

# eBay Voice and Tone (a case study)

Content Strategy Applied Conference  
March 2012

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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

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



ebay

Huge Selection  
Amazing Prices  
Great Shipping

amazon.com

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

Great Service

Zappos

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

Google

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

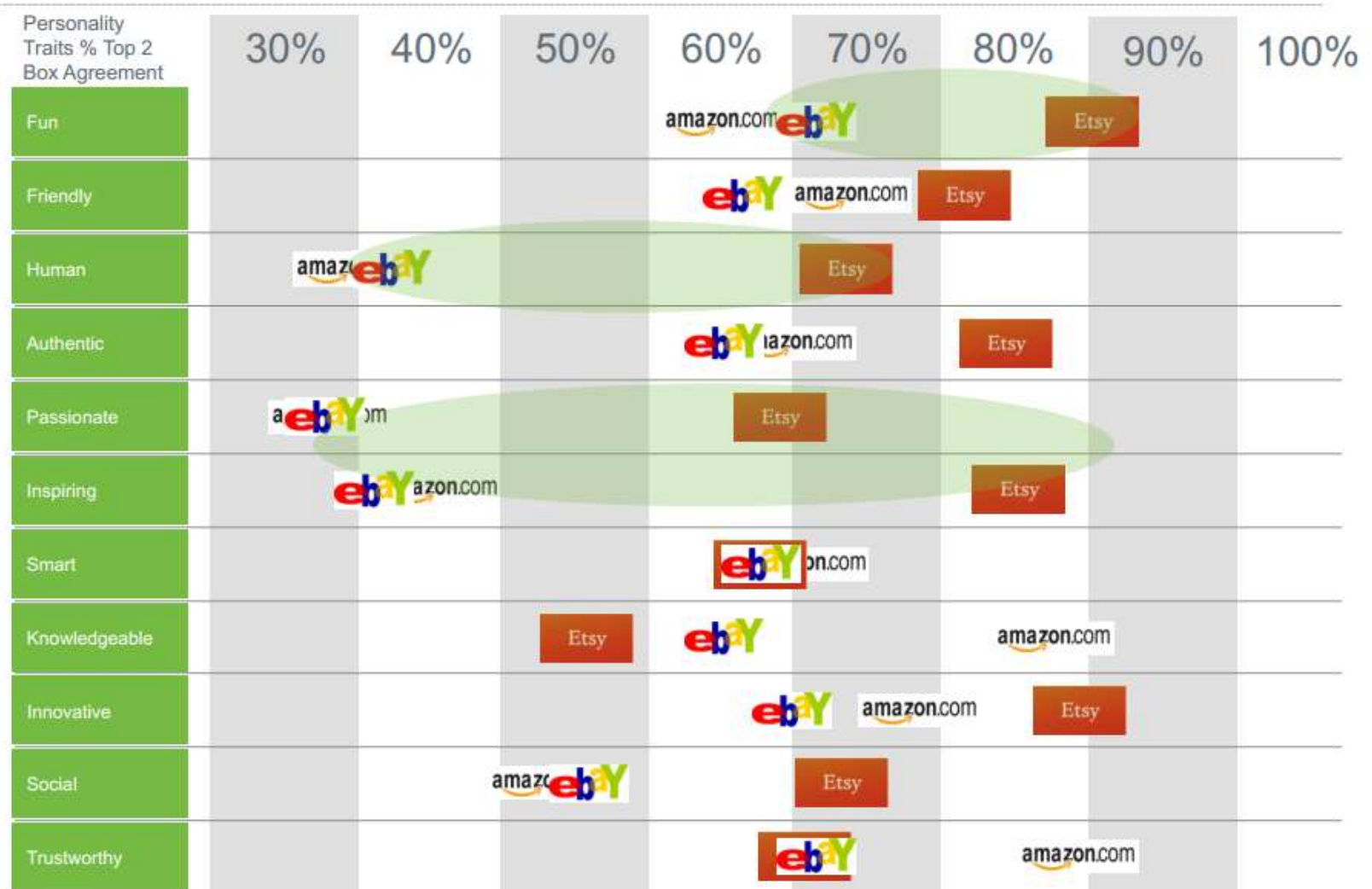
Authentic

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?





