

S I M P L I C I T Y

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WRITTEN BY

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SIMPLICITY IN DESIGN

The simplest design is often the most effective. In order to achieve simplicity in design, know thy consumer! Understand their goals. Keep it clean. However well-intentioned, when the non-essential details end up on your final design, the consumer may interpret those bells and whistles as distracting. How do we keep eyes on the prize? Highlight the innovative peak benefits of the product while cutting through the noisy clutter of the competition? Lead with the essentials, edit, refine, test, edit again. Discover fresh techniques to light up shelves and screens with concise precision.

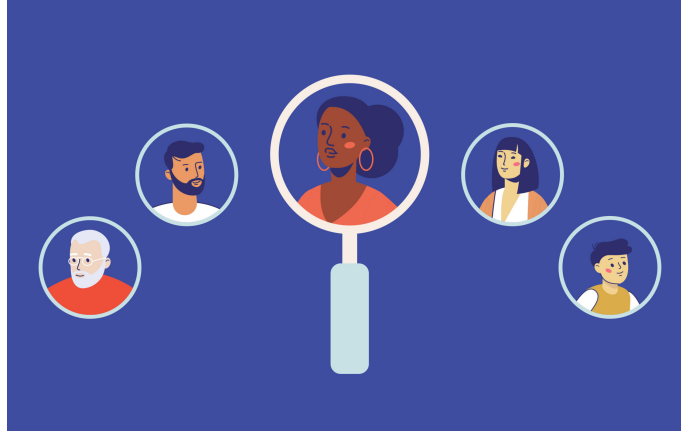
Strategy 1: Laser Focus. Hopefully, the brand team has hacked into the target's personal agreement that a need must be met and managed. Eliminate less important features

and factoids. Your product wins by being clear and decisive.

Strategy 2: Weigh the value of visual and verbal content? Is your creative leading your target to your product or muddling the message?

Strategy 3: Mind the gap. Between the designer's creation and the consumer's experience lies a vast space known as the "Gulf of Execution". In other words, identify any gaps between the designer's interpretation of the brand strategy and the consumer's experience of the final product. As long as the ocular appeal of the product aligns with what the buyer craves psychologically, that gulf narrows and loyalty develops.

Strategy 4: Think function-forward. Pretty graphic design does not equal strategic packaging. Design is functional. Does the aesthetic deliver the message?



SEP 25, 2020

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HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR TARGET?

Chris Rock recently described his relationship with his audience as a private love affair that outsiders were not meant to understand. Brand voices and their targeted future customers form a similar bond. If the message makes sense, then the message was made for you. Developing and maintaining authentic connections between brands and target audiences begins with a strong command of translating strategy into the target persona's love language, so to speak.

Social media audience research has a direct impact on the specificity and reach of the target message. The deeper the study, the more opportunity to hone the brand identity and ensure influence. Almost everyone needs guidance to be a more effective

communicator. Read on for strategies to be seen, heard, and dominate your target group.

Get to Know Who Knows You

When compiling data, start simple. Brands of all sizes can benefit from this strategy:

Step one, study the profile of your existing following. Demographic segmentation is an age-old go-to for marketers. Demographic segmentation pinpoints general audience profiles like age, ethnicity, and income.

Step two, balance your study with understanding the psychographics of your community because people within identical demographic profiles can behave in drastically varied ways. Suss out more refined subtleties within the target audience with psychographics. Psychographics hone in on the shadings of the abstract qualities such as sensitivities, concerns, and tastes.

Step three, schedule regular evaluations of your target audience. Like fashion, data can be informal or formal. Brand managers don't always have to spend time and money on formal qualitative and quantitative research to gain insight. A regular cycle of social media analysis is a casual way to identify the points of connection that forge your following. Without regular check-ins, you are bound to lose connection with your consumer.

Discover details about your demographic and investigate the psychographics that drive purchase of your brand to sharpen your focus. Psychographic

investigations allow for specialization of your brand's vibe and message and establish optimal odds for marketing success. Demographics are a strong predictor of the audience in the center of your bullseye. However, psychographic segmentation offers more leveraging power when developing a brand voice heard by precisely the right audience. Now engaging with your target audience is standardized and reliable as a measure for increasing profitability. The takeaway: make the time to put yourself in your consumer's shoes. Empathy is a powerful tool to guide design and marketing decisions.



