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## Client Name Project Name

### Steps to a Successful Design Critique

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One of the most vital parts of the design process is critique. The chance to receive helpful feedback from our clients is invaluable. Good client feedback gives us a chance to hear directly from the real insiders in an organization, and create superior work through collaboration.

In our experience, however, we've found that there are often unrealistic expectations placed on clients. As a client, you are often given very little guidance and expected to have the skills and vocabulary of an experienced designer. Because of this communication gap, many clients are left feeling pressured to come up with helpful responses, but not knowing exactly where to begin. This often leads to subjective responses based on personal preference like "I don't like this color," or "maybe that should be bigger."

Sometimes these comments are purely personal preference; whether one person likes it, or another doesn't. Other times these aesthetic concerns are actually indicative of larger, deeper problems in the design that must be addressed head-on to arrive at a successful resolution to the design.

In general, we can avoid concerns of personal preference. As funny as it may sound – whether you, or I, or another person likes the design isn't particularly important. In fact, letting these personal preferences dictate the direction of our work will ultimately lead us astray from our most serious concern: creating an effective final product for the end user. We can be sure to stay on track by always referring to the stated goals and requirements of the project that we formulated together in our initial meetings. Only by judging from the same set of focused criteria can we ensure that our work and critiques will lead to successful design solutions.

For every decision in the design process, we should be asking ourselves these questions:

- Who is our audience?
- Are we achieving the correct tone?
- Are we emphasizing the proper information?
- Are we fulfilling the practical goals of the project?
- Are we meeting the technical requirements of the project?

## Who is our audience?

Design should always be people-oriented. No matter what we are creating (a logo, web site, or annual report), the final recipient of our work is always a person. Correctly identifying who that audience is will be all-important in making the many decisions to follow.

For the Client Name Project Name, our audience consists of:

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## Are we achieving the correct tone?

The most general and pervasive aspect of design is tone. We work with you to define the tone for every project in our first meeting with a series of descriptive words. This is the feeling we are trying to project with every piece we produce. It helps us position your organization and initiatives correctly with the audience, so that we can set proper expectations for what you're about to tell them.

For the Client Name Project Name, our tone can be described with the following words:

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## Are we emphasizing the proper information?

Every job has an information hierarchy, or order of importance. We can only really emphasize one or two very important things in a piece, otherwise overemphasis quickly leads to clutter and confusion. Without a clear descending order of importance, we can't properly guide a viewer or reader through a piece, suggesting what to look at first. If we want people to take action, then it should be clear how to do that. Making sure we've selected the correct order of importance of elements is vital in a successful design solution.

For the Client Name Project Name, our order of importance is:

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### Are we fulfilling the practical goals of the project?

Tone is one thing, but what about the practical goals of a project? Is a logo correctly communicating the name of an organization, and properly incorporating its tag line (if applicable)? Does an annual report design accommodate all of the copy and financial data? Is a web site's stated functionality in place?

For the Client Name Project Name, our practical goals are:

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### Are we meeting the technical requirements of the project?

These are the least glamorous, but no less essential aspects of the project. Will a book design work within our printing budget? Does a mailing piece comply with postal regulations?

For the Client Name Project Name, our technical requirements are:

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