Pica: A Design Community

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by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wonderful fiancée and amazing parents who have supported all of my creative adventures and helped me along the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

0p0 .... Pica/Points
AIGA .... American Institute of Graphic Arts
App .... Application
B2B ....Business-to-Business
B2C ....Business-to-Consumer
BRM .... Business Relationship Management
CMS .... Content Management System
F2F .... Face-to-Face
GDPR .... General Data Protection Regulation
Pt .... point
PWC .... PricewaterhouseCoopers
TV .... Television
UI .... User Interface
UX .... User Experience

ABSTRACT

PICA: A DESIGN COMMUNITY

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The world of design has evolved, along with technology, from the days of print advertising to the digital world of websites and mobile apps. The Internet has created a greenfield environment with new design disciplines and new channels to collaborate and interact with other designers. However, the availability of information and design communities have failed to evolve to fit the needs of designers. In an effort to create a community of designers, for designers, this thesis takes a research approach to understanding the needs of designers in order to build a community for that promotes creative growth through education, face-to-face interactions, a positive environment, and a trusted space where designers can come together to share knowledge and experience and help one another. This community is called Pica.

THE PROBLEM

Designers are a creative, passionate, and curious group of individuals that require a multitude of disciplines in order to be successful in their careers. A crucial part of becoming a designer is idea sharing, collaboration, critical thinking, and being able to give and receive constructive criticism which is what lies at the core of all design programs. These programs are best for learning new technical skills, developing ideas, and learning how to execute on those ideas with the skills learned.

Upon completion of their education and entrance into the field of their choice, those core pieces are often consumed by external factors like stakeholders, business processes, deadlines, and politics. This thesis documents and demonstrates an avenue for designers to continue their education and learn skills that will help them become better designers and professionals.

Currently, there is no central community for designers that has everything they would need to grow and succeed as a designer. Face-to-face interaction has been replaced with digital communication, leaving designers without the benefits received in the classroom environment, such as free thinking and critiques. Networking becomes more difficult as designers take remote jobs and surround themselves with fewer designers. Designers are expected to have a wide range of knowledge that may not be taught or available online, and designers who are unable to collaborate or work with other

designers may be less likely to challenge themselves or try new methods. Technology is constantly advancing and can be overwhelming to keep up with new tools and design methods, which can deter designers from stepping out of their comfort zones. In addition, designers do not currently have a place they can go that is dedicated to their field and passion. For example, if someone is interested in making music, there are stores like Guitar Center and other local venues where musicians can find specific products and like-minded people. The lack of these crucial elements leaves designers isolated and stuck in an environment where they are less likely to grow and improve their design abilities.

THE SOLUTION

Pica empowers designers by giving them access to all of the tools they need to be successful. Pica is a design community that offers in-person collaboration, education, tools, and networking for designers who are looking for support and growth. Pica is the trusted resource in the design community and brings designers together to help them grow and succeed. The idea behind Pica is that with support and collaboration, designers can grow their creative skills and better their careers while helping fellow designers and the design industry as a whole. Pica would be a resource for designers and would include collaboration activities, education and learning events, and a trusted storefront that would provide designers with the specific tools they need to best execute their work. From notebooks to mentorship, Pica is there to help and support designers by supplying them with a path for continued education in their career and a community for growth and collaboration, with a focus on face-to-face interactions.

PROCESS AND METHODS

In order to develop the perfect plan for Pica, I used a variety of methods to gather the information needed to deliver a strong brand that resonated with my target audience and to help determine the best ways to engage and retain designers. This research included a literature review, a survey of designers, and first-hand experience.

Literature Review

In order to get a better understanding of the current state of design communities and branding, I analyzed 10 academic papers, reviewed six books, reviewed and gathered information from personal experience and education, and reviewed various reports and other sources. In order to provide information on whether Pica would be a useful tool for designers, the content of the literature review focused on face-to-face interaction, the impact of social media and online communities, and the direct comparison of the two. The results of the literature review can be broken down into 4 categories: digital vs. in-person communities, continued education, defining successful brands, and environment for growth.

Digital vs. In-Person Communities

Currently, there are online design communities available for designers to share their work, find inspiration, discover new trends, and attempt to collaborate. This

research aims to look at the difference between digital and in-person communication and the effect it may have on designers' ability to grow as creative professionals.

In the article "F2F vs. Digital Communication: Pros, Cons, and When to Use Each," written by Cyndi Cossais, and published by Business Relationship Management Institute (BRMInstitute), Cossais writes "While it can be argued that digital communication achieves the same outcomes, it is a poor substitute for the human interaction that people need to foster a more meaningful connection with others and build credibility, trust, and loyalty—traits that are critical in the field of BRM." (Cossais, 2017) This article is written in regard to business-relationship management, but it can be applied to any field. Designers, like any other humans, need interaction with other designers and stakeholders who both influence our work. Without this face-to-face interaction, designers risk isolating themselves and their concepts, which creates a hivemind and is detrimental to creative growth.

Cossais also goes on to account for the benefits of digital communication, such as immediacy and ease of access, when she says, "Digital communication provides its own benefits like convenience, it generates a written record, and is an immediate method of expression." The accessibility of an online communities makes it easy to interact with, however, they lack meaningful connections. Building a strong design community equally requires both digital and in-person interactions to make an impact and develop a loyal community of designers.

In the Influitive blog post, "Why Most Online Communities are Destined to Fail," Tatiana Morand discusses the idea that online communities aren't necessarily the best

choice when it comes to collaboration and learning. Morand indicates there are six reasons why seventy percent of online communities fail: lack of planning, outdated content, uninspiring discussions, low engagement, no way to build relationships, and no social capital for members. Morand also indicates that online communities must be purpose-driven in order to be successful:

> If you provide a purpose-driven community, where customers can interact with your brand and each other, they'll see more value—and, in return, so will you. For example, if you give customers the chance to build their professional network, showcase their thought leadership, and get more value from your products (either by interacting with other customers or your employees) they won't be able to stop coming back. (Morand, 2017)

Continued Education

In addition to the difference between online and in-person communities today, the millennial generation is joining the workforce with different needs than generations prior. In the journal article, "The Millennial Student: A New Generation of Learners," Michele Monaco writes, "The student of today uses many forms of collaborative learning, such as on-line discussion boards called blogs for case study discussions that incorporate not only the didactic course of study but also personal experiences from the clinical setting." (Monaco & Martin, 2007) As this new generation is familiar with the technology and finds online-discussion to be commonplace, it brings to light the question of whether online discussion is enough for them to continue to grow. Monaco's study shows that the millennial generations encounter challenges in the areas of career and growth

development. It could be argued that these challenges arise due to a lack of in-person communities for career-specific groups, such as designers. We're approaching a shift in education that breaks away from the traditional classroom model. Students are now learning through various mediums and through collaborative exercises. Not everyone learns the same and shouldn't suffer because of that.

