

A Case for Color: Redesigning Our Color Branding

Why Does Color Matter?

"Color theory is a science and art unto itself, which some build entire careers on, as color consultants or sometimes brand consultants. Knowing the effects color has on a majority of people is an incredibly valuable expertise that designers can master and offer to their clients," (source).

It's no debate that UI design comes with a mountain of challenges and considerations, of which color is one small portion. Color surrounds us in multitudes of shades, hues, saturations, and intensities that we absorb on a subconscious level. The study of [Color Theory as a psychological discipline](#) has existed for years, but the implementation of color theory to business applications is relatively new. There are plenty of articles detailing the importance of color in advertising and brand design, and similarly, color bears great importance in UI/UX design and can make great page designs confusing or a delight to use.

Key benefits of good color design:

1. Increases readability (how easily people read copy content) and legibility (how quickly users distinguish letters in the typeface)
2. Maintains consistency
3. Creates a strong visual hierarchy
4. Helps navigation become clear and intuitive
5. Instills recognizability and brand familiarity within the different applications
6. Positively impacts mood and behavior

Even beyond improving the user's experience on the page, careful color choices provide great benefits for the business. Clear color palettes and implementation create patterns and pathways that the users subconsciously learn, in turn making them more efficient and productive workers.

(Further reading: 1. [Color Theory for Designers, Part 1: The Meaning of Color](#); 2. [All you need to know about colors in UI Design – theory & practice](#); 3. [How to use colors in UI Design](#); 4. [Color in Design: Influence on Users' Actions](#); 5. [Bright Colors in UI Design: Benefits and Drawbacks](#) ;)

Problems Found

We began to notice in our different designs across projects that there were some glaring inconsistencies in our color decisions. This became the reasoning for our decision to analyze our current color usage and make adjustments when needed. I was given the task of documenting every hex color code for all of the elements used across the different Sketch files we have in the UX team's Dropbox folders. Though I didn't get to every single file, it became clear early on that there were some confusing variants. Here, you can see some of the various shades that were used on different files.



Now that I had an understanding of what colors were being used, I began researching what colors are used in other enterprise applications and how much. I pulled inspiration from [Dribbble](#) and other [design inspiration](#) websites and used those as a framework. Working on this project in tandem with the notifications project has given me the chance to really think about what colors to focus on for the different notifications users might receive.

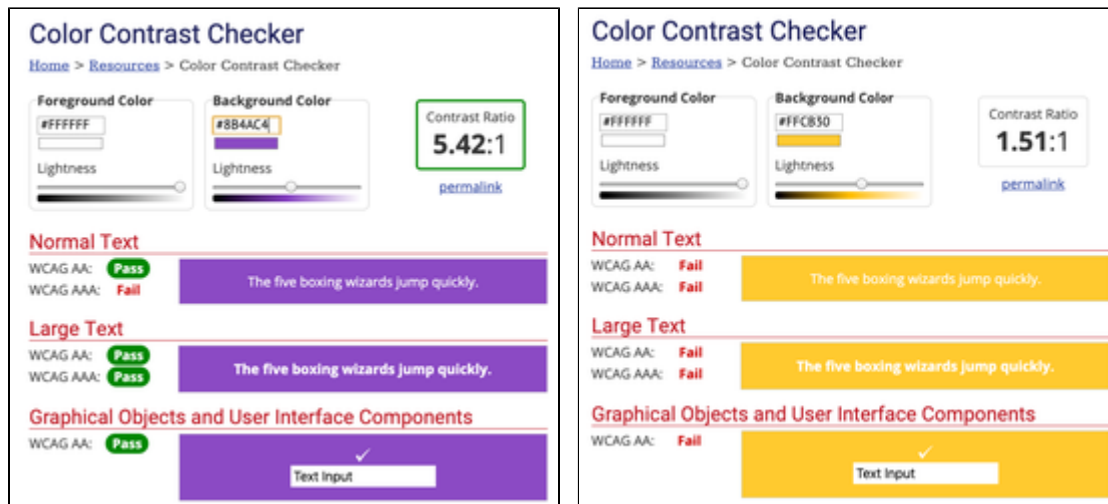
We were clearly already using a wide variety of colors in our designs, but we wanted to give the colors meaning and provide a standard for future designs.

Looking Forward and Solving Problems

Keeping Accessibility in Mind

Accessibility is a huge element of UI and UX design, and by extension, plays a big role in color decisions. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has released a range of recommendations for designing more accessible Web content, called the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The recommendations are designed to "make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these".

WebAIM's [contrast checker tool](#) was what we used primarily in making sure that the text is readable atop the background color. The WCAG Level AA requires a minimum contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text. All of our proposed color combinations meet the Level AA requirements.



We kept accessibility in mind with every color choice, whether it was call-to-action buttons and column headers or hovers and table fill highlights.

