DYNACRAFT — CO-BRANDED BRAND

PROBLEM

BEGINNINGS

Gaining market share and visibility is a tricky situation to start. How does a company that primarily works with licensed brands make a true name for their own in-house lines? Surely you don't want to overstep any working relationship ...but at the same time, growth kind of matters, just a bit.

The answer is...you bring them along with you.

During my time at Dynacraft, a bike and electric ride-on manufacturer located in the Northern California wine country city of American Canyon (complete with their own vineyard out front), this problem was posed to me. The company was looking to heighten their own lines of products, but didn't want to alienate the licensors they had fostered strong, and critical, relationships with. So with that, they devised a co-branded package, replete with the look and feel of them and their licensors, both shown front and center. Their creative director and upper management had already come to the solution upon my arrival at the company, but didn't yet know what that would look like. Bits and pieces of ideas floated around, but they needed concrete design foundation to expand the brand and make it seem like a viable option.

Cause here was the rub: none of the licensors had agreed to it.

Bold, you say? You would not be far from the truth I'd respond! The company had not approached any of their licensors with this idea, opting to try and come up with a solid design first that they could then bring to the table and make a case for its usage, the idea being that suggesting a co-branded package for the products would create consistency in the aisles and elevating Dynacraft as a brand would give strength that the product was quality and that would in turn further elevate any licensors as well. The veritable symbiotic relationship between a clownfish and a sea anemone if you will. Minus the poison tendrils.

But of course there just had to be one other, teensy, weensie, ever so small, barely noticeable, tinier than the last speck of food the Grinch stole from the Whos that was even too small for a mouse problem: Dynacraft was going through a rebrand...and it wasn't done.

So my task, should I choose to accept it, was this: finish an incomplete brand while an outside agency worked on it concurrently, develop a co-branded package that could be shopped around to licensors including the likes of Sanrio, Disney, Illumination, Marvel and Mattel (left that part out earlier, didn't I?) and then set a brand guideline standard that could be rolled out to the entire design department for adoption.

No big, right?

STARTING POINT

So what was I working with? Well, as I'm sure you guessed, a lot of disparate brands. Companies like Sanrio and Disney have well-established guidelines for their individual brands with their own looks and styles. Dynacraft had several of their own lines, including Avigo and Next which were aimed at their own demographics and all of that had to be reined in like the wild stallions they were and merged into one super horse.

To the left you can see some of the existing work that included both full color printed boxes and basic kraft boxes that could be found on shelves. But as well, you will also notice that the word "Dynacraft" is basically nowhere to be seen (at least not easily) on any of these packages. For years the company had opted to create their own set of individual brands rather than utilize one main one to sell their product. This resulted in it appearing as though there were many competitors on the shelves and diluted the strength of one main brand. They were, in fact, competing with themselves.

A selection of existing product packaging.

APPROACH

PUZZLE PIECES

Taking stock of all the pieces I had at my fingertips, I began with sorting them all into their components. The new Dynacraft brand, while incomplete, had a logo, a few textures and some color swatches, though it lacked font choices as well as background patterns, illustrations, and standards for how to use, extend and apply the brand. But that was a starting point.

One of the pieces that had been selected by the creative director to be used in the brand was an image of what they termed "scaffolding." This stock photo would add texture and edge to their packaging and be a foundation of the Dynacraft brand as well. But it was a basic raster image and I think we all know how well that can work over time. My first task was translating it into a vector illustration that could be scaled up infinitely with no loss to quality. It was from this illustration I could build the brand from, selecting color palettes, font choices, and additional imagery and designs for use.

The original stock image of "scaffolding" that the Dynacraft brand was built from.

The resulting vector illustration.

BRAND SETUP

BUILD IT OUT

You may be asking yourself, "Sean, an agency was working on doing the actual branding for the company; why not wait for that to get finished and approve and then work on the packaging from there?" First and foremost: I love your semicolon use. Second, timelines became an issue. The company needed to get licensors onboard in order to have a chance a getting product out with the new branding by a critical time: the holiday season.

So how much had the agency done? The new logo and a couple special use variations as well as horizontal and vertical options. It was a start for sure, but it wasn't enough. But I had the scaffolding and the logos so that was at least a heading in the right direction for the style the company was looking for.

TWO COLOR

SINGLE COLOR

WHITE

The lockups done for Dynacraft by an outside agency.

MINIMUM LOGO SIZE

1" WIDE

MINIMUM CLEAR SPACE

X = 1/2 the height of the logo

FONTOGRAPHY (NOT A WORD)

TYPE IT UP

Selecting a typeface to represent a brand is no small task. Well, I mean it is basically just thumbing through fonts till you find one that fits but still. Thought process! Obviously more goes into it that just scrolling page after page of fonts until you land on the right one (or get tired of it and just go, "Good enough," and pick the next one you see).

