

EPIISODE 010

ROBINHOOD

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Ben Crick, Collins

AND

Robert Thompson, Robinhood

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO

Hi, this is Bryony Gomez-Palacio and welcome to episode 10 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on the identity for Robinhood, the online platform that allows anyone to trade in in stocks, ETFs and options, all commission-free through a user-friendly desktop and mobile app.

The project, designed in collaboration by the San Francisco, CA, office of Collins and the in-house design team of Robinhood, was posted on Brand New on August 11. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast010 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast010, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Ben Crick, Creative Director at Collins, and Robert Thompson, Brand Creative Lead at Robinhood.

In this conversation we hear about the importance of a design agency and an in-house team working in tandem to provoke each other with new ideas and approaches and test them in real time as the project progresses. We also dig deeper into how the illustration-heavy

approach was developed and how it was designed to be implemented and expanded. And, most importantly, we get to the bottom of why they used a fire extinguisher as a sample application in the case study.

Now, let's listen in as Armin follows up with Ben and Robert.

ARMIN VIT Welcome everyone to The Follow-Up today we are going to look a little bit into the future with Robinhood. Today we have Ben and Robert on the podcast. Welcome guys.

ROBERT THOMPSON Great to be here.

BEN CRICK Good morning. Uh, this is Ben from Collins, or this is the sound of my disembodied voice from my home in San Francisco.

ARMIN All right. That is the best, uh, self-introduction on the podcast yet. So well done, Ben, we're off to a good start.

BEN Thank you.

ROBERT Really setting the scene.

ARMIN All right. So Robert, I want to start with you and Robinhood. So Robinhood is a relatively young company, only seven years old, but I imagine that given the changes in the industry and the technology, that's like 35 years old in FinTech slash online trading years, and that it would certainly be time to reassess your brand. So what led you to take on this redesign now?

ROBERT The first point of difference is that it was more of an evolution, right? We have all these monikers for, for what the work entails. I would say for this, it was more about taking a successful brand, taking a brand that was already beloved by this, the time that I joined and really evolving it into something that kept the things that were really working and push more into areas that would lead to us, being able to expand in our marketing channels, expand in all of our visual channels.

ARMIN And were you already in your role that you currently are when... seven years ago when Robinhood started?

ROBERT No, I wasn't. So I've been at Robinhood for three years before that our Creative Director, Zane Bevin was the real sort of creative mind behind the app, behind that first iteration of the brand, right? Very illustration-heavy, very green-heavy, and very useable right? So all credit to him who was definitely a part of this. For me, when I started three years ago, we were a successful company, still very small in terms of personnel. And we were really in a point where we needed to keep expanding all the visuals that we did and start to codify that system. So that was sort of my first task at Robinhood .

ARMIN So Ben, how did Collins get involved in the project?

BEN I don't think that this is a particularly exciting answer. It's pretty much the usual way. You know? We get, we usually get an email and then we meet for a chat and kind of discuss the problem and share some of the previous work and talk about our approach and you know, like any good date, you either get invited back for a second round or you don't.

ARMIN For our listeners that are maybe not that familiar with the process that you know, for you and me and maybe Robert it's kind of like a common thing, but you know, how does that process look at Collin's, which is different from what it would look like for someone like me or as well, which we're a small two-person design firm. So you get that email. How do you prep, who answers the email, who goes to a first meeting? Things like that.

BEN I mean, we just have an email on our website. So if anyone's looking to work with us, you know, just click on the link. No, so that, so that usually operates geographically. So I'm Creative Director of the San Francisco office and Robinhood is a San Francisco or, um, you know, West Coast based client, at least in their headquarters. And so that gets kind of funneled to us. And then we go in for a meeting and kind of, you know, we get the brief, we go in for a meeting and kind of share, ah, work that we think might be relevant and try to talk through

some of that work. The problem we solve, the shift that was that the client was kind of looking for, and how the work solved for that. Uh, and often like unpacking elements of the design system, like in this case, you know, illustration or iconography, or how did those different assets kind of work to solve that communications problem. Uh, I think something that we've been, hopefully was part of the reason we were selected for this project, but I think that we've kind of built a little bit of a name around is just, um, building systems for larger companies with kind of, uh, experience in-house teams. And so really considering what sets that team up for success and building a kind of toolkit for them as well. So I would say that was a big part of this project as well. And I think we have projects like that in the past that we've done that probably helped get us through the door on this one.

