Design with an Opinion

UX London
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One point, one lesson that I've learned over the last year.

How can we better
engage with customers?

We're all building things for people. How can we engage them better?

Opinions create engagement.

Main point: the best way to engage with people is to begin the conversation with an opinion. "Hello" doesn't start conversations. "I believe evil people run Wall Street" does.

I worked for Simple, a local startup offering a financial alternative to banks and credit unions. One of the most amazing stats about Simple is...

Over 100,000 people have requested an invitation.

over 100,000 people have requested an invite, (explain invite) some dating back nearly two years. and in all that time, only a handful angry about waiting.

That's one every 10 minutes
for two years.

it's an incredible number

How did they garner
so much interest?

A question I asked myself a lot in my role is, what went right? Why have so many people been attracted to us before we shipped anything? The conclusion I came to is...

The company has opinions.

Early on, our CEO Josh Reich really set the tone by voicing strong opinions about banking industry.

"Banking sucks."

Clearly, the industry is broken for regular people who want an easy solution for saving and spending their money.

> "Banking doesn't have to suck."

But moreso, it can be fixed. Through technology and design, a better system can be built. We don't have to rely on archaic technology anymore. It just takes will power to build something new.

And people have reacted
to those opinions.

People identified with these opinions. They recognized that there is somebody just like them working on the problem that they see. And that's interesting.

They engaged with us.

People engaged with Simple because they identified with our opinions. Josh took a stand, and that stand found its audience.

How do companies try
to engage with people?

So back to the original question...

1. The old way
2. The recent way
3. The better way

There's a progression in how companies attempt to relate to people.

1. **The old way**
2. The recent way
3. The better way

The first way is the tried and true classic.

Example: Adobe. Simply present the product and expect you to respond to it somehow. Features and benefits.

Present the product.
Make people react.

Companies present their products, state features or benefits, and expect you to react to that. Cross your fingers.

1. The old way
2. The recent way
3. The better way

The recent trend is through the use of tone and informality and humor...
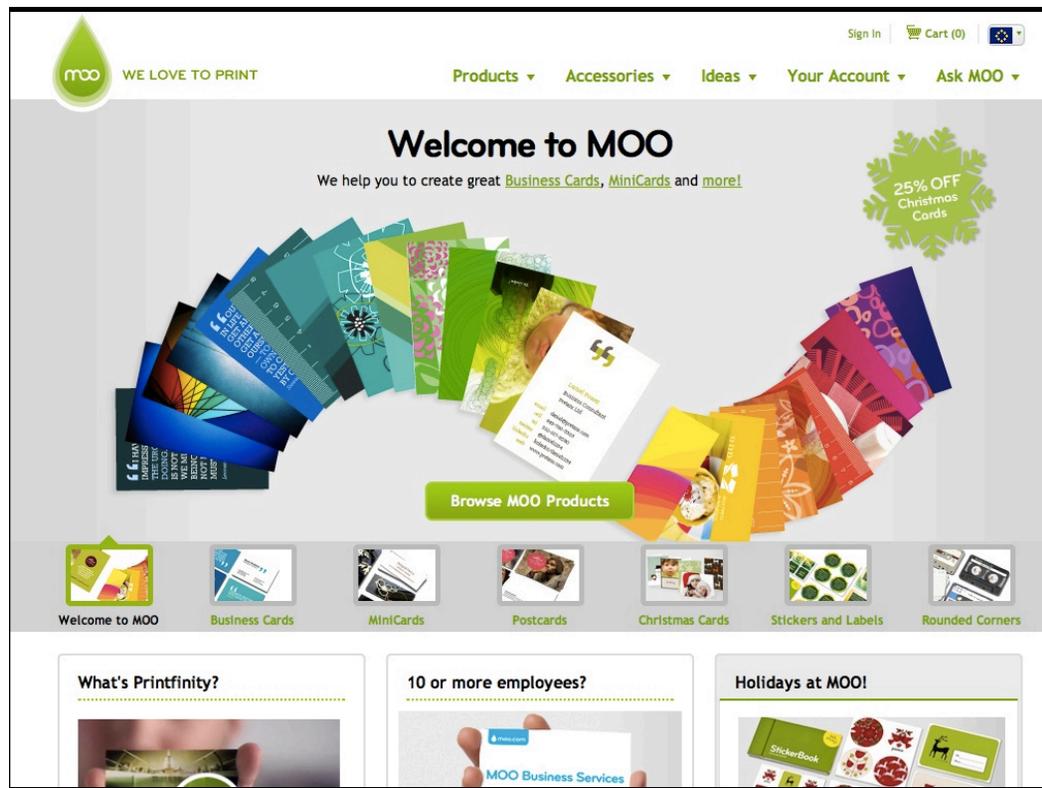
MOO. A great example of using language to be informal. And connecting people through informality. Using personality and tone to bring the product alive. Surprise and delight.

Be funny and informal.
Make people smile.

Trying to humanize themselves through a lot of informal language. Folksy. But this is only a tone. The problem here is it only stops at delight.

