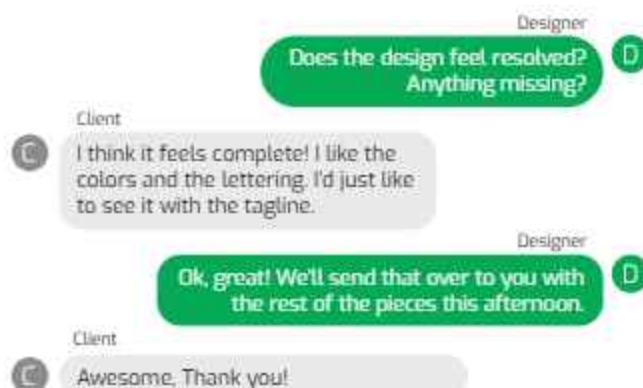
Better Example

Giving concrete examples of what you do and don't like is actionable feedback that your designer can respond to. Here, the client explains what they would like changed and the reasoning behind their request.



Best Example

Providing multiple opportunities for feedback and being as specific as possible will help keep projects and expectations on track. Feedback and approval happens at every step, so at the end, both you and your designer will be satisfied with the final product.





PHASE 4: FINALIZATION

Brand design culminates with Finalization. In this last phase, designers enter into production mode, building out a detailed collection of all brand identity assets and delivering them to the client in a well-organized package for ease of use.

Brand/Style Guide

Your brand or style guide details all the elements used to communicate your brand identity, including colors, typefaces or fonts, icons, and language. It will provide detailed instructions and examples of how your brand should be used across various mediums, including in print, online, and in your physical space. Your brand or style guide will serve as your “brand bible” for you, your staff, and any outside contractors charged with producing collateral or otherwise communicating your brand, i.e., social media managers, web designers, copywriters, photographers, architects, interior designers, sign makers, and more.

Launch/Rollout

After all your brand assets have been approved, it's time to roll them out. You'll be excited to reveal your new brand to the world, but taking time to craft a thoughtful action plan here will increase success. Consider business cards, signage, email signatures, and any other big or small piece of collateral that will need to be updated. Then decide who will do it and when. Be mindful of holidays and industry trends when determining the best time to release your brand to customers and the public.

Planning Your Brand Roll Out

Don't wait until your brand assets are ready to start thinking about how you'll reveal them. While your brand is being developed, you should be drafting an action plan for how to roll it out. Enlist any marketing, public relations, or communications support available to you. Don't forget to think about your overall budget and how much it will cost you to print, fabricate, or otherwise produce the materials or collateral you will need.

→ Ready to create or strengthen your brand? Check out Chapter 5 for worksheets to help you do so.

Logo and Color



When used in combination with the Spectacle Society logo, the brand name should be accompanied by the tagline "Spectacle Society" in a smaller font size.

On Kit's



Messaging

When used in combination with the Spectacle Society logo, the brand name should be accompanied by the tagline "Spectacle Society" in a smaller font size.

Don't be afraid to make a spectacle.

Primary tagline

The primary tagline should be used in combination with the Spectacle Society logo in a smaller font size.

Don't be afraid to make a spectacle.

Perfect yourself.

Have a genuine perspective.

Don't be afraid to make a spectacle.

Secondary tagline

The secondary tagline should be used in combination with the Spectacle Society logo in a smaller font size.

Illustrations: Eyewear Parts



Illustration

When used in combination with the Spectacle Society logo, the brand name should be accompanied by the tagline "Spectacle Society" in a smaller font size.

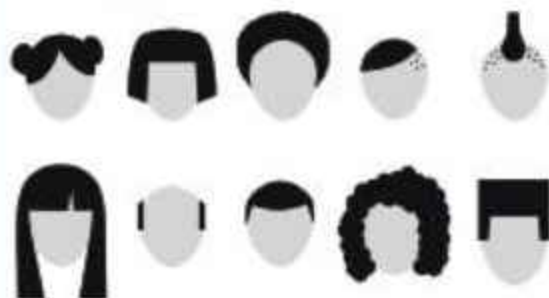


Photography



When used in combination with the Spectacle Society logo, the brand name should be accompanied by the tagline "Spectacle Society" in a smaller font size.

Illustrations: Hair Parts



RESOURCES

AIGA Detroit

The Detroit chapter of AIGA, which is the oldest and largest professional membership organization for design.
detroit.aiga.org

Behance

A platform to discover the latest work from top online portfolios by creative professionals across industries.
behance.net

Brand Camp University

A summit that gathers thought leaders, technologists, geeks, and creatives around a conversation on branding, entrepreneurial thinking, social media, and the use of technology. The purpose of Brand Camp is to change how people build, launch, and grow ideas, with the belief that these innovators can change cities.
brandcamp.design

Brand New

A website that shares opinions on design and focuses on corporate and brand identity work.
underconsideration.com/brandnew

Designspiration

A network used to collect and share design work that inspires you, and see what inspires the work of fellow creatives.
designspiration.com

Michigan eLibrary

A free, online library for Michigan residents. MeL users can access a powerful database system for business research, online full-text articles, full-text books, digital images, and other valuable research information.
mel.org

Open Up Shop

A brick & mortar readiness guide for small businesses: by Neighborhood Business Initiative.
degc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/NBI-OpenUp-Up-WorkBook-FINAL.pdf

Pinterest

A social network and online moodboard, used to collect visual pieces of multimedia.
pinterest.com

TED

Influential videos from expert speakers on education, business, science, technology and creativity.
ted.com

The BizGrid

An interactive online and physical directory designed to help entrepreneurs navigate the landscape of organizations providing business assistance in Detroit.
detroitbizgrid.com

The Brand Stylist

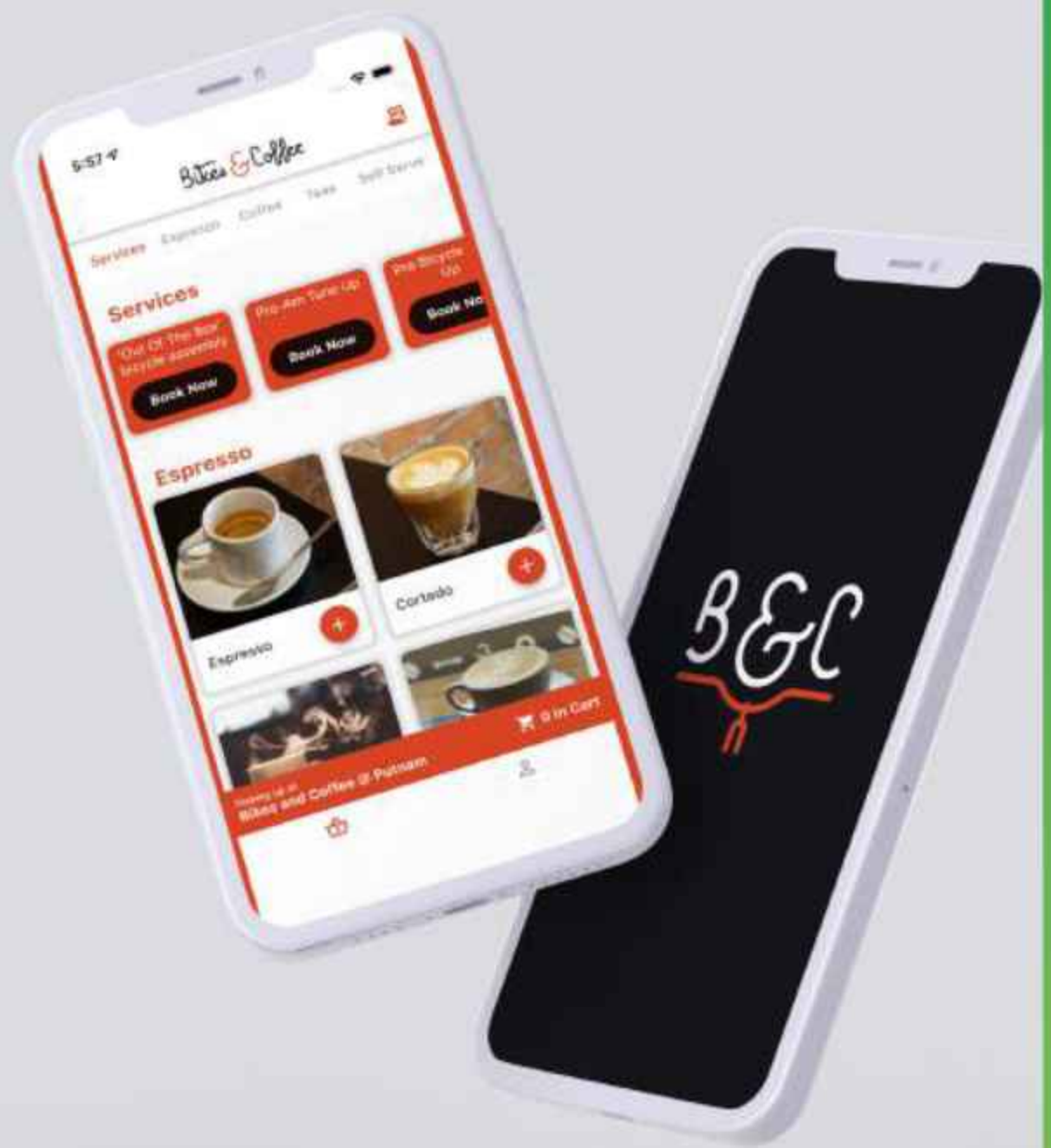
Books, workshops, online courses, and retreats to unlock the potential within your brand.
thebrand-stylist.com

The Business Model Canvas

A strategic management and entrepreneurial tool that helps you to describe, design, challenge, invent, and pivot your business model.
strategyzer.com/canvas/business-model-canvas

The Dieline

A packaging design website that highlights the value of well-designed brand packaging, provides a platform for the community to plug into the design process, and keeps users informed of industry trends.
thedieline.com



"Digital space is open 24 hours a day. What do you want it to be doing while you are sleeping?"

Meaghan Barry, Unsold Studio.

Section 03

Digital Design

CRAFTING AN ONLINE PRESENCE

34 Digital Design
for Business

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for Business

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Professionals

58 Phases of Digital Design

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When you're done with this chapter you will:

1. Understand the value of design and how it can help your business.
2. Discover different tools you can use to reach and engage with your customers online.
3. Understand why it's important to have a set budget for digital design and how much it can realistically cost.
4. Learn what types of designers work in the digital space and what they can do for you.
5. Understand the different phases of digital design.
6. Discover resources you can use to create or improve your online presence.

Digital Design for Business

Now that you've solidified your brand it's time to apply to to the digital realm. The objective of this chapter is to help you understand why your online presence matters and how to best present your business to potential customers online. We know the majority of customers now research a store online before visiting in person. A strong, well-designed digital presence can make your business more attractive to customers and help you stand out from the competition.

Why is digital design important for your business?

Digital design can help you:

- Market and operate your business
- Communicate with your customers or clients
- Sell your products or services

We know consumers search the Internet to:

- Find your business
- Contact you
- Receive relevant and timely news or updates
- Make a purchase or comparison shop
- Discover your days and hours of operation
- Schedule a reservation or appointment
- Read and/or write reviews

Think about how often you want your customers or clients to digitally engage with your brand, how you want them to engage, and what you want them to do.

What are your primary data or messaging needs?

Do you want your audience to visit your website, open your email, or watch a live shopping event on social media? Ask yourself the following questions:

- What information do you want to share with your customers?
- What information do you need to receive from your customers?
- What are you using this information for?
- How will you capture this information?
- Where will you store the information?

Digital Channels

There are multiple ways to reach your customers online. Some common examples include:

- A website
- An online store
- A Google Business Profile
- Social Media Platforms
- A Email Newsletter
- A Podcast or Vlog

Connect digital to your brand and business goals:

What is the value proposition for knowing your brand?

What do you want to achieve through digital tactics?

Since each business is unique they will interact with their customers or clients differently online, and have different digital goals. Consider the differences between a corner coffee shop and a local dentist. While both should have an online presence, they have very different target audiences, will reach them through different online channels, and will want to achieve different goals with their digital strategy.

Some industry-specific goals include:**Retail**

- Sell Products
- Offer coupons or deals

Restaurant

- Share menu
- Make reservations
- Highlight reviews

Hair Salon

- Show portfolio
- Make appointments

Service-Based Business

- Share location and hours
- Make appointments

Community Organization

- Promote events
- Share resources
- Provide contact information

Non-Profit

- Showcase community members
- Highlight donors

Digital design professionals will help weave your brand consistently through all communications, including your website and social media channels, which ensures your current and future customers will always have the experience you intend.

Well-designed digital assets can help your business:

- ① Stay in touch with existing customers
- ② Share info, promotions, coupons, and updates
- ③ Attract new customers and retain existing customers
- ④ Tell your business story
- ⑤ Support e-commerce
- ⑥ Gain a deeper understanding of your business, your customer, and your market

Before meeting with your designer, you should be prepared to talk with them about:

- Your existing brand identity and assets, including any pictures, copy, or other content you have for your website, social media, etc.
- Your target customer profile or audience.
- Your unique selling proposition. What makes your business special and why should people buy from you?

Marketing vs. Advertising

While sometimes used interchangeably, there are actually many differences between marketing and advertising. In basic terms, marketing is the process of identifying customer needs and determining how best to meet those needs. In contrast, advertising is the exercise of promoting a company and its products or services through paid channels. In other words, advertising is a component of marketing.

Organic marketing is a strategy that generates traffic to your business over time rather than using paid methods. This includes blog posts, case studies, guest posts, unpaid tweets, and Facebook updates. Organic marketing uses Search Engine Optimization (SEO), social media posts, and a variety of other tactics to increase brand awareness.

Developing a Digital Strategy

There are so many ways for your brand to connect with your audience digitally that it can become costly to maintain. This is when having a strategic plan can help maximize your efforts by focusing on key digital touchpoints. To figure out your key touchpoints, identify the digital spaces where your audience experiences your brand. By focusing on these key touchpoints, you can deliver amazing branded experiences that can help you increase brand loyalty or revenue.

Understand Your Audience

You should do research to understand your key audience. This will provide insights on what you need to change on your website to attract them. Discover:

- How many people are searching for your product or service?
- What is the level of interest in your product or service in your geographic area?

Once you understand how people are using your website you can set goals around how you want to use SEO to shape your customer journey.

Map the Customer Journey

A customer journey is all the steps a customer takes from interest to conversion (where they buy your product, schedule an appointment, or request more information). Work with a design partner to define what that means to you and your business goals. What are you trying to achieve? Your goals should inform what tactics you and your designer will choose to implement.

Sample Conversion Goals

- Get customer to visit landing/home page or other specific page
- Sign up for email/newsletter
- Make a reservation or appointment
- Make a purchase
- Follow your business on social media
- Leave a review
- Register for an event
- Request more information
- Fill out a contact form

CUSTOMER JOURNEY
Awareness Where might they first find out about you?
Consideration Where might they go to learn about you?
Conversion What is it that makes them decide to purchase?
Relationship What makes them return or purchase again?
Advocacy What makes them share?

“Avoid assumptions. If your company has a superfan, ask them about the customer journey. Their answers may uncover insights that can help you find more superfans just like them.”

Angela Ficarelli, Subtle Design Co.

Digital Tools for Business

Once you have defined your goals and developed a strategy, then you can pick the tools you will use to execute.

Website

To succeed in today's digital world every business needs a website. Your website doesn't have to be complicated, but it should be well designed, showcase your brand identity, and help you achieve your business goals. For example, if you want to sell products or allow clients to book services online, your website should have the functionality to do so. However, like almost anything else, more advanced features usually cost more money.

Website Design

Website design is everything involved in the visual look and feel of the website and its usability including the color palette, typography, and page layout. The design is what your customers actually see on their computer or phone when they open your website.

Website Development

Website development is the code that actually makes up your website and makes it work. The "front-end" is the code that makes the website display what the web designer has created. The "back-end" manages the data on your website and sends it to the front-end to be displayed. Web developers use code such as HTML, CSS, and Javascript to implement the pieces of content that web designers create.

Questions to ask before choosing a platform

How soon do you need your website?

Do you want to manage the website yourself?

How often do you plan to update the website?

Can you or do you have the time and staff to update and manage your website, including creating new content, updating or managing plugins, or writing code?

Based on your answers you may select an easy-to-use platform that you can update yourself once it's been set up, or have a designer create a completely custom website that you can pay someone to manage.

Other considerations

Some designers are available on demand, but this will probably increase the cost of your services.

Talk to your designer about timing expectations and how long it will realistically take to create what you need.

Conduct competitive analysis of other websites and note what's working and what isn't.

How to Choose a Domain Name

Try to choose a domain name that includes your brand or company name so customers can easily find you when they search for you on the internet. Ideally, you'd go with yourbusinessname.com, but that's not always an option if someone else has already claimed that domain name. In that case, you might try using a different top-level domain (for example .net instead of .com) or getting creative with your .com domain names. Drink brand Avec, for example, uses avecdrinks.com. If you're still stuck, you can use a domain name generator, where you can enter your business name or ideal domain name to see what similar or suggested names are available.



Bulk Space website courtesy of Bulk Space.

How to Buy a Domain Name

If you are working with a designer to create your website from scratch they can help you buy your domain name through a domain name registrar such as A2, GoDaddy, or Namecheap for a fee. Talk to your designer to see if there is a particular company they recommend. If you are using a website hosting platform there's often a domain registration process as part of your package and some even offer a free domain name with sign up.

Moving Your Domain Name

What if your business name changes and you want to update your domain name to match? You can move your website to a different domain. When you move your website to a different domain, it is important to follow SEO best practices to minimize loss of traffic. By redirecting the old domain to the new, live domain, you can signal to Google that the new domain is the home of the old domain's content. We highly recommend working with a digital designer if you are moving your website to make sure it's done properly.

Website Hosting

If you don't want to pay to create a website from scratch you can work with your designer to select a hosting platform like Wordpress, Squarespace, or Wix. These platforms provide website design templates, store and secure your website, and in some cases even provide website analytics to help guide your digital marketing efforts. Talk to your designer or do your own research to decide which hosting platform is the best for you.

"An annual fee [for] the hosting provider is a great investment and doesn't cost more than a few hundred dollars a year."

Cristina Magaña, Modish Creative Co.

Most website hosting platform services need to be renewed annually, so make sure you budget for this expense and make note of the renewal date to avoid service interruptions. Think of this as digital rent for your business!

WEBSITE WORKSHEET

01. Business Snapshot

What is the name of your company?

Website URL:

What does your company do? What products and services do you offer?

What budget have you allocated for this project?

03. Is there anything about your current site that serves the business well?

05. What are the reasons your ideal customer will visit your website?

02. What are the top 5 goals for your new website?

① _____

② _____

③ _____

④ _____

⑤ _____

04. Who is your ideal customer?

06. How do you want people to feel when they interact with your brand?

Check or fill in the box on the scale below:

Playful

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Serious

Youthful

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Mature

Inclusive

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Exclusive

Local

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

National

Affordable

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Expensive

Relaxed

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Intense

Progressive

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Conservative

High Touch

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

High-Tech

07. List your competitors' websites:

09. Are there any other websites in particular that you like the design of? Why?

08. What do you think your competitors are doing successfully?

10. If we were to be celebrating a successful website strategy in 12 months time, what would that look like? How many website visitors? How many leads? How many sales? Be as descriptive as you possibly can.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

One of the easiest ways for new clients or customers to find your business online is by searching for the products or services you provide on a digital search engine such as Google. SEO refers to strategies to optimize your website so that it shows up higher in the results.

Before you start optimizing your website, figure out where you are today. Search online for common terms such as your business name, your industry, or the products you sell and see how quickly your website comes up. If your website doesn't appear until the 15th or 20th page of search results it's time to optimize your website!

Use Your Data

Most website hosting platforms provide information about how your website is being used. You can also work with your designer to integrate tools such as Google Analytics to receive even more detailed information. Data points that can help guide your SEO strategy include:

- How many people are visiting your website?
- How are they finding your website?
- What pages are they visiting on your website?
- How long are they spending on each page?

What results do you get from findable?

"Increased sales, web traffic, and measurable/ noticeable conversions such as calls to the restaurant on behalf of guests discovering us through Google My Business and our digital ads."

How are your results so far?

\$50K **3** **\$200**
take out orders in months mo ad spend

What do you think of findable overall?

