LARA KROEKER

Interactive

BEAUTIFUL AND FUNCTIONAL

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FIND

A KILLER VISUAL STYLE FOR YOUR BRAND

Hi, I'm Lara Kroeker — a designer with over 20 years of experience crafting beautiful, functional websites!

I've worked with brands around the world and across many industries — building sites for products, films, and TV series; e-commerce sites for clothing designers, stores, and record labels; and social impact sites for climate change and human rights projects.

As a small business owner, I know you're in the trenches daily, doing the work to help it grow. And while you may feel like you know your brand inside and out, you struggle to share it in an impactful and consistent way: a necessity when drawing in those future clients!

This is why discovering YOUR brand's visual style is vital, and I'm here to help you do it!

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INSPIRE YOURSELF

Diving head first into the deep end of creating your brand's visual style can be overwhelming. So, we're going to wade in slowly with some gorgeous inspiration.

Use the following Design Styles to get your feet wet and start noticing how you might and might not want your brand identity to be expressed.

PLAYFUL

FUN AND INFORMALITY

You'll see, in this design style, a sense of fun and informality. Playful brands prompt a smile, or a laugh, and help to lower the audience's guard, inviting them in. Playful design style comes in many forms, including semi-realistic, realistic, animated, and artistic.

Below are some of the elements that define this amusing design style:

- Animated elements of people, animals, or objects
- Vibrant colors
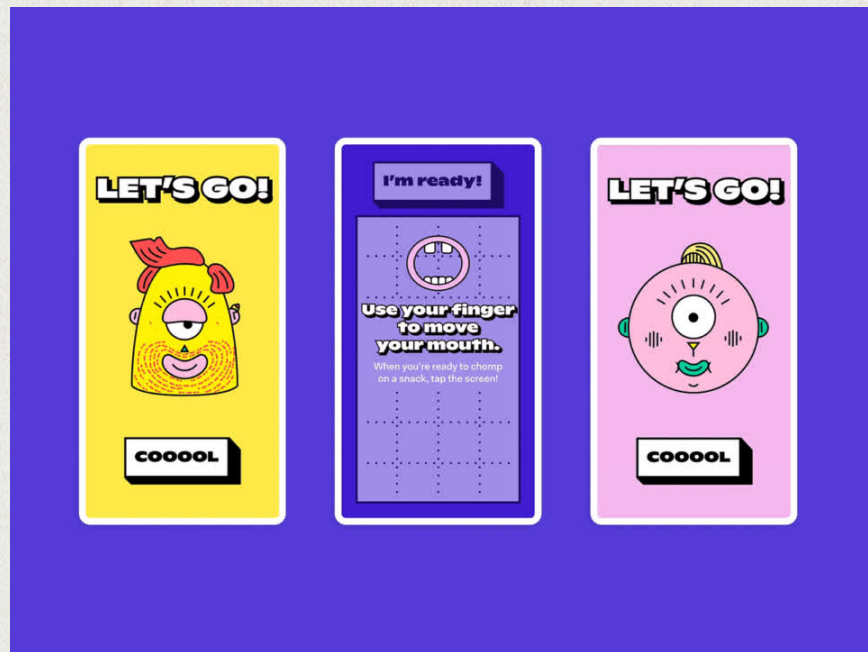
MINIMALIST

CLEAN DESIGN WITH NEGATIVE SPACE

Minimalism demands that only the most essential information and elements be included, ridding the design of any excessive components or additional features. It's just the bare minimum, you see (hence the name), which can make the feeling spare, cool, aloof, distant, or elevated.

The minimalist design style is often defined by the following characteristics:

- Simple functionality and user interaction
- Plenty of white/open space
- Simple color usage
- Only one or two typefaces with clean strokes
- Simplified, condensed content
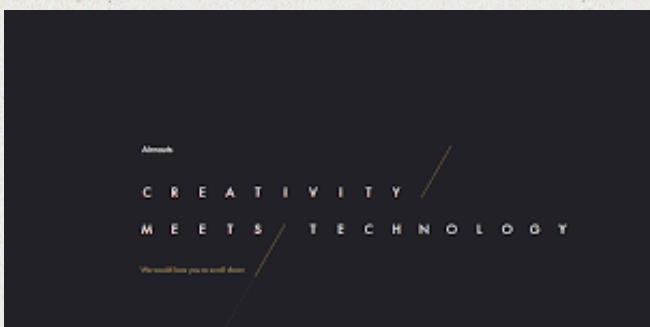
CORPORATE

FORMAL AND PROFESSIONAL

The Corporate design style is used mostly in formal or professional situations and, therefore, boasts a very straightforward, conservative look. There's little that's controversial in the Corporate style: it's simple, traditional, and a little familiar, sometimes associated with trust.