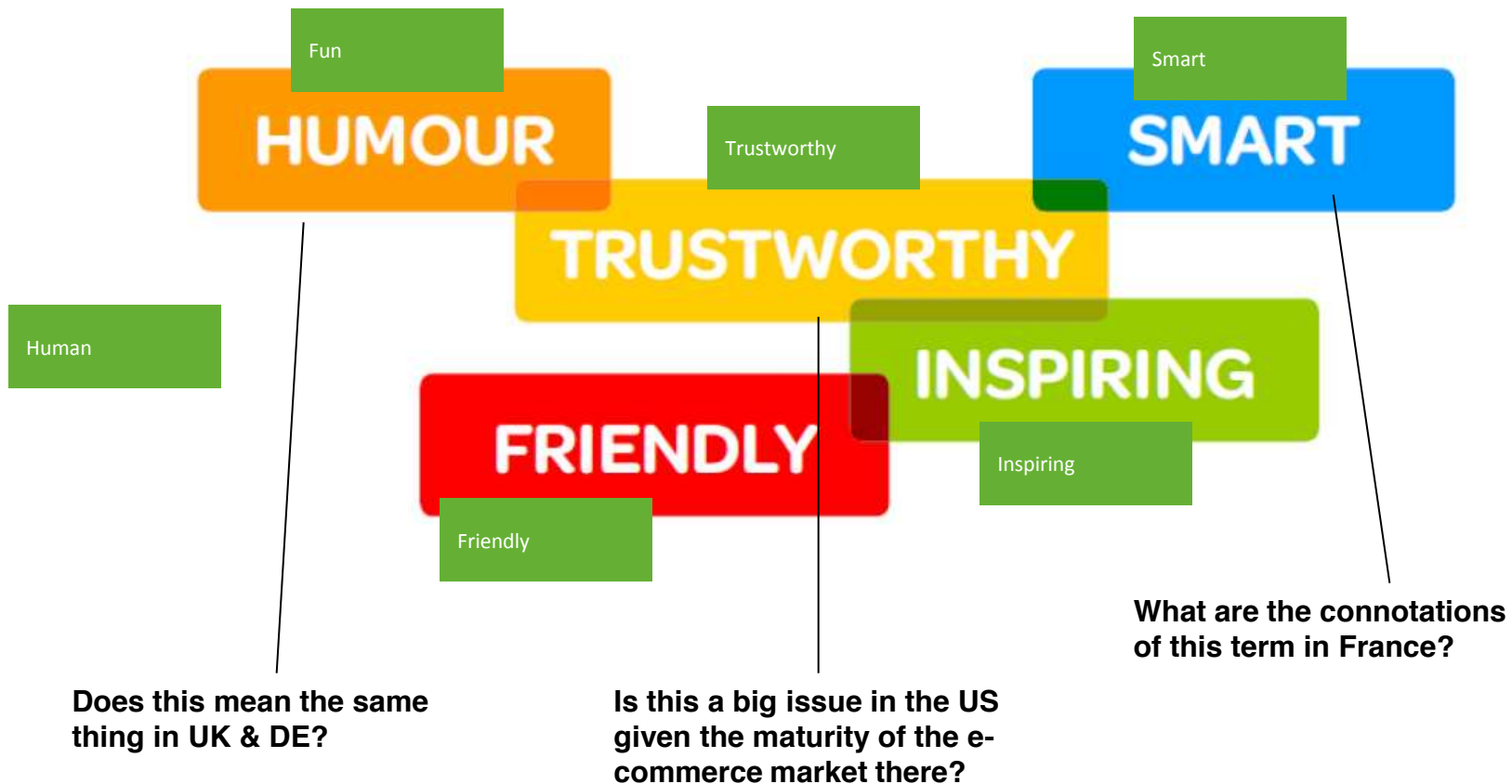
*“A brand has to transform itself into a sensory experience that goes far beyond what we see. The way a brand sounds should never be underestimated. It can often be the deciding factor in a consumer’s choice.”*

*-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**.