ARMIN Robert, can you verify what Ben just said? [laughter]

ROBERT It's all true....

New Speaker But like what attracted you to work with Collins?

ROBERT For me, it first, the role of the creative partner that we were looking for. We're not just looking to magpie concepts. We're not saying, oh, who did a good job on this? Let's just get exactly that thing. It wasn't window shopping. For me it was really important to find a partner that, and I do, and I will use that term a lot because it, it, it really was that right? You're not looking, you're not ordering at a fast food restaurant and saying, give me a double-double, and then you get a brand identity, right? It actually takes work from both sides. So for me, I wanted somebody who had a good process, right? You look at their work, there's not an idiosyncrasy there. You're not seeing this common theme. What you can see is that there is a process-based solution for all this work, for all of the work, that is appropriate to whatever the client was. Right? So you can, you can feel the research and the work that they do. And for me, that was important. And in the conversations that we had that became very apparent to me, I would say that we really wanted somebody who in that initial conversation felt like we

could collaborate, right? Felt like we could have an input that they didn't feel like it was going to be that, that typical relationship where a marketing manager coming in and saying, we need a redesign, please deliver this in seven weeks. But somebody who was willing to be in the trenches with us and, and loved the things that we loved about design.

ARMIN So speaking about collaboration now, um, as far as I know, like you have a pretty robust creative team in-house. What was the dynamic between you and your team with Collins during the redesign process? Once you knew that it would be a good fit?

ROBERT Yeah. That partnership part is super critical. I think it was fundamental to the success of this project, um, and building a successful brand at scale for us, it was collaborative from the get go. I think if the team on the in-house side is not as invested in the work as the partner that we're bringing onto this, I think that's where you run into trouble. For all of us, and Robinhood in general, we're really passionate about design. It's something that sets apart the product. And it's something that we wanted to be a huge part of this redesign, not only hitting all of these points and metrics that we needed to scale as a company, but also scale design, right, and good design at a massive scale. So it was a lot of partnerships. So it was being provoked by Collins. And it's so important to have that partner that's not going to give you what they think you want, but give them an idea that's free from all those hang-ups that you might have being on an in-house team. As an in-house team we're steeped in this stuff day and night, we're thinking about Robinhood problems, we're thinking about our category, we're thinking about everybody around us, and we're thinking about the work—but it's important to have that perspective from an outside agency and Ben and the team, and especially Ben being a Robinhood user, there was still that common language where we can be provoked, and we can also as an in-house team try all of these provocations. So it wasn't a matter of just being, you know, saying yes, no, yes, no. But like, yes, and? Right? And being able to build on that

with them and all of us really at points in this, we're very excited about what we were doing as a, as one entire team, as opposed to, you know, sitting back in a boardroom and saying, yeah, I think we like this when they're gone. Right?

ARMIN Yeah. I think that, it's very interesting that you mentioned how Collins can do something and then you can trial it in-house, because I think that's a really important thing where you you're, when you're able to prototype, you know, with what you're, as you're working on it, as opposed to just waiting for phases to be delivered. And sometimes you might have, for most clients, you have to wait until the end until you get the guidelines, then all the files and all that to actually start trialing. So this is a, it sounds like a really beneficial way to start that relationship.

ROBERT Yeah. I think for me having been on both sides of the table, at design agencies and ad agencies, and now being in-house, my mantra is always be a good client and digging into what that really means. It doesn't mean just saying yes to everything and making the agency or your partners happy. It's about actually digging in. It's about actually seeing if it could work for your business, seeing if it's scalable, getting people behind it and then also adding as much as we can to it. So not only just testing out ideas, but bringing new ideas to the table.

ARMIN Ben, can you confirm what Robert just said?

