

A person with long dark hair is seen from the back, holding a cold, condensation-covered beer bottle. The scene is set against a warm, golden sunset sky. The top of the image features a yellow banner with the title text, and a blue banner on the left side with a tree silhouette.

THE HOW TO'S OF CRAFT BEER DESIGN

A DesignBro Guide

"IT'S A LOT HARDER TO SELL GOOD
BEER IN BAD PACKAGING THAN IT IS
TO SELL BAD BEER IN GOOD PACKAGING."



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THE INTRODUCTION

As the craft beer industry grows beyond expectations, and enthusiasts around the world take a swig of a brand new beer, craft brewers struggle to find the upper-hand. With so many new competitors, how do you stand out, and make sure people are rating your beer, and not your competitor's on Untappd?

The craft beer industry is growing at enormous rates. Every day, new brewers pop up around the world, ready to take the craft beer sector by a storm. But, as the industry becomes more cluttered, making your beer stand out can be a challenge. This is where design comes in.

Of course, making a great beer should be your starting place. But if no one picks it off the shelf and tastes it, it won't make the cut. The way your bottle looks is your first impression, and it needs to stand out.

The reality is that the craft beer world has a long and interesting history with design. At the beginning, craft brewers had a tendency to ask someone local, think a friend or an artist, to do their packaging for them. Mostly, this was done to save money, and because the design wasn't the priority. This tendency, however, had unseen consequences. It led to highly creative and unusual design. In a twist of luck, this is exactly what customers were looking for. Early on craft beer enthusiasts sought out something completely different than the hundredth lager beer that tasted the same. The design of craft beer was so out of the norm, that it pulled them in.

However, as the craft beer world becomes bigger and bigger, this advantage in design is slowly becoming its own downside. With hundreds of craft beers populating the shelves in stores, the very unique, different, and creative packaging sometimes get lost in the overcrowded shelf.

Today, the craft beer industry proves to be a playground for designers - where there are none of the usual limitations, and creativity is key. But finding the best way to stand out amidst so many unique designs becomes a challenge, and a problem, for craft brewers.

In spite of the challenging nature of developing the right design, it should be a focus for craft brewers. A recent Nielsen Study found that two thirds of American craft beer buyers say a beer's packaging is "very" or "extremely" important. Clearly, craft brewers should not underestimate the power of persuasive packaging.

So, how can you do it right? Take a look through this guide and we'll point you in the right direction.



STEP ONE: OUTLINE YOUR GOALS

Before you go off on a search for your new design, it's best to outline your goals, and expectations. Getting the right design can be a lengthy, complicated, and confusing process (depending on how you do it), so before delving in - you need to set your priorities straight, and not lose sight of your final goals.

If you sit down and answer the following questions, it's likely you'll have a better understanding of what you're looking for, and will be better equipped at deciding which route to take.

ONE

WHAT ARE YOUR DESIGN NEEDS?

The reality is that a craft brewers' design needs can be varied and extensive. Whether it be packaging or logo design, think about what you require, and which are your main priorities.

TWO

WHAT QUALITY DO YOU REQUIRE?

There's a million options for getting your design needs fulfilled, but quality is constantly going to be something to consider. So, sit down and decide what level of quality you require.

THREE

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SPEND?

Take a look at your overall budget and decide how much you're willing to put into your design needs. Be realistic and set a clear standard, so you avoid going over budget throughout the process.

FOUR

WHAT SHOULD YOUR DESIGNS ACCOMPLISH?

Think about what you want your designs to accomplish for your brand, and this will help clear up how great your designs need to be. You might want to think contextually about the overall company goals, and determine how design will play into these.



STEP TWO: CREATE A BRIEFING

A briefing is the first, and arguably one of the most important steps, in getting your design made. In this step, you figure out the details of what you're looking for from the person who will help make your design a reality. So, doing it thoroughly and clearly can make sure you won't spend hours trying to fix designs later on. Take the time to do it well. The following things go into creating a briefing.

