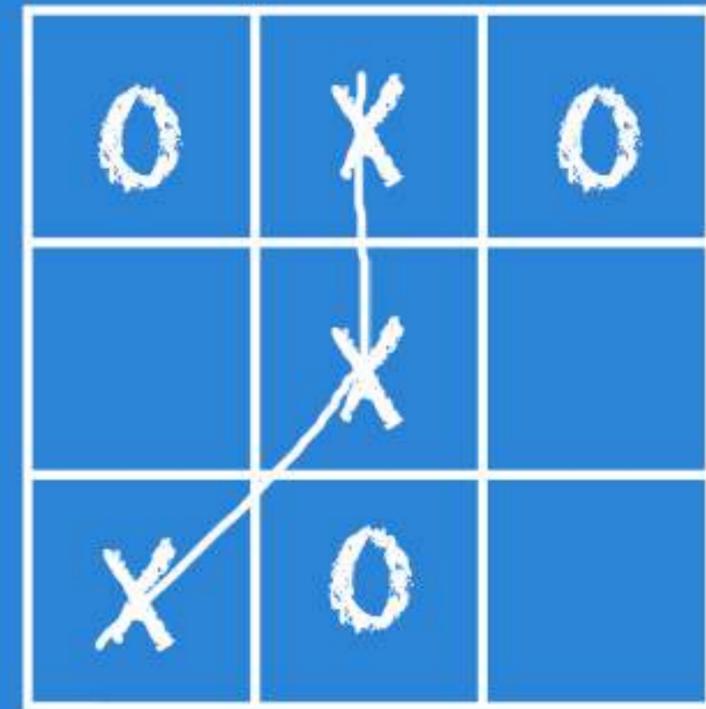


EXERCISES

To Drive Design Direction

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What is Design Direction?

Design Direction is establishing a creative style and tone (look & feel) for the design elements of a website or web product. It's also establishing a structure and layout for the web project. Examples are the following:

- ✓ Color scheme / Font-family
- ✓ Imagery
- ✓ Buttons
- ✓ Header / Footer elements
- ✓ Page layout
- ✓ Graphics
- ✓ Interactive Features

A lot of these elements can be subjective in nature. One image might resonate with one user over another. And one image might resonate with one stakeholder over another.

You can spend a lot of time going back and forth with a client on trivial subjective elements. These exercises should help solidify the direction of design before you start.



Why do I care what color the bike shed is?

What's the [color of the bike shed](#), why should we care? In short, we shouldn't! Nor should your clients...

But it's hard to have a conversation when your client feels so strongly about a subjective design element (like an image or a color).

[Parkinson's Law of Triviality](#) came out in 1957 and argued that members of an organization give disproportionate weight to trivial issues. And let's be honest, clients do too. We've all had that stakeholder who argues over one particular image or color wasting time in design reviews.

Hopefully, these exercises can help get stakeholders on the same page before you end up exhausting time and effort on back and forth design cycles.



Inspirational Websites

Good for learning clients likes / dislikes



OBJECTIVE

To understand what type of websites your stakeholders & clients favor and are inspired by. Hopefully you'll get a wide range.

ARTIFACTS / TOOLS

Use a spreadsheet to aggregate all the websites if you have lots of stakeholders

DIRECTIONS

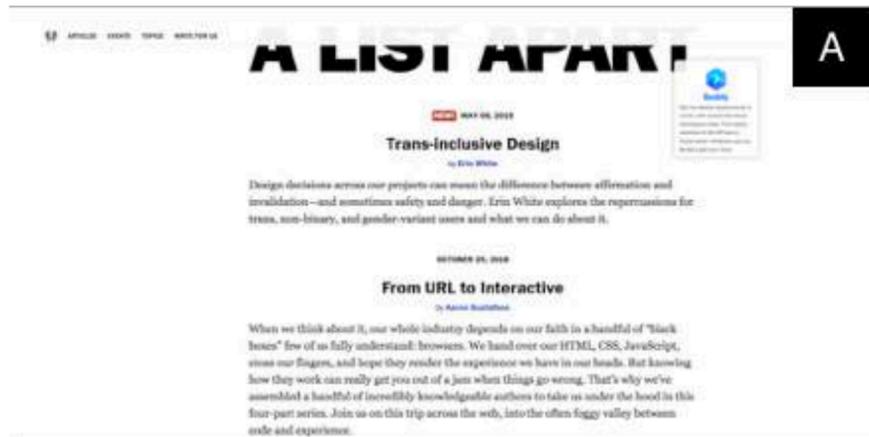
1. Ask everyone on the client side of the project team to send you their favorite, inspirational websites
2. Tell them NOT to discuss this among themselves and they can send whatever types of websites they find inspirational. It does NOT have to be a website that's in their industry.