"Anita's Kitchen has been very pleased with the results. Despite January and February typically being our slowest months - and in lieu of the challenges and limitations Covid-19 has presented - we have thrived in a carryout capacity and we attribute this to our marketing efforts. By emphasizing GMB and digital ads, we have noticed an influx of phone calls generated from the campaign, and our website traffic has undoubtedly increased. We feel very fortunate to be thriving in this current climate. In fact, by January, we decided to double our advertising spend through the program, as we felt we still had room to grow/ maximize our ROI."

92%

OF SEARCHERS WILL PICK BUSINESSES ON THE FIRST PAGE OF LOCAL SEARCH RESULTS.

86%

OF PEOPLE LOOK UP THE LOCATION OF A BUSINESS ON GOOGLE MAPS.

Jared Groth

Director of Operations

Anita's Kitchen

Case study and data courtesy of Findable.com

SEO Tactics

There are many ways to optimize your website, and which are best change year to year as search engines adjust their algorithms and design professionals adapt. Top strategies focus on:

Creating High Quality Unique

Content: Search engines rank websites that have useful, valuable, and relevant information higher. Work with a designer to create topically rich copy with relevant internal and external links.

Page Experience: If your website works better for users, search engines will rank it higher. A good experience means the pages load quickly, are optimized for mobile devices, and provide safe and secure browsing.

Incorporating Keywords: Most people will find your website by searching for the product and service they need. Make sure your website includes keywords someone might search to find you.

Finding Your Keywords

Think about your business and how someone might search to find your product or services. For example, END Studios, a woman-owned, Detroit-based architecture firm may include keywords like:

- Architect
- Building
- Design
- Interior Design
- Detroit
- Woman-Owned
- Residential
- Commercial

Once you've come up with your list of keywords make sure they appear on your website. But don't forget, the quality of content is key. Just listing the words won't help your rank. You need to create informative, engaging content that includes these words to improve your ranking.

Local SEO

For a small or medium business it can seem impossible to compete with huge national chains for search engine traffic. The good news is you don't have to! You can start with local SEO, where you target customers close to you and leverage your status as a local business. Tactics include:

Using the name of the city where your business is located throughout your website







Including your location on the back-end of your website

Linking to your social media accounts that include your location

Social Media

One of the easiest, most cost-effective ways to reach customers online is through social media accounts. You don't have to be on every platform, but it's a good idea to have at least a few accounts for your business. The channels you choose should match your brand and audience, and the content you post should be relevant, timely, and reflect your brand.

Using Social Media for Your Business

-  **Facebook:** Setting up a Facebook Business profile can help your audience find you when they search online. Facebook remains the most popular social media platform, so chances are your audience uses it.
-  **Instagram:** If the products or services you are selling look good, try setting up an Instagram profile and posting some pictures! Along with images you can also post Reels (recorded videos), stream video Live, and set up a click-to-buy shop.
-  **LinkedIn:** If you offer professional services or mostly serve professionals you should set up a LinkedIn for your business. You can use this to promote events and product launches and even recruit new employees.
-  **YouTube:** Share process videos, employee interviews, or online tutorials to connect with your audience.
-  **Twitter:** Share short snippets of business information, follow other industry leaders, and drive traffic to your website with tweets.
-  **TikTok:** If your brand is young and hip, try creating a TikTok. Follow the trends to get your business noticed—you might even go viral!

Types of Social Media Posts

- Original content about your products or services
- Related content to help build credibility and showcase your business as an industry leader
- Shared content that is relevant to your business

Create a Social Media Calendar

Posting on one (or multiple) platforms a day is a daunting task for a busy business owner. To help you stay organized you can develop a schedule of which content you will post and when. Gather the images or graphics you will use and pre-write your captions. You can even preschedule posts to go out at set dates and times using social media tools like Hootsuite, Sprout Social, or Airtable.

Intentional Posting

Make sure you are posting relevant and appropriate content even though it's weeks out. Revisit your calendar to make sure you are sensitive to current events.

"Scheduling posts weeks ahead of time instead of posting daily will save time and frustration. Dedicate 1 day a week to this. Having a calendar planned months ahead of time will keep you organized. This can be done once a quarter. Check analytics to change your strategy monthly."

Cristina Magaña, Modish Creative Co.

Metrics to Track

The only way to know if you are reaching your audience on social media is to take a look at your metrics and see what is working and what isn't. Try setting goals at the beginning of the month, then reviewing at the end. Check out which type of content or channel performs the best. If you aren't reaching your goals try changing your strategy.

Impressions: The number of times an individual saw your content.

Engagements: The number of times an individual interacts with your content (likes, favorites, shares, clicks, replies, follows)

Visits: The number of times an individual visits your profile page

Mentions: The number of times your handle or brand is tagged on social media

Followers: The number of individuals who follow your account

Work with a Professional

For some folks, managing social media isn't in their skillset or even the best use of their time. Keep track of the time you spend running your accounts and assign value to it. Compare the cost of your time with paying someone else to do it. This will help you see the value of having support from a professional. If you do decide to hire a professional make sure you are an active participant in the process. No one knows your business and your audience better than you, so the more information you share with your designer, the better they can tell your brand story.

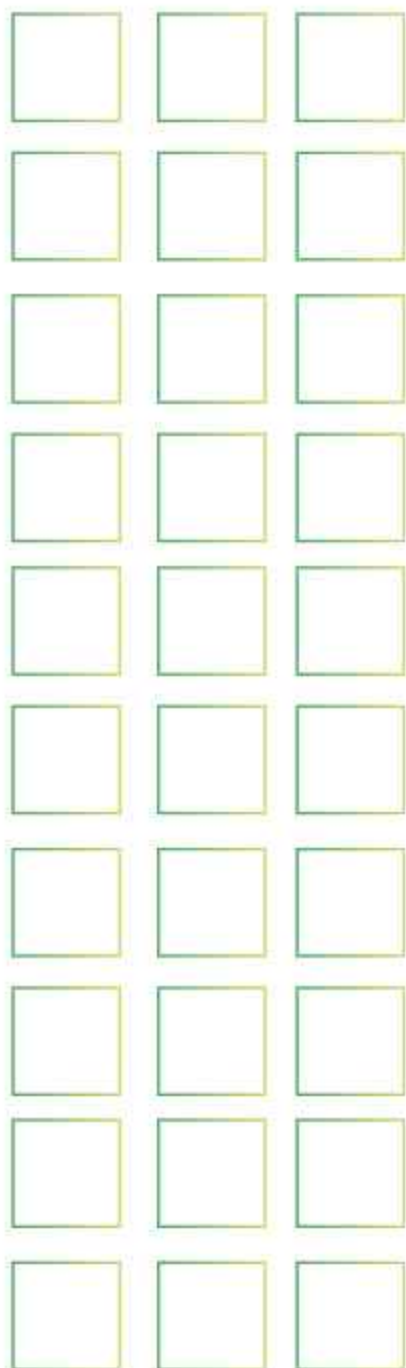
Social Media Consistency

Using your brand assets consistently across channels will elevate your business and ensure that customers keep you in mind.

"As the business owner,
your voice is always the
most important."

Ping Ho, Owner of Mink, Marrow and The Royce





FIVE TRUTHS FOR FINDING YOUR SOCIAL SPACE IN A CROWDED LANDSCAPE

Jumping into the world of digital marketing through social media may seem simple to some and out of reach for others. We'd like to walk that enthusiasm (or trepidation) down a more realistic path to getting your name out there using social media. Whether your business has stood the test of time and is just now jumping into the social space or it's a brand-new business looking to shout its name from the rooftops, we've got five truths to help guide your way.

Truth #1: Word of mouth is still the reigning champion of digital marketing.

News spreads faster person to person in a single day than any PR campaign could provide in a month. Get people talking. What does your business offer or what element of your business is worthy of telling a friend about? Whatever THAT is, it should be the main focus of Truth #2.

Truth #2: Yes, you need a social strategy.

Sure, you could be an avid personal social media user and think that you easily could pump out content for your business. Reality check—social media as an individual is very different than social media for a brand/business.

Think about it, in general, people care more about what other people are doing—not necessarily what a business is doing. Approaching social media takes a different lens as a business. Are you useful? Could you provide helpful content that keeps people coming back and saying “Oh hey, I didn’t know that. I can apply that to my daily life right now!” Or do you have compelling employee stories or a company history that could draw someone in? Whatever is your best story, pick it and stick to it.

From there, build a strategy that focuses on your core audience and what social channels they spend the most time on. If you build a strong community foundation, you can then build additional customer service channels, sales channels, and even a smart, efficient paid social strategy.

Truth #3: Don’t aim for viral. You’re not an infection.

It’s true that some businesses slide right into “viral” fame. Whether they were the first to send snarky tweets to their competitor or make use of a well-placed grumpy feline, they are indeed out there.

However, that’s like aiming to be the next Jay Z when you are more likely to be mistaken for Dwight Schrute. It’s not going to happen intentionally. Instead, set a business goal and build your social media and online tactics around that.

Want to increase product sales? Showcase products on the platform your audience hangs out on. For example, TikTok has a whole branch of content around “cleantok.” It’s this community that has led to an increase in sales for products like wet dry vacs, spin mops, and smiley-face sponges—just to name a few. No one single “cleantok” video is the “viral” culprit, rather it’s a community that has developed through cultivation and some smartly researched influential users of that platform.

Truth #4: Quality over quantity—pick your platform(s).

If you know your audience, you know where they spend time online. Focus on those one or two social platforms. Learn the lingo, understand the strategy, and become a part of that platform’s overall community so your content makes sense.

Be ingrained enough that you know what the trending topics or hashtags are and jump on that wave. A key part of understanding a topic is knowing when it’s more appropriate for you as a business not to engage.

It isn’t a requirement to be on every platform pumping out content every day. Find your audience’s preferred space and be an authority voice in that space.

Truth #5: If you’re bored with your content, so is everyone else.

If you weren’t a part of your business, would you follow your account? If you paused or said “no,” then it’s time to re-evaluate the prior truths. People are online because they want to be entertained, educated, and connected.

A few questions to ask yourself:

What’s in it for the audience?

What value are you providing them?

How can you build your community around what sets you apart? How can you use and reuse that?

10 CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING HOW TO HANDLE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Prepared for Design Core Detroit. By Emily A. Hay, Founder, Hay There Social Media.

We are often asked "when is the right time to hire a Social Media Manager?" While it seems logical to be one of the first things you outsource, there are actually steps/milestones we advise clients' address before taking this step. Here is a suggested roadmap/checklist to follow as you navigate how to handle your social media marketing:

1. Make sure you have a solid website

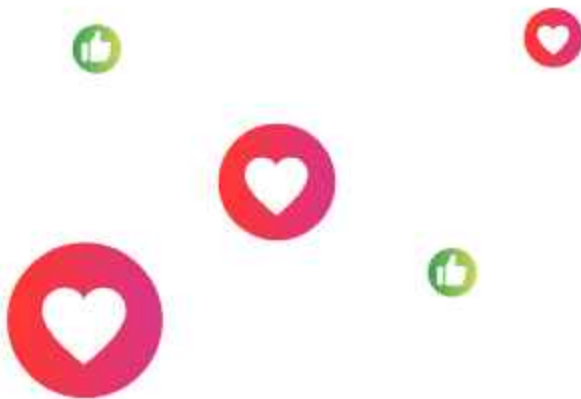
There is no point having a dedicated Social Media Manager without first having your website in order. One of the primary ways Social Media Managers deliver value through social networking is referral website traffic. If you do not have a place of your own on the web that you want traffic driven to via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more, then you need to put effort into getting that buttoned up before hiring someone to manage your Social Media Manager.

2. Get a website audit

If you have a finite amount of resources, put it into an SEO audit of your site before putting that money into social media marketing. It is smart to leverage "low hanging fruit" first and make sure that Google knows what your site is about, what you do, what keywords you should be targeting, and whether or not those factors are actually delivering traffic to you.

We do not advise having a dedicated Social Media Manager until you at least know you have these fundamental aspects in order.

Furthermore, it will make your Social Media Manager's job that much clearer and more effective when you can share this kind of data and insight with them. (If you can clearly explain business offers and who it is targeting as well as things like actual keywords your site is leveraging, so social media content can be consistent with that message).



3. Be sure your online listings and social profiles are in order

This is also a bit of "low hanging fruit" to be sure you have grabbed before considering an outsourced partner. You should ensure you have claimed, set-up, and managed any listings that impact your business from Google My Business to Yelp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

While a Social Media Manager can technically help you set these accounts up, we advise business owners to take care of this first so that:

- There is a better understanding of all online places the business is listed. This helps you understand everything your Social Media Manager is tasked with managing.
- There are no password/access snafus that can get messy quickly if you get locked out of an account.
- As the owner you have a high-level understanding of your social presence that you can share with Social Media Managers, should they change over time.



4. Now it's time to do your own social media marketing

"But I have no time" you may say. We totally understand. The thing is, a business owner IS their business in the early days and it takes your perspective, vision, and knowledge to be able to communicate it to the world on social media before you can ask someone else to be able to do it for you. When a business hires a Social Media Manager too soon, there can often be a disconnect. Business owners may say "the content is just not as strong as I was hoping it would be." Or, "we don't have enough followers." The Social Media Manager may say "I have no idea who I'm speaking to on social media." Or "What good are 500 followers if they don't live in the city you service?" This disconnect can appear when a Social Media Manager is hired too soon because the business owner may not have worked out all of the kinks themselves initially. This kind of problem can be avoided when you do your own social media for awhile yourself.



5. It's still time to do your own social media.

So you just got done reading #4 and can confidently say that you've done your own social media for a while. We advise you still do it yourself for a while longer before considering an outsourced Social Media Manager. Believe it or not, it will help you tremendously to have clarity around where you are "failing" at social media. You will be able to better communicate to your Social Media Manager where you need their help and you will be able to better judge their effectiveness.



6. Now consider outsourcing

Ok. You took the steps to understand your website situation and keywords; you have an online presence via social media that you set up, refreshed or controlled yourself; you did your own social media for a while and a bit longer than you wanted to. Now can be a good time to consider a outsourced Social Media Manager. So who do you consider?

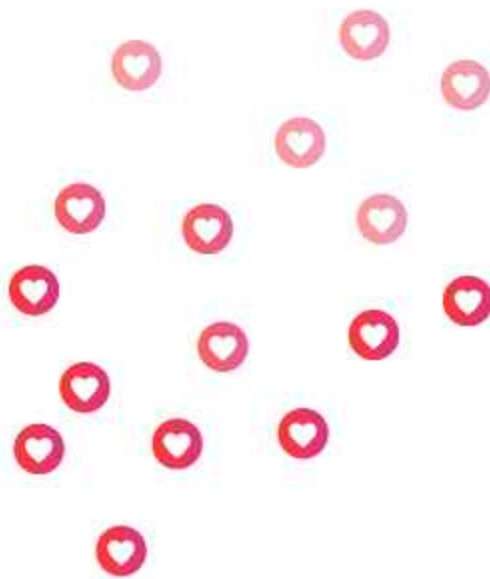
There are many ways to find an outsourced Social Media Manager including hiring:

- A Virtual Assistant (often overseas)
- An Intern
- Your niece/nephew/cousin
- A freelancer

We do advise going with someone who has been specifically trained in social media marketing and has sample work to demonstrate what they do.

Furthermore, ask yourself:

- Does they know how to do paid social?
- Does they use industry leading publishing and metrics tools like Sprout Social?
- Do they have a genuine interest in writing and do they come across clearly in written form?
- Are they creative?
- How much do they cost to hire?



7. Budgeting for a Social Media Manager

While there is a wide range of experience and quality, we recommend planning on a \$50-75/hr budget for a professional Social Media Manager.

- So if your social media takes about 5 hours a week, plan on a range of \$1,000-\$1,500/month. This does not include hard costs for promoted posts.
- "What do I do if my budget isn't at that point yet?" you may be asking. We would not advise expecting any fewer than 5 hours a week on a dedicated social media marketing effort. It's not enough time to thoughtfully create content, post, act as a community manager, and run metrics reports to be able to track results. However, as a business owner, you may be able to set up a trade with a Social Media Manager to supplement a retainer or even see if you can work out an arrangement where the monthly rate is less and a re-evaluation period happens in the near future. It is completely up to you and the Social Media Manager.

We also advocate for "value based billing," which is based on a set monthly retainer, not a variable cost that comes from charging by the hour and requires time tracking. We find monthly retainers to be the best method for a successful partnership because some months there will be a bit more work needed, and some months perhaps a bit less. It's a personal decision between the business owner and the Social Media Manager, but we have seen this yields the best results for all parties.



8. Now you have your Social Media Manager; what should they be doing?

A professional Social Media Manager will likely present you with some form of a new client questionnaire. This will allow them to ask questions about your business that they can refer back to time and time again when writing content, planning calendars, and brainstorming new tactics like social media giveaways, influencer campaigns, paid social ads, and more.

At this point, a professional Social Media Manager will be able to walk you through next steps and their process for approvals, asset collection, and creation as well as communication protocols.

PRO TIP

The more content assets you provide your Social Media Manager, the better. These should be photos and videos primarily. A Dropbox or Google Drive of photos and video files will allow a Social Media Manager to create a variety of content. Yes, they should be able to make their own visual assets to bring your content to life, but it can be hugely helpful when the business has its own photos and does not need to rely on stock images. It portrays an entirely more personal experience if the photos are real, even if you don't have thousands of them initially.

9. Paid social, SEO, and keeping it simple

We often hear businesses are spending their precious limited resources on paid social media ads. That can often be a good tactic but if it's "not doing anything" then usually the timing is what's off.

We find that the best approach is to:

- Really nail your organic social media content voice, visuals, and calls to action before doing anything paid. Have you leveraged all aspects of the social networks? Have you done it well? In other words, it may not make sense to spend money promoting Instagram posts when you have never posted an Instagram Reel. Have your Social Media Manager leverage all of the organic social media content forms before considering pumping resources into paid.

Back to the SEO factor we mentioned early on...

- While your website is something an IT professional handles, and SEO is typically something an SEO expert handles, SEO work is something that a Social Media Manager should absolutely be made aware of. It will make their work more effective if they use the same keywords you're using to optimize your website.

If all else fails...

- Whether you are doing your own social media marketing or you have an outsourced Social Media Manager, it is wise to stop and ask "Who are we trying to reach?" and "What product or service are we focusing on selling?" This can often make the questions around what to post and who to write it for much clearer to answer and easier to approach. For example, a realtor says she isn't crazy about her Social Media Manager's Instagram content. Well, the Social Media Manager did a post about first-time homebuyer credits. In fact, perhaps she created a Reel about first-time homebuyer credits and she is really proud of the Reel since it took a lot of time to make and even got a lot of views. The problem is, the realtor may be targeting people buying their second home or perhaps the realtor's clients are later-in-life buyers who don't need information about first-time home buyer credits and who certainly aren't looking for that information on Instagram or as an Instagram Reel. Confirming who the business is trying to reach and what product or service they are focused on selling, could stop this problem from ever happening in the first place.

10. Remember, nothing is a waste

Like anything, hindsight with how you tackle social media marketing is 20/20. Whether you do your own social media for "too long" or outsource your social media "too soon," if things go sideways and you feel like you wasted time and money, remember that it's never a waste. Everything is a lesson and it will only make you that much better the next time around. Detroit businesses should always feel free to reach out to Hay There Social Media where our team of experts and freelance Social Media Managers are eager to help answer any questions.



Point-Of-Sale Systems + E-commerce

A point-of-sale system (POS) is the hardware and software that make it possible for customers to purchase goods and services from your business. It lets you accept payments and keep track of your sales. Every POS system uses software, but any business that provides products or services in person may need hardware including a register, barcode scanner, credit card reader, receipt printer, or tablet to process orders.

Popular POS Systems include:

Clover
Toast
Square
Lavu
Ace
Shopify
Shopkeep
Lightspeed
Vend

E-Commerce

Electronic commerce, or e-commerce, refers to the buying and selling of goods or services online. More and more people are choosing to purchase goods and services online, so if you have an online presence it might be a good idea to expand your services and allow customers to purchase without coming into your store.

Selling products or services online is not as simple as putting a "buy now" button on your website. You need to choose what products or services you will be selling, gather any necessary media to sell them (images, product descriptions, prices, etc), and decide how you will process customer payment. If you are shipping goods to customers you also need to set up infrastructure for mailing the products and make sure to account for the cost of this.

How to Sell Your Products or Services Online

Through Your Website: If your website was created on a hosting platform like Shopify or Wix there may be e-commerce options already built in. If you worked with a designer to create a custom website, talk to them about adding e-commerce features.

