

eBay Voice and Tone (a case study)

Content Strategy Applied Conference
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Who are we? What do we want to be known for?



Since consumers can shop from a variety of brands, we need to be relevant but also differentiated.

Great Brands
At Great Value



TESCO

Walmart

?

ebay

Huge Selection
Amazing Prices
Great Shipping

amazon.com

Zappos

"Save Money. Live Better"
"Expect More. Pay Less"
"Every Little Helps"

"...And You're Done." "Delivering Happiness"

Our brand strategy is based on key areas of focus: eBay's emerging strategy, the changing shopping landscape, and our customers.

Our Landscape

amazon.com

Zappos

asos

MARKS & SPENCER

John Lewis

johnlewis.com

Argos

Tchibo

NET-A-PORTER.COM

GROUPON™

leboncoin.fr

...

Our Customers

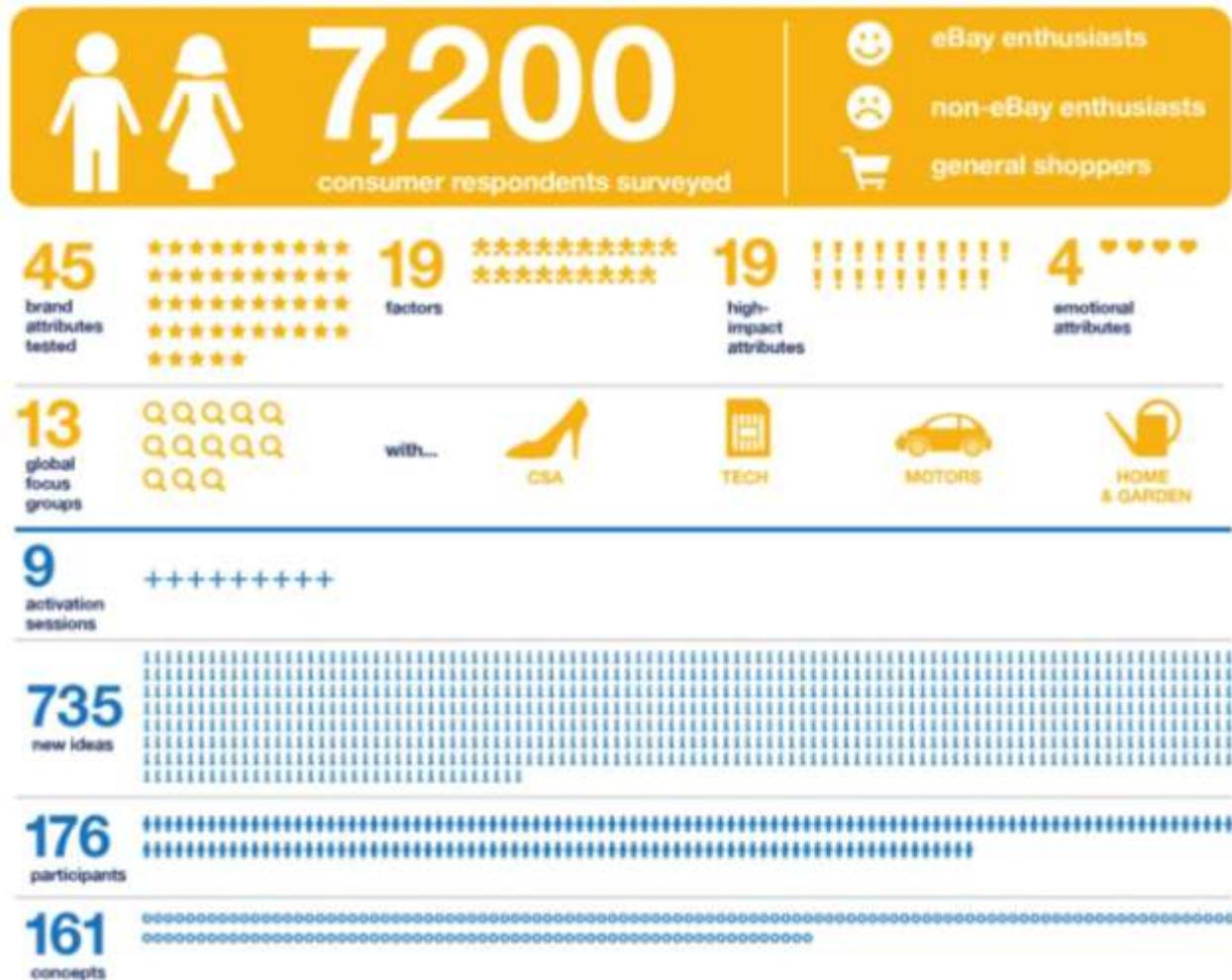


What do they **need**?

How do they **feel**?

What **makes** them
recommend a shopping
site to others?

Our new brand positioning was based on a deep understanding of the emerging needs of general shoppers, but with a focus on the shopping enthusiast.



Who is ?

