

ZURB

Foundation

17 Design Trends That Will Shape 2017

Designers working on web projects in 2017, in some ways, face more challenges than ever before. They have to create engaging websites, apps and services that work seamlessly across all devices and work for a global audience at a pace that seems to speed up every year. That audience too is more tech savvy, have higher expectations and are more design literate than ever before and expect near perfection. Faced with these challenges, it's more important than ever for designers to be aware of emerging trends, solutions and patterns that can help them solve common issues, capture the full attention of their audiences, and deliver amazing experiences.

Here at ZURB, we've helped hundreds of companies surface the best solutions and take advantage of new patterns in their websites and products. We've created this list of 17 design and development trends we think every designer should be familiar with to shape their 2017 and well beyond.

1. Brutalism

Taking its name from the architecture style of the 60's and 70's, Brutalism in design consists of bold, in-your-face collages of text and images, where anything goes. Echoing the web from yesteryear, Brutalist sites often employ simple markup, inline styles, and harsh colors and gradients. Some even argue that Instagram's new(er) gradient logo could be classified as Brutalist, with it's 90's esque neon colors and gradient design.

Pascal Deville, an authority on the Brutalism trend, and founder of brutalistwebsites.com defines the movement as this:

"In its ruggedness and lack of concern to look comfortable or easy, Brutalism can be seen as a reaction by a younger generation to the lightness, optimism, and frivolity of today's web design."

But not all Brutalist websites are an all out attack on the eyes. A few sites like Bloomberg News and TheOutline.com borrow from the aesthetic while adding a level of polish not typically seen

in most sites. We think designers can use Brutalism to set their site apart from the rest with bold color choices, large typography, and layouts that break away from the common hero-image-then-3-up pattern.

- The Brutalist aesthetic makes good use of typography, so choosing the right typeface is critical. Check out these tips for conveying the right typographic voice: <http://zurb.us/2nbgUfK>
- Brutalist websites run the gamut from mild to wild. Get inspired with these examples: <http://zurb.us/2n4KBmb>
- Spotify has been flirting with this style for a while. Check out how they make use of bold colors, strong typography, and a collage inspired layout: <http://zurb.us/2n4MJtX>

2. Large Screen Design

When most people think of responsive web design, they think of shrinking a website down from a desktop to something that looks great on a tablet or mobile phone. But this is ignoring a growing segment of users, those that have large scale monitors. Yes, while mobile has certainly exploded in popularity over the last ten years, so has extra large monitors with ever increasing pixel densities. The problem is that most focus has seemed to be on the smaller side of the spectrum with, few sites truly catering to their large screen users. By looking at your data, you may find that the majority of your users (or at least you're converting users) are on displays of 1920x1080 or higher. There are a lot of cool and creative ways to use that kind of screen real estate and clever designers are not afraid to go big.

We think designers should be well acquainted with the data and know exactly who their audience is and what equipment they're on. By using techniques like resolution independent SVG's, bold typography, and serving up either high or low resolution photos with JavaScript, they can deliver a rich experience for everyone, even those with massive screens.

- SVG's are perfect for large screen design because they are scalable, resolution independent, have small file sizes and are supported by most browsers. Here are 10 resources to learn more about them: <http://zurb.us/2nbqdw>
- Targeting SVGs with CSS allows you to do cool things like using media queries to hide and reveal parts of an image by screen size. Check out our lesson to learn the basics: <http://zurb.us/2n4NoLX>
- The Interchange component in Foundation uses media queries to load the images that are appropriate for a user's browser, making responsive images a snap. It decreases the load times for mobile users while still serving the bigger content to your visitors with higher screen resolutions. Learn how to use it: <http://zurb.us/2nbfOG>

3. Responsive Components

It's been nearly 8 years since Ethan Marcotte introduced the concept of responsive web design to the world, and we've seen it develop at an incredible pace. There are new techniques and technologies on the horizon though, that are going to dramatically simplify the writing of responsive elements and make today's responsive sites look simplistic and unrefined. Some examples are element queries and the upcoming CSS-grid spec. These two technologies will enable web designers and developers to create experiences that are truly tuned to every device size. Element queries will allow creating components that are responsive based on the space allotted to them rather than the full screen size, while CSS-grid allows us to dramatically change layouts based on media queries.

