

Howard University

Synopsis

Howard University is a private, non-sectarian university in Washington, D.C. founded in 1867 to provide educational opportunities to qualified people who were denied acceptance at many universities of that time, including women and African-Americans. Today, Howard is widely considered to be one of the most prestigious historically black institutions of higher education in the world. It offers, in addition to undergraduate studies, graduate programs in business, law, pharmacy, social work, medicine, dentistry, and divinity.

In 2013, Howard enlisted The Design Channel to evaluate its positioning and brand strategy, and offer recommendations for further strengthening its standing as a leading research institution and university of choice for highly qualified students.

TDC conducted an extensive series of interviews and focus groups with administrators, faculty, deans, alumni, donors, current and past presidents, and students to gather information and insights.

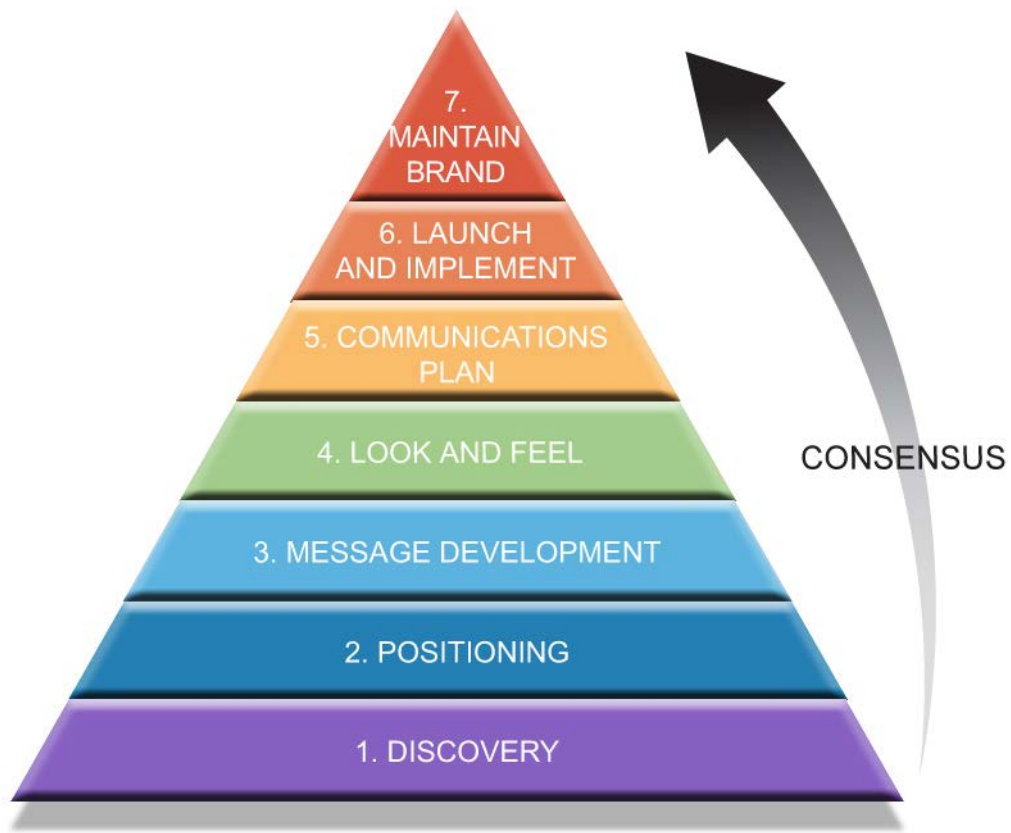
In addition, TDC performed a communications audit to assess the effectiveness of Howard's current marketing materials, as well as a brand benchmarking study to understand how Howard's peer and competitive institutions market themselves. The body of knowledge gathered was then applied by TDC to establish a new brand positioning, messaging platform, and look and feel for Howard's brand strategy going forward.

Our Process

The following page outlines our Channel BrandBuilder™ methodology for developing recommendations on repositioning and re-energizing the Howard University brand. It enabled us to discover many unique attributes and gain insights into Howard's brand equity, culture, and values. It was also applied to synthesize those key findings into a brand promise and positioning, develop a consistent and clear messaging platform, and establish a branding theme.

