

Transparent Design

How an open creative process transforms teams

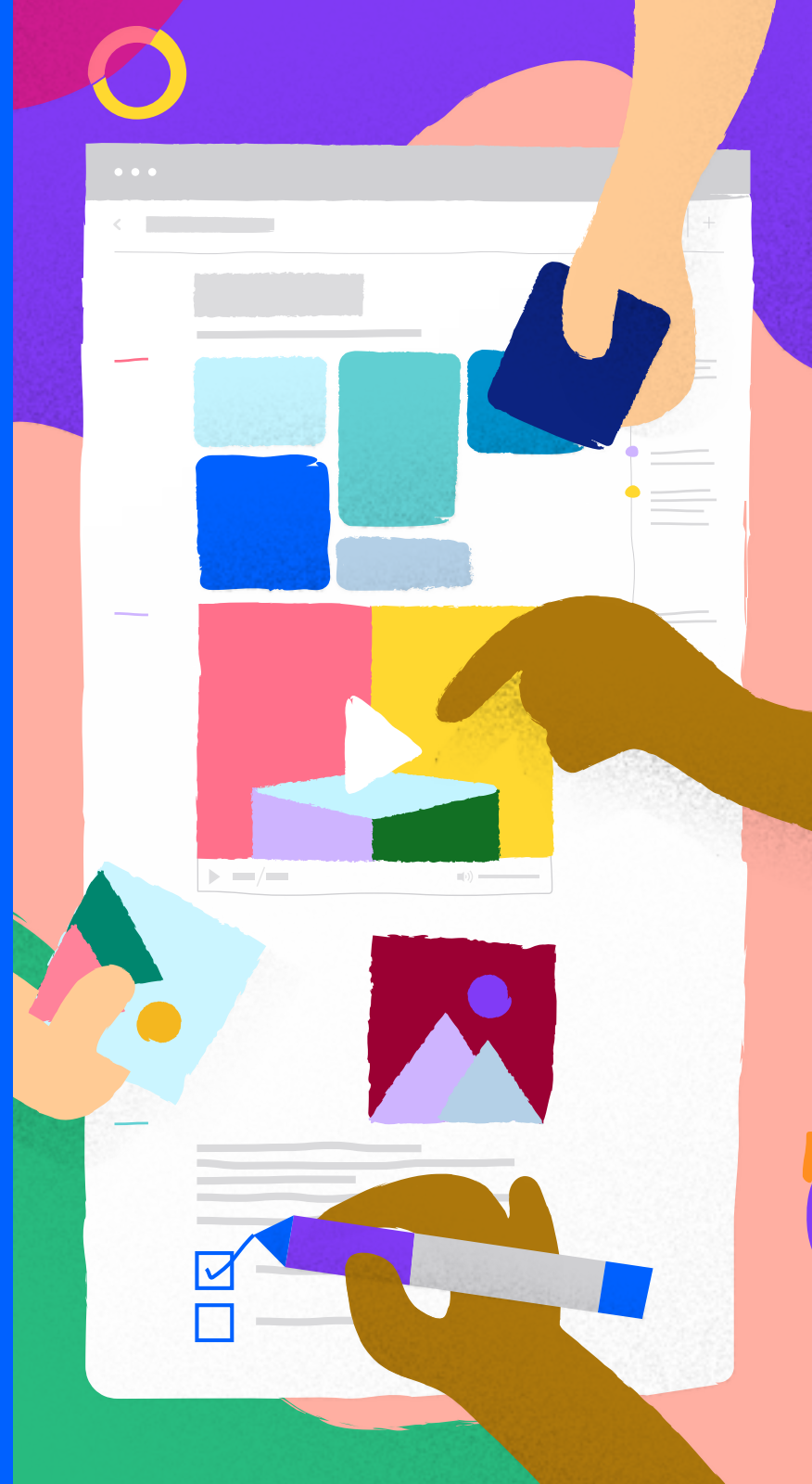


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Introduction

Today's creative teams consist of freelancers, vendors, agencies, and cross-functional in-house departments. Teams of this size and caliber need organic collaboration—from pretty much anywhere—with minimal disruptions. But keeping everyone on the same page can be quite the task.

