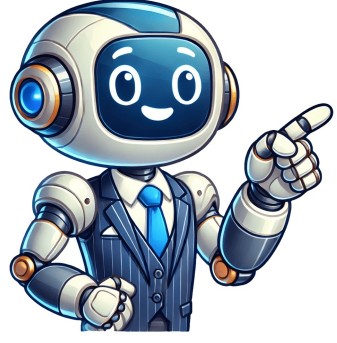


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Spotify brand guide

Article creditsHave you ever partnered with designers to design a design brand that helps designers showcase their design work to an audience of... (wait for it) ...designers? We just did exactly that. And now we want to tell you about it.In this two-part article, we'll give you the scoop on our collaborative project to level up our Spotify Design brand. We'll explain what we did and why we did it, plus tell you what we learned about wrangling stakeholders and embracing color in the age of dark themes. This first installment will cover the rebrand of Spotify Design. Its companion piece (coming soon!) will show how we applied the new brand to this bright and shiny website that you're currently looking at. In 2018 and 2019, Spotify began to play a stronger role in the global design community. We started developing a brand for our discipline through an external website, social media (Twitter and Instagram), and cool events. Then in September of last year, we stood back, took a hard look at what we'd done, and realized we'd missed an opportunity.We saw that designers were pushing our Spotify Design brand system to the breaking point. Assets for presentations, social media, and in-person happenings were being created by different teams, and the interpretation of our design guidelines was a bit, um, how do we put this? A bit relaxed. We could see that our designers craved a more flexible, playful system that would allow them to tell stories, explore big ideas, and energize our community.Our branding was all over the place...quite literally. So, we started fresh. We tackled the new brand using our product design process — a.k.a. think it, build it, ship it, tweak it — to give ourselves some structure and share our progress with designers in their own language.Before jumping into fix-it mode, we wanted to define our problem and figure out who'd help us solve it. For the initial design exploration, we partnered with independent art director Albin Holmqvist, who'd just completed a bold brand refresh for one of our favorite flagship playlists, Altar. Because we'd worked with Albin to bring some emotional mojo to one of our beloved editorial destinations, our team trusted him to create a brand that would be bolder — dare we say louder — that we'd be proud to represent us. We captured our community's T's and O's!It was during preliminary research sessions with our design team that we first encountered the paradox of designing for designers. Because while designers tend to have balanced perspectives, supernatural empathy, and scarily spot-on hunches, they also have tons of opinions! Respecting individual viewpoints is extremely important to us because of our diverse and multi-disciplinary community, and we wanted all our designers to feel ownership over the new brand. But we also wanted a strong direction. And a diluted, design-by-committee, trying-to-please-everyone-but-actually-pleasing-no-one brand was #1 on our "How do we know if we've blown it?" list of hazards. We also wanted to adhere to guidelines from our Brand & Creative team, to help us ensure our brand would be recognizable as part of the Spotify family while still representing our design identity — one that's fun, curious, and vibrant.Saturated with perspectives, viewpoints, and (ahem) opinions, Albin started exploring. We asked him to keep in mind the following brand attributes, as determined by our team:ADAPTABLEDIVERSEQUALITY DRIVENWARM & FRIENDLYHUMAN CENTEREDBright hues quickly became a central theme in the discovery process. We wanted to stay away from the neutral, muted colors and with dark design themes so closely associated with Spotify, we hoped to deliver something more unexpected. Albin's experience as an editorial art director made him brave with color:Colors, doodles, bursts. Oh boy did we have fun!He presented ideas that used a variety of strong, extensible elements, and we gravitated most toward the ones that added an analog vibe to our primarily digital experience. In the examples below you can see our brand's new DNA — bursts, action lines, and hand-drawn highlights — starting to take shape. Those accents exuded the personality we were looking for, and were refined and carried over to the final design system.Photography-wise, we wanted to do away with stoic, "I am a very serious designer" headshots. By combining color photography with bright backgrounds and the fun highlights, we were better able to capture who we are as humans. Serving personality realism.Our goal was to unify Spotify Design with the Spotify brand at large, while maintaining the avant-garde approach we loved in Albin's early explorations. We were experimenting with a lesser used version of Spotify's standard typeface, but we couldn't make the brand feel sufficiently Spotify without our trusty Spotify Circular Book. We originally thought we might differentiate Spotify Design through typography, but we made so many other changes that a font refresh was unnecessary. We wanted the overall effect to be "Spotify Design got a glow up!" as opposed