

**The Casual Brand
Creative**

Brand On-boarding

**A guide to building your
product line from concept
to finished product**

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Made With ♥ by
The Casual Brand Creative

The Intro.

Welcome.

I'm so glad we were able to connect,
and I am thrilled to guide you through
the creative and technical processes of
your project.

Building a brand is no small feat. It takes a lot of planning, preparing, organization, and, of course, vision.

It is our mission at The Casual Brand Creative to provide expert direction and guidance to start-ups like yours.

Building a line of product that represents the brand while also driving sales is a meticulous process, and from someone outside the industry it looks like complete chaos (or so we've heard). That is why CBC exists - we aim to support you in a way that will allow you to do exactly what it is you wanted to do - create a dope brand, but without having to worry about the logistics. Think of us as your industry BFF- we will hold your hand but also be honest when necessary (this statement will make more sense later).

By having over ten years of experience in the industry, we're in a position to be able to support your needs as a new brand. Our

industry network is a strong one, and we work with some of the best fabric mills and ethical clothing manufacturers in the game (not to toot our own horn). You can rest easy knowing that we are working night and day to deliver quality product with your brand ethos in mind.

This guide was put together for you to be able to reference throughout the design, development, and production process. It's a nice little tool to use to learn a little bit more about the process, delivered in a way that is easily digestible.

It's such a privilege to be working with you on this project. I know that this experience will be a special one for you, and I am so thrilled that I have the honor of being your guide.

Here's to creating something amazing, and completely your own!



Lauren Luketich
Founder

The Concept & Design

PS

**This is where
the fun begins**

First Thing's First

Before we go and run wild with design, we need to have a solid understanding of the business of things first. This will ensure that we are building a product that is on-brand and that aligns with your vision.

Here are a few questions to consider before we can get to the creative stuff:

- *Who is your customer?*
- *Are there any existing brands you look to for inspiration?*
- *What does your **line plan**, or **range plan** look like?*
- *Are you designing around a certain season or calendar? Where do you plan to sell your product?*



Let's unpack the biz side of things really quickly...

Customer Brand Aesthetic

I want to know anything and everything about who your customer is. Does she live on a farm and have rustic French vibes? Is he hip and urban? Is he spending \$25 on a tee or \$250? What are his/her core values, and how will we translate that in design? Are vegan products important to your customer? Does she buy pop colors or is she more of a neutral shopper?

Brand Identity

1

Line Plan / Range

2

What Are We Making?

If you've signed on with CBC to create 4-5 pieces or more, I consider this to be you starting your own fashion line. You don't need to be building a collection of 10-20 pieces in order to launch a line. So before we begin I will need to know:

1. What it is, exactly, we will need designed.

Example: 2 Tees, 1 Jean, 1 Short, 1 Short Sleeve Dress

2. How many pieces per style/per color are you planning to offer?

*Example: Tee #1 will be offered in 2 colors, and 1 Print (for a total count of 3 **SKUs**)*

What is Your Sales Plan?

Are you planning to sell at a wholesale level? Or will you be selling your product D2C (directly to your consumer)? If you plan to sell at trade shows and are on a seasonal calendar, we need to ensure we build that into our planning. For example, you have a trade show to hit in 3 months, and we haven't even begun to design, there is no chance of turning product quickly enough for that show.

If you are selling D2C on say, your website, then we have a little more wiggle room with the calendar.

Calendar

3

Once these steps are clearly laid out, we can then begin to move on to the different phases of the actual design and product development phases.

Design Flow:

The Process & What to Expect

We've talked business.
We know who your customer is.
We've touched on your brand ID.
We understand your timeline goals.
Your range plan is set...but as bullet points on a piece of paper. Now it's time to actually breathe life into your concept & get designing!

Step 1: Mood Board

Mood boarding is something I could talk on for hours. They are one of my favorite parts of the design process.

It's like arts and crafts for grownups. There is no right or wrong kind of mood board. It's essentially a brain dump that represents what you want your brand/label/line to look like, to feel like. When you're done with your board, you should be able to present it to someone and that person should know what your ish is all about, just from looking at the board.

Here's what should be represented on your board:

Mood	If you're creating a children's line, your "mood" wouldn't represent heavy-metal "Iron Maiden" vibes
Color	This is a great way to explore the beginnings of your color palette. Find hues that you'd like to see realized on your garments!
Fabric	Like color, this is a good time to generate an understanding of the types of fabrics that will work best for your line.
Graphics	Have some cheeky ideas for some wording printed on your tees? Embroidery ideas? A cool print? Include these ideas!

Pro Tip: If you're not sure where to start with fabric and color, a great exercise is to scope out your competitor's stuff. Go shop around and see what fabrics they are using, and if it's available, buy a garment whose fabric you really like.

Another idea would be to head to a second hand store and purchase something similar there. For color, head to Home Depot and get some paint chips! Sounds silly, but it works.

Pro Tip: Pinterest is the most obvious place where you can keep loads of ideas for a mood board. There are also other sites like Canva who offer a great platform for creating shareable mood boards

Sample Mini Mood Board

You should be able to understand the overall mood that this brand is trying to convey simply by looking at the imagery. A few words or phrases that would come to mind are:

Rustic Country Eco-friendly Natural Fabrics Earth tones Lightweight fabrics Flowy Designs

Your story should be clear.