Results

Our findings and recommendations were well-received by stakeholders at the university. We have recently prepared an executive summary of our recommendations for the next phases of the new brand implementation. Our next objective will be to build and elevate consensus of the Howard brand internally with faculty and staff, and externally in the minds of prospective students, parents, guidance counselors, alumni, and the broader Howard community.



Channel BrandBuilder™

Channel BrandBuilder™ is our proprietary approach for building an organization's brand, re-energizing a brand, or developing a major campaign. It's a flexible, seven-step process. The discovery phase is the foundation of our process with modes of discovery that include internal and external surveys, focus groups, interviews with key stakeholders, interviews with external audiences, competitive brand benchmarking research, an audit of existing communications, and ethnographic research.



Interviews and Focus Group Questionnaires

Gathering insights and perceptions of audiences and stakeholders is a critical step in developing a brand's foundation. We conducted phone and in-person interviews, as well as focus groups, with many representatives of the Howard University community, from students and faculty to alumni and donors, and even current and past presidents.

COMPETITOR BRAND BENCHMARKING

Competitors

Inventory	Priority	Message
Case Western Reserve	Innovation and Leading Edge Thinking	CWRU presents itself as an outstanding independent university that engages leaders and problem-solvers of tomorrow. It calls itself the best college in Ohio and one of the top universities in the nation. It is a place where students are challenged to explore the range of programs, academic centers, and research initiatives that enable students to pursue their own dreams.
Emory	Balanced Academic Excellence	Emory highlights a vast array of strengths—from its world-class research programs, professional schools, and liberal arts to its excellence in teaching, international studies and the city of Atlanta—each of which contributes to the institution's overall excellence.
George Washington	Powerful University in the World's Most Powerful City	GW leverages its location in Washington, D.C. as a primary differentiator and main selling-point—a “global nerve center” and an international hub. The school aligns itself with the city and its vibrant culture, and it offers a wide range of programs and research.
Georgetown	Preparing the Next Generation of Global Leaders	Georgetown dives upon its Jesuit heritage and values to provide a world-class learning experience that nurtures the whole person. This legacy, based on openness to different cultures and global perspectives, is a major theme that shapes the university's identity and influence in the service of others and to impact the world.
Dr. Louis Viana	A Commitment to Faith and Service	LSU is another Jesuit institution that focuses on developing students who seek wisdom and knowledge to be applied in the service of communities and individuals. It emphasizes how service is integrated into its education and prominently features this stance in its motto: “Higher purpose. Greater good.”
Tulsa	Best of Both Worlds	Tulsa promotes itself as a home for creative scholars as well as for leading-edge research. It promotes intellectual and artistic engagement as one of its top priorities by its attachment into the highest tier of Carnegie Foundation research universities.
Yale	Prestigious and Exclusive, Committed to Service	Yale promotes itself as one of the most highly regarded and selective independent universities in the United States. It connects its rich history and tradition to its service, enabling students to gain real-world experience while contributing to the better of the nation.
Vanderbilt	Gateway to Greatness	Vanderbilt is a destination for the best and brightest students from across the nation and the world. It provides an integrating academic environment that promotes the integration to meet their goals and researchers' collaboration to solve the complex problems of our world.

The University of Miami *rides itself on its diverse student evolution and focus on*

Competitors: Local Competition

name	tagline and/or positioning	overview	key messaging	look and feel
George Mason www.georgemason.edu	WHERE INNOVATION IS REACTIVE George Mason University is a public university that was founded in 1962 in Fairfax County, Virginia. The university offers undergraduate programs in 46 fields of study. 30 doctoral programs and a law degree program.	George Mason University is setting the standard for the modern, innovative and entrepreneurial university. The university is committed to leading-edge research that drives the 21st century world.	George Mason University is setting the standard for the modern, innovative and entrepreneurial university. The university is committed to leading-edge research that drives the 21st century world.	GMU came a long, bumpy road and the good points are business school, law school, and the fact that the school is a public university through the state. The school is not a private school but it is the second best and best.
www.georgemason.edu	Virginia's Largest Public University It is recognized for its strong programs in business, law, creative writing, computer science, and health, in recent years, George Mason has been named the fastest growing university in the United States in Economics.	The university recently closed its doors, 30,000 undergraduate and 12,000 graduate students. The university is the largest university to headcount in the Commonwealth of Virginia.	The university recently closed its doors, 30,000 undergraduate and 12,000 graduate students. The university is the largest university to headcount in the Commonwealth of Virginia.	The brand feels like a large institution, but it is not. It is a public university, not a private university. It is a public university, not a private university. It is a public university, not a private university.