**Note - this should give clients their individual voice (which is why they should not discuss these with their coworkers) - it will also tell you how they interpret your ambiguous directions.*



20 Second Gut Test

Good for client team consensus



A



B



C

- A. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- B. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- C. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- D. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- E. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- F. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- G. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- H. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- I. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- J. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- K. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)
- L. (Dislike) 1- 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 (Like A Lot)

OBJECTIVE

To get a client team consensus on the direction of design. This will help you gauge what website designs the majority of the client team likes.

ARTIFACTS / TOOLS

1. Paper copies with the alphabet listed (A, B, C...) and scale of 1 to 5 on each line.
2. Slideshow of 26-ish inspirational, competitive, and miscellaneous website screenshots (add Letters to slides)

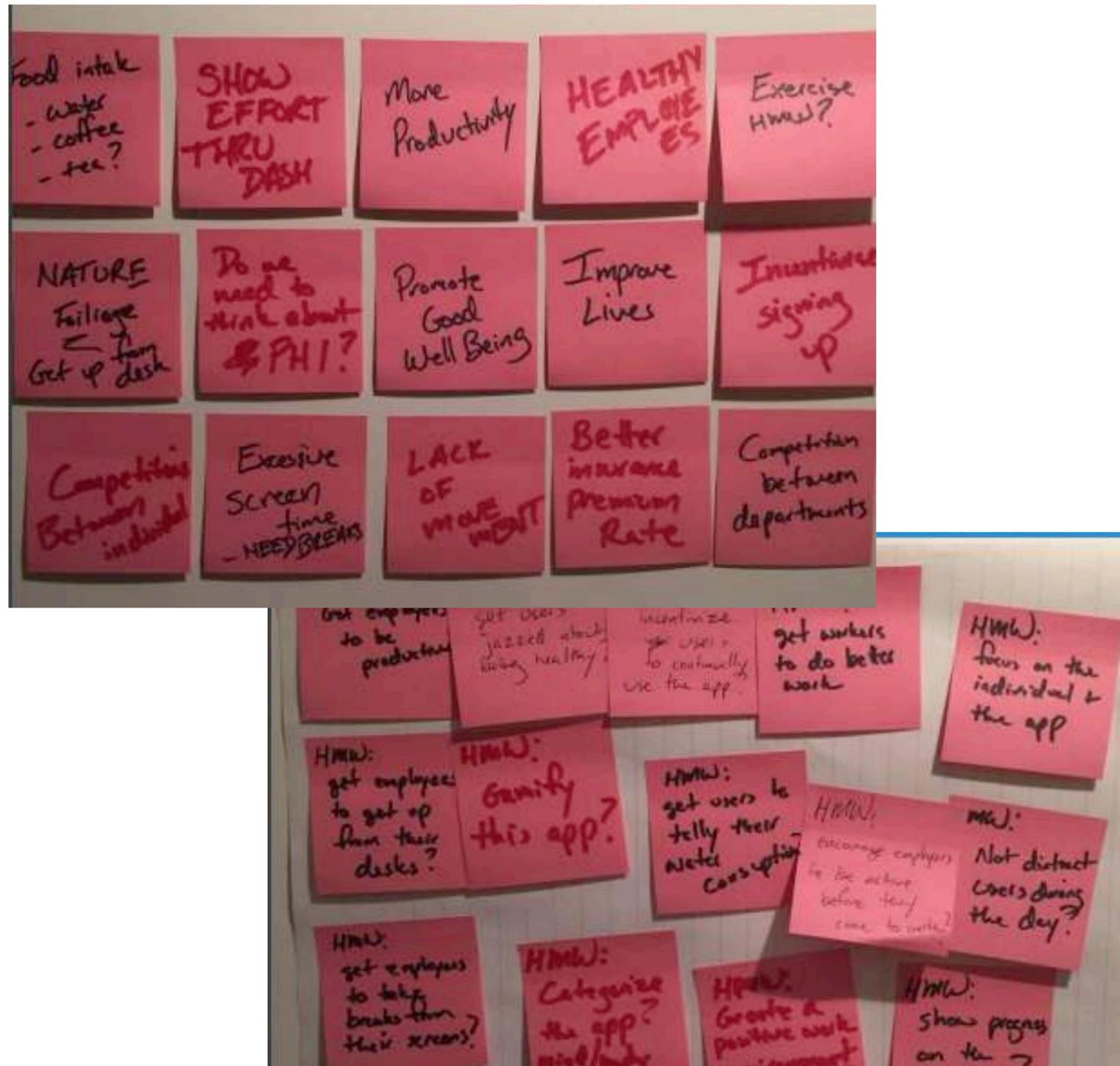
DIRECTIONS

1. Pass out one paper per person and make sure everyone has a pen/pencil.
2. Instruct the team that they will have 20 seconds to view each of the 20 screenshots. They will ONLY have 20 seconds, no going back!
3. They will need to circle 1,2,3,4, or 5 depending on whether they Dislike (1) or Extremely Like (5) the design.
4. Start the slideshow and show each screenshot for 20 seconds (hence 20 second gut test)
5. Enter the answers into a spreadsheet and see what designs take the top 3 spots and bottom 3 spots - share with the group