A successful corporate style design boasts the following characteristics:

- No drop shadows or effects
- Very few muted colors / simple color palette
- Standard, straightforward grid
- Traditional layouts with conventional header and page number placement
- Conservative, simple shapes
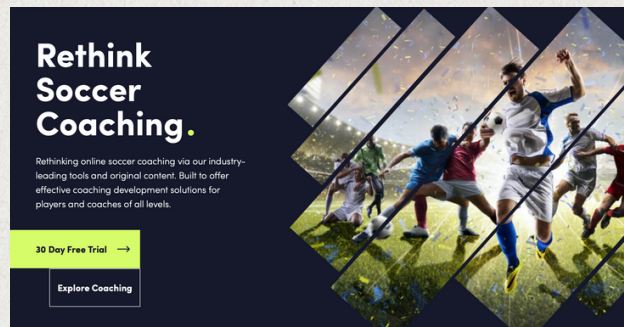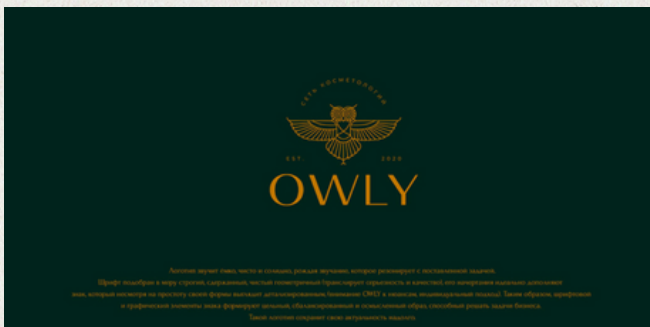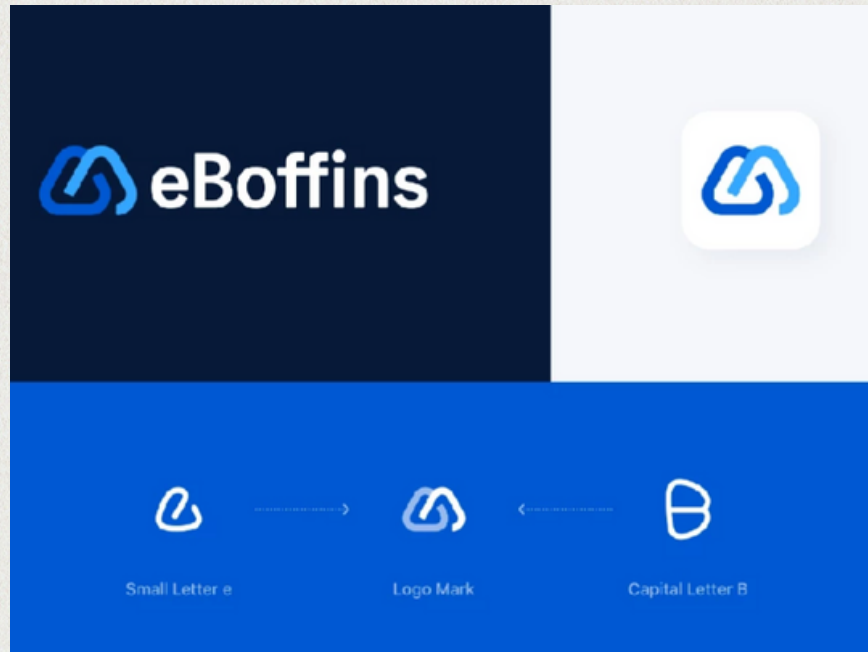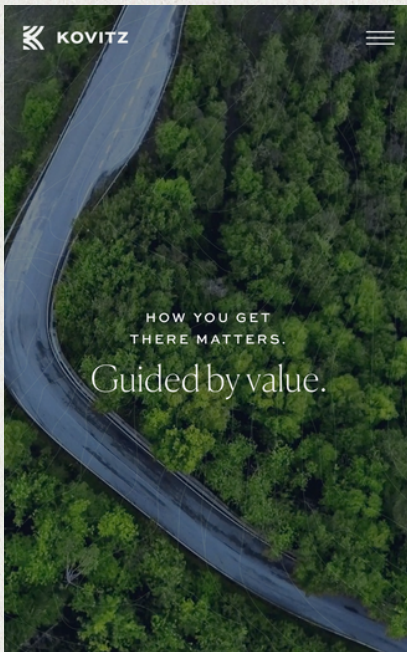
ELEGANT

