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# Principles of Design and Building Quick Graphics

Johanna Ostrich

PAC Digital Public Affairs Content Creation Workshop



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# Today's Agenda

- What is Design?
- 4 Stages of a Project
- A Designer's Strategic Toolbox
- Putting it All Together: Building a Graphic

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# Key Learnings

- **Design can be a powerful tool for communicating**  
your message to a broader audience.
  - **Make sure the whole team takes time to set your strategy**  
at the beginning of a design project, and revert back to it throughout to make sure you're on the right track.
  - **Keep your design clean, simple, and aligned with your goals,**  
so your message makes an impact!
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# Remote Workshop Culture + Norms

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# Remote Workshop Culture + Norms

- **Video on, mic muted:** Come off mute to chime in, of course.
  - **Regular workshop norms apply:** Speak to each other respectfully. Wear pants.
  - **Active participation:** We'll have opportunities for group discussion.
  - **Be kind to yourself and others:** Don't sweat the small stuff.
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# What is Design?

Breaking Down Some Common Myths

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# Design Myth #1

Design is about making things pretty.



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# Like This









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# Pro Tip: Form Follows Function

Design is about organizing and communicating information clearly through the use of visuals.

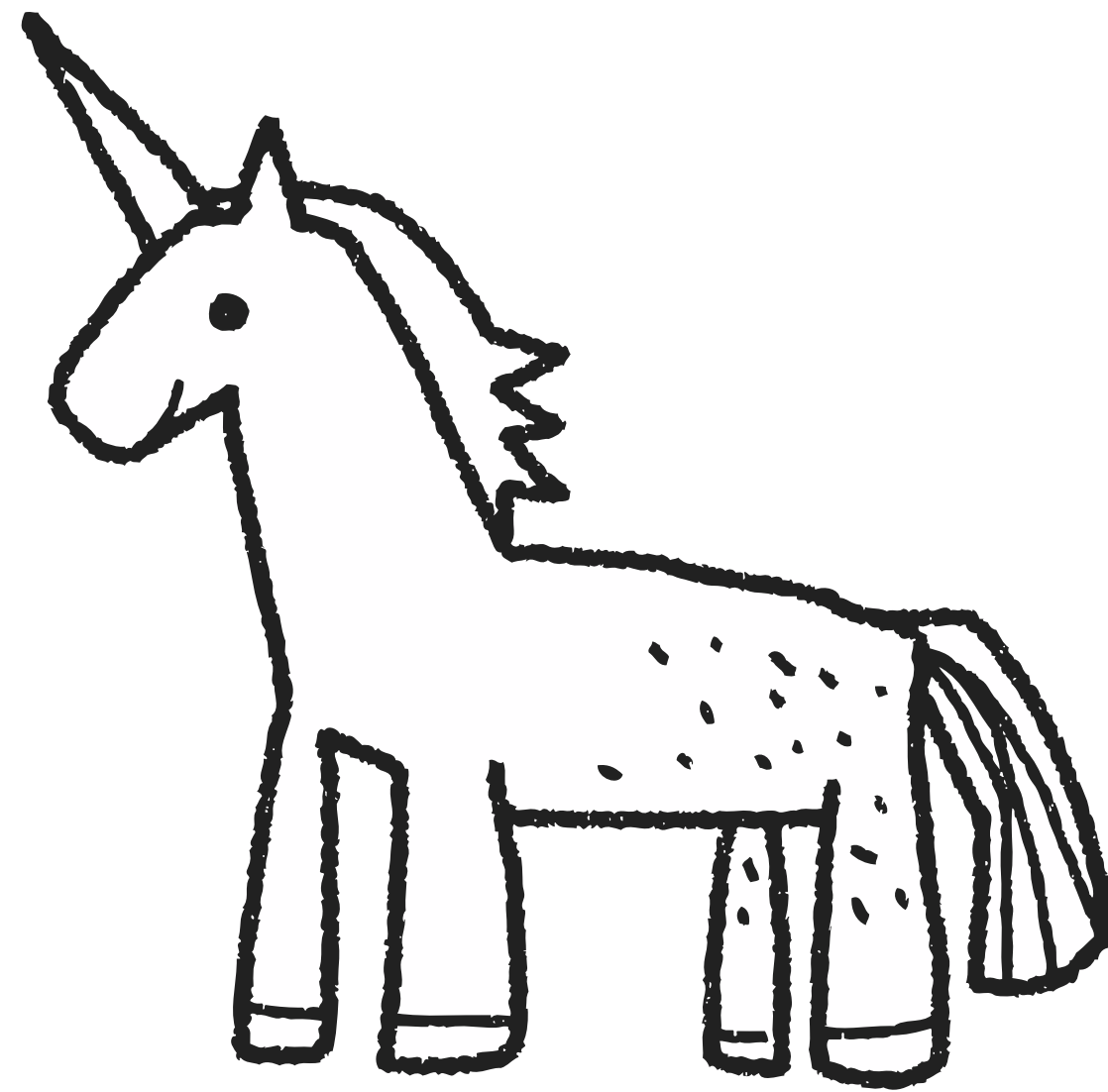
It's about enhancing content, not decorating it.



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# Design Myth #2

Design is a fluffy and magical process.





A close-up shot of a Black man with a bald head, looking directly at the camera with a wide-eyed, open-mouthed expression of surprise or awe. His hands are clasped together in front of his chest. He is wearing a dark shirt with a light-colored paisley pattern. The background is a blurred interior with a warm, reddish-brown light source visible through a window or doorway.