BEN Oh yeah. They threw, a few hot balls our way for sure. Uh, but the work is so much stronger for it. And I think Robert makes a bunch of really good points that I think Collin's as an agency has been learning over the last, you know, five, ten years, like what it means to build a brand at scale is: you can't, it's not like set it and forget it. You have to set the internal team up and Robert is a hundred percent, right. Like the business is so complex, there's so much stuff that these guys have to create, that there's no way that we're ever going to be able to solve that and zip it up a hundred percent. Right? And I think this is representative of kind of the whole agency model is kind of

changing a little bit, or especially when working with clients like Robinhood. A—this project and why I'm so proud of it is it's, it's kind of like a best in class example of, I think how these kinds of partnerships should go. Yeah, there needs to be a dialogue. We have an outside perspective and we have maybe like a focus on brand at large, but these guys understand what they need to communicate day-to-day. They understand what it means to make the work, what it means to get that work through an organization, timelines, budgets, all of that kind of stuff. And if you want to build a brand that is going to continue to be exceptional, or ideally get better and build from the place where we exit the conversation to rub this point exactly, they have to be co-creators—they have to have skin in the game, they have to love what they're making. Otherwise, it's going to start degrading from day one.

ROBERT To add on that and obviously, like agree with what Ben is saying completely. It's like buying a new car. The moment you drive it off of the lot, it starts devaluing, if you don't do anything to improve it. So having that cohesion between our teams and having our teams brought in, to all of these processes, means that when that guideline is delivered, right, we're already making stuff for it. We're already building on that foundation. We're already fixing things we're already streamlined and it making it more useful and amplifying the things that are really we're working about it.

ARMIN Uh, so Ben, you mentioned outside perspective and on your case study on your website, you mentioned that you started last year by hosting workshops in, uh, your San Francisco office with Robinhood's leaders, which means that you're trying to get the inside perspective so that you can match it with yours. Uh, can you tell us more about these workshops and what were some of the key insights that you got from them?

BEN Yeah, I mean, I think there's a little bit of a misunderstanding there, or just maybe the way it's phrased is slightly confusing. The project didn't start with a workshop. The workshop was kind of around the time

when we kind of, we were wrapping up the design direction and then the workshop was something we did to enrich some of the thinking, and to, and to kind of solidify some of the processes and bring a bunch of people on board so that they were, again, co-creating the kind of work, but it was really good. It was led by a managing partner out here Karin Soukup, I was her kind of brain child. And really, it was an exercise in getting kind of like 11 or 12 folks from Robinhood, plus us just working together for a couple of days. We, we put a bunch of boards up with reference of kind of the things we were inspired by, uh, specifically in this project, thinking about like the future, we wanted to get a ton of different representations of the future, you know, like illustrative novels, film, pop culture, fashion, especially when we're talking about this illustration style, which is, I think we say this in the, in the documentation of the case study, but when you're kind of imagining a future world, you kind of have to reimagine everything in the scene, which is both exciting and absolutely kind of like terrifying, there's so much work to do there. So this workshop was an attempt to get as whole kind of co-creating in that way. You know, we went to kind of like self driving car companies. We visited architects and urban planners, we went to Pixar. We were just try to see what people who are in the business of kind of imagining optimistic futures and worlds and how they kind of go about that and see if there was any goodness that we could draw on it for our own work.

ROBERT The entire experience was great. It sort of, it felt like cheating in a way, because this is, it's just not an experience that you generally get to have in-house, or I would assume at, at an agency it's immersive research and I'm a big proponent of that. I think that, uh, immersing yourself in something that you're trying to do is the only way to really understand and bring your own expertise to it. And we had a chance to do that in so many different levels of what the future could be, right? There was, as Ben mentioned, Pixar was amazing, right? And, and it has the auxiliary effect of not just being about, you know, how are people making the future of animation? It's the processes involved in it that we got an eye into. We were able to see kind of what

character building looks like at a very high level and at the kind of level where they're developing these things for years, right? Obviously it's an inspiring place to be right, at Pixar, but I could say the same for the architecture studios we went to. They're building sustainable architecture for the future, for like cities, for urban urban spaces that really, um, helped us sort of build this process of looking ahead, right? Of looking how we can start to anticipate things as a company, as designers. So it was not only defining kind of how we're building this world, but really as a design team, I found it extremely useful. And the effects of that continue to reverberate for us.

ARMIN How easy was it then, or how hard was it, to make that jump into committing into this idea of the future, not just for you and your team, but I guess you, at some point you have to get the leadership on board with this concept. Was that an easy process?