SOPHISTICATION, ELEGANCE, AND CLASS

This design style can incorporate layers and/or textures to help set a specific mood or tone: one that represents sophistication, elegance, prestige, and/or class. You may see this type of design style used by high-end hotels, luxury fashion, or anything that is upscale and that invites the audience to indulge in extra comforts.

Below are the defining characteristics of elegant design style:

- A mix of Sans Serif fonts
- No effects
- Imagery that includes close-ups, subtle, focused on form
- Luxurious colors (gold, bronze, purple, pastels)
- Simple and classic grid
- Patterns, hard angles, borders, thin lines

CONTEMPORARY

MODERN, TRADITIONAL, ART DECO, FUTURISTIC

The contemporary style can offer hints of modern, traditional, art deco style. This design style is all about being aware of what's happening or trending in design, and adapting whatever is 'in' today to roll with the times.

Characteristics that can help when identifying this unique style:

- Mostly Sans Serif font, optional Serif headers
- May have effects
- Vibrant imagery, overlays and filters
- Vibrant colors, gradients, full screen colors, high contrast
- Straight/angled and geometric grid

GEOMETRIC

STRAIGHT LINES, ANGLES, AND SHAPES

This style is extremely symmetrical and features many shapes throughout the entire design, specifically rectangles, squares, and triangles. Geometric design style blends quite nicely with the minimalist style, as well as with Corporate.

Here are some of the defining characteristics of this design style:

- Straight lines and angles
- Highly symmetrical
- Perfect curves

ORGANIC

NATURAL AND ORGANIC

Organic design is a holistic, nature-inspired style that integrates both human and natural elements. It often has a grounded, warm, and/or comforting 'feel'.

When executed correctly, this type of design includes the following:

- Heavily nature-inspired
- Holistic design
- Smooth, rounded forms and shapes
- Lightweight constructions
- Softer shapes and flowing lines
- Asymmetrical
- Dynamic forms
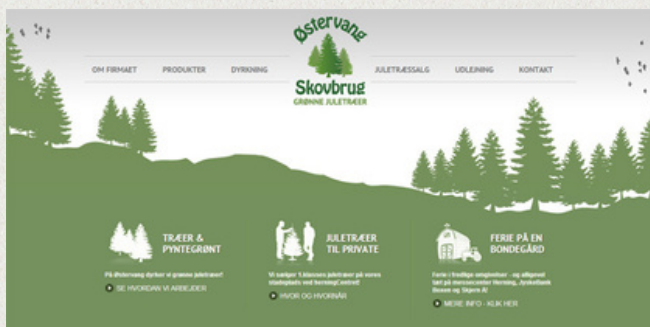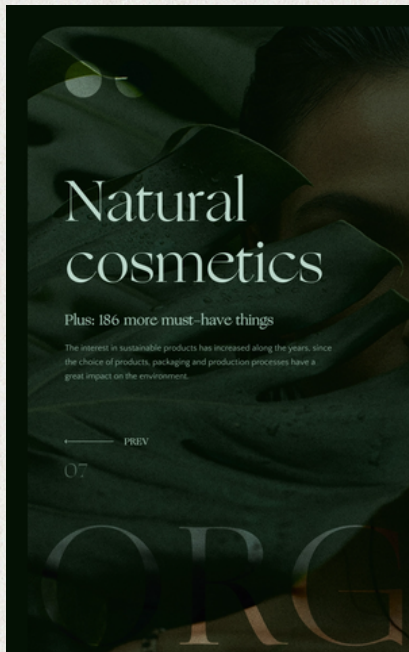
ILLUSTRATED

ILLUSTRATED GRAPHIC DESIGN

Illustrated design style is used to deliver a message or a concept almost entirely through illustration. This type of style combines very well with playful design style, as well as organic. It differs slightly from playful style in that it is completely dependent on artist-produced illustrations.