1. The old way
2. The recent way
3. **The better way**

The last way that has been successful for Simple. Rather than just focusing on tone, also take a stance.
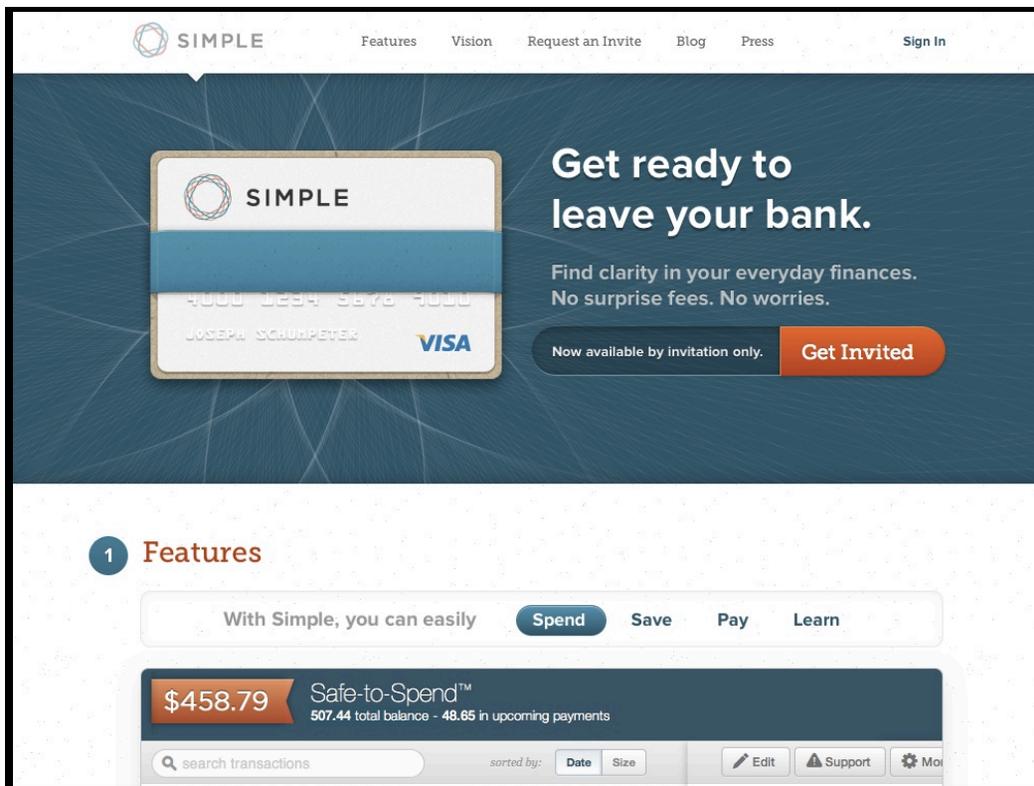
An example of our home page. "Get ready to leave your bank." It's just this side of antagonistic.

Have an opinion.
Make people think.

Is to take a stance. And make people think. Whether in messaging, in product decisions, anything.

Thinking creates engagement.

This is the big point. We people think about your opinion, they are automatically engaged with you. They process, counter, consider it. It may stop there, but at least they've made it further than reading your features, or smiling.

Some example opinions
from the Simple product.

So now I'd like to show you a bit of what we've been working on and some of the opinions and principles behind the various features.

"You are bad at math."

It's true. People are horrible at estimating how much spare cash they have.

Safe to Spend balance does the math for you. We don't highlight your total balance. We highlight your spending cushion.
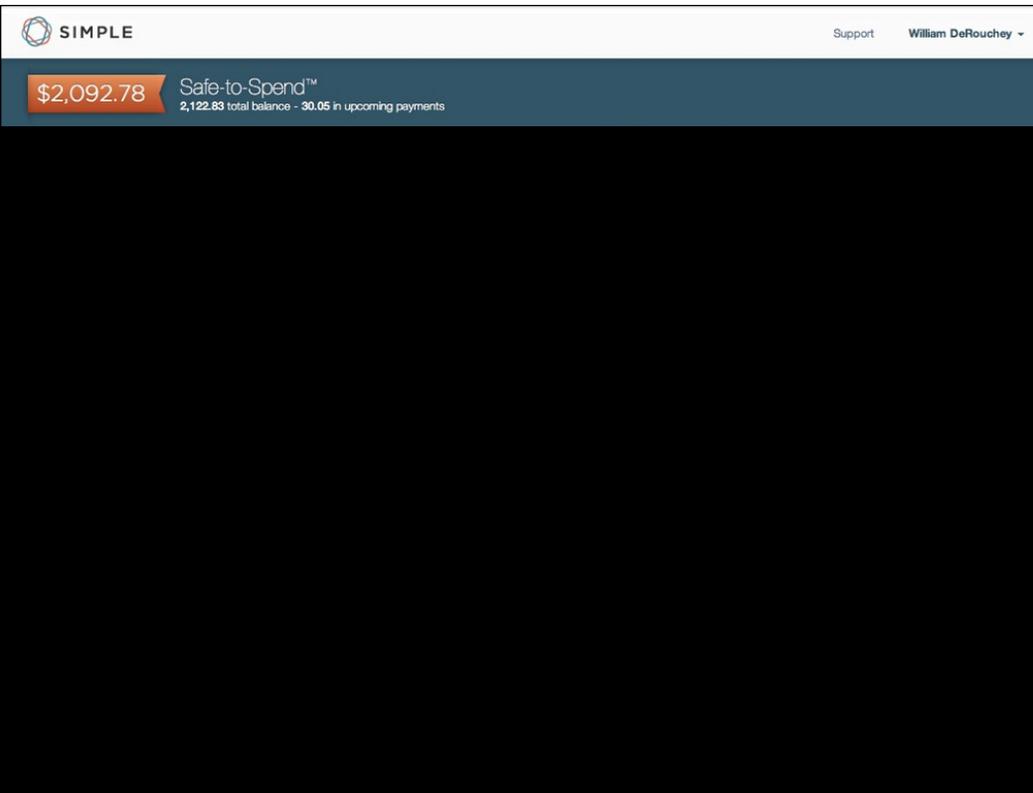
Safe to Spend balance is your spending cushion. It factors in...