Through an Online Marketplace:

Established e-commerce marketplaces like Amazon and Etsy provide businesses with tools to easily set up their e-commerce business.

Through Social Media: You can post the products or services that you want to sell on your social media channels, ask customers to direct message you to purchase, then use an independent payment tool like Venmo, CashApp, or Zelle to process payment.

No Matter What Tools You Choose Consistency Is Key

Just as with brand design, a key consideration of digital design is the consistency of your message and your voice. Other factors of effective digital design are frequency and content. Maintaining consistency of tone in who produces your content and how it looks, as well as consistency in frequency of communications will keep your customers informed and empowered when considering your business. Take advantage of all you can do on your own to control your brand's narrative.

How much should you invest in your digital brand presence?

There are many factors to consider when determining your budget to set up and maintain your digital brand presence. The biggest factor may be deciding how much of an impact it makes on your business. For instance, if 75% of your business comes from your website, then it makes sense to make a bigger investment to maintain a great brand experience. This may include a monthly retainer to make updates, answer customer service requests, etc. Alternatively, if your website is more of a formality to present information about your business, and doesn't really generate revenue, then that might be something you make a one-time investment in, and only spend a small amount of money to maintain it over time.

Is it really cost effective to do-it-yourself when it comes to your digital brand?

There are many apps and online tools that help entrepreneurs set up a digital presence for their brand pretty quickly. These tools can be very helpful, especially if you are comfortable using them and have some experience or a background in design.

When you might want to DIY:	When you might want to invest:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → You have the time and skills needed to do the task. → You are setting up an account for a service. → You have clear step-by-step directions on how to do the task and support if needed. → You have the time and money to invest in learning how to do the task. → The time it takes will not negatively impact your ability to grow the business. → You have the time and skills make adjustments to improve results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → You have the skills to DIY, but you make more money when you are focused on growing the business. → When managing the website, social media, or SEO becomes a disruption to your day. → You are overwhelmed with the process or don't know where to start. → You have a lot of transactions per day and need someone dedicated to handle customer management. → You are not sure what information needs to go on your website. → You need custom photography or graphics for your website. → You have a lot of competitors and need deep expertise to help your business. → Your business depends on revenue from your website, but you're struggling to get people to find your site. → Your business is not growing and you are not sure why. → You can't afford to invest resources in something that doesn't grow the business. → Your efforts are not helping to grow the business. → You have a large team that needs to have alignment in order to help grow the business. → Productivity is slowed down because your input is needed for every part of the business. → You are unsure why some efforts are successful and some are not. → You do not have the expertise or time to do the task.

How Much Will It Cost?



In the scheme of web design and digital brand development, many different platforms and services exist to help business owners create unique websites and carry out various business functions. Some are geared toward DIY users, while certain functions may require the help of an expert. While this chart by no means represents all the options, it does serve to give a general sense of the level of investment and experience required to execute different kinds of online content. In short, the more specialized or complicated the service, the more expensive it will be and the more likely it is that you will need to work with a designer.

Digital Design Professionals

Below are some of the creative professionals that you might work with across the various phases of digital design development:

Strategy

These individuals help you to research and plan which media or channels to use and how to best engage with your target audience.

Brand Strategist

A person who helps you define your business goals and makes a plan for how your brand can help you get there.

Industry Consultants

A person or firm with specialized knowledge in a certain area, i.e., food and beverage, healthcare, or retail.

Publicist

A person or firm that can improve your reach and the response to your brand messaging by aligning with the right media outlets or brokering promotions and partnerships with other brand ambassadors.

Digital Strategist

A person who can help you measure, analyze, and adjust your digital performance for optimal impact.

Content

These individuals help you create any text, pictures, icons, videos, and quotes featured on your website, social media channels, or other digital touchpoints.

Copywriter

A person or firm who specializes in writing, i.e., titles, stories, descriptions, and other language for your digital assets.

Photographer

A person who captures and edits images. Photographers have focused expertise, so you should choose your photographer based on whether you need portraits, product pictures, food, sport or action shots, etc.

Social Media Manager

A person who can help you set up a consistent and meaningful schedule for posting brand content on your social media channels and respond to activity on your behalf.

SEO/SEM Specialist

A person who can help you make your website relevant in online searches and grow site traffic and brand awareness through organic and paid search engine rankings.^{4,5}

Design

These individuals are responsible for creating websites or applications and making sure they tie in with the given brand persona.

Graphic Designer:

A person who assembles images, typography, or motion graphics to communicate ideas, thoughts, and information visually.

User Interface (UI) Designer:

A person who designs the visual way that a user interacts with an interface, like swiping controls on an application or clicking buttons on a website.

User Experience (UX) Designer:

A person who creates the overall feel and experience that a person has when interacting with a system.

Videographer

A person who captures and edits moving images.

4. <https://www.mediabistro.com/be-inspired/advice-from-the-pros/what-does-an-seo-specialist-do/>

5. <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/what-does-a-sem-specialist-do>

Development:

These individuals create the mathematical and linguistic coding required behind the scenes to make a website functional.

Back-End Developer/Coder

A person who is responsible for writing the mathematical and linguistic code to make a functional website infrastructure.

Database Managers

A person who uses specialized software to store and organize website data. They can also help with data security, backup, and recovery.

Analytics Specialist

A person who can help you monitor, analyze, and review marketing campaign results (such as sales increases or engagement) to understand what to repeat or change in the next campaign.^{6,7}

IT Professional

A person who can help you with your computer or software. These individuals can help troubleshoot problems, teach you how to use all the features of software, select or repair programs and equipment, and more.



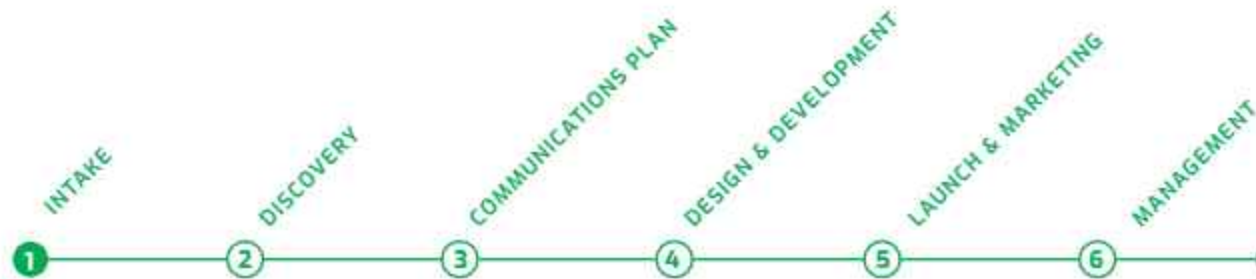
Website homepage courtesy of Mona Lisa Living.

6. <https://www.coursera.org/articles/marketing-analyst>

7. <https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/digital-marketing/digital-marketing-analyst-skills/>

Phases of Digital Design

Below is an example of the process for working with a digital design professional, and some suggestions for what you should prepare before meeting with them. You will notice that this process looks very similar to the Brand Design process. However, there are some unique aspects for applying your brand to online channels.



"Digital design services are created on a digital platform and are essential to a brand. They include; graphics, web design, online ads, social media content, and other digitally shared collateral. These services are essential to a modern business as most customers and clients will research them online, providing their first impression. The first impression of a brand should tell its story and attract the right people. Once those people are at the physical location the story should continue to be told. This overall experience is what will keep them coming back to the business."

Cristina Magaña, Modish Creative Co.



PHASE 1: INTAKE

What is your budget?

Prepare your budget for digital design and share it with your design professional as soon as possible. They can't help you if they don't know what kind of resources they will have to work with. The cost of digital design projects can vary widely, depending on how complicated your needs are. A digital designer can help you prioritize where to use your resources based on the outcomes you want to achieve. Keep in mind, things that can impact the overall cost of your project are:

- Your active and timely participation in the process
- Clearly defined objectives and priorities
- Existence and availability of appropriate content
- Timely decision making
- Your actual budget

Acknowledge Constraints

Acknowledge budget, social capital, and capacity constraints and make a plan that fits within them.

What can you do with a small budget and only five minutes a day?

What could you change if you were able to devote more time and money?

Will your website require a lot of content and updates? If so, do you have the internal resources or a team to create that new content for your site?

What will your process for creating new content be and who will be responsible for that?

How will you create the systems to make that happen? Writing the copy, curating the images and video, publishing (initial and changes), and monitoring the engagement (including spam)?

Audit your existing digital assets.

What does your online digital presence look like?

Note all of the places where your existing digital assets and messages are inconsistent with your brand.

Do you have a high-resolution version of your logo?

Do you have professional product images?

Is your mission and vision up to date?

Are you using the right colors?

Note all of the ways your customers currently connect with you digitally.

Do you have an email mailing list?

Have you set up any social media profiles?

Do you have followers on existing social media profiles?

Do you blog or publish a newsletter?

How often do you update content?

"Have an intentional marketing budget. Even if you think you will not need it. It is just like utilities. Even if it is \$5 a week. It takes the stress away of having to find the money to pay for it."

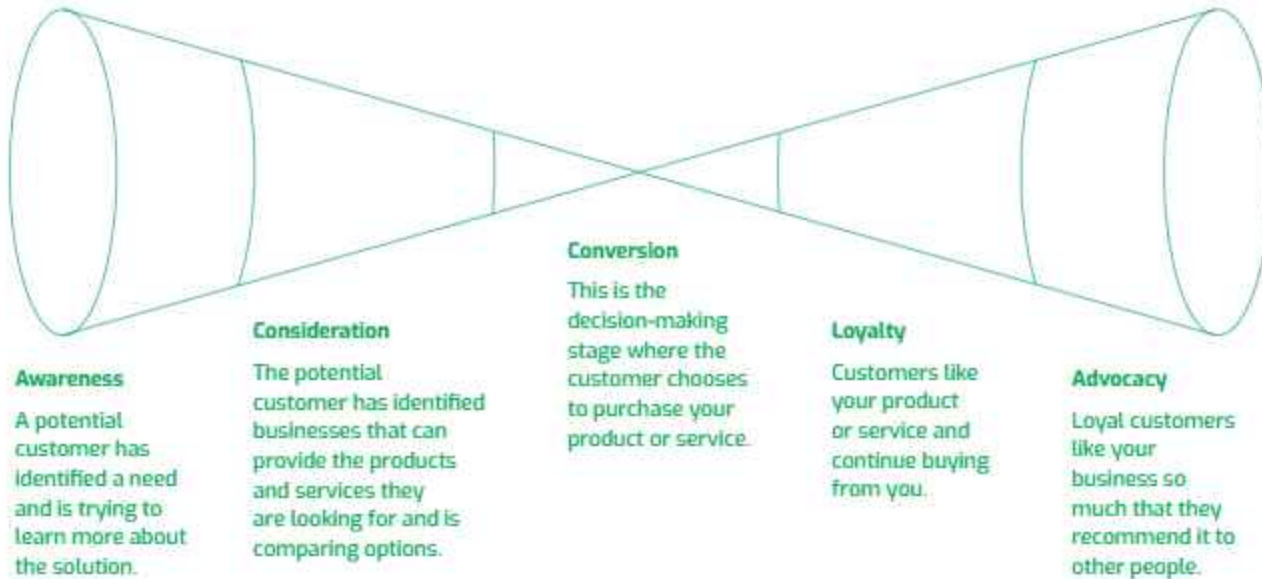
Jerome Brown, Detroit Soul



PHASE 2: DISCOVERY

What does your customer journey look like?

A marketing funnel describes the steps a customer takes from learning about your business to purchasing a product or service. Each point has potential place to reach out and draw them further along.



What outcomes do you expect to achieve?

Work with your designer to set goals for the project so you're on the same page. These goals, also known as Key Performance Indicators (KPI) will be unique to your project. Make sure to consider what you need now as well as what you might need in the future as your business continues to grow. No matter what your goals are, make sure they are clear, measurable, and you have a plan to evaluate them.

Sample Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for Your Marketing Funnel

What do you want your customer(s) to do? Where are they on this journey?

Customer Journey	Customer Action (KPI)	Channels commonly utilized
Awareness	Learn about your business.	Social, Search Engines, Word of Mouth, Partner Organizations
Interest	Know about and be interested in your business and mission.	Website, Newsletter, Social
Involvement	Visit your store, website, or attend an event.	Eventbrite, Website, Newsletter, Social
Investment	Make a purchase or appointment.	Fundraising/Outreach Platforms, Website
Advocate	Refer or bring others to your business.	Social Media, Website

Source: Amber Hunt, Magpie Strategy



Find Inspiration

Look at other companies to discover what you like and what you don't. Check out their websites and social media and see what is working for them.

Benchmarking:

What are 3 websites you like? Why?

What are 3-5 examples of social media posts you like? Why?

How do these examples relate to your brand?



PHASE 3: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

In this phase, you will determine which technology tools will be most effective for your business and how and when you will use each. Remember, every single time a current or potential customer connects with your brand, you want them to have a consistent experience. Be sure when they call your business or visit your website, they get the same service they would receive if they walked through your door. Some of the most common and useful channels for small businesses are:



Website

A well-designed website lends credibility to your business and can help you build trust with your customers. Some basic standards of design for websites are including sufficient white space, breaking up large sections of text with titles or headlines, and using elegant and stylish images and other content. Even the most basic websites should include some combination of the following information:

Home Page: This is where people land when they first come to your site, which is why it's sometimes referred to as a landing page. This could be the only page on your website a customer sees, so make sure it's engaging and encourages them to explore further.

About Page: This is an opportunity to tell the story of your business and help people engage emotionally with your brand. Consider including your mission, vision, and values here.

Team: This is where you can showcase all the people who are involved in your business. Sharing personal information about yourself and your employees can help customers connect with your brand.

Products and Services: Include clear and concise descriptions of your offerings, and how clients or customers can access them. This may be an e-commerce component, an appointment scheduler, or a contact form where they can request more information.

Case Studies: Consider featuring past projects, awards, or articles that showcase your success.

Contact: Provide a way for clients or customers to get in touch with you.

Thought Leadership: To be seen as a source of information or expertise in your industry area, consider including a blog or other educational content.

It's important to know what specific objectives you're trying to achieve with your website. Will it primarily be used to provide information about your business and direct people to your location? Or will it be set up for e-commerce and allow customers to buy products, sign up for classes, and book appointments? Talk to your designer to make sure your website supports your goals.



Point of Sale Integration

Does your in-store point of sale software allow you to also handle online sales? Can it keep track of inventory across both? If not, will you expect it to do so in the future? Some platforms and features will impact your ability to do this, so you'll want to think this through with your designer before making decisions. A POS system can help you decide what items to buy more of, what to not repurchase and put on clearance, which days are busier, and what staff members sell more.

Your sales transaction history can tell you:

- What your sales been in the past hour, day, month, and year
- If your first-time visitors are purchasing
- Which items are and aren't selling
- What items are selling together
- How many items are purchased on an average day
- The average amount of each transaction



Email

Targeted email messages, newsletters, and other forms of direct digital messages are an extremely effective way of staying connected and communicating with clients, so you want to capture and use email addresses whenever possible. However, you have to balance the opportunity with the threat of saturation and customer privacy. Be sure to follow all applicable rules and regulations.



Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, and other social media channels can be excellent, and cost-effective tools for small businesses, but can also be very time consuming, overwhelming, and ineffective if not managed well. Research which channels your customers are most likely to be on and focus on those. Establish a consistent schedule for sharing and engaging with your audience.

Steps for Social Media Success

1. Decide which channels make sense for your business and your customers.
2. Be consistent with your brand, your messaging, and your participation.
3. Use social media to build relationships and engage new customers.
4. Consider hiring someone to manage your social media channels.

Social media explained with Bacon



I like bacon



I'm eating bacon



Here is a vintage photo of my bacon



I have skills including eating bacon



Watch me eat bacon



Here's a recipe with bacon



This is where I eat bacon



Look at what I did with bacon!



Professional Platforms (Google Business, Yelp, etc.)

Yelp, Google Business, and Foursquare are search and discover channels for consumers looking for local stores, restaurants, services, and amenities. A page often exists for your business, even if you haven't created one.

To effectively manage your brand and your customers' experiences, be sure to:

- Claim your page and domains
- Respond to questions and comments
- Ensure accurate business and location information
- Add a photo

Telephone



Many small business owners in today's digital world use their personal phones or mobile devices to conduct business. They're often the most available and basic technology for connecting to customers. However, it's important to remember to always treat your business like a business and ensure each call or message to those devices is considered a current or potential client and handled professionally every single time.

Consider the following:

How are calls answered? Is it an official office or store line?

Are customers directed to voicemail? Is your voicemail greeting professional? Does it provide critical information for your customers about hours or location?

Is the person who answers trained to deliver great service, provide accurate information, or close the sale?



PHASE 4: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

This phase will depend on the specifics of your project, but in general this is where your designer will start generating the parts and pieces that will make up the final deliverable. For website projects, this phase is broken into two essential areas: creating wireframes or mock ups and applying styling and branding. Wireframes or mock ups refer to the structure of a website: how many pages it will have and which functions will be included where. The styling is more about visual and written content.



Wireframe images courtesy of Rightpoint.

Functionality

How will customers interact with your website? Is it strictly informational? Or can they purchase goods and services, make appointments, sign up for classes, or upload records and documents? Adding a function like e-commerce allows you to offer products to consumers all over the globe, but it may also require custom coding and added time to understand and manage the logistics. Be realistic and make sure you understand how adding function now may impact your workflow later.

Content Creation

Content refers to text, pictures, videos, quotes, stories, blogs, contact information, maps, and other information included on your website. In today's fast-paced digital marketing world, we often hear "content is king." Stories and images must quickly capture the attention of your target audience and inspire them to engage with and share it. What content do you already have? What will you create? If you can't create it, who will do it, and how much will it cost? Your customers will share content that is meaningful to them, which makes your digital presence stronger and exposes your business to more potential customers.

Usability

This refers to the customer experience. Are the steps you want them to take clear and easily understood? Can they find what they need easily? Consider how your information and calls to action appear on a desktop screen versus a mobile device.



Behind the scenes for All Things Detroit. Photo courtesy of Reel Clever Films.



Photo by Jeshoots.com on Unsplash.

Photography and Videography

Pictures and video make online content more interesting and help engage customers. You may want to include pictures of your team in action or a product demonstration video on your website. The quality of the content should reflect your brand image. Consider whether you'll use stock photography or budget for hiring a professional to take pictures or shoot videos to capture the visual stories you want to tell.

"Your brand is your face to the world. It needs to represent your values and what you want your customers to see."

Luis-Antonio Uribe, *Design Think Tank*

"People ignore design that ignores people."

Frank Chimero, author of *The Shape of Design*

Written Content

Even the most basic websites will require a bit of thoughtful writing. Consider, for example, how you will describe your business products or services, share contact information, direct people to make a purchase, or tell the story of your business to attract and retain customers. Your "About" page is a great opportunity to tell your unique and compelling story and make an emotional connection with your customers.

Pro Tip

Clear, top-level navigation on your website is key to providing a good online experience for your customers and allows them to easily find additional information, make a purchase, or contact you.

Increase customer engagement by simplifying the content on your homepage into a few key points. Allow them to discover more about your business as they click into the deeper web pages. This way your customers won't feel overwhelmed and bombarded with all the information at once.



PizzaPlex design by CCS Advertising Students.

Design Guide: Neighborhood Business

"Working with a group of dedicated and dynamic CCS students afforded our social enterprise the opportunity to explore multi-disciplinary and multi-media ways that design could improve our customers' experiences and grow our business."

Allessandra R. Carreon, PizzaPlex Owner

AMF Nano: Website Development/Design

Challenge: As an "Internet of Things" startup, AMF-Nano needed a website to showcase their unique product and motivate investors.

Solution: We designed and developed a responsive website that put AMF-Nano on the same level as other key "Internet of Things" players.

Impact: The new site exceeded expectation, improved user experience, and impressed investors.



Web design for Ann Arbor-based smart tech supplier AMF-nano, by No Pulp Digital.

Digital Design



PHASE 5: LAUNCH AND MARKETING

Like everything else, the successful launch of a new website or digital advertising campaign requires careful planning and execution. The planning timeline can vary widely and depends on multiple variables and adjustments while you review and approve content. In general, plan on at least 6-8 weeks of development and planning before you're ready to launch.

When it comes to execution, you may decide to use any of the following marketing tools to get the word out:

- Social Media
- Calls to Action
- Google AdWords

Social Media

If you create the right content and reach the right audience, you can actively grow your following organically. Or, you can pay to boost your content and reach even more people.