Our brand personality attributes

Fun

Friendly

Human

Inspiring

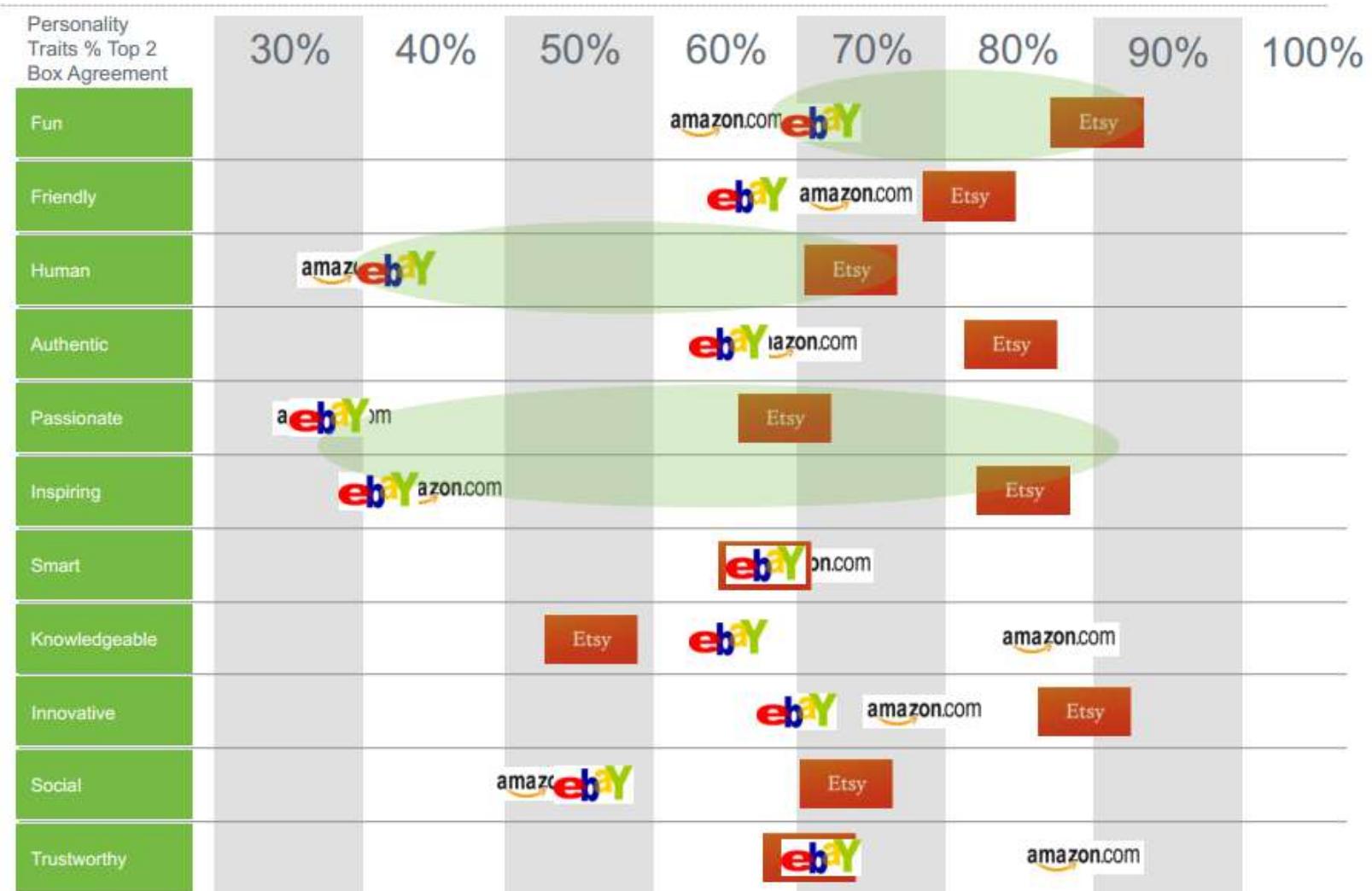
Authentic

Passionate

Smart

Trustworthy

Our research also helped us understand how our brand's personality is perceived by consumers, and how this compares to other brands



Sensory Branding

- Visual- What does it look like?



- Audio- How does it sound?



- Touch- How does it feel?



- Smell- How does it smell?



- Taste- How does it taste?



“A brand has to transform itself into a sensory experience that goes far beyond what we see. The way a brand sounds should never be underestimated. It can often be the deciding factor in a consumer’s choice. ”