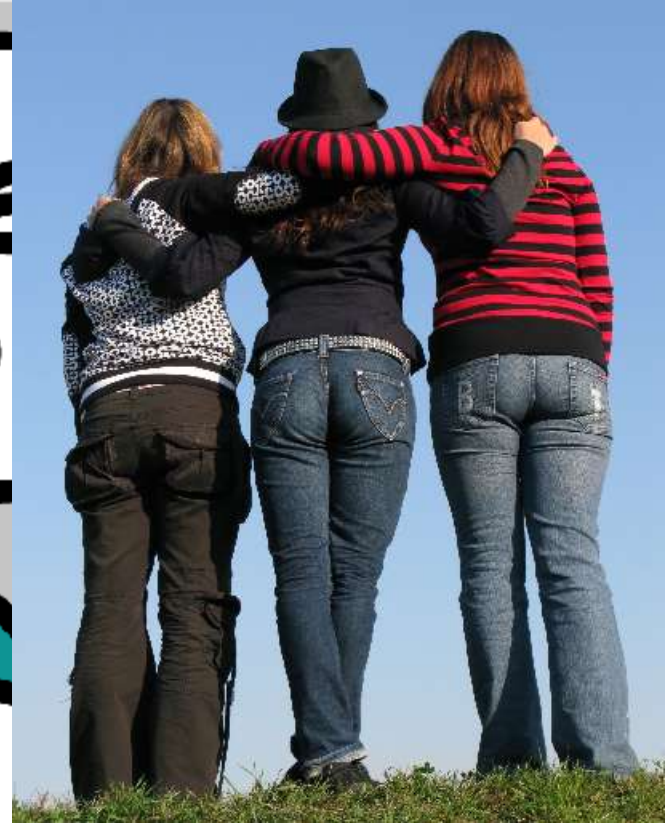
# What is fun?



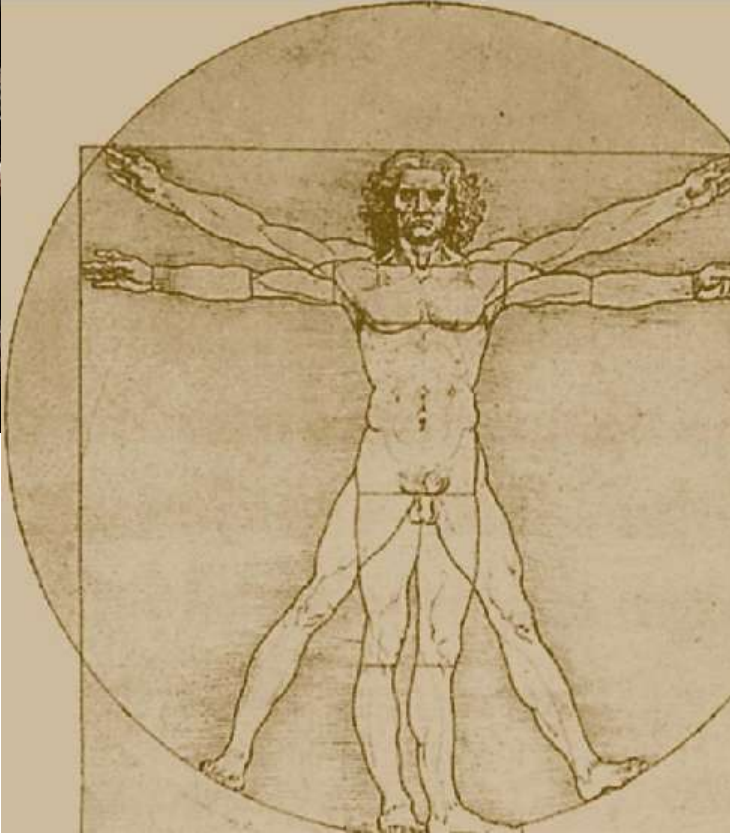
# What is friendly?



ti! Le  
frie



# 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	<b>Consistent, everyday, natural language</b> 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	<b>Prefer conversational, natural language</b> Stay away from corporate speak
UK casual sellers	Professional, but not corporate speak <b>Everyday language</b>
UK business sellers	Dislike waffle <b>Want direct, to-the-point language</b>

# 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

bright **colorful** simple  
vibrant sophisticated  
**dimensional**

### FEELINGS

delight **pleasure**  
joy love rewarding  
a good time positivity

### PEOPLE

cartoons characters

### WAYS OF BEING

quirky **playful** silly humor  
unusual sees things differently  
creative **innovative**  
risky smart wit entertaining  
engaging confident  
direct **accessible**

### REACTIONS / RESPONSES

**laughter** YES  
**engaged !** involved

### EXPERIENCES

spontaneous surprise  
**unexpected** finding  
easter eggs unpredictable  
variety **discovery** fresh  
personalization custom  
**realism** 3D real life lively  
rich experiences  
interaction winning games  
thrilling **challenges**  
adventure solves a problem

= emerging themes

## FUN not like....

### VISUAL

busy energy draining loud  
**unorganized**  
disruptive muddled  
obfuscation disjointed