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CLARITY EQUALS VISIBILITY

Branding is more than design. Branding is clarity. Is your value clear? The purpose of branding is to examine the product through the consumer's experience and distill the value proposition. When done well, powerful intuitive connections drive consumer awareness, conversion, and loyalty. Clarity equals visibility. The degree to which your product draws the attention of the consumer depends on a clear, resonant, and visually organized packaging and communication strategy. Read on for tips that apply to any brand, at any stage.

Pause. At any stage—perhaps, at every stage—brands should pause to reflect on the state of their brand. Schedule regular strategy sessions to review the effectiveness of the current brand.

Be objective. Don't take for granted the way other people perceive your brand or product. As David Foster Wallace pointed out, a fish doesn't know water until it leaves the fishbowl. Often, the most important elements of your brand are the hardest to see from the inside. Enlist objective perspectives.

Distill. Can you elegantly articulate your unique value in 10 words or less? Or, do you stumble through the plethora of features and benefits that appeal to a wide variety of consumers?

Recognize who you are and what you do. This process seems fairly straightforward, yet it requires ongoing attention. The intricacy is layered in your identity and how well you know and relate to your target. Keep in mind that change is the only constant. Stay fresh. Be prepared to recommit to your messaging and visual language, regularly.



AUG 27, 2020

WRITTEN BY

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DESIGN & PSYCHOLOGY

Choosing product A over product B is among the 35,000 decisions our brains make each day. Packaging designers use visual language to nestle products into a market void and fill a human need. Doing this successfully establishes an unshakable bond with consumers and drives sales. Visual design communicates very specific experiences to consumers in seconds and often without words. Packaging design strives to draw attention, impact the consumer's ethos and merge with their lifestyle. Designers must tap into psychology and symbology to create work that transmits information and impacts on an emotional level.

Psychology 101 tells us mimicry is the most innate and enjoyable form of communication. Mirroring the consumer's emotional interests such as: the need for convenience, improved health, natural

ingredients, indulgence or an uplifting escape from reality, connect your visual language to an intuitive need state.

It's important to slow eyeballs that are quickly scanning shelves and screens for value. Your visual language on pack needs to captivate and communicate. It's important to consider the consumers' needs objectively and position the value of the product strategically. Brand strategy distills your value and message into a succinct brand essence, which can then be translated into a visual identity. A pretty package is not always an effective package. Your package should have meaning and resonate with the consumer's needs.

Food and beverage are gateways to childhood memories, experiences, relationships, and connect consumers to old and new traditions. Food and beverage packaging is about the connection between imagery, words, the human brain, and the human behavior of what we feel affecting what we buy. With regard for the infinitesimal reasons we create and or consume, the objective is to enjoy the process and find comfort in impulse and routine.



JUL 10, 2020

WRITTEN BY

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN ADAPTIVE DESIGN PARTNER

When it's time to extend your brand identity across your entire packaging, you want to select a partner that can translate your vision across SKUs while thinking globally about your brand identity. ***This means choosing a team led by creatives rather than production artists.*** Production artists are an equally important part of the mix though- they should review and consult throughout the process to ensure technical specifications and guidelines are met. Your adaptation partner should inhabit the intersection between strategic and production design in order to preserve your brand equity and save unexpected costs from endless revisions or inaccurate technical files.

Not just any creative team can fill this need. It's rare that a production or production-turned-adaptive firm does not tout some strategic capabilities, and the reverse is also true. The solution? An agency led by creatives, grounded by

production artists: the adaptive sweet spot. The GRO Agency falls in this category- we have our own internal process for the discovery and brand strategy phase, and specific teams for adaptive and production work. Our adaptive design specialists have been cross-trained with expertise in both areas.

A team led by creatives will take into consideration the holistic design, the master brand essence, and brand strategy while adeptly addressing the unique needs of each design adaptation. Production artists are an equally important part of the mix- they should review and consult throughout the process to ensure technical specifications and guidelines are met. Not every beautiful design will translate well in print.