-Martin Lindstrom, Brand Sense



Content and tone also influence the brand's personality

The brand personality is **communicated through tone of content**. The success of this communication will depend on our interpretation of the appropriate tone examples based on insights we generate through research in **all markets**.



Does this mean the same thing in UK & DE?

Is this a big issue in the US given the maturity of the e-commerce market there?

What are the connotations of this term in France?

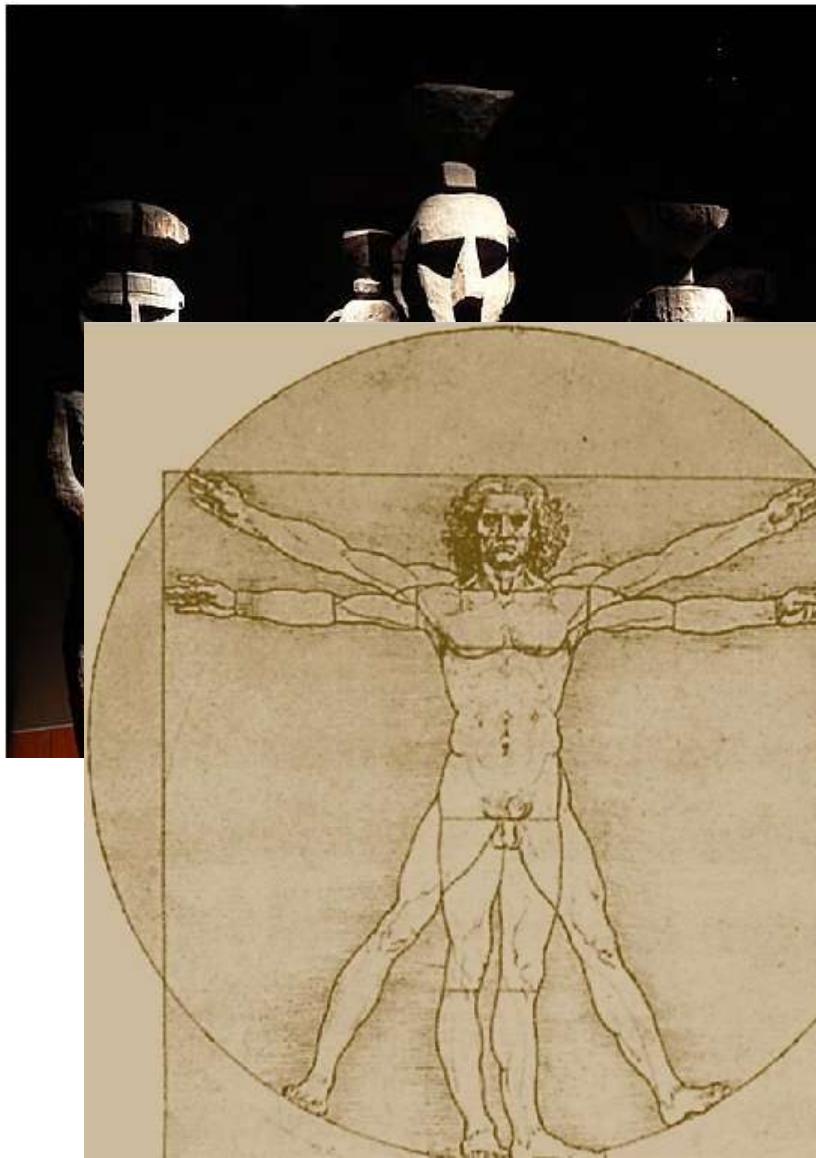
What is fun?



