

Why content strategy should be a product manager's best friend

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- Recovering content marketer
- Long-time UX design devotee
- Product content strategy “newb”

Today's call

- 01 Content strategy today**
- 02 Content strategy + product strategy**
- 03 Tools to borrow**

Content strategy today

**Content strategy plans for the
creation, delivery, and
governance of *useful, usable*
content.**

— Kristina Halvorson, Brain Traffic

**Content strategy is just
content planning.**

— Elizabeth McGuane, Shopify

Content is really just
INFORMATION.

Me

Experiences
without
content are
pretty
meaningless.

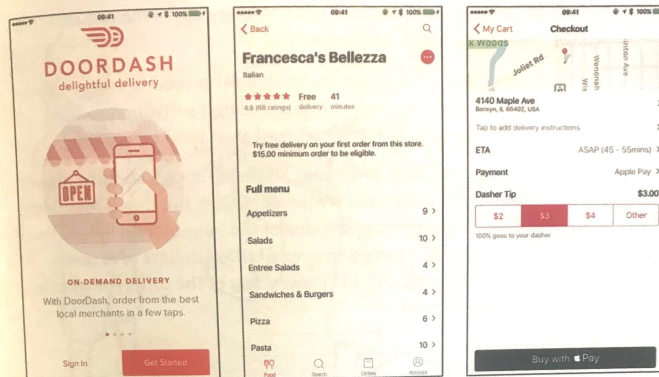


FIGURE 1.7
Screens from the DoorDash mobile app with words.

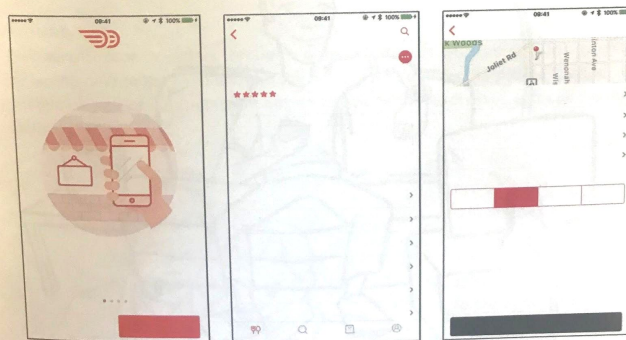


FIGURE 1.8
Screens from the DoorDash mobile app without words. Designer Mig Reyes did this to popular websites in a 2015 blog post, illustrating how much interfaces depend on writing.⁴





**Content strategy meets
product strategy**

Common goals of a product manager

- **Align** teams
- Set **strategy**
- Establish and **execute** roadmap
- Drive analysis and **iteration**

A **clearly defined concept** is the first step to gaining alignment, building a strategy, and creating a product that will make sense in a system that is constantly changing.

“Concept clarity is at the core of all good design. If you can’t agree on what something is, how can you know how you want people to understand, use, and even pay for it?”

— Elizabeth McGuane

THE CONTENT STRATEGY PROCESS



THE CONTENT STRATEGY PROCESS

ALIGNMENT

STRATEGY

EXECUTION

ITERATION



Common goals of a product manager—through the lens of content strategy

- **Alignment:** How do you help the team understand the concept and solution behind your product? It's all about communicating the problem you need to solve.
- **Strategy:** How do you plan and prioritize the scope of building the idea into reality? A deep dive into the context is crucial, ensuring you don't overlook edge cases.
- **Execution:** How do you explore and implement solutions? Knowing what information is needed and how to structure it is key.
- **Iteration:** How do you continue to drive success for the product? Identify areas to test and iterate on.

Content strategy deliverables

01

ALIGNMENT

Message architecture

Voice & tone guidelines

Persona development

Competitive analysis

UX/Content brief(s)

02

STRATEGY

Content inventory & audit

Terminology definition

Journey maps

Tree testing/card sorts

Content models

03

EXECUTION

UI copy (names/labels, etc.)