Below are the characteristics that help define this style:

- Lots of different illustrations styles
- Unique to different designers' drawing techniques/styles
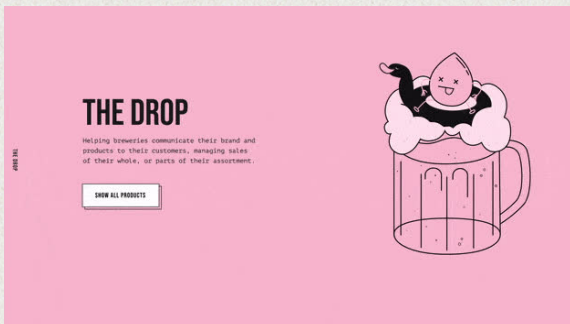
RETRO/VINTAGE

RETRO/VINTAGE GRAPHIC DESIGN

Retro or vintage design refers to a broad range of graphic design styles which lift influences and inspiration from different historical eras and retro style design, from mid-century modern graphic design and 50s art styles to vintage 70s graphic design.

Below are the characteristics that help define this style:

- Graphic is nostalgic
- reuses an element from the past
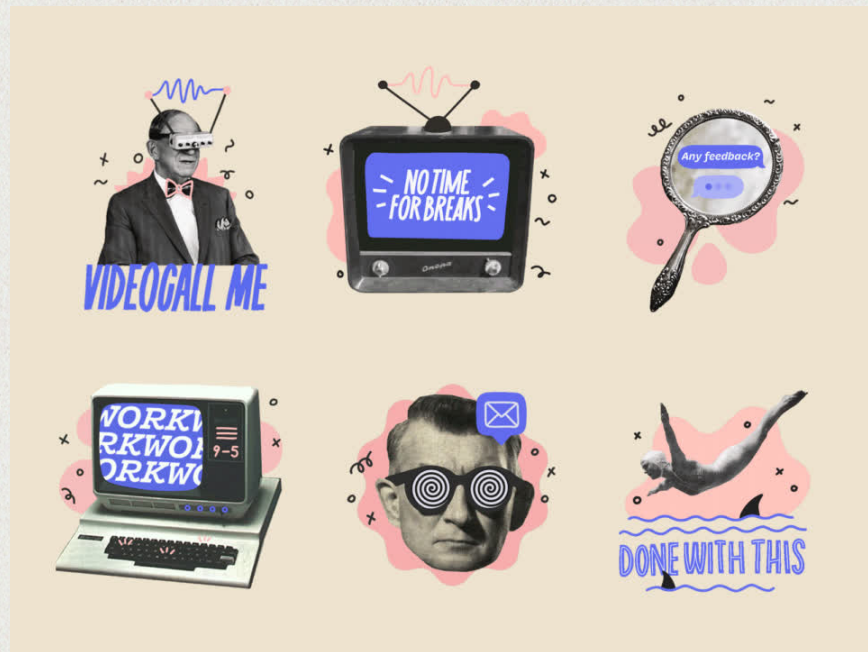
FLAT DESIGN

RETRO/VINTAGE GRAPHIC DESIGN

Flat design is what it sounds like: a design style that's two dimensional and proud of it. There's no shading, no added-in glare and no highlights to make images look 3D. Rather, flat design embraces a 2D style in order to communicate information quickly.