to "Wait, what brand is this?"Next up, we started by applying the brand to different things to make it feel real. How might the brand behave on old-school printed-out posters? How about in new-school animated GIFs? We could write a whole article about the science of applying your brand to mock-ups of water bottles and sweatshirts. But let's leave it at this: One of the truest ways to evaluate employer branding is by asking designers, "Hey, would you wear this swag?" We then gathered feedback from our design leaders and brand guardians. And with approval on the horizon, we dove into iteration mode. After a few more rounds of review, we'd done it: Spotify Design was rebranded!To solidify and celebrate our decisions, we made a brand book and cranked out some practical assets. Because a brand is nothing without a slick Google Slides template! We also began a communications plan to let our designers know about the changes we made and how to find the tools to put the new brand into action. A Google Slides deck teaching designers how to brand their Google Slides decks...and a lot of other things.We see our new brand as a unifying starting point, not a complete toolkit of immovable assets. Why? Because we know designers like to play. We invited them to do so by creating their own brand DNA to be added to our asset library. We also kicked off a swag competition, promising that the winning piece of hot design fire would be produced. Check out some of the swaggiest ideas below.*spoiler alert* People went nuts over the Spotify Design overalls. So we had a new brand, and we thought it looked really nice in a variety of places. But there was one especially important place that needed our attention: the Spotify Design website. Tune in for the second half of our rebrand adventure, where we talk about how our newly minted brand inspired the creation of the internet webzone you're currently beholding. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. 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If you are thinking about getting it, for sure get the Premium plan, no ads, endless skipping of songs, shuffle play, and a good amount of more things. One thing I will say is frustrating is the constant change of the like button to songs, they removed the heart for whatever reason and with that they made adding a song to a playlist but not your liked songs a lot harder, with a drop down feature you have to scroll down to find the playlist you want. I will say that I love that you can get to choose if you want your playlists public or not because let's be honest some playlists do not need to see the light of day but can still be enjoyed in peace. I also like what they did with the front page, being able to just swipe right to click onto our profile and access our settings much easier. My most favorite feature that might not be new but I did just discover, is on that same page where we access the settings and our profile there is this "Recents" tab where you can go and see all of the songs you've listened to and the amount of times I've used it to find a song I liked in someone else's playlist, or a podcast episode I was listening to but didn't save, my lord I love that feature so much. But overall it's a really good app and something that if you get it, it will be used in your daily life if you are a fanatic music listener. Dawn has been an accessible, passionate and inspiring leader of W. I've heard her story before but feel moved by it over again each time I hear it. She shares with her GEMS her appreciation and acknowledges each time we meet how she couldn't manage without us. Meeting with new widows as a First Connect is so gratifying but, for me, the meeting begins with some apprehension. Am I going to be able to help this woman who may be crying through some or most of our talk? Will she feel she is in a safe space? Will she feel I understand her pain? Will she feel she's made the right choice? Will she feel some hope even though she's feeling quite hopeless in this moment. This stranger shares the most intimate details of her loss and devastating details of her grief. I am honored to be the one this new widow trusts. If she feels some relief from our talk, I am grateful. Dawn encourages us to embrace and share as First Connects with our new widows. Dawn listens to our experiences and understands and asks for feedback and suggestions. She acts on those suggestions. We feel part of her mission. I enjoyed this podcast tremendously. As the host, you asked questions that were spot on and the ones your audience would want to hear the answers that Dawn gave. I loved the humor too. It did not diminish or dishonor the grief aspect at all. Great interview. Used to be better, has a lot of difficulties that I'll talk about.Premium is a pretty good deal but good luck getting it, not only do you have to go to a website but the chances of that website working properly on your phone is unlikely. Your address is needed to purchase premium but whenever I go to put it in there isn't a place where I can tap on to put it in. You used to be able to minimize ads when you were on the app but now you have to watch the many