SelfDesign®
identity, communications and public websites
review and recommendations

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vanilla five creative inc. august 2013
the following pages present the results of a review of SelfDesign's brand, identity, communications, and public website properties.

SelfDesign is a learner-directed, enthusiasm-based educational methodology. SelfDesign's life-long learning programs seek to co-inspire wonder, joy and integrity in all learning experiences and relationships. The various programs enable authentic self-discovery and empower all learners, young and old, to assume responsibility for their own learning paths.

the organization is currently experiencing growth in its programs and offerings. It has grown largely by word of mouth and personal recommendation for many years - and at the same time there is a demonstrated potential for strong growth outside the reach of this grass roots circle.

SelfDesign is also engaging in some core changes to its organizational structure and administrative practices. Undertaking, at this time, the important initiative to revitalize the organization’s brand and identity, will help to galvanize that process, and a well considered plan for redesigning SelfDesign’s communication and public presentation, from the ground up, will tap into the growth potential.

A comprehensive assessment of SelfDesign’s current branding and identity suggests a fragmented, unfocused, confusing and outdated communication. It also reflects a program-centric bias, which misses the mark of communicating the true value, dedication and unique programming that SelfDesign offers to learners and parents.

the re-design project will result in a more contemporary, articulate, focused and vital expression of the organization, its philosophy, and its programs. It will reach out to a large group of potential SelfDesigners who are waiting to hear about it, and it will reinforce the growth and positive alignment within this unique community of learners.

this document is intended as a point of reference and as a working paper for discussion and agreement towards the definition of a revised SelfDesign brand, identity and communication platform - one that better represents the strengths and qualities of the organization.

the focus of these pages is on presenting those areas where significant opportunities exist for improved communication and design, along with recommendations for positive change.

in this document the term user represents the people we want to engage - both those potentially interested in SelfDesign, as well as learners, parents and consultants within the community.

hanif janmohamed, august 2013
complexity begins at the root.
simplify.
"SelfDesign?"

When the name is first heard, the question frequently asked is:

"SelfDesign?" - "What's that?"

"SelfDesign is..." and that's where it gets a bit tricky, and answers can get a bit long winded, and they can take many forms.

- It's not really a thing - and yet it must be, it's got a name - SelfDesign.
- It's a process? - that of designing your self - "Self-Designing"
- It's a relationship? - which we have with ourselves, in the world?

Is there some contradiction in the language, resulting from the particular combination of words, that results in ambiguity? It certainly has complexity:

SelfDesign sounds like a thing.
It has 'noun-ness' - Self, n - defined by wiki: The self is an individual person as the object of his or her own reflective consciousness.

SelfDesign sounds like a process.
It relates to an action - Design, v - is a term used as liberally as salt, with just as many uses (it's also sometimes a noun - 'my design' - a cross-dresser perhaps?)

It's an odd relationship - Maybe it wants to be a more like a verb? 'SelfDesigning' feels easier to grasp - it sounds like an action:

"Hey, what're you up to?"

"I'm designing my self - I'm a SelfDesigner"

"Cool, I'd like to do that where'd you learn to do that - SelfDesign?"

maybe it's stuck with being a noun - SelfDesign must be the place where you learn to be a SelfDesigner?

And yet the locus of SelfDesigning is in the Self, and in its interactions and relationships with the world.

"SelfDesign?" - it's complicated.

What's in a name?
...what is it?
...an organization’s name?
...a process?

SelfDesign®
an ambiguous term?
hard to resolve?

the term is...
• an unfamiliar combination
• not easily reconcilable
• feels incomplete
• not a name
• not a thing
• asks for interpretation

resolve the ambiguity.
attach a qualifier to help users understand it?

SelfDesign learning community
academy
multiversity
college
system
institute
institution
reformatory
forum
platform
abecedary
fellows

SelfDesign Learning Community (a thing?)
SelfDesigning (a process?)

... a thing?
“a way of being”
...what are its qualities?

SelfDesign®

how to locate it?
what can it do for me?

...what does it do?
...what's the story?

add a tag line?
made the tag line evoke something.

SelfDesign
everchanging
is **SelfDesign** **Self**Referential?

make a fundamental change:

shift the frame of reference in all forms of communication - from that of the organization to that of the user.

**address:**
- users’ needs
- users’ frame of reference

**from there, illustrate:**
- SelfDesign’s important difference
- and why we believe that
Flat Presentation

current communications - particularly on the websites - provides information in a flat horizontal presentation. offering little to draw users in, and requiring them to seek and glean pertinent information for themselves.

Differentiated Presentation

• speak directly to users needs in an engaging way.
• differentiate SelfDesign's offerings.
• illustrate how SelfDesign supports that need.
• make site navigation an intuitive and engaging experience for the user.
SelfDesign
Institution Centric

Stanford design
Viewer Centric

- hub and spoke model of organization.
- no visual hierarchy.
- no compelling reason to click anywhere.