Adding relevant and popular hashtags related to your content can also be helpful when trying to reach as many people as you can. Try SproutSocial's Character Counter to make sure your content is optimized: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-character-counter/#>

You can use personas and demographics to target audiences when running ads or promotions on social media. When you can narrow down the group of people you're trying to reach, social media paid promotions can be extremely successful in getting your name out there.

"Successful branding is not only about standing out, it's also about fitting in the heart of your customers."

Angela Ficorelli, Subtle Design Co.



Call to Action (CTA)

CTAs are written directives urging customers to complete the action you want them to make. A CTA can be in an email, a social post, or on a website. A successful CTA is clear and concise, and easily picked out of a content piece.

A few dos and donts for CTAs

<p>✔ Do make your CTA noticeable. If it's in an email, it's a button with few words like "Read More" or "Shop Now."</p>	<p>✖ Don't Over Promise Be honest about what your readers are interacting with. If you're selling a product, don't make the buyer think they are getting more than what they're actually purchasing.</p>
<p>✔ Do make your CTA actionable. How is your reader going to know they have an action to complete if you don't tell them to do it?</p>	<p>✖ Don't make your CTA longer than it has to be. Especially if it's a button in an email or on your site, a CTA button shouldn't include more than 3 or 4 words.</p>

Google Ads

Google Ads allow businesses to pay to display brief advertisements, service offerings, product listings, or videos in the results of search engines like Google and on other websites, mobile apps, and videos. It can be a great tool to get your website displayed in Google search results, especially if you rank low on the results page organically.



"Set goals, track your progress with reporting on social media platforms or an outside service like SproutSocial, and don't give up if one thing doesn't yield the results you're looking for —be open to adjusting your strategy."

Suzie Djordjevic, Creative Director, studio519.co



Analytics dashboard for a select client, photos courtesy of Milo Detroit.



PHASE 6: MANAGEMENT

Once your website or other digital campaigns have been launched, you will need to be diligent about monitoring and managing them. Keeping information current, for example, is critical to maintaining customer trust. But effective management goes way beyond consistent posting and engagement.

KPIs

Key performance indicators, also known as KPIs, are crucial in measuring the success of your efforts. The first step to any marketing plan is to identify your goals and how you can measure your achievements. Social media KPIs may include fans/audience growth, reach, impressions and engagement.

A person skilled in the science of measuring and analyzing digital marketing, for example, will evaluate your KPIs and analytics to help you assess whether you're achieving your goals. A digital strategist can help you determine what data you should be looking at, where you can find it, and what you can do with it.

Consider the objectives you outlined during the Discovery Phase for customer awareness, consideration, and conversion. In order to know whether your customers are responding the way you'd planned, you need to periodically assess the effectiveness of your strategy and adjust accordingly if they're not.

Analyze Your Analytics

The majority of digital tools you use including your website, social media channels, and POS system provide data that you can use to help you make decisions about your business and measure how effective your strategy is. This is where you can actually match the results of your work with your goals. If your goal was to increase traffic to your website, looking at the number of visitors over time will show you if you are moving in the right direction. How many viewers or the level of engagement on a social media post can help you see what type of content is the most effective. Pull reports from each of your digital media tools weekly, monthly, or quarterly and compare them to see customer trends.

RESOURCES

Amy Porterfield

Host of top-rated 'Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast', Amy Porterfield is a marketing professional who teaches business owners, educators, and entrepreneurs the profitable action steps for building a strong online presence and community.
www.amyporterfield.com

Basecamp

A project management tool that puts everything you need to manage projects, work with clients, and communicate company-wide.
basecamp.com

Canva

A free online graphic design tool that can be used to create social media posts, presentations, videos, and more.
www.canva.com

Constant Contact

An email marketing platform where you can create online marketing campaigns to meet your business goals.
www.constantcontact.com/index.jsp

Do-It-Yourself Digital Resource Guide for Detroit Small Businesses

A curated list of easy-to-follow resources that could help you go from technovice to tech-savvy NOW.
neweconomyinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/DIY-Digital-Guide-for-Small-Businesses-Released-June-2022.pdf

GoDaddy

An e-commerce platform that helps businesses register domains, create and run websites, and manage their digital business.
www.godaddy.com

Google Analytics

A free and enterprise analytics tools to measure website, app, digital, and offline data to gain customer insights.
www.google.com/analytics

Google Digital Garage

Online courses and webinars on topics designed to help expand your career, business and horizons and to upgrade your skills for a new digital world.
learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage

Google for Small Business

Helps small business owners find the right Google products and services to help them succeed. Businesses provide simple information—their name, website URL, goals, and type of business—and Google for Small Business will provide a prioritized list of Google products to help that business stand out online, reach more customers, and work more efficiently.
smallbusiness.withgoogle.com

Google Marketing Platform

A unified advertising and analytics platform for smarter marketing and better results. Tools include Google Analytics, Data Studio, and Search Ads 360.
marketingplatform.google.com

Google Workspace (formerly G Suite)

Provides custom email for your business and include collaboration tools like Gmail, Calendar, Meet, Chat, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, Sites, and more.
workspace.google.com

LinkedIn Learning with Lynda

Online training courses taught by industry experts in software, creative, and business skills.
www.linkedin.com/learning

MailChimp

An online platform that provides marketing automation for businesses. Users can send well-designed emails, connect their e-commerce store, advertise, and build their brand.

mailchimp.com

MOZ

A tool that make SEO, inbound marketing, link building, and content marketing easy.

moz.com/explorer

SEMRush

A powerful and versatile competitive intelligence suite for online marketing, from SEO and PPC to social media and video advertising research.

www.semrush.com

Shopify

An e-commerce platform that allows entrepreneurs to start, run, and grow their business.

www.shopify.com

Shutterstock

Royalty free images for purchase including photos, vectors, and illustrations.

www.shutterstock.com

**Small Business Association of Michigan—
Digital Trends**

Digital marketing trends to help small and medium businesses in Michigan.

www.sbam.org/digital-marketing-trends-for-2022

Social Media Examiner

An online social media marketing resource that helps businesses discover how to best use social media to connect with customers, drive traffic, generate awareness, and increase sales.

www.socialmediaexaminer.com

Sprout Social

A social media management tool created to help businesses grow their social media presence.

sproutsocial.com

SquareSpace

A website hosting platform that allows businesses easily create a website, sell products, and market their business using templates.

www.squarespace.com

Unsplash

A website dedicated to sharing copyright-free stock photography.

unsplash.com

Vitamin T Check Salary

Info available on the most recent salary data for designers.

vitamintalent.com/check-salary

Wix

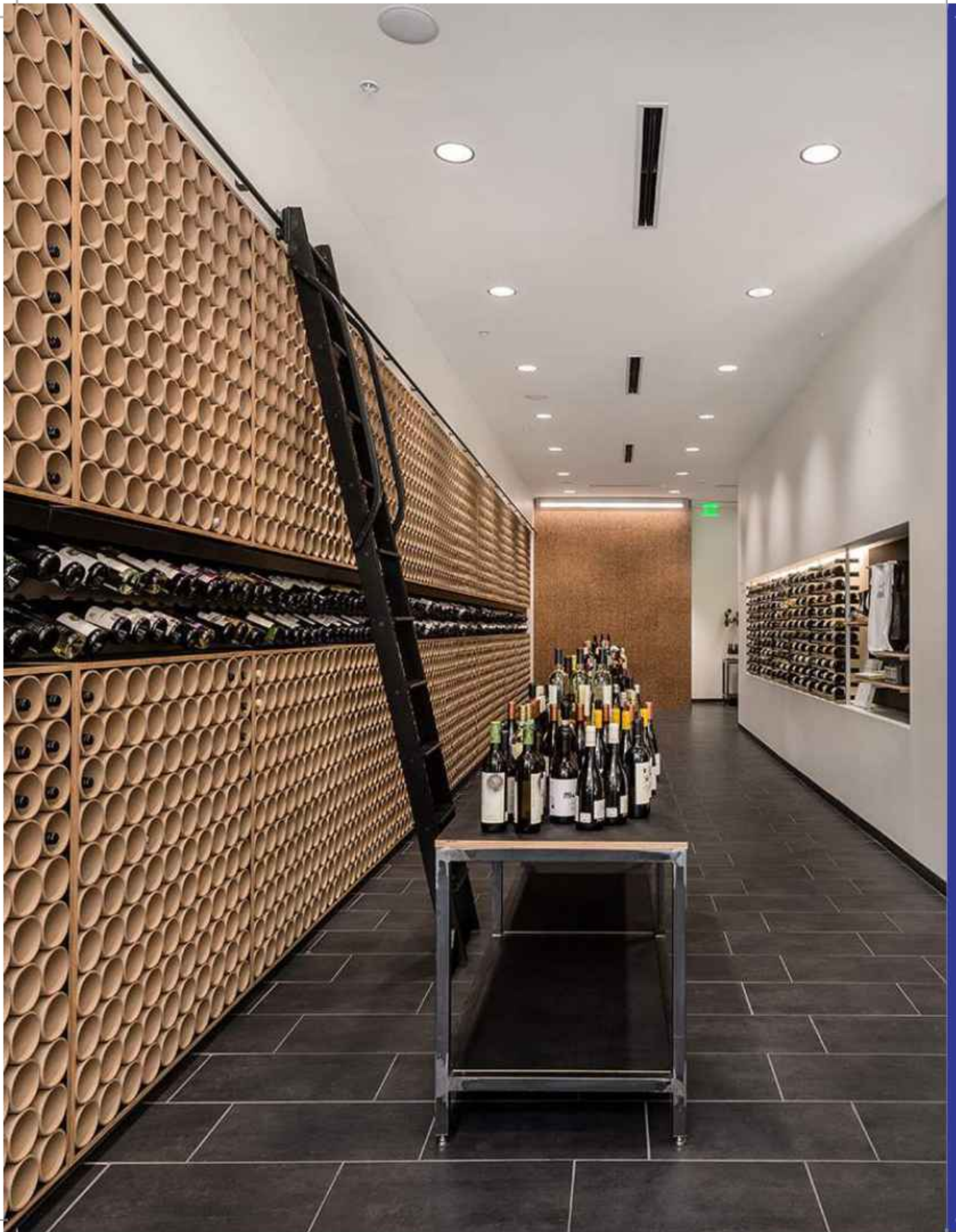
A website hosting platform that allows businesses to quickly and easily create websites for their businesses with templates.

www.wix.com

WordPress

A website/blog hosting platform that lets businesses create their own website for free.

wordpress.com



Section 04

Space Design

BUILDING YOUR BRAND STORY INTO BRICK AND MORTAR

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Design Process

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Customer Experience

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When you're done with this chapter you will:

1. Understand how the space your business occupies is an extension of your brand.
2. Understand the design processes of architects and interior designers.
3. Develop a successful customer experience, both inside and outside your business.

While this section gives an excellent overview of the architecture and interior design process, for more details, tips, and worksheets check out Design Core's Design Guide: Real Estate Development.

The objective of this chapter is to help you understand how the physical space your business occupies is an extension of your brand, and a crucial tool in attracting and retaining customers. As discussed in the introduction, this includes the context your business exists within. Customer experience begins long before they step foot into your store, so be prepared to think about what your customers see and feel as they approach and once they step through the door.

Designing Your Space

Space design, in this context, can cover a very broad range of projects. Your business may be in a stand-alone storefront, or you may lease a portion of a much larger and professionally managed retail building. The unique opportunities, challenges, and goals for your business will determine how you establish the scope of your project, but a qualified design professional can be an invaluable guide to navigating the process.

This chapter will break down space design into two categories: Architectural Design and Interior Design. Many architecture firms offer interior design services, and some design firms will have a licensed architect on staff to address structure or building systems. The following page contains a general description of the similarities and differences to help you decide what services your project might require.



Interior view of wine display and cold storage at House of Pure Vin, designed by and photo courtesy of MIDTW.

BOTH Architects and Interior Designers:

- ① Are skilled in spatial planning and design, and know what questions to ask you to guide the process.
- ② Are well versed in the building codes and regulations that apply to their work.
- ③ Can produce floorplans, and visualizations, and assist you in selecting materials, finishes, and hardware.
- ④ Undergo rigorous education, training, and examination, and pursue ongoing educational programs to maintain their expertise. Obtaining a license is a requirement for architects only. There is no license in Michigan for interior designers. Although some interior designers take a national certification test (NCIDQ), the lack of certification does not mean they cannot practice interior design.



Photo by Daniele McCullough on Unsplash.

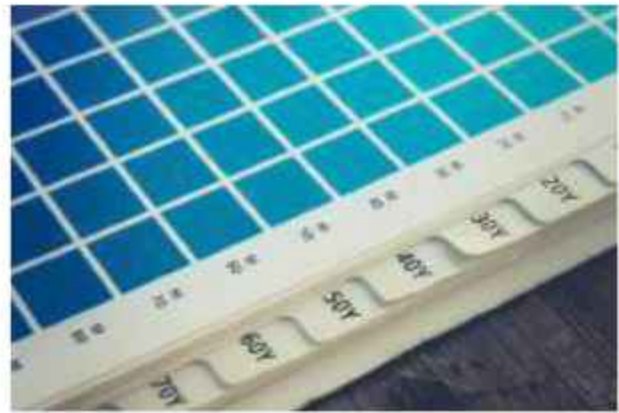


Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash.

Architects

Are required to stamp permit documents. Not all "architects" are licensed. Those who aren't are typically referred to as Architectural Designers and would need to work with a licensed architect for stamped drawings just as an interior designer would.

Are needed whenever the project might impact the building's structure or 'envelope' (outside walls, roof, and foundation)—essentially, the 'skin and bones' of your building.

Can address building systems like the electrical and plumbing, permanent elements like doors and windows, and exterior elements like landscaping, parking, and utilities.

Can perform energy calculations to optimize things like insulation and natural lighting.

Interior Designers

Usually perform most of the interior architecture, including space planning, furniture layouts, millwork design, lighting design, interior ADA compliance, etc. in addition to the selection of materials and furniture.

Can assist in furniture selection and design custom elements like cabinetry and other millwork.

Have deep knowledge of current trends and innovations in materiality, and new products in areas like lighting, hardware, and fixtures.

May be more appropriate if you only need to redesign the interior of your space, and aren't touching any permanent building elements.

360° WALKTHROUGH

Objective

First, visit other brick-and-mortar locations, then look at your own. When completing this observation exercise, try to visit the location during a variety of times of day and days of the week.

Use all Senses: What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What can you touch? What can you taste?

Observe the space from a variety of perspectives:

Driving in a car, standing across the street, standing outside the front door/window, standing at the back of the space and front of the space. Walk through looking only at the ground, then at eye level, then above at upper displays.

What do you see? Is it compelling at all eye levels? Does it need to be?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

Is the space inviting?

Does it stand out from its neighbors?

Does it represent its services?

How long does it take you to walk the entire space?

Does it inspire you to want to come back to experience it again and learn more?

Architectural Design Process

You may have a life-changing product or service to offer, in a store that perfectly represents your brand. But if your building is in disrepair, poorly lit, or lacks appropriate signage, you may be losing out on the potential for organic business from the people who live, work, or visit your neighborhood. Improving your building may seem daunting, but the benefit to your bottom line can make all the difference in the world.

This section will break down the process of working with a licensed architect to breathe new life into your building and its surroundings. While the specifics may vary based on your project scope, architects and the many other players in a construction project generally describe the process in six phases:



Paul's Pizza exterior design as part of the SOBA Façade Improvement Program and exercise courtesy of TechTown Detroit. Architecture by Steven C. Flum Inc. and sign design and creation by Richard Gage Design Studio. Images courtesy of Myrna Segura with SOBA.

"Commercial real estate brokers who represent tenant interests will sometimes draft an RFP and assist in selecting and managing architects and other design and construction professionals working on your project. Their expertise may also cover costing and risk assessment, so be sure to inquire about these services if you're working with an agent to identify and secure your space."

Peter A. Bacevice, PhD—Director of Research, HLW International



PHASE 1: PRE-DESIGN / CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

What do we already know, have, and want?

Much like the Discovery phase in brand and digital design processes, this step is really about you and your design professional getting a solid understanding of what you have to work with.



Goal

Research existing assets and information, and determine project criteria, constraints, and broad goals.



Preliminary Project Budget and Timeline

Start the project with a general idea of the resources you plan to commit to the project, and any timelines or milestones that may need to be considered.



Business Plan and Brand Strategy

Bring your design team any existing materials you've developed that describe the character of your business, how you operate, long- and short-term goals for your business, etc. This could include your completed Defining Your Brand worksheets from Section 5.



Existing Conditions Survey

Gather any pictures, floor plans, or other documentation describing the project site, inside and out. A professional architect can help you assemble information on things like electrical service and other existing building systems, municipal utilities like water and sewer connections, the condition of the structure and building envelope, etc. If available to you and in your budget, a laser scan can also be used to provide both a 2D and a 3D layout of the structure as is.



Review of Applicable Codes, Regulations, and Neighborhood Context

This might include building codes, zoning regulations, neighborhood ordinances, and historic district regulations.



Precedent Study

Gather pictures of other businesses you like and don't like and be prepared to describe why you feel that way about each one.

Preliminary Blocking, Circulation, and Space Planning

Start to think about what the major areas within the space will be, and how they relate/connect to one another. If you will need fitting rooms or seating, for example, consider whether those need to be near the front or in the back, by the register or away from the bathrooms, etc.

Preliminary Palette, or "Look and Feel" References

Work with your designer to develop ideas for colors, materials, and finish qualities that embody both your brand and goals for the user experience.

Things to Consider About Your Project Site

Architectural elements of your building and surrounding community go further than just your property line. You should also think about:

- Exterior lighting
- Signage
- Parking
- Landscaping
- Sidewalks & Outdoor Seating
- Security and Public/Private Access



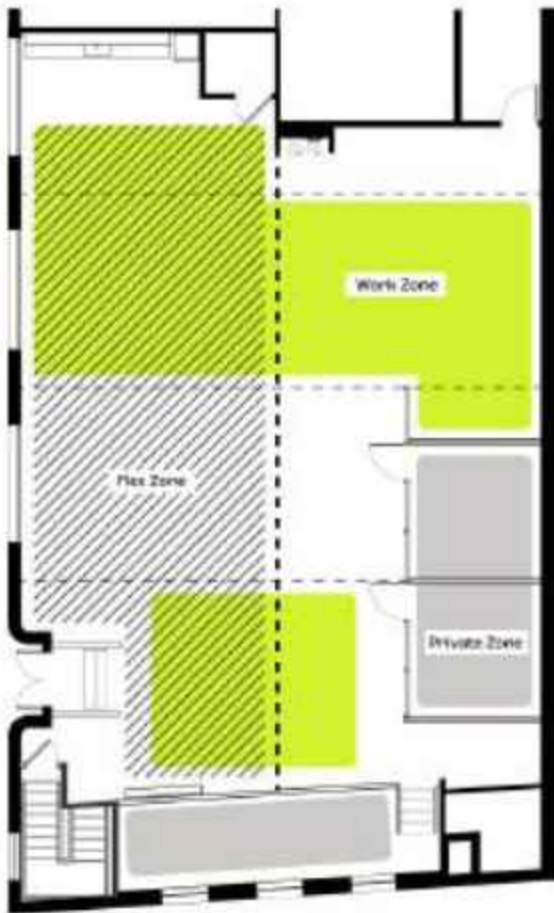
This annotated floor plan clearly marks different retail zones, overlaying a suggested customer traffic pattern for the flow of shoppers throughout the whole space. Illustrations like this are helpful to plan focal points and customer interaction patterns. Design and illustration courtesy of JGA.



PHASE 2: SCHEMATIC DESIGN

What is your vision for the project?

This is where the real back-and-forth design work starts to happen. Your design team will gather up all the information you shared with them, digest it, and start making recommendations. Don't be worried if you don't like the first design they suggest—this part of the process relies on honest and open feedback to hone in on a design that is functional, practical, and the best representation of your brand.



J&J Design Drawings Plan Diagram courtesy of Synecdoche.

Goal

Explore various design concepts based on the information and goals above, iterate and discuss design concepts, and narrow them down to one preferred design.

