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THE DESIGN PROCESS

Objectives

- Learn phase 1 of the design process: *Orientation*
- Learn phase 2 of the design process: *Analysis*
- Gain knowledge of a design brief
- Learn phase 3 of the design process: *Conception*
- Understand the steps of concept generation
- Learn phase 4 of the design process: *Design*
- Learn phase 5 of the design process: *Implementation*

Definitions

- An *audience* is the targeted, specified group of people at whom you are aiming your visual communication.
- A *design concept* is the designer's primary reasoning that forms the basis for a graphic design solution.
- *Strategy* is the core tactical underpinning of any visual communication, unifying all planning for every visual and verbal application within a program of applications.
- A *design brief* is a strategic plan that both the client and design studio or advertising agency agree upon; a written document outlining and strategizing a design project.
- A **comprehensive** is a detailed representation of a design concept thoughtfully visualized and composed.
- **Production**, also called **digital prepress**, includes preparing digital files utilizing industry-standard software.

Phase 1: Orientation

Phase 1 is **orientation**—the process of becoming familiar with your assignment, the graphic design problem, and the client's business or organization, product, service, or group.

- Usually, junior designers and junior art directors or copywriters are not involved in strategic planning or in design brief formation.
 - More often, juniors are challenged by a simple design brief that has been distilled for them by their design director or art director.

Phase 1: Orientation

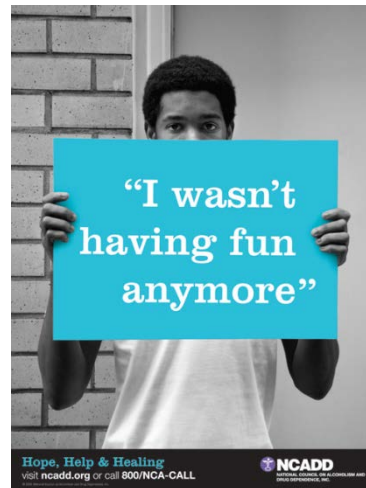
Conducting the Orientation

- During this initial phase, you and your team learn about the assignment. Since designers and art directors work in a variety of settings, who conducts the orientation and how it is conducted depends on the nature of your firm.
- Ascertaining essential information happens during this phase.
- For most assignments, there are standard questions, and some will be revisited during the next phase of analysis.
 - Questions will vary depending on the design application.
- Orientation also involves reviewing and evaluating the current graphic design solutions, branding, and/or advertising program created for this product, service, or group.

Phase 1: Orientation

The Audience

- Equally important during orientation is learning about the **audience**—the targeted, specified group of people at whom you are aiming your visual communication.
 - The audience is the main *relevant* group who would purchase this brand or utilize this information, service, or product, or patronize this entity or who can influence others.
 - Knowing about the audience is critical.



Phase 1: Orientation

Material Gathering

- To design, first you must learn about the sector, the product, service, company, or organization, the company's history, core values and attributes, mission, and of course, the audience.
 - Every designer must be informed about his or her sector under assignment, the client's business, and the problem under assignment.
 - Not only does gathering information about the client's business help you solve the assignment, but it also enriches your general wealth of knowledge.

Gathering Information Through Listening

- During this first phase of the design process, you get the lay of the land and obtain as much raw materials as you can.
 - Active listening entails concentrating, focusing on the content of the speaker's message, interpreting what the client says and means, and actively reflecting on what has been said.

Phase 2: Analysis

Once Phase 1 is completed, the next phase is **analysis**—examining all you have unearthed to best understand, assess, and strategize to move forward with the assignment.

- After reflective thinking, you develop the direction your solution(s) will take. When you analyze, you
 - Examine each part of the problem
 - Concisely and accurately define constituent elements
 - Organize the information so it is broken down into parts that are easily analyzable
 - Draw conclusions based on your analysis that will allow you to move forward to the next step

Phase 2: Analysis

Discovery and Strategy

- **Strategy** is the core tactical underpinning of any visual communication. It unifies all planning for all design and copy within a strategic program or campaign.
 - A clearly defined strategy directs all strategic and creative expressions, and keeps the client and creative professionals on the same page.

The Design Brief

- A **design brief** is a *strategic* plan that both the client and design firm or advertising agency agree upon, a written document outlining and strategizing a design project; it is also called a **creative brief**, brief, or creative work plan.

Phase 2: Analysis

The Design Brief

- Design briefs may take different forms.
- Some sample creative brief questions may include the following:
 - What is our challenge?
 - Who is the core audience?
 - What is the audience's perception of the brand or group?
 - What would you like the core audience to think and feel?
 - What specific information and thoughts will assist in this change?
 - What is at the core of the brand personality?
 - What is the key emotion that will build a relationship with the core audience?
 - What media will best facilitate our goal?
 - What are the most critical executional elements and what is the budget?
 - What is the single most important takeaway?
 - What do we want the audience to do?

Phase 3: Conception

A foundational concept drives the design. A **design concept** is the creative reasoning underpinning a design.