1. FIGURE OUT YOUR STORY

Any decent design tells the customer a story, and it should be the brand's story. Your design needs to communicate who your brand is, and why the customer should care. So, figuring out your brewery's story is the first step.

2. DEFINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

The design needs to attract your customers, and get them to pick the bottle over any other. For this, you need to understand who your audience is.

3. ANALYZE YOUR COMPETITORS

An understanding of your competitors helps contextualize the environment your design will be in, and can serve as inspiration, whether good or bad.

4. FIND INSPIRATION

Searching for inspiration can prove a powerful tool in narrowing down the style you are looking for in your own design.

5. PINPOINT REQUIREMENTS

You need to communicate your needs in terms of the design with clarity to whoever you are working with. So, think about what you require and detail this.



FIGURING OUT YOUR STORY

Whatever designs you choose, needs to represent your brand. And, at the end of the day, every good design tells a story. So, figure out your brand's story so your design can represent it - the right way.

But, how do you figure out your brand's story?

Filling out the following form may help you clarify your brand's story.

1. HOW DID YOUR COMPANY COME TO BE?	SERIOUS	1	2	3	4	5	PLAYFUL
	BOLD	1	2	3	4	5	REFINED
2. WHAT IS YOUR COMPANY'S HISTORY?	HANDCRAFTED	1	2	3	4	5	MINIMALIST
	TRADITIONAL	1	2	3	4	5	MODERN
3. WHAT ARE YOUR COMPANY'S GOALS?	VALUE	1	2	3	4	5	PREMIUM
	DETAILED	1	2	3	4	5	CLEAN
4. WHAT THREE WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR BRAND?	STANDS OUT	1	2	3	4	5	FITS IN
	SEEMS 100 YRS. OLD	1	2	3	4	5	START-UP

DEFINING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Defining your target audience is one of the most vital steps in building a successful business. Your design needs to attract your ideal customer, and they need to be able to relate to it. Which means you need to know who they are.

It might be helpful to begin thinking about your target audience as one person. So, with that in mind - below is a template for your ideal customer.



DEMOGRAPHICS

1. HOW OLD ARE THEY?
2. WHAT GENDER?
3. WHAT'S THEIR RELATIONSHIP STATUS?
4. WHERE DO THEY LIVE?
5. WHAT IS THEIR OCCUPATION?
6. HOW MUCH MONEY DO THEY MAKE?
7. WHAT IS THEIR EDUCATION LEVEL?

BEHAVIOR

1. HOW DO THEY CHOOSE WHICH PRODUCTS TO BUY?
2. HOW DO THEY INTERACT WITH BRANDS?
3. WHAT KIND OF SHOPPERS ARE THEY?

PAIN POINTS

1. WHAT ARE THEIR MAIN PROBLEMS (THAT YOU CAN HELP SOLVE)?
2. WHAT ISSUES DO THEY FACE WHEN MAKING PURCHASES?

GOALS

1. WHAT DO THEY WANT?
2. WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

COMMUNICATIONS

1. HOW DO THEY MAKE THEIR PURCHASES?
2. WHERE DO THEY MAKE THEIR PURCHASES?
3. WHERE DO THEY SPEND THEIR TIME (ONLINE AND OFFLINE)?
4. WHO DO THEY LISTEN TO?

MOTIVATIONS

1. WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO MAKE THEIR DECISIONS?
2. WHAT DIFFERENT TACTICS, IN TERMS OF MARKETING, PROVE EFFICIENT WITH THEM?
3. WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO CHOOSE YOUR DRINK OVER ANOTHER?

Tips & Tricks

1. FOCUS

You don't need to think about how they purchase all their products, or how they choose which toilet paper to buy. Focus on how they choose which craft beer to drink, why they're interested in craft beer, and similar aspects relevant to what you're doing.

2. GO BEYOND

This template is a useful tool in getting you to begin thinking about your ideal customer, but you shouldn't limit yourself. If you think of other relevant facts - include them. Anything that helps you understand them better is worth including.