In addition to lacking in-person collaboration and interaction, online communities make it easier for designers to isolate themselves and become complacent with the work they produce instead of continuously trying to improve. In the book, "*How to Be a Graphic Designer Without Losing Your Soul*," Adrian Shaughnessy proposes an equation for creativity: risk + discomfort + sweat (±inspiration) = creativity. (Shaughnessy, 2010)

With the growth of online communities and digital interactions, it's become much easier to avoid discomfort and stay away from risky scenarios. Based on the equation above, online communities and digital interactions ultimately take away from a designer's creativity by only participating in things they are comfortable with. This can be seen all around. When designers graduate and leave the collaborative classroom atmosphere, they are left with finding that collaboration in their job or somewhere else, and in many career paths, designers might not be able to work closely with other designers on the job.

Defining a Successful Brand

In order to develop Pica's brand, it was important to revisit the basics of building a brand. Marty Neumeier's 3-part series on branding discusses the three basic areas of building a quality brand: *The Brand Gap, The Brand Flip, and Zag: The Number One*

Strategy of High Performing Brand. In each book, he breaks down a different component of a brand starting with the introductory level definition to how to structure and position a successful brand.

In *the Brand Gap*, Neumeier discusses a high-level view of what a brand is and is not. Because a brand is so intertwined with a business strategy, Neumeier breaks down the barriers, the brand gap, to show the alignment between strategy and creativity. "Successful businesses are those that continually adapt to changes in the market place, the industry, the economy, and the culture." (Neumeier, The Brand Gap: How to Bridge the Distance Between Business Strategy and Design, 2005) Brands have to be adaptable, strategic, and creative to withstand the constant changes of consumer needs, wants, and habits and to maintain their presence in the industry.

In *the Brand Flip,* Neumeier addresses the shift in branding from a company owned function to a customer owned function. Before this "flip," brands used to companies used to create the brand that would bring customers in and retain them. After the flip, a company's primary job is to create customers and those customers are the ones that end up defining the brand. Of course, a company can guide the message, but ultimately it falls into the hands of the customer. In order for a brand to stand out among the rest, there are two core functions: innovation and marketing. Without both of these pieces, a brand will fail to be heard or remembered.

In *Zag: The Number One Strategy of High Performing Brand,* Neumeier delves into the main things to consider when defining your brand, which he breaks down into five key questions: what, how, who, where, and when, and how to differentiate yourself

from others. The title of the book Zag, is in reference to zig zagging and as he states in his book, "when everybody zigs, zag." The basic ingredients of a Zag are when "focus is paired with differentiation supported by a trend, and surrounded by compelling communications, you have the basic ingredients of a zag." (Neumeier, Zag: The Number One Strategy of High-Performance Brands, 2006)

These books analyze and breakdown the different pieces that make up a successful brand, and the information gathered from these books will direct the brand development and management of Pica. The brand development of Pica needs to be extremely considerate of the audience and methods used to create a loyal, trusted, and helpful design community.

Designing Brand Identity by Alaina Wheeler was a reference book I used to analyze existing brands, which inspired many of the decisions I made throughout my project. Wheeler analyzes all of the different touch points that make up a brand and pairs them up with real world examples. Seeing the different components of brands and how companies have successfully used those components became a primary source of inspiration when building the Pica brand.

The "Gamification Market to Reach $2.8 Billion in US by 2016, According to New Findings" report by PWC analyzes the business impact of gamification as a marketing technique and its market value projections.

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, there are five needs that give people the feeling of gratification. (Communication Theory, 2010)

1. Cognitive needs

2. Affective needs

3. Personal Integrative needs

4. Social Integrative needs

5. Tension free needs

Rewarding users for gaining knowledge or participating in an event satisfies their cognitive needs. The emotional feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction satisfies affective needs. The competing against others to get to the top of a leaderboard or getting public recognition satisfies personal integrative needs. The natural social network of gamification helps users feel connected to others participating which satisfies social integrative needs. Gamification can take the complexity out of a task and turn it into an escape for a user making it a tension free experience.

Environment for Growth

While everyone strives to achieve different goals, designers are not alone in their limitations to continue to grow, as mentioned above. These limitations range from lack of tools and community to self and social limitations. For example, a lack of face-to-face interaction can lead to a feeling of isolation, which can ultimately limit a designer's creativity, drive, and passion for design.

In the study "Social Belongingness Satisfaction as a Function of Interaction Medium," Donald Sacco and Mohamed Ismail discuss the idea that face-to-face interaction leads to positivity and belongingness: "face-to-face interaction leads to social belongingness and creates a positive mood," and "both face-to-face and virtual interactions reduce negative moods." (Sacco & Ismail, 2014) The fact that face-to-face

interactions reduce negativity and increase positivity is an indication that in-person design communities can benefit designers by positively reinforcing their work and the purpose behind what they are attempting to achieve. In contrast, designers in face-to-face situations are more likely to take constructive criticism in a more positive way.

In addition to the vast literature available on the benefits of different online and in-person communities, the basis for this project was developed as a result of my own education and study of design.

Participating in the classes and discussions provided the breadth of knowledge and general understanding of the different disciplines a designer can pursue, and the course work created a continuous way to challenge existing knowledge and force students to break out of their comfort zones in design. Students have to learn how to think critically and analyze the different mediums of design while working collaboratively with other design students to improve their work. The classroom atmosphere is the clearest example of how in-person interaction can continue to improve a designer's skills and confidence in their work.

Overall, the literature provides information on the benefits of both online and face-to-face communities, however, most information suggests that face-to-face communities are likely to have a better success rate and provide a better all-around experience for the participants. As a result, Pica was developed to offer both face-to-face and online interactive opportunities for designers.

Survey

In order to gather information real designers' preferences and how they work, I developed a survey to gather data from a diverse group of designers from across the country. The survey aimed to determine their role as a designer, to determine if/how they interact with a design community, and to gain insight on their interests in regard to a design community. The data gathered from the survey indicate that a community like Pica would be helpful to designers in three ways.

Survey Design

The survey consisted of 36 questions (some conditional questions) with 30 multiple choice questions and six free response questions. The questions included demographic and workplace information and design interests, including community, events, and personal experience. The survey was disseminated by local design social media groups and personal contacts and their networks of designers. The survey was open for three weeks, and there were 85 respondents total.

Key Data

- **Design Work:** The survey included a question to determine the type of design work the respondents typically produce. Of the 85 respondents, 48 percent indicated they are visual designers, 40 percent indicated their job involves user interface or user experience work, 34 percent indicated they are marketing designers, 17 percent indicated they are front-end developers, 14 percent indicated they are art directors, and 34 percent indicated that their work also included web design work. This is important because it shows that the survey respondents

provide a wide range of backgrounds and types designers who have a range of knowledge and produce various types of work.

- **Team Size:** According to the survey data, 33 percent of the designers are the only designer on their team and 36 percent work on a team of two to four designers. This is relevant because designers need collaboration in order to create the best solutions to the problem. If a third of designers work on a one-man team, they have to find their own ways to interact with other designers outside of work.

