CULTIVATING COLLABORATION:
Optimizing Communication Between
Designers and Non-Designers
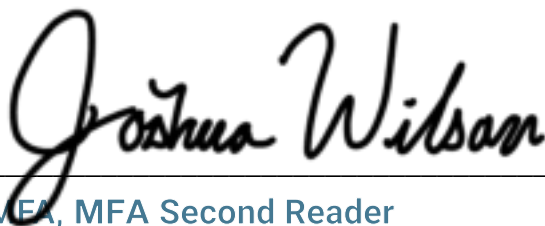
SIGNATURES

David Wayne Meyer

David Wayne Meyer MFA, Chair

Bruce Kirk

Bruce Kirk EdD, First Reader

Joshua Wilson

Joshua Wilson MFA, MFA Second Reader

Pamela Miller MFA, Department Chair

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ABSTRACT

Clients and designers, having different tacit knowledge, fail to effectively communicate with each other during the design process. These inadequacies risk relationships, reputations, and project success. This issue has long been recognized in the field of design, often as a concern with client involvement. This research aims to identify these complications in the design process and inform how they might be amended. Specifically, it investigates how the relationship between designers and clients can be improved in order to garner better communication and greater project success. In this context, clients are defined as non-designers that commission design professionals. A literature review as well as several case studies and visual analyses conclude that collaboration, empathy, and project structure improve communication and project outcomes. These findings will inform a proposed visual solution that aims to provide knowledge and structure to client-designer partnerships in order to facilitate these benefits.

Chapter 1: Introduction

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Clients and designers, having differing tacit knowledge, fail to effectively communicate with each other during the design process, risking relationships, reputations, and project success.

86% of people (including both employees and executives) recognize "the lack of effective collaboration and communication as the main causes for workplace failures," whereas teams that practice effective communication see up to 25% more productivity ("Communication Statistics ....").

In today's competitive market, exceptional graphics can make a company stand out. Graphic designers provide these effective assets while balancing client requests with user needs. However, patrons that realize they can benefit from graphic design are often unfamiliar with its concepts and methods. This leads to articulating their requests in an unclear way that constrains the efficiency of the process.

Clients unaware of their own inefficiencies often make vague requests of their hired designers that present risk of misunderstanding. By encouraging a partnership wherein clients and designers can communicate effectively, design teams can be more productive; save time and money; and curate better project solutions.

Publishing a narrative that explains how to best collaborate and communicate (and why it is important) can foster these measurable outcomes. Such measurements could include assessments of client feedback and reviews as well as the quality of design work and user experience. Observation of engagement could also measure the success and popularity of the deliverables as well as their effects on client-designer relationships.

OBJECTIVES

For the author's undergraduate senior project, an award-winning compost education campaign was developed. However, despite the meticulous amount of effort, research, and outreach, the project solution remained hypothetical. The objective is to research a problem more related to the field of design. In this way, the project can be learned and benefited from by the author regardless of if it is utilized to a further extent. Therefore, the thesis addresses client-designer relationships and how to improve them. The goal is to identify inefficiencies in designer-client communication; reveal methods of improvement; and inform a visual solution.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• Which dynamics affect designer-client relationships?

• What are the causes of insufficient collaboration?

• How might they differ across disciplines?

• What are the consequences of miscommunication?

• How can communication best be optimized?

• What are the benefits of improved collaboration?

• How are designers and their clients persuaded?

KNOWLEDGE GAP

The studies cited in the literature review were transparent about the limitations of their results. These mostly consisted of questioning if the findings were applicable to people and institutions outside of the studies, as they were limited to their participants. However, there were no findings that questioned the validity of the consensus established across this research. In other words, multiple resources coming to the same conclusions independent of each other strengthens the validity of these findings. Nevertheless, it can still be concluded that any approach to advising individuals would not be universally applicable. This is where encouraging an empathetic approach can guide partners to discover a dynamic that is more tailored and agreeable to their situation. Where there seemed to be a gap in available research was literature that incorporated clients to the same level as these studies did with designers. In another instance of conclusions that may not be universally applicable, the relevant case studies that quoted clients and non-designers were fewer and more limited than ones that relied on design experts. As client opinions on design processes are often facilitated by designers, there may be biases at play that influence the validity of some sources and discoveries. This poses an area of potential future research that utilizes non-designers as primary sources in order to supplement the plethora of design literature with relevant client parallels. The research also varied by discipline, so it is uncertain how the findings might be altered if the research were to be applied to fields such as industrial or product design.

SIGNIFICANCE

This thesis and proposal will use design as a resource to influence the field of design itself and its communications. After all, graphic design is communication (Barnard), as well as a vital tool that, when utilized correctly, can influence social and societal issues (Frascara 1). In this way, what is at stake can vary from mundane to life-altering. Regardless of these circumstances, clients that hire designers value how their brand is communicated to users. This desire for expert visual communication drives the profession of design and is the foundation of a client-designer relationship. This partnership has been discussed since the emergence of the field, but the modern trend across more informal literature in the design community often portrays clients as more of a mandatory inconvenience than as potential partners (Hryhorsky). This dismissive outlook is unproductive and further drives a rift between designers and non-designers (Akama). Rather, these inconveniences that clients pose to designers are a result of differing tacit knowledge and poor communication (Bruce). This thesis investigates these issues and how they might be addressed in order to foster more genuine and productive partnerships in the design process.

Chapter 2: Research

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following pages curate research pertaining to the field of design; relationships and interactions between designers and clients; and the design critique process. These sources provide contextual evidence that proves that clients and designers, having differing tacit knowledge, fail to communicate effectively with each other during the design process, risking relationships, reputations, and project success. This evidence supports the need for investigating how to amend this identified problem. A review of relevant literature found consensuses that are discussed in six sections.

Because of their relational relevancies, some of these discussions incorporate overlap with each other. These intersecting ideas reinforce the validity of one another and together paint a picture of the complexities at work in client-designer relationships and how they might be influenced for improved communication and better results.

1. **Client partners**
   Why clients are a focus

2. **Empathy**
   Why and how empathy is essential to ideal communication

3. **Collaboration**
   Why and how a collaborative dynamic is the most productive

4. **Structure**
   Why and how partially structuring interactions yields the best results

5. **Effective feedback**
   What are potential disconnects and what is effective critique language

6. **Avoided consequences**
   What are consequences of not practicing effective communication

1 Client Partners

Perception of the Client

Perceptions are important to investigate with respect to how they influence client and designer relationships. Michael Bierut is a leading graphic designer, critic, and educator who has continually curated critical writings on the field of design for publication. His writings agree with the claim that will be discussed in section three: that the relationship shared between clients and designers is meant to be a partnership (Bierut 19). However, although many designers use this idea promotionally, " privately, most designers would concede that most of their client relationships are anything but partnerships, a fact that's seen as both frustrating and basically unchangeable" (Bierut 19). In order to explain this concession shared among designers and why it seems "unchangeable," Bierut uses an extreme metaphor that compares designers and clients to participants of the Milgram Shock Experiment:

The subjects in Milgram's experiments often wanted desperately to quit, but they just couldn't get up and walk away. What kept them at the shock panel wasn't the $4.50 they were being paid but their idea that the experimenter, and not they, and certainly not the helpless subject

at the receiving end of the wire, was in charge... Designers, even in a climate that finds us more and more driven to question the social and ethical underpinnings of our work, cede the same authority to our clients. And when we're roused to our feet by a call to action, second thoughts set in. "That's easy for him (Tibor, Milton, fill in the blank) to say, "but my clients won't let me do that." But of course that's not true. In fact, we don't know what would happen if we tried. We take too much pride in the quality of our "service" to find out... The designer-client relationship can and should be a partnership. It's time to stop blaming the client when it's not. Our work can and should serve society. It should serve an audience beyond ourselves, beyond our clients, and beyond the next design annual (Bierut 21-2).

This "second thought" that impedes communication between designers and clients can be far outweighed by what there is to gain from a collaborative partnership. This will be relevant to future sections of this discussion and identifies a need for designers to engage with their clients rather than letting them have complete direction over a project.

The Client Partner

The roles played between partners in the design process are relevant to investigate when examining the dynamic between them. The AIGA code of ethics states:

A professional designer does not undertake speculative work or proposals (spec work) in which a client requests work without compensation and without developing a professional relationship that permits the designer sufficient access to the client to provide a responsible recommendation and without compensation (Bierut 231).

Therefore, clients are recognized as invaluable partners to designers not only for financial reasons, but also for opportunities for collaboratively creating work (Falcão). In this way, it can be inferred that designers have much to gain from collaborating with clients who provide them with professional opportunities. Matt Hryhorsky is a Product Design Leader, UX Strategist, Speaker, and Design Educator who claims clients themselves can be identified as designers in that they are invested in the development and success of the process (Hryhorsky). They also have expertise in their own disciplines that they contribute, albeit not always in ways that are transparently understood by others. It can be deduced that if client communication could be better understood, they would make for better partners and contribute to a more efficient process. In a similar manner, it is also relevant that another published observation views clients as "co-authors" and not just commissioners that present a project but are removed from the process (Falcão). Using this analogy, it can be extrapolated that clients can improve their authorship by better understanding how their readers understand their writing. Expanding on the concept of co-authors, it is also accurate to describe design teams (clients included) as co-editors, especially with respect to the critique process.

Including the Client

One example that demonstrates this collaborative dynamic and some benefits that can be earned by including clients in the design and critique processes is Anstey Healy Design (Make). A successful small firm and the focus of an article published by the Portland Business Journal, Anstey Healy Design has clients that appreciate being included in the creative process. Just as the design partners at a firm work closely together, clients can be involved just as intimately rather than being excluded. Clients prefer when designers are able to listen to and refine their vague ideas into tangible success (Make). This exemplifies how the relationship between a non-designer and their designer can benefit from open communication and collaboration that empower the client. At present, Anstey Healy Design has been re-branded as Flint Design Company (Vineyard). Their team "is a leader in brand development for specialty products" that "...help food, beverage and lifestyle companies connect their values to their brand, and position them for growth" (*Studio – Flint Design Co*).

2 Empathy

Empathizing with Partners

In her peer-reviewed writing, "Kaleidoscope of roles: Valuing the agencies of the audience, client and the designer," award-winning professor Yoko Akama identified one disconnect that may be among previously mentioned differing client perceptions is a stereotype that designers are egocentric (Akama 7). There is also a preconception shared by many designers that clients are often frustrating to work with (Hryhorsky), not to mention intimidating (Bierut 19-22). These misconceptions can lead to mistrust and skepticism, but demonstrating empathy can alleviate this. Especially if both partners practice empathy, they will be able to reciprocally develop respect, understanding, and collaborative success. However, designers should be careful not to *over*-identify with clients in a way that exploits or tarnishes the integrity of their expertise (Bierut et al. 77).

Empathy in the Design Process

It has been established that clients are essential to the design process, and therefore it is important to be able to recognize and bridge disconnects between designers and their clients that are lacking in design experience. Because, as previously stated, the interactions between a client and designer are crucial to the outcome of a project, a human centered approach becomes important (Akama). Conversing with the client partner yields clarification regarding project goals and how to best achieve them, and having a diversity of stakeholders invested in the design process enables more complex interactions and possibilities to be considered.

In a 1979 publication of *Educational Technology*, training consultant Ann Deden-Parker writes that being present and engaging; having empathy; and compromising with clients in order to meet their needs and make them feel heard, can enable designers to foster effective and ongoing relationships with their clients (Deden-Parker 44-5).

Deden-Parker also addresses this in the context of highlighting the importance of educating these methods and in what ways designers can "develop consultative skills." Some motifs in this writing include that the client needs to feel heard by the designer in a respectful and collaborative way and that client-designer interactions are important for design scholars to consider and learn about navigating.

When initiating contact with a client, a designer may generally be said to have two goals: to put the client at ease and to collect information required for a long list of design decisions (Deden-Parker 44).

Therefore, designers have a responsibility to extrapolate what they need from a client in a respectful manner rather than relying on the client to know what is relevant. As established in the previous section, it is important to acknowledge clients' input rather than being direct and dismissive, as supporting their suggestions reassures them and builds rapport.

Empathy and Success

What may come as a surprise is that the source investigated in the previous paragraph is decades old. While this is usually seen as a setback when it comes to evaluating the credibility of a source to utilize, its relevance supports that this thesis addresses a historic problem in the field. The themes from Deden-Parker's writing share multiple points of overlap with other sources cited in this review. This consensus strengthens the arguments as well as provides historical factors that contextualize the dynamics of client-designer relationships and how navigating them has been a priority since the emergence of the field. For example, at the time of writing, video demonstrations of how designers can facilitate successful critique were under development (Deden-Parker 46). This demonstrates that deliverables to supplement the design process have long been valued and raises the question of how they might differ in the future. In addition to this being a long-term consideration, it is also an international and multi-disciplinary one, as the sources cited in this review originate from a variety of nations and cover design across various fields.