Site map

Error messages

Metadata framework

Onboarding content

Content templates

Help docs

04

ITERATION

Content testing plan

Style guide

Tools to borrow

Tools to borrow

1. Message architecture
2. Voice & tone guidelines
3. Competitive analysis
4. Journey maps
5. Content inventory (and audit)
6. Style guide
7. Content testing plan

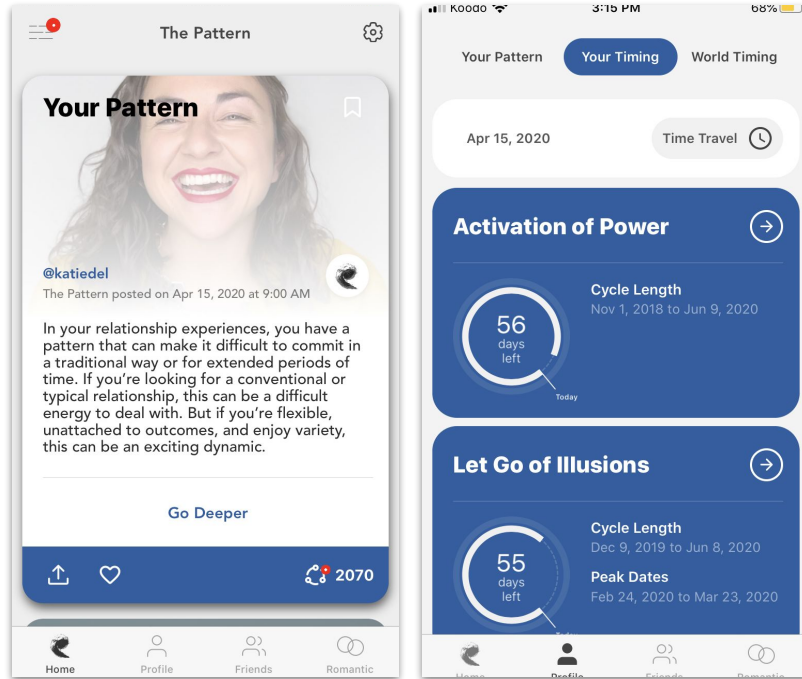


MESSAGE ARCHITECTURE

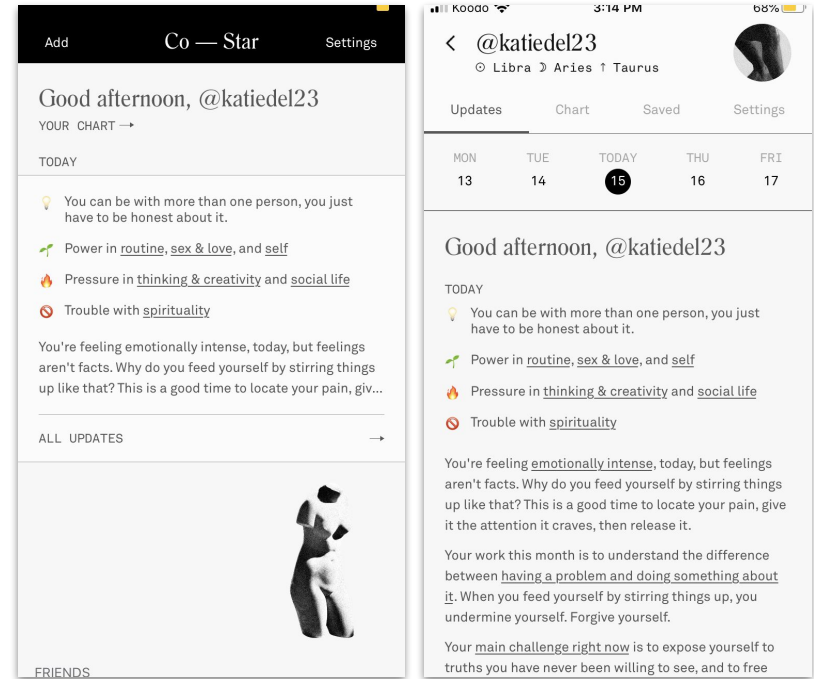
A documented hierarchy of what your brand experience should embody helps **align your team and prioritize features**, UI elements, and more.

**This is not just a tool for copywriting!*

MESSAGE ARCHITECTURE in product decisions



Accessible, personal, actionable



Thorough, spiritual, thought-provoking



VOICE & TONE

Your brand may already have a voice & tone guide—but **noting how and when your product experience might deviate** will empower your team.

**This is not just a tool for copywriting, either!*

VOICE & TONE in product decisions

 **Before you can purchase a shipping label, this change needs to be made:**

The name of the city you're shipping to has characters that aren't allowed. City name can only include spaces and hyphens.