When it comes to adapting the master brand to the other SKUs, we understand that design isn't the only consideration. As an adaptive partner, we are agile, swift, and priced to compete.

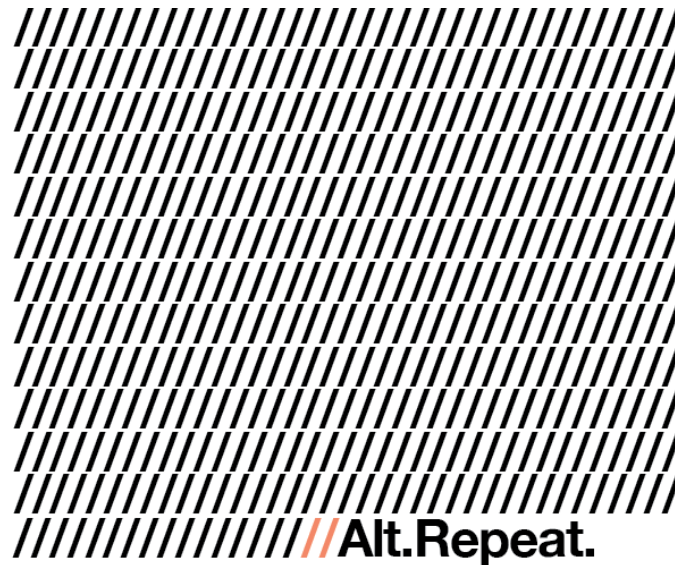
Scalability, Capacity & Collaboration

An adaptive partner should be set up to scale quickly to accommodate even the largest multi-SKU project. While a strategic partner may be more like a production line- each step of the process needing completion before the next step begins (with bottlenecks occurring regularly); an adaptive partner is adept at working on many different projects that are in many different stages of completion. Even if a piece of information is missing or delayed the project can still move forward towards completion and progress doesn't stop. A great adaptive partner should be flexible and able to move quickly, meeting changing deadlines with accuracy (and a smile).

It's critical that whatever partner you choose is collaborative, communicative, and a team you actually want to work with. They should collaborate closely with you, with your strategic agency, and any other stakeholders

Adaptive Experience

Perhaps most importantly- ask to see case studies that clearly demonstrate the adaptive agency's ability to extend a master design without sacrificing the brand vision across a large portfolio. Specifically seek out agencies that have a proven ability to tackle complex design systems- perhaps a brand that has multiple sub-brands, or adaptation that extends across several categories and formats. Look at the adaptations against a master or hero SKU- do these embody the brand vision and clearly communicate the product extension without sacrificing shelf impact?



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WRITTEN BY

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CONTROL. ALT. REPEAT.

Three steps to ease the discomfort of looking inward when you can't go outside.

It's official, down is up, left is right, and it is very wrong to lay a finger on many things without gloves, masks, and an eternal mist of sanitizer to save us from ourselves. Indelible touchstones of our world are hands off. As global citizens we've had a shock to our systems, our industries, and our families. The only way out is through. As the Covid-19 pandemic teaches us how to slow down and reevaluate our priorities, executives and

#6 PLANT YOUR FLAG

Without the comfort of your favorite parking spot and the confines of a dedicated office, it is easy to feel discouraged or disoriented. Take pride in identifying a workspace where you live. Whether indoors or out, this is your moment to create a routine, get in the zone and boost that work/life balance thing. Yes, that part.

#7 CONNECT THE PODS

There is no I in team. But there is an I in insulation. Disconnection from the people in your life is an unexpected challenge for extroverts and introverts alike. You can ghost loneliness by urging your employers to simply provide remote sessions to mix it up and socialize. You can always create your own socially distanced work session with colleagues. With invitees in their own habitat and using a screen of choice, you've managed to throw an inclusive e-event.

#8 REPORT PROGRESS

As you happily approach completion of important assignments and projects, drop a pin for your managers and co-workers. Let them know the status of your productivity. Keep it casual and useful. If you're unclear about your duty or have done all the to-dos, say so.

#9 BREAK IT UP

When it comes to managing your workload between loads of laundry (it happens) make sure you take appropriate breaks. Schedule them and live your best life away from your workstation for a spell. A brief respite from your responsibilities allows your mind and body to have a sigh of relief. Don't skip recess or lunch. You deserve both.

entrepreneurs are best served to consider the dynamics of control, alternative modes of thinking, and mastering intentionality to keep things on track.