One study conducted in Portugal by Dr. Gonçalo Falcão summarizes the argument in the previous paragraph well:

...Much of an industrial designer's success depends on the ability to interact effectively with clients whose needs and perspectives are affected by contingencies quite different from those operating on faculty/clients in educational settings (Falcão).

Designers should be able to facilitate this conversation while being empathetic with the client as well as with users. In another source that values empathy, award-winning UX Designer Uyen Vicky Vo writes that informing clients about the role and expertise of a designer; representing their audience needs; and being transparent about a practical workflow will earn designers more mutual understanding with their clients. There exists a knowledge gap between designers and their non-designer clients, so being aware of this gap, sharing knowledge, compromising, and "being empathetic" allows for better client-designer relationships (Vo). In this way, educating clients so they have a better understanding of creative expertise leads to more efficient processes.

3 Collaboration

Collaborative vs. Hierarchical Relationships

In addition to designers involving and being empathetic with clients, it is important that the client also collaborates with the designer. Recognized author, researcher, and professor Philippe d'Anjou observes that in a client-designer relationship, the decision-making process can be designer-dominant, client-dominant, or collaborative (d'Anjou). The most effective relationship is collaborative (see Fig. 1), since a designer-dominant dynamic which grants designers full authority creates a gap in communication that omits client needs.

Alternatively, a client-dominant relationship compromises the designer's professional expertise and integrity. "Client-designer cooperation" is the solution: project goals are best met through collaboration; mutual sharing of respective expertise; and reaching a shared agreement through authentic conversation (d'Anjou).

In a recent similar study, scholar Yu Yu labels varying collaborations as facilitating, delivering, and partnering approaches. "Facilitating" designers act as coaches who train and inform clients. "Delivering" designers work independent from their client to provide them with expertise; and "partnering" designers participate alongside their clients in a mutually affecting design process. This is again where empathy is relevant, because empathizing with individuals demonstrates adaptability to their needs:

The experts we interviewed pointed out that research, observation, empathy, and creativity are particularly required for the delivering approach, while coaching, mentoring, facilitating, and change management skills are needed for the facilitating approach. They suggested that designers seeking to change the nature of their practices from delivering to partnering or facilitating need to be more knowledgeable of organisational contexts, practices, processes, and culture (Yu 103).

These varying dynamics are important to review because, in the words of published author Margaret Bruce:

Depicting a taxonomy of client-design consultant relationships highlights the choices available to both client and design professional for working together (422).

This assists in achieving an ideal collaborative partnership because this knowledge and understanding helps the client and designer to be on the same page, as well as requires mutual willingness, competency, respect, and empathy (d'Anjou). In Bierut's more observational writing, content (or also considered as the user) is identified as a common priority across designers, regardless of how they value their authority in comparison to that of their clients.

This idea of "making content the issue" unifies people in favor of project outcomes:

…Designers are more often tempted to serve more urgently demanding gods: their clients on one hand, their inner muses on the other. What the world demands, however, is something more. Call it content, call it substance, call it meaning: it is the too-often forgotten heart of what we do. (Bierut 147).

This shared priority provides a foundation for collaboration and incentive for active participation. It also paints a picture of overcoming personal biases in order to prioritize project goals and outcomes.

Figure 1: A visualization of d'Anjou's collaboration model.

Engaging Collaboration

Another consensus across literature is that ideal collaboration requires designers to actively contribute their expertise rather than being "rigid role-players" (d'Anjou). Returning to Yoko Akama's publication:

There is a genuine desire for designers to be in a mutually respectful relationship with their clients and other team members who they work with, rather than being delegated the task of a 'stylist' or 'window-dresser' at the tail end of the design process (Akama 3).

Similarly, a project brief is not a 'to-do' list, but outlines a problem-solving challenge with which to engage (Falcão). Internationally recognized expert Peter L. Phillips used an analogy to express this idea: designers should not be "taxi drivers," happy to serve without asking questions, but respected as professionals. He writes that "a truly collaborative design brief process can make a major difference in the way design is perceived by nondesign executives" (13). Therefore, being a collaborative practicing designer not only develops better design relationships, but also engages clients and deepens their understanding of the design process.

In this way, designers and clients are partners that work with each other instead of working for a superior (Phillips 180). This consensus helps in resolving the hesitation and perceived authority identified in the first section by encouraging designers to fulfill roles of engaging partners.

Collaboration Builds Relationships

Projects by design teams that include non-designers not only benefit from active collaboration, but also by prolonged collaboration. Long-term relationships with a deep understanding between partners are beneficial in that they "engender mutual respect and trust between the client and design professional, which facilitates the creation of effective design solutions" (Bruce 402). Such long-term relationships enable designers to develop tacit knowledge about their client and their preferences, thereby leading to more productive design developments (Flint Design Company exemplified this). They are also symbiotic in that designers benefit professionally from successful consults and clients benefit from the development of their brand. Even though this brand development is proven to be essential to corporate success, clients expressed in a survey that while they utilized design expertise, they did not have a formal design strategy (Bruce 409).

Therefore, designers are invaluable to clients because they are relied on to represent their brand and can signify how brand strategies drive success. In order for this process to be set up for such success, the designer needs to understand and visualize the project goals and the client must communicate them in a way that is clearly understood. Thus, "personal chemistry, mutual trust and respect and understanding each other's language" are essential to achieving this and developing long-term partnerships (Bruce 403). Just as design affects a brand, this management of consultants during the design process was also found to be crucial to project outcomes and will be further discussed in the following sections.

4 Structure

Studies on Structure

Multiple studies found that collaboration with a "semi-structured" or "scaffolded" (see Fig. 2) format resulted in more reliable and specific feedback that garnered less misunderstandings; more involvement; and better designs (Luther et al.). In one of these studies that compared results from testing open-ended, semi-structured, and structured workshops, scholar Alma Leora Culén found that semi-structured methods yielded the most success with respect to the diversity of concepts, scope of solutions, and level of involvement (Culén et al.). This research saw that the tools a team uses become more important if the team is composed of or includes non-designers, and that semi-structured processes enable "collaborative co-shaping, appropriation and improvisation." This is relevant to how this thesis could be optimally structured, as well as how designers and non-designers' level of restrictions in the design process affects the outcome of the collaboration.

Another study, conducted by widely acclaimed Dr. Kurt Luther, "built a web-based system called CrowdCrit that allows designers to submit preliminary designs, receive critiques from many crowd workers, and explore the aggregated results using an interactive

visualization" (Luther et al.). The development of CrowdCrit was based on tested research that concluded that a scaffolded format with pre-written options resulted in more reliable and specific feedback that resulted in less misunderstandings and better designs. The critiques were also more consistent and thorough, even coming from participants with little to no design experience, as the structure was found to "help novice crowds adopt the process and language of visual design critique" (Luther et al.). This is because the scaffolding provided categories that identified points of design feedback: "Readability, Layout, Balance, Simplicity, Emphasis, Consistency, and Appropriateness" (Luther et al.). This will also be relevant to the next section regarding how feedback in the design process could be improved.

Structuring Communication

Clients and designers can practice this semi-structured approach in their communication with each other. Clients should respect the expertise of their designer when briefing projects, providing enough direction to define the project, but not place too much restraint as to dictate design decisions (Bruce). Likewise, author and professor Anders Haug states that designers should also explain to clients that while being flexible does allow creativity, it is more efficient to set practical requirements (Haug). In this way, partners that can collaborate within agreed upon project guidelines will have an ideal structure off of which they can achieve success. This communication of expectations will be further referenced in the next section.

Establishing common language at the start of a project builds a foundation of expectations upon which such a collaborative relationship can be built. This foundation is essential because, as a participating designer from this study states, "the only level of feedback you get is from the client, and they let you know whether it's been successful or not for these reasons" (Akama 6). This highlights the importance of critique sessions and how the clients' ability to communicate, as well as the designers' comprehension of this communication, are essential to the success of designs.

This research also suggested a "New Design Space… where, collectively, they will generate many new ways of expression, experiencing and meaning-making" (Akama 8-9). This proposed space speculates new areas of research and discourse that the thesis might supplement.

Design critique sessions also provide structure to communication to "systematize the feedback process and spend time productively" (Torozyan). Published by Dr. Laura Forlano, a study funded a two-year long international collaboration that investigated "the culture of critique" in the field of design (Forlano 280). This culture was found to be largely studio-based and confirmed the vitality of the critique practice. There was a consensus that while it is important to involve critique throughout the design process:

It is particularly important to get feedback from the client as early as possible in the design process in order to align the approach with the client's goals (Forlano 293).

In its discussion, this study expressed a need for a virtual tool that would "support the different styles, approaches, languages and values of critique that are common in the studio with a specific focus on openness, multiplicity and collaboration" (Forlano 294).

Tools that Provide Structure

Design briefs are an opportunity to identify parameters and develop understanding. Because they provide structure, they can also foster creativity as well as save time. While the client partner determines the project brief, the design partner has a responsibility "to clarify and determine what is relevant for this specific product development, and what is not" (Haug). This is essential in understanding the project, so having a reliable brief is vital. Sometimes, designers provide clients with the structure to design a brief, but even a well-designed brief can fall victim to insufficient user responses (answering with "customers" as the target audience, for example) (Phillips 2). This demonstrates the disconnect between partners in business and design roles. It also identifies the need for clarification in collaborative communications. Falcão's proposed solution to ineffective briefs is to remove them altogether: "There should be no briefing but an open call for action in a certain area or context." While this provides debate pertaining to the validity of a design brief, it poses agreement with the necessity of discussion which briefs aim to structure.

In her book that discusses ethics in graphic design, Lucienne Roberts writes:

With regard to the client, in order to do my job properly I engage with their brief - I'm not just a mouthpiece for them. Ideally there is a two-way discourse. They're the client and have the final say, but there are ways in which I can influence them too (Roberts 49).

This demonstrates how collaboration, as in the previous section, enables partners to communicate. Rather than discarding them, Roberts explains how clients and designers should optimize briefs via communication.

Clients and designers *both* have knowledge within their own disciplines that is often relevant to their projects. Using visual tools to communicate can help partners understand each other.

For example, clients can provide the designer with relevant design examples that they value. However, it is essential for the client to identify what they value about any samples that they provide:

When you're sending through your north star example to a designer — 'We're looking for something along the lines of this.' — consider clarifying whether or not you want the designer to use it for creative musings, or if you're actually looking for something more 'plug-and-play.' If the former, specifically pointing out the key elements of the example that you admire or want incorporated in the final asset (i.e. the layout vs. the color palette vs. the image selection) will help give the designer guardrails (that won't hurt their creativity!) within which to work (Projector).

In a similar way, designers can provide examples to the client. Utilizing mock-ups that visualize the final project has been found to assist clients in providing efficient feedback (Forlano 296). Just as clients need to provide context with their examples, designers need to provide context for their designs and how they may or may not be changed moving forward (Hryhorsky).
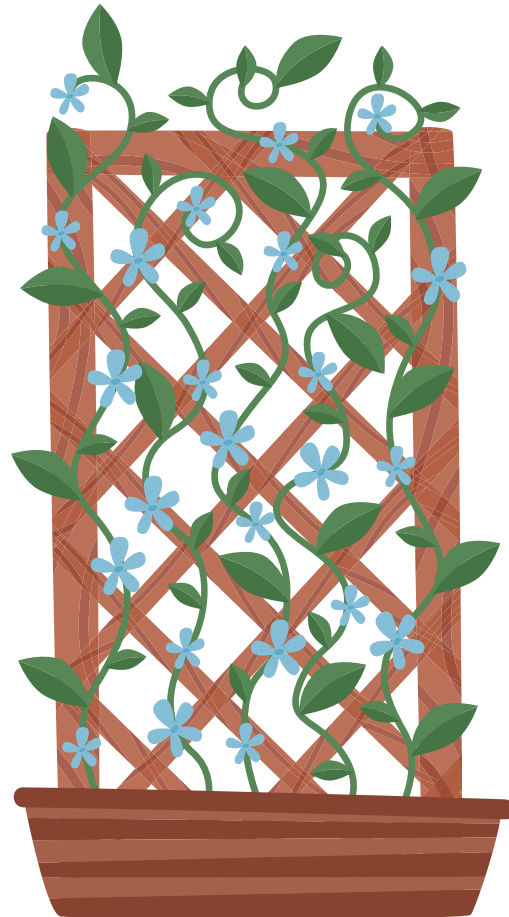
Figure 2: Structural support increases opportunity for potential growth.