Visual Expressions



Executive Summary


General Observations

The following are several high-level impressions garnered from the research:

- **Best of the best.** Boston University, George Washington University, Cleveland University, and Loyola University of Chicago featured some of the most attractive and engaging materials of all. Qualities they shared were high quality photography, unique ways of presenting information, and websites that avoided overwhelming amounts of copy on home pages.
- **HBCU opportunity.** The materials of many HBCU institutions reviewed lacked a cohesive or inviting presentation. This provided a significant opportunity for Howard to establish a brand presence that reflects its preeminence among HBCUs and further enables it to stand apart.
- **Big messages.** Several institutions were especially focused on an important differentiating quality about themselves. George Washington leveraged its DC location. Drexel, its workstudy programs. Morehouse and Spelman highlighted leadership and empowerment. And Loyola University made its commitment to faith and service clear.

- **Third party praise.** UMBC's materials feature quotes from national media outlets (TIME, US News & World Report, 60 Minutes) touting the school – powerful validation for a local institution that doesn't have the visibility or prestige of many schools reviewed here.
- **Mobile optimization.** A majority of the schools reviewed had websites that were mobile-optimized or had responsive design. It's becoming increasingly important to have a website that is user-friendly on smartphone and tablet devices.
- **Broad social media.** Many schools are going beyond Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to connect with their communities – more are featuring a presence on LinkedIn, Flickr, Pinterest, Google+, FourSquare, and Tumblr.

Competitors: Local Competition

Name	Tagline and/or positioning	Overview	Value messaging	Look and feel
 American University www.american.edu	A Global Foundation in the Liberal Arts	<p>American University is a private liberal arts and research-based university in Washington, DC, with a focus on international studies and programs. The university is a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges. The School of International Service was the first in the world to offer a degree in international studies. The university is a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges. The School of International Service was the first in the world to offer a degree in international studies. The university is a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges. The School of International Service was the first in the world to offer a degree in international studies.</p>	<p>American University creates meaning and change in the world. With highly talented students and faculty, we are committed to providing a world-class education. We are a research-based university with a focus on international studies and programs. We are a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges. We are a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges. We are a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges. We are a member of the Association of American Universities and the Association of Liberal Arts Colleges.</p>	<p>All colors are white, and blue predominates, with an extended range of shades of beige and gold. The design is clean and modern, with a focus on typography and a structured grid. The use of color is subtle and sophisticated, with a focus on creating a sense of depth and texture. The overall look is professional and academic, with a focus on clarity and readability.</p>

Visual Expressions



Competitors: Local Competition

<p>name</p> <p>Amman University</p> <p>www.ammanuniversity.edu.jo</p>	<p>begin and/or positioning</p> <p>The WMOAC School</p> <p>Amman University is a private, secular, and research-oriented university in Jordan. It has 15 faculties and 10 schools, including the renowned Faculty of Education. The WMOAC School is a part of the Faculty of Education, which is the largest faculty in the university. In addition to high-quality academic programs, the school provides public and private tutoring services, and has a well-stocked library.</p> <p>What's New / Special Bookend?</p> <p>The school offers a Bachelor's degree program in Education, a 4-year program. It also offers a 2+2 program, where students complete the first two years of their undergraduate studies at Amman University and the last two years at a partner university in the United States. The school also offers a 3+3 program, where students complete the first three years of their undergraduate studies at Amman University and the last three years at a partner university in the United States.</p>	<p>coverture</p> <p>Amman University is a private, secular, and research-oriented university in Jordan. It has 15 faculties and 10 schools, including the renowned Faculty of Education. The WMOAC School is a part of the Faculty of Education, which is the largest faculty in the university. In addition to high-quality academic programs, the school provides public and private tutoring services, and has a well-stocked library.</p>	<p>key messaging</p> <p>Amman University is a private, secular, and research-oriented university in Jordan. It has 15 faculties and 10 schools, including the renowned Faculty of Education. The WMOAC School is a part of the Faculty of Education, which is the largest faculty in the university. In addition to high-quality academic programs, the school provides public and private tutoring services, and has a well-stocked library.</p>	<p>look and feel</p> <p>Amman University is a private, secular, and research-oriented university in Jordan. It has 15 faculties and 10 schools, including the renowned Faculty of Education. The WMOAC School is a part of the Faculty of Education, which is the largest faculty in the university. In addition to high-quality academic programs, the school provides public and private tutoring services, and has a well-stocked library.</p>
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Visual Expressions