Begin to Design

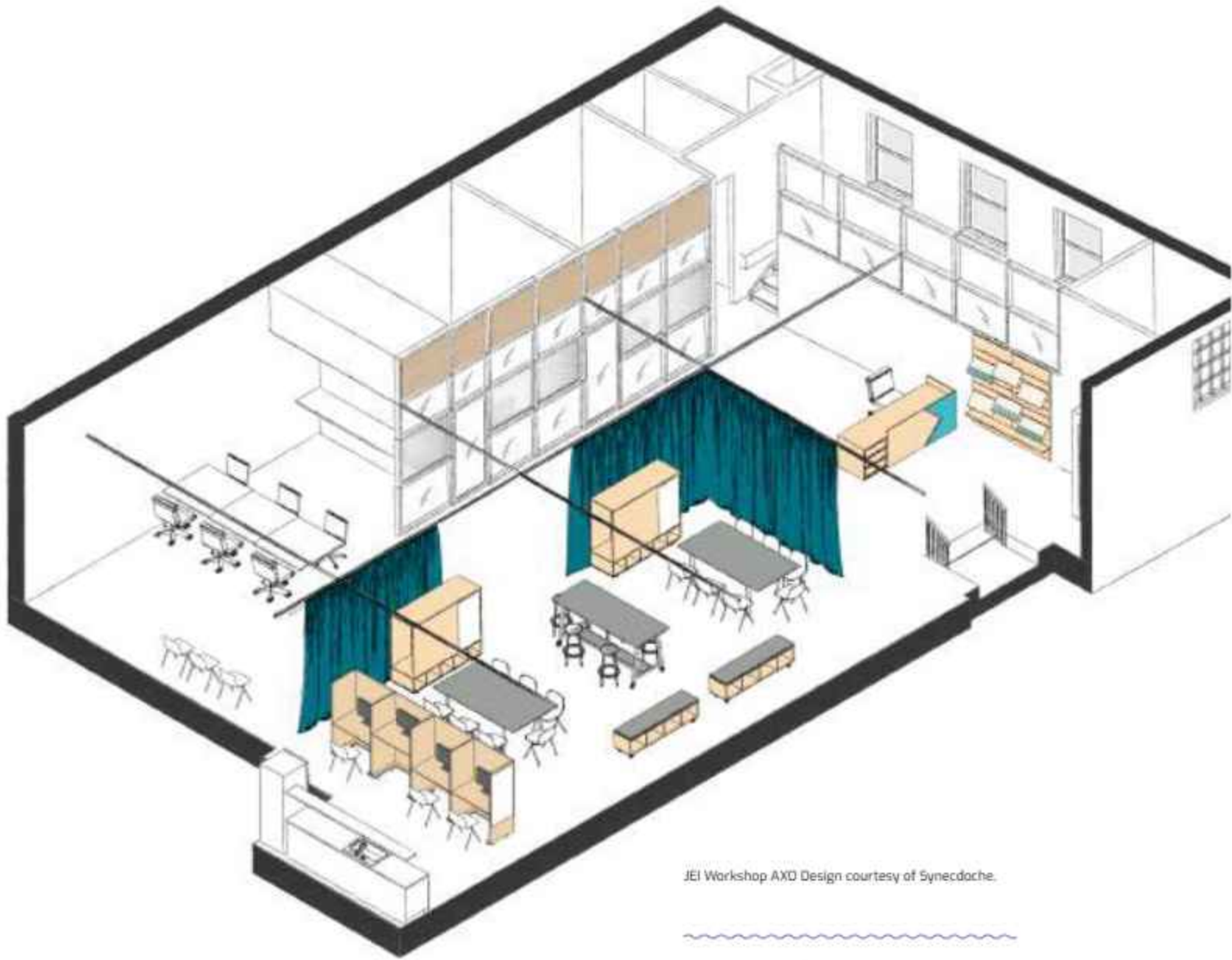
Based on the information gathered in the first phase, designers begin to develop rough sketches, layouts, and physical or digital models to describe different approaches to the design.

Iterate

Designers will present one or more concepts and encourage discussion of what you like and don't like, and the strengths and weaknesses of each concept. This process will repeat until a single, cohesive design concept emerges.

Commit

At the end of this phase, after lots of back-and-forth, you'll arrive at a design concept and be asked to commit to that plan so the design team can develop it further. Some changes beyond this point are inevitable, but making big changes after this point can cause delays and added expenses.



JEI Workshop AXD Design courtesy of Synecdoche.

The Power of Paint (from Patrick Thompson Design)

A fresh coat of carefully selected paint can go a long way and is an affordable way to transform both the interior and exterior of your space..



Photo courtesy of END Studio.

"When designing a space, it is imperative that there are moments of co-creation, where all the necessary parties are collaborating, discussing ideas, and building off of each other to come up with the best possible solution."

Rachel Nelson, Concetti

All About Blueprints

Floor plans, along with other drawings like sections and elevations, are what most people think of as "blueprints"—the name refers to the process architects once used to copy their hand-drawn designs. Copies showed up blue wherever the original was white, and white where the original black lines were. True blueprints are rarely used today, but the name stuck!

Document

By the end of this phase you're likely to have some or all of the following documents in early draft form:

Site Plans

Drawings that describe the area around your building and the relationship to adjacent properties.

Floor Plans

Top-down view showing where the existing building elements and walls, rooms, and other features go.

Key Elevations and Sections

Views of how the outside faces of the building might look, and views cut through the building to show the height of spaces and relationship to floors, ceilings, and the roof.

Area Analysis

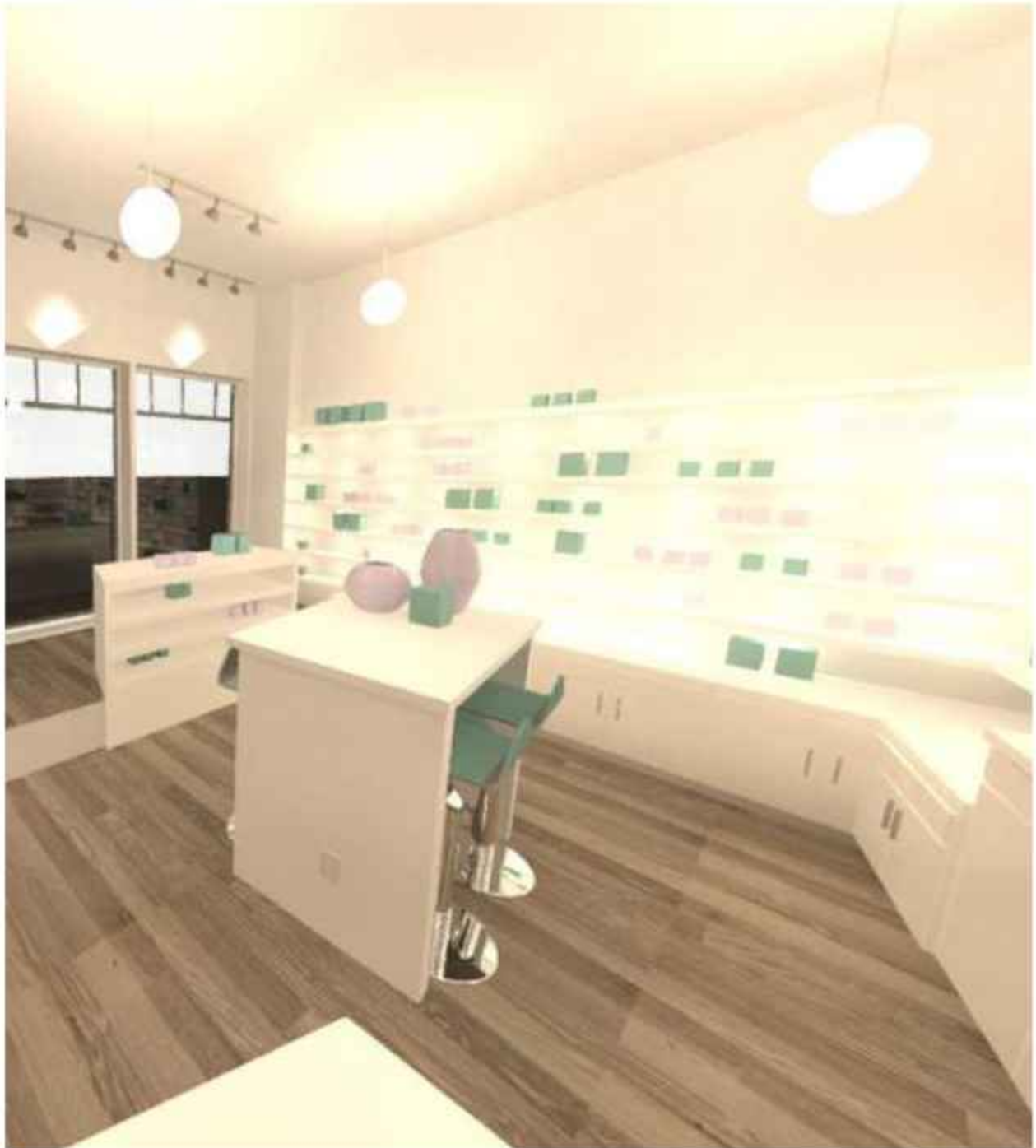
General ideas of the functions and sizes of rooms and other areas of your space.

Visualizations

Renderings, videos, or 3D models that let you see what the design will look like when complete.

Preliminary Cost Estimates and Anticipated Specialty Consultants

Best guesses, based on industry knowledge, of the hard and soft costs you might expect, and what kinds of specialty trades might need to be involved, like a food service consultant for a restaurant, or an acoustical engineer for a performance venue.



Proposed interior rendering of Skin Bar VII on Livernois Avenue, near six mile. Designed by Virtuoso Design + Build. Photo courtesy of Skin Bar VII.



PHASE 3: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

How do we turn our vision into a design?

At this point in the process, you and your design team have decided on a single approach to the project, and it's now up to your architectural or interior design team to dive into the nitty-gritty and figure out all the details.

Goal

Refine and develop the approved design to address major decisions and incorporate building systems.

Refine Design

Just like the name of this phase implies, the design team will take your approved design and continue to develop more and more detailed information about every surface, material, fixture, and system, from the size of the toilet stalls to the style of light fixture over the entryway.

Engage Consultants

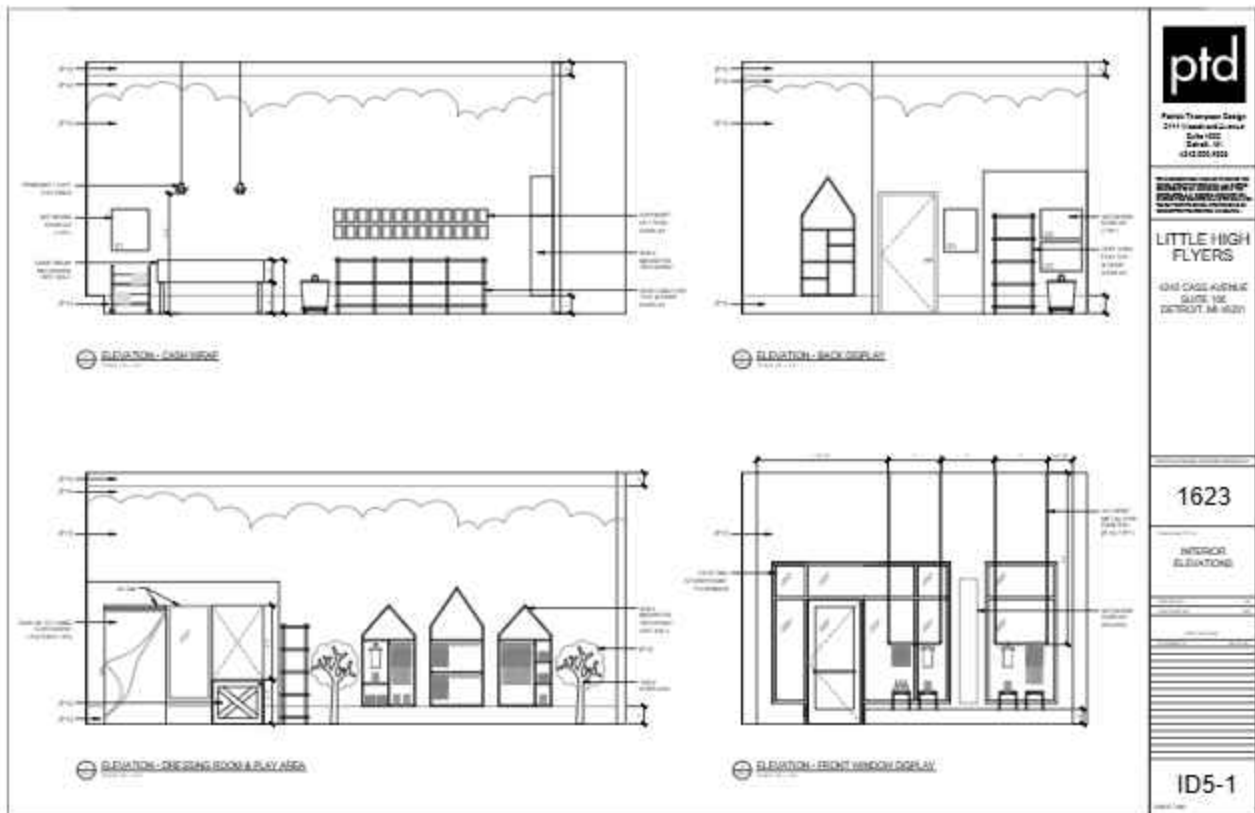
Specialists will be enlisted to help lay out systems like the HVAC, plumbing, electrical (collectively referred to as "MEP", or "Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing"), landscaping and parking, fire protection and security, and other specialty systems unique to your business. In some cases, structural or civil engineering may also be needed.

Selections

You and the design team will begin to select specific materials, colors, and products to be used.



Photos courtesy of END Studio.



Elevations for Little High Flyers on Cass Avenue, in Midtown Detroit. Photo courtesy of Patrick Thompson Design.



"Design impacts people's lives everyday. A well-designed space can change the way we live, work, and play."

Patrick Thompson Design

Document

The design team will continue to refine the set of documents developed in Schematic Design, and might start to create new ones, like:

Outline Specifications

Often referred to as "Specs," these are written descriptions of approved products, materials, and finishes, or descriptions of the performance criteria the products must meet, which the contractor can use to guide their own product selection—for instance, you might specify the rating you'd like for the insulation in your walls, but not a specific brand or type, which lets the contractor shop around for a good product that meets your needs.

Interior Elevations

Drawings showing what the interior walls look like, including things like paint or wallcovering, cabinetry or built-in storage, and the placement of doors, windows, lighting, and electrical, etc.

Reflected Ceiling Plans

Often called "RCPs," these drawings are much like the floor plans and elevations, but show the ceiling, with details about the ceiling type and finish, lighting, vents, and sprinklers ("Reflected" just means that the plans have been mirrored, so that they have the same layout and orientation as a floor plan).

Schedules

The design team will start to assemble lists and tables of common elements throughout your project, such as all of the different types of doors, door hardware, or wall finishes; these lists can be referenced in the plans to avoid having too much text in the drawings.

Details

Some unique or complex elements may get their own close-up detail drawings.

Consultant Sets

All of the specialty consultants and trades will produce their own sets of drawings, which will be compiled by the architect and included in the complete set.

Revised Cost Estimates

As more and more specific decisions are made, the design team can update the cost estimates to give a more accurate picture of the overall project cost.



PHASE 4: CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTATION

How will the design get put together?

At this point in the process, you and the design team have figured out almost all of the decisions that need to be made. Now, they'll take those drawings from the Design Development phase (or "DD Set"), and translate them into a set of drawings and written instructions that will tell the construction team exactly what you want, and show the permitting authorities that it's safe and appropriate!

Goal

Develop detailed instructions for construction and the permitting process.

Construction Drawings

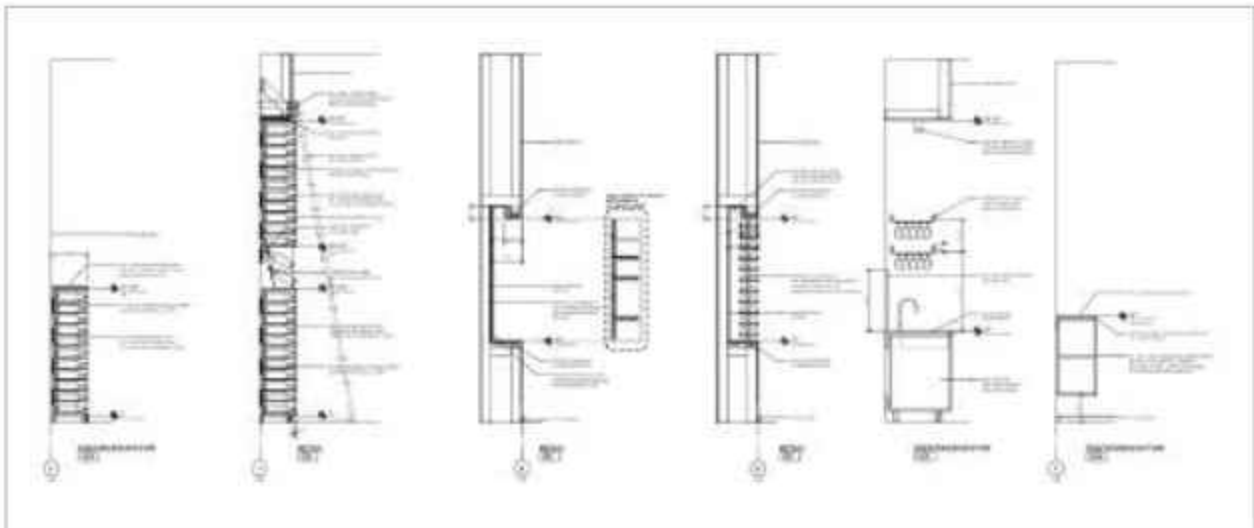
Also known as "CDs" or the "Permit Set," These are the final, highly detailed drawings—including plans, sections, elevations, RCPs, and details—describing every part of the building and site. They serve as the contractor's "assembly instructions" when directing their team and their subcontractors. This set may also be used to get final approval from regulatory agencies like the building department, thus the name "Permit Set."

Specifications

The final specifications provide written details on every finish, material, product, and process to be employed during construction. These written instructions, along with the construction drawings, comprise a legally binding contract between the owner and the contractor—as such, the Construction Drawings and Specifications together form the "Contract Documents."

Permitting

During this phase the project is submitted to the local building department for a plan check, which is the process in which city agencies review the submitted documents for compliance with zoning and codes. The owner will be required to pay a fee to the city when the documents are submitted. The time frame varies depending on your project's size, complexity, and the speed of the local jurisdiction.



Section schematics for House of Pure Vin specify the building and installation requirements needed for the various fixtures and display cases customized to fit the space. Plans courtesy of MIDTW.



PHASE 5: BIDDING AND NEGOTIATION

Who's going to build it, and how much will it cost?

In a typical project, this is the point where the design team will send the instructions they developed out to a number of different construction companies or General Contractors, and ask them to estimate how much they think the construction will cost.

Goal

Using the information assembled in the Contract Documents, gather competitive pricing from potential contractors and subcontractors to establish actual project cost and obtain necessary permits.

Contractor Selection

If you did not get a contractor involved in the design phase, the next step is putting the drawings and specifications out to bid with two or more contractors. The design team will help preselect contractors who are a good fit for your project and assist you in evaluating bids.

Negotiation

Once you select a contractor based on qualifications, capabilities, and/or referrals, they will put the drawings out to bid with multiple subcontractors. Typically, 90% of the project is competitively bid. The contractor will select the best bids from the subcontractors, and put together an overall project bid. The owner can then negotiate the terms of the contract, including the construction fee, and, if desired, a guaranteed maximum price.



PHASE 6: CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION AND PROJECT CLOSEOUT

Are we getting what we designed?

In this final phase of the project, the design is effectively complete, but the construction is probably just getting started. Along the way, it's likely that the General Contractor or their subcontractors might have questions or need clarification, or even find an issue in the design that needs to be addressed by the architect.

Goal

Observe the construction process to ensure that it follows the intent laid out in the design, respond to any questions from the construction team, and coordinate any revisions that may be necessary during the process.

Owner's Agent

At this stage of the project, the design team and the owner have agreed on a final design, and the designer will act as the owner's representative when observing the construction process.

Submittals and Shop Drawings

The design team will be responsible for reviewing documents submitted by subcontractors or specialty trades describing how they plan to complete their piece of the project—for instance, a metal fabricator may submit "Shop Drawings" of a custom awning to show how they plan to assemble it, and the architect will review those drawings to make sure they're consistent with the design.