5 Effective Feedback

Establishing Common Language

In considering how to advise, the way one communicates is just as important as the content of what they are communicating (Teixeira). A project is reliant on communication that moves things forward, although this might be achieved in more than one way. One firm's "language of critique" incorporates: "emphasizing consensus, participation and collaboration including aspects such as flattening group hierarchy, discussing the reasons one would say no to another's idea, embracing diverse perspectives, focusing on a common goal, and keeping it fun" (Forlano 283, 285). This is important to consider, both in terms of how to communicate to an audience of non-designers, and the direction given to them on how they might also communicate. Renowned authority on communication design Jorge Frascara states:

The rational analysis of the problem at hand, and the verbal articulation of both the problem and the proposed action, are extremely useful elements not only for the designer's understanding of the problem but also for the client's understanding of the designer's perceptions and intentions.

One of the main tasks of the designer is to create a relation of trust with the client. For this to happen, the designer must speak the language of the client (which is normally verbal, not visual), and a culturally respected language as well (which is rational, not subjective). The verbal and rational articulation of the design problem, starting with the definition of the problem itself, is therefore an essential element in the designer's task. This articulation is essential, particularly when considering designing as a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary effort.

This is vital to the thesis because it identifies communication "essential" to a solution and also verifies the discussions of collaboration and empathy.

Managing Expectations

It is crucial for designers "to set expectations for the state of [their] designs and what feedback would be the most helpful for [them] to receive" (Projector). Setting expectations, as well as involving clients in the design process and demonstrating examples, are some methods designers can employ to better satisfy unclear client requests:

We expect feedback, but often designers don't provide feedback expectations" (Hryhorsky).

This reinforces the importance of incorporating communication with clients to the design process in order to receive feedback. Regarding managing these set expectations, partners are advised not to "dwell on the details and do not become attached to a specific solution" (Torozyan). This allows the project to develop in unforeseen ways that can benefit stakeholders, as demonstrated in the following example.

In her thesis at Texas Tech University, Veronica Medina concludes that conducting "message overhaul" can interrupt the design process and is an issue that can be prevented by starting with clearly stated project goals (Medina 24). However, regarding message overhaul, it is also agreed upon that the process of critique itself may build upon the message by improving both "visual and verbal elements" (Medina 25). This demonstrates how critique can benefit design teams and their projects. However, the critique must be well understood.

Facilitating Effective Feedback

In one of his articles, experienced UX architect Anush Torozyan explains that effective feedback should: address the central problem; address the context; ask precise questions; avoid subjectivity; and be clear and specific (Torozyan). Explaining these qualities to non-designers will assist them in sharing their contributions in ways that are efficient. In addition, designers should also be masters at giving critique, as "learning how to ask for, receive, and give constructive feedback will help you to see the gaps in your work and grow as a professional" (Torozyan). While other sources claim that clients are designers in their own way (Hryhorsky), this source highlights the importance of collaborators recognizing and respecting their assigned roles. This recognition of roles demonstrates empathy, collaboration, and structure at practice.

Torozyan also states that when giving feedback, readers should investigate the problem(s) they might have with a design rather than discussing subjective opinions. Demonstrating the accuracy of this advice, Medina's study found that clients use descriptors such as "it just looks off" when referencing unsatisfactory layouts (Medina 27).

This exemplifies the sort of vague jargon that is often used by non-designers when providing feedback. This poses an issue because describing feelings ("I think," "I believe," "I feel," "I like," or, "I don't like") is irrelevant and unproductive in a critique (Phillips 59). Instead, identifying how the object of the opinion can work towards achieving project goals redirects the conversation towards actionable feedback. It is not useful to make unhelpful, irrelevant comments or suggest solutions. Rather, it is more productive to state a problem or ask questions that enable the designer to refine a solution (Torozyan).

Another similar article addresses non-designers, educating them about effective feedback and providing another source that validates the consensus regarding this communication of feedback. Suggestions include: referencing the context of the design rather than the visuals themselves; maintaining objectivity; being specific when clarifying provided examples; expressing what is wanted; and communicating the rationale (Projector). Spending time explaining context and reasoning rather than personal preference leads to faster and more accurate results.

Of course, it is also important for a designer to use productive language during critiques as well:

In discussing design work with their clients, designers are direct about the functional parts of their solutions and obfuscate like mad about the intuitive parts, having learned early on that telling the simple truth—"I don't know, I just like it that way"— simply won't do… I discovered in short order that most clients seemed grateful for the rationale as well. It put aside arguments about taste; it helped them make the leap of faith that any design decision requires; it made the design understandable to wider audiences (Bierut 176).

Critique sessions also allow partners to debate the design and learn about each others' preferences and expertise. Overall, participants in Medina's study believed that the performance and success of a message (often measured by level of engagement) was reliant on the layout of its design (Medina 26). According to the participating designers, the non-designers also prioritized the choice of color too highly and too often and were observed to have an aversion to white space and preference for crowding available space.

These findings identify a disconnect between client requests and design expertise, as the designers in the study "felt that they had to help their clients understand how information overload can actually lose viewers" (Medina 29). Because of these differences in priorities among designers and non-designers, "the critique process improved communication between project members by allowing them to clarify what they were thinking during design development" (Medina 30).

In agreement with other sources, co-founder of UX Collective Fabricio Teixeira writes that feedback can be optimized by prioritizing the goal and purpose of a design; offering solutions but trusting the designer for refinement; and being available to collaborate (Teixeira). User needs should be prioritized, and this should be reflected in a design and its process. It is important to not be prescriptive when providing feedback: "tactical feedback can not only limit how innovative and exciting a certain solution is, but can undermine the team's confidence in coming up with solutions on their own" (Teixeira). The relevant consensus here is that design considerations should always circle back to the original intended function, and that tactical feedback limits how a designer can employ their expertise themselves.

6 Avoided Consequences

It has been discussed how client and designer interactions can be optimized and the benefits of this optimization, but it is also important to review what is at stake when partners fail to communicate. An infamous example of the perils of miscommunication is NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter. The cost of the mission would be almost half a billion dollars today and failed when partners did not convert from English units to metric ("Mars Climate Orbiter"). In this case, failing to employ a common language had extreme consequences. As demonstrated by this example, unpreparedness such as "internal resistance, lack of overview and coordination, or product-centric sales force" can impede success, whereas "proactive approaches" facilitate successful development and processes (Yu 81-2).

Design management consultant Terry Lee Stone identifies various problems that could also be aided with the thesis: missed deadlines, miscommunication, off-target creative, non-involvement of the principles, bad chemistry, excessive revisions, fear or issues with the design solution, delays in client input or approvals (Stone).

Each of these issues can be detrimental to projects, businesses, and partnerships. They can also affect users and their relationship with brands (Aaker et al.). In this way, dedicating time and effort to the improvement of communication in the design process is not only proactive, but also preventative.

Such preventive measures can also pay off financially. In "Reducing Disconnects in the Design Agency-Client Relationship," scholar Harold L. Koch DBA writes that neglecting essential processes and failing to share critical information were identified to lead to dysfunction and mistrust. These miscommunications were observed to have monetary consequences: "the recent trend for larger business clients to require error and omission insurance policies… can cost the agency $10,000 per year in premiums for $1 million in coverage to compensate for damage to the brand."

Conclusion

Since the emergence of the graphic design field, there has been a consensus across literature that designers have a responsibility to collaborate with their clients. This entails including them in the process; being empathetic; and providing structure for critiques in order to engage actionable feedback. Failing to incorporate these dynamics during interactions between clients and designers leads to disadvantage communication that risks finances, relationships, integrity, and solutions. These conclusions identify miscommunication among non-designers as a complication in the design process and inform how it might be amended. Multiple sources also identify that general advice might not work for everyone because individuals have unique circumstances and interactions. This is where empathy is again essential; not only in reassuring the client, but also in order to enable accommodation for their unique needs.

STAKEHOLDERS

Individual

While the thesis focuses heavily on clients, the initial audience for the proposed solution should also be designers. It is expected that non-designers do not have a natural curiosity or incentive to develop design-related skills, so informing and persuading design professionals about the proposal will lead them to share it with clients at their own discretion. Therefore, the proposal needs to work for teams of both clients and designers. Because the proposal should impact the results of design endeavors that consider the proposed solution in the development process, it will also affect the end users and stakeholders invested in these projects.

Societal

Because design is so interdisciplinary, societal stakeholders that might garner the benefits of improved communication in their design processes could be from any industry. Within the field of design, the thesis aims to amend any negative preconceptions that clients and designers may have of each other as well as innovate their outlook of design processes with respect to client involvement and communication.

Institutional

There is not only much to gain from higher potential project success earned through collaboration, but also much to lose from failing to communicate effectively. An infamous example that demonstrates institutional stakeholders affected by the perils of miscommunication is NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter. The cost of the mission would be almost half a billion dollars today and failed when partners did not convert from English units to metric ("Mars Climate Orbiter"). In this case, extreme consequences were faced by a governmental agency for failing to employ a common language.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

The research supports the hypothesized thesis and the idea that stakeholders have much to lose from miscommunication and much to gain from collaboration. Stakeholders can deepen their understanding; develop genuine relationships; and increase their potential success while decreasing disconnects, miscommunication, and liabilities. The original problem statement for the thesis was regarding clients providing inefficient feedback during the design process. However, this statement was amended during the research phase in recognition of its findings. In addition to refining the problem, the research sought to identify potential solutions. While the literature review accomplished this, conducting case studies and visual analyses of relevant artifacts can supplement the knowledge gap and inform the visual solution.

RESEARCH METHODS

Case Studies

- Define who initiated and is responsible for the project.

- Identify the motivation of the project.

- Summarize the project.

- Identify challenges they faced.

- Project outcome.

- Identify and connect relevant elements back to the identified problem or theoretical solution.

Visual Analyses

- What does the selection depict?

- Who is the audience?

- How do people consume the visual solution?

- How is this project embedded in a wider cultural context?

- What is the interrelation between the image, the form, or object, and the accompanying text?

- Compositional Interpretation

- Content Analysis

- Semiotics

- Iconography

- What aesthetic choices led to the success or failure of the visual solution?

- How do the aesthetic choices made relate/connect back to your identified problem or theoretical solution?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Case Study One

Penji is an "unlimited graphic design platform" that "supports thousands of brands and agencies worldwide" (Garces). On their site, Karen Garces, entrepreneur and content writer, advises design clients: "How to Effectively Communicate with Your Graphic Designer." She introduces the topic by detailing why effective communication is important, then provides tips on how to achieve it and provides examples. This is an appropriate case study because its purpose is to inform a target audience of design clients. As an example, Garces visualizes the varieties of typefaces to demonstrate how clients can provide direction in the decision-making design process. This also starts bridging the gap in tacit knowledge among designers and non-designers and also supports the idea of client-designer collaboration.

This article was published in Penji's "Learning Center." This context is relevant because the case demonstrates the perspective of a brand that aims to recruit designers and clients to work together. The consensus is strengthened by this point of view because even when attempting to convince clients to join their design service, Penji values teaching them and expressing the

importance and nuances of effective communication:

...Thorough communication not only paves the way for transparency. But it also promotes a better working relationship that will reflect on the final outcome.

The first section serves to establish the persuasion and relevancy of the content and is titled, "Why You Need to Communicate With Graphic Designers Effectively" (Garces). This wording has a more demanding and accusatory tone than necessary. The section could have been phrased as "Reasons to Communicate With Graphic Designers Effectively" or, to reflect the syntax of the title, "Why Communicating With Graphic Designers Effectively is Important." Albeit subtle, these would be effective alterations because, according to research in the Literature Review, designers and clients pointing fingers at each other is counterproductive to optimal communication and collaboration. Therefore, it is relevant to consider neutral verbiage that encourages teamwork rather than making demands. This also relates to the necessity of empathy and how it can be reflected in the common language

used between partners. The content of this section includes an overview of big-picture influences of communication followed by a list of several specific benefits. These benefits overlap in agreement with the findings from the Literature Review. One example is the consensus that clients and designers should collaborate: "It takes two to tango" (Garces).

The next section, "Tips on How to Communicate With a Graphic Designer," introduces the problem then uses subheaders to offer suggestions on what is important to communicate. These subheaders include: Target Audience, Design Concept, Design Specifications, Typeface, and Color Schemes. These sections highlight the importance of clients knowing and sharing information regarding their project needs. The subheaders are also components that can be used in a project brief, and are often required, like when identifying target audience and design specifications. In this way, identifying the parameters of the project not only establishes project goals, but also provides structure.

Another way this article supports providing structure is by utilizing visuals that supplement the clients' lack of design expertise. By picturing different classifications of typefaces, the article introduces readers to available options and their differences. While this example is specific and may not pertain to each project or partnership, it demonstrates how sharing information about basic design elements can benefit the client-designer relationship. It also relates to the notion of establishing common language, as this section defines terms familiar to designers in a way that clients can easily understand. The last sub-section regarding color also provides an external link for readers to learn more about color psychology. The end of this article, "How Graphic Designing Works," seems to be mostly with regard to Penji's own services and processes, summarizing the design process and its timeline.