At Dropbox Brand Studio, we're no stranger to this issue. We have graphic and web designers, illustrators, producers, strategists, and writers, to name a few. Keeping our crew aligned at all times involves strategic thinking and organization, while living and breathing what we call "transparent design."

Let's look into how a new creative process can elevate and streamline your team's workflow.



Step 1:

Create a transparent culture

A creative culture isn't always structured or planned. Creativity happens when inspiration hits. From brainstorming to simple sketches, you can establish a process that allows for open collaboration and fluidity, wherever your team members may be.

Here's how to create your transparent process:

- Hold team members accountable with visibility at every step
- Align with your entire team by keeping content and ideas in one place
- Solve problems collectively, regardless of where you work
- Work together and share responsibility

“Our design process begins with our customers. They constantly give us great ideas on fit, style, colors, and materials. And we do that all in Paper. There is no point of producing something that will not make somebody's life better. To achieve that, we need to understand what their life is all about. And so we weave the customer into our processes from the very beginning until the end.”

Anna Lecat

Founder and CEO of sustainable clothing brand Les Lunes

Step 2:

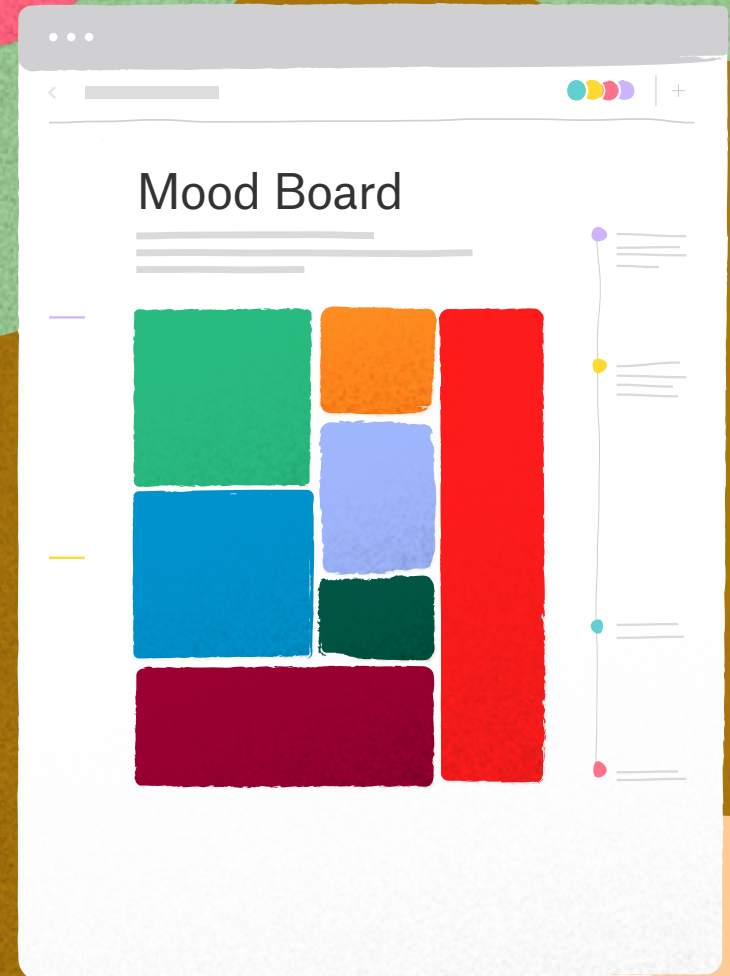
Establish a process

Fluidity and transparency are keys to cultivating a creative culture. But having an established process saves time and makes transparency even easier. Every team member will be able to find the information they need when they need it. And they won't ever wonder what the next step is.

One great way to stay organized is to make a creative process doc. While experimenting with our own creative process doc template, we found a way to go deeper than a traditional brief. Now, everyone can get up to speed faster and in a more meaningful way. It's completely adaptable, but it's a good starting point.

Here's what to put in your creative process doc:

- Include all key information, like due dates, stakeholders, and Dropbox links to relevant assets or docs
- Encourage designers to write about the problem they're trying to solve
- Incorporate a section for creating a mood board of inspirational work
- Share screenshots of works in progress, and ask for feedback
- Provide final links to the finished work



Your process all in one place

Dropbox Paper supports your creative process every step of the way. Brainstorm with your entire team, plan for projects, and create meeting notes, all in one place. It's a tool built specifically for transparency.