- The design concept sets the framework for all your design decisions. It is the primary broad abstract idea driving the hows and whys of your design decisions.
- A design concept is visually expressed through the creation, selection, combination, manipulation, and arrangement of visual and type elements.
 - For any assignment, a design studio or agency must generate several viable concepts to present to their client



Opus: Logo

Tricycle, Inc., Chattanooga, TN

Phase 3: Conception

Concept-Generation Process

- The generally accepted protocol for graphic design conception is based on the four-stage model outlined in *The Art of Thought* by Graham Wallas:
 - **Preparation > Incubation > Illumination > Verification**

Preparation

- Thoroughly examine your materials for insights.
- Examine for connections among thoughts and/or facts. Then correlate to find an insight or idea platform.
- Write any idea or insight on an index card, in a notebook, or in a digital file.

Incubation

- Once you have examined all the materials, allow the information to incubate in your mind.
- By allowing the problem to incubate in the back of your mind, your subconscious may do the job for you.

Phase 3: Conception

Illumination / Conception

- For many, a concept pops up as if out of a magic lamp.
- When we are relaxed and not directly working at concept generation, an idea comes to us.
 - However, if incubation has not worked for you, consider alternative forms of concept generation.

Verification

- Once you generate a concept, you need to evaluate it, testing for both functionality and creativity.
 - This is the point in the process to keenly critique your own concepts.
 - Verification involves evaluating/assessing and logically supporting your viewpoint.

Phase 4: Design

Finally, it's time to design. Now your design concept takes articulate visual form.

- For many, this is a nonlinear process, where the steps vary markedly as a result of creative thinking and designing.
 - Individual factors or circumstances cause designers to follow different paths with deviations from those paths.

Step 1: Thumbnail Sketches

- **Thumbnail sketches** are preliminary, small, quick, unrefined drawings of your ideas in black and white or color.
 - Best practice dictates that you use traditional image-making techniques—sketch by hand using a drawing tool, such as a pencil, marker, or pen, or digital pen and tablet.

Step 2: Roughs

- **Roughs** are larger and more refined than thumbnail sketches.
 - The purpose of this stage is to flesh out a few of your best ideas, before going to a final stage.

Phase 4: Design

Step 3: Comprehensives

- A **comprehensive**, referred to as a **comp**, is a detailed representation of a design concept thoughtfully visualized and composed.
 - When a client sees a comp, he or she will see a very close representation of how the piece will look when produced.

Client Review During Phase 4

- At this point, clients often request changes and refinements. During this phase, the designer evaluates, refines, and secures approval from the client.
 - Very often, the comp is used as a visual agreement of the design solution between the designer and client and as a guide or “blueprint” for the printer

Phase 5: Implementation

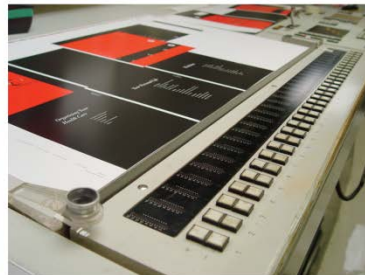
For a graphic design student, execution means either printing one's solution on a home printer or displaying it on screen to one's instructor or crafting a mock-up.

In a professional setting, implementing one's design solution takes a variety of forms depending on the kind of format and whether the format is print, screen-based, or environmental.



Phase 5: Implementation

- Very often, designers go on press to assure accuracy and may work closely with the printer.
- **Production**, also called **digital prepress**, includes preparing the digital files utilizing industry-standard software, collecting all needed photographs and/or illustrations and having them scanned, preparing font folders and image folders, proofreading (with or without the client), and following through by working with the printer or the web designer.



Phase 5: Implementation

- **Craftsmanship** refers to the level of skill, proficiency, and dexterity of the execution.
- Well-crafted work enhances good design concepts.
 - Many students display their portfolios on websites, on mobile or other digital devices, or in PDFs.
 - Some employers still prefer to see hard copies—comprehensives and mock-ups in portfolios.
 - Design solutions should be neat, clean, accurate, functional, and ecologically mindful.
- **Presentation**—the manner in which comps are presented to a client or the way work is presented in your portfolio—is important.
 - A great presentation can truly enhance your chances of selling your solution to a client.
 - Make it accurate, make it neat, present it professionally.

Debriefing

After a design assignment has ended, some clients and designers find debriefing useful.

- This involves reviewing the solution and its consequences—examining your finished assignment to determine what went right and what went wrong.

Summary

- Orientation is the process of becoming familiar with your assignment, the graphic design problem, and the client's business or organization, product, service, or group.
- The audience is the targeted, specified group of people at whom you are aiming your visual communication. Knowing about the audience is critical.
- Analysis involves examining all you have unearthed to best understand, assess, and strategize to move forward with the assignment.
- A clearly defined strategy directs all strategic and creative expressions, and keeps the client and creative professionals on the same page.
- The design concept sets the framework for all your design decisions. It is the primary broad abstract idea driving the hows and whys of your design decisions.

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- For a graphic design student, execution means either printing one's solution on a home printer or displaying it on screen to one's instructor or crafting a mock-up.
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