With Dynacraft, they marketed their products to numerous segments: boys and girls in the 5-8 demographic, the children's 8-12. women's 12-16, 18-24, 24-30, men's all of those ones too! And with their goal of expanding their market and catering to new audience groups (*insert shameless plug here for my product design and development of a girls-specific princess carriage electric ride-on vehicle,* previously girls only had pink colored models that were initially designed for boys), their reach was going to be wide.

This led to the selection of Gotham and DIN, as they would be good standard bearers for the company without leaning one way too much, though with Gotham, there would be extra tracking for readability and presence. DIN would add to it without detracting, giving solid usage for subheaders, providing just enough variance to add extra depth, but nothing so over the top it would take away from Gotham. More often than not, bike graphics were very over the top so the brand itself needed to be more subdued so they didn't compete, but work in tandem.

PRIMARY TYPEFACE

GOTHAM
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh
Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp
Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx
Yy Zz 1234567890

SECONDARY TYPEFACE

DIN
Ab Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr
Ss Tt UuVv Ww Xx Yy Zz
1234567890

The fonts and their examples selected for the brand.

AND NOW FOR DIGITAL

With Dynacraft's renewed focus on digital marketing and sales, driven by user research and analytics done by the company, it became necessary to select web-only typefaces that would carry the brand online and not lose the overall feel of sleekness and cutting edge. Source Sans Pro coupled with Roboto Condensed fit the bill nicely, with Arial taking the default setting should any user not have access to the other fonts. Because at the end of the day, one must think further than just the optimal to make sure all of their customers have equal access to the site.

PRIMARY TYPEFACE

SOURCE SANS PRO
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii
Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
1234567890

DEFAULT TYPEFACE

ARIAL
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh
Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp
Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx
Yy Zz 1234567890

Digital only fonts that were picked.

SECONDARY TYPEFACE

ROBOTO CONDENSED
Ab Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
1234567890

FORMATTING

PRINT FORMATTING

HEADLINE

SUBHEADLINE

Ides Tus et eti fat, cononum teridem hilicuperum tam se quam ut vit vis verir acta, nostimp erehebem ocae ad crid culintis

– CONEROBUS ET NICA NOCTUM IAM QUE REST

– AN TELA REBAT PORTEM MANDAM AD INATIS HABUS

HEADLINES
- GOTHAM BLACK
- CAPS

SUB-HEADLINES
- GOTHAM MEDIUM
- CAPS

BODY COPY
- GOTHAM MEDIUM
- SENTENCE CASE

SUPPORTING COPY
- DIN MEDIUM
- CAPS

WEB FORMATTING

HEADLINE

SUBHEADLINE

Ides Tus et eti fat, cononum teridem hilicuperum tam se quam ut vit vis verir acta, nostimp erehebem ocae ad crid culintis conerobus, et et, nica noctum iam que rest? An tela rebat portem mandam. Ad inatis habus hicauciam inerferio.

HEADLINES
- SOURCE SANS PRO BLACK
- CAPS

SUB-HEADLINES
- SOURCE SANS PRO SEMIBOLD
- CAPS

BODY COPY
- SOURCE SANS PRO REGULAR
- SENTENCE CASE

BUTTON COPY

SUPPORTING COPY (BUTTONS, LEGAL, ETC.)
- ROBOTO CONDENSED BOLD
- CAPS

Instructional formatting for both print and web usage.

ADD IN SOME COLOR

Dynacraft's new color system would largely take inspiration from it's old one: namely they used red and black. Were there old brand guidelines? Probably best if we not mention that. The agency that did the initial design had picked out some color for their new red and now grey as well as a gloss and chrome setup to mimic what was used in the new version of the logo.

Adding in some secondary color for pops that would highlight the excitement and action-oriented feelings that often came with bicycle riding was the thought process. It is a fun and sporty brand after all, why not add in some brightness to balance it out when the opportunity arises!
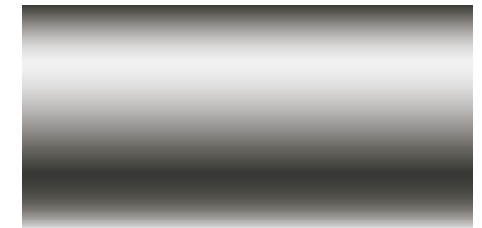
DYNACRAFT RED
C 12 M 100 Y 92 K 03
R 207 G 32 B 46
PMS 186C

DYNACRAFT GREY
C 68 M 60 Y 65 K 55
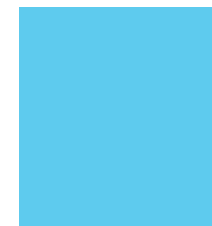R 056 G 057 B 053
PMS 447C