Visual Analysis

Penji's website is modular and features consistent typefaces and colors that are also shared with its learning center articles such as this one. Users can view the article from a device across desktop, mobile, and tablet platforms, and scroll up and down to navigate. Hyperlinked words are indicated in purple and bring users to relevant external sites upon clicking or tapping.
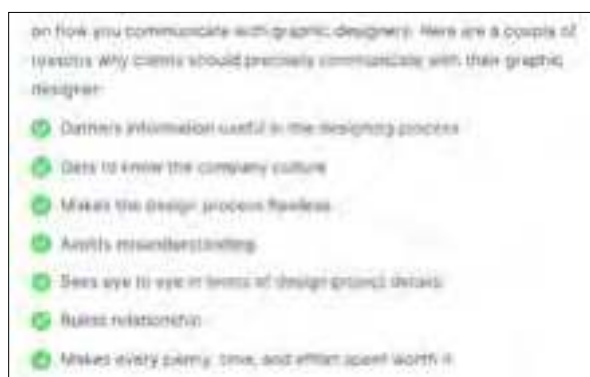

Figure 3: Penji article list (Garces).

The article uses bold, title case for its section titles, and smaller, bold italic for its sub-headers. When listing text, check marks in colored circles are used as bullet points (see Fig. 3). This helps visualize the information as a checklist that clients should be able to cross off with their designer, and could inform a similar visual solution that has the potential for interactive elements.

The images that accompany the article vary in subject and media. The first of these images is a photograph placed immediately below the first sub-header but before its section content (see Fig. 4). Creating tension between the text and photo, the gutters between the image and surrounding text are narrower than the leading in the copy. Because the shapes do not have enough white space to complement the layout, it could be speculated that the formatting options of the publication were limited. The photograph used here is the only one that features people rather than a design or mockup.

Figure 4: Penji article image (Garces).

The setting appears to be a lounge of some sort, where two smiling men sit in very different chairs around a small coffee table that has lots of books on it. The man on the left is holding a phone and has a laptop with stickers sitting on top of something on his lap. There are also a couple of people in the background, one on a laptop, and one looks to be serving themselves food. Needless to further elaborate, this photograph contains a lot of information and details. The level and contents of the details in the photo seems to be extraneous, as there is no established relevancy or story to accommodate the photo.

The following four images in the article are used in the subsections of "Tips on How to Communicate With a Graphic Designer" (see Fig. 5). The first of these, under "Design Concept," shows a large vector-style illustration of a winking character over the name "NOVSTER." It is on a colorless, borderless, background,

so the tension from the layout of the first photo is not present. However, here is another instance in which a caption (that explains what exactly "NOVSTER" is) would be helpful to the understanding of the visual. The next images show mockups of digital and print assets such as logos, posters, and billboards, respectively. These designs appear to be completely unaffiliated with each other. It can be deduced that they serve to visualize various design formats, but having captions that make their intentions clear would be helpful. If the anchoring text gave insight to the process of these designs or a brief summary of the client and their needs, users might be able to relate to and value the images more.
While this identifies how images and their context could be better optimized for user experience, the way this article visually demonstrates designs introduces clients to the process.

Figure 5: Penji article design samples (Garces).

The next images (see Fig. 6) exemplify this by picturing four different kinds of typography (serif, sans serif, script, and display). These are an example of how clients do not share tacit knowledge with designers, and a start to bridging this gap where relevant. While typeface choices are quite specific and usually up to the designer unless the client has preexisting conditions, this could inspire a visual solution, such as an infographic, that provides clients with a brief overview of necessary design requirements and perhaps potential options.

Figure 6: Penji articlefont samples (Garces).

Case Study Two

Ralph Theodori is a Design Director of four years and content creator on YouTube. His open letter, "Dear Clients: Read This. Love, Designers," expresses frustrations about working with clients and wishes for them to change their behavior. Peter Horvath is a seasoned leader, lecturer, and practitioner of Business Strategy, Experience Design, and Service Design. Horvath's open response letter, "Dear Designers: Read This. Love, Clients," summarizes points made by Theodori and provides rebuttals for each. While Theodori's letter made demands of clients that would appease designers, Horvath's letter recognizes the causes of the issues and suggests more collaborative ways to work alongside clients. Because this dialogue comments on ways that designers can improve communication with clients, it is very relevant to the thesis and its solution.

Theodori's letter has a very patronizing tone that reveals the title as sarcastic: "Dear Design Clients, Welcome to your wake up call." Rather than writing with sincerity, Theodori "get[s] things off [his] chest;" making points that he feels are "most obvious" in hopes that clients "will finally understand" his frustrations.

The analogy he uses exemplifies the tone of his writing and outlook on the client-designer relationship:

I would like to imagine that designers live in Mars: A land of the future, fashion and art. Clients however reside all the way in Venus; where word art, Microsoft paint and comic sans enjoy their retirement (Theodori).

This not only introduces clients and designers as worlds away, but patronizes them rather than taking an empathetic approach in an effort to respectfully communicate.

Signing his open letter as "Love, Designers" is also problematic because Theodori is asserting himself as speaking for everyone in the field. One commenter did agree with his narcissistic albeit oxymoronic outlook: "You're damn right! I hate it when they tell us how to do our job and always try to find [something] to complain about, most of them never provide us with enough information..." (Theodori). This language demonstrates a challenge of designers that lack enough information for projects yet do not want to communicate with their clients.

Stubbornness like this has earned designers a reputation for being arrogant. Clearly unproductive toward the goal of collaboration and improved communication, this attitude tarnishes empathy on both sides of a partnership, viewing client interaction as a mandatory chore rather than a creative opportunity. Horvath saw this, utilizing the opportunity to respond with his own open letter.

His letter, in contrast to Theodori's, opens with compassion and understanding, and he also shares that he values feedback. As someone who has been in the role of both client and designer, he states that "client-vendor relationships are always tricky" (Horvath).

After this introduction, Horvath advised to "never start an argument by blaming the other side of being lesser than you. Instead, set a good tone by praising their virtues." Horvath demonstrated this with the opening of his own letter. He also states that Theodori is misusing the Mars/Venus analogy, a reference to John Gray's Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus that " is about improving relationships despite the differences."

Theodori's first point addresses the cliche "make the logo bigger" request that most designers are familiar with. However, Horvath moves on quickly to more important concerns, essentially implying that designers should move past this infamous yet trivial complaint.

In his rebuttal to Theodori's second point regarding setting expectations, Horvath implies that designers need to accept and assert their responsibility in the process. Horvath writes, "if you do not receive a proper briefing, do not start working." This supports research that emphasizes the importance of clients and designers establishing a common language and identifying project goals at the start of each design process.

Next, in his first "major area of disagreement," Horvath uses an external link to a study that supports the idea that applying limitations increases creativity (contrary to Theodori's claim that less limitations equated to more creative freedom). This idea is akin to a consensus discovered in the Literature Review: providing structure to the design process can optimize its potential for greater success. The context of this case study not only further supports this finding, but also reveals a willingness from designers to receive or mutually set limitations on their projects.

Theodori then asks clients to familiarize themselves with current design trends. Horvath corrects him by stating that this is the designer's expertise, and that designers should not expect clients to stay updated on trends. Theodori's point is a misguided attempt to bridge the difference in tacit knowledge between clients and designers. Rather than asking clients to learn design, it is the designer's responsibility to share their expertise and tailor designs according to project needs. Similarly, clients also have expertise in their disciplines that is also often relevant to project goals. This sharing of information can fuel collaboration, so it is counter-productive to demand that clients do their own research on design.

In point five, Horvath rebuts Theodori's request that clients not "be afraid of change." Clients and designers should work to build rapport with each other. Similarly, brands have rapport with their users that could be betrayed if their graphics were altered from their established identity. Therefore, Horvath encourages designers to be comfortable working within brand guidelines and familiarizing themselves with brand identities before rushing to change them.

In point six, Theodori does agree that "communication is vital," but in the context of asking clients to reward designers with praise. In response, Horvath recommends that designers who want positive feedback should ask for it. Again reflecting the ideals of clear expectations and ensuring that relevant information is shared, asking the right questions is important in order to facilitate optimal critique. The rest of the points made by Theodori can also be resolved with communication: reviewing work properly; trusting the designer; and not forgetting to pay the designer. Horvath replies that, respectively, designers can present their work in ways it can be easily reviewed; should work with clients to utilize combined knowledge; and ask for payment. In the spirit of collaboration, Horvath signs his letter: "Together, we can do this! Only together can we do this!" This dialogue exemplifies how designers and clients should not feel that they have to serve or be serviced, but communicate together in a mutually respectful collaboration.

Visual Analysis

Theodori's editorial is addressed to non-designers that work with designers. Published on Vectornator's blog (a graphic design software), the letter incorporates emojis, memes, and animated GIFs. Horvath's letter is published on Medium, a platform with hundreds of millions of readers and collaborators. Horvath illustrated custom graphics to accompany his letter, which is an open response targeting designers but still relevant to a wider audience.

Both letters utilize sans-serif typefaces compliant with their platform identity; bold, numbered sub-headers; and scrolling navigation. They also use selective boldness to emphasize choice words, as well as hyperlinks to provide further reading, supporting articles, or other relevant media. Both platforms have similar layouts and typographic hierarchy that serve to be easy to read across articles, creating a legible and consistent user experience.

Each header in Theodori's letter is accompanied by an emoji or two at the end. The style and choice of the emoticons contributes to a casual and sophomoric tone. Each section also includes a visual. Half of these visuals had no continuities and varied from a meme template to desktop screenshots, to a comic. The other half of the visuals were GIFs from a video that was created by a seemingly unaffiliated illustrator.

These GIFs picture a client character, always with the same wide eyes and blank smile, interacting with a frustrated designer by controlling their computer mouse, burning ideas, and endlessly pushing rejected feedback (see Fig. 7 for an example). They are vectored with flat colors and linework, but include a level of detail that incorporates shadows and expressions. These GIFs looped so they showed an endless, repetitive cycle of client versus designer interactions. Each scene even included a clock on the wall to emphasize wasted hours flying by.

Figure 7: the cover image (above) and frames from one of the looping GIFs (below, sequence: top left, right, bottom left) from Theodori's article.

The bottom of the article has a video reel of the GIFs along with more loops, which even included the client punching the designer and making their ear bleed from talking. The illustrations and video paint the client in a negative light, implying that they are naive, stubborn, and difficult to work with. This reflects the attitude of Theodori's writing that moved Horvath to respond in a way that clarified the client-designer relationship as an opportunity rather than an inconvenience.

Horvath's visuals were much more tailored to his letter. Because Horvath illustrated his own artifacts to accompany his written content (see Fig. 8), they achieved a consistent visual story. The execution of the illustrations is simple; pictorial yet abstract. He uses organic linework and simple shapes and shadows. This gestural style of illustration evokes humility and genuineness. He illustrates on an off-white canvas to give a soft background to his compositions, which feature sketches of people. He utilizes symbols and iconography to simply visualize interactions between clients and designers. One example of this summarizes the conversation between the two letters: a designer sending a middle finger, and a client sending a heart. This visually demonstrates his response and advice to be empathetic with partners rather than being annoyed and dictating.

In contrast to Theodori's variety of visuals, Horvath's illustrations are charming, simple, and intentional. Where Theodori used an emoji in each sub-header, Horvath instead used an arrow to point from a summary of one of the initial claims to his proposed better solution. Horvath's "less-is-more"-esque approach, especially as a response to Theodori's bright, animated mixed bag of graphics, makes an impression of greater sincerity and approachability.
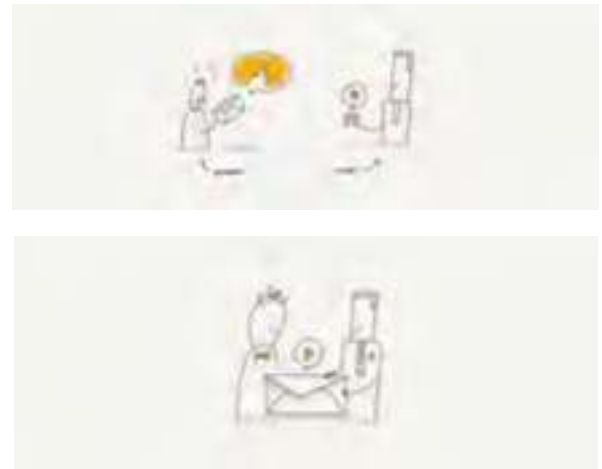

Figure 8: the cover image (above) and frames from one of the looping GIFs (below, sequence: top left, right, bottom left) from Theodori's article.

Case Study Three

Carys Tait is an experienced UK-based illustrator and designer (Tait). Her freelance brand, Carys-ink, exemplifies how an individual designer can communicate with clients. A case study of Tait's site and writings provides relevant findings from the perspective of a freelance designer. Not only does she use an analogy to provide structure to and identify stages of the design process for clients, but she also expresses the importance of valuing clients as design partners.