Between the two, we believe we will see a dramatic increase in the diversity of responsive patterns easily available to designers and front-end developers.

- Element queries and container queries open a new horizon for responsive components, here are 10 resources to learn more: <http://zurb.us/2nbfIce>
- Our Foundation Lead Kball broke down how responsive components work and what's coming in the near future in this recent article: <http://zurb.us/2nbqWhc>

4. Device Specific Microinteractions

Up until now, the mobile-first method has meant building a slick and usable experience for small screens, and then layering in more complex interactions and animations for the desktop. But as mobile web tooling mature and mobile traffic eclipses that on desktop, we think there is a ton of opportunity to take advantage of the native paradigms of different devices for mobile-focused interactions. With the rise of touch and gesture related JavaScript libraries, there is a ton of opportunity for subtle animations in response to gestures (e.g. the twitter mobile app's tweet refresh interaction) to make their way into more and more web applications.

As Nick Babich pointed out in a recent post on [Medium](#), microinteractions provide users acknowledgment they crave. Popular apps like Slack have skillfully weaved them throughout the entire experience, delighting users and making the app feel more intuitive.

By taking advantage of whatever is available to them, device specific microinteractions will only serve to make microinteractions more compelling and personal.

- Learn the basics of microinteractions, why they're important, and how to use them: <http://zurb.us/2n4QK1H>
- Playing around CSS animations and transitions can help you build and test some neat microinteractions. Here's a few techniques: <http://zurb.us/2n4QzDn>

5. Split-screen Design

A simple way to highlight a contrast, balance text with images, or share two different products, split-screen design has grown in popularity with many designers. Easy to implement, split-screen design is a great way to present content in a way that feels fresh and balanced. For products or sites that require a comparison, split-screen design is a no brainer.

We've seen some really creative uses of split-screen design, and we think people are only beginning to scratch the surface. We're looking forward to new ways this pattern can be used to tell a unique story and guide users.

- Get inspired with some great examples of split screen design on Pattern Tap: <http://zurb.us/2n4QCiA>
- Still need inspiration? These 20 examples showcase some really creative applications of this trend: <http://zurb.us/2n4OveS>
- Nick Babich offer some clear best practices for split screen design you should definitely adhere to: <http://zurb.us/2n4S7NS>
- Just because they're simple doesn't mean they're easy. Here are three things to keep in mind when building a split screen layout: <http://zurb.us/2n4S6t0>

6. Reactive Animations

The explosion of native mobile apps this decade put a spotlight on human centered design. Apple's iPhone and iOS were breakthroughs in part because of the way they used design to mimic humans and **appeal to emotion**. How good a design looks now plays second fiddle to the way it feels. While mobile apps have been the driver of these breakthroughs, desktop experiences have still felt clunky and unintuitive. But advances in desktop browsers, JavaScript, and CSS variables, have made it possible to add those human focused interactions in really compelling ways.

We think we'll soon see more technologies that push what's possible in the browser, led by animation heavy interactions.

- Our Reactive Listener playground piece is a great example of how reactive animation can be used to highlight content to users even before they take action: <http://zurb.us/2nbfguR>
- By harnessing the power of JS and a little CSS, combined with the capabilities of modern browsers, we can deliver experiences that are responsive, fluid, react to user input and give native mobile apps a run for their money. Here are 10 resources to start with: <http://zurb.us/2n4SGap>

7. Refreshing Card Based Interfaces

While cards have been around for years, they are a solution that is not going away anytime soon. A pattern tailor made for responsive web design, they make it easy to display large amounts of information in a way that is easy to browse and simple to implement. In recent months, we've seen them used for more than text and links, becoming hubs of all kinds of rich media. Designers are playing around with rich microinteractions with cards themselves, and are finding ways to make this old pattern new again.

We see no reason to abandon tried and true patterns that solve common problems, and are excited about the new experimentation we're seeing with cards.

- Cards are all over the web, but we still see designer making these 5 mistakes: <http://zurb.us/2n4Qdww>
- Not a big reader? Learn how to avoid those 5 mistakes by watching this video: <http://zurb.us/2nbteNk>
- Cards are the basis for a ton of successful interfaces. These 10 resources will help you figure out how to best use them in your project: <http://zurb.us/2n4S2cU>
- Foundation's new Flex cards open you up to all kinds of possibilities. In this lesson, Rafi breaks down how to use this new component: <http://zurb.us/2nbppHK>
- Nick Babich highlights some best practices of using a card based UI in this incredible article: <http://zurb.us/2nbsdF2>

8. Locations and Context Awareness

People take their phones, tablets and handheld gaming consoles with them everywhere they go, and these little devices have a growing ability to understand the location and context around them. Those capabilities are increasingly being exposed to web developers, and we believe that a huge area of coming innovation will be in making websites increasingly responsive to the environments around them.