[Edit address](#)

 **USPS has updated their rates** 

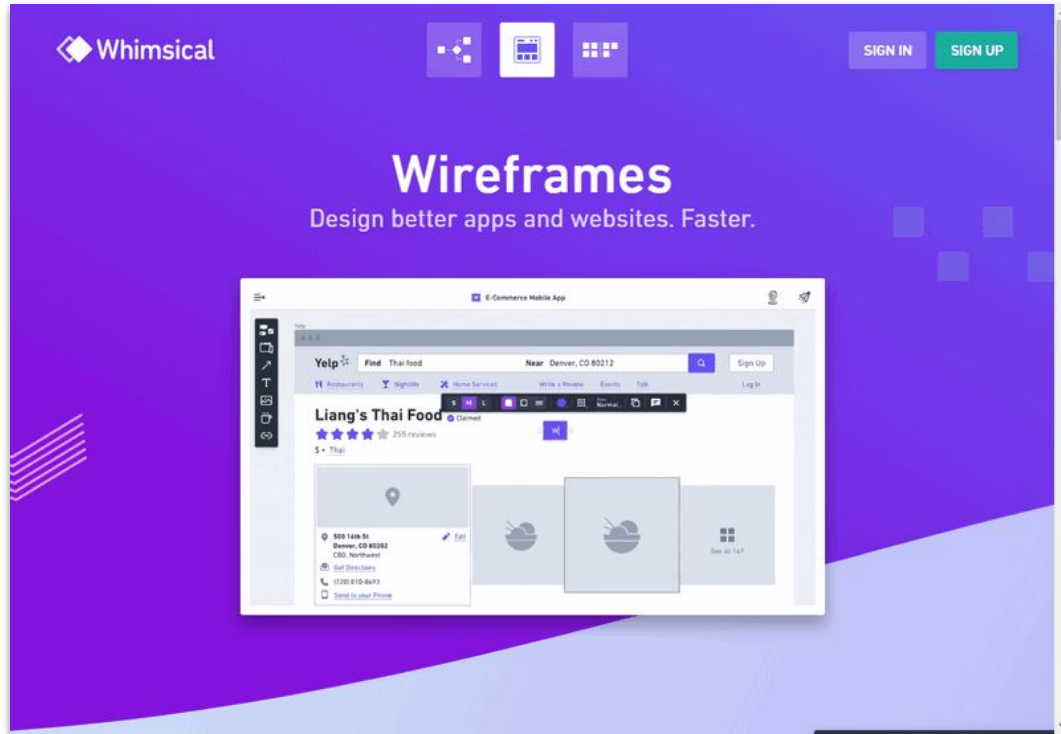
Make sure you know how these changes affect your store.

[Learn more](#)



COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Do a quick poke around 3-5 competitors to see how other solutions address this problem area. **Share this context.**



JOURNEY MAP

Mapping out more than just the “happy path” should help you see where there is potential to mitigate errors or **enrich the experience with information.**

JOURNEY MAP in product decisions

Footer	
<p>DISPLAY OPTIONS</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shop address</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone number</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social media links</p>	<p>Displaying a valid address is required in most countries, and can help avoid spam filters.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shop address</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone number</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social media links</p>
<p>STYLE</p> <p>Font</p> <p>SF Pro Display</p> <p>Change</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Text color</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Link color</p>	<p>STYLE</p> <p>Font</p> <p>SF Pro Display</p> <p>Change</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Text color</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Link color</p>
<p>DIVIDER</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show divider</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Divider color</p>	<p>DIVIDER</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Show divider</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Divider color</p>

Tool tip vs. warning or error message

Including a mailing address in your emails

Depending on where you're located, you might need to include a physical postal address in your promotional emails. The [CAN-SPAM Act](#) in the United States and the [CASL legislation/PIPEDA](#) in Canada are examples of these laws. The rules, regulations, and laws surrounding email marketing and spam, such as unsolicited emails sent in bulk, vary depending on your location. Make sure you're familiar with the laws in your region, state, and country before you begin an email marketing campaign.

By default, your store address is included in the footer of your emails. If you don't feel comfortable sharing your store address in your emails, then you can rent a PO box from your local post office or UPS store to use as your mailing address. To change the mailing address in your emails, go to **Settings > General** in your Shopify admin and enter your PO box address as your store's address.



Note

Your store address is the address that's shown on your invoices from Shopify. It could also affect [which apps can be used in your store](#). Make sure that you're comfortable with using a PO box for these purposes before you update your store address.