### EXPERIENCES

**mandatory fun** circus  
cheesy fun corny  
**forced**  
birthday parties  
**cheesy** roller coaster

### FEELINGS

disjointed **flat** diminished  
**a let down** difficult  
too much effort  
bad consequences **threatening**  
dangerous **pain** scary

### THINGS

taxes forms **tasks** work  
**too much process**  
rules restrictions weird  
**too much effort** slow


### WAYS OF BEING

mundane **boring** dull  
predictable or  
**expected** rehearsed  
traditional **serious** high-brow  
too cool **exclusive**  
goofy awk too funny  
mandatory/unimprovised fun  
brainy **techy**

### PEOPLE

lady gaga  
(bad music in costume)

# Fun experiences



hunch.com

Recommendations just for you

What's this all about?

Watch this video

1 repin



metsdelacreme.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



Fun

Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore



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

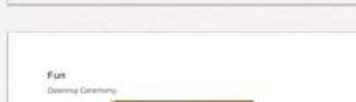
ted.com



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

1 repin

Uploaded by user




Fun

Dancing Ceremony



Treasure Island Music Festival. Well organized (didn't have to choose between stages). Lots to do if didn't want to listen to music. "Unlike Outside Lands which is chaotic, unorganized and a mass of people." - Tiffany

treasureislandfestival.com




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



Fun

Dancing Ceremony



Fun

Kate Spade Blog

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

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

agencynet.com



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 rationale for this

Colors:



Typefaces & font treatments:



Illustration styles:



Shapes:



Inspiration:



## FRIENDLY like....

### VISUAL

color sunny warm  
soothing (white space) organic  
simple & clean blue  
vibrant colors blended with earthtones  
orange bright lowercase type

### FEELINGS

joy cheerful fun  
positive intuitive  
interesting happy  
makes me feel welcome  
familiar

### INTERACTION DESIGN

easy to use choice  
engaging playful  
enabling simple  
freedom to choose  
not bound/no end

### MOODS

calm calming  
happy

### PERSONAL INTERACTION

individualized  
human personal  
on my level  
know who I am

### WAYS OF BEING

inviting accomodating  
hospitable open available  
helpful non-threatening  
funny ~~straightforward~~ empathic  
trustworthy casual  
approachable

### THINGS

texts (not spam like email)  
coffee "puts me in an  
elevated state"  
puppies

## FRIENDLY not like....

### VISUAL

black cloudy text  
mechanical cold sterile  
all caps type over-glossed

### FEELINGS

uninvested in  
your happiness

### INTERACTION DESIGN

distracting chaos  
unreliable improper hierarchy  
complicated  
anonymity usenet

### SOCIAL

negative negative  
self-seeking  
hidden agenda  
hiding behind barriers

### SOUND

stern legless abrupt  
condescending  
talking down arcane  
terse harsh bureaucratic  
storing

### WAYS OF BEING

too serious neutral  
aloof dull negative  
intrusive bland  
focused on negatives  
human passive proud

### !!! CAUTIONS

too silly too gimmicky  
too stooey too playful

### THINGS

spam bids fraud  
returnts office space movie  
(mandatory 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



Yelp. Greeting feels personalized and can change - "Come here often" is remotely flirty. "Someone wants to be your friend" vs. "Confirm" is more human.

Repin Like Comment



Mint. Removes a lot of 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



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:



Illustration styles:



Shapes:



## HUMAN like....

### FEELINGS

emotive **having feeling**  
emotional expressive

### PERCEPTIONS

casual **approachable**  
reliable down-to-earth  
simple easy **warm** embracing  
**friendly/ welcoming**  
inviting gracious see open

### WAYS OF BEING

quirky **imperfect** mortal  
makes mistakes sometimes  
**flawed** not always good or bad  
funny **sense of humor**  
**empathic** aware  
understanding insightful  
cares about your needs forgiving

### EXPERIENCES

idiosyncratic multi-faceted  
**multi-dimensional**  
opinion **diverse** inconsistent  
not one-size-fits-all experiential  
**personal** personable  
connected **personalized** compassionate  
remembers me/ knows who I am  
sense of connection **engaging**