What is friendly?

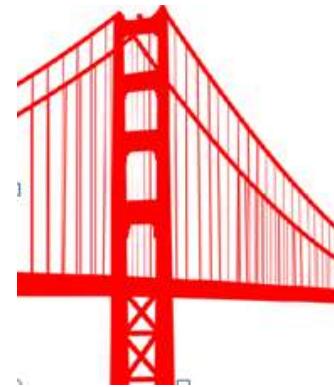


What is human?



Lots of questions, here's another one: Where to begin?

- Start with customer feedback. How do customers perceive our brand?
- We conducted voice and tone focus groups in the UK, NYC, and San Francisco



What our customers told us

Customer segment	Preferred tone
US buyers	Consistent, everyday, natural language Don't want to be told what to do – prefer friendly guidance
UK buyers	Wary of “generic politeness” as it comes across as insincerity eBay should apologize only when necessary
US casual sellers	Positive, polite and active voice Benefits led – but not “wacky”
US business sellers	Prefer conversational, natural language Stay away from corporate speak
UK casual sellers	Professional, but not corporate speak Everyday language
UK business sellers	Dislike waffle Want direct, to-the-point language

Next step, gain internal perspectives

We held “brand design dialogues” with designers and content strategists to tease apart what these words mean for eBay.

In these sessions, we created:

- ✓ Word affinity maps
- ✓ Experience captures
- ✓ Mood boards



FUN like....

VISUAL	PEOPLE	REACTIONS / RESPONSES	EXPERIENCES
bright colorful simple vibrant sophisticated dimensional	cartoons characters	laughter YES! engaged ! involved	spontaneous surprise unexpected finding easter eggs Unpredictable variety discovery fresh personalization custom realism to real life lively rich experiences interaction winning games thrilling challenges adventure solves a problem
FEELINGS	WAYS OF BEING		
delight pleasure joy love rewarding a good time positivity	quirky playful silly humor unusual sees things differently creative innovative risky smart wit entertaining engaging confident direct accessible		

= emerging themes

FUN not like....

VISUAL	FEELINGS	WAYS OF BEING
busy energy-draining loud unorganized disruptive messy education disjointed	disjointed flat diminished a let down difficult too much effort bad consequences injurious dangerous pain scary	mundane boring dull predictable by expected rehearsed traditional serious high-brow too cool exclusive goofy silly too funny immature unrefined cliché
EXPERIENCES	THINGS	PEOPLE
mandatory fun circuit cheeky fun forced birthday parties cheesy roller coaster	taxes forms tasks work too much process rules restrictions restrictive too much effort over	lady gaga bad taste in culture

Fun experiences



Hunch. Shapes are hand-drawn (human) and look cut-out. Silly and unexpected.