"Your money is your data."

Most banks just list off the series of transactions, and that's that.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Example: searching, food last 7 days

lunches last month

Consider another example: Path

This is a big one.
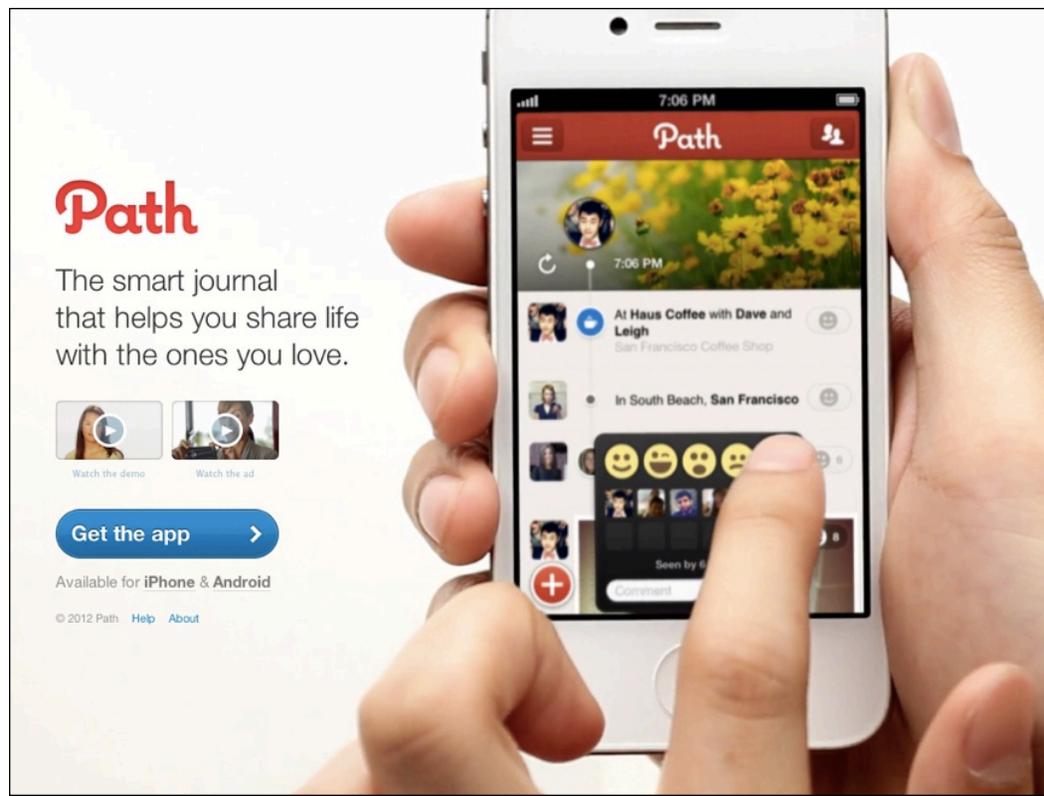
Launched as the anti-Twitter.

On launch, they had
a max of 50 friends.

When Path launched, only 50 friends. This was a bold statement that this product was for your tightest friends. Too bad they didn't stick to it.

"Your true network
is quite small."

their opinion

Last example:
Nest

Another example in home electronics

A thermostat that you train for two days, and then leave it alone.

"You should never have to adjust your temperature."

their opinion

So...

SO

Whatever you're working on,
there's a reason why.

We're all makers and designers in this room.
So why are you making the things you're
making?

Let your opinions shine through your product.

Let the essence of why you tackled this project shine through in the product itself.

Make your customers think.
They'll engage with you.

And people will respond to your opinion by thinking about it. And with that, you will have won the first half the battle for engagement.

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Thank you!

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