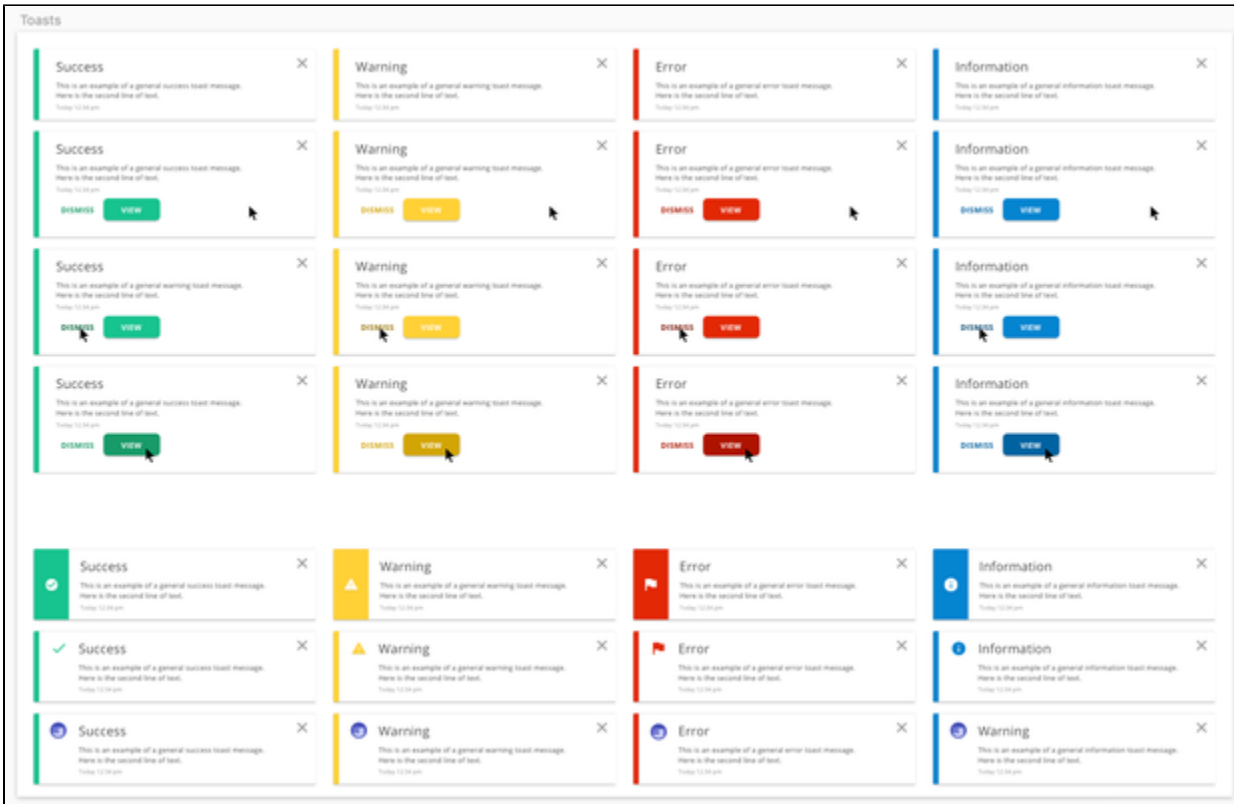
(Full W3C Accessibility Guidelines detailed [here](#))

Creating Meaning

A big problem we wanted to solve in our color redesigns is the problem of haphazard or meaningless color use. Having too many unnecessary colors on a page distracts the user and makes page navigation needlessly difficult. Some of our applications, like Log Management, simply need more color on the page than other applications to group different items. Rather than remove the different colors that the users need, we adjusted the colors and assigned meaning to them. For example, all error messages are coded red and all errors are colored yellow-orange.

Removing unnecessary colors	Intentional color changes
<p>We chose to remove the blue gradient on the stepper items that was distracting from the table and instead use one color to signal to the user which daypart they are looking at.</p>	<p>For this screen, we tried to make the errors and warnings easy to find in this very large table. The fully saturated cell fills draw attention immediately without filling the entire page with too much confusing color. The selected row highlight is a fairly neutral blue that matches the blue from the daypart stepper, and the checkboxes, lock icon colors, and table headers are all in the family of the iHeart Violet of the navigation bar.</p>

For the notifications project, I decided on colors that adhered to conventions and could easily communicate the nature of the notification to the user without having to read too much. Below are some explorations of different notification toast messages with minimal but intentional color choices. Though these didn't make it to production, they are still helpful examples of meaningful color choices.



Final Color Decisions

Branding Colors



Primary Colors



Secondary Colors



iHeart Blue
#4C84FE



iHeart Midnight
#10197F



iHeart Violet
#3B44AD

Application Colors

ACTION BLUE



#4C84FE



#A5C1FE



#DBE6FF

BILLING



#27AE60



#79DEA4

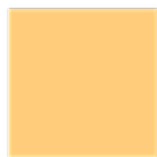


#DAFEEA

ENTERPRISE COPY



#FF9A00



#FFCC7B

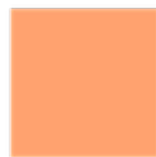


#FFE6BE

LOG MANAGEMENT



#FF5900



#FFA26F



#FFE0D0

ORDER MANAGEMENT



#007ACE



#7CBDE8



#DAF0FF

UNIFIED PROPOSAL



#3B44AD



#7E8DE1



#EAEDFF



#10197F

Highlight and Hover Colors

General Hover

#F6F9FF

#FFD0CB	#D3F9D8
#FFD7E7	#E9FAC8
#FFCDE4	#D9F7BE
#FFC1CC	#D2F2A1

#D1C7FD	#E9E3E3
#E7C9FF	#D3D0CD
#E0D4FF	#D0DBDB
#EDDAFF	#D4D7CC

Table Header Fills

#4556B3
#5161BD
#6878D1
#7E8DE1

Notification Colors

		Incomplete	#737373	#575656
		Assistance	#8B4AC4	#66249F
		Information	#0779CA	#015896
		Approve/clear	#17BC85	#17905D
		Warning	#FFCB30	#CD9B08
		Error/rejection	#DE230B	#A51300