ads, which also show up every 5 songs. They make ads about their own playlists like they couldn't just make it pop up on the homepage, and they also repeat ads over and over again until you can recite them word for word. They say they listen to their users but only to the users who write good reviews. When share playing with your computer almost all the time there will be lyrics in the song that don't even play. Another thing that I find very annoying is the whole 6 skips every HOUR which is not at all worth it because even when skipping you still get ads. Then there's choosing songs, say you look up a song and try to play it, there will be 5-6 songs that you will have to listen to or skip through to listen to the song you want to, I like the idea of suggesting songs but it should at least play the song I want to listen to first or second. This is all I have to complain about and I hope I can get some fixes or at least a response. The developer, Spotify, indicated that the app's privacy practices may include handling of data as described below. For more information, see the developer's privacy policy. The following data may be used to track you across apps and websites owned by other companies: Contact Info Identifiers Usage Data The following data may be collected and linked to your identity: Health & Fitness Purchases Financial Info Location Contact Info Contacts User Content Search History Identifiers Usage Data Diagnostics Other Data Privacy practices may vary, for example, based on the features you use or your age. Learn More Developer Website App Support Privacy Policy Go-to Brand Spotlight: Spotify In fact, you may think you know everything there is to know about them. That feeling of cultural omnipresence—where everyone is a power-user, and everyone has something to say—is a clear sign of a Go-to brand. And the numbers don't lie: with over 600 million monthly active listeners and 200 million paid subscribers, Spotify is the single largest source of revenue for the audio industry. By a lot. But it was far from a linear path to commercial dominance over an entire sensory domain. So, how did Spotify answer the music industry's piracy problem, broaden to an audio-first strategy, and win our hearts to become the collective default for all things listening? Perhaps we can learn a thing or two about how they've continued to foster connection and enable progress: the two essential ingredients to reaching "go-to" status. It's no secret that people have always connected around music. From records and CDs to iTunes libraries, your collection formed an identity of sorts—and sharing that was a way to bond with others. In the early aughts, that might have even meant going to your friend's house and illegally downloading songs from one of the many sites that emerged during the industry's budding digital transformation. Founded in 2008, Spotify emerged as the answer to music's piracy problem. Even in its infancy, the business gained traction by disrupting a long-held belief in music: that listeners need to own their music. What better way to curb online music theft than providing legal access to a seemingly infinite catalog? "People just want to have access to all of the world's music," said Spotify co-founder and CEO Daniel Ek. "Ownership is great—but access is the future." While other early music streamers emulated radio stations, Spotify rose above by providing access that felt like ownership. The trick was building a searchable, connected experience that enabled users to listen and share on their own terms. By responding to industry pressures—and innovating in a way that aligned to existing user behavior—Spotify drove rapid adoption of a new paradigm for connecting through music. Plus, connection doesn't stop with the product. Above and beyond Spotify's core value proposition, the company makes a point to bring people together through everything they do. From initiatives like Loud & Clear, an annual report that builds literacy around the economics of music, to NextGen, a scholarship that amplifies emerging talent from underrepresented groups, Spotify shows clear commitment to building transparency and community in the industry. Are you a savvy Connoisseur—or a rebellious Maverick? From Myers-Briggs to astrology, archetypes are a popular way to connect by expressing our unique identities. Spotify applied a music lens to this idea with the 2016 debut of their Spotify Wrapped campaign. Personalized using listener data and colorfully packaged for social shareability, Wrapped is a case study in marketing genius. It doesn't hurt that the name and concept of "Wrapped," which is typically released each December, tap into seasonal themes of gift-giving and reflection, offering a novel outlet to tap into society's collective mood. "It also creates this FOMO effect that inherently entices new users to consider Spotify," said June Sauvaget, a former marketing leader at Spotify. The FOMO even reached peer tech brands: from language learning to fitness trackers, copycats across categories followed suit with annual summary highlights. If you're not listening on Spotify, you won't have a year-end "Wrapped"—which