- **Remote Workers:** The survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they work remotely or in an office with other colleagues. Of the responses, 76 percent indicated that they work remotely, and of that 76 percent, about 50 percent would prefer to be in the office, and 50 percent would prefer their current remote work situation. This is relevant because it shows that half of the designers would prefer to work in a more collaborative environment.

- **Online Communities:** Respondents were asked to indicate which online communities they interact with, and responses indicate that 50 percent of respondents interact with 5 different communities: 55 percent interact with Facebook Groups, 47 percent interact with AIGA, 40 percent interact with Behance, 30 percent interact with Dribbble, and 20 percent interact with Slack Communities.

In addition to the above key data points, the survey asked respondents questions about their freelance work, event attendance, in-person vs. online events, and more. Some of the additional highlights from the data are:

- 17% of designers are freelance/contract designers of those designers, 47% get new clients through references. This shows that networking and having a strong community has the most impact when designers are trying to find new work.

- 75% of designers have attended an event in the past. People don't attend events because they don't have time or there are none in their area. This indicates how Pica can be more inclusive to all designers for and to get good participation

- Both designers who have attended events and those who haven't go for the same reason: Education, Networking, Fun. This helps determine what type of events people would most likely attend.

- Respondents preferred in-person events (63%) and the other 37% said it depends on the event. This reinforces the theory that in-person events are better for designers than online events.

- When asked about learning something new, blogs, videos, and conferences were the top three choices, while webinars, classes, and slack communities were the last three. It's helpful to know what people prefer so that Pica can prioritize those platforms for content distribution.

- When asked about other areas designers are interested in, marketing, user research, analytics/data, and photography were the top three choices, and writing, sculpting, music were the last three. A large part of Pica is educating designers on other topics that may be outside of their everyday job. Having this data shows the topics other topics designers want to be learned about.

- When asked what designers prefer to do in their spare time, concerts, galleries, and staying home were the top three choices, while hackathon, open mic, and conferences the last three. This information is useful because Pica is an all-inclusive resource that encourages designers to find inspiration from non-design related activities, have knowing what designers are interested will help guide decisions on event and social gatherings.

- Designers selected supplies are supplied by jobs, specialty stores, and bulk retailers as the top three locations where they get design supplies, and local stores and art stores were less popular. Pica has its own product line that falls into the specialty category.

- Most designers indicated they prefer a blank or dot grid notebook.

Literature Review & Survey Recap

The information gathered from the literature review and the survey confirm that there is a lack of in-person communities for designers, and as many designers work remotely or with teams of four or fewer, it's to be expected that collaborative design discussion may be limited. The information gathered from the literature review supports the idea that online communities are convenient, but that they may not be the most successful when it comes to providing a consistent, trustworthy, and educational environment for participants. The information and data gathered also support the idea that the adoption of these communities could benefit designers by providing the collaboration, critique, supplies, and support that they need to succeed.

As a result, the product of this thesis is the brand, Pica, which aims to address the problems outlined in the above section. Below is a detailed description of the development of Pica as a brand, a physical, in-person design community, and a store for designers.

PICA EXHIBITION

Alongside the mission statement, a brand needs a defining set of principles that it's advocates and users strive for. Principles are the qualities and characteristics that encourage people to interact with a brand.

Ultimately, a brand is not what a designer or company says it is, but what people say about the brand. Alina Wheeler writes, "Brands need to demonstrate their difference and make it easy for customers to understand that difference." (Wheeler, 2012) This is in direct relation to rise in new media and communications. Take social media for example, if a customer has a comment or complaint, they now have an avenue to publicize that message to the rest of the world. Some brands see this as an uphill battle while others thrive. Principles can guide that conversation and promote the brand.

Pica Brand

Pica is founded on the principle of helping designers grow and succeed in their desired field through a shared community that provides support, collaboration, resources, and supplies for all their design needs. Every decision Pica makes is always in the best interest of all designers. Pica is an open, trusted brand that relies on its community to share their knowledge and experience and/or participate in community activities to help designers thrive. The foundation of Pica is to be supportive, positive, and people-focused

interaction. The basis for the brand is the 6p0 of Pica: People, Passion, Positivity, Perspective, Productivity, and Presence.

The 6p0 of Pica

The 6p0 of Pica make up the backbone of the brand: it's what every Pica member should consider in all aspects of the brand -- from personally interacting with others to selecting events and educational opportunities.

People

Everything we do is to help you, the designer. We believe designers have a unique talent that can change how people learn, think, and interact with the world.

Pica's brand is about being a part of a community, and there is no community without people. That's why Pica promotes interpersonal interactions - to strengthen the design community. To create a strong brand, it's necessary for Pica to meet consider both in-person and online support for designers. The use of digital communication is at an all-time high, and as it continues to grow, our face-to-face interactions occur less frequently. Multiple studies have shown that "face-to-face interaction leads to social belongingness and creates a positive mood." This is why Pica is designed to provide a space for designers to meet, both in-person and online, and continue to grow and support one another as a community.

In addition, all decisions made by Pica members should represent the needs of designers. Pica is built around designers, and these are the people that should be considered in every aspect of the brand and brand decisions.

Not only is there extensive research on the idea that people-focused companies, groups, and communities are more successful and beneficial, my own experience

supports this concept. After spending some time at a global Business-to-Business (B2B) company, I've seen first-hand how businesses can make decisions that promote their own goals without considering the impact it may have on the customer. This can be seen in many companies, even beyond the B2B arena. Websites and apps have resolved to using dark-patterns that are put in place to influence customers to make a decision they may not otherwise make, not based on what the customer actually wants or needs.

Pica exists to support the customers—designers and their careers—with transparency, honesty, and trust because they are part of our brand mission. People are starting to see through the veil of dark patterns and gimmicky solutions and are striving for reliable and honest companies. This acts as a differentiator for Pica in comparison to competing brands. While it may require more work, that's exactly what we want to be doing. When profits and advertising are not the primary goal of the company, we are able to focus on the people.

Passion

If you're going to do something, do it passionately. Strive for perfection, and always deliver the best you can.

Passion makes people strive for more. Passion is confidence. Passion is knowledge. In any career, skill, or hobby it's passion that keeps someone interested: Passion makes them keep trying. Pica's brand is built on passion because in order to improve as a creative mind, it's important to keep challenging, expanding, and growing, which comes from passion. Pica and its members are passionate about design, but even more passionate about helping other designers.

Passion is also crucial to the self. A major part of being a designer is trying and failing, iterating, and constantly striving to be better. A deep seeded passion for the process and craft make these challenges a benefit, not a reason to call it quits and try again tomorrow. Pica wants its members to bring the energy that keeps the brand alive and exciting.

Positivity
> *Support and promote positivity in everything that you do.*

The Pica brand is based on positivity in all situations to create an exceptional, supportive environment for our members that transcends their interaction with the brand and influences everyday lives. Being positive means practicing grace and understanding, accepting and supporting others, and showing respect, even when facing opposition or negativity.