**RAZZMATAZZ**









**SUPER MAGICAL RAINBOW KICK**



We've been trained to think of designers as people who are a few cards short of a tarot deck, out in left field, creatures of instinct. They don't follow rules. They accidentally set conference rooms on fire. And they only work when inspiration rolls up for a visit....

Calling someone a creative doesn't elevate. It marginalizes. The label excludes designers from conversations about strategy, product definition, business goals, and metrics.

—Mike Monteiro, *You're My Favorite Client*

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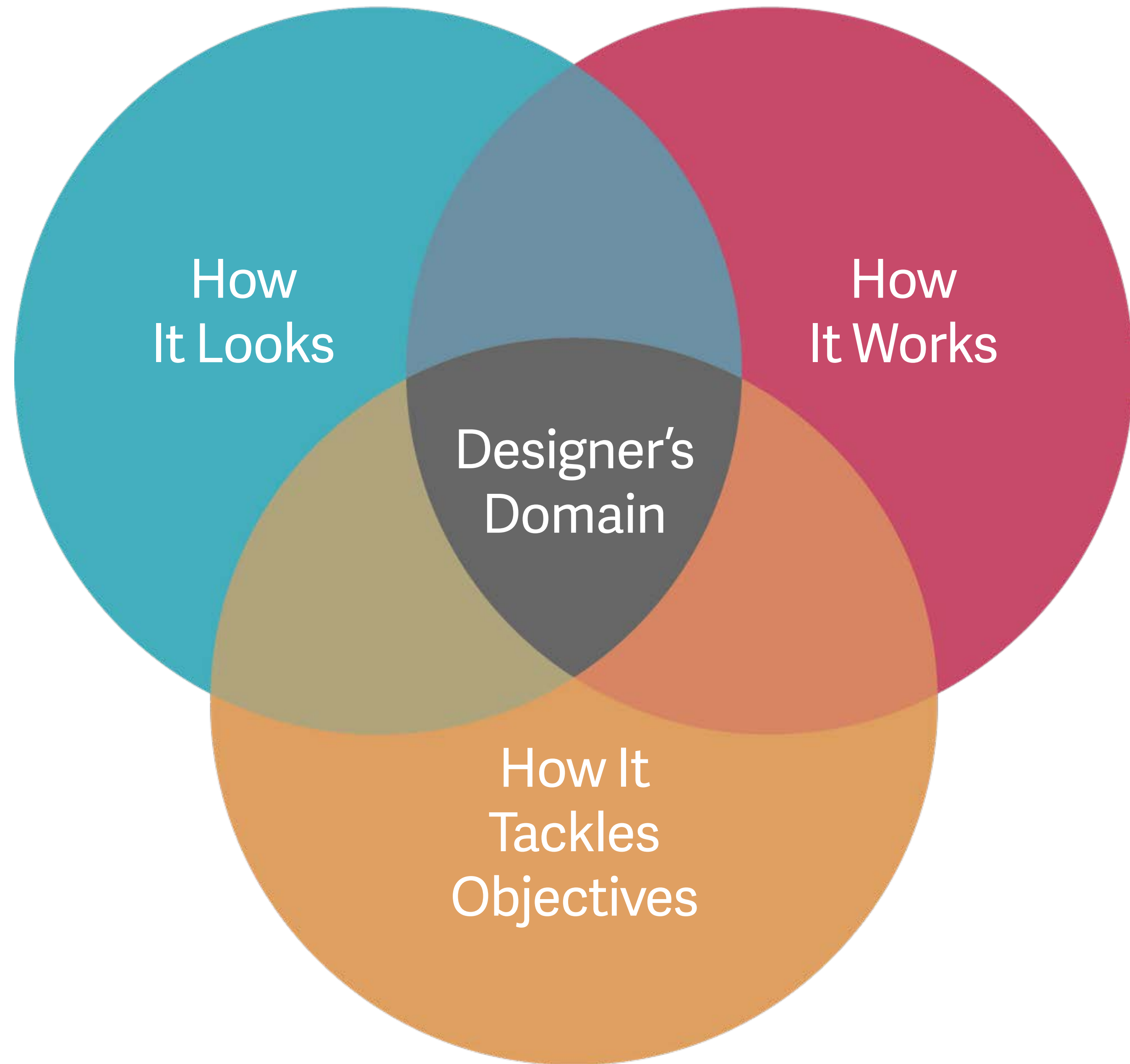
# Pro Tip: Design Isn't Magic

Design is about solving a problem.

And there are principles and processes to guide us.









# 4 Stages of a Project

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# 4 Stages of a Project (The 4 D's)



**DISCOVER**

Research

**DEFINE**

Summarize Research  
(in a meaningful way)