Our Brand Benchmarking study evaluated the online and printed marketing materials of 34 universities identified as Howard's peer and competitive institutions. It examined the positioning, key messaging, and brand look and feel of institutions across the country, including historically black colleges and universities, large public universities, prestigious private institutions, as well as universities in the metro Washington, DC area.

Howard University

EXISTING COMMUNICATIONS BRAND AUDIT

Compiled by The Design Channel
May 2014

Brand Audit

Howard University's visual and verbal communications material is the expression of the institution's philosophy and culture, as well as its abilities and goals. The material can announce or mumble, inform or confuse, delight or dishearten, stimulate or irritate, and make or break a connection. It is therefore important for Howard to plan and manage its communications carefully.

Executive Summary

Within the last few years, Howard developed a brand standards guide. The branding guide presents clear documentation and application of the basic elements within the Howard University branding system (i.e. logo, color palette, typography, etc.). The document is well-written and designed. The guide sets high standards for Howard University brand consistency and the institution's culture and philosophy.

The guide was developed because of major gaps in the University's identity implementation. Two major problems were identified at the time—lack of sophistication and inconsistency. As stated then: "Both of these result in the depletion of the meaning and value of the brand. Inconsistency also introduces irregularities that impede brand recognition and obstruct positive associations with the brand."

Some Observations
Except for a somewhat more consistent use of the Howard logo and colors, we have to say, those same two major problems still exist—lack of sophistication and inconsistency in the visual communication aspects. The written communication aspects were, for the most part, well-aligned with Howard's mission and high-level messaging.

The notes on the following pages reiterate these observations. Almost all the communication pieces from the professional schools were generic-looking and lacked a clear connection to an overall umbrella brand. Here are some highlights from the observations:

- There was not a consistent manner for a professional school's name to be "looked up" or visually aligned with the Howard logo to form a system of unit identification (even though this is addressed in the Howard Identity standards).
- At a very basic level, some pieces do not incorporate the Howard logo, colors, or typography from the identity standards.
- Even when the Howard logo and colors were used, there was still no familial connection or coherence between many communication pieces and the Howard brand.
- The vast majority of the professional schools' materials are generic and do not differentiate Howard from other professional schools.
- Many high-level pieces look and feel unimpressive. These materials present an opportunity to communicate with and touch various audiences. They should be designed to present Howard in a unique, impactful, and dynamic manner.

Existing Communications: Brand Standards



Brand Standards
The Howard Brand Standards guide presents clear documentation of existing brand elements within the Howard University branding system. We recommend greater adherence to the direction provided in this guide.

Existing Communications: Publications



University Publications
Both of these publications are modern, well-designed, and professionally produced. They incorporate great photographs, images, and messaging. They incorporate the basic elements of the Howard brand elements. But there is still room for improvement to maximize the impact on your most important audience.

Existing Communications: Professional School Material



College of Arts and Sciences
Cards promoting classes and theater events have creative, effective designs. The Howard identity could be larger to remove clutter and make these events more university productions.

School of Communications
The recruitment package for the School of Communications is professionally designed and provided other pieces reviewed and less impressive in comparison.

Communications Audit

To get a better understanding of the manner in which Howard had engaged its audiences to date, we conducted an audit of much of its available marketing materials. We examined messaging, brand consistency, adherence to brand standards, use and quality of images, and many other aspects of the materials in order make informed recommendations going forward.