DYNACRAFT RED GLOSS

DYNACRAFT CHROME

C 60 M 00 Y 100 K 00
R 083 G 221 B 068
PMS 360C

C 55 M 00 Y 03 K 00
R 028 G 188 B 238
PMS 305C

C 100 M 75 Y 00 K 10
R 000 G 000 B 255
PMS 286C

C 05 M 05 Y 100 K 00
R 252 G 237 B 033
PMS 108C

The color palette for Dynacraft's .new brand

WRAPPED UP WITH A BOW

The real trick was the packaging. This was the single most visible part of the brand. The spotlight shown on this, it had to stand out in an aisle and it had to be strong enough that licensors would hop on it and agree to sharing the packaging real estate with Dynacraft.

So totally chill, right?

Utilizing the scaffolding I had created along with the new type and logo standards, I set about creating a left and right panel to hug the center which would be occupied by either one of Dynacraft's in-house styles, or a licesned one. Mirroring the angles in the scaffolding on the left side panel honed in on the sharp look while adding a hint of gradient inlay furthered the three-dimensional feel that the logo started. Adding in appropriate safety notices (always wear a helmet, kiddies!) and age requirements made the right panel more than just a tacked on addition. This would set a standard we could really build from and expand the new, revitalized brand.

PACKAGING DETAILING

SIDE PANEL DETAILS

- Dynacraft logo aligned with headline text

- Headline bars should extend to edge of left panel
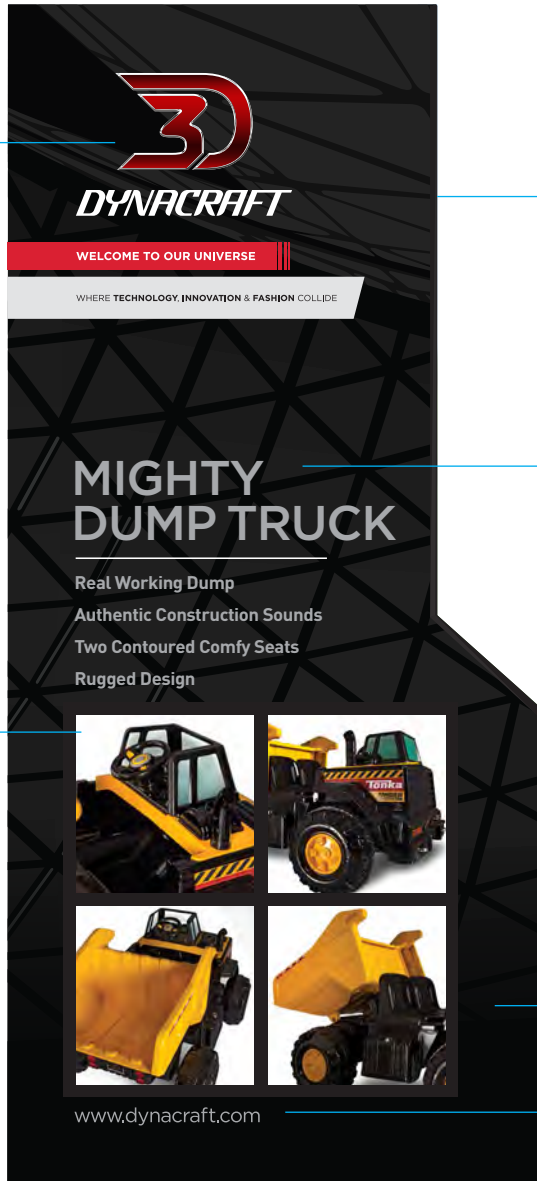
- 4 detail shots are arranged on a solid black background

- Detail shots can be combined to form one main image, two horizontal or vertical images, or a mix of one horizontal or vertical image with two square shots

- A bevel element is nested on the right edge

- Angle of bevel edge is approximately 138˚

- 40% all caps Black text in Gotham font for headline text

- Subheader text is DIN Pro Bold font

- Stroke should be noticeably thin

- Header to Subheader text is a 3:1 size ratio

- Leading for Header text is 1:1 while Subheader is 1:1.25

- Vector Scaffolding is used for background image

- Dynacraft website address is left aligned at bottom

- Icons detailing product restrictions in top section

- Icon Text is C:36 M:28 Y:27 K:0

- Icon Box is C:68 M:62 Y:58 K:46

- Vector scaffolding used as background

- A bevel is used on left

- Warnings are done in White, no stroke

- Model information is 40% Black

The side panel details for what would now be co-branded packaging.