**DESIGN**

Design it

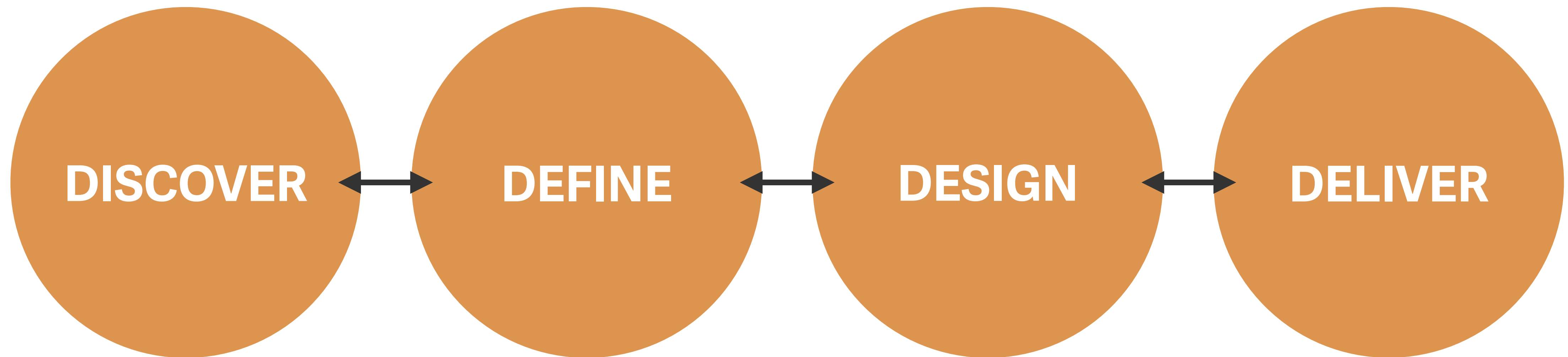
**DELIVER**

Test it

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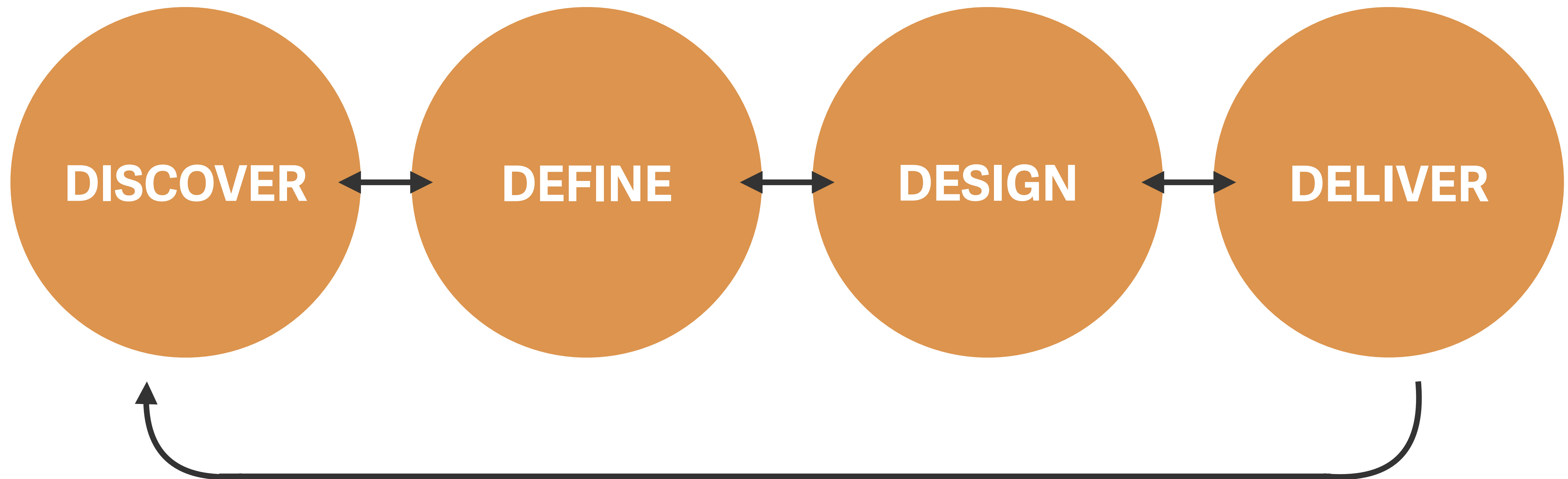
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# The 4 Ds—Not Necessarily Linear



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# The 4 Ds—Not Necessarily Linear



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# The 4 Ds—All Team Members Involved

**DISCOVER**



**DEFINE**



**DESIGN**



**DELIVER**





# A Designer's Strategic Toolbox

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# Design Toolbox Includes:

- strategy
- composition
- typography
- color
- imagery





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# Understanding the Problem & Setting the Strategy

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# Laying the Groundwork

- The first step in solving a problem is **understanding and defining the problem**.
- This step lays the foundation for the whole project, so it's important for relevant team members to be involved early on.
- This is where **research** comes in.



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# 3 Big Questions

- What are we making?
- Who are we making it for?
- Why are we making it?

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# Goal-Setting

- What's our message?
  - Who is our target audience?
  - What's the point?
    - Present information clearly?
    - Tell a story?
    - Educate or change opinion?
    - Compel readers to take action?
  - Is this narrative-driven? Stat-driven?
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# Logistics

- Format and specs—*Where is it going?*
  - Timeline
  - Budget
  - Approval process
  - Desired design style
  - Brand requirements
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# Summarize Your Research

Makes sure we're all on the same page about:

- the problem we're trying to solve
- the steps we're taking to solve the problem

It gives us something objective (and important!) to evaluate our work against throughout the process.

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# Project Prompt

**You've been working with the Mayor's team on a major piece of tax legislation, incentivizing organizations like yours to build facilities in the community and hire locally (both construction and permanent jobs).** The legislation is good for the city (expanding the tax base and allowing it to improve and expand municipal services) as well as good for residents (giving people more financial power to spend locally, buy homes, save for college for their kids, etc).

Your team learns that several City Council members are unsure about the legislation—they think it's too generous for business—and you need additional community support to get it passed. **You are tasked with creating easy-to-digest, shareable social graphics that make the case to residents that the legislation is beneficial to the city.**

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# 3 Big Questions

- What are we making?
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# Further Reading

## **Never Get Involved in a Land War in Asia (or Build a Website for No Reason)**

By Greg Storey



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# Composition

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# Composition

- One of the most obvious places strategy comes into play is composition and layout—how content is prioritized.
  - Don't force your readers to find order in the chaos by themselves.
  - Designers use **white space, visual hierarchy, and design principles** to influence how the user's eye goes through content.
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# Visual Hierarchy is Key

- Some elements on the page are more important than others.  
What visual cues can we use to indicate the hierarchy?
- If everything is of equal visual prominence, nothing stands out, and information may feel chaotic and hard to understand.