ROBERT To sort of back out and frame it a little bit. The future has so much to do with a product like ours. Um, when you're talking about investing, when you're talking about customers trying to better themselves, it's all about this vision of the future for themselves. It doesn't always mean flying cars. It doesn't always mean this sort of ultra futuristic science fiction world. Sometimes it just means feeling better about your skills, feeling better about what the future looks like for you. And in an optimistic way. I think leadership was very attuned to this from a tactical level of how people think about investing to how we were creating illustrations, how we were starting to show this double meaning of future, meaning like the future of investing: your future. It was a very, very easy, and I wouldn't even say sell because so much of it came from us already that it was the perfect foothold for us to start building work off of. And even further making that point, like going to self-driving car places, going to these people that are making technology for the future. It's so much of what the world of investing is about it's speculation, right? So we, this as an opportunity to speculate about what an optimistic future could look like, not only for our product, but for our customers.

ARMIN Yes, sounds like that's the benefit of knowing what your company is. And I think it, it sounds like you and the leadership know very well where you're working with. So it's also great that then Collins comes in and you all align on this vision of the future. So Ben, in terms of bringing this vision to life, how did you arrive at such an illustration-led approach?

BEN There's a couple things I want to go through in there. I think the concept of the future, Rob is a hundred percent, right. It in retrospect was such a natural fit for just like what's at the heart of Robinhood as a company. At the very least there, they're making a bet that the future is going to be better and that's what their whole company is founded on. Right? We, you know, we like to look into like historical references. Brian Collins, you know, has a passion and has spoken about in other instances, JFK speech where he kind of talks about it's the one where he says, we choose to go to the moon, we choose to go to the moon, not because it's easy, but because it's hard. But there's a whole bunch of stuff packed into that speech around, you know, the fear of, um, rocket technology as being linked to the cold war and, and kind of a weaponized technology. And he flips it into the space race and talks about rocket technology as being something that will propel mankind into the future, uh, into knowledge and, and prosperity that we don't know yet. And ever, and you know, that speech galvanized a whole generation and affected decades of kind of pop culture, you know, the whole mod movement and everything came out of kind of space, age, uh, inspiration. And that speech kind of became representative of this hope that humans have the technology is the path to a better future for all of us. And so that was really the kind of connective tissue where, where we were thinking Robinhood is this future-focused technology. That's kind of like changing the category. It was forged in the crucible of the financial crisis. And so anyway, we really liked the idea that our version of the candy speech was flipping finance and talking about the future and prosperity and, and just like evoking, trying to kind of create a vision that was really evocative, that kind of snap people out of their current understanding.

BEN So once we kind of settled on that idea, well one, the Robinhood team like Robert himself is an illustrator and the Robinhood team has always used illustration as a strong tool in their brand. And again, trying to, trying to build systems that kind of understand the strengths of an internal team. I think, you know, we had discussed this and thought the illustration was a no brainer. And then it just came down to kind of what kind of illustration really, you know, illustration made a lot of sense for this, this kind of vision we were trying to create. Illustration made a lot of sense because of the competency of the team. And illustration made a lot of sense because honestly it's a fantastic tool for explaining hard to understand concepts or things that are a little abstract like finance, because illustration can blend reality and, you know, the imagination fairly seamlessly in a way that photography and iconography and many other visual tools can't really do. So it kind of just ticked all the boxes really.

ARMIN Yeah. And I think for the project, as we show it on Brand New and it's on your case study, there's a lot of commissioned illustrations that you worked on upfront, but I have a little bit of a technical question is that now that it's ongoing, how do you go about creating new illustrations for different needs? I guess this is a question for Robert.

ROBERT It's interesting going through the case study process with something like this, because we have so much beautiful material that is useful for us internally and can sometimes skirt the area of concept art, right. And somewhat divorced from its meaning. I felt that it was very important to include that in this case study, because it shows those visions of an emerging future, right? What's also important to note is that we work with so many illustrators on this, right? Like we knew that we wanted to build a system that was flexible. One that had some pretty strong visual kind of stylizations and some rules around it where we can still maintain a brand through all of these different illustrators, different stories that we had to tell. It's been extremely scalable because we looked at it from not just the perspective of what's a good illustration system, but what's one that actually is repeatable, what's one that is