Imagine loading a website and immediately seeing reviews and pricing comparisons for all of the internet enabled devices near you, without having to search or install an application. Or imagine a website that uses some combination of the Media Streams API (streaming video from your camera), the Geo Location API, and Mozilla's web-VR library A-frame to serve you an augmented version of reality, once again without ever installing an app. While we'll need to be ever cautious about how we use these tools and show the utmost respect for the privacy of our users, we see a near endless amount of ways this technology can be used to improve our lives.

- As technology progresses, we're able to provide users with experiences that are tailored to where they are and what they are doing. This articles explains what's possible now, and what will be possible in the near future: <http://zurb.us/2n4Rofl>

9. Hand Drawn Illustrations

Super slick and perfect vectors are all over the web, and for good reason. They can have small file sizes and work great for responsive sites, but a nicely drawn sketch-style illustration can add a clearly human element to a site. Whether purposely nostalgic and childlike or not, they evoke warm and friendly feelings which may just be what your brand needs.

We're seeing this trend pop up more and more, especially when it comes to making more complex topics or instructions seem a little less intimidating. A hand drawn style can also set your brand apart from the pack. We love the unique flare illustrations add to brands like [Intercom](#).

- We were able to use a hand-drawn character to help McAfee tell a compelling story: <http://zurb.us/2n4G17k>
- It's not all hand drawn either, illustration is having a major moment on the web: <http://zurb.us/2n4Re7Q>
- There are a ton of great ways to use illustrations on your site, from the hero image down to your icons. We were inspired by these examples: <http://zurb.us/2n4loHk>
- Some people totally commit to this look and include hand drawn illustrations all over their site. Here are a few examples that do it really well: <http://zurb.us/2n4V0y1>

10. Flexbox

For the longest time, making cool layouts on the web was really hard. We tried using tables for layout on the web, and using floats has resulted in all kinds of hacks to make things work the way we expect. Fortunately, Flexbox came along and changed everything. Flexbox lets us arrange elements in a truly web-like way and solves problems that traditional float grids don't do well. [Browser support](#) is excellent so it's a great time to jump into flexbox if you haven't done so yet. Combined with CSS Grid, we expect to see some incredibly innovative layouts in 2017.

- Flexbox can help solve or eliminate a ton of layout issues. Here's a lesson on vertical alignment using Flexbox: <http://zurb.us/2n4TVGs>
- Foundation now includes an optional Flex based grid. We published some great examples of our initial experiments with it in this past blog post: <http://zurb.us/2nbgSVg>

11. Greater Accessibility Focus

The internet is one of humanity's greatest achievements. It opens up opportunities, knowledge, freedom, and independence to people around the world. Ensuring your website is A11y compliant (accessible to those with disabilities) ensures that everyone can benefit from what the web makes possible. Accessible websites are easier to navigate for all users, rank higher, and increase your conversions by opening up your content to more people.

The good news is that it's not difficult to implement A11y into your website, and the [Foundation framework makes it easier than ever](#).

- The web is for everyone. If you're looking for ways to make your website fully A11y compliant, these 10 resources can help: <http://zurb.us/2nbkYNg>
- It's not as difficult as you think to make your site a little more accessible. Check out lesson on how to spend "Five Minutes Toward an Accessible Page": <http://zurb.us/2nbCUaw>

12. Full Screen Forms

Sign up forms can easily be lost on a site, or so busy and cluttered it's scary. Full screen forms work by using a full-screen overlay instead of sending the visitor to a different page which gives the user more screen space and less distractions.

This technique allows designers to guide users through a few inputs at a time, rather than showing them everything at once, which is encouraging users to actually complete the full form. The data shows this is reducing form abandonment, so we think this trend is here to stay.