3. THINK CRITICALLY

Don't answer questions like "what motivates them to make their decisions" with simplistic explanations like "they're thirsty." Think more in depth. Why do they choose to buy craft beer instead of Heineken? Why do they choose to buy beer at all? When do they choose a different drink? And why do they make a different decision in those moments? You need to understand your customer profoundly, not superficially.

ANALYZING YOUR COMPETITORS



Your competitors are going to be sitting right next to your beer on the shelf. Your customers will be glancing from their drink, to yours, and back again. In the end, you want them to pick up yours and take it home. To make sure this happens, you have to know who's going to be your main competition. Learn who they are, what they look like, and how you can get the upper-hand.

Finding your competitors can be tricky, but we've provided some tips to finding your competitors.

Once you have figured out who your competitors are, there are three questions you should ask yourself.

ONE

**WHY HAVE THEY CHOSEN
THE LOOK THEY HAVE
FOR THEIR BEER?**

TWO

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE
ABOUT THEIR DESIGN?**

THREE

**WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE
ABOUT THEIR DESIGN?**

Use your competitors as a sort of inspiration. Analyze their choices, to make informed decisions of your own. Think critically about what might have led them towards certain designs, you'll find some of their reasoning might be useful in your own process.

FINDING YOUR COMPETITORS

GOOGLE

Act like a customer looking for a beer like yours, and see what comes up on Google. The options you're faced with are, most likely, your competitors. Evaluate which are most similar to your company, and could pose the greatest issues. This will help you get a clearer picture of your industry.

CUSTOMERS

Talk to your customers and ask them questions. Doing this can give you a better idea of who you're competing with and, even more so, why. You could also take the opportunity to get a closer look at what your customer is like and what they look for in craft beers.

TOOLS

A quick search of "competitor research" will bring up a variety of tools to help identify your competitors. It's an important part of making a big impact in the industry, and could be useful beyond your design. Take the time to do the right competitor research, and use the tools available to you.

FINDING INSPIRATION

Try researching some designs, to see what you're into and what really isn't your style. That way you actually have a clearer vision when you get down to the designing part. We've collected some of the best craft beer designs we could find, to help give you some ideas.

Go through them and rate them, consider adding some justification for your rating as well. Try to pinpoint what about a design makes it great, or not so great. If you go through this process, you're much more likely to understand what type of design will work for your brand, and which styles won't.

Below, our rating system and some questions to get you thinking about the design.

RATE EACH DESIGN FROM 1 TO 10, BEING HONEST. CONSIDER THE LIKELIHOOD THAT YOU WOULD PICK IT UP FROM THE SHELF.

1. IS IT TOO COMPLICATED, OR TOO SIMPLE?
2. IS IT TOO COLORFUL, OR NOT COLORFUL ENOUGH?
3. DO YOU LIKE THE TYPOGRAPHY USED?
4. IF THERE IS VISUAL IMAGERY PRESENT, IS IT SOMETHING YOU APPRECIATE OR NO?
5. IS THERE ENOUGH INFORMATION ON THE BOTTLE FOR YOUR TASTE, OR NO?
6. IF YOU KNOW THE BREWERY, DOES THE DESIGN REFLECT IT WELL OR NOT? WHY OR WHY NOT?
7. DO YOU LIKE THE TONE OF THE DESIGN (THINK HUMOROUS, QUIRKY OR SERIOUS AND SOPHISTICATED)?





GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10



GRADE: /10

PINPOINTING REQUIREMENTS

Think critically about what needs to be on the packaging, and communicate that well.

Every design is different, and every brand, brewery, or company, requires different things to be incorporated or excluded from the design. It's important you figure out what you need from your design so you can communicate this at the beginning, and not after the designer has already put in work.