Key Findings

Key Findings

- Howard faces an array of challenges that hinder its development, operational efficiency, engagement with critical audiences, and attractiveness to prospective students. While not inherently factors in Howard's branding efforts, they may point to opportunities for additional communications efforts. They include:

- Dysfunctional administrative processes
- Lack of stable leadership at the highest levels
- Disenfranchised alumni who are not invited to share their resources with the university in a meaningful or organized manner
- Poor communications between administration and students/faculty
- Weak athletic programs—a major missed opportunity to boost fundraising and increase interest from prospective students
- Outdated facilities and technology

Key Findings

- Howard's proud past is not the whole story**

Howard has been defined by its legacy of distinguished alumni from past generations. While impressive, the past is becoming less relevant in today's world. The fact of the matter is that Howard's notable recent alumni, current achievements and important research can connect the past with the future to give Howard a more relevant, contemporary face.

- There is only one Howard**

There is no other institution of higher learning today comparable to Howard. It is irreplaceable as a national university that has international influence; rigorous academic programs, wide renown for serving the underserved; broad afro-centric diversity; and a nurturing, protective environment. Howard is an iconic, one-of-a-kind institution.

Key Findings

- Howard transcends the HBCU label**

Howard is widely regarded as the Mecca—the leading HBCU and center of black academia in the world. While the HBCU standing is an important part of Howard's identity, other attributes such as its professional programs, international reputation, and research focus make Howard especially unique.

- Howard prepares students to change the world**

The university has played an integral role in educating many innovators and trailblazers in recent history. Today it continues to provide an experience that prepares students to create a career and life of meaningfulness, achievement, and service to others.

Key Findings

- Howard attracts purposeful individuals**

Howard's Washington, DC location and service-driven mission attract students and faculty around the world who want engagement in national and global issues—in particular, those addressing social inequalities.

- Howard offers a transformational experience**

Howard offers a comprehensive breadth of academic and professional programs that prepares students for career success, teaches them to overcome barriers, and reinforces their desire to impact society in a positive way.

Key Findings

After analyzing the information gathered from our interviews and focus groups, we identified major takeaways that revealed the most compelling perceptions and truths about the Howard experience.

- theme and positioning
- message platform

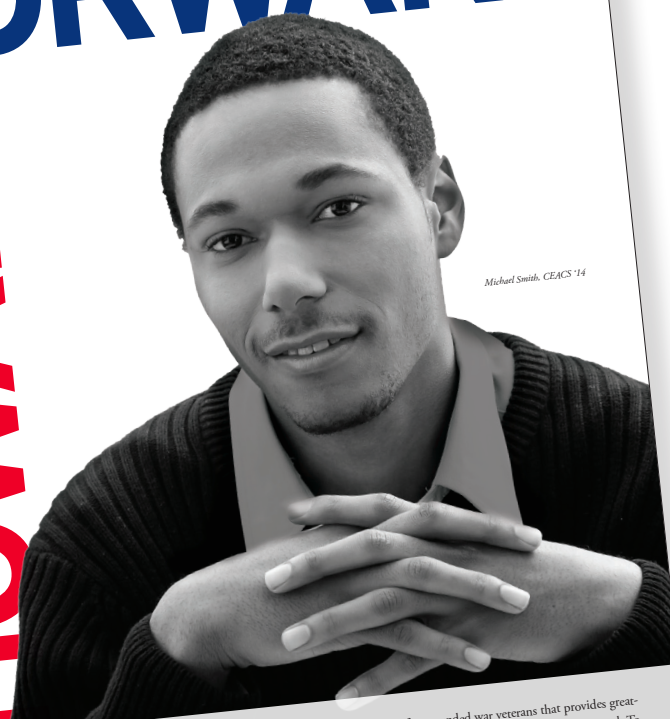
All about a transformational experience

Howard University is the nation's leading HBCU and foremost center of black academia in the world. Its Washington, D.C. location, comprehensive academic programs and service-driven mission prepare students to succeed in their careers, overcome barriers and change the world in a positive way. The university's legacy of distinguished alumni, combined with its accomplished faculty, current achievements and research focus, propels Howard forward.