1 repin

hunch.com



Repin Like Comment

Theme: Unexpected and Realism/Reality. Inconvenient Truth iPad app. Educational and can play with the images and the real-time infographics. Unexpected fun - can blow onto the iPad to move the wind turbine to see it translate into energy.

2 repins

ted.com



treasureislandfestival.com



Theme: Unexpected. Kate Spade blog is colorful with unexpected, quirky elements. There is a play on words like, "supercalifragilipstick".

katespade.com



Theme: Unexpected. Agencynet. Draw different shapes to navigate through the site.

agencynet.com



Theme: Reality/Realism, Accessible by Anyone. Mets de la Creme. Recipe site turns the boring prep into something interactive and fun by showing you from the angle of the cook what it would look like. Makes the process come to life.

1 repin

metsdelacreme.com



Theme: Thoughtful Discovery. Dorling Kindersley (DK) travel books. Knows travelers well, engaging and entertaining how it shows maps, museums, etc.

1 repin

Uploaded by user



Theme: Unexpected & Thoughtful. LEGO website. They didn't have to make their site so entertaining as if you were playing a game and the characters are moving around, but they did.

lego.com



Theme: Realism/Reality. Digital Pop-up Book (iPad app). Taking something mundane and making it more fun/interactive to learn. Engaging because it prompts you to read.

Uploaded by user



Theme: Realism/Reality. Agencynet. A different way of navigating brings things to life that are typically flat.

agencynet.com



kindle

Fun mood board

Fun like how?

Some things we've heard:



- Dial up judiciously, where it matters
& have strong rationales for this

Colors:



NO! pastels are too soft



Typefaces & font treatments:



play with italics, bold, etc.
ADD some INC

clean, modern, sans serifs are quieter faces allow content to shine

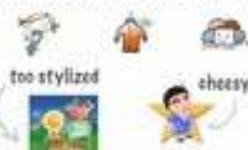


personality, flavor & character can come through in small doses

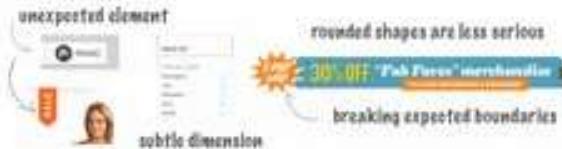
Illustration styles:



NO! too much personality will be limiting



Shapes:



smart & simple use of slight color variations suggest shape



Inspiration:



FRIENDLY like....

VISUAL	INTERACTION DESIGN	PERSONAL INTERACTION	THINGS
color: sunny, warm soothing (white space) organic simple & clean blue vibrant colors blended with earthtones orange bright lowercase type	easy to use choice engaging playful enabling Simple freedom to choose not bound/no end	individualized human personal on my level know who I am	texts (not spam like email) coffee "puts me in an elevated state" puppies
FEELINGS	MOODS	WAYS OF BEING	
joy: cheerful fun positive: intuitive interesting: happy makes me feel welcome familiar	calm: calming happy	inviting: accomodating hospitable: open available helpful: non-threatening funny: <small>unintimidating</small> empathetic trustworthy: casual approachable	

FRIENDLY not like....

VISUAL	INTERACTION DESIGN	SOUND	!!! CAUTIONS
black: cloudy, dull mechanical: cold, sterile all caps type: over-glossed	distracting: chaos unreliable: manipulative complicated: anonymity, closed	stern: <small>legitimate</small> abrupt condescending: talking down, arcade harsh: <small>humorous</small> shouting	too silly: too gimmicky too sleepy: too playful
FEELINGS	SOCIAL	WAYS OF BEING	THINGS
uninterested in your happiness	negative: <small>resentful</small> self-seeking hidden agenda hiding behind barriers	too serious: neutral aloof: dull, negative intrusive: bland focused on negatives human: <small>presume</small> proud	spam: bids, fraud returns: office space move (immediate TPS reports) bad relationships

Friendly experiences



Zulily. Inviting - pictures are the doorway into the site. They have extended this experience onto their app. "I feel happy when engaging on the site." - Tanaya

2 repins

zulily.com

Wag. Awning feels familiar. "you could imagine that it's right around the corner."

wag.com

Mint. Removes a lot complexity associated with finances. "like a friendly helper" Lots of white space conveys simplicity.