In "Collaboration between Designer and Client… Can This Make All the Difference for a Creative Team of One?" Tait explains how freelance designers working solo can actually form a team with their clients. In first person, blog-like prose, she shares and reflects on some personal experiences to elaborate on how she collaborates with her clients.

She agrees with "the idea that there should not be seen to be creative people and 'not-creative' people, but that in a team everyone should be given the opportunity to input when developing solutions to problems." This relates to the open letters in the previous case study, as this debate between creatives and others was discussed. In contrast with Theodori, the initial designer from

that study, Tait enjoys having her clients included in the creative process. She writes in bold that "bouncing ideas around with others is always a good thing," and explains that:

Through collaborative and open conversation, I left feeling much happier about where I had got to with the visual approach and a much clearer idea of how to resolve the identity (Tait, Collaboration…).

She elaborates that, because her clients "understood the project," they were ideal partners for conversation. This coincides with the previous finding that clients have relevant knowledge about their industries as well as project goals. Another similarity between Tait's writing and other research is a section regarding "the role of the client." In this section, Tait identifies an ideal balance of not being over-dependent on the client or too demanding of them, but involving them so they can share useful knowledge and preferences. She points out that clients will always share opinions, so "why not embrace it…?" She follows this up by saying that she enjoys having her clients feel heard and involved in the creative process, not unlike Anstey Healy Design.

In a demonstration of this client involvement, Tait asks some of her former clients what their ideal level of involvement is:

A collaborative approach, in theory, at least stops time wasted pursuing an avenue that as a client I fundamentally don't want and am likely to reject later down the line... I like to feel that they [the designer] are an extension to my team - they can expand on my initial thoughts and offer some excellent creativity and imagination to help bring the project to life (Tait, Collaboration...).

To summarize these findings, in strong consensus with the Literature Review, Tait concludes that "collaboration is key." In her last section, she reflects on why she thinks clients might choose to hire an individual designer over a team, and also recognizes that collaboration can come in many forms.

In "What's It like to Work with Me? A Guide to the Process Stages of Your Design or Illustration Project," Tait breaks down the stages of the collaboration process using a tandem ride as a visual analogy. Her "Project Journey Route Map: The process I follow with my clients on every creative project" (see Fig. 10) provides knowledge and structure by visualizing the design process.

Below the map, she also elaborates further on each step, providing relevant details that allow the map to remain concise and uncluttered.

She shows empathy in her section, "The Process - A Tandem Ride to Project Completion & Beyond!" by recognizing the struggle clients may have with hiring a designer. She writes that "it's hard to know what to expect," and introduces her map as a way to introduce her process:

As I see it, the client/designer process is a collaboration, a journey traveled together. If we take the tandem as our vehicle of choice there's even more fuel for the analogy... After some initial route-planning, we pedal off together towards an agreed destination. I'm at the front leading the way while you're at the back giving input and feedback to keep things moving along... (Tait, What's It Like...).

This holds many strong parallels with the thesis and proposed visual solution, from mutual collaboration to using an analogy to provide structure. Continuing her analogy, she uses the subhead "Let's take a ride together!" to introduce the fourteen steps, each with a sentence to a paragraph of accompanying explanation. In her second stage, "the brief," she hyperlinks "a couple of standard briefing documents."

Even as a "team of one" designer, providing multiple sample briefs demonstrates that briefs are not one size fits all and that different projects require different information. While there are areas that overlap across projects - such as basic client, audience, budget, and project specifications - others may be more in-depth or tailored to the situation. For example, the illustration brief has one section for content, but the brand brief includes questions about selling points, clientele, existing materials, usage, and more.

Knowing the answers to these questions allows teams to move forward without extraneous back-and-forth, both regarding project specifications and design alterations. As her clients testify:

The all important step is the brief – providing a brief that without being prescriptive, offers as much colour, background etc as possible, a springboard for ideas about what as a client I'm trying to achieve… I like to create a clear, sharp brief when I bring a designer on board to help them understand my vision and goals. However, I would always choose to work with a designer who is able to bring something extra to the table (Tait, Collaboration…).

In the client testimonies that follow the steps of her process, Tait's communication, collaboration, and efficiency were praised (Tait, What's It Like…). She was described as empathetic for being patient and helping her clients understand the process and expectations, as well as providing satisfactory designs that met project goals. This client feedback, collected in her twelfth step of the process, proves that her approach was successful on both the client and designer sides of the partnership. This supports the thesis and can inspire its visual solution.

Visual Analysis

The illustration accompanying "Collaboration between Designer and Client...Can This Make All the Difference for a Creative Team of One?" depicts two figures, each on a small island surrounded by water (see Fig. 9). Each figure is surrounded by a bubble and has lines coming out of their respective heads. On the left island, the scribbles are completely contained and repelled by the bubble, ricocheting in a way that obscures the figure's face. On the right, the bubble is represented by a dashed line rather than solid, allowing the lines to eventually escape. This reveals a smiling face of the figure, whose bubble is less crowded (perhaps additionally represented by the lack of clouds and birds that are present on the left side). The lines create a radially asymmetrical sunburst around the bubble with five dashed lines and one wavy, solid line, each leading to an arrow.

Figure 9: The cover photo for "Collaboration between Designer and Client...Can This Make All the Difference for a Creative Team of One?"

The birds in the sky are gestural lines and the water appears to be stamped or printed with the negative space utilizing the color of the sky/background to create the ripples. The slight grunge texture that is overlaid, noticed as faint brown against the sky, gives character to the piece. Other aspects of the organic style include slightly askew outlines of the clouds and the use of hatching to texture and fill in the "bubble[s]." This style reflects what is described in the designer's brand tagline as "wholesome creative."

It can be deduced that the lines and scribbles represent the figures' thoughts. With the accompanying article, these thoughts could specifically be ones that arise during the creative process. Contextualized by the writing, this visual represents feeling "isolated, as if on an island" and the relief that can be achieved by opening up one's " own little bubble" and "find[ing] inspiration from outside."

In her "Project Journey Route Map," (see Fig. 10) Tait uses a tandem bike ride analogy to communicate the graphic design process to clients and potential clients. Users scroll up or down to navigate while the menu on the left is in a fixed position. This menu holds the site name and tagline followed by page links and, at the bottom, social buttons.

The infographic is modular, with straight lines and circular curves used to mark the flow of reading and direct the order of the elements. The organic texture of these lines contrasts with their neat shapes for a professional yet personable look. The graphic reads from top to bottom with a hierarchy of viewing the bicyclists first as they are colorful, large, and at the top of the page. The logo (a pencil shaped into a "C" for "Carys") and copyright are at the bottom of the page, small, and in grayscale. At the top of the page there is also a sun and cloud to provide a sense of environment for the figures, as well as to balance the composition.

The white, textureless canvas is an appropriate background for the textured flowchart that has lots of elements and movement. The lines represent both the bike path and the map navigation. At the start of this line, Tait uses scale and proximity to give the illusion of this path going back into space. On the path, there are 14 steps each represented by visual icons; labeled with the name of the step; and described with a subhead that briefly elaborates on what the step entails. Under each descriptor there is a small outline of a square (or three, if on the "feedback" step) so that users can utilize the graphic as a checklist. The icons use objects, signs, and symbols to represent the steps and also relate to the bike ride analogy.

They are rendered with a cohesive and legible level of detail and are all contained inside of circles that are centered on the map's lines. A few of the icons overlap their circles, providing a sense of depth.

Figure 10: "Project Journey Route Map: The process I follow with my clients on every creative project" (Tait, What's It Like…).

Below the infographic, each icon is repeated chronologically with a more detailed description of the steps (see Fig. 10). These descriptions are separated by a light rule and utilize hyperlinks as well. At the end of the steps, users are able to download the map. Below the download there are testimonials and another hyperlink to more resources.

Figure 11: Elaboration below the Project Journey Route Map (Tait, What's It Like…).

Both analyzed visuals use blue and green color systems with orange and black/gray accents. This shared color system, in addition to the similar style of rendering, unifies the illustrations. This successful harmony of visual systems across assets creates familiarity with the user and should be utilized in the visual solution for the thesis.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the Literature Review, as well as from the additional research methods, support the hypothesized thesis: clients and designers have different tacit knowledge and fail to effectively communicate with each other during the design process. These inadequacies risk relationships, reputations, and project success. The research refined the problem, identified solutions, and exhibited measurable outcomes. The additional research methods further demonstrated how the findings could be published in a digestible context. These cases demonstrated the introduction of clients to design concepts to provide structure, context, and tacit knowledge; provided insight on biases that may be held and how to address them with an empathetic approach; and exemplified the use of a visual analogy to communicate the design process and support a collaborative client-designer relationship. The proven success of these sources will provide informed inspiration to the decision-making process for the proposed visual solution.

Chapter 3: Visual Process

PLAN

PHASE 1: **Brainstorming & Ideation**

Consider mediums and visual motifs.

- Visual Research & Conceptual Brainstorming for Visual Series
- Storyboarding Ideas
- Copy research
- Name research
- Word lists/formstorming
- Sketching ideas
- Documentation of progress

PHASE 2: **Visual Content**

Create the main images for the posters.

- More sketches, refine concepts
- Compile photo library
- Photoshop assets
- Documentation of progress, time lapse videos

PHASE 3: **Completion & Refinement**

Finalize the visual solution.

- Add backgrounds and shading
- Illustrate assets
- Choose typography
- Layout final deliverables
- Documentation of progress

PHASE 1

In the objective of the Literature Review section, it was stated that the author's undergraduate senior project remained hypothetical. For that project, handmade recycled seed paper, stamps, typography, swag, and more were developed. The only criticism received during the assessment of that project was that too much was done. Learning from that, the author should distance herself more from the stakes of this thesis by not trying to provide a solution to the problem. Rather, the focus would be on creating persuasive pieces that informed about the problem, focusing on the quality of the pieces and what can be learned from them rather than quantity of deliverables. In this way, a concise, practical set of deliverables that showcase mastery of design could be created without repeating the efforts of an informative booklet, flyer, website, etc. Rather than trying to provide specific solutions when the problem is so widespread and diverse, the problem would be brought to light in a memorable way. It's as was taught in ARTS780 with *Made To Stick*: "if you say three things, you don't say anything" (Heath).
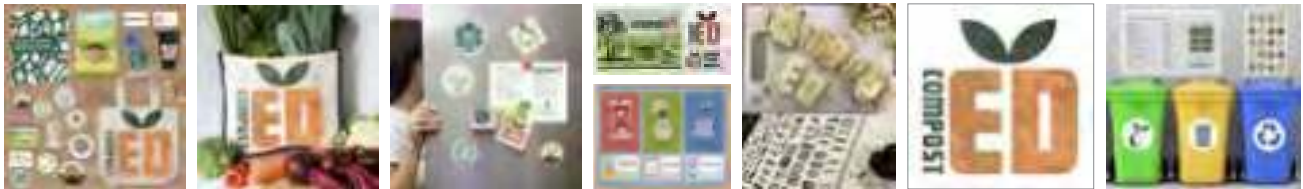
Visual Solution

It was *Made To Stick* that also aided in the decision to move away from the gardening analogy concept. This concept was still considered, and even developed animated storyboards in an attempt to energize the idea, but still seemed forced. After this uninspiring stage of conceptualizing under the umbrella idea of the gardening analogy, it was realized that a better idea might be to use awkward scenes in which improved communication could resolve the conflict. Because there are lots of dynamics of communication and design approaches, a way to approach the visuals for this concept could be with a series of diverse strategies. The concepts of more unique, unexpected storytelling also hit more notes from the principles of stickiness and are also more dynamic than informative deliverables that only rely on typography and simple visuals.

Moving forward, it was considered how to make these ideas more "concrete" and clear because some of the sketches were not very practical. At this point a meeting was scheduled with the committee chair to get feedback on the updated direction and deliverables.

Visual Analogy Brainstorm
Floral / Gardening

Personification
- of plants
- of soil, sun, water, etc.