Below are the characteristics that help define this style:

- Bright colors
- Simple shapes
- Minimal textures
- Simple typography
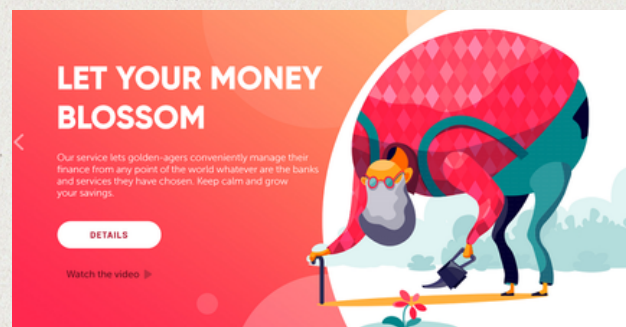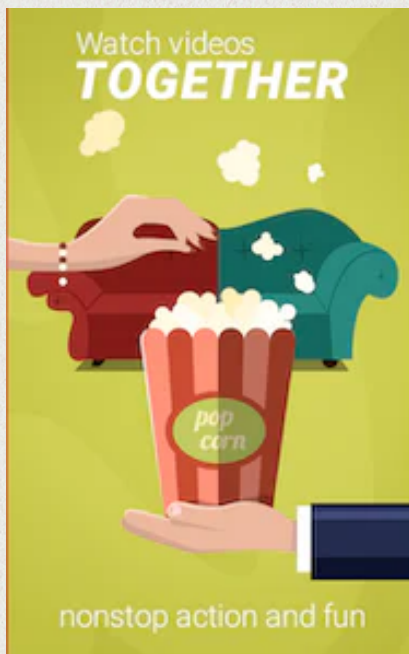
ALRIGHT, NOW TELL ME, WHAT WERE YOUR FAVOURITES?!?

While there are many ways to find a design style that's right for you and your brand, exploring what inspires you is the BEST place to start. Inspiration may not always come from the likeliest source, but you know when you find it!

And if one or more of these design styles had you grinning from ear to ear or nodding your head as you said, "YAAAAS!", you're on the right track.

Listen to your instincts and that voice in your head that's pulling you toward one style or another. By paying attention to that intuition, you will begin defining the look and feel you want for your brand.

Which of these styles could be THE ONE for your brand?

Minimalist

Contemporary/Modern

Professional and Corporate

Elegant Design

Vintage/Retro

Playful

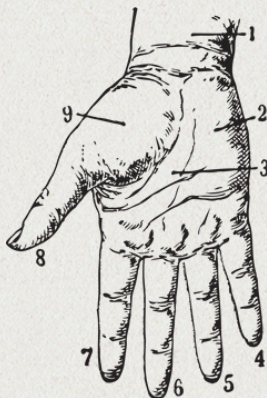Organic and Natural

Illustrated

Geometric

Flat Design

2

DETERMINE THE BRAND ELEMENTS YOU NEED

Branding is about so much more than just a logo. Your brand is the entire image of your business! Your brand is conveyed through your name, fonts, color schemes, imagery, style, and overall voice.

For some brands, you'll need elements like stickers, photos, textures, social templates, and illustrations to help share your image. For others, different elements will be more important. This step will help you determine which elements are right for YOUR business.