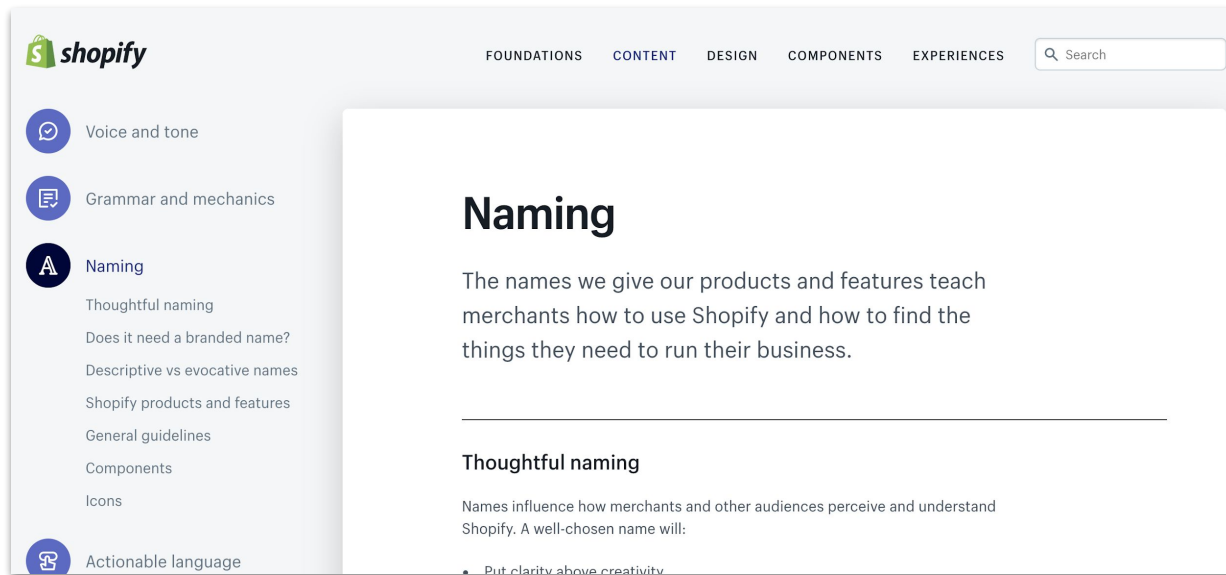
Help Center documentation for more detail

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
1	Merchant action / Resource scenario	Status	Does this need a message in the UI?	Type/timing of response	v1 response	v1 content	Git issue	v2 response	v2 content
2	Adds too many sections	✅ Ready to build	Y						
3	Adds more than 20 characters to a button	✅ Ready to build	N	Interaction	Interaction				
4	Adds a product image file type we don't support	❌ Done	Y	Upload	Upload				
5	Adds a product image that is too large	❌ Done	Y	Upload	Upload				
6	Adds a product image that is too small	❌ Done	Y	Upload	Upload				
					status becomes 'Failed'. Include			status becomes 'Failed'. Include	

CONTENT INVENTORY & AUDIT

Documenting where and **how your product surfaces information** will help as the product grows and evolves.

It is also a tool for tracking progress and helping to iterate later on lower priority items.



The screenshot shows the Shopify Style Guide & Glossary page for Naming. The page is titled "Naming" and includes a sub-section for "Thoughtful naming". The main text states: "The names we give our products and features teach merchants how to use Shopify and how to find the things they need to run their business." The sub-section "Thoughtful naming" includes the text: "Names influence how merchants and other audiences perceive and understand Shopify. A well-chosen name will:" followed by a bullet point: "• Put clarity above creativity."

shopify

FOUNDATIONS CONTENT DESIGN COMPONENTS EXPERIENCES

Search

Voice and tone

Grammar and mechanics

Naming

- Thoughtful naming
 - Does it need a branded name?
 - Descriptive vs evocative names
 - Shopify products and features
 - General guidelines
 - Components
 - Icons

Actionable language

Naming

The names we give our products and features teach merchants how to use Shopify and how to find the things they need to run their business.