means you miss out on a big cultural conversation. And you can't share music with the majority of your friends, who are probably on the platform. That's why fostering connection is an especially strong strategy that brands can embrace to build loyalists and cement "go-to" status. Another key aspect of go-to brands is their ability to enable progress for customers: setting the standard for how category experiences should feel, and ultimately powering action that advances how we live. One way to do that is listening to customers who might be ahead of the curve, and adapting your offering to meet new needs—or even awaken them in others. That's what Spotify did when they noticed German users uploading audiobooks to the platform, which at the time in 2015, was only focused on music. It was time to capitalize on a new growth opportunity inspired by user behavior. "One of my favorite topics is how often people game our platform," said Ek. "It made us realize: what else can we put on the platform that gives us a leg up and creates more revenue?" Audiobooks would come a few years later, but the notion of a flexible platform sparked the idea to hop into another rapidly growing market: podcasts. However, with any big move, Ek and his team faced resistance. The trend at the time was mass proliferation of apps, separated by function. Shouldn't podcasting and audiobooks live on their own? Not if you want to win new listeners. A music fan might not download a podcast app, unprompted—but perhaps they'd listen to a podcast if it showed up on Spotify. By broadening their audio offering, Spotify not only stretched to meet new needs, but fundamentally grew the market by converting a new audience. Not to mention, there was major upside from an operations perspective: by building out podcasts on the same chassis, the team took advantage of existing infrastructure to rapidly scale a new offering. It also helped that Spotify's brand identity was expansive enough to support growth in new directions. The relatively abstract name, hinting at the idea of discovery (to "spot" or "find")—and logo comprised of sound waves—represented concepts broader than just music. As a result, the brand wasn't a limiting factor when it was time to widen the scope. In a 2019 memo, Ek announced that the focus of the company would now be "audio-first." He hasn't looked back. Nailing the experience also played a substantial role in propelling Spotify to where it is today—and a big part of that is flexing to meet customers where they are, through strategic experience principles like ubiquity. "Whether you're driving, in your home, on your headphones, or exercising—it's making sure you can get to your Spotify experience as quickly and easily as possible," said Sten Garmark, a longtime product leader at Spotify. Even before AI entered the zeitgeist, Spotify has been using it to power exceptionally seamless listening. One innovative application is Blend, which takes sharing music to the next level by auto-curating playlists that merge the tastes of two users—enabling friends to both discover new music and connect over common ground. It's an algorithm, but somehow it feels like so much more. From features like daylists, which cleverly curate a mood for the moment, to simpler functions like auto-translation of podcasts and audiobooks, Spotify goes beyond the competition to deliver moments that let users discover and delight in new content. Overall, Spotify's dedication to customer experience has earned them above-the-norm ratings on measures like easier to use than similar brands and sets the standard for how things should work—two key drivers of Progress in Lippincott's Brand Aperture methodology. Can you innovate to align with customer behavior—like how Spotify made accessing music feel like owning it? Can you leverage existing assets to meet new needs—like how Spotify scaled to accommodate podcasts and audiobooks? Can your foundational brand identity expand for growth—like Spotify's name, logo, and visual system? Can you provide opportunities for expression that build a connected community—through moments like Spotify Wrapped and features like Blend? Can you deliver an outstanding experience that sets a new standard—through principles like Spotify's "ubiquity" strategy? We look forward to continuing this series, sharing more wisdom from conversations with go-to brands. In the meantime, explore Lippincott's "Go-to Brands" resources for more principles in driving business growth and resilience by creating meaning for customers. First things first: while Spotify communications are made up of the four elements, the Logo is the focal point — an instantly recognisable symbol of the brand. That's why it's important to use the Logo exactly as specified in these guidelines. Our Logo is the combination of a simple and modern Wordmark with the Icon. The Icon stands for a lot of things — streaming of course, but also sound waves and movement, as well as sharing and community. We are very proud of our Logo, and would appreciate it if you could follow these guides to ensure it always looks its best.

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