



DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 142

ALIGNING DESIGN WITH YOUR PERSONALITY

Hello this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation.

Last month we received this totally cool, completely entertaining annual report email from our email marketing provider MailChimp.

The report is creative. It's fun. It's original. It's one of those pieces that gets your wheels turning and making you think of ways you can craft your own engaging, original piece to really draw in your audience.

Since this is audio and you can't see it, I'll describe it to you, but if you want to see a sample of this and the other pieces I'll be talking about today, text the word Personality1 to 33444 or visit www.iriscreative.com/dp142.

If you are not familiar with Mailchimp, it is an email marketing company. I always joke that every internet service seems to let their 8-year-old name their company. When we first started using the service, even we couldn't remember the name and kept calling it Monkey Chimp.

They are a long way from the startup they once were but have somehow managed to keep their quirkiness while turning into a reliable, easy to use marketing tool that is committed to great design. And this year's annual report combines color, illustration, movement and a few bananas to shine some light on the inner workings of the company.

It's a really fun piece, and I can almost hear you saying, "Well, Beth, that's great for a hip internet company, but that's not who we are." Or you might say, "I love it, but the board would never go for it."

Well, I'm here to tell you: You can do something special and engaging without





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

stepping out of your brand's character!

So let's take a look at some of the brand-appropriate ways you can make your own information-laden pieces shine — from annual reports to public health messages.

THE VISUAL TREND

People are busy these days. And they're swamped by the sheer volume of information they have to process — from constantly buzzing phones to overflowing inboxes.

Scholars haven't dubbed our era the Information Age for nothing.

That's why finding ways to simplify your message — while remaining true to your brand and your voice — is becoming ever more important to cut through the clutter.

And that's where MailChimp gets it right.

Sure some of the stats they share are off the wall. Yes, the drawings and animations are whimsical. And maybe that's not you.

But they convey a lot of information without using a lot of words. And that's the example we can all learn from, no matter what our brand's personality. I'll give you some examples of the kind of info they share in a minute but I want to give you some context about brand personality first.

YOUR TRUE COLORS

There are millions of models out there that describe personality. To organize this discussion, I picked Jennifer Aaker's, which divides organizations into five categories that emphasize one of the following brand traits:





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

- Excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date)
- Sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful)
- Competence (reliable, intelligent, successful)
- Ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough)
- Sophistication (upper class, charming)

Don't get too caught up in the categories here, its just a framework. The important thing is to see how MailChimp's visual approach can be adapted across many different brand personalities.

IF YOU'RE DARING, IMAGINATIVE, EXCITING ...

In other words, if you're just like MailChimp ...

The success of this piece starts with the type of information they chose to share. Instead of telling you how much money they made this year or the number of employees they have, they chose unique stats to tell you important things about the company:

- 74 graduates of MCU, our internal development and growth program
Translate: We treat our awesome employees well.
- 4 pounds of coffee consumed by our support team per day
Translate: We put a lot of energy into supporting our customers.
- 13 tons of physical server infrastructure added
Translate: We're growing. A lot.

Most importantly, they don't use tons of words to convey their message. They pared the information down to just a few key phrases and got busy drawing,





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

using a comic-strip style to literally illustrate their story. And it probably isn't an accident that the whole design is banana yellow.

So what does MailChimp's approach look like if "adventurous" isn't exactly the word that defines you?

IF YOU'RE KNOWN FOR SINCERITY, HONESTY, CHEERFULNESS ...

If your organization is a bit more serious, you can have success with a more straightforward approach.

Instead of telling us how much coffee your support team drinks, tell us how many American-based people answer the phones in your call center. And don't show us a crazy comic-strip drawing of a monkey talking into a banana — use an actual photo of your call team at work — or better yet, take a photo of your people at iconic places in your town to reinforce your "localness" if that's important to your audience.

There are lots of examples out there of serious organizations that effectively use a visual approach to convey their messages in an interesting way.

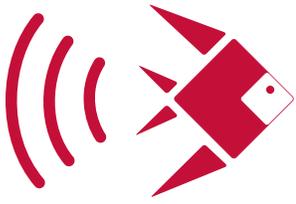
A winner in this category is the **USDA's Choose My Plate campaign at ChooseMyPlate.gov.**

No amount of words can beat this graphical depiction of a balanced meal. But let me try in case you haven't seen it. It is an illustration of a place setting. There is a plate that is divided into sections for meat, vegetables, grains, fruit and a cup of dairy.

The information is easy to digest. (Sorry, pun intended!) And it makes the behavior they're trying to encourage easy to replicate.

Another good one is an **infographic from the food brand Kashi** that explains why





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

the company uses ingredients from farms in the midst of the process of going organic. They introduce the consumer to an entirely new concept and its benefits through a highly graphical representation.