scalable. So it wasn't just about drawing the best picture, right? It was about, can we create a process behind this that makes it a lot quicker than people think. How do we optimize this process? So with the use of 3D-tools, with the use of super inventive things from our in-house animators, Drew, Victor, you guys were amazing. It really pushed this idea forward to make it seem not, you know, when you see these illustrations and I was the same way at certain points, it's like, how do we continue this... right? We've set a high bar. How do we keep going on it? I've not found that that's been a problem at all, due to the technical acumen of, of our teams and the great network of illustrators that we've been working with. As Ben mentioned, I started my career as an illustrator. So, it had the benefit of when we were talking about this stuff, I knew somewhat the production of these, what it would take. Uh, and it, it didn't scare me. Right? It felt like these are things that we've always wanted to do. And there's always somebody standing in the way saying you can't do that. It's going to be too hard. Look how beautiful this is. How are you going to do it? The truth is we did a world building exercise that helps us sort of define everything from form language, to what are recurring themes, all of these things that are going to tie together a visual system without it having to be by the same artist every time that have helped us again, not only create a great network, but create really amazing technical advancements in how we can make these things and animate them in-product, which we have.

ARMIN Yeah, that sounds really exciting. I think usually when you, when I see a redesign with illustrations, you will see anywhere between five and ten illustrations that just get repeated on different pages. And that it, and as I kept clicking through the Robinhood website, like, oh, here's a new one and here's another new one, and here's a small one, and here's a big one, and here's one to illustrate this concept. And I just thought like, wow, this is endless. Somehow they've managed to already build a library that's pretty intense and deep, but it sounds like you were prepared for that. And now you have the tools to just keep making a bunch of these as ah, as needed.

ROBERT Yeah. Illustration and these delightful experiences as, as they can sometimes be called, have been a part of Robinhood since long before I was there. Amazing illustrators have been there long before I was there. So there was already this mindset of the importance of illustration for all the reasons Ben mentioned, it's super versatile. It can be instructive. It can be imaginative. It could bring you to a place where you're just sort of in awe—it's arresting imagery, right? And sometimes it's instructive. For us, it wouldn't have been enough to have a sticker pack, right? Commission somebody to do ah, here's this illustration system it's done. Here are 300 of them, use them for the next four years, or whatever. For us, we have to be adaptable, right? Just like markets change, just like people change, just like our users change, we need to be able to tell different stories. So just having, you know, 10 illustrations and saying, okay, job done. Let's pack it up. Wouldn't have been enough for us. We're pretty ambitious as a company and as a design team that certainly holds true. And part of the reason why I joined Robinhood was for how ambitious and not like the rest of finance we are. And that, that has remained true for me. So Ben and I have talked about this a lot where it's, the more curious you are, you should be rewarded for that. Curiosity should always be rewarded. And I find that having delightful visual experiences or having new or novel visual experiences, the more you dig in is important. You can't keep repeating the same thing and expect people to be as excited about it when they're 10 layers deep as they are with something that's new.

BEN Yeah. And I think that this really ties into for me why I think this illustration and system and the world building and everything is so effective. When you think about any good film that has such a really powerful world built around it, that a world that you feel like you could step into and turn the corners, and that would, you know, you start to understand the rules of that world in a way that you can see how it extends beyond whatever image you're just looking at at the moment. And I think that's what makes that's what made the workshop. And that's what makes this system so powerful is you want to discover more because there's so much detail and

so much thought in each image that it just suggests a larger narrative is there. And so you kind of want to keep digging and understand where it's going. I think that's a really powerful, it's a kind of an antidote to the overly simplistic illustrations that we see as kind of like the predominant form of illustration at scale at the moment. So I just really enjoyed working on it.

ARMIN Indeed. There is nothing simplistic about some of the illustrations you all created, specifically the ones that build on the work of Moebius, whom you do acknowledge as a source of inspiration and that you're making an homage. Can you talk a little more about him and his work as an influence for this project?

BEN I mean, we obviously love Moebius Jean Giraud, was a kind of iconic French illustrator in the sixties and part of like a whole movement, he worked on the story boards for Tron. Jodorowski's Dune. For Fifth Element. He, what the point I'm trying to make is, you know, he, he's kind of like in many respects, like one of the pillars of futuristic thinking and imagination. And so, you know, of course he was something that we love and looked to, but we were also looking at all sorts of other references. I mean, Valérian was another French graphic novel that came out roughly around the same time that dealt with the same kinds of things. I mean, there was a whole movement in that era linked to that same moment around Kennedy, where we were kind of imagining mankind's future in space and the prevailing sentiment was optimism. And so there was a lot of optimistic futures out there. And so yes, some of those images definitely kind of are an homage to Moebius because we love him so much. But I think if you look across the full suite and if you look at the ones on Robinhood's learn page and, and other places, we're definitely not strictly in that territory. There's some of those that I think we're just as fans of his, we wanted to kind of celebrate that style and I'm kind of sad that people don't see it that way. But....