Viruses replicate. It's what they do. But when mother nature goes viral, it is rarely as fun as a meme with Lionel Richie and the caption, "Hello". The pandemic, closed schools, new workspaces, and solving the algebra of getting your groceries are all out of your control. With each passing day, you may find yourself feeling quite out of sorts, missing your work spouse, and grappling with deadlines while pets and children paw at you. For now, focus your attention on what you can control. A new perspective reveals fresh avenues that reroute you to managing what's in your power. As one distinguishes between the things they can control and the things they can't, one gains a sense of direction, self-reliance builds. That is the power of your point of view. Welcome back to the ability to zoom out and see the big picture. O hello, efficiencies, deadlines, and hangouts with the camera on, not off.

With your new found acceptance of change being the only constant, ask yourself if your usual routine and expectations need a shakeup. Odds are something's got to give. Even the most successful and compulsory personalities benefit from flexibility. If you are too rigid to shift, consider that changing your mind increases productivity and decreases anxiety. Tap into your curiosity, connect with a teammate, and get creative. Think about your usual habits, then rethink your usual habits. New habits and routines can be intentionally developed. By simply acknowledging the possibility of bending the old rules to meet the new normal, you move forward and create alternative modes of handling business. You've architected a more productive reality. By embracing agility in these

complex times, you'll find that this crisis doesn't mean gameover, it means next level.

You must do this again and again. Adversity is a given, overwhelm is natural, and eyerolls are necessary to move forward. Advance one step, one hour, one project at a time. In tai chi, there's a saying, "Don't anticipate. Watch." A zen reminder to stay present and avoid future-tripping. By embracing the opportunity at hand, maximizing options, and reapplying your game plan, you recognize success even when it is in the shadows of stress. Become an expert at shifting gears and letting go. Pretend you're on a rollercoaster. You'll be alright and you'll have more fun even if you don't like rollercoasters. Eventually, the car slows to a stop and you're off to the next adventure. You made it. Give yourself a high-five, (that's very cool now), and get back to living your best life.



RULES OF DISENGAGEMENT: A GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE REMOTE CONNECTION.

Apr 2, 2020

Written By

Ayana Hampton

Get into this. Working remotely is the new black, the new vegan dessert, it is everything. It may be challenging to remain productive without the hub of your workplace and peers. But trust and believe you can manage the separation and get through this shift. Here's how.

Rules of Disengagement -The Etiquette of Working Remotely

#1 MAKE IT EASY.

Set a schedule for work at home and be on time. That means you can sing in the shower, brew that coffee, suit up, (pants optional), and ease on down to your desk/ kitchen table and get to it. This strategy of following an organic flow to your workstation is more effective than letting a clock be your boss. Would a clock let you floss and

Postmates breakfast tacos while joining the team Google Hangout with the camera off? I didn't think so.

#2 DRAW A LINE IN THE SAND.

Unless you have the privilege of living alone, you have to set boundaries with the people in your space. This includes the people you made, Children will demand your focused love constantly. That is their job. Your job is to communicate when you are in your bubble, when they get to play in thiers, and when the bubble pops and parenting returns to normal.

#3 HANG OUT & SPEAK UP

As your team schedules video conferences as frequently as you check IG, accept the invitations and have something to offer. At times, the format of a video chat can be daunting and distract you from sharing ideas and inquiries with everyone. In other instances, inexperience with on-camera meetings may intimidate you. Avoid that trap by listening closely and engaging with intentionality. Your boldness will pay off and you'll learn that everyone is learning.

#4 MIND THE GAP

When entering a conference call resist the temptation to jump right in and voice your presence. Instead, join, feel the flow, take a beat, and cut through the anonymity of the group chat by saying your name before you contribute. External participants will be impressed that you leveled up with friendliness and professionalism.

#5 STAY CONNECTED

Be sure to contact managers and colleagues as often as it's necessary to be supported. This is when connectedness rules. Get that feedback. Seek

clarification for further directions. When you try, sometimes you get what you need.

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