LOGO

COLOUR

TEXTURE

TYPOGRAPHY

BRAND ELEMENTS

PATTERN

ILLUSTRATION

PHOTOS

STICKERS
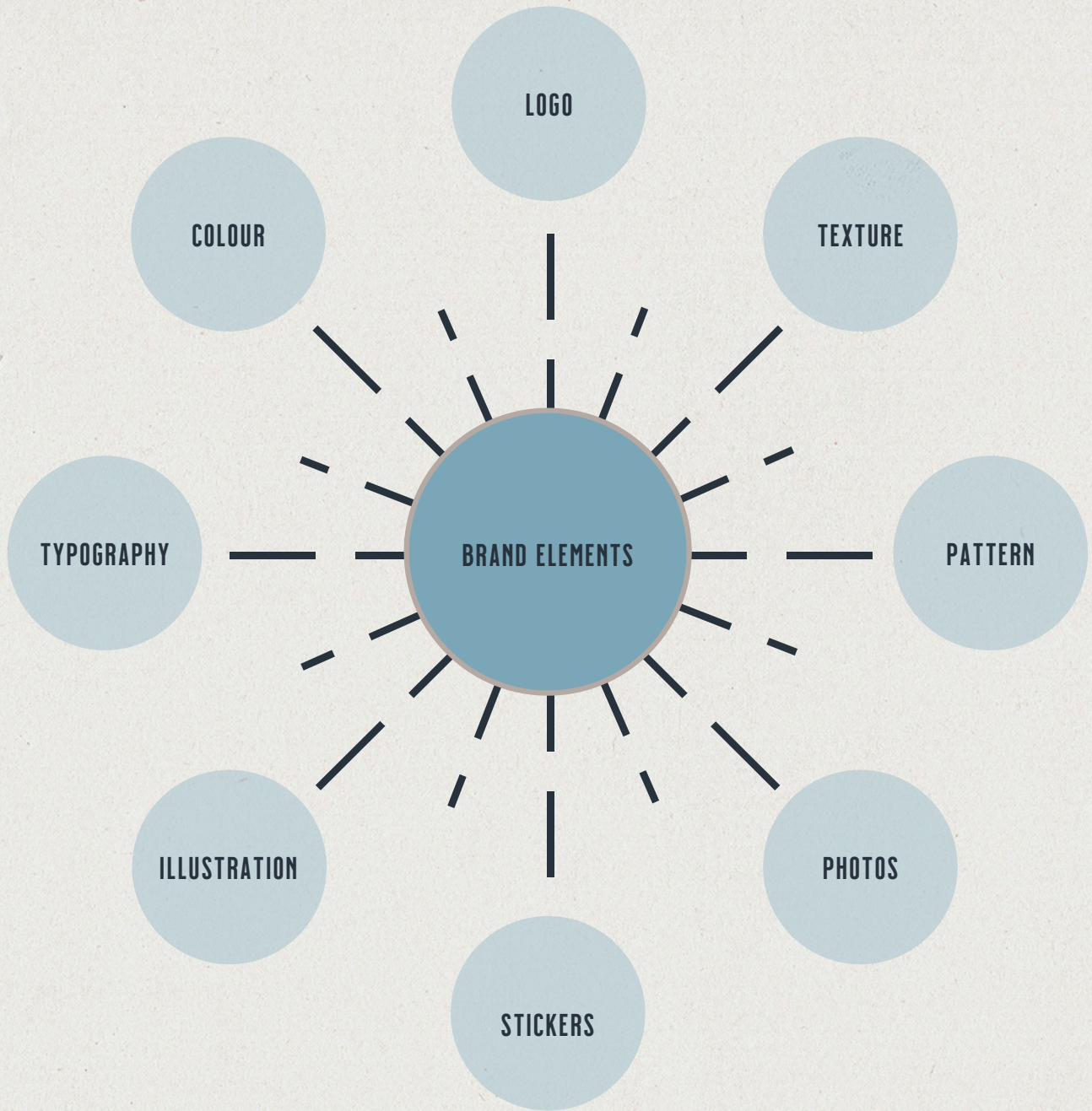
WHAT BRAND ELEMENTS DO YOU NEED?

This checklist will help you think through the various branding elements you may need for your business. Honestly, you could consider hundreds of elements, but this list is a fantastic jumping-off point, and the choices included are a fabulous place to start for most small and growing businesses.

If you come to an element you're unsure about, your brand may not need that yet...and that's okay! This is all about supporting you and your branding needs. Your brand and its visual style will continue to grow with your business.

Foundational

logo   ☐   font set (2-3 fonts) ☐

Colour palette   ☐   Patterns/Textures ☐

Website

Website Hero image ☐   Headshot ☐

favicon ☐   Brand photo style ☐

Branded illustration ☐   Icon family ☐

Social

Square profile picture ☐   Story highlight icons ☐

Branded cover banners ☐   Social Templates ☐

Print

Branded Swag ☐   Letterhead ☐

Stickers ☐   Envelopes ☐

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BRAND AUDIT

Now is the perfect time to figure out what you already have (and don't have) for your brand.

As you survey everything you DO have, you'll notice the holes in your branding and determine what you still need and what are "must haves" going forward.

What elements do you ALREADY have?