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# Gestalt Principles of Perception

- Gestalt psychology is interested in the way people make sense of a world filled with so much visual stimuli.
  - It examines how humans subconsciously look for patterns to impose order on chaos. (I.e. how our lizard brains work.)
  - For design, Gestalt principles of perception help us understand the way our brains process visual stimuli, so we can more actively control the way people see our designs.
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# Can You Read This?

I cnduo't bvleiee taht I culod aulacly uesdtannrd waht I was rdnaieg. Unisg the icndeblire pweor of the hmuan mnid, aocdcnig to rseecrih at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mttar in waht oderr the lterets in a wrod are, the olny irpoamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rhgit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whoutit a pboerlm. Tihs is bucseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey ltteer by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

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# Gestalt Principles of Perception

**C**—Contrast

**R**—Repetition

**A**—Alignment

**P**—Proximity



*The Non-Designer's  
Design Book*  
by Robin Williams

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# Contrast/Repetition

## 1 of These Things is Not Like the Others

- People are good at identifying when something is the same.
- People are also good at identifying when something is different.
- **Takeaway:** Elements should be the same or different *for a reason*.





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# Alignment

## In Two Straight Lines...

- When things line up, they look more related and also more intentional/professional.
- **Takeaway:** Set up consistent margins.  
Use a grid.



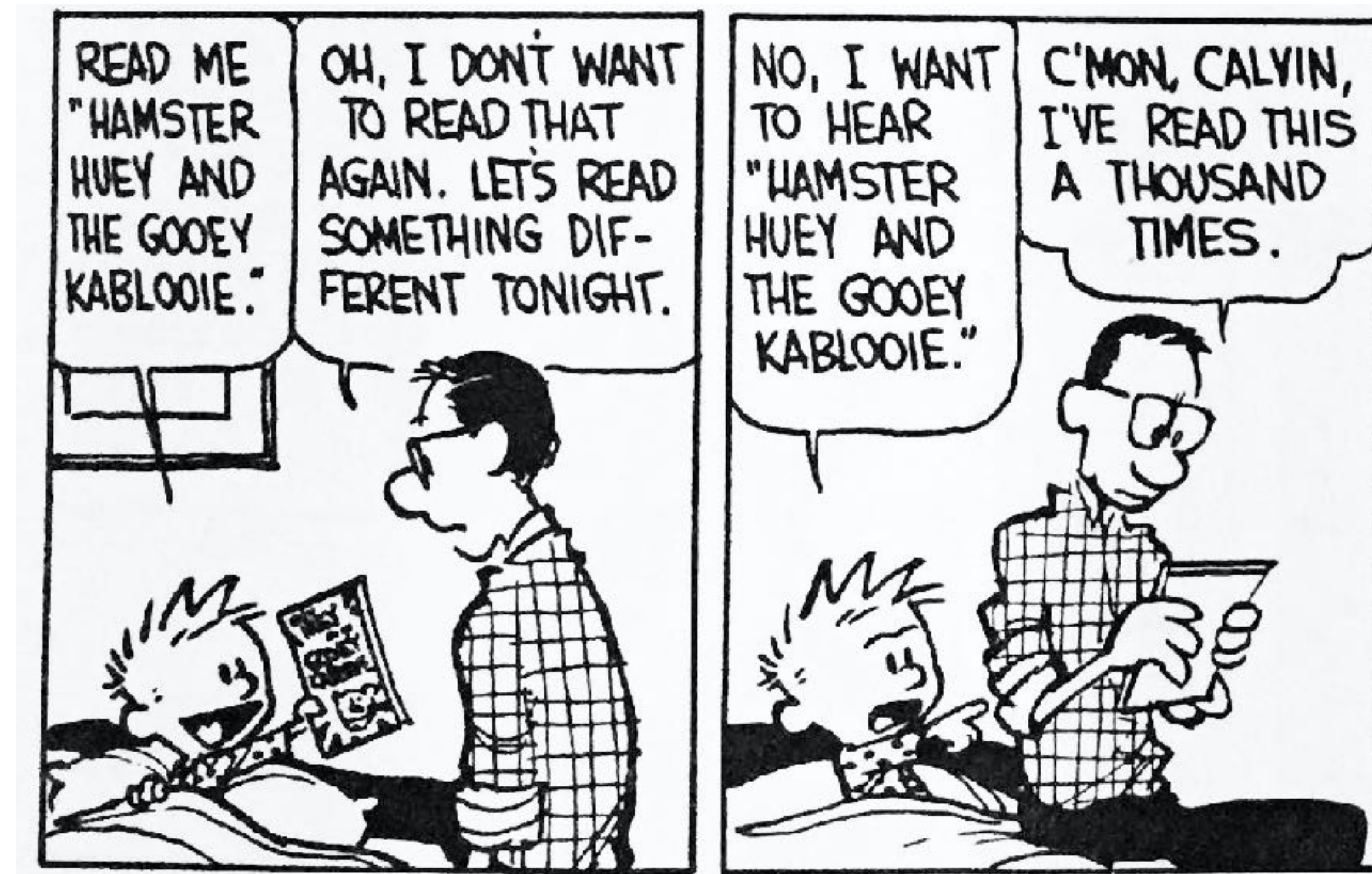


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# Proximity

## Don't Stand So Close to Me

- Things that are close together appear more related than things that are far apart.
- Similarly, things that are connected (with a line in between, or enclosed in a box) appear especially related.
- **Takeaway:** Use these techniques to distinguish between elements.