Thoughtful naming

Names influence how merchants and other audiences perceive and understand Shopify. A well-chosen name will:

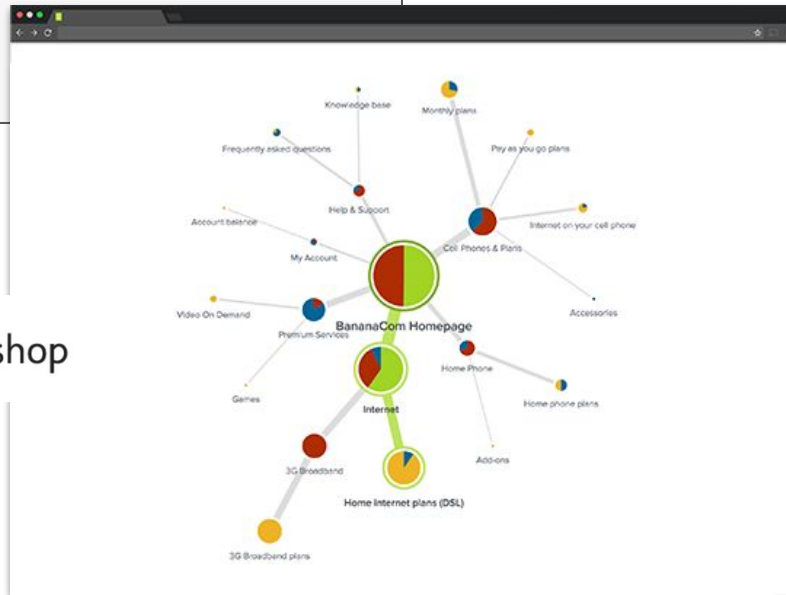
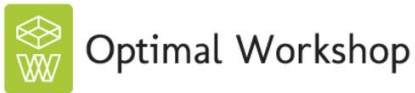
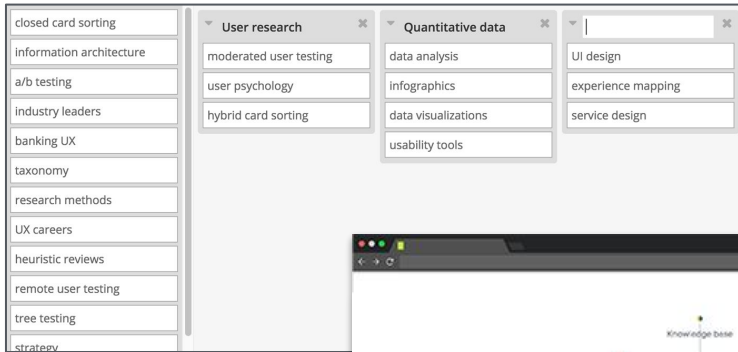
- Put clarity above creativity

STYLE GUIDE & GLOSSARY

Creating a shared source of truth for common elements will **help your team make decisions faster over time.**

Including rationale and patterns, as well as recurring vocab, will help with scaling.

ITERATION



CONTENT TESTING PLAN

Make note of areas where there is low confidence in the UX, then **create a roadmap for testing those UI elements.**

Tools like Optimal Workshop make it easy to do tree tests that don't require as much design effort up front.

**This tool is useful for understanding users' mental models for brand new products, too!*

Questions to ask at each stage

- Alignment
 - Does the hierarchy of the interface reinforce our message architecture?
 - What other product lines will this interact with? Are there clear CTAs? Is language consistent?
 - Is our terminology consistent with industry norms?
- Strategy
 - What other info might the user need at each stage? Should it show up as onboarding content in the interface, a Help Center doc, or something else?
- Execution
 - Do the CTAs, labels, microcopy, placeholders, and messages follow voice and tone guidelines?
 - How can we create frameworks to scale content, like error responses?
- Iteration
 - Do we have any concerns that users won't understand any areas? How can we test that?

Thanks!



Bonus material

- Content Strategy 101: A Primer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2doMXfwhMs&t=1s>
- Product content at each stage of a project
<https://ux.shopify.com/product-content-at-each-stage-of-a-project-55195190d8b5>
- 6 steps to product content audit perfection
<https://ux.shopify.com/6-steps-to-product-content-audit-perfection-fc89d3b637f4>
- Platform Design & Content Strategy
<https://designleadership.io/talks/elizabeth-mcguane-platform-design-content-strategy/>
- Content Strategy at Work (Sample chapter with info for establishing a message architecture)
http://appropriateinc.com/downloads/ContentStrategyAtWork_Chapter2Sample.pdf
- A primer on tree testing <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/tree-testing/>