4 repins

mint.com

Bootleg. Mission: To make you squeal and change your life via your feet. "A very old school approach - friendly, she's handpicking the stuff, it feels special." - Myra

1 repin

shoeblog.com

Soap. Fonts are "bubbly".

soap.com

TOMS shoes. Inviting and welcoming.

1 comment

toms.com

Lindsey Hooper You can wear them with everything!!! Love Toms

groupon.com

Lululemon. Inviting - they focus on building stores within their community and host free yoga events and speakers. Tone can be sassy since they know who they're talking to.

lululemon.com

Groupon. They have a sense of humor. Copy is funny. Silly (need to have trust before silly can work).

groupon.com

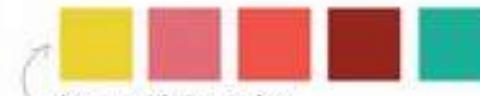
Friendly mood board

Some things we've heard:



Colors:

- Intense enough to be taken seriously, but not too serious.
- Colors to not compete with content
- Mix earthtones with vibrant colors to work well with the primary colors in logo



Typefaces & font treatments:



hand-drawn feels human



play with the type family and characteristics (bold, italics, etc.)



sans serif



script can be friendly



NOT! not too playful or sloppy

Illustration styles:



Shapes:



rounded, soft



tear paper edges

push pins



feels real & tactile



dimension



pull cord

HUMAN like...

FEELINGS	PERCEPTIONS	WAYS OF BEING	EXPERIENCES
emotive having feeling emotional expressive	casual approachable relaxed down-to-earth simple easy warm embracing friendly/ welcoming inviting gracious easy open	quirky imperfect mortal makes mistakes sometimes flawed not always good or bad funny sense of humor empathic aware understanding insightful caring about your needs forgiving	idiosyncratic multi-faceted multi-dimensional opinion diverse inconsistent not one-size-fits-all experiential personal personable connected personalized considerate remembers me/ knows who I am sense of connection engaging
VISUAL	SOUND	INTERACTION DESIGN	PEOPLE
authentic real realism genuine	candid communicative conversational forthright transparent feedback	adaptive organic alive evolution constant change tactile haptic physicality	good samaritan Jesus superman exceptional human

= emerging themes

HUMAN not like...

FEELINGS	PERCEPTIONS	WAYS OF BEING	EXPERIENCES
uncaring unphased apathetic not caring uninvolved uninvolved neutral	cryptic elusive obtuse secretive unwelcoming unapproachable	unaware dumb clueless shallow understanding close-minded intolerant	mean cold stark mean-spirited too stiff automated robotic mechanical
VISUAL	SOUND	INTERACTION DESIGN	PEOPLE
fabricated facades fake artificial too polished fictitious perfect	mute silent isolated uncommunicative	stiff unchanging chunky a rock dead monolithic difficult complexity	good samaritan Jesus superman exceptional human

Human experiences

Theme: Communicative, Friendly/ Welcoming, Personal. Cloudberry - Interactive Design firm in NYC. Conversational tone.

cloudberrycreative.com

Theme: Communicative, Having Feeling, Personal. Path iPad app - Smart journal that helps you share life with the ones you love — your thoughts, the music you're listening to, where you are, who you're with, when you wake and when you sleep, and beautiful high quality photos and videos. All activities consolidated into a timeline. The presentation is warm and inviting, beyond a paper scrapbook. "Being able to see a video of your friend's kid ride a bike for the first time is emotional." - Alex

itunes.apple.com

Theme: Authentic, Physicality, Imperfect. Old, hand-painted postcards - "Have a friendly, hidden beauty" - Jeff