As humans, we are always aware of negative circumstances and consequences as a means of survival. At any opportunity, our instinct is to address even the potential for some sort of negativity by shying away from a conflict, lack of confidence, new situation, and the potential to fail. In addition to our natural instinct, the ability to shy away from negativity increases with online communication. With online communication, it seems easier to deliver and receive bad feedback or new. Pica aims to create opportunities for positivity in every aspect of the brand.

Perspective
> *Keep an open mind. Shift your perspective. There's always more than one way to solve a problem.*

Pica's brand considers perspective as a key component to success. Perspective is required in all aspects of life and is becoming increasingly important as we move to a connected, global society. Perspective is important for designers to consider, especially in the areas of user interface (UI) and user experience (UX). Perspective is what helps us stay positive – to know when the negativity is focused on an aspect of the design, not on the person.

Pica considers all perspectives of designers and users in all aspects of the brand, including Pica design, community, conferences and events, and design tools. While accessibility has always been a component of design, it has been a rising in importance in parallel with the standardization of digital interfaces. Pica wants to be inclusive to all designers, so it's important to consider things like accessibility.

Perspective is also important when working with a team, at an event, or interacting with someone in general. No two people are alike and no one person is inherently better than another. Being open minded and understanding will make a designer work better and they'll interact with others better, which is one more reason why Pica's brand focuses on Perspective.

Productivity
Stay focused. Minimize the noise. Being productive is a choice that you make every day.

The Pica brand represents productivity because creativity requires focus, attention, and discipline which are all byproducts of productivity. It's important that designers engage their skillset by being productive. It's the "use it or lose it" situation. And, as adults, productivity is something that most of us strive for every day. This can be

seen by taking a look at all of the phone apps, websites, and scheduling tools that help

people increase their productivity. Being productive requires focus and discipline.

Pica's brand includes a work and education environment to allow designers to be

productive in an atmosphere that suits their needs, and where they can feel comfortable

trying new things with others in the same scenario. From a professional perspective,

companies have moved to open concept offices and communicate through always on

channels like Slack which, at least from my own personal experiences, make for easy

interruptions and distractions. The idea that an open concept office enables collaboration

and easier communication. It also creates more distractions and causes a designer to lose

focus. Dr Gloria Mark explains that every time a person changes tasks, "it takes an

average of 25 minutes to return to the original task after an interruption." (Sullivan &

Thompson, 2013) For a designer working in the creative field, losing a train of thought or

getting interrupted can ultimately result in a forgotten idea or no ideas at all.

Presence

Put down the phone. Close the computer. See what's in front of you and discover

new ways to learn and be inspired.

Face-to-face communication only works if both parties are giving their undivided

attention. The Pica brand considers presence as one of the most important aspects of

having a successful community. Pica believes that you cannot benefit from the

community without being present, and this is represented throughout the brand focusing a

large amount of our energy on in-person events. It's easy to get distracted online with

social media, notifications, emails, or even choosing the next song to listen to.

Designers rely on various online channels for inspiration information. As the saying goes, "Inspiration can be found anywhere." If we're constantly distracted or mindlessly consuming content, we are potentially missing out on a whole world of inspiration right in front of us. Pica members support being present in both work and community. We understand that people want to record content and take notes digitally, Pica prefers if everyone would put away their devices at our events (unless it's needed). We always provide the content to attendees after so they can go back and revisit.

Name

The name Pica is based on a historical and functional measurement: a pica. A pica is the foundation of a typographic point. It is a unit of measurement used in the early days of design to measure type, and it equals 1/6 inches and can be divided in to 12 points, making it a useful unit of measurement for structuring a grid and measuring distances. The name Pica represents the 6 principles by which our community operates while acknowledging the history of typography.

Because picas are based on a multiple of six, the Pica community uses the number six as the "golden number." There are the six principles of Pica (6p0), Pica design – in all aspects – uses and incorporates six to twelve column grids, Pica hosts the 12pt Conference, and there are six Pica products (for now).

Logo

The standard Pica logo is composed of two elements, the wordmark, and the ruler, there are two utility icons that only incorporate the use of the ruler.
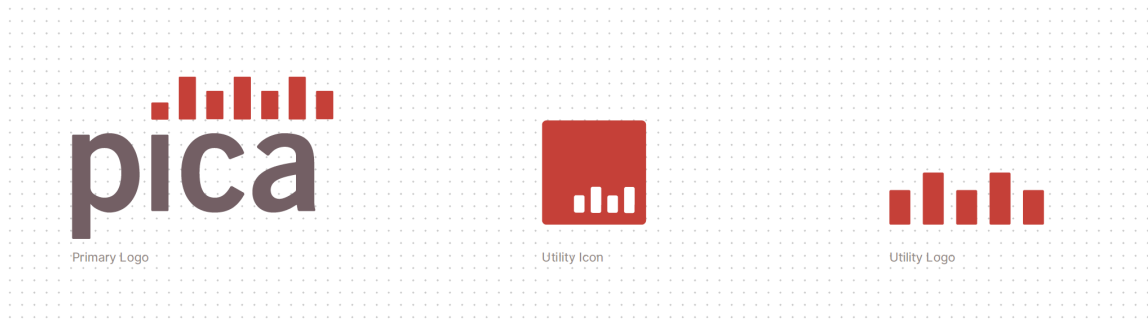
Figure 1 Pica Logos

The typeface, Trade Gothic Bold Condensed, is derivative of traditional gothic sans-serif typefaces while featuring its own defining characteristics. Trade Gothic was originally released in 1948 by the director of Linotype, Jackson Burke. This preceded Helvetica and Univers making it a foundational piece of modern typography. The typeface Trade Gothic Bold Condensed was chosen for the Pica brand because it's functional, but it still manages to stand out from other typefaces in the gothic classification. Because the typeface preceded modern typefaces, it also represents the historical theme for which the Pica name was chosen.

Figure 2 Trade Gothic Type Sample

The ruler is a tribute to the foundations of design and typography. Before computers, designers relied on rulers and a variety of other tools to measure, align, and create their designs. Although we have software to help us do this today, the ruler is still a core piece of design. The ruler in the Pica logo is an abstract interpretation to make it a defining piece to the brand.

The two utility icons act as alternate logos for the brand. These were developed to accommodate the advancements in technology and the various channels and mediums where brand logos must exist. On websites, apps, and social media, full brand logos are not always functional, and with the growing use of websites, apps, and social media, brands need to make sure their logos are usable and recognizable on different mediums, for example, a website favicon, a mobile app icon, or a social media profile picture. By

using these alternate logos, Pica will be able to maintain a consistent and strong brand across all channels.

