

Steven Sherlin

## Research Proposal

### Research Problem Statement

The research problem for this project was to develop a brand campaign for a fictional store. I needed to choose what type of store I would design for, conduct some research, and then design relevant graphics. This would include creating a logo, developing a brand identity system, designing packaging concepts, producing a print-based mailer, and making a brand style guide/booklet. All elements in this brand campaign needed to show consistency and harmony with one another. Staying true to foundational brand design guidelines was important at all stages of this project. The concept for my store was an organic food supply exclusively for dogs and cats. I imagined a company that was focused on animal health and high-quality organic nutrition. I wanted to develop brand campaign that incorporated vibrant colors and had an up-beat, happy feel to it. I also wanted the pieces I designed to be simple, reflecting to straightforwardness of my store's mission; to supply organic food specifically for dogs and cats.

### Communication Objective

The goal of this project was to visually communicate a brand persona and value system. The elements I designed needed to be able to communicate with the company's target market in the most effective and focused way possible. The first thing I needed to do was to create a strategy. I needed to decide on a name for my store. Then, I conducted some research to figure out what kind of visual themes I wanted to showcase in by branding designs. I looked at what other companies in the pet food industry do for visuals to get some ideas. I browsed through a number of different online platforms looking for inspiration. I wanted the name to be both light-hearted and somehow related to cats and dogs. I decided on the name Whiskers Organic. I already had an idea about what kind of products my store would sell (organic cat/dog food), but I hadn't yet picked a location for it. The location I settled on was a small, but nice strip mall in Charlottesville, VA. After researching companies that could be potential competitors with Whiskers Organic, I developed the unique selling point for my company. The selling point is found in the fact that it only sells organic products, and also in the fact that those products are all exclusively for cats and dogs. Whiskers Organic's market positioning is upper-mid to high-end as far as pet food stores are concerned. After all, our customers need to both care about quality nutrition for their pets, and also be willing to pay for organic options. Whiskers Organic's target consumers are 30+ years old pet owners who are health-conscious and relatively well-off financially.

### Visual Solution

After weeks of thorough planning, research, composition, critique, and lots of hard work, the branding campaign I developed for Whiskers Organic has finally reached the potential I thought it could when I started this project. The various elements of the campaign display the up-beat, happy attitude of the company, even while staying consistent with the established brand design guidelines. The logo, tagline, identity system, mailer, and packaging I designed worked together nicely to create one unified whole. Through the use of color, simple designs, and an emphasis on health, I believe this campaign successfully promotes Whiskers Organic and its values.

### **Production**

When it came to producing the visuals, the project had to go through a number of draft stages. The process of designing the logo for Whiskers Organic involved developing 100 thumbnail sketches that explored various logo possibilities. I took the three strongest candidates from this group and developed/refined them further. The next step was to develop digital iterations of the logo. I played around with configurations with the icon and typographic portion of the logo. I also experimented with a number of different color schemes. Next, I worked on Whiskers Organic's identity system. The system includes a letterhead, a business card, a note card, and an envelope. The next item I designed was an advertising mailer. After multiple rounds of critique on this piece, and on the other elements in the branding campaign, I was able to move forward and start developing final designs that are much stronger than the original iterations I came up with. All of the pieces I designed for this project stayed within certain visual boundaries which I compiled in a brand style guide booklet. This booklet details all of the branding guidelines for Whiskers Organic. This includes guidelines for typography, proper logo use, brand colors, etc. The last part of the project was to create packaging for the brand's products. These include a screen-printed canvas shopping bag, a labeled can for cat food, and a custom-made box for dog treats.