



***Paying Homage to
Your Brand
with Manning Antoine***



Lesson 1

Creating Your

Own Lane



Antoine's first lesson focuses on the importance of creating your own lane. Most people have people who inspire them or things they take inspiration from. However, other people's methods or schedules may not be for you. "Create your own schedule," Antoine says. "You don't work for the schedule; you make it work for you so you don't have to do anything you don't want to do." Figuring out the schedule, ideas, and methods that work for you can help you find your design language.

Finding Your Own Design Language

A design language isn't something you can build overnight. It will take time to build it up and play with your passion to truly hone in on what you want it to be. Antoine stresses the importance of drawing inspiration from your own experiences and being authentic to yourself rather than trends and what everyone else is doing.

Be Willing to Invest in “Stupid” Ideas

Antoine has had many ideas he thought wouldn't work or be well-received, but he always takes the jump anyway. By investing in the “stupid” ideas, he figured out what did and didn't work for him and his brand. “One of the most important processes of having a brand and finding your own voice is knowing that you have to make those mistakes,” he says. “Those imperfections are what allow us to make things that align and resonate with people.”

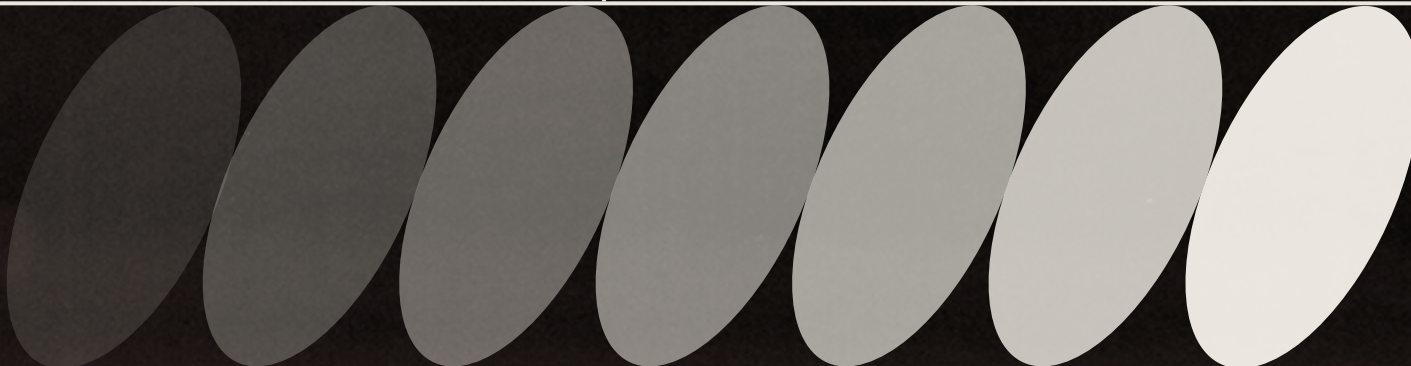
A few key questions to ask yourself about your brand include:

- Why are you doing it?
- Who are you doing it for?
- How will it reflect onto you?
- What will it mean for the people you're creating it for?

The answers can help you figure out the pillars of your brand, and they can help your brand be more authentic. “No one wants stuff from a corny or unrealistic brand,” he says. “And what you put into the world, that's all you have. And once it's out there, it's out there forever, and that's what you'll be seen as.”

For example, Antoine's brand, Homage Year, focuses on creating sociopolitical pieces and things people find meaningful. “It can be really hard to do both,” he says. But he maintains focus on the question: “Who do you want to commemorate along the way?” When you know your mission and why you want to do whatever it is you want to do, you can start building the path to get there.

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Lesson 2

Assessing Low-Risk vs. High-Risk Ideas

Ideas fall into two categories: low-risk or high-risk. For low-risk ideas, the risk is low, but the reward is also low. Antoine believes those ideas are still worth putting your time into, but you should also consider the high-risk ideas. High-risk ideas cost a lot and have a greater risk, but the reward is also super high if it all works out.

For Antoine, he started with his low-risk idea. He made t-shirts and accessories at the beginning of his journey. Then, he realized there was only so much he could do with just t-shirts or small items. He decided he had to make a bigger jump, even if it seemed out of reach at the time.

High-risk ideas bring additional barriers with them. You might receive the wrong samples or come across language barriers. You might receive the wrong product and have to put more time and money into fixing it. You could find yourself in a problematic situation where you have to decide whether it's worth it. However, Antoine believes you have to be willing to take those risks if you want to reap the rewards and benefits of those things.