Color Palette

Color is an integral part of a visual brand. Alaina Wheeler writes, "Color is used to evoke emotion and express personality. It stimulates brand association and accelerates differentiation." (Wheeler, 150) If a brand is successful, a consumer will already know what brand is being referenced before having to read the brands name. Wheeler also writes, "In the sequence of visual perception, the brain reads color after it registers a shape and before it reads content." (Wheeler, 2012) There are not necessarily right or wrong colors but using them strategically and consistently along with all other brand touch points can have a huge impact on a consumers memory of the brand.
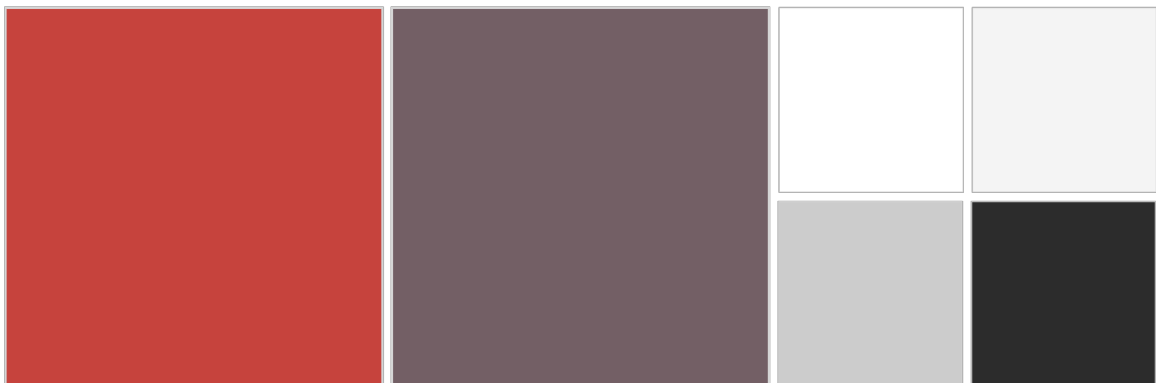
Figure 3 Pica Color Palette

The Pica color palette is built around the idea that simpler is better, and it consists of a specifically chosen red, a plum wine color, and shades of black, white and grey.

These colors were chosen specifically to convey the 6p0 of Pica: people, passion, positivity, perspective, productivity, and presence.

The Pica Red is a passionate, attentive color that best represents the passion for the work, connection, and continued education that the Pica community has. Paula McHugh, painter, painting teacher, and interior designer at Belltown Design in Seattle, comments on the merit of a "well-placed explosion of rich vermilion color." In small doses or larger swathes, McHugh uses vermilion to energize a space and "make everything come alive." Pica Red was also chosen for its representation in the art industry as a bright contrasting color when used with whites and blacks.

The secondary color, Pica Wine, is a calmer accent color that balances the power of the red that represents sophistication and quality and helps provide ensure the Pica Red doesn't stand out too much and make the logo look "cheap" or "gimmicky. Sometimes red can be too overbearing and can send the wrong message like danger or anger. Wine is a much more inviting color that has enough energy to stand on its own while still falling to the background.

The rest of the color palette is made up of neutral grays. The grays were chosen to help balance and contrast with the brighter colors. Using a primary, secondary, and shades of gray will help keep the brand consistent and vibrant. I've had first-hand experience working on brands with more than 5 colors and over time it can start to dissolve the overall brand by having too many varying designs. A simpler color palette is a risk but also shows confidence and skill.

Brand Elements

Pica has three core brand elements: The Dot grid, the Abstract ruler, and the Pica Ruler. The brand elements appear on Pica marketing, content, and products as an accent to help identify the brand.

- **Dot Grid:** The dot grid will be used as an accent on marketing collateral, a pattern for our notebooks, and as a general brand identifier on its own. Each dot in the grid is one pica apart and measures in multiples of six to continue the story of pica. The dot grid is only used in pica's approved color palette: red, wine, light gray, medium gray, a dark gray.

- **Abstract Ruler:** The abstract ruler element is derived from the ruler in the pica logo. This ruler can be used on its own as a brand mark on products, collateral, and ads. It is also used as the template for image masks across the brand.

- **Pica Ruler:** The pica ruler is used as a utility element. The to-scale ruler can be placed on brand touch points which in turn will turn them into a functional tool for a designer. It currently has a home on the back of our business card with the purpose of establishing us as a trusted resource.

These elements were chosen because of their historical ties to design and their aesthetic appearance. Each element can be used in a multitude of combinations to create a design system rather than a fixed set of elements that can get stale. Being able to adapt to the ever-changing world of design requires a flexible system, and while all of our designs may not be the exact same, they will be consistent from a foundational stand point.

Each element can be directly sourced back to the foundations of design. The dot grid is a direct reference to the use of grids in layout and type design. The ruler is an interpretation of the tool that all designers used to complete their work and ensure consistency and balance.

Photography

If a photo is worth a thousand words, then make it says the right thing.

The use of photography in Pica design is a distinctive style that represents our brand and values. The goal with Pica imagery is to focus on the people, experiences, and create an image that is organic and inviting to look at. When someone is on the Pica website or social media, the photography should make them think, "I could see myself being there."

With the availability of stock photo libraries, many brands don't develop and capture their own images. The truth is that it's easy to tell when a brand uses stock imagery, and Pica is a brand that is authentic and uses imagery to portray that to the community. I've worked on brands that rely completely on stock imagery and not only is it more difficult, it lacks cohesiveness and storytelling. When a brand that uses stock images consistently over time, there's little to no connection between the photos, and the message of the images starts to blend in with other companies that use stock images.

A great example of a brand who uses photo consistency in branding is Nike. Nike has a specific style that can be seen across campaigns and media. Apple is another example of a brand that was able to develop a distinct style for showing their products that is immediately recognized whenever seen.

Pica strives to express authenticity through photos, which means less editing and more reality. Today, there is so much editing that goes into even the simplest of photos: Small mark on a wall, just cover it. Power outlet showing, Photoshop it out. For example, Dove made a "Real Beauty Pledge" that promises to only feature real women, not models and promoted the idea of loving your natural beauty. The adoption of social media, specifically Instagram, standardized the use of filters that alter and, in some cases, improve the appearance of the person in the photo. These edits are valuable and important, but only to a certain extent. A photo is much more engaging if the person viewing it can personally relate. When developing a community that is people-focused, it's important to be transparent and authentic.

One of Pica's principles is positivity. By promoting the use of natural, imperfect photos, it causes the viewer to pay attention to the context of the photo rather than focusing on the overall aesthetics of the photo.

In order to uphold the 6p0 of Pica, a set of guidelines would be used for photography. The guidelines include using natural photos (no filters), minimalizing edits because "imperfections are perfect," making sure the context is right, and only using photos that show people smiling.

When in doubt, reference the 6p0 as a guide when selecting or taking photos.

Typography

The typeface Pica uses in all content – digital and print – is Inter. Inter is a typeface that was designed for computer screens, but it also works well as a typeface used in print media. Inter was designed as a variable typeface, meaning there are not fixed

weights (Andersson, 2018). It's an accessible typeface with 2,000 glyphs, and nine official weights. Accessibility is a hot topic in the digital world, and this typeface embraces the challenge and delivers a complete font that can be easily read and used for multiple languages.