PACKAGING EXAMPLES

Packaging samples for the new co-branded boxes.

Packaging samples for the new co-branded boxes. Notice this one has the right panel removed as an option should it arise.

PACKAGING EXAMPLES

Packaging samples for the new co-branded boxes with Illumination content.

AND NOW FOR THE CURTAIN...

THE END MUST COME

Having built the packaging, the rest of the brand come together fast: I knocked out usage dos and don'ts, added in photography styles and had alternative looks shown for appropriate styles.

But wait Sean, what about the licensors? That was the whole point of this.

Well dear reader...they went for it. Getting Mattel onboard first allowed us to leverage cooperation to have Disney and Illumination as well as Sanrio agree to the co-branded packaging. It was a win-win all around. Branding looked consistent across the board and using a similar style for all of the new products allowed us to tell the customer that they could expect the same level of quality with whatever product of ours they purchased (*cough Princess Carriage cough*). It also allowed Dynacraft to gain new visibility and market share for their products and in-house brands. Not a bad thing at the end of the day.

So now we close this chapter and look back and say, "Grab your helmets and lets go ride everyone!"
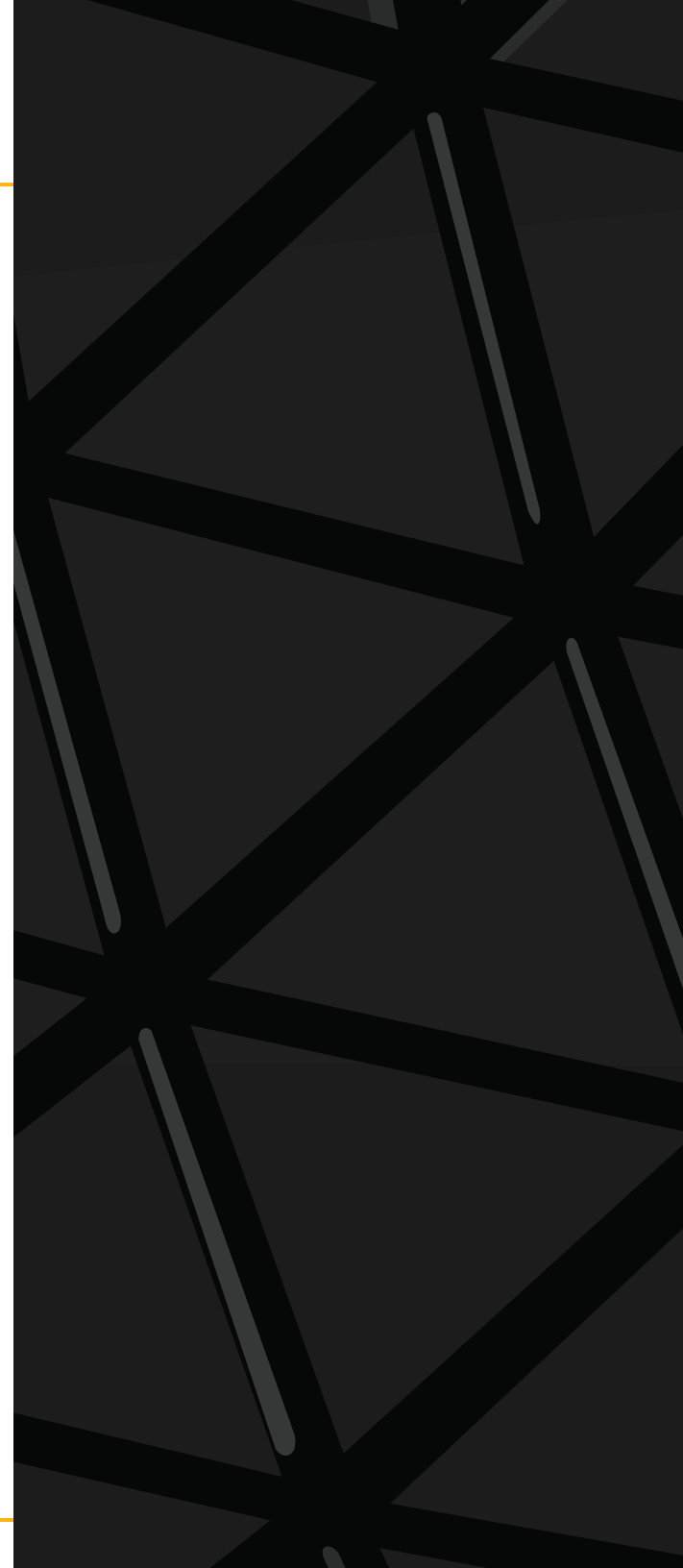
THANKS FOR READING (HOPE IT WASN'T TOOOOOOO BORING)