Be sure to think about what's currently working for your brand and what always seems to need more work and attention. (HINT: If tasks like creating social media images take FOREVER, this is a clear sign that social templates are something your brand needs.)
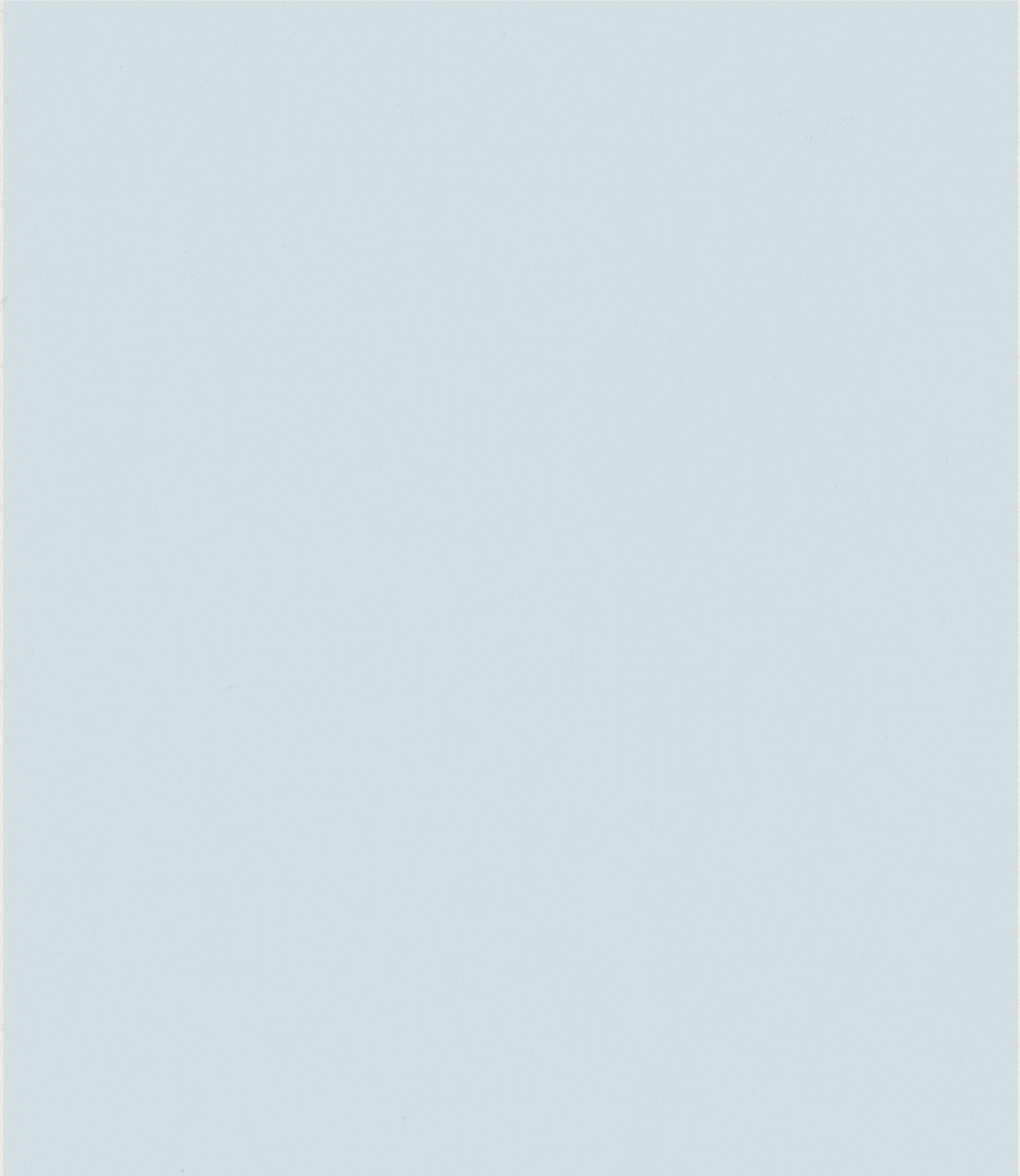
What elements do you NEED?