Uploaded by user

campluxe.com.au

Theme: Authentic, Approachable, Aspirational Human. CampLuxe - online store that ranges luxury outdoor & camping products - "glamping" (luxury camping). Navigation has a casual feel centered around things people do: relax, eat, etc.

clientsfromhell.com

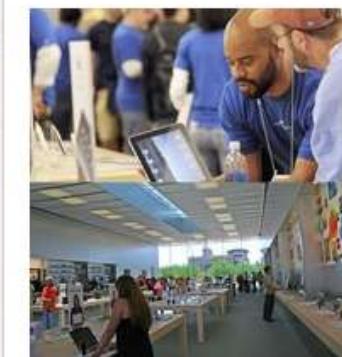
trending.seetorontonow.com

Theme: Physicality, Multi-Dimensional. Virtual Instruments - Experiences presented from the perspective as if you're playing them. Can touch and interact like you would the real instrument - using more senses (touch, sound, visual). Instructional video shows a human playing.

Uploaded by user

store.apple.com

Theme: Imperfect, Multi-dimensional, Communicative, Authentic. Toronto Trending - Real-time updates on what people are talking about from food to nightlife to shopping, etc. Aggregates Tweets. Fun, quirky, weird.



Theme: Authentic, Approachable, Physicality. Apple Store - The store is designed to allow you to interact with the products. The staff are easy, helpful and go-with-the-flow, but not uptight. When you need help, there's always an army of people to help you.

clientsfromhell.com

Sc
to

Human mood board

Some things we've heard:



NOT whatever lacks:
- life
- warmth
- depth

Colors:



Typefaces & font treatments:



Maybe the best only
just isn't enough



Bach Cello Suites



organic & hand-drawn to convey a personal touch



Illustration styles:



imperfection



Shapes:

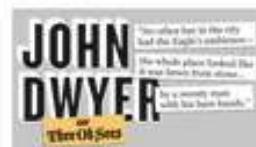


nature can have patterns of organic shapes and lines in them, could integrate within a non-natural context

Photography: a style that feels real, not forced or canned
curated vs. user-generated



Other:



collage: aspect of some things not being perfect

Then, we created content examples



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Features



Widgets, Analytics, & Facebook. Oh my.

Get Satisfaction has a full suite of features designed to help you participate, moderate, and measure the value of conversations happening inside your community.

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Partners



No App is an island. We love our partners (almost) as much as we love our customers.

From Salesforce.com to the Social Web, Get Satisfaction integrates with the systems you currently use in order to extend the value of your Community into your CRM, blog, or helpdesk.

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Solutions



Customer Service is from Mars. Marketing is from Venus. We love them both.

Building a customer community isn't about asking "what can your customers do for you?" but rather "What can we do together?" The answer to that question provides value to Marketing & Social Media, Customer Support, R&D, and your customers.

Friendly

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SHOES CLOTHING BAGS & HANDBAGS AT HOME BEAUTY ACCESSORIES

ALPHABETICAL BRAND INDEX # · A · B · C · D · E · F · G · H · I · J · K · L · M · N · O · P · Q · R · S · T · U · V · W · X · Y · Z

SHOP WOMEN'S

- Clothing
- Shoes
- Accessories
- Boots
- Denim

SHOP MEN'S



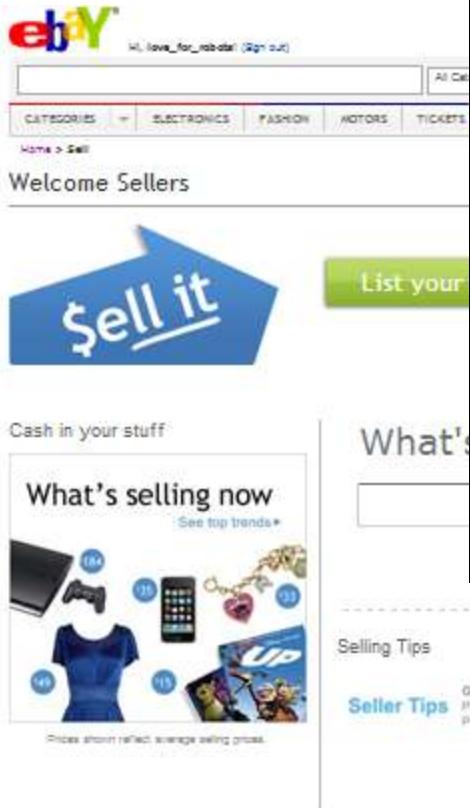
TALK TO US
We have answers right now!