Pica uses Inter because of its versatility and ability to work with and for multiple outlets and people. Although pica primarily focuses on in-person, face-to-face interactions, it is undeniable that we live in a digital world, and Pica content needs to accommodate that truth. At Pica events, most presentations will be digital, and most of our content available in-person will be also be available, in some for, in a digital format. Using Inter will ensure Pica content is consistent and legible across all media.

Content Guidelines

Part of what makes Pica a trusted resource in the design industry is the quality of the content. Excellent content is a vital component to attracting and retaining community members and an integral component to the Pica image.

Pica will ensure the content provided to the community is helpful, accurate, and relevant to designers. Pica will develop and share content that will educate and enhance the skills of designers in various fields. The content available to designers in the Pica community will focus on common design topics as well as topics that are not always taught in a formal design program like business, data, marketing yourself as a designer, photography tips, working with and hiring other designers, branding, communication techniques, managing clients, analytics, and more.
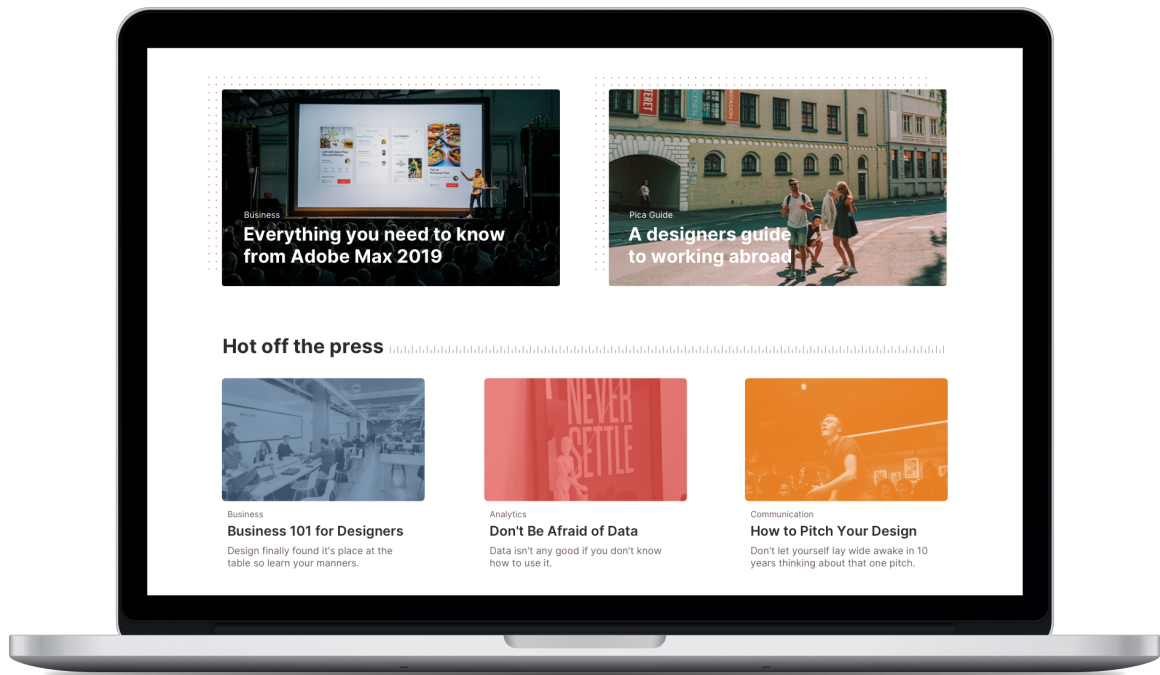
Figure 4 Pica Content Library on Website

In addition, Pica uses its content to connect young designers with more experienced designers by enabling the community experienced designers to create content for less experienced as a way to offer mentorship to designers who need it. Experienced designers provide a wealth of knowledge and advice that younger designers could greatly benefit, which gives young designers a channel to discover and expand on strengths and talents and enables the experienced designers to share that knowledge and experience. Pica also utilizes its employees to create content for the community and act as the quality control for all content being produced. This technique was chosen to keep the content and engagement among the community fresh and intriguing.

Pica Community

Pica's community is what differentiates it from others and keeps designers interested in joining or returning to our events, content, or stores. The community is broken up in to two main categories, each serving their own purpose: the in-person, face-to-face, community and the online community. As studies have shown, there are benefits to a face-to-face community that can't be replicated online, and vice versa. Understanding how designers can benefit from both of these channels allows Pica to create an engaged and interested group of designers.

Physical Space

While brands are moving away from brick and mortar stores and focusing on an online presence, Pica's brand focuses on interaction with people. The physical space is at the heart of the Pica in-person community. This is where designers can meet, collaborate, or even just hang out for a change of scenery. The physical space has three core components that designers come to interact with.

Figure 5 Pica Store Signage Mockup

1. **Collaborative Workspace** – The workspace is a place where designers can come interact with other Pica members or find a place to get some work done, share ideas and knowledge, or just hang out during non-event hours.

2. **Storefront** – Pica offers supplies and other merchandise for the convenience of designers. Offering essential products establishes Pica as a go-to resource that a designers can always count on. As indicated in the survey data above, 22 percent of respondents prefer specialty products from a local store. (The majority of respondents, 32 percent, indicated they have supplies provided by their job.)

3. **Event Space** – The physical space is where Pica hosts all events, whether big or small. Having a Pica-owned, dedicated space strengthens the brand and creates an environment that designers will associate with their growth and success.

By investing in a physical space, Pica will be accessible to the community.

Pica's in-person community is where designers go to meet new people, challenge their ideas, learn something new, and collaborate with others. In today's world it's easy to fall back on the idea that online interactions are easier and more beneficial because they are more convenient and accessible, but studies show that online community is "a poor substitute for the human interaction that people need to foster a more meaningful connection with others and build credibility, trust, and loyalty." (Cossais, 2017) Pica's focus on in-person community also helps to bring back the classroom mentality to designers in the working world who may not have the opportunity for continued growth and learning.

Online Community

The Pica online community is the second pillar of the Pica community. The online community and in-person community each have their own goals and purpose in the brand. The in-person community exists to get designers out of their comfort zone,

challenge their ideas, and meet other designers in the area while the online community is a content hub, inspiration resource, and easy way to connect with other Pica members.

The online community, also known as the Pica Grid, is made up of multiple channels including: the website, the mobile app, Slack channel(s), and social media. Each of these channels serves a distinct purpose for engaging Pica members and ensures they get the information they need quickly and easily.

Website

The Pica website is the central location for everything Pica has to offer. The Pica website hosts the extensive and carefully curated content library, event calendar, news, and all other brand-to-member and educational communications.

The Pica website and content library has one key feature: the Pica Self-Selector. The goal of the self-selector is designed to help a user find content they are looking for even if the user is unaware of what they are looking for. Living in the age of information is an empowering and never-ending journey of finding new content and learning new things, but how does someone find what they don't know they are looking for? Having great content takes precedent, but if a user can't find or interact with that content, it doesn't serve its purpose. The Pica Self-Selector solves that problem and gets people to the content they are looking for.