# 5 HEALTHY WAYS TO UNWIND



**aacom<sup>®</sup>**

**Exercise**



**Read a  
book  
for fun**



**Go see a  
movie**



**Cook a  
new recipe**



**Visit with  
friends &  
family**





## News & Research



### ELECTION IMPACT: DON'T FIGHT THE LAST BATTLE

No one knows for certain what will happen on Election Day, but Nathan Gonzales explains why our collective shock from 2016 shouldn't drive us away from the data this time.



### IS THE TRUST PENDULUM SWINGING TOWARD BUSINESS?

In a year marked by COVID-19 and questions of election integrity, the public is putting more trust in business and less in government. Read on for insights from the 2020 Public Affairs Pulse Survey and how companies can take a bigger role on the biggest issues.



### HOW NONPROFITS ARE CHANGING

As the boundaries between corporations and nonprofits blur, Walter Powell of Stanford University provides a fresh understanding of charitable organizations.



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# Typography

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# Typography Makes a Difference

WITH YOUR HELP

**WE'VE FUNDED 24,537 WATER  
PROJECTS FOR 7 MILLION  
PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD.**

SEE MORE OF OUR IMPACT

WITH YOUR HELP

We've funded 24,537  
water projects for  
7 million people around  
the world.

SEE MORE OF OUR IMPACT



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# How Do I Know What Font(s) to Use?

- Consult the brand guidelines.
- If you're starting from scratch, 2 important questions when evaluating a font...

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# Can You Read the Text Comfortably?

This is known as readability.  
It's particularly important for body copy.



## HOW NONPROFITS ARE CHANGING

AS THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN CORPORATIONS AND NONPROFITS  
BLUR, WALTER POWELL OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY PROVIDES A  
FRESH UNDERSTANDING OF CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS.

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# Rules for Readable Body Copy

- Left-aligned
  - Regular weight (not bold or italic)
  - Sentence case (not all uppercase or all lowercase)
  - **Font-size:** 10–12 point for print  
15–25 pixels for web
  - **Leading** (vertical distance between lines): 120–145% of font size
  - **Line length:** 9–12 words
  - Nothing fancy
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# Does it Set the Right Tone for the Project?

You can use fonts with more personality for headers. But when in doubt, simple is always best.

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## **HOW NONPROFITS ARE CHANGING**

As the boundaries between corporations and nonprofits blur, Walter Powell of Stanford University provides a fresh understanding of charitable organizations.



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# Rule for Effective Headings

Headings are all about visual hierarchy—making the page easy to skim. Make sure there's contrast between headers and body copy.

## **FatFrank Header**

Display fonts can make for good headings. They create contrast with body copy and are more readable at larger sizes with less text.

## **Open Sans Bold Header**

Or you can use a single typeface for everything and create contrast through size and/or weight.

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# Google Fonts

- Excellent repository of free fonts.
- Lots of them are great, lots of them aren't.
- Look for fonts with 4+ styles.

The screenshot displays the Google Fonts website interface. At the top, the navigation bar includes the 'Google Fonts' logo, links for 'DIRECTORY', 'FEATURED', and 'ABOUT', a search icon, and a search input field. Below the navigation bar, a status message indicates 'Viewing 223 of 818 font families'. The main content area is a grid of font family cards. Each card shows the font name, the designer's name, the number of styles available, a red plus icon for adding the font, and a sample of text in that font. The cards shown are: Roboto (Christian Robertson, 12 styles), Open Sans (Steve Matteson, 10 styles), Lato (Łukasz Dziedzic, 10 styles), Roboto Condensed (Christian Robertson, 6 styles), Oswald (Vernon Adams, Kalapi Gajjar, Cyreal, 6 styles), and Source Sans Pro (Paul D. Hunt, 12 styles). The sidebar on the right contains filter options: 'Categories' (Serif, Sans Serif, Display, Handwriting, Monospace), 'Sorting' (Trending), 'Languages' (All Languages), 'Number of styles' (a slider), 'Thickness' (a slider), 'Slant' (a slider), and 'Width' (a slider). At the bottom of the sidebar is a 'CLEAR FILTERS' button.

Google Fonts

DIRECTORY FEATURED ABOUT

Viewing 223 of 818 font families

Roboto  
Christian Robertson (12 styles)

Open Sans  
Steve Matteson (10 styles)

Lato  
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Vernon Adams, Kalapi Gajjar, Cyreal (6 styles)

Source Sans Pro  
Paul D. Hunt (12 styles)