### VISUAL

**authentic** real  
realism genuine

### SOUND

candid **communicative**  
conversational forthright  
transparent feedback

### INTERACTION DESIGN

**adaptive** organic alive  
**evolution** constant change  
tactile heavy **physicality**

### PEOPLE

good samaritan Jesus  
**superman** aspirational human

= emerging themes

## HUMAN not like...

### FEELINGS

uncaring unphased  
apathetic **not caring**  
uninvolved self-involved  
neutral

### PERCEPTIONS

cryptic esoteric obtuse  
selective **unwelcoming**  
unapproachable

### WAYS OF BEING

unaware dumb **clueless**  
shallow understanding  
close-minded **intolerant**

### EXPERIENCES

**mean** cold stark  
mean-spirited too stiff  
automated **robotic**  
**mechanical**

### VISUAL

fabricated facades  
**fake artificial**  
too polished fictitious  
perfect

### SOUND

mute **silent** isolated  
uncommunicative

### INTERACTION DESIGN

stiff **unchanging** clunky  
a rock dead monolithic  
**difficult** complexity

# Human experiences



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

cloudberrycreative.com

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

Uploaded by user



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.

campluxecom.au



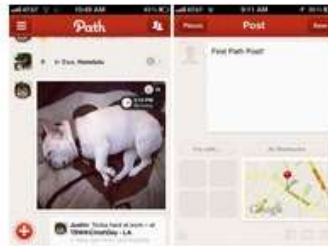
Theme: Physicality, Multi-Dimensional. Virtual Instruments - Experiences presented from the perspective as if you're playing them. Can touch and interact like you would the real instrument - using more senses (touch, sound, visual). Instructional video shows a human playing.

Uploaded by user




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.

trending.sectorontonow.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, Communicative. Clients From Hell - "the dirt of reviews", genuine, camaraderie. An extra range



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.

store.apple.com



# Human mood board

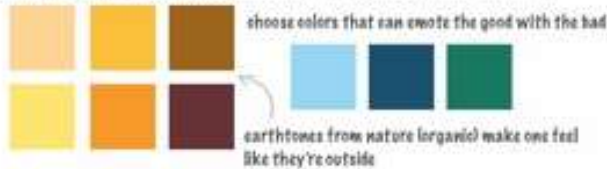
Some things we've heard:



**NO!** whatever lacks:  
- life  
- warmth  
- depth

Colors:

humans are diverse and colorful, so almost any color could be relevant - a rainbow



**NO!** red is alarming

Typefaces & font treatments:

type is a great platform to show a range of styles that communicate voice differences



organic & hand-drawn to convey a personal touch

**NO!** overly hand-drawn can feel forced

Illustration styles:



**NO!** illustrations that feel canned & don't have an authentic story behind them - a badge is nothing without something to back it up.



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

**NO!** staged, unnatural poses



Other:



collage: aspect of some things not being perfect

# Then, we created content examples



# Fun

## Explore Get Satisfaction

### 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.

[Learn More >](#)

### 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.

[Learn More >](#)

### 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

Order before 1pm PST for **FREE Next Business Day** shipping on all **Clothing**. [Learn More](#)

24/7 Customer Service (800) 927-7671  Live Help [Log In / Logout](#) [My Account](#) [My Favorites](#) [Blogs](#) [Help](#) [Cr](#)

**Zappos.com**  
POWERED by SERVICE

Shoes, Clothing, Bags, etc.

SEARCH BY: [Size](#), [Narrow Shoes](#), [Wide Shoes](#), [Popula](#)


SHOES CLOTHING BAGS & HANDBAGS AT HOME BEAUTY AC

ALPHABETICAL BRAND INDEX # • A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H