How Might We's

Good for starting conversations about design, information architecture, etc.



OBJECTIVE

To get conversations started around design, process, features and more on the website or web product

ARTIFACTS / TOOLS

1. Post it Notes
2. Markers

DIRECTIONS

1. Ask team members to write down different ideas, desires, thoughts, concerns when it comes to the website (i.e. - we want our users to improve their mental and emotional health at work - or - we want our users to sign up for our email newsletter after they've read our blog post on xyz)
2. Write all of these ideas, desires, thoughts, concerns on Post-it Notes and tape them to the whiteboard or wall
3. Then take each of those cards and rephrase the idea starting with HMW (How Might We...)
4. Example: How might we improve our users mental and emotional health at work? Or HMW get our users to sign up for our newsletter?
5. Open the table for discussion

Card Sorting

Good for Information Architecture, page hierarchy, or look & feel of a website / web product.



OBJECTIVE

To find a consensus on navigation, page hierarchy and/or look & feel of the website by lumping information into groups and categories

ARTIFACTS / TOOLS

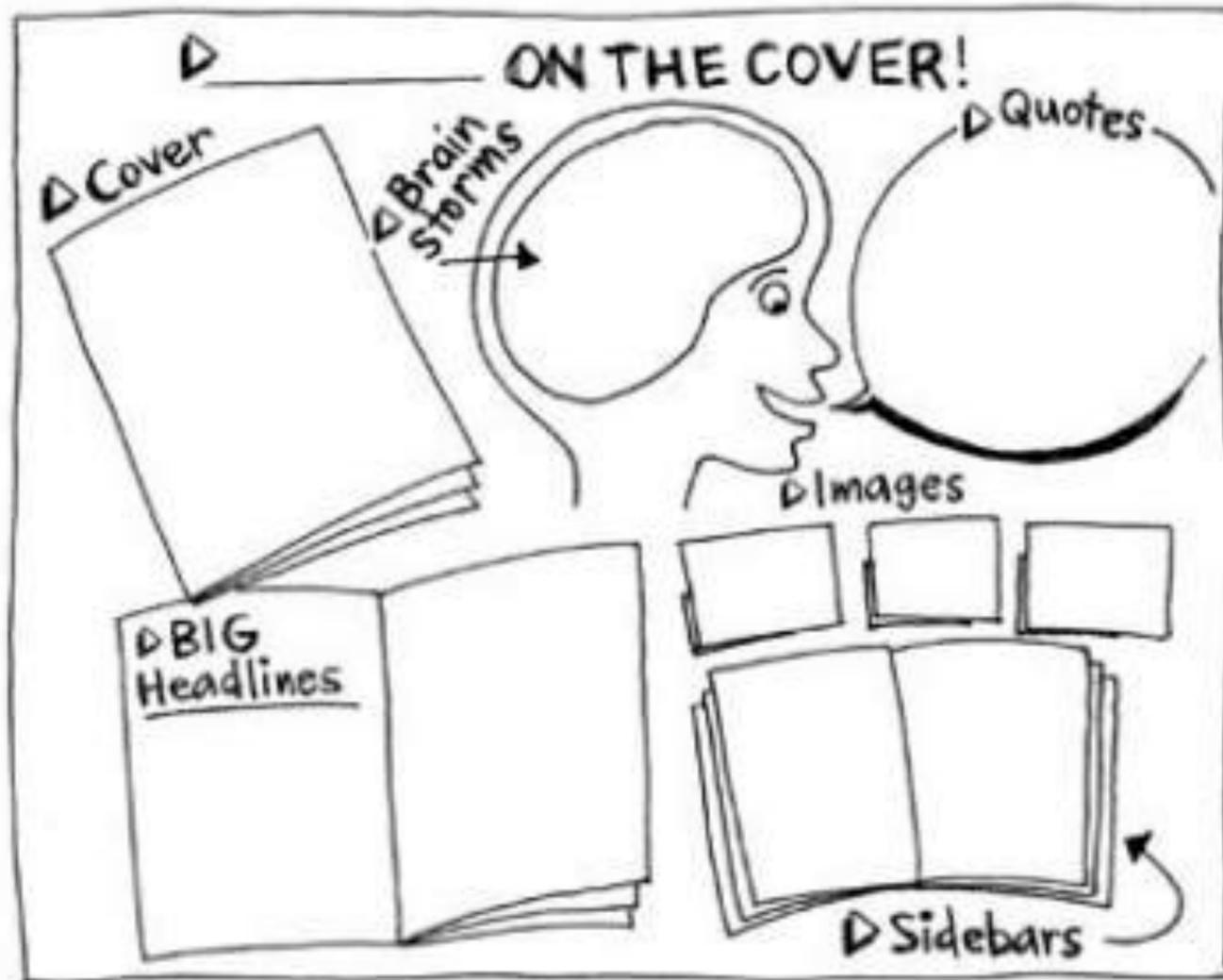
1. Post-it Notes and/or Index Cards
2. Markers