Change Orders

Since the drawings and specifications form a legal contract, any changes that are requested, either by the contractor or the owner, must be documented and attached to the contract. Any changes you request often cost an additional fee, which is why it's so important to develop a good design from the beginning.

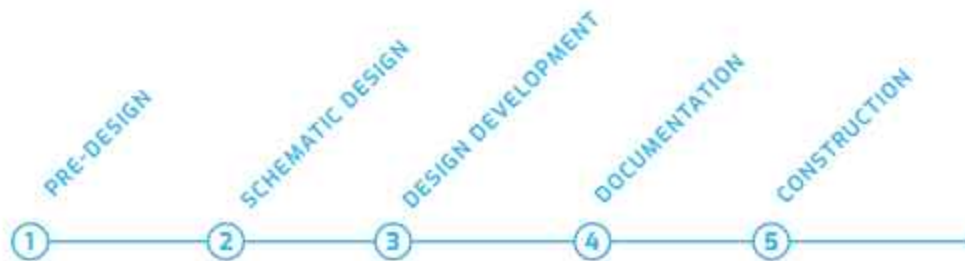
Punch List

As the contractor is nearing the end of construction, the design team will walk through the project with the contractor and compile a list of items they observe that have not yet been completed in accordance with the contract documents. The contractor must see that all of these items are complete before the design team will certify that the contractor's job is finished and signed off on.



Interior Design Process

Working with an interior designer is likely to be very similar to the architectural design phases described previously. There will be a pre-design phase to gather existing documentation, assets, and information about your business; a schematic design phase to iterate on a number of concepts to hone in on the one that you feel suits your business best; a design development phase to make specific decisions on materials and products; a documentation phase to drill down on the nitty-gritty details of how it will all come together; and a construction phase, working with consultants and contractors to ensure the work is executed as intended.





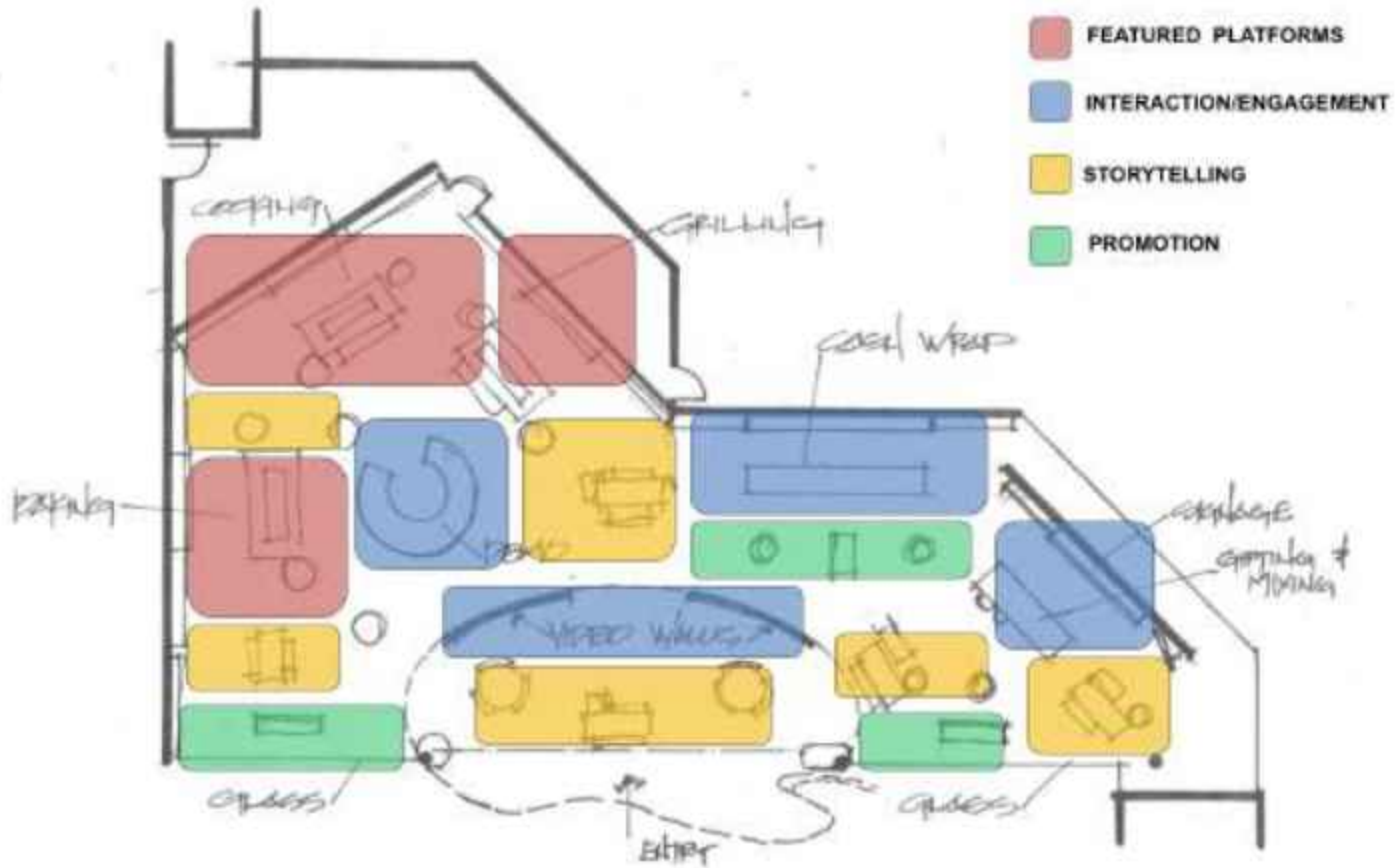
Downtown Detroit's Go! Sy Thai restaurant demonstrates the use of color and texture through furniture and lighting that beckons to customers from behind the all-glass facade. Designed by and photo courtesy of Patrick Thompson Design.

Defining Your Customer Experience

Once the customer has made it into your space, they should already have a sense of what to expect of your brand. But the layout and other interior design elements will really tell your brand story. Spatial design is a complex balance of art and science—if the architectural design process skews toward the “science” side, think about the interiors as the “art” of communicating your brand through the customer experience.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ① What kind of store experience do you want your customers to have?
- ② How will the layout of your space dictate their experience?
- ③ How will your customers move through the space?
- ④ How much time will they spend in the space? Are they in a hurry or are they looking to linger?
- ⑤ Does a purchase decision or service require multiple visits?
- ⑥ Do you need a place for customers to wait or relax? If so, does the space allow them to do that? If not, does it encourage efficient exits?
- ⑦ Is it easy and comfortable to complete a purchase or service?
- ⑧ How are all customer senses being engaged?
- ⑨ Are employees prepared to interact with customers in a friendly, helpful, and efficient manner?
- ⑩ Does the customer need additional service or education to make their purchase? If so, is it provided from the staff or signage?
- ⑪ Does your packaging reflect the experience? (i.e. size and material of shopping bag, menus, carry-out food and beverage containers, etc.)



This retail floor plan for McCormick World of Flavors demonstrates how the retail environment can be broken down into distinct zones for communicating different aspects of the product or service while adding structure and variety to the customer experience. With clear areas of storytelling versus promotion, you can influence how shoppers learn about your product and influence where their eyes travel to first. Floor plan courtesy of JGA.

Merchandising and Display

Once you have your space fully realized, it is time to consider how your product itself is representing your brand. In a retail setting, and even in a restaurant or service-based business, you will undoubtedly be faced with decisions about how to represent what it is your business is offering to your customers. These are not decisions to be made once and never thought of again. Your products and visual displays are most engaging when they are new and exciting, so updating your visual merchandising and window displays regularly will be key to not only attracting customers, but retaining them. Below are some tips to use on a regularly recurring basis to keep your visual merchandising fresh and appealing.

Break the Rules

Don't worry about following trends or rules; a meaningful and original idea can make a huge impact when executed well.

Merchandising Calendar

This schedule acts as a foundation for all visual merchandising activities, including window displays. Start with major holidays and fill in the remainder with local activities that impact sales. Use this tool as a guide for purchasing product, scheduling promotions, and coordinating staff. Take photos of displays once they are complete and compile in a master visual merchandising guide so the team can maintain it throughout the day. Use the sample merchandising calendar on the following page as a starting point to create your own!

Sales per Square Foot

Whether your business is a restaurant or retail store, every amount of space needs to pay its rent. The selected size, quantity, and placement of tables and fixtures warrant a specific number of customers and/or product that can be supported within a given footprint. Flexible fixtures enable re-merchandising to happen quickly to react to customer demand and business trends.

Planogram

Use a map or diagram to place where each product story lives on every surface. A product story is a group of complimentary products that can be purchased individually, but also be viewed as one purchase. Every product story should enhance the path to purchase—the physical path customers visit from initial selection to transaction. Strategic placement of product will enhance sales, while miscalculated displays will slow sales. Track the sales of every item and reposition if necessary to avoid dead inventory.

Consider Seasonal Changes

01. Do you offer different products or services seasonally, or around certain holidays?
02. Do you offer special promotions at certain times of year?
03. How does your brand adapt to changes like these throughout the year?

Sample Merchandising Calendar

January	New Year's Day Martin Luther King Day	July	Independence Day
February	Black History Month Groundhogs Day Superbowl Sunday Chinese New Year Valentines Day President's Day	August	International Youth Day World Humanitarian Day
March	International Women's Day St. Patrick's Day First Day of Spring	September	Labor Day Rosh Hashanah International Literacy Day First Day of Fall
April	April's Fools Day Earth Day Good Friday Easter Sunday	October	Indigenous Peoples' Day Halloween
May	Cinco de Mayo Mother's Day Memorial Day	November	Veterans Day Thanksgiving Black Friday Small Business Saturday Cyber Monday
June	Pride Month Flag Day Juneteenth Father's Day Summer Solstice	December	Hanukkah Christmas Eve Christmas Day New Years Eve



The Peacock Room inside the Fisher Building. Photo courtesy of TechTown Detroit.

The Five Most Important Elements of Visual Merchandising

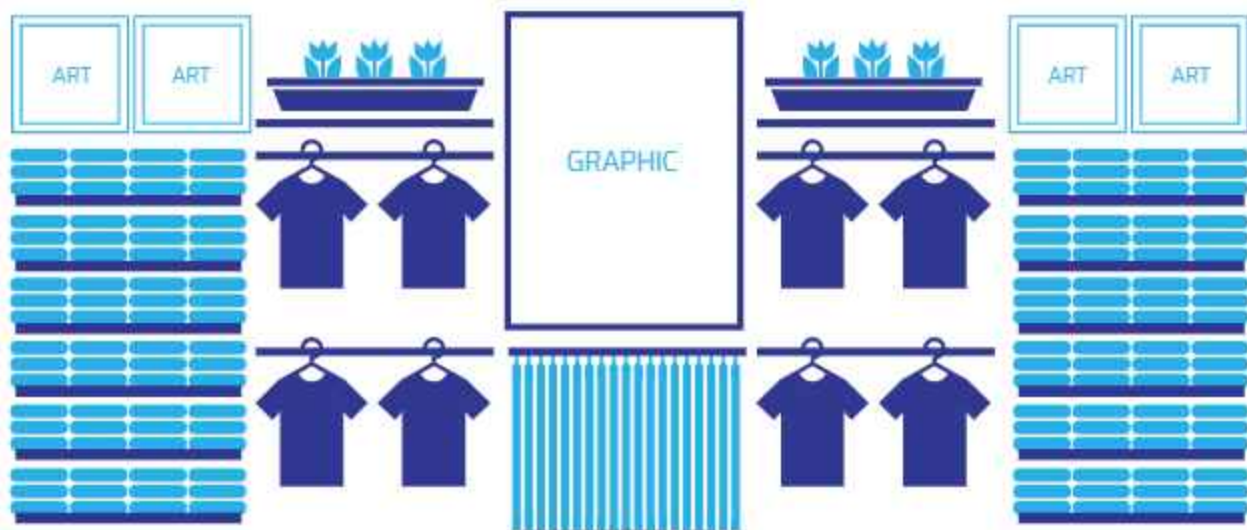
Each element of visual merchandising ([lighting](#), [fixtures](#), [signage](#), [product](#)) should address these.

- ① Color is King
- ② Create a Focal Point
- ③ Tell a Story
- ④ Expose Customers to the Maximum Amount of Merchandise
- ⑤ Use Empty Space Wisely



Retail feature wall display at Bird & Bee women's boutique in Capitol Park. Designed by Virtuoso Design + Build. Photo courtesy of Daily Detroit.

Space Design



An example of a 20-foot wall planogram presenting women's t-shirts and pants with props, tulips with planters. Image courtesy of TechTown Detroit.



Color blocking at Bleu Bowtique. Photo courtesy of TechTown Detroit.



Jeans display at Red Bag Boutique. Photo courtesy of TechTown Detroit.



Retail display at Mama Coo's Boutique in Corktown, Detroit. Photo courtesy of Mama Coo's Boutique and Julieanne Lindsey.

Five Senses

Remember, you want to create a positive experience that is designed around the interests of customers visiting your store. Be sure that customers can engage with your store through sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, in a way that is enjoyable and complimentary to your store.



Sight

Light, symmetry, balance, colors, contrast, and focus. What do customers see when they walk in the door? Is your store layout open, well-lit, and comfortable for all customers to navigate?



Sound

Music has been shown to attract and keep (or repel) customers. If you play music in your store, it should reflect your space and the experience that you want customers to have. Therefore, it makes sense to play relaxing music in a spa, upbeat music in a bar, and so on.



Touch

Accessibility to touch and feel is important; it allows customers to become more engaged and likely to buy things. Some products might be better displayed locked or behind glass, while some need to be touched for a full experience, like trying on clothes in a dressing room.



Smell

Another aspect that can attract or repel, smell is very linked to emotion and memory and also has been proven to enhance the shopping experience. Does your business have a signature smell? If you sell strongly scented products, is there a way to make the combined smells less overwhelming? If you're a restaurant, is the space well ventilated?



Taste

Giving people the ability to taste and sample before they buy is a great way to give your customers a preview of your product, which helps to convince them why they should buy.

**To learn more about architecture and interior design check out
Design Core's Design Guide for Real Estate Development.**

RESOURCES

City of Detroit Commercial Building Permit/Plan Submittal Checklist

This checklist contains the standard information required for commercial construction projects submittals in the City of Detroit.

www.detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/docs/Permits/BSEED/Construction/Comm%20Bldg%20Permit%20Plan%20Checklist_2013-06.pdf

City of Detroit Zoning Division

The City of Detroit's Zoning Division reviews all incoming projects to ensure compliance with the City of Detroit Zoning Ordinance. It is the first step of the building permitting process, and staff can provide the most accurate information regarding zoning questions related to your project or activity.

www.detroitmi.gov/How-Do-I/Apply-for-Permits/Zoning-Permit-Information

Design Core

Collaborative membership network of interdisciplinary designers and agencies founded to fulfill the creative needs of Michigan's business community.

designcore.org

DTE Energy Outdoor Protective Lighting Program:

A flat-rate program through DTE Energy to install energy efficient lighting options, ensuring that the area near a business is well-lit, inviting, and safe.

<https://www.newlook.dteenergy.com/wps/wcm/connect/dte-web/home/service-request/business/electric/electric-services/outdoor-protective-lighting>

Hatch Detroit

A vehicle to champion and support independent retail businesses through funding, education, exposure, and mentoring.

hatchdetroit.com

Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Plan Review

Useful resources for Michigan-based businesses in the Food Establishment Industry. The worksheets and applications included are intended for actual use in completing a plan review.

michigan.gov/mdard/food-dairy/regulators/planreview

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA)

LARA is responsible for the state's regulatory environment, and oversees the licensing and regulation of more than 1.2 million individuals and entities on an annual basis.

www.michigan.gov/lara

Motor City Match

Quarterly business competition that connects new and expanding businesses with Detroit's quality real estate opportunities, providing them with funding and tools to fuel the city's entrepreneurial revolution.

www.motorcitymatch.com

Motor City Re-Store

Quarterly business competition that gives Detroit's neighborhood businesses a boost in curb appeal through matching grants that improve their storefronts, making the city's commercial corridors more walkable, more attractive, and better for business.

www.motorcityre-store.com

TechTown Detroit

Detroit's entrepreneurship hub. TechTown is a different kind of incubator and accelerator, with a full suite of programs for both tech and neighborhood small businesses. They work with businesses at all stages, helping startup, emerging, and established companies develop, launch, and grow.

techtowndetroit.org

Trade Associations

American Institute of Architects (AIA), Detroit

Professional organization for architects in the United States.

aiadetroit.com

American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), Detroit

The Detroit chapter of a professional organization for all forms of design in the United States.

detroit.aiga.org

International Interior Design Association (IIDA), Michigan

The Michigan chapter of an organization for interior design professionals, industry affiliates, educators, students, firms, and their clients.

www.michiganiida.org

Michigan Retailers Association

Retail association that provides services ranging from legislative advocacy and expert credit card processing to business insurances, discount programs, and college scholarships.

www.retailers.com

National Retail Federation

The world's largest retail trade association, dedicated to advancing the interests of the retail industry through advocacy, communications, and education.

nrf.com

Retail Design Institute

Organization that promotes the advancement and collaborative practice of creating selling environments.

retaildesigninstitute.org



Section 05

Implementation

BRINGING BRAND, DIGITAL, AND SPACE DESIGN TOGETHER

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Brand Strategy

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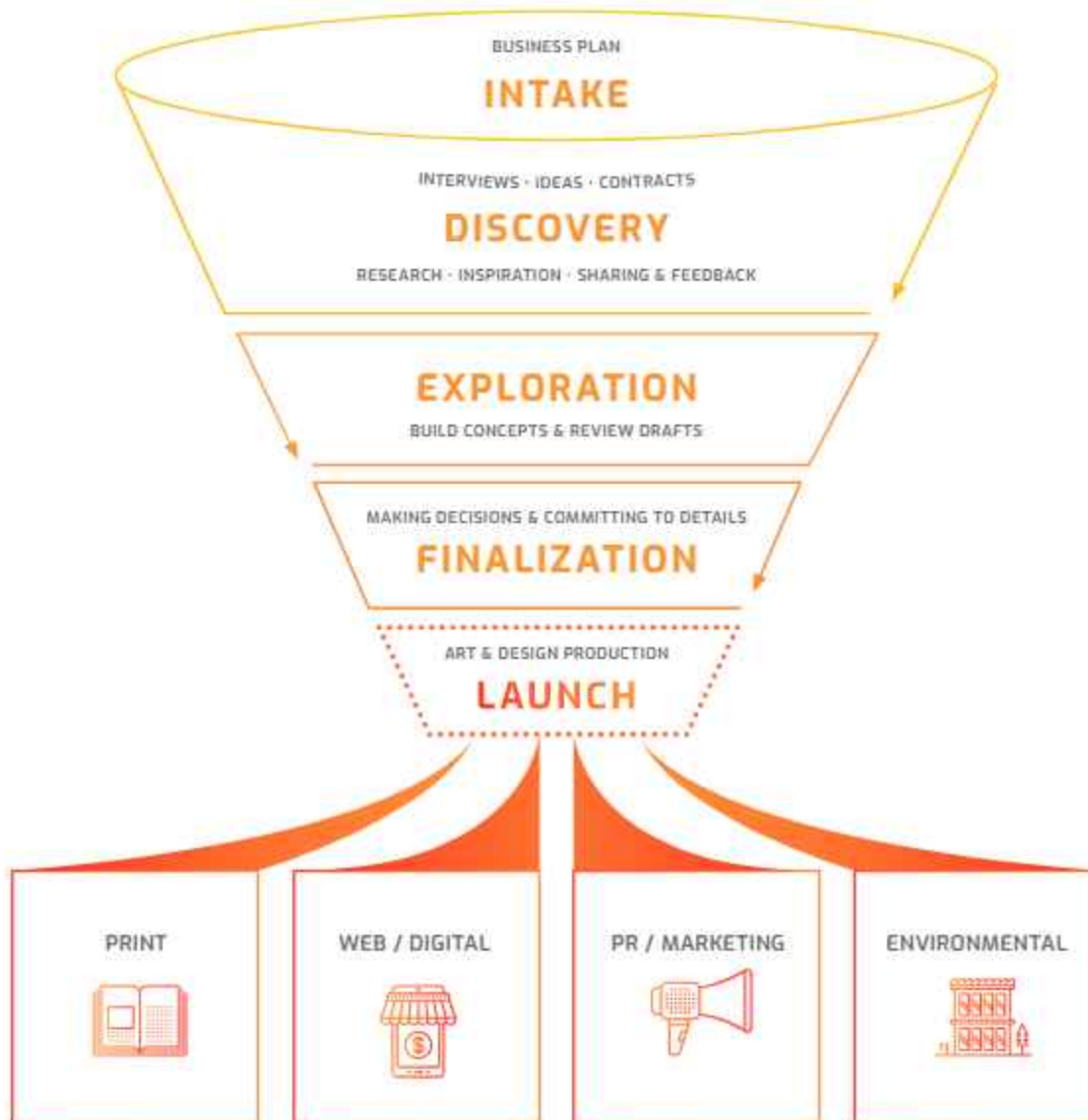
123 Request for Proposal

When you're done with this chapter you will:

1. Define your brand and identify your goals.
2. Develop questions to consider when hiring a designer / design firm and prepare answers to questions they might ask you.
3. Draft a Scope of Work (SOW) or Request for Proposal (RFP) for your project.