Our Brand Promise (Positioning Statement)	All about a transformational experience Howard University is the nation's leading HBCU and foremost center of black academia in the world. Its Washington, D.C. location, comprehensive academic programs and service-driven mission prepare students to succeed in their careers, overcome barriers and change the world in a positive way. The university's legacy of distinguished alumni, combined with its accomplished faculty, current achievements and research focus, propels Howard forward.				
Theme	Howard Forward				
Our Character (Brand attributes expressed in human characteristics and personality traits)	Afro-centric We provide an educational environment that attracts black and minority students worldwide and brings black points of view to the forefront of academic programs.	Encouraging We actively promote and provide opportunities for student leadership and involvement in a wide range of activities and capacities.	Supportive Students receive support and nurturing from faculty and staff to succeed in their academic pursuits and personal lives.	Proud We hold our bond with the university in high esteem, and honor the alumni, achievements, and milestones associated with Howard.	Challenging We expect achievement and effort from students and believe that the struggle to reach academic goals develops greater resolve to attain professional and career success.
Core Values (Fundamental principles and beliefs that drive our actions)	Academic Excellence We provide a first-class, rigorous education that provides graduates with the knowledge and skills to succeed in the field of their choice.	Social Mission / Activism Students, faculty and alumni embrace the expectation that their association with Howard carries a responsibility to address social disparities and serve the greater good.	Diversity / Inclusivity We welcome qualified students across the country and around the world who bring a broad spectrum of backgrounds, experiences, talents and potential.	Global Outlook Our graduates are engaged in leading conversations about, and developing solutions to, global issues.	Research We are committed to advancing the frontiers of knowledge and expanding our thought leadership in many disciplines.
Our Differentiators (Qualities that are credible, ownable, unique and telegraphic)	Legacy / Heritage We have a long history of producing graduates who have changed the course of, or sparked innovations in, a wide range of fields.	Location Our Washington, DC setting provides access to many career opportunities, direct involvement in national and global affairs, and exposure to vibrant cultural experiences.	Professional Programs We offer far more professional programs (13) than any other HBCU and many other institutions of higher learning.	International Renown We are admired and acclaimed around the world for the quality of our education and the achievements of our alumni.	HBCU We are among 103 institutions of higher learning in the U.S. that have historically emphasized educational opportunities for black and minority students.
Benefits to Students (Aspirations and anticipated rewards)	Preparation Our remarkable faculty equips students with the knowledge, confidence and values they need to succeed in their careers and impact the world in positive, meaningful ways.	Transformational Experience We provide an educational experience and environment that provides fertile ground for life-changing ideas, values and points of view.	Howard Name / Prestige Our name instantly conveys credibility and excellence, and can help open doors to professional opportunities and options.	Perspective We offer an experience that leaves graduates with a deep understanding and appreciation of the culture, issues and viewpoints of the African Diaspora.	Alumni Network The relationships formed at Howard provide an extensive, life-long network that supports career advancement, professional success and personal connections.
Our Vision	Through its programs of exemplary quality, Howard University will be the first HBCU to become a top-50 research university, while it continues its traditions of leadership and service to underserved communities nationally and abroad.				
Our Mission	Howard University, a culturally diverse, comprehensive, research-intensive and historically Black private university, provides an educational experience of exceptional quality and the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels to students of high academic standing and potential, with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students.				


FORWARD

HOWARD



Michael Smith, CEACS '14

Michael is developing robotic technology for wounded war veterans that provides greater mobility and dexterity. Like him, Howard University is leading the way forward. To prepare talented individuals for lives of achievement and service. To expand the frontiers of knowledge. And, in countless ways, to make tomorrow better than today. Moving forward is what we do. Come and create your own Howard movement.



Howard.edu Twitter.com/HowardU Facebook.com/howarduniversity

FORWARD

HOWARD



Julia Williams, College of Dentistry '15

When millions of young people hit the beach for Spring Break, Julia headed to Haiti as part of a Howard team to provide dental care for children in need. Like her, Howard is leading the way forward. To prepare talented individuals for lives of achievement and service. To expand the frontiers of knowledge. And, in countless ways, to make tomorrow better than today. Moving forward is what we do. Come and create your own Howard movement.



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FORWARD

HOWARD




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- creative concepts: option 1