DIRECTIONS

1. Ask the client team a question like “what information do you want the user to know?” or “what feeling do you want the user to get while their on the website?”
2. Tell the team to write down a succinct amount of info on each card individually
3. Keep a handful of blank cards available as more ideas/info might come up while sorting them
4. Individually or with the team, start sorting the cards into groups to get your overall categories or themes for the website

Cover Story

Good for expansive thinking about the website, project, organization, etc.



OBJECTIVE

To understand the client's vision about the future state of their website or web product and how that impacts their company. The team members need to pretend they ended up on a magazine cover.

ARTIFACTS / TOOLS

1. Large-Scale template of Cover Story (see image to the left) done on canvas paper or a whiteboard
2. Pencil / Pen / Marker

DIRECTIONS

1. Explain to the team that there has been a magazine article written about their company because of the web project they've done (that's how awesome the web project turned out)
2. Ask the team to imagine the best case scenario and fill out the following sections:
3. The magazine **Cover** will tell the world what they've accomplished
4. **Headlines** convey main themes of the cover story
5. **Sidebars** reveal interesting details about their story
6. Certain **Quotes** that are worth noting about the story
7. **Brainstorms** should document initial ideas for the cover story
8. **Images** can support the content with illustrations

*Note - this is directly from the book [Gamestorming](#)

Crazy 8's

Good for feature or web design element sketching



OBJECTIVE

To get a number of ideas quickly on how to display or showcase a feature, element, or process on the website

ARTIFACTS / TOOLS

1. Paper (folded into 8 sections)
2. Pencils / Pens
3. Kitchen Timer

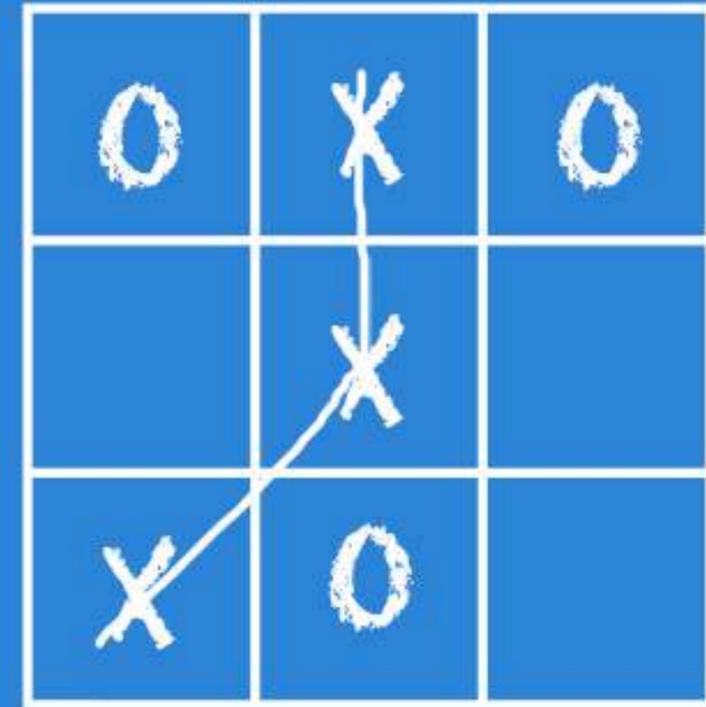
DIRECTIONS

1. Fold a piece of regular paper into 8 sections
2. Choose a feature, element or process on the website that can be designed in different ways
3. Tell the team they have 8 minutes to sketch 8 different variations of the feature, element, or process
4. Start the timer and go!
5. Once the timer ends, the sketching stops and you can always tape all the sketches to the wall and the team can come around and vote on them (exercises that are called Museum Art and Dot Voting)

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