The focus of the page is on displaying the structure of the organization - which is presented without differentiation. The frame of reference is based on a representation of the institution, rather than the engagement of the user's needs or interests.

- adopt the viewer's frame of reference
- differentiate viewer's interests.
- guide them towards areas of focus.
- offer a call to action.
- represent the institution's support of the user's needs.
“...there is a deep appreciation for the diversity of the group, they're awake to the fact that they're there for themselves and that they are designing their learning.”
EOS Mentor

“I never wanted to go to school before, now I get up early”
EOS Learner

“Oh, I get it now, I'm here for myself”
2011 EOS Learner

- ask selfdesigners to talk about SelfDesign.
- share their stories.
- testimonials say more than description.

- a compelling concept.
- bring it forward.

- provide users with a glimpse into the conversations that are taking place.
- encourage members to share stories with users - explore the nexus.
the spiral

- The spiral is a core symbol of selfdesign.
- It represents growth, change, natural progression, and harmony.
- It is used as a primary reference in the creation of selfdesign's models and philosophy.
- It is a beautiful construct that is ubiquitous in the natural world.
- It embodies growth.

expand on what works.

multiple paths

- The use of multiple paths expands on the symbol to embrace the notion of the other.
- Still metaphorical of opening and outward growth, it also symbolizes choice, and is inclusive of multiplicity.
- The depiction of multiple paths underscores a richness of opportunity, and the importance of individual choice.

the solitary path

- The spiral, as used in SelfDesign, represents the path of life - it is symbolic of the journey of life, from birth to death.
- If the spiral is seen as a motif of the human journey - the single spiral can also be seen as an unfolding of life along the path in a uniform progression, for each of us.
- The intention of this symbol is an expression of growth, unfolding and opening, however its singularity also speaks to linear progression, prescribed progression and constraint.
expand on the logo's spiral theme.
create movement. illustrate multiplicity.
expand on the logo’s spiral theme. create movement. illustrate multiplicity.

catch the wave?
choices

categorize
- categorize from users perspective.
  - create categories of information that are useful from a user's perspective.
  - categories need to speak to the chooser, not the choice maker.
  - shift frame of reference to the user's when articulating a choice to be made.

reduce complexity
- simplify complex processes.
- help users in choice making.
  - use progressive disclosure to help users work through complex choices.
  - shift frame of reference to the user's and see the choice framework from the outside looking in.

cut
- minimize choice overload where possible.
  - choice overload reduces:
    - engagement
    - quality of decision
    - satisfaction
SelfDesign Compass
(Our Purpose, Assumptions, Orientations, Tenets and Core Processes)

SelfDesign is a way of being
SelfDesign is a lifelong learning journey
SelfDesign is living enthusiasm into the world

SelfDesign offers opportunities for people of all ages to connect, learn and grow in freedom, unfolding their wisdom and potential.

Our Social Purpose
To offer children and adults, individually and in collaborative communities, ongoing opportunities for lifelong learning and living with conscious intention.

Our Economic Purpose
To grow and sustain the organizational, ecological, and financial health of SelfDesign to support the people with whom we connect and the communities where we learn and grow together.

Our Service & Product Purpose
To offer learning opportunities, resources, technological innovations, and services based on SelfDesign methodologies to assist people of all ages in realizing their human potential and personal goals.
In our SelfDesigning, we find the following assumptions, orientations, tenets, and processes to be worthwhile compass points on our life's journey.

Assumptions – values and beliefs
- As individuals, we learn optimally through spirals of discovery, introspection, integration and expression, following our own natural rhythms and personal developmental cycles.
- As family members, we live optimally in loving engagement, conversation, and mutual respect.
- As community members, we live optimally through co-inspirational activities and relationships that enrich and sustain the well-being of the group.
- As global citizens, we optimally work with nature to live elegantly within the web of living systems.
- Optimal learning and living contributes positively to the physical, emotional and spiritual health of individuals, families and communities.

Orientations – positions and views
- We recognize that both our direction and our manner of moving in that direction influence and shape our lives and relations with others.
- We orient ourselves in this present moment, understanding that our vision and our goals are future manifestations of our present self.
- We recognize that we have choices in how we frame our life, as well as how we view and describe our experiences.
- We live in a manner of love, co-creative, co-inspiration, accepting other perspectives and systems of meaning as legitimate.

re-write/edit text so that it is concise and meaningful to the users who are investing time to read.

*be brief.*

SelfDesign offers opportunities for people of all ages to connect, learn and grow in freedom, unfolding their wisdom and potential.

*distill.*

SelfDesigners connect, learn and grow for life

*be articulate.*

SelfDesign is a way of being?