SHOP WOMEN'S




- Clothing
- Shoes
- Accessories
- Boots
- Denim

SHOP MEN'S



## TALK TO US

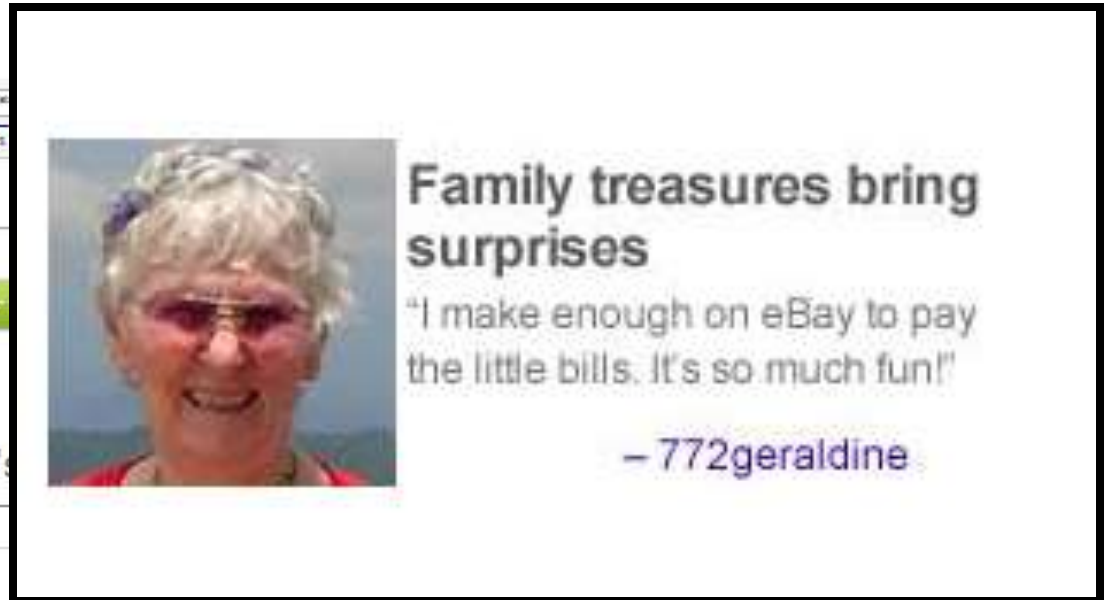
*We have answers right now!*

-  **Live Help**  
Chat Online Live
-  **Not A Fan Of The Phone?**  
Send Us An Email
-  **Need Answers?**  
Check Out Our FAQs Page

# Inspiring



The screenshot shows the eBay Seller interface. At the top left is the eBay logo with the text "Hi, love\_for\_robota! (Sign out)". Below it is a search bar and a navigation menu with categories: ELECTRONICS, FASHION, MOTORS, and TICKETS. A "Home > Sell" link is visible. The main heading is "Welcome Sellers". A large blue arrow graphic says "Sell it". To the right is a green button that says "List your". Below this is a section titled "Cash in your stuff" with a sub-heading "What's selling now" and "See top trends\*". It features a collage of items: a laptop (164), a game controller (35), a smartphone (32), a blue dress (149), a pair of shoes (15), and a game box (UP). Below the collage is the text "Prices shown reflect average selling price." To the right of this section is a "Selling Tips" section with a "Seller Tips" sub-heading and the text "Get free boxes & more. Pay shipping online. Print labels free." At the bottom of the page are links for "Seller Resources", "Shipping Center", "Seller Education", "Tools & eBay Stores", and "International Selling". At the very bottom are links for "About eBay", "Security Center", "Buyer Tools", "Policies", "Stores", "eBay Wish list", "Site Map", "eBay official time", "Preview new features", and "Tell us what you think". Copyright information for 1995-2013 eBay Inc. is also present.



The advertisement features a portrait of a smiling woman with short blonde hair and sunglasses. To the right of the portrait is the text: "Family treasures bring surprises" in a large, bold font. Below this is a quote: "I make enough on eBay to pay the little bills. It's so much fun!" and the name "- 772geraldine" in a purple font.



This section contains two smaller advertisements. The top one is titled "Quick Start" with a "STEP 1" button and the text "Sell and ship" and "How to wrap things up" with a link "See step 2 of 3". The bottom one is a smaller version of the "Family treasures bring surprises" advertisement, featuring the same woman's portrait and text.


# Fun



 [United States \(English\)](#) ▾

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Account login 

Email address

PayPal password

Go to  
 ▾

[Log In](#)

[Problem with login?](#)

New to PayPal? [Sign up.](#)



## Hidden Powers

Shop at millions of online stores without risking your identity.

[Check out with \*\*PayPal\*\*](#)

Shop with confidence. [Learn how...](#)

**+100 million**  
people use PayPal worldwide

# NOT so Smart

 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 )

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?”

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!

<b>FUN is</b>	<b>FUN is NOT</b>
That page is not available, but Doug is. Page not found, and an engineer just lost his wings.	Error 404: Page not found
<b>FRIENDLY is</b>	<b>FRIENDLY is NOT</b>
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.
<b>HUMAN is</b>	<b>HUMAN is NOT</b>
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.
<b>SMART is</b>	<b>SMART is NOT</b>
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?
<b>INSPIRING is</b>	<b>INSPIRING is NOT</b>
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!