Live Help
Chat Online Live

Not A Fan Of The Phone?
Send Us An Email

Need Answers?
Check Out Our FAQs Page

Inspiring



Family treasures bring surprises

"I make enough on eBay to pay the little bills. It's so much fun!"

– 772geraldine

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Fun



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NOT so Smart

I clicked on a “live help” link to get here. So why is the button at the bottom of the page under the header “Need more help?”

The screenshot shows the eBay Live Help interface. At the top, the eBay logo and "Live Help" are visible, along with a link to "Get help from eBay Customer Support". The main text area says, "If you have a question about selling on eBay, we're here to assist you." Below this, a list of related topics is provided. A yellow callout bubble points to the "Call us" button at the bottom of the page, which is labeled "Need more help?". The text in the callout bubble reads, "This is only superficially friendly. Does it look like eBay wants me to call? Or is this just lip service?" The "Call us" button is blue with white text and a phone icon. The text "(5:00am - 10:00pm Pacific Time, 7 days a week)" is located below the button.

ebay Live Help

Get help from eBay Customer Support

If you have a question about selling on eBay, we're here to assist you

You might also be interested in information about:

- Fees for listing and selling an item.
- What's allowed on eBay and what's subject to certain restrictions.

Related help topics

- Rules for sellers – overview
- Rules for listings
- Rules & policies

Need more help?

Call us

(5:00am - 10:00pm Pacific Time, 7 days a week)

This is only superficially friendly. Does it look like eBay wants me to call? Or is this just lip service?

Let's see some examples!

FUN is	FUN is NOT
That page is not available, but Doug is. Page not found, and an engineer just lost his wings.	Error 404: Page not found
FRIENDLY is	FRIENDLY is NOT
Here's how it works. Don't worry—we'll guide you every step of the way.	You shouldn't have bought an item from a seller with less than 100 feedback. You can only return an item if the seller lets you.
HUMAN is	HUMAN is NOT
Rats! We can't find that page. In the meantime, here are some links that might help.	eBay is proud to announce a new product feature for sellers. eBay Selling 2.0 is designed to be the greatest selling tool of all time.
SMART is	SMART is NOT
Getting a refund is a simple. Here's what you need to do: 1- Ship item to seller with our easy return label 2- Get money in your PayPal account	Are you sure you want to return this item?
INSPIRING is	INSPIRING is NOT
What to know what's hot for spring 2012? Let our style director point you to the trends that everyone will be wearing this season.	We have millions of items from millions of sellers, a million different rewards programs, and a million different ways to buy. All just for you.

It's all about context!

Content Type	Key Voice Attributes				
	Friendly	Fun	Trustworthy	Human	Smart
Greeting to member	Secondary	Primary			
Navigation			Primary	Primary	
Personal reminders	Primary	Primary		Secondary	Primary
Buying and selling reminders	Primary	Primary		Primary	Primary
Selling (no activity)	Primary	Primary		Secondary	Primary
Community content	Primary	Primary		Secondary	Primary
Quick links	Secondary		Secondary	Primary	Primary
Items of interest	Secondary	Primary			Primary

Our next step: Creation of actual guidelines



How to make this global? Will we have US, UK, and DE guidelines or sections?



What will this be?

- A pdf? Some sort of online tool?
- Integrated with a CMS? Acrolinx?



Then: rollout, evangelize, and adopt!