- Forms are critical component of many websites. Here are six techniques to make them more effective: <http://zurb.us/2nbrnba>
- Touch devices are making us rethink how people interact with our products, and forms are no exception. Here are some tips on how to make them more finger friendly: <http://zurb.us/2nboMOA>
- Make forms quick and easy to complete with these seven simple steps: <http://zurb.us/2nbE9qc>

13. Vertical Menus and Navigation

It's not always used effectively, but when done right, vertical navigation is incredibly slick. Sites that use vertical navigation are a refreshing diversion from a sea of horizontal menus.

One of the main benefits of vertical menus are that they give you plenty of space to work with if you've got a lot of main pages to link to, and can even allow you to list items in hierarchy of importance. This format also works really well when combined with other patterns like slideouts and sticky navigation. Most sites that use vertical menus keep it on the left side due to better visibility based on the **F-pattern**, but throwing a menu on the right hand site can work well and make your site stand out.

- Foundation 6's rebuilt off-canvas component allows you to create more dynamic and modular layouts. In this lesson, we explain the ins and outs of this powerful component: <http://zurb.us/2nbA0CH>
- Here's a code snippet you can use in your own project, A Top Bar with Off-canvas menu containing an accordion menu: <http://zurb.us/2n50j0z>

14. Conversational UI

Chris Messina, the founder of the hashtag said **"2016 will be the year of conversation commerce."** We did indeed see an explosion of conversational UI last year, and that trend is only gaining momentum here in 2017. People are growing more accustomed to being able to interact with their favorite brands and services through chat, messaging, and other natural language interfaces.

This is still relatively new and we've seen a few missteps, but as it matures, we think we'll see this trend pop up in all sorts of places.

- Everything seems to be going conversational. This article is a great breakdown of what's happening and why: <http://zurb.us/2n4Vgxx>
- One of the big areas where conversational UI's are having an impact are with chatbots. Here's a few conversational UI lessons one developer learned along the way: <http://zurb.us/2n59xtR>
- Sure, conversational UI is everywhere, but can it ever fully replace GUIs? This article does a great job of explaining why conversational UI is exploding and where it's falling short: <http://zurb.us/2n4Z4OG>

15. Live Product Previews and Demos

Landing page design continues to evolve as web browsers become more sophisticated. One trend that has increased conversion rates are live product previews directly on the homepage. Whether through videos and animations that demonstrate a product's features or actual working functionality, letting users see exactly what your product looks like and even try it out themselves is incredibly compelling.

Static images are boring and losing effectiveness. We think we'll see even more live product previews in 2017, allowing users to play directly with real, working components of apps and services.

- Demonstration is a powerful psychological trigger that can get your users imagining what life would be like if they were using your product or service. Here's a great example of it in action: <http://zurb.us/2nbFxco>
- Connect Mania is a mobile game that took the world by storm. We thought it was incredibly clever of them to include a working demo of the game mechanic on their homepage so users could get a feel for it before they download: <http://zurb.us/2nbAmt4>
- MailChimp does a fantastic job of using animation and video to demonstrate how their service works and what their interface looks like: <http://zurb.us/2nbpdZ5>

16. Monochromatic Color Schemes

Closely related to the minimalist aesthetic sweeping the web is monochromatic color schemes - using various shades of one color. This trend can help your site feel elegant and sophisticated, and is a great chance to emphasize your brand color. Shades, tints and tones are what prevent monochromatic sites from feeling too simple. The constraints of working with a single color can lead to a lot of creativity while bending the rules by adding an accent color can add just the right amount of contrast.

- Monochromatic color schemes seem easy, but there are more to them than you might realize. Here's a few important things to consider: <http://zurb.us/2nbniE1>
- A good understanding of color and color theory are essential for any designer attempting to create a monochromatic site. This refresher can help you nail down the basics: <http://zurb.us/2n55yNN>
- If monochromatic is too limiting, duotone or overlay colors can get you a similar effect. Here's some helpful tips: <http://zurb.us/2n4YgJG>

17. Clever Use of Video

More and more, bandwidth is less of a concern on the web, making video one of the hottest trends. Video backgrounds and headers were all the rage the last few years, but we're beginning to see it used even more creatively to tell stories and form the basis for some really inspired interfaces.

- This keyword research tool uses video to help build a character and story that sets them apart from the competition: <http://zurb.us/2n57jKG>
- Video can be used to create completely immersive online experiences, as this example demonstrates: <http://zurb.us/2n51FIO>