



# Community Collaboration

## THE PROJECT

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To expand my professional communication skills outside of the classroom, I decided to partner with aha Pure Foods, a plant-based soup company here in Gainesville. I got involved with the organization through their internship program early last summer, and my role at the company has expanded to Media Manager since then. It was valuable to apply course skills learned in Professional Communication to produce something useful for the wholesome, lively brand.

I decided to put together a brand style guide for aha Pure Foods to help dictate current and future content creation. Lots of useful sections are included, from brand values, logos, and colors to writing and photography guidelines. These will be particularly useful for the steadily growing team of interns, who create most of aha's branded content. The guide will ensure harmony among various forms of visual content, including Instagram posts, social media graphics, and branded videos, as well as a consistent voice across all communication pieces, from email marketing campaigns to blog posts, tweets, and the website. In a nutshell, the brand style guide will be instrumental in keeping consistency across platforms now and in the future.

Check it out here... [AHA PURE FOODS BRAND STYLE GUIDE](#)

## The Process

Since I was already very familiar with aha Pure Foods, I decided to create the style guide on my own time. However, I sought feedback on the brand from potential customers and friends first. This provided great insights and allowed me to look at the brand with fresh eyes. Then, I combined my experience at aha with the outside feedback to piece together a first draft.

Once it was completed, I met with the Creative Director, Mary, to gather her opinions and go over any necessary changes. She had lots of meaningful suggestions, and together we worked on refining the guide over a couple of meetings. I also discussed the feedback I received from outside sources, and we came up with ways to integrate the feedback into the existing brand. Once the guide was finished, I shared it with all members of the aha team, and it has already proved very beneficial!

## External Feedback – From potential customers

- People had mostly favorable attitudes toward the simple logo.
- Customers associated the wood on the soup jars with a rustic personality.
  - Slightly rustic and “homemade” are important characteristics of the branding, so I added a wood stock photo to the guide. I also used it for the footer on the guide as an example of our aesthetic (here too).
- People thought the circle graphics (denoting that our soups are gluten free, plant-based, dairy free, non-GMO, etc.) looked “messy” or like “a child had drawn them.”
  - After discussing the graphics with the Creative Director, I re-created them using Adobe Illustrator and better polished digital art skills. I added the png images to the style guide and the company Google Drive for future use.
- The pastel colors corresponding with each soup offered bright yet relaxed vibes.
  - I made sure to find the exact colors on the soup jars and include different color code options in the style guide (CMYK, RGB, and HEX #)
- People associated the rich green color with healthfulness, sustainability, and freshness.
- People preferred the Kirvy font face for body text (easier to read) and the Elegant Typewriter font face for headings.

## Internal Feedback – from the Creative Director

- She offered me access to a professional photoshoot, and together we decided which pictures were the most “brand defining,” and I added these to the guide.
- She asked me to remove the frames from example images for more of a simple aesthetic.
- She suggested making important capitalization guidelines larger, so they stand out to those reading the guide. Capitalization mistakes are one of the most common problems with intern-created content aha experiences.

To see how the guide evolved, check out the links below...

[FIRST DRAFT](#) - [FINAL DRAFT](#)

As a whole, the process of creating the style guide went very smoothly, and Mary, myself, and the rest of the aha team were pleased with the results. Overall, most parts of the guide denote aha Pure Food’s core brand, but I do believe that certain sections will continue to evolve over time as the company grows and consumer trends shift.

One thing I may do differently in the future when creating professional communication pieces, however, is to plan a more formal interviewing process with more users. For this project, I talked to a handful of people I know, but I would have liked to receive more feedback from others outside of my personal circle. This was simply a case of doing the best job I could with limited time and resources.

# ACCESSIBILITY

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## Customer Segments

Despite aha Pure Foods premium products and their presence in a health conscious, sustainability focused niche, there are multiple consumer segments aha Pure Foods targets. These are namely millennial parents and older citizens now focused on health and wellness. Thus, the branding must appeal to a wide variety of people accessible through different channels. To help the brand reach more potential customers, aha's marketing efforts are customized across various touchpoints to intrigue different segments through the website, samplings, multiple social media channels, and/or email marketing. However, all communication must have an overall consistent look, voice, and feel, and that is where the style guide will come in especially handy.

## Veganism

There are also accessibility considerations for the brand regarding veganism. As part of their mission, the plant-based brand aims to spread the philosophy "food is medicine" and help people live an overall healthy lifestyle. Thus, an important aspect I incorporated into the style guide is that all branded communication should *support* a plant-based diet, but not *require* it. All copywriting and other branded content should absolutely avoid *persuading* people to avoid animal products, as this would make the brand less "accessible" to people who are simply not interested in being vegan. However, highlighting the researched benefits of a plant-based diet is absolutely part of the core brand. Allowing customers to eat how they please while offering a delicious, nutritionally dense product that is intentionally 100% plant-based seems to be a healthy balance for the brand.

## The Style Guide

As for the actual style guide, I considered accessibility of the document in a couple of ways. Mainly, I made sure to use clear headings and subheadings throughout the document. Although this is extremely helpful for those with visual disabilities, I was mostly concerned about ease of navigation and a seamless reading experience since the primary users are aha team creatives. In addition, I aimed to make all text large enough to read without zooming in and ensured strong contrast between text and the background. Lastly, I uploaded the document to aha Pure Foods Google Drive as both a pdf and a Microsoft Word document, so it can be viewed correctly without downloading, and it can be edited by other aha team members in the future if needed.

# COURSE CONCEPTS

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## Single Sourcing

In the course Professional Communication, we read William Hart-Davidson's article, "The Core Competencies of Technical Communication," which discussed "single sourcing." That is, the concept of using one piece of information for various purposes. The brand style guide I created is a prime example of "single sourcing" for pieces of creative content over multiple digital platforms. In the future, aha Pure Foods team members, especially the interns who manage social media channels, run photoshoots, and write blog posts, can look quickly at the style guide for instructions. This will streamline the process of content creation and ensure harmony among all branded communication pieces.

## (Not) Damage Centered

In class, we also read a piece about damage-centered research, "Suspending damage: A letter to communities" by Eve Tuck, which also influenced my work for aha Pure Foods. aha's soups are supercharged with natural, medicinal ingredients to boost certain health aspects, and the company was created to help integrate packaged yet wholesome, plant-based foods into the standard American diet. However, aha Pure Foods wants to avoid "fixing" our nation's obsession with unhealthy, processed food, as well as emphasizing replacing poor-diet choices. This would be a damaged-centered approach. Rather, aha aims to promote a healthy lifestyle in general, and I made sure to reflect this in the brand style guide.

## References

Hart-Davidson, W. 2001. "The Core Competencies of Technical Communication." *Applied Theory*. Volume 48, Number 2. pp. 145-155.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409-427. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>