Getting Started

So, you've read through this guide and understand the importance of a strong brand presence at your brick and mortar store and online. But how do you create a strong brand presence? First, you need to conduct a brand audit, to understand the context your business exists in, your target audience, and your goals.



DEFINING YOUR BRAND STRATEGY

Defining your brand is a journey of business self-discovery. It is important to establish a baseline for reference as your business ebbs and flows and your brand story unfolds over time. It may be difficult, time-consuming, and uncomfortable, but if you haven't already, answer the questions below. They will help your designer better understand your business so that they can accurately represent you and your brand.

What is your company's mission?

What are you selling?

What are the benefits and features of your products or services?

Why are you doing what you do?

What do your customers already think of your company?

What do you want people to say about their experience in your store and online?

What qualities do you want customers to associate with your company?

What do you want people to say about your business, product, or service?

Defining Your Brand cont'd.

02. Who are your customers? What are their lifestyles, interests, hobbies, ages, ethnicities, income?

03. Your story as defined by others

Ask 3 of your customers or neighbors what makes your business unique.

List all of the places that people see or interact with your brand. Think signage, your website, your employees. Is their experience consistent?

04. Competitive Analysis

What makes you the expert in your industry?

Why do customers chose your business rather than other similar businesses?

04. Neighborhood Context

How does your brand fit within the context of your neighborhood?

How does your business serve the broader community/neighborhood?

05. Are there any markets or customers you don't have but would like to attract?

BRAND PERSONIFICATION

01. If your brand were a person, what would they be like?

For example, are they loud, honest, and in your face or quiet, shy, and introspective? Write a list of at least five personality traits that describe your brand:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

02. Where does your brand hang out on a Friday night?

What does the crowd look like? What does the interior of the space look like? For example, is it a fancy jazz club, or is it dive bar? Write a description of your brand's perfect Friday night hang out:

03. If your brand were the weather, what would it be?

For example, is it a stormy, blustery day that forces everyone to pack an umbrella, or is it a warm sunny day in paradise? Write a description of your brand's future forecast:

04. If your brand were an animal, what would it be?

For example, is it an overfed indoor house cat that lives in a bookstore soaking up the sun by the window, or is it a lioness, ruling the pack in the wild? Write a description of your brand's animal instincts:

05. What are songs featured on your brand's playlist?

For example, is it a selection of Motown classics, or does it have an eclectic mix? List at least five tracks that would be on your brand's list of jams:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

PRIORITIZING GOALS

Use this worksheet to prioritize goals to help build revenue, grow awareness, and streamline your workflow. The goals with the highest totals should be done first.

List your goals in Awareness, Revenue and Efficiency.
Rate them on Desirability (1-10, no-yes) and Doability (1-10/hard-easy)

Awareness: How might you get people to hear about you?			
Description	Desireability	Doability	Total

Revenue: What will generate revenue?			
Description	Desireability	Doability	Total

Efficiency: How can you systemize and simplify?			
Description	Desireability	Doability	Total

DEVELOP A MOODBOARD

Now that you've developed your company's identity, it's time to create a vision for your business utilizing Pinterest or DIY magazine clippings. This is called a moodboard, and it is a physical or digital collage of ideas that can represent your business goals and help you define your direction.

Materials Checklist:

- ☐ A posterboard or corkboard
- ☐ A stack of old magazines
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Markers or paint
- ☐ Glue, tape, thumbtacks, or pins

Image Selection

As you are collecting images for your moodboard, be sure to write down why you like the certain images you have chosen.

Activity

Set aside an hour to complete your moodboard. Find a quiet space where you can fully concentrate on the project.

Find images that represent your company's identity and vision. The images should represent a feeling and show your designer the kinds of things that you like. Don't worry about details such as materials, your design professional will figure out how to make it a reality!

Print or cut out images from magazines, and paste them on your board!

After reviewing the current status of your business you've decided to undertake a project that you need to engage a professional for. This section contains worksheets that will guide you through actually engaging and working with a designer.

Finding Your Designer

Much like the rest of the design process, finding the right designer will depend heavily on planning and communication. Whether your project is big or small, the process will include some version of the following steps:

1. Consider who will make the final decision and what criteria you'll use.
2. Make a plan and assign deadlines for each step.
3. Draft a Request for Proposal (RFP) or Scope of Work (SOW). Decide how, where and to whom you'll share the opportunity.
4. Create a schedule for the following:
 - Initial RFP / SOW announcement
 - Submission deadline
 - 1st round proposal review
 - Selection of finalists
 - Vendor finalists review
 - Award notification
 - Project start
5. Research and contact local designers who you think may be a good fit for your job, then conduct an interview with the candidates.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING DESIGNERS

During the interview process, you are trying to determine whether the person or firm:

- Has the expertise and experience you are looking for.
- Can deliver your project on time and within budget.
- Will work with you in a way that's compatible with your needs, personality, and preferences.

The questions below can help guide your conversation and discover if the designer is the best fit for your project.

What is your design philosophy?

Here's the chance to talk about the vision this designer will bring to your project. Whatever is important to you should be important to your designer.

- What is your style?

What is your design process?

Most designers follow an established path for each project, although that process varies slightly from firm to firm and project to project.

- What process can I expect throughout this project? What are the project milestones?

What projects have you done that are similar to this in type, size, and complexity?

You want to make sure your designer is comfortable with the size and complexity of the project you're proposing.

- Do you have portfolio examples that are similar?

Do you foresee any problems with this project?

If you're dealing with a unique challenge, a limited budget, or other complications, be up front. How the designer reacts to these challenges will tell you whether they're suited for the project.

- How would you solve these problems? Have you had similar experiences in the past?

Will I be working directly with you or someone else on your team?

If it's a large firm, you will want to clarify who will be designing your project, and who your contact person will be.

- What is the experience and style of the person I will be directly working with?

How much time will the design process take?

Be sure the designer has the time to devote to the project and can complete it within your timeline. Remember, the designer can account for their time, but not unexpected delays like a client's indecision or a contractor's scheduling conflicts.

- Will you be available to consult with me throughout the process, if necessary?
- Can I expect a timely response to all inquiries?

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING DESIGNERS Cont'd

Find out what tools your designer will use to engage with you. To save time and money and minimize back/forth with your designer during the project, consider using communication and collaboration tools such as:

Common collaboration tools:

☐ Google Workspace

☐ Slack

Other:

☐ Microsoft Teams

☐ Trello

☐ Asana

☐ Notion

☐ Zoom

☐ Calendly

If you are unable to be the point person for communication and/or are unable to use the tools, either learn the tools by asking your designer for a quick tutorial or have someone on your team lead this to help avoid additional hours and costs.

Will you need certain software to open files for in the project?

☐ Adobe CC
(InDesign, Photoshop,
Illustrator, XD, etc.)

Other:

☐ Sketch

☐ Figma

How (and how often) will you and your designer communicate?

☐ Bi-weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Quarterly

☐ 24/7

What is the preferred method of communication?

☐ Email

☐ Phone

☐ Text

Who is paying for images/artwork?

☐ Designer

☐ Client (your business)

If the designer is purchasing it:

Will you receive a copy of the the original files?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Will you have to reimburse the designer?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Can you approve images before they are purchased?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your designer creating original artwork (photos, illustrations, etc.)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

For any artwork that is not original can they provide documentation that ensures your brand can use it legally?

☐ Yes ☐ No

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING DESIGNERS Cont'd

What type or form of design deliverables can I expect?

The type of deliverable is not an indication of a "better" designer, but if you're more comfortable with one than the other be sure to bring this up.

- Will you share the raw or working files or just the final product?
- How will it be delivered to you? Will it be a hard copy and/or a link to a cloud file?

Can you provide references for projects you've worked on that are similar to mine?

The designer may be able to provide professional references from past clients or even show you projects they have created or collaborated on locally.

- Do you have any work nearby that I could view?
- When you call their references, make sure to ask specific questions. Did this designer save you money? How did he or she handle conflicts? Was the project completed on time? What value did they bring to the project?

Which parts of the design process will you specifically be accountable for?

Be sure you're clear about which parts of the process you or someone else on your project will be responsible for versus your designer. Make sure both of you understand what is expected of the other.

- How will we divide responsibilities? How can I help you complete your tasks on time? What do you expect me to handle?

Should I expect any additional costs along the way?

This will help you make sure the designer understands what is included in your Scope of Work and your contract or agreement. This portion of the conversation should include a thorough discussion of budget and costs.

- What extra costs might you predict and why will they occur? How could we avoid these costs? Are there any suggestions you could make to cut costs?

What is your fee, and how is it structured?

Don't leave the interview without a firm understanding of what the designer's fees are, what they are based on, and how and when you will be billed.

- Will I pay for all services at the end of the project? Or pay for half at a predetermined midway point?
- Do you require a deposit to start? If so, how much? You may want to confirm you will withhold a final portion of the payment until you are satisfied the project is complete and all deliverables have been turned over.

The information gathered from these questions will help you decide which designer to hire, but you may not want to rely on their answers alone. You should also ask yourself a few questions.

- | | |
|---|--|
| Did they provide honest, thorough answers that were easily understood? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do they understand the size, complexity, and scope of your project? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Will they take pride in the project and see it through to the end? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Will they act as a partner and treat you with mutual respect? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you trust them to deliver what they promised on time and within budget? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Did you have a frank discussion about your budget? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

PROGRAMMING QUESTIONNAIRE

One of the first things any design professional will do is start asking questions. While these questions may vary by industry, the following will give you a general idea of what will be asked:

01. What products or services does your business provide?

02. Who are your customers?
Be as specific as you can about demographics.

How old are they?

Where do they live?

How much money do they make?

What is their level of education?

What is their cultural identity?

03. Are there new market opportunities in your future?

Will the space need to be designed to accommodate changes in products, services, or customers?

04. How many people work in the space?

What are the staff-specific needs?

05. What specific areas or zones are needed in your space?

What spaces are for customers and which might be for staff only? For example, a restaurant usually has a "front of house," where patrons come in and eat, and a "back of house," where food is prepared and staff convenes. A clothing store might also have an employee break room or storage area, which is separate from customer space.

Scope of Work (SOW)

For smaller, less complex design projects, or for projects with greater urgency, you can use a Scope of Work. Necessary sections of your scope of work are similar to those of an RFP, but can be more briefly stated.

A scope of work should include:

- Company description and values
- Statement of current challenge
- Project goals and expected outcomes
- Existing assets, content, or technology
- Timeline, including proposal due date
- Budget (can be a range; should be realistic in terms of capacity to pay and scope of project)
- Include information on other important assets or constraints
- Primary point of contact
- Samples of existing marketing materials, collateral, your logo, link to website, etc

SCOPE OF WORK

A Scope of Work establishes clear expectations for a project, so all parties understand what work each party will perform and deliver, when it's due, and the agreed upon price.

Briefly describe your business products or services, including your brand and core values, if applicable:

Explain the project or challenge for which you are currently seeking design services:

Project Deliverable:

- ☐ Brand Strategy
- ☐ Visual Identity
- ☐ Website
- ☐ Social Media Graphics
- ☐ Messaging
- ☐ Marketing Strategy
- ☐ Advertising Campaign
- ☐ SEO
- ☐ Signage & Wayfinding
- ☐ Packaging
- ☐ Other:
-

Desired Result or Goal:

- ☐ Create brand consistency
- ☐ Increase sales
- ☐ Establish a digital presence
- ☐ Reach a new market
- ☐ Recruit employees
- ☐ Sell more efficiently
- ☐ Other:
-
-

Provide a brief description of of your project including existing challenges or constraints.

SCOPE OF WORK Cont'd

Provide a timeline for execution and completion of your project. Some details here will be specific to the type of project (i.e. delivery of brand assets, new website), however, most design projects will at least loosely follow these steps. Be sure to consider any upcoming holidays, product launches, or events that will impact your timing or deadlines.

PROJECT MILESTONES

Expected date for delivery of the following milestones:

- _____ Scope of Work Completed
- _____ Project Goals Set
- _____ Budget Set
- _____ First Draft Due
- _____ Second Draft Due
- _____ Final Draft Due
- _____ Final Product Launched

What are your primary priorities for the project? Think about what you want your business to be exceptional at and let that guide your selection process. Number in order of importance.

- _____ Economic (basing decision primarily on price)
- _____ Maintenance and Execution (timeless and/or easy to update or change yourself)
- _____ Inclusive (adheres to inclusive and/or universal design principles)
- _____ Aesthetic (striking and unique design)
- _____ Sustainable (design that is good for the environment)
- _____ Cooperative (created with designers you regularly work with)
- _____ Unique (custom design that requires lots of research to create special solutions)
- _____ Timeline/Urgency
- _____ Accessibility
- _____ Other

Do you know how much you can afford to spend for the services you're seeking? It can be a range, to leave room for discussion and negotiation, but should be realistic in terms of capacity and the scope of the project. Detail the amount below.

SCOPE OF WORK Cont'd

Describe how you would like designers to respond to your SOW. Be sure to indicate when it's due and how to submit it.

Be sure to indicate what you expect them to include. Consider requesting relevant case studies or prior experience, firm overview (mission/values), firm structure and key staff, anticipated consultants or contractors, fee proposal, and project timeline are included. Describe what you would like your designer to include in their proposal (below).

Be sure to include point of contact information for the project, so that interested designers know who to send their proposal to.

Name

Role

Email

Phone

Be prepared to share more information to help the designers understand what you're looking for. This could include attaching examples of existing marketing materials, collateral, your logo, a link to your website, your mission/values, social media handles, etc.

Request For Proposal (RFP)

If your project is large and/or complex, or if your organization requires it for funding or procurement reasons, you'll want to manage the selection process by drafting a complete RFP and collecting formal proposals from multiple designers. A template is included for your reference.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Cover Page

The cover page of the RFP should include your company's main contact information, including: your company name, address, and logo; the proposal name; its due date; and to whom the proposal is going. The design should reflect your company's brand, and the layout should be arranged in a clean and organized manner.

Table of Contents

A table of contents page should come before the main content of the RFP. A sample list of section titles that can be incorporated in your table of contents can be found below. Make sure the layout is clean and organized and includes page numbers.

Summary and Background

This section of the RFP should provide a high level description of what the request is for and the purpose of the requirements. It may provide background information on the organization requesting proposals as well. Most of the requirement details will be included in subsequent sections of the document.

Proposal Guidelines

This section of the RFP should provide a description of what each responding organization's proposal should contain. It should also include a deadline. Any required information should be described in detail in this section of the RFP.

Project Purpose and Description

This section of the RFP should provide the purpose and description of the project or work to be performed using as much detail as possible. In order for companies to submit accurate proposals, they need the details of exactly what work needs to be performed and the purpose of the work. The purpose of the work is important because sometimes bidders may be able to provide different, but more effective solutions.

Project Scope

While the project description provides bidders with general information about the project, this part of the RFP should include detail of what exactly is required for the project.

RFP Cont'd.**Project Timeline**

The RFPI should provide known information about the timeline for the RFP process as well as the project itself. Much of the project timeline will be determined in the project initiation and planning phases once the winning bidder is chosen. However, any known deadlines or timeframes should be listed in this section.

Budget

This section should explain what budget information bidders should include. Often, an RFP will ask bidders to list pricing a certain way or describe what exactly should be included in the pricing for the proposal. This may describe specific items to include or exclude depending on the project or task, and could be project based, hourly, or other. It is important to remember to provide all necessary information in order to find the best possible match with a designer. You don't want to receive proposals from a \$50K web developer, if the budget for your landing page is \$4K.

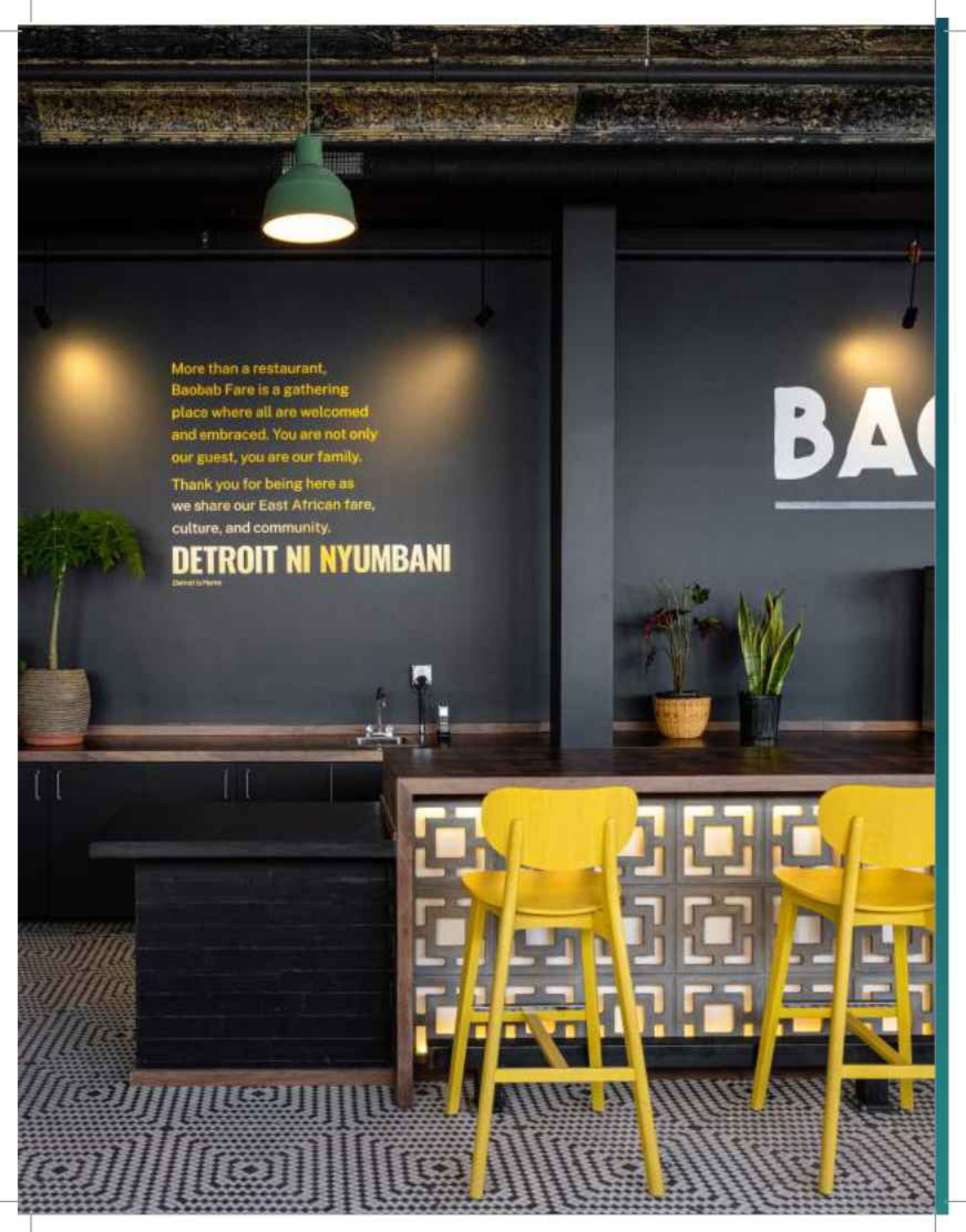
Bidder Qualifications

This part of the RFP should describe the criteria that will comprise the successful bidder's organization. You may solicit examples of work from bidders, contact information, company history, executive background, information on company size, organizational charts, or any other information to aid in the decision making process.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Here, the RFP should describe exactly how proposals will be evaluated. It should include a list of criteria that will be reviewed and describe what is suitable for each of the criteria. The more detail that can be included, the more thorough and complete the proposals will be.