Scale
- small people
- large plants

Iconography
- tools for design
- tools for gardening
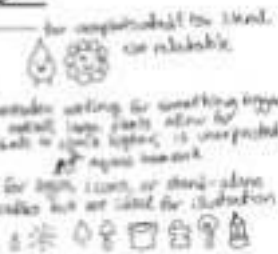
Medium + Style Brainstorm

Photo manipulation
- Contrast illustrated elements on realistic backgrounds
- Needs a style study to determine motifs + methods

Digital Illustration
- Vector or not → flat vs more depth + texture
- Strokes? textures?
- Determine level of simplicity + detail
  - want to be charming, not cheesy but still whimsical
  - focal points
    - All visuals will be made with accompanying text
    - Typographic style, text + image balance
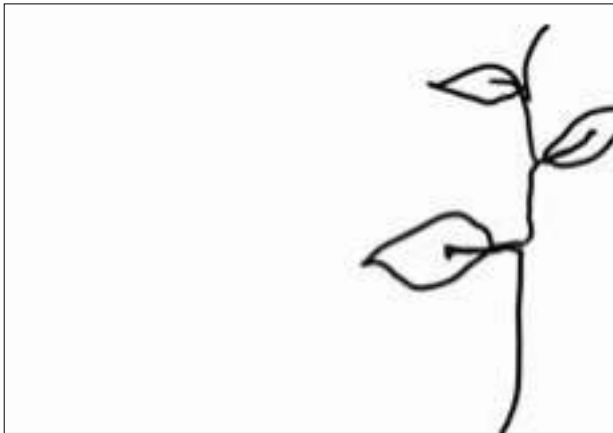
[External Link](#)
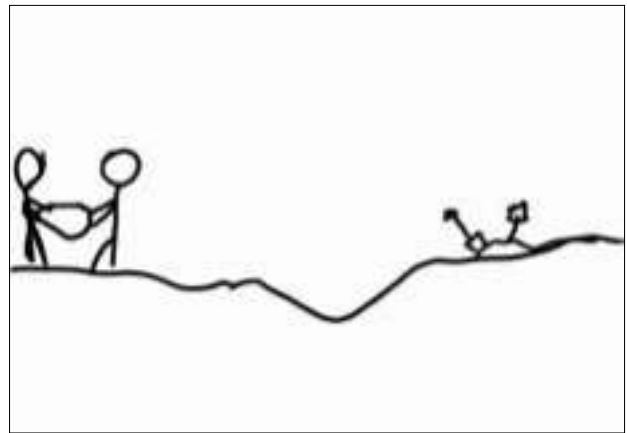
[External Link](#)

Brainstorm

You need both sides animation: stripes reveal two images - could be done with a mirror?

Both sides needed for context; can't have one without the other

There are lots of ways things can go wrong and lots of ways they can go right, so a better way to approach the visual solution is with a series of diverse strategies. In this way, the unifying element can be how the visuals are presented and laid out rather than relying on one visual analogy of flowers/gardening to resonate with an audience. I think a series of stories that demonstrate unfortunate miscommunications would be more memorable and persuasive.

Missing something: empty ice cream cone

Lost: cat in a dog park

Confused: anatomy of a question mark?

Missing the mark: darts on the wall - probably too literal/cliche

Using the wrong ball for a sport

Missing the dress code - Dressed for different event/activity/weather

Bird underwater

Flower in desert

Different architecture in a neighborhood

Moving truck for something different

Intersection of yellow brick lane/ave

Train on a runway

Diving board over shark pool

Misspelled/mistaken tattoo

Figure skater in a wrestling ring /rink

Hazard cone replacing a fallen ice cream cone (good for 404 in the website too)

Is this your card? - A discolored, misnumbered card maybe with multiple icons (spade and hearts)

Fish eggs in a bird's nest?

Push door (no handle) that says pull

Glasses that blur a visual to look like something it's not

Is there an opportunity to use a Chinese finger trap? Since the solution is to come together? Would this be recognizable enough? Maybe the hands in the trap create a shadow puppet that tells a story? Or it's just thumbs up/down to show disagreement? Hands running away

Magnets?

Yin-yang seen in something, maybe the two dots and shapes are made up of a dog and it's ball that it can't get to? But then the dog would want to not be in the middle of the shape it would want to be on the edge trying to get the ball, life if it were in a pool. This being off-center could actually work for the concept though because there is unbalance.

Music to your ears irony

Flintstones "car"

Egg on a golf tee instead of an egg cup?

Porcelain plate that's an archery target - fragile, critical to hit target

Something gift-wrapped in an obvious shape, like giving a snake shoes or a fish a snorkel

Worm coming out of a clock face

Umbrella with holes in it or made out of netting or doily so it's pretty but doesn't function/beauty isn't everything/form but no function

Marble life preserver

Watering can on something waterproof or can be damaged by water, or ice to cool an overheated computer - trying to solve the problem but actually creating a new one

A slide that's inverted where the ladder is sloped and the slide is upright or harshly stepped

Shell of jelly or paper

Less is more

Feather leaf

Square wheels

Snail on a turtle on a sloth? - need diverse teams

Football player tackling a soccer player and getting carded

A flimsy ladder or made of house of cards

Sponge/brick swap

Neutons cradle or some sort of pendulum/swing where there is back and forth but loss of energy

Single-person see saws

Egg in place of white ball for breaking pool - be sure you hit your mark; this one/or and the golf one could show the perspective of the player where the eggs look like balls, then show the eggs from the side to reveal the misperception

Similar perspective reveals where things are not what they seem, something could be unplugged, a different scale, obscuring something, bridge but from the side it is crumbling or fraying, a domino missing from a Rube Goldberg machine,

Partially solved rubik's cube

Installing text on a window display from the inside but it's backwards from the outside

Confusing elevator buttons/directions

Porcelain helmet

Formstorming where there are many ways to say one thing

Ideas that will highlight client contributions and not just the designers or both where both are apparent

Things made up of two parts

Drawbridge? Two parts that come together to let cars go or make way for boats

Cliche rowing/boat analogy

Drink stuck in a vending machine

Positive

Brainstorm	Focus
Create	Objective
Creative	Subjective
Partnership	Critical
Structure	Thoughts
Empathy	Thoughtful
Understanding	Consideration
Communication	Considerate
Candid	Filter
Sharing	Identify
Feedback	Pinpoint
User	Select
Support	Choose
Consideration	Decide
Ideas	Design
Options	Cohesion
Research	Unity
Reasoning	Harmony
Purpose	Create
Intentional	Sketch
Co-authorship	Mock-up
Collaboration	Build
Teamwork	Construct
Project	Evaluate
Goals	Efficient
Target	Demonstrate
Mission	Optimal
Relevant	Discuss
Opportunity	Clarify
Potential	Optimize
Constraints	Thorough
History	Thoughtful
Process	Perceptive
Stages	Tailored
Awareness	Success

Consequential

Miscommunication
Misunderstanding
Misconception
Misperception
Preconceptions
Uncomfortable
Discord
Inefficient
Mistakes
Mistaken
Consequence
Fear
Personal
Concern
Wasteful
Liability
Issues
Argue
Distrust
Impatient
Ineffective
Inefficient
Irrelevant
Sub-par
Failure
Stuck
Lost
Turbulent
Incompatible
Confrontational
Hostile
Dispute
Quarrel
Short-sighted
Insignificant

Name Ideation

Inconsiderate CoLab and Colab co-op are taken

Colab Community is taken

CoLab Connection is not taken (colab connect is) but probably too close to google colab

The colab conversation?

Colab design is taken

Colab studio is taken

Colab workshop is taken

ComHub is taken

CoLab project is taken but Project Colab isn't

Creative Colab is taken

The Collab Coalition/CoLab Coalition (redundant)

"cc" or "cco" logo has potential for target, links, venn diagram, fig/ground play

Creative coalition is taken

Creative communication, creative communication coalition

Creative conflux

Creative convergence is taken

After some deliberation, the name for the visual solution borrowed the name of its research phase: "Cultivate Collaboration." This name was to title the poster series as well as reserve a domain for the website.

Sketches

PHASE 2

More Sketches

Decided Concepts

This phase continued sketches and, with approval from the Chair, moved forward with the following concepts for graphics:

• The pencil padlock
  (unlock creativity, communication is key)

• The finger trap
  (come together)

• The vending machine
  (get what you pay for)

• The one-sided see saw
  (work with a partner)

• The skyscraper on a residential streets
  (know your audience)

• The partially solved Rubik's cube
  (think outside the box)

The Pencil Padlock

The photo-manipulation process began with one of the simpler visuals. Assets were licensed and Photoshopped together.

Initially, the pencil was warped to achieve the curve, but this resulted in a huge loss of quality. Instead, the stamp tool was utilized. Rotating the stamp along the curves achieved the shape without sacrificing quality.

Only the keyhole was added at first, but it needed something more to balance the piece and make it more believable. To resolve this, the beveled circle was added around the keyhole to ground it more. This required attention to detail in order to match the colors, textures, and lighting to the lock itself.

To finish up this session, as well as each one that followed, shadows were painted in between the layers and a time lapse video of the process was made.

Pencil Padlock Process Video

External Link

The Finger Trap

The finger trap graphic was compiled next. The challenge for this came with altering the wrist angles in a seamless way. The fill, patch, and eraser tools achieved this by building out new arms. The skin tone of one of the hands was adjusted in order to demonstrate diversity as well as make it clear that the hands belong to different people.

Finger Trap Process Video

External Link

The Vending Machine

It was a challenge to find photography to utilize for this concept, so 3D illustrations were licensed. In order to create a more believable, photographic quality on the graphic, the author overlaid textures, painted on ware, and matched the lighting and reflections.

When it came to painting the shadows on the stuck bags, a harsh shadow was added to the tops to match the items already inside the machine. However, if these were propped between the glass and the shelves, they would not have the shadow originating from the shelves above them. Therefore, the lighting was changed to remove shadows from above. These bags were also colored a bright color while the other products were desaturated. This made the brighter bags a focal point to tell the story of everything else being irrelevant when waiting for a purchase to fall out of a vending machine.

At this point, the images and process videos of the three graphics were shared with the Chair, who relayed satisfaction with the progress.

Vending Machine Process Video

External Link ⬏

The Buildings
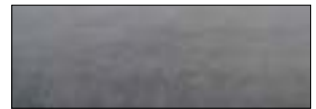
For the buildings graphic, a
skyscraper had to contrast with
a residential street but only with
its size. This meant that the style,
textures, lighting, and level of detail in
both the building and the houses had
to match so they could believably live
in the same atmosphere together.

The tall building also had to have
proportions relative to the houses
as if there were actually next to each
other. One has to know the rules
in order to break them, and in this
instance stretching a photo was
deemed appropriate. The skyscraper
was distorted horizontally to
achieve leaner windows and overall
silhouette. Because the image only
features rectilinear details, it could
be distorted without consequence of
abnormal anatomy.

Buildings Process Video

External Link ⬀

The See-Saw

Considered Assets
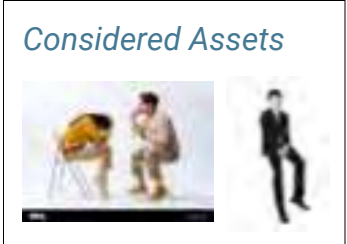
This concept was the first to include a person. Body language, facial expression, clothing: all of these elements and more contribute to how a person is read. With this, there were different images considered before one was casted for the role. The chosen image was selected for its candid qualities, appropriate profile, and ambiguous gaze.

The image then had to be cut out of its background and edited onto the see-saw (or "teeter-totter"). Even against a white background, hair requires attention to detail to cut out. Once completed, the person was duplicated to have layers both above and below the see-saw and the top layer was strategically erased to reveal the board between the man's ankles.

See-Saw Process Video

External Link

The Rubik's Cube

Considered Assets
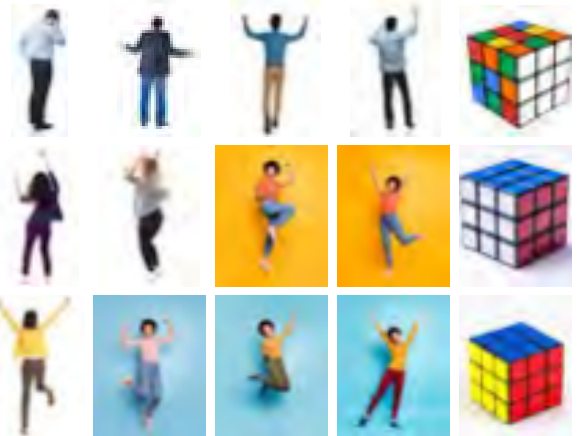
Because this graphic features two people, more time was dedicated to finding appropriate images. Even the cube was considered for its angles before being chosen.

Different from the original sketch, the celebratory person was faced away from the cube. This connotes that because the person is celebrating and faced away from their completed side, they would walk away from it. This better fits the theme of what not to do, as people should work together to complete a project before turning away from it.

With the selected images in Photoshop, they were cut out and assembled. The squares on the cube were recolored and subtle shadows were added to place the elements in a more dimensional space.

