

A Level Product Design at Plymouth High School



Yr11 into Yr12 summer transition task:

Product Design Summer Project

Coursework Context:

Design thinking is concerned with **solving problems** through **design**. The idea **being** that the future output of the process will provide a better answer than the one already available or if nothing is available – something entirely new.

For your first project in Year 12 we will be working with Block Design, a company which makes innovative, beautiful products for creative living.

They want you to design a product as part of a solution to a problem, which can be sold by their company. This means your product must sit inline with their previous items.

Task 1:

Research Block Design so as you are able to identify the types of products that they make and who their customer base is. A brand manual is attached to help you with this.

Present your research on a Powerpoint slide. Make sure to outline your thoughts and ideas throughout.

Block company - mood board

It seems that Block are trying to appeal to young professionals (20-30 age range). This age range is very aware of their aesthetic and are possibly more aware of the image they are putting out of themselves to the world than ever before. This is due to the heightened role that social media takes in our lives, where we see extensively into people's personal lives. On their website, it shows that Block is buying into this social media age, as they urge customers to tag them in posts. This shows that they are aware of the fact that if you are visible on social media, you are going to get a lot more exposure.

Customer profile:

- Age range will probably be around 20-35
- A lot of people who buy Block's products will be working executive office jobs or work from home.
- They will be very social and be aware of the image they are putting out to the world of themselves
- Trends will influence this demographic a lot, as they will want to keep relevant.
- People who live in bigger, more metropolitan cities (London, Paris etc) will probably be more drawn to this, as they will be more aware of popular culture than people who live in more rural areas.
- In the Block company profile, it states under the label 'specific' that people like the Bombas, who is quite an alternative artist. This will be more 'cool' to their social circle than more mainstream, pop artists.
- This age group living this sort of lifestyle will be unlikely to have children, so will have disposable income to spend on these kind of products.

According to Block's website, "colour is integral" to their collection. This will appeal to their target market, as it sets out a particular desirable image to the people they associate with. Looking at their products, it seems that they are sleek, simple and serve an obvious purpose. Many young adults are going to be living in flats or apartments and have limited space. Block's products serve this purpose as they make their products as simple as possible. The target market is also going to be more likely than older people to work from home, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that they need stationary and desk items to help organise their work and home lives, which are happening in the same space. Something else I have noticed about their products is that they are quite minimalist, which will also help with reducing clutter in a home office set-up. In fact, Block's slogan is "A tidy desk, a tidy mind", this shows that they are in tune to what their customer will need.

They make their products in their own workshop, which will reduce the carbon footprint of the place and will make it feel more personal. Many young adults really care about the environment and want to do their part in reversing climate change. This demographic are likely to have attended at least one protest or march in response to a social issue.

Block only works with independent retailers, such as Paper Tiger. This is a paper shop in Paris. Mini city books are popular with the millennial demographic, so they are likely to come across this shop. This age group is also more likely to shop in independent retailers, as they want a more personal feel to their purchases.

After taking a glance at their website, it is clear that Block products are well made, so will be worth the money, as most of their products are under \$100. The reviews here are from the Letter Block (#12), and they all say how thrilled they were with the product.

They also stock at museums and galleries, such as the Tate Modern. This young generation that Block are appealing to commonly attend exhibitions, so this is a good place to sell their products.

Buy less, choose well, make it last.

In regards to the price range, it looks initially like Block's products are quite expensive. However, the popular millennial slogan "Buy less, choose better, make it last" most commonly applied to clothing, is also being integrated into the shopping habits of young adults when they are buying any form of item. Vivienne Westwood first popularised this when she began to slowly transform her company to become more sustainable. This means that they are more likely to pay slightly more than average for an item if they know it is going to last a long time and is going to be a worthy investment. The Block product pictured above is an example of making something last. It is a vase that can be used either way, therefore eliminating the mess and reducing waste. This item will cost you £38, which I think is not too bad for two glass vases in one.

Task 2:

Explore potential problems. You may also want to consider growing trends for products in the market to help you to identify a product which will be needed in the future.

A good example of this would be Block Designs vase which has been designed to hold both a single stem flower as well as a bunch so as that the vase can continue to be used as flowers die or wilt simply swapping the vase around.

Remember that simple solutions are usually the best ones in this case.

You may want to present this on another slide in the form of a mind map.

Task 3

Choose your problem.

Do some further research:

Are there any products which are already in place for this problem?

On your return we will have a meeting with Tara, the owner of Block Design, who will give you a bigger insight into her company and discuss your ideas with you before we begin the design stage.

Any questions regarding this work please do contact Miss Westaway at g.westaway@tsatrust.org.uk.