*create clear and meaningful communication.*

SelfDesign is living enthusiasm into the world?
create common ground with language.

identify selfdesign as different from conventional education programs, articulate those differences, and express their value.

and...

in pursuit of that differentiation, use common language in a clear communication that expresses selfdesign’s unique learning programs and culture.

• simplify language.

• create clear communication.

• avoid invented terms.

• limit jargon.

• use language to create a shared space.
personalized learning

• clarify the value proposition for each audience
• express it in simple, clear terms
SelfDesign Brand Emotions (Current)

- Inclusive, a sense of belonging/connection, acceptance, supportive, feel recognized, understood, values alignment
- Centered on me, acknowledged just as I am, intimate/personal, meets my unique needs, strengthens my relationship to self

Valued/Affirmed
- Co-inspiring, collaborative, organic relationships within
- Natural gifts are nurtured, supported and shared to the betterment of all
- Supported in uncovering my life purpose
- Zen, comfortable environment
- Open, sense of space, clarity, nature inspired/organic, light, elegant and ecological
- Friendly, welcoming, non-judgemental
- Balanced and harmonizing energy
- Calm, relaxed, centered

At Ease
- Sound philosophy and methodology behind SelfDesign,
- Safe, trustworthy
- Conscious choice, responsible risk, investment in future, synchronistic, foundation for the future,

Reassured
- Dynamic, emergent, ever-changing, expectant, growth, fluid
- Different approach to learning
- Vital, life enriching, wellness, healthy
- Freedom to choose

Aspiration
- Enthusiasm, joy, playful
- Open-mind/open-heart, possibility, curiosity
- Learning as a lifelong endeavor, the curriculum is in your heart
- Sense of richness in understanding one's self, adventure,

Wonder
- Connectedness, co-inspiring, interdependent
- Values the intimacy of relationships and community
- Higher awareness of all I am relating to
- I am in the world and the world is in me
- Brings spirit into action
- Connects people together in trust
- Seeks our best understanding for ways of living in harmony and integrity

Agreement Based Relationship
- Values the intimacy of relationships and community
- Higher awareness of all I am relating to
- I am in the world and the world is in me
- Brings spirit into action

- Distill and articulate SelfDesign's brand values.
- Focus on those that differentiate SelfDesign.
use of images

- use images to good effect.
- use evocative images, that fuel the imagination.
- invite users to ‘picture’ themselves

image from SD website

while this type of image may be of historic importance and value, sharing it with users does little to engage them emotionally. in addition, it reflects an institution-centric perspective that is prevalent in the current communications, and one that distances users.

image as document...

image as impetus...
the rainbow/spectrum

- the rainbow or spectrum is used extensively in the depiction of SelfDesign models.
- it is symbolic of promise, among other things.
- it is essentially a spiritual symbol, and is rich with implication.
- it represents magic and a sense of an ideal or utopic vision.
- it can be seen as elemental - representative of the 4 elements, and symbolic of change and initiation.
- it can be seen as a bridge, when represented as an arc.
- in its use and adoption it is seen primarily in the gay community, and in hippie culture.

*the rainbow's use as a brand element is inconsistent*

bring it forward...

or make it recede.
• Use color as a strong brand element.

organic, light, elegant
vital, life enriching, wellness,
enthusiasm, joy, playful
dynamic, emergent, ever-changing,
open, sense of space, clarity
safe, trustworthy

colour can convey emotion better than words.
the mandala

- bring the mandala forward as a brand element.
- the mandala is a significant symbol in SelfDesign's models and philosophy.
- it could be used to good effect as a brand element.
SelfDesign
live life. learn.

- embrace change
- enable growth
- empower people
While undertaking this review, and working through the material and discovery process with the SelfDesign communications team, the Japanese concept of Shibumi came to mind, and I began to engage its principles through the review, and in creating this review document.

Shibumi could be translated as 'effortless perfection'. It implies a simplicity of spirit; an attitude of refinement without pretension, honesty without apology, beauty without artifice.

Shibumi favours simplicity, tranquility, and balance - harmony in action.

The quality of Shibumi evolves out of a process of engaging with complexity, though none of this complexity shows in the result. It is a valuable process when addressing particular design challenges.

When applied to design thinking, Shibumi can lead us to clear and simple solutions in complex spaces. When something has been designed well, it can have an understated, effortless beauty.

I found it valuable to consider the 7 principles...

Hanif Janmohamed, August 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 Shibumi Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>KOKO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>refrain from adding what is not absolutely necessary in the first place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KANSO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eliminate what doesn’t matter to make room for what does</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SHIZEN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incorporate naturally occurring patterns and rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YUGEN</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>limit information enough to pique curiosity and leave something to the imagination</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FUKINSEI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>leave room for co-creation and provide a platform for open innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DATSUYOKU</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>make an interruptive break a part of any breakthrough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEIJAKU</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>doing something isn’t always better than doing nothing</td>
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