ROBERT And if I could add in a little bit, I think just even being brought up in the same sentences, Moebius is like a major win, right? And it's not

because that's what we set out to do. I think Moebius is amazing. There there's nobody that's been more influential in graphic novels than Moebius. Any illustrator that we've worked with. Everybody knows who he is. And it's important. I can remember the first time that I was introduced to Moebius early in college, my French friend, who had all of the Moebius comics, but all of the books, the big box set in French showed me. And it blew my mind. Like it really leaves an indelible mark on everybody that sees it. I mean, you can trace him back to Star Wars to all these things that we think of as being the singular moments in science fiction and futurism have been inspired by him from like cinematic scenes where you're showing organic landscapes with these futuristic technologies. It's almost impossible to escape. I would say in the art direction of these pieces, that was never something that we pushed towards. It's something that the world gravitates towards. And I think it's because Moebius had beautiful principles for how he built his artwork and was extremely influential on everybody that came after him. So to me, I celebrate even being mentioned in that even if it was in an abstract way that we came to that conclusion.

ARMIN Yeah. And in the end, they're just beautiful illustrations to look at and take in that you don't see them and discard them easily. They force you to sort of pause and be like, oh wait, is that what I think it is? Is that, you know, someone holding a weird thing while levitating in a pod. So yeah, I think there's a lot to it that goes beyond just, you know, a certain style that some people might recognize. So yeah, I love the illustration work and moving away from the illustration topic into something a little bit more lighthearted that I think was entertaining for a lot of people from the images from the case study was this image of a fire extinguisher that in 16 years, sorry, 14 years of running Brand New, I have never, ever posted an image of a fire extinguisher as a proof of concept for an identity. So what, where did that come from? [laughter]

BEN Do you want to take this one on me?

ROBERT You can start off because it was definitely one of those collaborative moments for us that form of fire extinguisher is pretty ubiquitous in European countries. I love it. It's the kind of thing that I, the first time I saw that type of form for that, it just made perfect sense. Right? Very simple, very beautiful in its own way, in a way that most things aren't. So that when we were talking about this, it immediately came to mind as something that could be a good vehicle for what we're trying to accomplish with this, which is, I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but you've seen every permutation of in-situ branding, right? We've all seen the billboards that everybody uses the bus shelters, every, everything, t-shirt, tote bag... I think for this, because we are trying to do something new, and I think pattern breaking is something that's really important for our business—it was just as important for this case study. We wanted to make sure that the Institute that we were showing was the best vehicle for the work, purposeful and set itself apart. And Ben, if you want to add to that...

BEN The, the point of the icons was a utility element, right? And I think we had a really beautiful fire extinguisher icon, and we wanted to show it off in a way that was kind of challenging conventions. And so that's really, it. [laughter]

ROBERT There's an immediacy to that iconography, right? Like when you're talking about pictograms, none are more important than where's the first aid kit? Where's the fire extinguisher? You have to know those things. So being able to flex our color system, being able to flex our iconography in a way that you immediately got the purpose of those, it was unquestioned. Why that thing was on that thing. It wasn't a tote bag. It wasn't something applied to something out of context. It was, here's a utilitarian, useful, beautiful design that just happens to be something that most people ignore, but probably shouldn't,

ARMIN We'll see two years from now, if fire extinguisher becomes, uh, one of the default ways of showcasing an identity. It'll be, it'll be interesting.

ROBERT We expect a footnote. If you ever see that Armin, you gotta... [laughter]
Let them know.

BEN Link, link back to the original fire extinguisher.

ARMIN First use. Yeah. So Robert, well, we've talked a lot about the illustration. Now let's get into a little bit of the nuts and bolts of the actual identity system. What is the most exciting part about it going forward in terms of the typography,color, just general thinking beyond illustration?

