
The design phase

Next, we move onto the design phase. This will be where your research and planning pays off, as you'll start to see the product come together and be built.

Develop some mood boards

As a good starting point, you'll want to develop mood boards. These can be about the design elements you're particularly keen on, for example styles, colours, trims and fabrics, as well as anything else you feel is important. This allows you to start to create a visual representation of how the product is going to look and feel, which is important from a design standpoint.

If you're a designer yourself, then this is where you can really let the creative juices run free and experiment with all kinds of processes and patterns and concepts. If you're not so inclined in that area, then it's best to hire out someone to take you through this part of the process, while you stick to what you're good at.

If I'm a designer working for a particular client, what should I take into account?

As designers, it is important that you get as much information from your clients as possible, so you can ensure that the best possible product is produced. For example, styles they like, as well as colours and any trims they feel will be of value to the product. Other things you want them to provide you with are;

- Any mood boards that have been designed
- Any print ideas they may have
- How they actually see their brand developing

- Who they consider to be potential competitors.

The more information provided, the more detailed the design process can be. From there, you'll need to expand upon the information which has been sent over to get started. For example, if your client wanted to do a polo shirt, then you'd need to look at things like the collar, what options were available in regards to the designs provided, if it was a cotton jersey or not, and what you could do with the branding.

What happens when the mood boards are finished?

Once all the details have been sent over and the mood boards have been created, you'll need to return them to the client (if applicable) and discuss everything with them. This is a great way to identify what the client does or does not like about the various designs put forward, so that what remains are the things they're happy with, which saves time and efficiency.

It's a good idea to put together multiple designs in order to showcase the full range available to the client. Using the polo shirt idea from before, if the client is just seeking one shirt, then bringing several designs together will allow for a range of ideas and concepts to be explored. This standard would be kept for everything they needed, and the final designs can be reworked with the client to ensure the end range is exactly what they're looking for.

Creating your initial range

When you're designing an initial range, try and keep the costs as low as possible. This involves making sure the colours and fabrics on the branding are also as inexpensive as possible, and you can also cross colours and fabrics together in order to keep costs down.

It is suggested that you keep the initial range small, as a good way to test the market is to use a small capsule range. Producing a range is not a cheap process by any means, so make sure you try and keep your costs as low as possible during this phase. A good starting point is to have a range which is between 6 - 10 pieces, in order to provide a selection of merchandising options and to show the product in a range of colours. It's also worth considering how you're going to use your branding, and to factor in costs for things like labels, swing tickets or embroideries.

A final note is that if you want to get a rough idea of costings from the suppliers for your product, you'll need to have completed tech packs. These will give the suppliers all the information they need in order to complete the costings evaluation. This will include such things as;

- All the information required to make
- Sizings
- The makeup info
- Any branding and labels which need to be incorporated.

You won't be able to get any information on costings without these details, so it's important that you have them. Once you've reached this point in the process, you can begin to speak to suppliers and start to source your fabrics to actually design the product.