We've developed some questions so you can ensure you cover all your bases:

- 1. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT NEEDS TO BE WRITTEN ON THE PACKAGING?**
- 2. DO YOU HAVE CERTAIN COLORS IN MIND THAT YOU WANT TO BE A PART OF THE DESIGN?**
- 3. DO YOU HAVE A CERTAIN SYMBOL, OR LOGO THAT YOU WANT INCLUDED?**
- 4. ARE THERE PARTICULAR ASPECTS OR STYLES THAT YOU WANT INCLUDED OR AVOIDED IN THE DESIGN?**



THE CONTAINER: BOTTLES VERSUS CANS

There's a considerable debate regarding whether to use bottles or cans in the craft beer industry. It's up to you to decide. Here's some things you can take into account.

There's a lot of different things to take into account to decide whether to use beers or cans. Debates rage on in the community about which is best, but the reality is that this is up to you. Each brewery is different, and while a bottle may be best for you - that may differ for someone else.

In spite of this, there are things you can ask yourself to decide which one you're going to go for.



1. PORTABILITY

Figuring out how to transport your beers can be challenging, and could influence your decision between beers versus cans. Going for cans (which are lighter) may facilitate your options in terms of portability.

2. SUSTAINABILITY

Fun fact! Having your brand commit to environmentally healthy business practices could be a big plus for you, and for the environment! Consider whether this is something you want to invest in or not, as it could sway whether you go for cans or bottles, since cans are far more recyclable than bottles.

3. CONTEXT

Put some thought into when and where your beer will be used. Is it more of a summer beer for outside, or is it for nights in? Knowing this may help you decide between bottles or cans, since each is better suited for distinct occasions.

4. BRANDING

A can expresses a different brand to a bottle. The container itself already says something about the personality of the brand. For example, a bottle has a more traditional look, alluding to a more cultured brand. Think about which container is more in line with the nature of your brewery's branding. This might be one of the most important things to consider when choosing which container to go for, so think about it thoroughly, and critically.

5. PROTECTION

Cans are a much better choice in terms of keeping beer from getting oxidized. In this way, they offer better protection than bottles. Consider how much this matters to you before choosing which container to adopt.

6. BREWING TECHNIQUE

Certain brewing techniques require the use of a bottle instead of a can. If this is the case for you, then the bottles vs. cans debate isn't particularly challenging or relevant for your case.

FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES

There are beer labeling requirements in most countries, which limits what you're allowed to include, and highlights what you must exclude, on the design. Make sure your final design follows the guidelines of your country, and that you figure out who to get the label approved in the right way. Some quick research should help you navigate your way, but just remember that checking with the guidelines should definitely be on your to do list, and with a little star right next to it. Below are some possible guideline requirements you might run across. Note that there is a lot more you might encounter during the process, this is just to give you an idea.

POSSIBLE GUIDELINE REQUIREMENTS TO CONSIDER:

1. HEALTH WARNING
2. DECLARATION OF VOLUME AND ALCOHOL CONTENT
3. LANGUAGE
4. FONT SIZE
5. DECLARATION OF ORIGIN
6. INGREDIENTS



GET OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

Make sure you include everything you require for the design in the briefing, and not afterwards in the advice. Your briefing should be complete enough for designers to present a decent design from the beginning. Communicate well from the beginning. Don't make it a guessing game.

PINPOINT THE PROBLEM

Be specific in your evaluation of the design. Try to pinpoint what specifically you would like fixed and why. What's the reason you want to change it? Designers are masters at solving problems, but if they don't know the problem - they're reaching in the dark.

DO IT WITH RESPECT

Always be kind and respectful. Having a good relationship with designers will lead to much better results. Provide constructive criticism when necessary, but in a productive and respectful manner. Don't be rude.

GIVE THE RIGHT FEEDBACK

Giving feedback, positive or negative, is a key part in getting the right design, no matter how you're getting it made. But maintaining a positive relationship with your designer is, arguably, even more important. The kind of advice you give greatly influences the entirety of your project. It's important to set the right tone. So, here are some simple tips of what to do, and what not to do when you're pointing a designer in the right direction.