Categories

- ☐ Serif
- ☒ Sans Serif
- ☐ Display
- ☐ Handwriting
- ☐ Monospace

Sorting

Trending

Languages

All Languages

Number of styles

Thickness

Slant

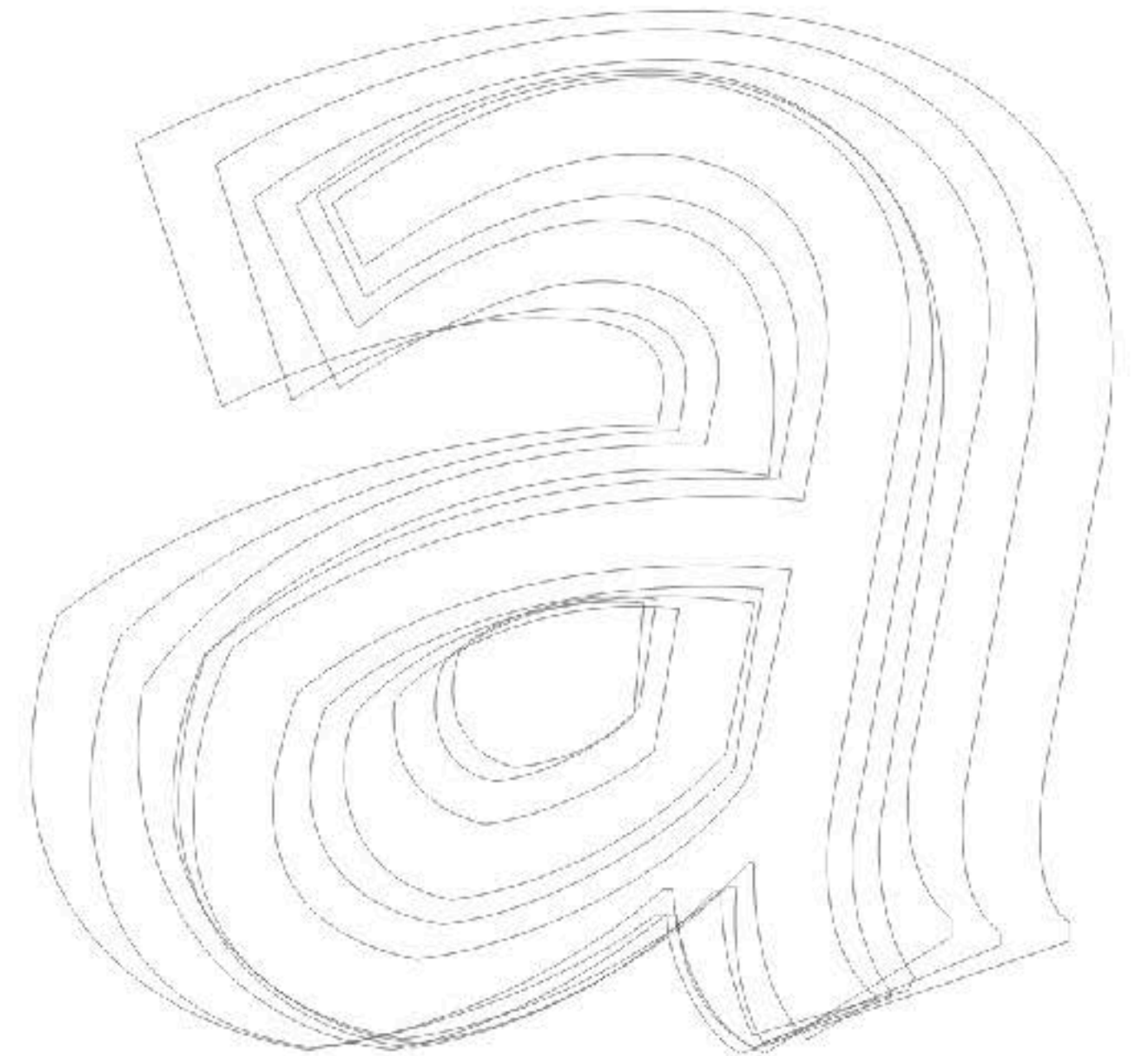
Width

CLEAR FILTERS

# Butterick's Practical Typography

Great typography resource  
for beginners.

BUTTERICK'S  
PRACTICAL  
TYPOGRAPHY



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# Color

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# Color Should be a Team Player

GET OUR EMAILS




WITH YOUR HELP

We've funded **24,537**  
water projects for  
**7 million** people around  
the world.

SEE MORE OF OUR IMPACT

But we're not done yet. We need your help. Here's how you can get involved.