The self-selector is made up of 2 input fields:

1. Persona – designer, illustrator, student, manager
2. Topic – business, billing, communication

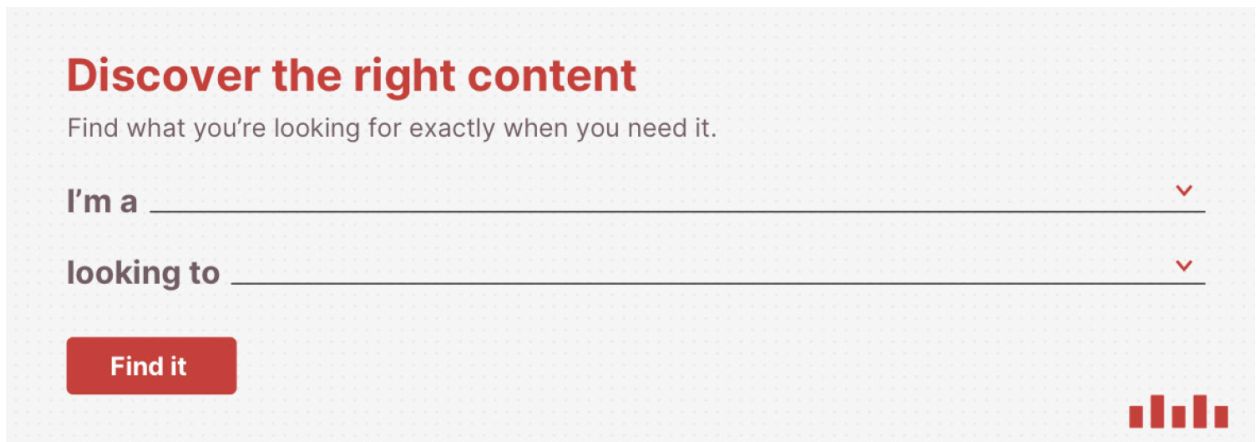By answering these two questions, the website will aggregate content fits their needs.

Figure 6 Pica Self-Selector

There are many websites that track behavior and deliver personalized experiences based on past interactions with the site. This can be great for a user because it will seamlessly deliver relevant content without the user knowing that it is happening. However, this has raised concerns in various countries around the world which has led to the introduction of GDPR in Europe. GDPR is a law that was put in place in 2018 that protects its citizens right to privacy and has astronomical fines for companies that do not comply with the law. California is working on a similar law, California Consumer Privacy Act, that, when implemented in 2020, will completely change how companies interact with customers and prospects.

While Pica aims to curate content, the privacy of community members is a top priority. Because the self-selector does not rely on any previously collected data Pica is able to respect the privacy of our users while still delivering personalized, curated experiences.

The self-selector works off a system of tags called taxonomy. Each event, article, and resource is tagged with the necessary taxonomy terms to deliver the most accurate results. Using a taxonomy-based system allows Pica to evolve and change with the industry. By nature, it is a dynamic tool which allows us to add, remove, and rename items to stay relevant and organized. For example, ten years ago, the term web designer was at the new hot design field, but as mobile apps and interactive hardware became more accessible, the title web designer has shifted to UI/UX designer. Simply changing the label keeps our resources relevant to current design terms even if the content hasn't changed.

Mobile App/Rewards

Pica's mobile app is a member's rewards center. As a registered Pica member, designers can log in to the mobile app to keep track of rewards, achievements, and recent activity, which are earned through interacting with different parts of the brand. The mobile app also functions as simplified website where users can browse our content library, sign up for events, and maintain a friends list of other Pica community members. The mobile app and rewards center was developed as an incentive for designers to interact with the Pica community in different ways.
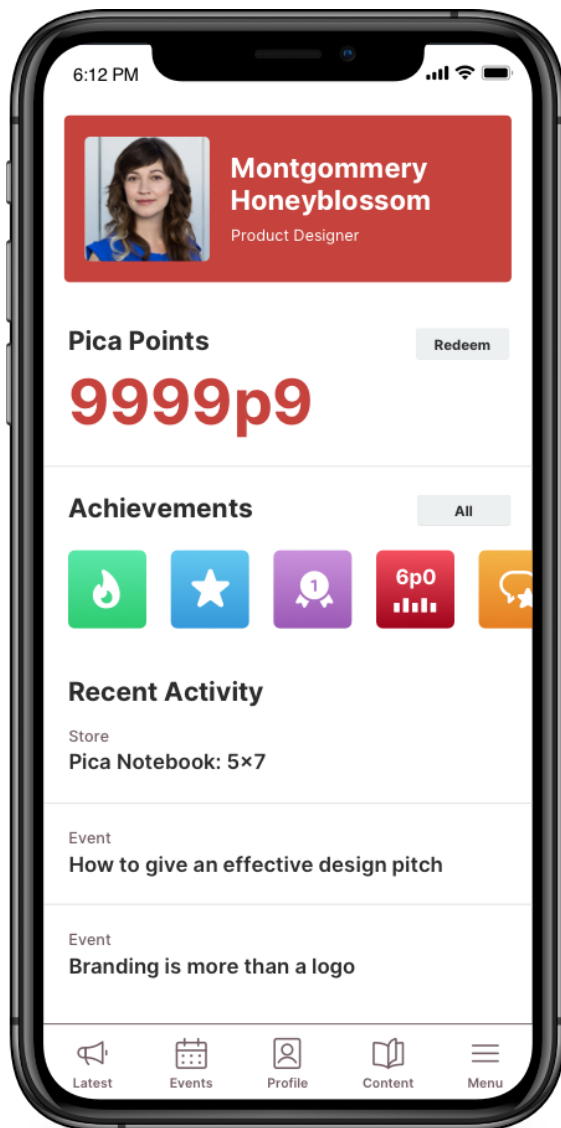
Figure 7 Pica Mobile App

Whether people recognize it or not, we are living in a society where rewards, achievements, and instant gratification drive a person's decisions. This style of engagement is referred to as "gamification" and has been around since the 1980s.

"While early gamification was being used in practice worldwide through schemes such as frequent flier miles, cereal toys, and green stamps, gamification itself had not yet been cemented as a term. The 1980s saw the first academic papers and commercial books around gamification, specifically aimed at the gamification of learning." (Dale, 2014)

Around 2011, this concept became so popular that some companies were developed around gamification. For example, Foursquare, an app that allows users to check-in to locations and rewarded frequent visitors with titles, badges, and even discounts at a location. "The size of the gamification market, currently estimated at around $100 million, will grow to more than $2.8 billion by 2016, according to M2 Research." (M2 Insights, 2011)

Businesses are constantly looking for ways to attract and retain customers. The use of gamification causes customers to set goals and even go out of their way to achieve that goal. A current example is a State Farm commercial that is running on TV right now that is trying to get new customers by advertising it's safe driving discount. The commercial shows a woman driving in different scenarios where she should be in a rush and the passengers keep telling her to hurry up. She immediately shouts back, "don't mess with my discount!" which is a reference to the lengths a person will go to for a desired reward.