If you have a high-risk idea, Antoine recommends doing whatever you need to do to invest in that idea. That could mean getting a second job or selling merchandise to cover the costs, but if you go with a high-risk idea, you should fully commit to executing it.



Lesson 3

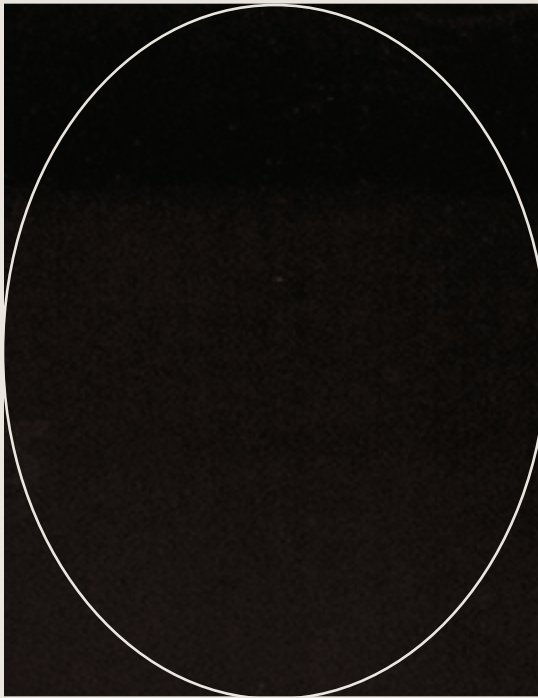
Why Consistency

Beats Mediocracy



It can be hard to beat yourself up over making the next best thing, being consistent, or making something bad or embarrassing. “Ultimately, I think that does you the biggest disservice as a creator and a designer,” he says. “Because you’re never not going to make a bad design or not the best thing.”

This is why he recommends focusing on consistency. Even if you make mediocre things, people likely won’t be focused on those products or ideas for too long, especially if you regularly put out new stuff. Consistency allows you to get better and reimagine your ideas as you go along. It’s all part of figuring out what does and doesn’t work for you. It’s also important to remember that not everyone will love everything you make. Everyone has different tastes; what’s someone’s trash is someone else’s gold.



PRO TIP: IF YOU'RE WORKING WITH OVERSEAS MANUFACTURERS, THEY MAY MEASURE FABRIC THICKNESS IN GSMS. YOU CAN USE FREE ONLINE CALCULATORS TO CONVERT OUNCES TO GSMS TO INCLUDE MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF YOUR PRODUCTS.

Most of the time, the only thing that can stop you from achieving is yourself and letting other people's opinions of you get in the way. At the end of the day, you should trust yourself. Even if your gut leads to an idea that doesn't pan out, it will eventually take you down the right path.

Bringing an Idea to Life

When it comes to manufacturing, Antoine has some tips. First, you'll need to find a manufacturer to produce the type of product you want to make. One site Antoine recommends is Alibaba. You can inquire with multiple manufacturers and then choose from those options based on the responses you get back from them.

When inquiring with manufacturers, you should have some sort of 3D model or vector of your product to send over. If you don't have a 3D model or vector, you can find a similar product online and use the sizing chart as a reference to include in your inquiry.

Then, you'll want to send over as many details as possible, including their minimum order quantity, sample costs, and their bulk price. It's also important to include details about the design and materials, especially the thickness of the materials. You can inquire with multiple manufacturers and choose one to work with based on their responses. Some manufacturers may also provide examples of similar products they've produced before.



Lesson 4

Know Who to

Call and When

to Call Them

Knowing who to call and when to call them can make the difference between a right decision and a wrong one. Antoine stresses the importance of maintaining certain connections and relationships as you build your brand. Moreover, timing is everything. You may want a fully formed idea or product ready to go when you reach out for help. This way, you can share your entire vision and obtain better results instead of possibly ruining a collaboration.



When you reach out to your connections, you should consider what they may have going on and how they may feel. At the end of the day, people are people. Treat your connections and relationships with care and respect. It's also helpful to be mindful of the process. Things won't happen overnight, so have patience with your path and the people you reach out to along the way.

Sometimes, it won't be about the advice itself but the affirmations you receive from the people you trust. Antoine suggests receiving these affirmations from those closest to you and truly know your vision and heart. From there, you can continue to hone your craft, find your motivation and inspiration, and figure out the next steps for paying homage to your brand.



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