Rubik's Cube Process Video

External Link [↗]

Background/Illustration Consideration
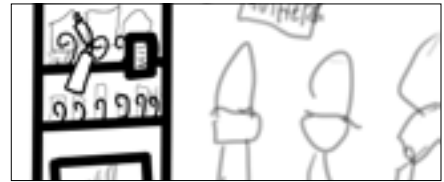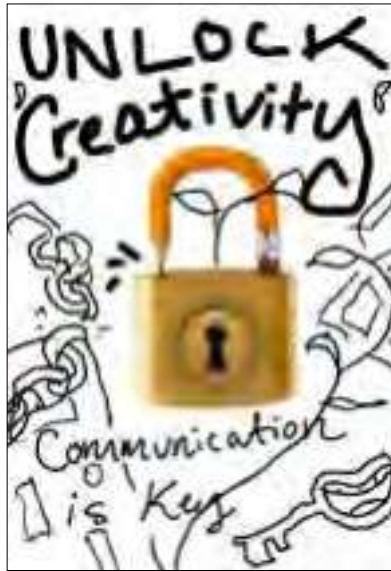
For illustration-style assets to be included, they would have to add to the concept and the story. The illustrations should not just be background environments because the photo-manipulated graphics would not fit into them unless they were stylized to compliment.

Adding Backgrounds

While the building had a sky background added to it, this made it seem like stock photography and would also did not fit in well with the others to form a cohesive series. Instead, a blue was painted in to represent sky.

Solid colors were also added to the rest of the graphics, in addition to more subtle shading. All graphics were sized to square aspect ratios as a neutral frame. As squares they could also be used as tiles and fit social media.

Illustration Inspiration
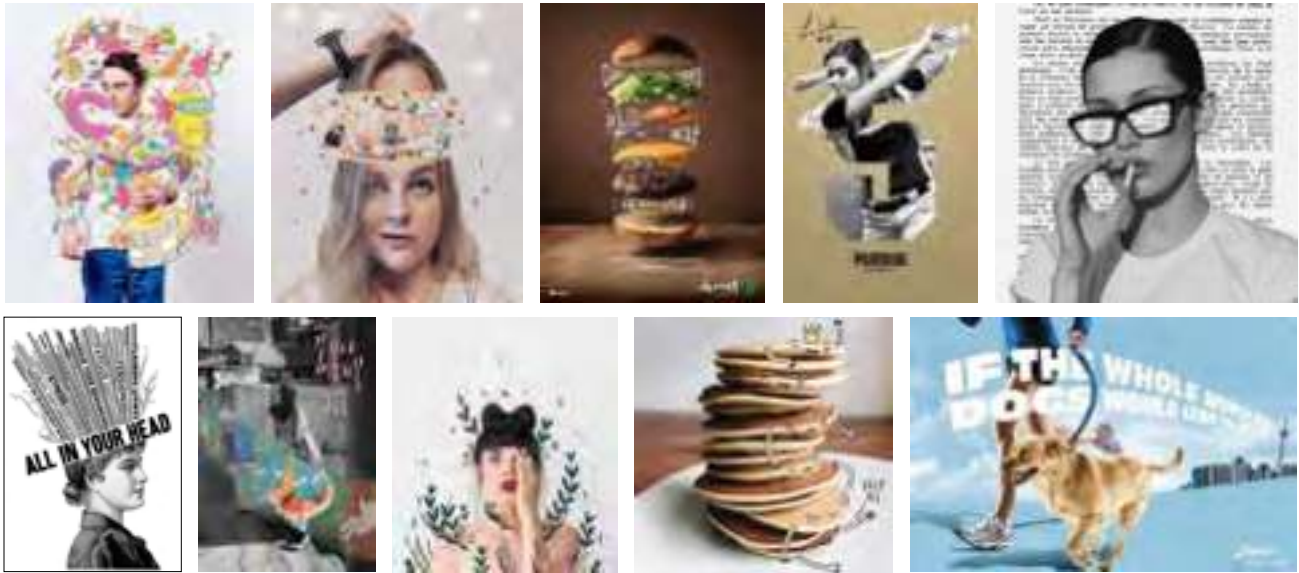
When looking for examples of multimedia graphics, it was found that Sankarnarayan shared a collection of diverse works. The different artists demonstrated unique approaches to incorporating typography and illustration to photographs and portraits.

One such artist has a signature style that earned her an impressive clientele of various brands and magazines (Strumpf). Her bold style of scattered illustration was not unlike the intentions of a sketch for the padlock.
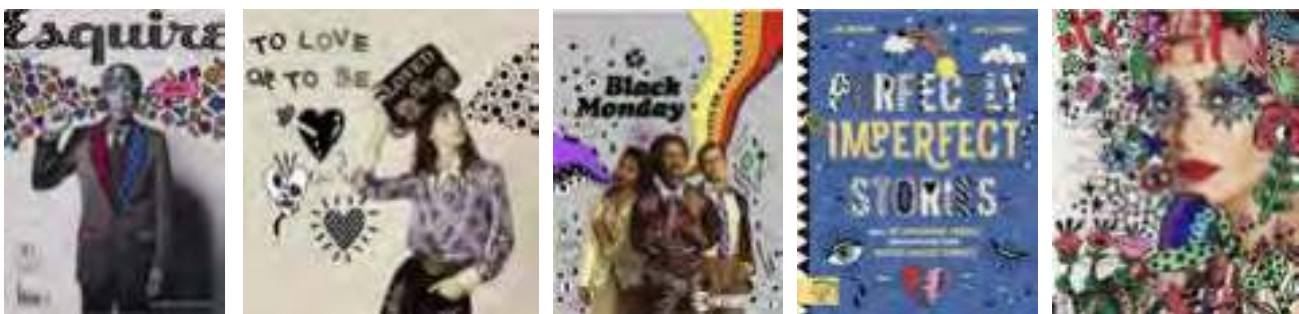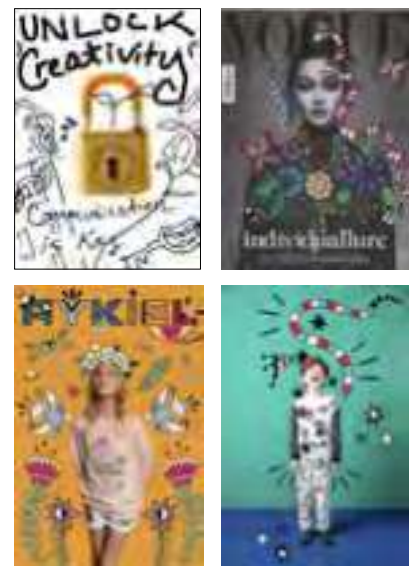
Illustration Consideration

The next round of sketches were developed over the images in order to experiment with overlaying illustrations. Abstract options using geometric patters were used, as well as illustrations that interacted with the images or provided environmental context.

At this time, the Chair approved the progress and to move forward with trialling illustrations. He also clarified that the thesis should be written in academic voice rather than in first person.

Illustration Consideration

One sketch sampled a jumble of iconographic illustrations. When the opacity on this layer was lowered, the illustrations became a wallpaper for the graphic.

This style was reminiscent of WhatsApp's default messaging background. Featuring various vectored figures and objects, the subtle scenery adds a light texture to its app. The illustrations are also used in their branding and blog (WhatsApp).

Using this approach would make the thesis graphics more dynamic and extend the duration that viewers might spend observing them. It would also provide potential to contextualize the graphics in many ways. Similarly, some illustrations could also pay homage to the ideas that were not brought to completion.

Illustrations Process Video

[External Link](#)

Illustrations

Illustrations

Illustrations

Illustration Consideration

One sketch sampled a jumble of iconographic illustrations. When the opacity on this layer was lowered, the illustrations became a wallpaper for the graphic.

Typographic Consideration

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY

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The quick brown fox jumps over

Typographic Consideration

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THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY

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The quick brown fox jumps over

Typographic Consideration

Chosen Graphics

Think outside the **box.**

Come **together.**

Unlock **creativity.**

Find **balance.**

Get what you **pay for.**

Know your **audience.**

Quotes Graphics

Quotations were gathered when considering the gardening analogy, and the thesis defense is to open with a quotation as well.

Demonstrating application of the visual system to more assets such as quotations would strengthen its defense.

The quotation marks were illustrated in Procreate, just as the background illustrations were. Different options were assessed to represent varying abstractions of quotation marks and speech bubbles. Scale and value were also varied.

You don't have to be 'a creative' to **be creative.**
— Drory Ben-Menachem

Collaboration has no hierarchy. The sun collaborates with soil to bring flowers on the earth.
— Amit Ray

I don't like that man. **I must get to know him better.**
— Abraham Lincoln

Don't aspire to be the best on the team. Aspire to be the best for the team.
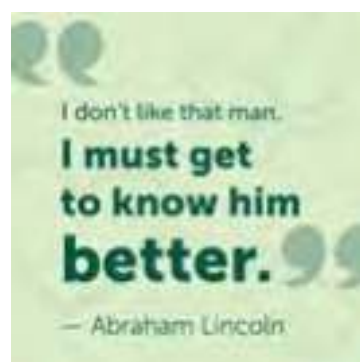— Brian Tracy

Many **ideas grow** better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up.
— Oliver Wendell Holmes

It's not about what it is, **it's about what it can become.**
— Dr. Seuss

Great things in business are never done by one person; they're done by a team of people.
— Steve Jobs

Two monologues do not make a **dialogue.**
— Jeff Daly

Alone we can do so little; **together** we can do so much.
— Helen Keller

Talent wins games, but **teamwork** and intelligence win championships.
— Michael Jordan

If you take out the team in **teamwork,** it's just work. Now who wants that?
— Matthew Woodring Stover

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and **working together is success.**
— Henry Ford

Quotes Graphics

Don't aspire to be the best on the team. Aspire to be the best **for the team.**

— Brian Tracy

Many **ideas grow** better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up.

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Collaboration has no hierarchy. The sun collaborates with soil to bring flowers on the earth.

— Amit Ray

If you take out the team in **teamwork,** it's just work. Now who wants that?

— Matthew Stover

Chapter 4: Final Solution

VISUAL SYSTEMS

The typography was chosen for its legibility and because of its large family of different weights. Words most relevant to the research were bolded and enlarged to become focal points in the hierarchy. Illustrated motifs were layered in the backgrounds to provide depth, texture, and detail.

Because research revealed that clients have too great concern for color (Medina 28), multiple colors were chosen to prove that not only does each color work just as well as the rest, but also that the graphics still work together as a series despite the variation of color. The different colors also provide contrast for the graphics when viewed together, such as in a tiled feed or presentation.

Typography

Museo Sans 900
Emphasized copy

Museo Sans 500
Main copy

Museo Sans 300
Poster CTAs, quote authors

Color

Photo-manipulated Graphics

The graphics used multiple techniques to achieve unique interpretations of the research that appeal to an audience of young adults to middle-aged viewers that interact with others to reach a common goal. These graphics used a variety imagery to address the "stickiness" of the message from different perspectives. For example, some showed individuals whereas others relied on unexpectedness. Both of these techniques were proven to increase the retention of messages (Heath).

The concepts were generated with the research in mind in order to convey the findings in a visual manner. The pieces tell stories that the viewer can make inferences about rather than relying on literal anchor text. In this way, the graphics engage individuals to consider the graphics and their message.

Viewers are also enticed to follow the call-to-action. A larger production would use this CTA as a measurable tool to provide helpful resources and track engagement, as well as lead to more resources for users. These resources could include educational and informative assets that present the research findings in a digestible way, such as in Case Studies one (for communication and structure) and three (for empathy and relationship-building). These informational pieces for further development would also appeal to a wider audience than the photo-manipualted graphics alone, which are far more conceptual and abstract.

Unlock **creativity.**

Learn more at https://htebo3.wixsite.com/cultivatecollab

Combining two different objects in an unexpected way, this visual exemplifies how coming together can 'unlock' innovation (Beirut; d'Anjou).