FIGURE OUT THE HOW

There's a lot of different ways to get your packaging design made. You could reach out to a freelancer, use a design contest platform, or go for the professional design agency. I could talk about this for a while, but the basis is that your choice depends on what you're looking for.

FREELANCE DESIGNER

A freelance designer is a self-employed designer that takes on different projects to make a living. It's a little difficult to talk about them in a general and broad sense since each one has their own distinct portfolio and skill-set, costs and schedule. This means that your experience may greatly differ from one freelance designer to the next, as will the costs.

This is a great choice if you know a freelance designer you can trust. You need to be sure you're going to get the quality you're looking for, and are being charged what you should be. A lot of trust and good communication is needed with this one-to-one, so make sure you find someone that will make this possible. Also, as a tip, make sure your designer isn't going to cause any issues when it comes to copyright.

PROS

- Could be affordable (depending on the designer)
- Could be high quality (depending on the designer)

CONS

- Could be expensive (depending on the designer)
- Could be low quality (depending on the designer)
- You are fully dependent on the individual, making it riskier than other options
- Finding the right designer can be complicated, especially if you don't have assurances that they are reliable
- Communication may be complicated and problematic



FIGURE OUT THE HOW



DESIGN CONTEST

A design contest is a more modern approach to getting your design made. It's simple, you start a contest, giving some guidance regarding what you're looking for and designers from all around the world send in designs. You go through the designers' submissions and provide feedback. Designers will send you revisions and, eventually, you pick a winner.

The design contest is a fast, relatively cheap option if you know how to do it right. The most important thing with a design contest platform is to do your research. Many design contests allow any designer participate. So you pay a couple hundred dollars to receive amateur designs. Look for a platform that prioritizes quality over quantity, and takes steps to ensure high quality is provided on the site. Our very own DesignBro is leading in the industry with extensive quality-control measures.

PROS

- Relatively cheap (\$200 - \$300)
- Can be of high quality (depending on the platform you chose)
- Variety of options to pick from
- Faster solution than others
- Cost-efficient solution

CONS

- If you pick a low-quality design contest platform, it's likely you'll get amateur designers working on your project
- Some platforms give you too many options to pick from (and many of these options are of low-quality) making your job harder

PROFESSIONAL DESIGN AGENCY

If you've got a huge budget, and aren't in a rush - the design agency will give you the most comprehensive approach to getting your design. They'll do research, prepare strategies and come up with a high quality design. But it may be too expensive for small breweries just getting started.

PROS

- Full-on approach (marketing plan and the well-researched designs)
- Always available
- Expertise

CONS

- Very expensive (think anything from tens of thousands to six digits, depending on what you want)
- Often takes a long time
- May be overpriced (you're often paying for overheads, like champagne)

REVIEW YOUR DESIGN

Believe it or not, it's not uncommon for the client (you) to not really know how to pick the right design. The reality is that subjectivity has its challenges and what may be a great design for you, may not be a great design for someone else. So, our suggestion is that you ask your designer, your friends, your family, anyone, what they think. Get some opinions before making your choice. But, whenever you are about to pick a design, go through the following list to make sure you're making the right choice:

IS THE DESIGN...

- ☐ TELLING THE RIGHT STORY?
- ☐ REFLECTING YOUR BRAND?
- ☐ UNIQUE?
- ☐ NOTICEABLE?
- ☐ MEMORABLE?
- ☐ APPROPRIATE FOR THE CONTEXT
(TARGET AUDIENCE, INDUSTRY)?
- ☐ ADAPTABLE TO DIFFERENT
PLATFORMS?

It's likely not everyone will see the thought process behind your design, but if you understand what a design should be to be successful and, for lack of a better word, "good" - we're already half way there.





GET THE RIGHTS

The word copyright seems to always elicit an annoyed expression and a tired sigh, which is completely understandable. But, when it comes to your design, copyright is something you need to get right.