It's not daring or silly — it's completely down-to-earth and sincere. But it's totally visual, just like MailChimp's annual report.

IF YOU'RE COMPETENT, RELIABLE, INTELLIGENT, SUCCESSFUL ...

If reliability is your brand's primary personality trait, your approach will be similar in style to the sincere organizations, but perhaps a little less cheery and a little more polished.

Going graphical can be even more important in this category if you need to help your readers understand complex ideas or data.

A lot of the information that the Centers for Disease Control puts out falls into this category. Take for example how they **illustrate the way the International Health Regulations work**. It is a circular graphic with the words Detect, Assess, Report and Respond, interspersed with illustrations and very simple action steps for each.

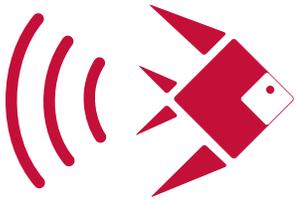
Banks also provide great examples of "reliable" brands presenting their information infographically as well. We found a great **one from TD Bank** illustrating their healthcare survey results. They did a great job incorporating their signature green.

IF YOU'RE RUGGED, OUTDOORSY, TOUGH ...

Think all the examples you've seen to this point are too colorful, corporate or cute to really translate to your rugged brand?

Industrial equipment company **Grainger** shows that visual representations of





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

information can be rugged and tough, too. They partnered with NASCAR on this series of infographics that are clearly designed to delight their consumers. They are black and red and bold in design. And only one includes any link to their products. The series is a great example of positioning your organization by aligning with things your community already loves

John Deere used visualized instructions to reinforce proper use of their products. When you are trying to keep people safe, images are faster, easier and more likely to be followed than written instructions.

IF YOU'RE SOPHISTICATED, CLASSY AND HIGH END ...

This is the trickiest one of all, and it's pretty much MailChimp's polar opposite.

In our experience, it's much harder to find highly "sophisticated" exclusive brands using the same type of visual approach we saw with the other personality types.

But visual communication is not limited to communicating instructions or information. You'll find that these brands often use the fewest words of all in their overall communications, relying instead on gorgeous photography and one or two choice phrases to make their point.

Take a look at a brochure from any luxury car company. I found one from Ferrari that is 36 pages of stunning photos and only 6 pages have even a single word.

And, in probably my favorite example ever of the battle between visual impact and wordy explanation, I give you this classic YouTube viral video from 2006, "Microsoft Designs the iPod Box." Hard to believe it's been 11 years since this was the cutting edge! As soon as you are done listening, jump over to YouTube and watch it. It's priceless.

It is a wordless video that imagines what the iPod box would have looked like if Microsoft had been involved. If you know anything about these two companies, it





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

truly depicts the different personalities. Rumor has it some frustrated Microsoft employees were the masterminds behind this gem.

As a designer myself, I still find this video hilarious. And the story it tells is just as relevant today. This is so funny precisely because Apple is known for its visual communication.

Organizations that want to embody sophistication absolutely work the fewer-words, more-images angle, even if it shows up in a drastically different way.

FINDING IDEAS EVERYWHERE

I hope I've shown you that even the wildest of projects can get your own creative juices flowing, no matter what your organization's personality.

MailChimp stirred mine.

Are you ready to get started converting your information into inspiration?

I have a few things to help you:

- **If you missed our Master Class Webinar “Infographics: Simplifying Big Ideas with Images,” the recording is [now available](#).** The session covers the difference between infographics and data visualization; three essential qualities of all successful infographics, ways to use content you already have; and how to create compelling graphics for your organization.
- In March we'll be running a follow-up to that Master Class that will teach you (in a live demo) how to use some of the best online tools to create your own infographics.
- Or, you can always give us a call and have us do it for you. That's what we're here for!





DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

Thanks so much for listening today. Remember, if you want to see the examples, you can text the word Personality1 to 33444 or visit iriscreative.com/dp142. This month's Master Class is on using your events to create a springboard for engagement. You can sign up for the live class and the recorded classes at nonprofittoolkit.net/training. I hope this episode was helpful. I always love to hear what you think. Please connect with me on LinkedIn and let me know you are a podcast listener - or email me at beth@iriscreative.com.

On the next episode, I have the team that runs the Annual Fund for Drexel University as my guests. They have been running some really interesting experiments on their list and getting some great results. I went down and recorded with them in person and got some great ideas on how they are using data to get to know their audience and send appeals that are, well, more appealing. Please join me in two weeks to hear all about it.

NONPROFIT TOOLKIT

USING EVENTS AS A
SPRINGBOARD

FEB 23 > REGISTER NOW