Template courtesy of Design Core Detroit.

The image shows the interior of a restaurant with a modern, industrial aesthetic. A dark grey wall serves as the backdrop, featuring a green pendant light hanging from a ceiling with exposed wooden beams. On the left, a wooden bar counter is topped with a potted plant. In the center, two bright yellow bar stools are positioned in front of a dark wooden counter with a decorative, geometric lattice pattern. To the right, another wooden bar counter is visible, also with a potted plant. The floor is covered in a patterned rug. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting, with a focus on natural materials and vibrant colors.

More than a restaurant,
Baobab Fare is a gathering
place where all are welcomed
and embraced. You are not only
our guest, you are our family.

Thank you for being here as
we share our East African fare,
culture, and community.

DETROIT NI NYUMBANI

Detroit to Home

BAC

Section 06

Case Studies

BRANDING AND SPACE DESIGN IN PRACTICE ACROSS THE CITY

128 Good Cakes and Bakes

130 Baobab Fare

132 Elwood Bar and Grill

134 Floyd

136 Plowshares Theatre
Company

When you're done with this chapter you will:

1. Be inspired by local examples of businesses who have established and implemented their brand online and in their brick and mortar space.



GOOD CAKES AND BAKES

Good Cakes and Bakes (GCB) was created by Michelle Anderson and pastry chef April Anderson in 2013 with the mission of providing quality baked goods that are wholesome and organic in nature.

Project Type:
Interior Renovation

Architect:
Brooke Ellis & Garnet R.
Cousins Architect

Interior Design:
Concetti

Contractor:
JJ House

Budget:
\$10,000-50,000

Project Timeline:
July 2020 – October 2021



Photos courtesy of Brett Mountain Photography.

Located on Livernois Ave in Detroit's Fashion District, the bustling business quickly outgrew their original space. Interested in aligning their brand and business strategy with a renovated interior, the GCB team worked with Detroit-based interior design studio Concetti to transform their space.

Concetti partnered with April and Michelle to understand the established Good Cakes and Bakes brand and created a Visual Guideline that inspired the aesthetics of the entire space. Several in-depth conversations with April and Michelle helped the team understand how they would like GCB employees and customers to interact with the space, so that the interior design team could manipulate the built environment to support their unique goals and maximize efficiencies.

A larger kitchen improved employee workflow and allowed GCB to increase their offerings with baking classes for the community. Designated spaces were designed for take-out and delivery orders to improve traffic within the shop. The bold pops of light and bright pink are pulled directly from their brand colors.

The brown accents, such as the custom brown and white striped awning above the counter, nod to the traditional, sweet southern hospitality that inspires so much of their customer experience. The exterior was updated with new pink umbrellas and outdoor seating.

The result is a space where employees feel empowered, allowing their positive energy to flow through the local community.

"Our neighbors deserve to have a beautiful space where they can engage with each other. I have customers come up to me and tell me that it means so much to them that we would invest in a storefront like this in their neighborhood," said April Anderson.

The enhanced communication and coordination that was necessary to successfully complete the project during the COVID-19 pandemic will be applied to every project Concetti tackles moving forward, including the GCB's second location, which they are currently developing.



Photos courtesy of Featherstone.

BAOBAB FARE

Wife and husband team Nadia Nijimbere and Hamissi Mamba came to Detroit from Burundi in 2014 with the dream of creating an East-African restaurant that would serve as a haven for everyone, especially immigrants. The Baobab Fare team first partnered with Detroit-based Marketing/Strategy consultants Featherstone during the 2017 Hatch Detroit competition.

Project Type:
Brand and Digital Identity
Development

Marketing & Strategy:
Featherstone

Branding:
Aliado Studio

Budget:
\$2500-5000 (Hive Competition)
\$2000 per month

Project Timeline:
3 Weeks (Hive Competition)
Ongoing since 2019



Featherstone worked with the Baobab Fare team to craft their brand identity and build out a website and other content including copy and images. Additionally, Featherstone assisted Baobab Fare with public relations and community outreach to share their compelling story.

The chemistry and trust the team created through their initial collaboration led them to continue their relationship when Baobab Fare opened its doors in 2019. With the identities and values of Baobab Fare and Featherstone so closely aligned, it is easy for them to form a single cohesive team that can work together to amplify Baobab Fare's voice. Featherstone works with the Baobab team on strategy as well as manages their social media and public relations, helping them reach a wider audience.



Case Studies



Photos courtesy of John D'Angelo Photography.

ELWOOD BAR AND GRILL

Originally built in 1936 on the corner of Woodward and Elizabeth, the Elwood is an iconic example of Art Moderne Style architecture in Downtown Detroit.

Project Type:
Interior Refresh

Interior Design:
Patrick Thompson Design

Budget:
\$10-50K

Project Timeline:
1 Year



The historic building was almost lost when Comerica Park was first constructed in the late 90's, but owner Jim Forbes elected to move the building to its present location at the corner of Adams and Bush instead.

In need of an interior refresh, the Elwood team turned to Patrick Thompson design to update the floorplan, interior finishes, furniture, and lighting. Selections were inspired by and compliment the historic context of the building.

The design leaned into a sports theme, helping attract more customers, especially during baseball season, while maintaining the feel of the beloved neighborhood bar.



Floyd workspace photographed by Nev Muftari, courtesy of MIDTW.

FLOYD

Founded in 2013 by Kyle Hoff and Alex O'Dell as a kickstarter campaign to produce The Floyd Leg and allow consumers to easily create tables out of found surface materials, Floyd has quickly grown into a sustainable furniture powerhouse.

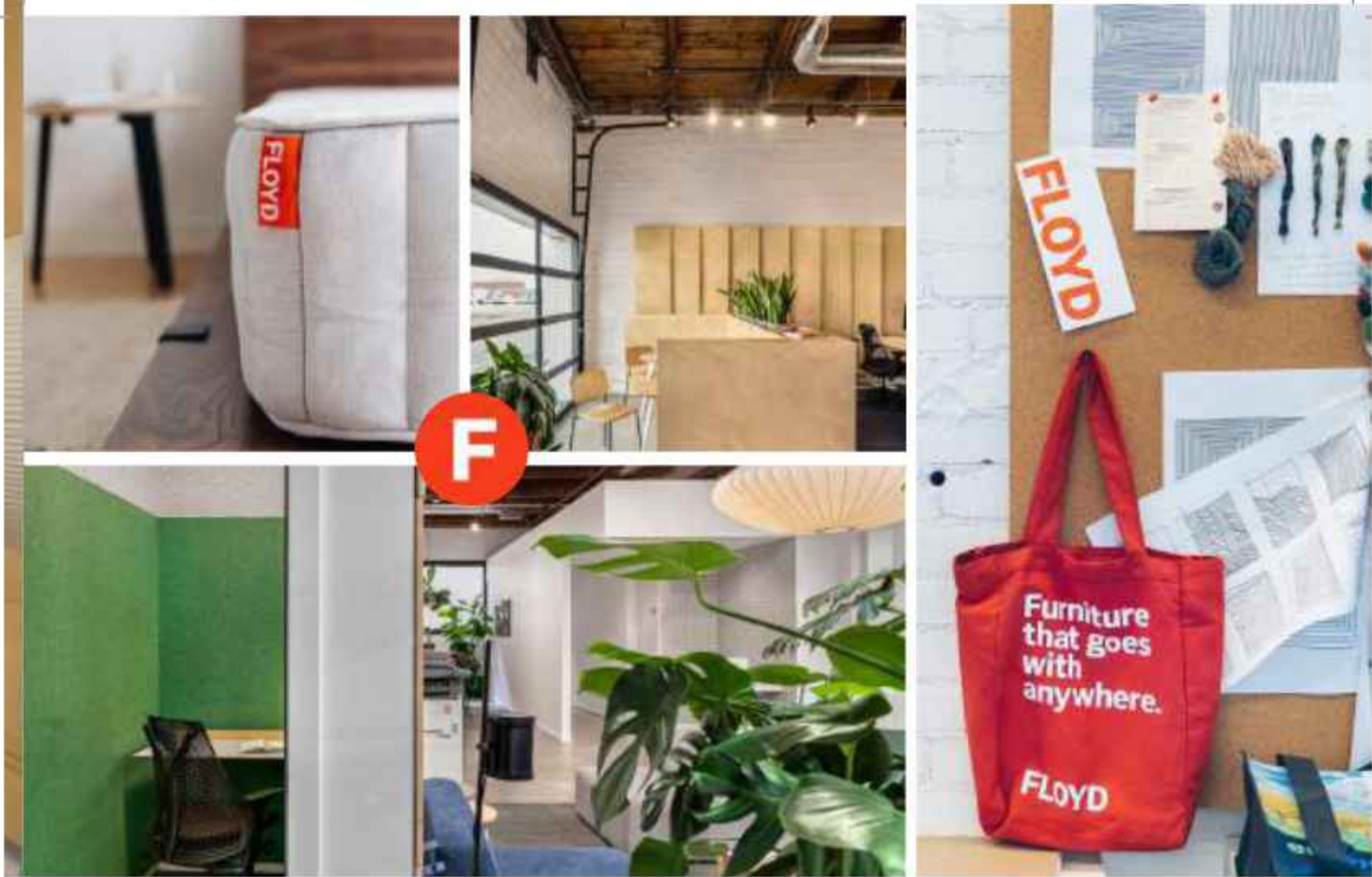
Project Type:
Interior Refinement

Architect:
MIDTW Architects

General Contractor:
Premier Construction

Budget:
\$100,000+

Project Timeline:
Fall 2020–Summer 2021



Floyd digital and physical brand assets photographed by Nev Muftari, courtesy of Floyd.

Floyd now offers bedframes, sofas, storage, and more, guided by their principles of practical design. The team first partnered with MIDTW architects in 2018 to develop their Eastern Market workspace. Then, in 2019, the pandemic completely changed how Floyd operates, with many of their employees adopting a hybrid style of work. The original space needed to be refined to fit how the team operates now, as well as anticipate future growth.

The result is the Floyd Library, a complete reimagining of the internal dynamics of the original headquarters space. The Library pays considerable attention to the workplace environment and needs of company staff with an emphasis on safe, comfortable, and creative cohabitation.

Designed over the course of several months, in response to prolonged and thoughtful interactions between the design team and core company members, the new Library builds on the entire 3,200 SF original floor plan, taking advantage of new space made available with the upgrade of product team facilities in an adjacent building within the same complex. The result is a homier workplace, which emphasizes smaller meeting rooms, semi-private "hot desks" for focused individual work, warmer lighting, and relaxing interiors for casual staff interactions. In keeping with the company's values of conservation and reuse, MIDTW worked carefully to readapt and infill the space, while ensuring that virtually none of the previous materials were demolished or discarded.

30

**PLOWSHARES
THEATRE
COMPANY**
presents eye-opening
works about African
American experiences
that challenge the
minds of their audiences
in a safe environment
with a progressive voice
helping them to better
understand their own
community and bring in
perspective to the role they
play in their own lives.



PLWSHARESTHEATRE.COM

RED

YELLOW

BLACK



PLOWSHARES THEATRE COMPANY

Plowshares Theatre was created by Gary Anderson in 1989 with the mission to preserve, present, and produce Black stories and experiences that challenge minds and builds community.

Project Type:
Branding

Brand Strategy & Design:
Subtle Design Co.

Marketing:
Donna Jackson, DMJ Studio

Budget:
Less than \$10K

Project Timeline:
6-weeks

Plowshares Theatre Company brand assets courtesy of Subtle Design Co.



Plowshares Theatre Company brand assets courtesy of Subtle Design Co.

Producing shows since 1990, Plowshares Theatre Company is the premier black theater company in Detroit, focused on providing a stage and platform for African American experiences. Founder Gary Anderson was interested in increasing Plowshare's donor base and achieving the company's goal of creating a physical space downtown. He partnered with Angela Focelli of Subtle Design Co. to audit the company's brand and provide strategies to create consistency across all brand touchpoints.

After completing a two-day workshop, the team had refined the Plowshares Theatre mission, distilling their rich history and goals into a single statement that shares the importance of their work and provides a sense of urgency for donors: "Lift Every Voice." Their visual branding was expanded, with a new simplified logo that would be easier to produce on merchandise and other products, as well as an expanded kit of parts to bring the brand to life.

Brand guidelines were created to provide structure for their in-house designer moving forward, while still maintaining creative room for the brand to grow and evolve over time.

Perhaps the most important piece of their branding effort was the development of the ideal Plowshares customer persona that embodies who they are trying to connect with in all of their marketing efforts. Her name is Diana, she is a college educated, deep thinker in her 30s, who loves to go out with her friends, and as a Plowshares superfan she supports the theatre and their goal of creating their own physical space in Detroit. The team identified all the "Dianas" of Detroit, inviting them to a marketing event where they could share insights the company could use to further strengthen their brand.

With their revitalized branding Plowshares is positioned to reach a wider audience, grow their donor base, and continue to provide engaging programming for Detroit.



GLOSSARY

Let's break down the buzzwords.

A

Accessibility (ADA requirements)

An aspect of the design process specifically considering how people with different physical limitations may interact with your space. Many aspects of accessibility planning, like wheelchair-accessible doors and bathrooms, are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA.

Analytics

The measurement and analysis of website data used to understand and improve web usage and conduct market research.

As-Built Drawings

The revised set of drawings submitted by a contractor after a project or particular job has been completed (Drawings of the space as it is in its current state).

B

Backlinks

A link for a given website or piece of web content linked from some other website (the referrer) to that web resource (the referent). A backlink is like a reference comparable to a citation in print.

Bidding

Allows vendors, manufacturers, or subcontractors to submit their competitive pricing to supply the specified product and/or service as part of the construction process.

Blog

An online journal or diary used to share your thoughts with the world. It can also be used as a marketing tool.

Boost(ed) Post

A paid post from your business' social media page that can appear as an advertisement in your audience's news feeds.

Brand Assets

Any aspect of a brand that creates value and builds loyalty and awareness. This includes how any of the following are used in person, in print, in digitally, or in your physical space: color, type, tone of voice, messaging, how you or employees act with clients/customers, website, photos, etc.

Brand Audit

A thorough examination of a brand's position in the marketplace compared to its competitors, to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a brand, along with brand inconsistencies and opportunities for improvement.

Brand Identity

All of the unique attributes that define a company and shape its perception by customers. A few examples of brand identity components include: business name, logo, business card, products and services, and dress code.

Brand Mission

The core of a business's goals that set the tone for its brand identity.

Brand Positioning

This explains where a company sits within the marketplace and describes how it is different and how it wants to be perceived so that it pops into the forefront of the customers' minds.

Brand Promise

What your business says it will do and provide for your customers and clients. It doesn't have to be in print, but it should be part of your business mantra.

C

Code Review

Necessary to ensure the design complies with building, zoning, and accessibility codes. Code compliance is not only a design responsibility, but also a legal responsibility.

Collateral

The collection of marketing materials used to promote a company and its sales. Collateral can include brochures, presentation templates, email signatures, email templates, business cards, and data sheets.

Color Blocking

Pairing colors that are opposites on the color wheel to make interesting and complimentary color combinations.

Content Marketing

A form of marketing focused on creating, publishing, and sharing online material to attract an audience and generate interest in a company's products or services.

Conversion Rate

The percentage of visitors that take a desired action on a website such as signing up for a newsletter or making a purchase. It is used to measure website success.

Competitive Landscape

An analysis that identifies a business' primary rivals to understand competitors, followed by an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses so that the business can improve upon what its competition is doing.

Copywriting

The process of writing verbal content for advertisements, website, collateral, and other communications.

Core Values

The set of guiding principles that communicate what a company believes in.

Customer Touchpoint

The points at which customers come into contact with your brand before, during, or after they purchase something from you.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System

Technology that allows businesses to manage business relationships and customer data in one central location.

D

Direct Traffic

When customers reach your website through a search engine.

Domain Name (URL)

The unique online address where internet users can access a website. A domain name, or URL, is your website's address. You can customize your domain name to match your business. It's important to choose a domain name that's easy to remember and spell so customers can find you.

E

E-Commerce

The buying and selling of goods and services over the internet.

Elevations

A 2-dimensional drawing that shows the front or side view of a building, wall, or object, from one side. They typically show important details such as exact dimensions, electrical placement, millwork, etc.

Environmental Graphics

Graphic design elements applied in a physical space—these can include branding or promotional graphics, visual wayfinding and navigational signage, information displays, or simply decorative graphics to bring color and form to otherwise plain surfaces.

F

Finishes

Materials (like stone, tile, metal, fabric, and glass) that make up the finished design of the components of the interior, i.e., floors, walls, ceiling, fixtures.

G

General Contractor

A person who is responsible for day-to-day oversight of a construction site, management of vendors and trades, and the overall coordination of a building project. Also known as the "GC," the general contractor works heavily with the Architect and Interior Designer to ensure the design is executed correctly.

I**Interior Decorator**

A person who helps a client decide on a style, choose a color scheme, purchase furniture, and accessorize a space.

L**Logo**

A graphic symbol or other design used by a company to represent its brand.

M**Millwork**

Permanent or semi-permanent building elements, typically made from wood or a wood composite, for both decorative and practical uses. This can include custom cabinetry or built-in shelving, reception desks, fixed seating elements like window benches, or the trim and other details where surfaces like floors and walls meet.

Mobile Optimization

When your website is designed to look and function properly on a mobile device.

O**Organic Traffic**

When customers reach your website through unpaid avenues, such as Google searches or word-of-mouth.

P**Palette**

The range of colors used in a particular project.

Point of Sale (POS) System

The combination of hardware and software used to manage sales and track sales data in a retail store.

Programming

The process of discovering and defining the feasibility constraints along with the clients specific needs, desires, and requests through questionnaires, analysis, and user interviews.

S**Schematic Drawings**

Studies prepared by an architect, engineer, or interior designer to establish the scale of the building and project requirements. These drawings and documents illustrate project scale, components, and design goals.

Search Engine Marketing

A digital marketing strategy used to increase the visibility of your website in search engine results pages.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

The practice of increasing both the quality and quantity of traffic to your website.

Site Map

An organized chart of a website that shows relationships between web pages and content. It is designed to help both users and search engines navigate the site.

Space Planning

A plan that defines the zones of a space and the activities that will take place within those zones. The plan also shows how people will move through the space, and is finished by adding details of all the furniture, equipment, and hardware placement.

Story/Storytelling

The process of writing and creating content guided by personal and existing stories, emotions, and experiences to engage customers in a brand narrative.

T**Target Audience**

The desired potential customer audience most likely interested in a product or service.

Tone and Manner

A distinct way of communicating to make a brand's voice quickly recognized and easily remembered in the marketplace.

Top Level Domain (TLD)

TLD is the abbreviation for top-level domain, which is the last section of your domain name. Many websites use .com as their TLD. Some other TLD includes: .edu, .co, .store, etc.

Typeface

A set of one or more fonts that share an overall look of the characters contained within the font.

U

User Experience (UX)

The overall experience that a person has when interacting with a company, its services, and its products.

User Interface (UI)

The visual display of a computer or software that determines how users give commands to the computer, and how information is displayed on the screen.

V

Value Engineering

A cost-control measure to identify elements of the construction budget that may be substituted for less expensive alternatives that will still achieve the desired result.

Visual Merchandising

The practice of developing floor plans and retail displays to attract, engage, and motivate customers towards making a purchase.

W

Wireframe

A visual guide used to lay out content and the organizational framework of a website.

Acknowledgments

The development of this design guide spanned over a year, during which time Design Core Detroit facilitated information sessions, workshops, focus groups, and draft reviews with business service providers, industry experts, designers in multiple disciplines, community stakeholders, and small business owners. We also worked hard to align this guide with existing small business programs in Detroit. Sincerest thanks to the many contributors of stories, examples, pictures, expertise, content, and financial support. We couldn't have done it without you.

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Remember, to have faith and have fun. Trust your designer and participate actively in the process, and you are far more likely to achieve your design and business goals.

We hope this Design Guide for Neighborhood Business has inspired you to consider what's possible and given you the confidence to manage a successful relationship and project with a professional designer. Design is known to drive the competitiveness of businesses, enhance the overall appearance of commercial corridors, and create welcoming and inclusive spaces for customers and visitors alike.

Design Core is excited to see how you use this guide and welcomes you to share stories, pictures, and examples of your future design projects with us so we can help celebrate your success.

Please email info@designcore.org or call 313-664-7400, if we can be of any further assistance to your business.

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