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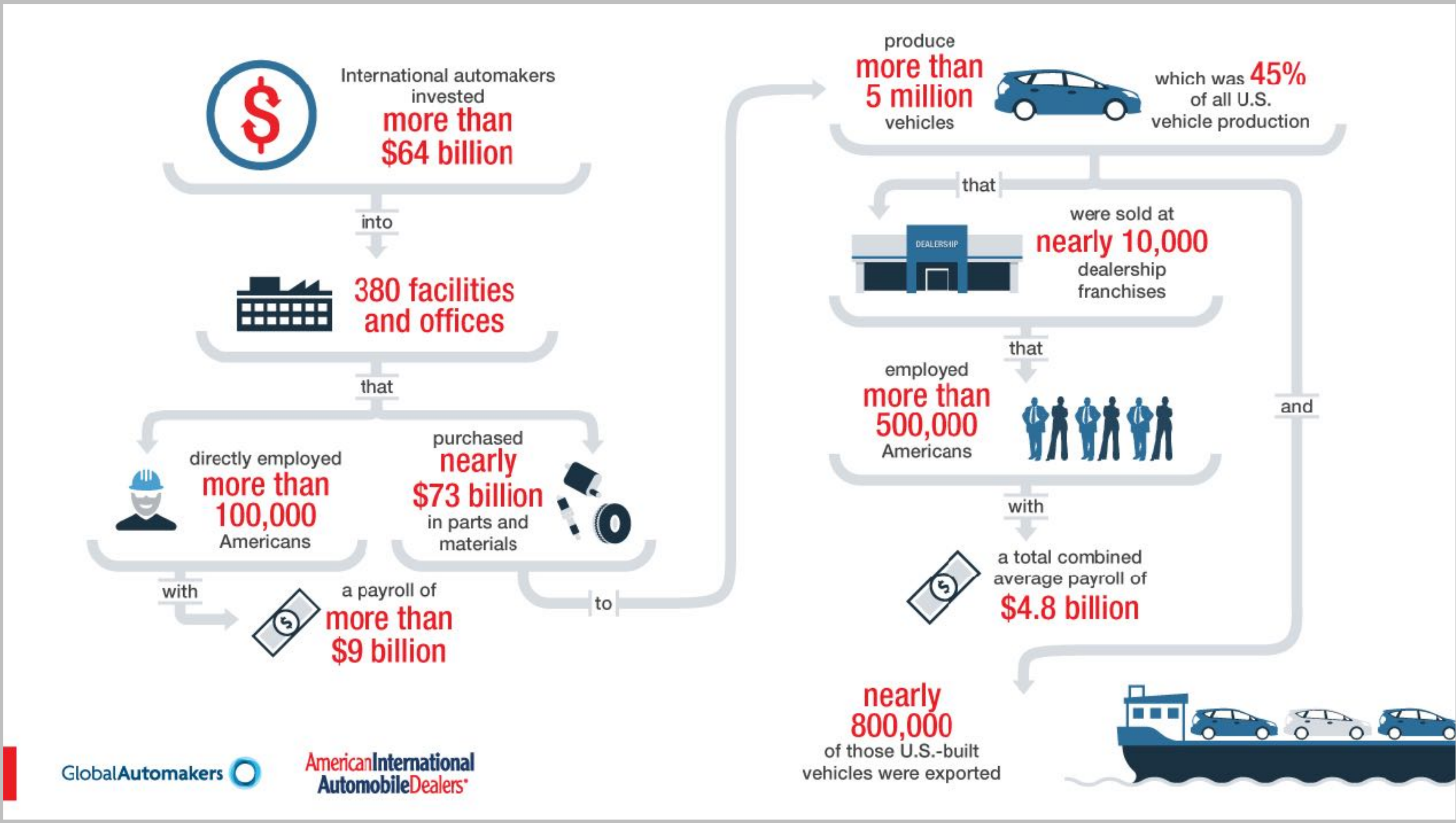
## 2 Big Questions with Color

- **Does this color palette set the right mood for the project?** Often this work has been done for you. Consult the brand guidelines.
- **Is the color applied in a way that reinforces the content?** Create a visual language with color that reinforces contrast and hierarchy.



### HOW NONPROFITS ARE CHANGING

As the boundaries between corporations and nonprofits blur, Walter Powell of Stanford University provides a fresh understanding of charitable organizations.





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# Text Color is Important

- High contrast is good for readability, particularly with body copy.
- Most body copy is black (or dark grey) on a white (or very light) background.
- If contrast is low, it will be hard to read.

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# Don't Assume Reading Conditions

Consider that your readers could be:

- Color-blind
  - Vision-impaired
  - Using a device with a crappy screen
  - Reading a document printed with a terrible office printer
  - Reading in poor lighting
-



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A low-angle photograph of the U.S. Capitol dome, showing its intricate architecture and the American flag flying from a tall pole in front of it. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The dome's base features a series of white columns and a pediment with sculptural reliefs.

# **TAKE ACTION**

on Our Important  
Issue Right Now

**LEARN MORE**



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# TAKE ACTION

on Our Important  
Issue Right Now

[LEARN MORE](#)

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A low-angle photograph of the U.S. Capitol dome, showing its intricate architecture and the American flag flying from a tall pole in front of it. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The dome's base features a pediment with sculptural reliefs and a row of columns.

# TAKE ACTION

on Our Important  
Issue Right Now

[LEARN MORE](#)

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# TAKE ACTION

on Our Important  
Issue Right Now

[LEARN MORE](#)

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# Imagery

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# Image Considerations

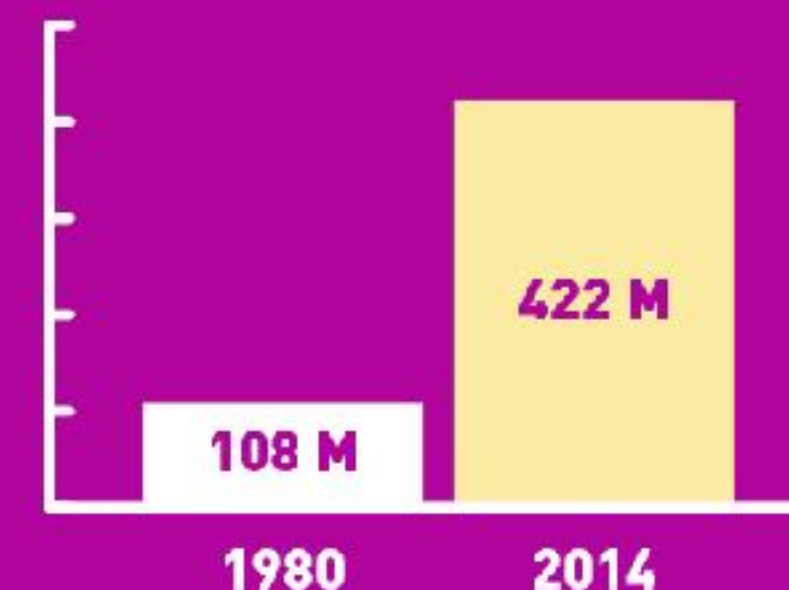
- What kind of visuals will work best with our content—photos, charts, icons, etc?
- What kind of mood do we want to set?
- What kind of visuals do we already have access to?