Domino's ran a campaign in early 2019 that allowed customers to take a picture of any pizza they were eating and would get credit towards a free pizza from Domino's. From a marketing perspective, there were two primary goals to this campaign: to get people to download their mobile app, which was the only way a person was able to earn

their credits and to make sure current and potential customers would think about Domino's every time they were eating pizza.

According to Dale, there are eight components to gamification:

1. Points – points are allocated for specific high value behaviours and achievements.

2. Achievements – provide positive reinforcement for high value user behaviours.

3. Levels – signify levels of engagement and act as gateways into new challenges.

4. Missions – used to create a set of behaviours that will enable users to unlock specific rewards.

5. Contests – a combination of missions that reward those who finish most quickly or effectively.

6. Leaderboards – introduces a sense of competition by letting people know where they stand relative to their peers.

7. Notifications – to encourage engagement when users perform a desired action.

8. Anti-Gaming Mechanics – used to set limits on how often a behaviour can be rewarded. (Dale, 2014)

Pica would incorporate a gamification component into the brand to encourage designers to get out of the house and participate in something they may have otherwise ignored. Not only does Pica give users points for interacting with the Pica brand, it also give points out for participating in non-Pica activities, such as continued learning experiences, non-Pica events, and volunteering, which opens up our platform reinforce our brand mission that we exist solely to help designers and not manipulate them for our own gain.

Outlined below are the different behaviors and their points and achievements that can be unlocked as points are earned.

Table 1 Behavior Value Chart

Behavior	Points Awarded	Limit/Cap
Daily Challenge	1	1/day
Pica Event	6	None
Non-Pica Event	3	6/week
Webinar	3	12/week
Community Discussion	1	12/week
User Referral	12	3/month

Table 2 Achievements

Reward	Amount of Points
$6 store credit	6
$12 store credit	16
Create a daily challenge	32
$24 store credit	54
1-inch Pica ruler pin	72
Exclusive Pica Notebook	96
Pica Instagram for a day	120
Free pass to 12pt	24
A year worth of supplies	365
Design a product	500

Slack

Slack is team collaboration software tools and online service that allows a large group of people to talk, share, and collaborate with each other over the web. Slack is

made up of different workspaces and each workspace has its own set of channels. Because Pica is a thought leader and community driven company, it works with other companies they value rather than reinvent the wheel. Ten million people already use Slack, making it an established software across businesses, and it provides a number of benefits. One key benefit to Slack is that the software allows a user to be a part of multiple workspaces within one instance. This means that a user can be a part of their company's Slack workspace and easily access Pica's Slack workspace without having to open a new window, download a new app, or remember a new login, making it easier for community members to stay connected whenever they need to.

Pica's workspace that is open to all Pica members is where they can share ideas, ask questions, give and receive critiques, and discover new content. Pica has built custom integrations with Slack where members get notifications about new content being published to Pica's content library, check their rewards status, and hear about product releases before anyone else.

Events

Events are intimate, educational, inspiring, and engaging experiences that cannot be replicated in any other medium. From a branding perspective, events are one of the ultimate brand touchpoints. The attendees choose to attend, which implies that they find value in the brand. Events are a channel for people to physically experience a brand. In a world of one-sided messaging and advertising, events stand out as a unique and engaging experience that an attendee can directly benefit from.

Creating a memorable experience at an event has a longer lasting effect on a person when compared to an ad or blog post. Events give a brand the opportunity to

create an emotional connection with a person and make a lasting impression on them far after the event is over. It's easy to stand up a blog, contract writers, and publish content. Hosting events shows the level of passion and dedication that a brand has with its community which are two main components of a successful brand.

Events aren't a new channel for sharing content, in fact, they were one of the only ways to share content before the Internet was fully adopted. Like fashion and design trends, brands are always looking for a way to stand out. In the past, brands had to pay for visibility in market, but now they're fighting for visibility and attention from consumers.

With Facebook ads for example—anyone can create a brand page and buy a sponsored post with $50. The accessibility of ads has flooded the channel with sponsored posts, and society has become accustomed to ignoring content that we feel doesn't apply to us. In marketing terms, that means it's easy to get impressions from consumers, but increasingly difficult to get them to engage with your content.

If a consumer is attending an event, they are engaging with your brand just by being there, and that's an invaluable experience for a brand. Pica will use events as a source for continued education, getting designers out of their comfort zones, and to deliver thought provoking content. Because we rely on our members to generate content, events will be a primary channel for younger designers to learn from more experienced members and get a change to interact with them in a personal environment. All of our events include a networking portion that gives designers a chance to meet new people and build a network of their own.

Pica Store/Products

Having a physical presence establishes credibility for the brand, promotes face-to-face interactions, and creates an environment for its community to exist. Pica is founded on the belief that investing in a physical space establishes trust, credibility, and dedication of the brand. It would be a lot easier and cheaper to just create a website to promote our brand. The store not only acts as a differentiator, but also as proof of our dedication to our principles — people, passion, positivity, perspective, presence, and productivity.

Becoming the ultimate resource and thought leader for designers means supporting designers with the tools and content they need to do their job best. The Pica storefront is multi-purpose space that serves as an event space, workspace, and a retail store.

Pica has its own branded line of supplies for designers which includes notebooks, pens, pencils, rulers, stickers, and t-shirts. As much as these are tools to help designers do their job, they are also part of Pica's marketing strategy to create brand awareness as other designers will see and interact with the products outside of the store.

12pt Conference

In order to be the trusted resource for designers, Pica has to be accessible around the nation. Pica focusses on creating experiences that encourage face-to-face interaction but that poses challenges when trying to service a whole country. The 12pt Conference is a year-long, annual tour where designers come together to learn, network, create, and get inspired. Pica and its presenters travel to 12 different places in the country and host a

short multi-day conference for a smaller group of people rather than host a 5,000-person event.

Figure 8 12pt Conference Logo

The 12pt Conference does one event a month, every month. By traveling to various areas around the country, we make our event more accessible to designers, maintain the quality of content, and create a beneficial experience for attendees.

The conference is two to three days long and includes hands-on workshops, seminars, hackathons, and networking opportunities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, research shows a growing need for a designer-based community that offers both in-person and online opportunities for interaction. Pica is the answer to that need. Pica will provide both online and in-person support, supplies, tools, resources, and community for designers of all backgrounds.

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BIOGRAPHY

George Bartz graduated from Cox High School, Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 2007. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from George Mason University in 2011. He was employed at an advertising agency right out of his undergrad and in 2016 changed jobs to the corporate world working for the global B2B company Cvent where he currently works as a UX lead. While working at Cvent he's had the opportunity to speak at their annual user conference in 2018 and 2019 teaching attendees about website design and in 2017 he was nominated Innovator of the Year. When not designing, George enjoys live music, board games, and watching TV commercials.