Come **together.**

Learn more at https://htebo3.wixsite.com/cultivatecollab
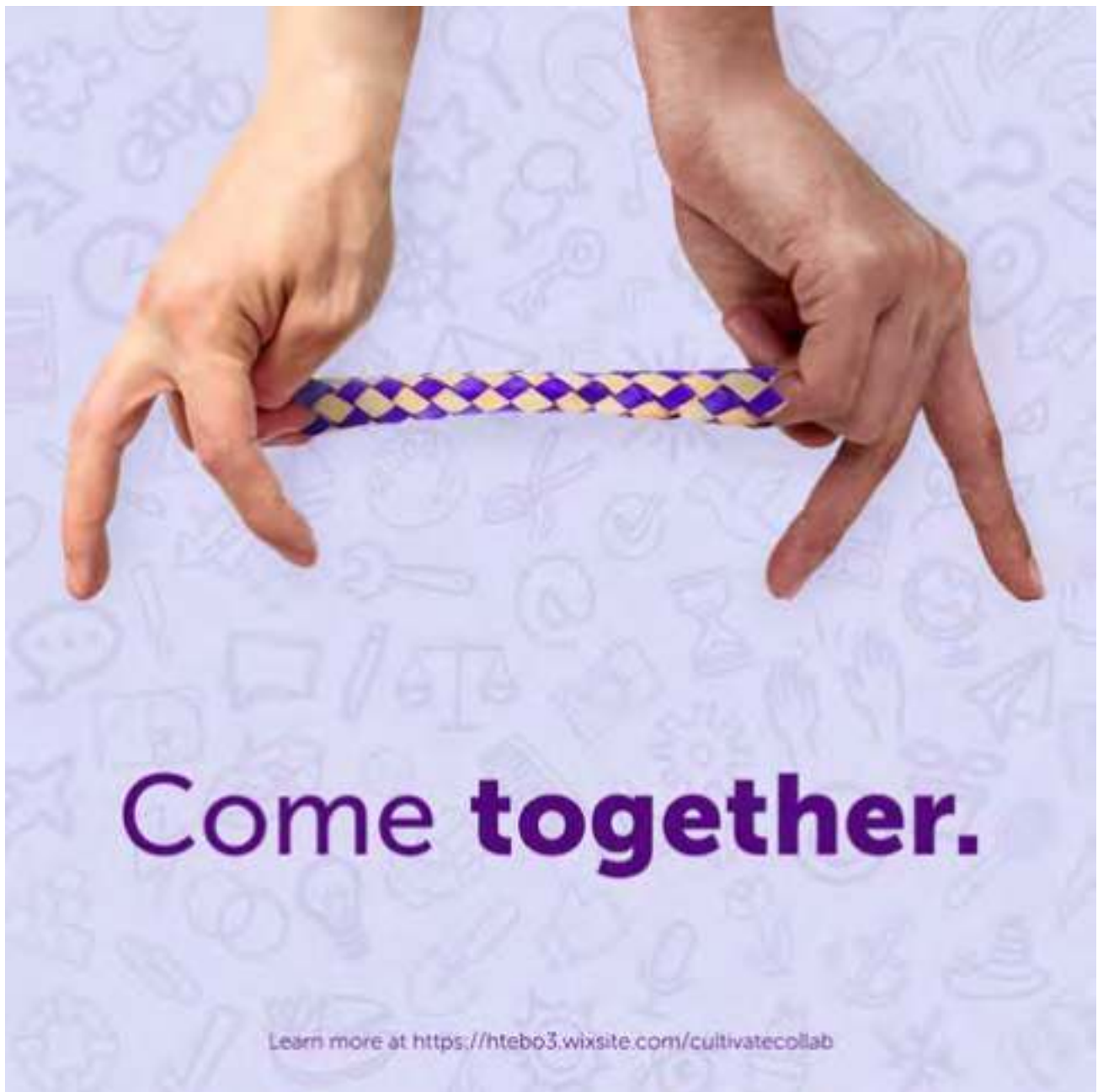
Inspired by Case Study Two (Horvath; Theodori), this graphic uses a finger trap as a metaphor for how empathy and cooperation are more effective than pointing fingers and putting up barriers.

According to a statistical source form the Literature Review, trillions of dollars are lost in productivity globally, but effective communication increases productivity, retention, and engagement to reduce these loses ("Communication...").

This visual utilizes a familiar frustration as metaphor in order to entice the reader to learn more about how they can avoid losses associated with miscommunication. Demonstrating a relatable scenario conveys to individuals that they are stakeholders.

Find **balance.**

Learn more at https://htebo3.wixsite.com/cultivatecollab

Because a seesaw is powered by the give-and-take of two partners, it was chosen as a visual analogy for how clients and designers need each other (Falcão).

Know your audience.

Learn more at https://htebo3.wixsite.com/cultivatecollab

This concept uses contrast to demonstrate how neighborliness can transcend location. Inspired by the empathy section of the research (Akama; Bruce; Deden-Parker), it is a metaphor for partners and end users as members of a shared community.

Think outside the **box.**

Learn more at https://htebo3.wixsite.com/cultivatecollab

This puzzle with only one side solved represents how, as stated in the Literature Review (Garces; Vo), it is important to work together and share information in order to increase success.

Quotes Graphics

From historical figures and celebrities to authors across various genres, these quotes come from a diverse range of people. Whether one enjoys sports metaphors, insights from successful businessmen, or prefers humor, they can find a quote that will "stick." For example, the author found the quote by motivational speaker Brian Tracy most memorable because she is a team player that has witnessed competition impeding progress.

Because the quotes offer a variety of messages, they appeal to a larger audience than the photo-manipulated graphics. They are more literal and less abstract ans also have more potential for print applications in addition to web and digital. With the authors being historical figures, the main audience that these quotes target are educated employees of any shared workspace.

The quotes share the same format and visual systems as the other graphics but provide a typographic solution rather than photographic. The quotes were considered to relay the themes revealed in the Literature Review in a digestible manner. The background icons were tailored to each quote.

> ## Alone we can do so little; **together** we can do so much.
>
> – Helen Keller

The first section of the Literature Review discussed the essential partnership between clients and designers (Bierut). In this way, the above quote correlates with the research findings by emphasizing in concise terms the importance of collaboration.

By using "we" pronouns, this quote involves the reader. In this way, the words imply that any combination of individuals can collaborate, including the reader and author themselves. This also demonstrates empathy because the author is expressing compassion.

> # "It's not about what it is,
> ## it's about what it can become.
>
> — Dr. Seuss

This quote can be related to the increased success attributed to collaboration (d'Anjou). "It" can also denote a team or partnership between a client and designer or pertain to the consideration of the end user during the design process.

> Don't aspire to be the best on the team. Aspire to be the best **for the team.**
>
> — Brian Tracy

Putting aside ego to prioritize project goals is essential to productive collaboration (Medina). Feedback and criticism is also necessary in order to improve designs (Torozyan). The quote supports these findings in a poetic way.

> ## Many **ideas grow** better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up.
>
> — Oliver W. Holmes

This idea reiterates the importance
of collaboration, sharing knowledge,
and participating in critique as found
in the Literature Review (Medina).

You don't have to be 'a creative' to **be creative.**

— Drory Ben-Menachem

Research revealed that clients are co-authors of design (Falcão). This quote expresses that non-designers can contribute to design even if it is not their profession.

> Two monologues do not make a dialogue.
>
> — Jeff Daly

This quote concurs with the research by demonstrating how empathy and engagement are essential to effective communication (Bruce). The analogy is also appropriate to represent the importance of sharing knowledge and providing impartial, impersonal critique.

> # Great things
> in business are never done by one person; they're done by a **team of people.**
>
> — Steve Jobs

Similar to Hellen Keller's quote, this one expresses how collaboration leads to impressive accomplishment, but through the words of a well-known entrepreneur and designer from more recent history. This quote is also more specific because it identifies stakeholders as business-related.

> **Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.**
>
> – Henry Ford

These words of another successful business founder narrate the journey of teamwork and its payoffs. The potential that collaboration holds, the importance of communication and compromise, and how these lead to success are confirmed by both the quote and the research .

Collaboration has no hierarchy. The sun collaborates with soil to bring flowers on the earth.

— Amit Ray

Relating to the first part of the Literature Review (Bierut), this quote reiterates the conclusion that clients and designers are equal partners and that they can accomplish greatness together.

> Talent wins games, but **teamwork and intelligence win championships.**
>
> — Michael Jordan

In agreement with the research phase (Garces), this sports metaphor attributes increased success to sportsmanship and thoughtfulness. The quote is also a celebrity endorsement of working together and applying intellect.
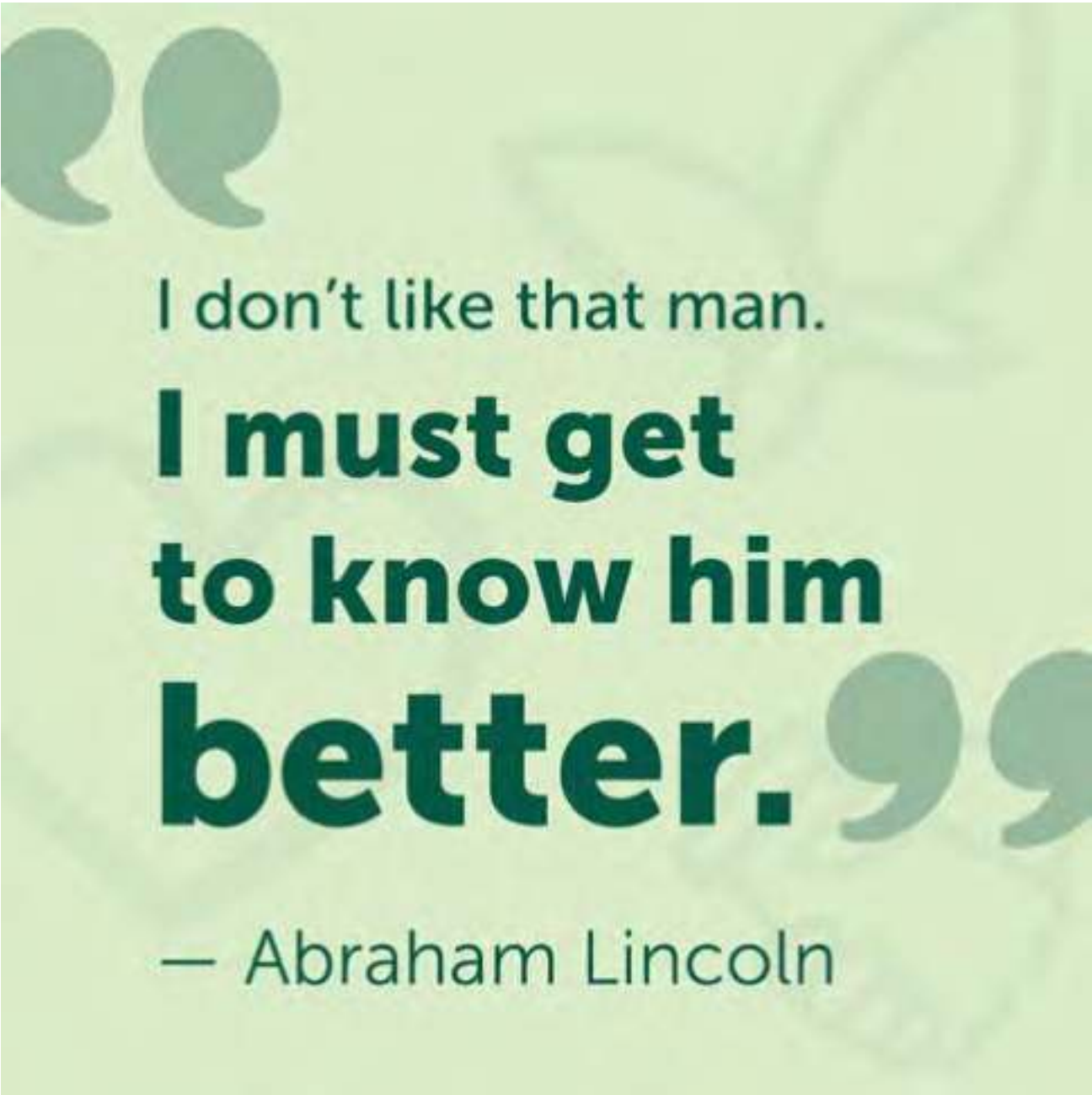
> If you take
> out the team in
> **teamwork,**
> It's just work.
>
> Now who wants that?
>
> — Matthew Stover

This rhetorical quote uses wit and word play to analogize how collaboration is simply better than the alternative (d'Anjou). It also uses prose that individuals can relate to.

> ## I don't like that man.
> # I must get to know him better.
>
> — Abraham Lincoln

The second sentence contradicts expectations assumed from the first sentence. In this way, the quote is surprising and therefore memorable. It also expresses empathy as it pertains to communicating with others (Bruce).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis has potential for greater application and development, especially through collaborating with others. By sharing the findings with coworkers, a more precise conversation about the problem and its solution be started. In this way, there will be continued learning about individuals, their preferences, and how they can best work together.

The creation phase also revealed an additional source of further interest. While searching for images using the term "person" for the image libraries, the results are overwhelmingly male and Caucasian. There was also a difference between searching for "frustrated man" and "frustrated woman," as the men typically looked serious while the women were hysterical.

This is pattern stood out to the author as a designer and an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Especially while researching how individuals can have empathy for each other, the results inspire an awareness of and need for representing diverse individuals.

CONCLUSION

Clients and designers, having differing tacit knowledge, fail to effectively communicate with each other during the design process, risking relationships, reputations, and project success. To utilize the greatest project potential, teams of clients and designers must have empathy for each other and collaborate in defining goals, and articulating feedback.

The research phase of the thesis identified this conclusion through comparing and contrasting numerous sources. The case studies provided individual examples relevant to the problem and the visual solution directly responded to it.

Because the project supplied experience valuable to a designer's career, the objective of the thesis was met. One measurable outcome that demonstrates this is an increased contribution to conversations in the workplace, both during critique sessions and to better get to know team members. Not only has there been increased participation in discussion, but the quality of conversation has become more candid and confident.

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