(Make notes on your assets and keep a running list)

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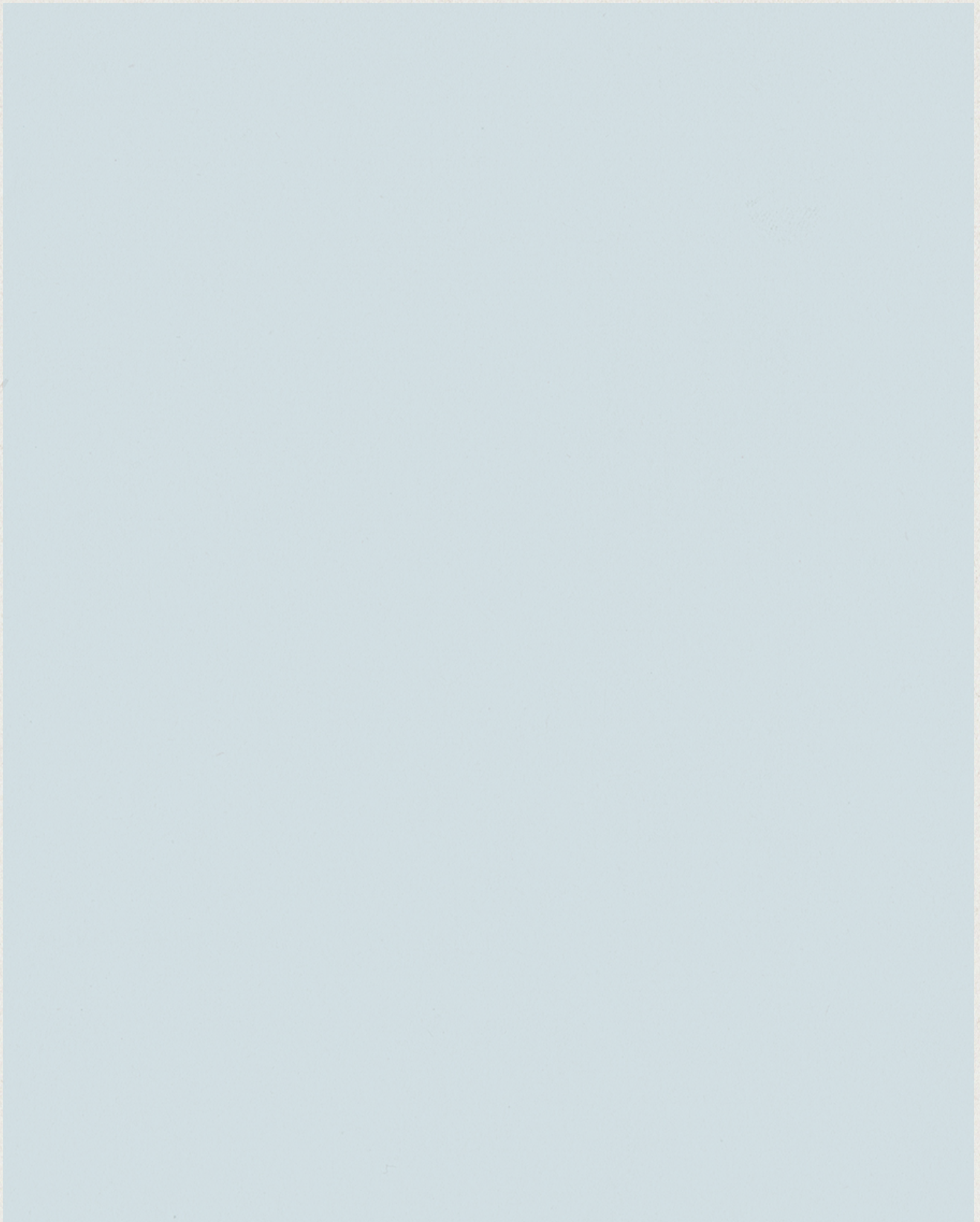
Every business, and every project, needs a unifying visual strategy that tells a consistent visual story of your brand.

This guide is a phenomenal place to start as you evaluate your current brand and dream about where you're headed.

The next step? Creating a cohesive, beautiful style guide that brings it all together and takes the guesswork out of design for your business.

If you're ready to start crafting this functional, gorgeous guide to your brand, I've got just the ticket!

...IN JUST ONE DAY!

BOOK A CALL