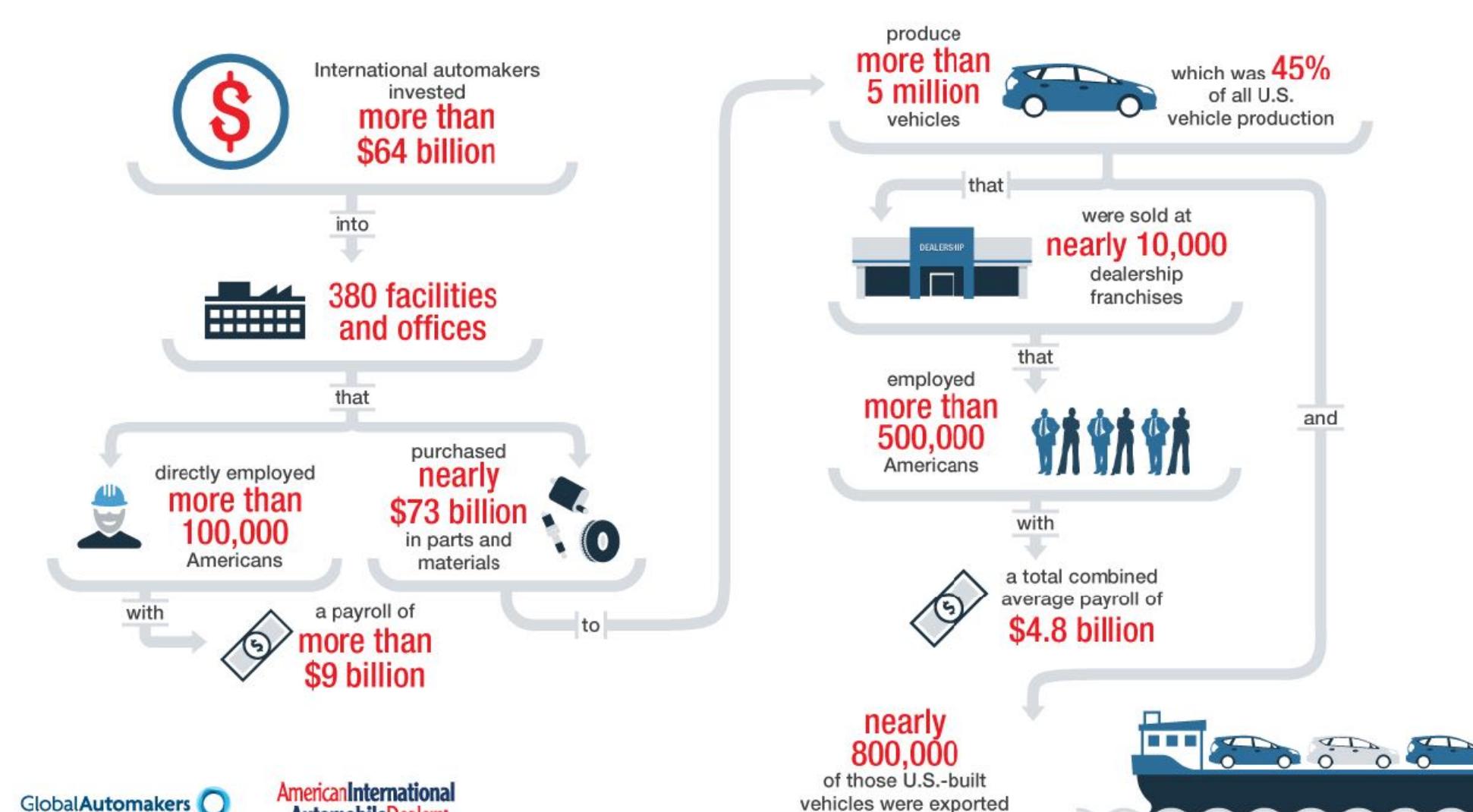
"My iLevel Power Chair has restored my mobility and freedom. Switching to iLevel was like going from an economy car to the deluxe model! When I am out in public, everyone asks me how I can drive so fast elevated. iLevel also takes the stress out of navigating through crowds when I'm out with my family. I cannot image life without it."

— Jay Smith, founder of Every 90 Minutes



The number of people with diabetes has risen from 108 million in 1980 to **422 million in 2014.**

— World Health Organization



## Why We're Thankful for Medicare Part D

90% of seniors enrolled in Medicare Part D say they are satisfied with the drug plan.

64% of all American seniors are enrolled in Medicare Part D. That's 31 million people!

As of 2011, Medicare Part D had come 41% under its original projected cost.





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# Tools—Assets

## Icon Sets (free):

[fontawesome.com](http://fontawesome.com)

[thenounproject.com](http://thenounproject.com)

[flaticon.com](http://flaticon.com)

## Image Editors (free):

[pixlr.com](http://pixlr.com)

[gimp.org](http://gimp.org)

## Stock Imagery (free):

[flickr.com/creativecommons](http://flickr.com/creativecommons)

[unsplash.com](http://unsplash.com)

## Stock Imagery (paid):

[istock.com](http://istock.com)

[thinkstock.com](http://thinkstock.com)

[gettyimages.com](http://gettyimages.com)

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# Putting it All Together

Building a Graphic

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# Tools—Software

- **Canva**—free; paid service with additional features
- **Sketch by Bohemian Coding**—\$99/year
- **Adobe Creative Cloud** (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, etc)—\$50/month



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# Canva Tutorial

[canva.com](https://canva.com)

Download these assets:

[bit.ly/2HqWuyz](https://bit.ly/2HqWuyz)

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# In Conclusion

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so your message makes an impact!
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# Thanks!

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