Paper drives innovation at Cannes Lions

A recurring theme at Cannes, and a core part of our company culture at Dropbox, is the foundation of trust required to build a collaborative environment. Companies need to create environments that are safe in order for people feel comfortable sharing their ideas. It's one of the ideals that drove our development of Dropbox Paper. We wanted to create an open space that encourages teams to share and build on ideas, even at their earliest stages, when they're raw, imperfect, and full of possibilities.

“Paper lets us share content quickly and collaboratively. It lets us connect with the press, alert remote team members, and provide feedback...all on the go.”

Marian Brannelly

Press & Public Relations Manager
at Cannes Lions International
Festival of Creativity

Step 3:

Create deeper partnerships

Unlike many ad agencies of yesteryear, pulling back the curtain to surprise a client is not our preferred way to work. We want a partnership where both sides contribute, not just critique, and are more invested in the project.

This type of transparency elevates design. It shows stakeholders the considerations, decisions, and compromises we made to arrive at our recommendation. When everyone is invited to be part of the process, it shows that you value their feedback.

“The more controversial a project, the greater the need for collaboration. This was the only way to work through the risks that go hand in hand with groundbreaking, culturally aware campaigns.”

Margaret Johnson

Chief Creative Officer at
Goodby Silverstein & Partners

A new way to present your work

Do more than just share files—guide people through your work. This way, your clients get context and you no longer have to worry about file names and folder structure.

Display your work in a more engaging and compelling way with Dropbox Showcase:

- **Make your mark:** Add your branding to the files you share, so everything feels professionally packaged and uniquely you
- **Tell a story they'll remember:** Use visual previews, customized layouts, and captions
- **Get a pulse:** Take the guesswork out of engagement by keeping track of who views, downloads, and comments on the work
- **Collect comments and compliments:** Invite others to give feedback, so you can see which parts truly shine

Dropbox Showcase

Present your work in one professionally branded page. Tell a story they'll remember and get a pulse with detailed tracking.

Step 4:

Show how you arrived at your vision

In an ideal world, you'd have direct access to leadership and would work with them as partners. But that's not always the case. Presenting to executives? Show your whole process so the team can see exactly how you got there.

To bring this thinking into meetings, go in with a point of view, a recommendation. Paper puts everything together in one place, so you can show partners and clients how you arrived at your vision.

You can preview different file types in Paper without needing the other programs (even on mobile). You can collaborate on designs without worrying about adding more tools or making sure everyone has access to the same program.

Some current Dropbox Paper integrations:

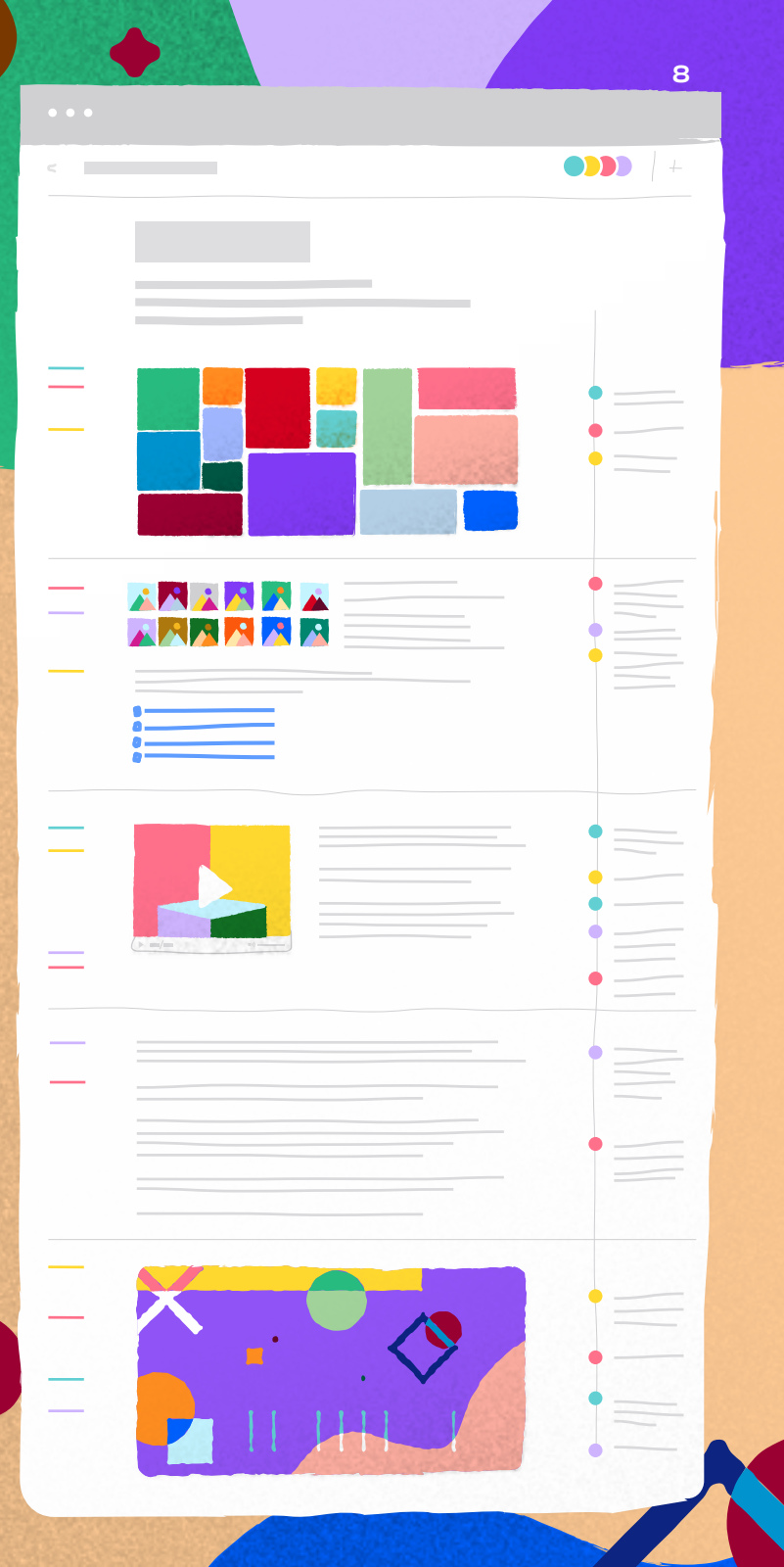
- Figma
- Pinterest
- Framer
- Sketch
- Google Drive
- Spotify
- InVision
- Trello
- Marvel
- Vimeo
- PDF
- YouTube

Step 5:

Reflect on your work

Although you might be ready to celebrate project completion and move to the next project, taking an honest look at finished projects can be just as crucial. Reflecting back on your work enables you to apply lessons learned to your next project.

Dropbox makes reflection easy. The company data you store in your team's Dropbox account is more than just files. It's your institutional knowledge. So, why not do more than simply archive files from your project? Spend time building a retrospective others can learn from.



Why reflection works

In order for reflection to truly work, vulnerability is key. Create a space where people feel free to put themselves out there. Reflection works when you're open, vulnerable, and transparent.

Here's a simple but effective approach for what to include in your retrospectives:

- **Executive summary:** Highlights for those who want to skim
- **What happened:** Purely objective statements of facts, as they happened
- **What went right:** Great way to reinforce good behaviors
- **What went wrong:** No finger-pointing, just a list of things to improve next time
- **Lessons for the future:** Something to share with the entire company

We believe radical transparency helps us improve and learn as a company. And disarming honesty can build trust throughout your team. Reflecting on your work not only helps show what pitfalls to avoid—it also gives your company more knowledge to pull from in the future.

Conclusion

Harness the power of transparent design

A culture of transparency elevates accountability, aligns ideas, and shows you're willing to figure out problems together. Embrace transparency to achieve deeper and more meaningful collaboration.

Dropbox Business helps teams work transparently and supports their creative flow.

To learn more, visit
dropbox.com/business/solutions/design

“I believe in a world where people collaborate and co-create. I believe an idea is in a box. And it only comes out of the box to be free when more people come into it and add to it.”

Weera Saad

Regional Head of the
Creative Shop at Facebook