ROBERT Absolutely. With the typeface, this was something that we developed before our engagement and partnership with Collins. It was a typeface that needed to perform like our previous typeface, have similar characteristics, but move more in the direction that we were going, which was having more clarity, more sort of usefulness, some charm, right? So there— this typeface, whenever a company makes a shift from one typeface to another, it's an enormous shift throughout product ,throughout all of the touch points that we're putting out as a company, you have to adjust to that. And to me it's extremely exciting, right? It's like, it's kind of like eating one thing for a year and a half, and then all of a sudden there's a slightly different, like change... any sort of minor change has a sort of ripple effect, right? Where we have to create new design solutions. We need to put it through its paces. So that's been extremely exciting seeing it come to life from our product teams. That really is the most exciting part is seeing how this reverberates outside of brand and marketing, into the core product itself. And I know Zane that team, they're really doing an amazing job of bringing that to life and providing provocations and solutions that we get to continue building as a company. Even with the color system in a brand context, you're able to use it in ways that are different than product, right? We want to maintain simplicity. We want to maintain clarity and seriousness of what we're doing in our product. So taking that and transferring it through that lens of product has been super exciting to see. We have this huge toolkit of everything from layout, to illustration, as you've mentioned, uh, iconography, which is a

whole other fantastic world we've been exploring, like all of it excites me is like the diplomatic answer to that because it is new. There's a freshness to it that maintains its excitement for me. I haven't gotten used to it. And I think that's a good thing.

ARMIN That was a great metaphor of changing typefaces inside the company that it is like changing your diet all of a sudden, like you've been eating chicken breasts for three years and then someone goes like, here's some salt for your chicken, but like, oh my God, like this is revolutionary! Like I can do so many more things.

ROBERT Yeah. And to us from an outside non-designer perspective, it might be chicken breasts. Right? And that the thought from outside of design might be, oh, why did we have to change this? Like, why do we have to change it? We're totally happy with us. And no disrespect to Din, which is an amazing typeface, right? It's tried and true. Nobody can argue against Din having its place in the lexicon of great typefaces. But for us, it's a monumental change. It's like going from, as you're saying, it's like, you're eating, like gruel basically every day to having like a four course meal that's changing all the time because you're getting to know this thing. And so you always, you have to have justification for what you do and the rationale behind all of these decisions that we made has made it possible for these elements to continue their relevancy for our company.

ARMIN That's fantastic. So, Ben, um, looking back at when the project started and those initial conversations, when that email came to that magic button on the website and got funneled to San Francisco, did you ever imagine this is the territory you would end up in?

BEN Well, two part answer: short version is no. But the long version is I don't think we try to go into any project with a preconceived notion of where we're going. And in fact, I think that there were oftentimes really trying to challenge category convention, at least when it comes to kind of the marketing perspective anyway, because there's a busy world out there and there. And I think there's a lot of brands that are starting to pull from the same kind of reference sheet I would say. And so we are

interested in something that's appropriate, which Robert kindly gave us credit for earlier. And the best version of appropriate is, you know, or at least I would say differentiation is a factor that makes something appropriate. And it's something that these guys agreed with us on as well. So it seems, you know, if you look at the visuals and it's different from everything else, I think that's great. That was the intended response. When you think about Robinhood's DNA as a brand, they were built out of challenging convention or challenging the status quo. And so in many respects, this identity doesn't feel surprising to me because it's a real, while it aesthetically is quite different, it's a absolutely a representation of their kind of ethos as a company and what they're looking to do with every move they're making right now.

ARMIN Well, yeah, it sounds like you both Collins and Robinhood teams, you both had a really great time working together. And I think the end result shows off that really great relationship and that back and forth and pushing and pulling that took that work to the next level. And as you mentioned, just defied conventions and expectations and it's everything to see it as you scroll through the work. So thank you so much, Ben and Robert for sharing your story today. And we look forward to seeing many, many more funny, funky, cool illustrations on the Robinhood page. So thank you for joining me. Thank you. Thank you.

BRYONY A key word that kept coming up in this conversation was provocation, which is a great notion to keep in mind as you work with anyone from clients to colleagues to in-house team members... can you provoke each other outside your comfort zone and take the time to explore those provocations before shutting them down and seeing if they lead you to a more interesting future? A future where, perhaps, a new, default, identity application like business cards, tote bags, or wild postings is a fire extinguisher.

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.