



THE 6 MOST CRUCIAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES TO IMPLEMENT ON ANY DESIGN

CREATE A KNOCKOUT
DESIGN PORTFOLIO

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You will either cover these in your design fundamentals modules if you decide to take up a design course or you will no doubt encounter this on the job. You'll face these points again and again in your career, and it only reaffirms their importance. In my experience, the 6 most crucial design principles to implement when designing anything are the following...

01

RELEVANCE

Do not be led by aesthetics.

I'll say it again. Do not be led by aesthetics. Be led by relevance. I cannot emphasize this point enough. This requires you to do adequate research before beginning any design brief. The more you know about your communication objectives, the target audience demographic, the culture of the brand, the perceptions of the market and the environment the design will be seen in, the clearer your mind will be when making design decisions.

Once you start uncovering this information, you can get to the solution quicker because you're informed by the psychology of the people you are speaking to. In your attempts to create disruption, always ask yourself, "Does it create relevant cut through and relevant conversations between brand and consumer?" Oftentimes relevance is what creates the disruption you're looking for.

02

HAVING A GRID SYSTEM

Whether you stay in the grid or break out of it, you must have one.

Why? Because you need to organise the information in a hierarchy that is easily digestible, alluring and pleasant to look at. Do not start a thing without one. Four columns, six columns, twelve columns – see what works best for the brief or task.

03

HIERARCHY

Ask yourself, “What is the one thing I am trying to say?” That single, primary message must be the focus and must be unmistakably clear.

The secondary message should then substantiate the initial claim or idea, usually through transparent and honest proof points. For businesses, this substantiation strengthens their brand values on top of acquiring new customers and retaining existing ones.

The third should present a call to action (abbreviated as ‘CTA’) to the audience. Get them to do what it is you want them to do. Whether it be clicking a button, turning a page, buying the item, calling a number, interacting with it or sharing the content. Whatever it is, you’ve gotten their attention, you’ve raised awareness and led them to do something. Don’t make them work hard for the message.

A clear hierarchy of information will help achieve an engaging and memorable customer experience. It’s also worth noting that each touch point will likely have a different message. This ties in with brand strategy, but as an example, outdoor and print advertising may just be a teaser and direct the audience to the online space.

From there, a landing page may hold a competition which leverages social media marketing, and participants are then engaged further via email and then to an event in a month’s time. As you can imagine, these different touch points have different conversations but are overall defined by a customer experience structured by hierarchy.

04

TYPOGRAPHY

Typography can make or break any communication piece. It's a craft in itself.

Kerning and leading text should become second nature and used appropriately. Your objective should be on legibility first and foremost. So if the heading or copy needs more space then give it some, if it needs to be tighter then make it tighter. Font weights and size should be used in consideration with information hierarchy.

For example, using a bolder weight for sub-headings and a lighter weight for copy is common as it helps the reader scan the content of the page easily. Line breaks must flow both with the reader's eye and with the content. A line break shouldn't be disruptive.

Typography overall need not be flat. You're only restricted by your imagination. For instance, if you're designing a poster with the word 'SUMMER', there's no reason why you shouldn't explore the letters with beach-themed objects. If it hits the tone of the brief then great, if it doesn't, it'll reaffirm that the other design direction you've done is the better solution.

05

A SINGLE-MINDED MESSAGE

Does your design enhance the message? Is it original in a way that communicates a different solution to a real problem? Is it clear and uncluttered? This level of intelligence is the 'wow factor' Creative Directors are looking for. Don't be fooled, cleverness is often frighteningly simple.

06

CREATIVITY

If you can implement the previous five points, you've got the foundation of a good design, but that's only 50% of it.

A truly great design injects the above fundamentals with a big idea. A big idea is the springboard into relevant and multi-layered conversations. Conversations that are compelling enough to effortlessly guide the customer on a journey that informs and engages them to take action. A creative spark that's simple and immediate. You'll know you've done this when you've captured attention, created delight and delivered meaning.

Think broadly. Your big idea should be a continuous story that lives on all relevant touch points.