If you don't put some time in and get the copyright stuff right, you might find yourself running into legal issues in the future. Be smart and take care of it now. Double, and triple, and then quadruple check that your design is original. And then ensure that whoever you're working with knows how to handle the copyright, or find out how to do it yourself. Whatever the case may be, don't forget to take the time to do this right.

In terms of copyright, both the professional design agency and the design contest platform offer to take care of this for you. Our advice? Don't underestimate how good of a deal this might be. Taking care of copyright can be enormously confusing and complicated, so try and find the easy ways to get it done. It's probably worth it.

If you're going to do it yourself, research well before delving into the process.

KNOW THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING

BEYOND THE DESIGN TO AN OVERALL VISUAL IDENTITY

Getting the right look for your beer should only be step one. Part of having a memorable beer, is having a memorable brand. It's worth expanding upon the design to create a look for the brand as a whole. Whether your name and logo are on it or not, your customers should know if something is from your brewery. Create a coherent, all-encompassing look for your brand by defining its look.

We've gone through defining what your brewery is like, what it stands for, and where it came from. So, by now, you should have a clear idea of your brand's identity. Translating this into a coherent look is the next step.

Creating brand identity guidelines can be overlooked and underestimated. But it shouldn't be. Brand identity guidelines is like a rule-book for everyone working at your brewery - so they know how everything with the brewery's name stamped on it should look.

If everything associated with your brand can be identified as forming part of your brewery, without the logo or brand name attached to it, you've succeeded in developing a style for your brand and a powerful, persuasive look.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN BRAND IDENTITY GUIDELINES

1. OVERVIEW OF YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

Let your employees know what your brand identity is like. Include a couple of words to describe your brand, and perhaps a philosophy to give employees an idea of what your company stands for.

2. LOGO SPECIFICS, STYLES AND PRACTICES

Include when to use which variations of the logo, what size they should be used in, and any other relevant information concerning the use of the logo.

3. TYPEFACE DETAILS

Which font should your brand use for what? What should header ones look like, for example.

4. COLOR SPECIFICATIONS

What's your brand's color palette, and are there any specific times when some colors should be used instead of others?

5. IMAGE STYLE

What kind of images should be used on the website, or in the social media? Think whether the images should be minimalist and bright, or darker and blurred. Consider adding a "mood board" to inspire your employees as to your brewery's overall look.

6. CORPORATE STATIONERY

Define when your employees should use certain stationery.

What should be identifiable?

Here are the things you should probably make sure look like the form a part of the same brand, and aren't off the mark.

1. STATIONERY
2. PHYSICAL BREWERY
3. UNIFORMS
4. WEBSITE
5. SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE
6. ONLINE ADS
7. E-NEWSLETTER
8. EVENTS
9. BOTTLES / CANS
10. BOXES
11. LABELS
12. BROCHURES
13. OFFLINE ADS
14. E-MAILS
15. BILLBOARDS
16. TV ADVERTISEMENTS

GET THE WORD OUT

The craft beer industry is, undoubtedly, an innovative and creative one. Coincidentally, the world of marketing is in a blur of changes, and innovation right now. The options to market your brewery are, thus, endless. So, how can you get the word out about your brewery, without blowing your budget?

THINGS TO LOOK INTO TO MARKET YOUR BREWERY

- ❑ CONTENT MARKETING
- ❑ MERCHANDISE
- ❑ LOCALIZED TRADITIONAL
MARKETING (NEWSPAPER ADS,
BILLBOARDS, ETC.)
- ❑ EVENTS
- ❑ SEASONAL / THEMED BEERS
- ❑ NETWORKING
(COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER
CRAFT BREWERS)
- ❑ SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING
- ❑ NEWSLETTERS



Thank you for reading our guide for getting your craft beer designed, in the right way. We hope it has helped you find your way in the complicated, and often confusing, design process. Feel free to reach out to [DesignBro](#) if you have any other questions regarding the process.