Once the design direction is established... Here's what happens next...

The Entire Range is Sketched

All the designs are sketched, with any notable details called out, and passed to you for final approval. The designs are laid out in a merchandised plan to ensure there are no gaps in the range.

Fabrics are Sourced

Once we have an idea of the type of fabrics we want to consider for the range, I will begin to simultaneously source fabrics while in the sketching phase of things. All viable fabric options will be selected and sent to you for review and final selection.

Notes on Fabric

*Fabric mills require minimum order purchase for fabrics that they do not stock. Some mills will run lower yardage but this will normally mean that surcharges will be involved. This is still a great option for a brand looking to custom-make their fabric (with their own colors, prints, finish, etc).

*For brands looking to run low units to start, it's best to source fabric from vendors that have a stock program, so that at the most, you'd be required to purchase only a roll. Sometimes, they will do you a favor and cut less than a roll. The downside is that the mill may not carry your selected fabric in a colors that matches your palette for the season, though they do try to update their stock to match hot colors for the season.

Tech Packs are Built

When the designs are finalized, we can move on to the tech packing stage. **Tech Packs** are basically the Bible for pattern makers, sample makers, and manufacturers. It's a build guide for them, and 100% necessary. You wouldn't try to build an airplane by yourself, right?

Samples are Made

*Once the fabrics are selected and tech packs finished, we can move to sampling! I know, FINALLY! In order to get samples made, **sample yardage** of fabric will need to be purchased.

*The first step is to get a pattern made. This may or may not be done by the person who will sew it as well.

*After the pattern is created, the sample will be sewn and we will have a fitting to make any tweaks or changes to the garment before moving to the production stage. If you have a good pattern maker and sample sewer, you should expect to only need 2 rounds of fittings, if the style is not extremely complicated.

*Over the years, I've seen a lot of dismayed clients at this stage. Their expectation is that the first time they see their samples, they will be perfect and will look how they expect the final product to look. **This could not be further from the truth.** The sampling stage is for fit. It's to ensure that the technical details and issues are worked out before running production. It may be the case that your first couple samples are delivered in a dull brown with bright yellow zippers. Ugly AF. But this is what the sewer/mill/vendor had on hand to create the fit samples & will in no way reflect your final garment.

Notes on Samples

The Production.

✓ **Concept**

✓ **Sketches**

✓ **Tech Packs**

✓ **Fabrics**

✓ **Samples**

Hope you're ready, because now you're committed & ready for the next step

The hard part is done. The development of your initial design idea tends to be the most tedious part of the project.

You want to make sure your product is perfect, and that doesn't happen overnight. It can take months (established companies can take up to six (6!)) to work on the development of a new range of product.

This is where the expertise of CBC really comes in to play. Once we've finalized designs and have a production-ready sample approved, you can sit back, relax, and let us deal with ensuring that the production of your line is running smoothly.

Here's what's happening while you take a much-needed breather:

Before we begin production:

In order to begin production, here is what we will have in-hand and confirmed:

A production-ready sample This is the sample that has an approved fit and, ideally, represents all the construction details that are called out in the tech pack. Your final sample does not necessarily need to have all of the production-approved bulk materials (fabric, trims, labels, etc) at this stage (you will get a **PP sample** that will reflect all of this).

Bulk materials (fabrics, trims, labels, packaging) In order to begin production, we will need to have ordered all of the components in order to actually build the garment. You should have ordered and delivered all the items on your **bill of materials** reflected in your tech pack to your manufacturer.

**If you are producing full-package overseas, you will have approved all components by now.*

Pattern Grading Before the manufacturer cuts your bulk fabric, you need to have your patterns graded in order for a **marker** to be made. CBC or your pattern maker will grade your base pattern according to the sizes that

you specify (ex: XS-XL). To ensure that the grading reflects the fit you want to achieve for each size, we will be asking for a PP sample for both the base size and a larger size. This ensures that the grading has been done correctly.

**By doing this, you can catch any issues before your entire production is compromised!*

Production Starts.

Here's what that means & what it looks like, in a nutshell

- 1 PP is approved —→ A Marker is Made
 - 2 Bulk Fabric is Cut —→ Cut Pattern Pieces are Bundled
 - 3 Pieces are Sewn —→ Garments Move to Finishing & Packing
-

That's the general process. Here's what CBC is up to during it all...

Once we have an approved PP ready to go and the fabric and components have been delivered to the manufacturer, it's full steam ahead and we are there at every step of the process to ensure that your project is running smoothly.

Once production is under way, we will be requesting **TOP** samples to make sure the production line is following the tech pack guidelines (which should also match the PP that you approved).

Once the goods are finished and packed, we will provide packing lists so you know exactly how many units are being shipped so that you can have your website and inventory updated ahead of the goods arriving to your final destination/warehouse.

That way, once the goods arrive and are checked in (you want to make sure all the goods you were expecting are accounted for, you can start selling!

And just like that, you have your own label.

Words to Know

Bill of Materials: This will detail every component required to build out your product. Self fabric, lining, fusing, buttons, zippers, tags, labels, etc..... Everything that will be on your garment should be listed on the BOM.

Finishing & Packing: This stage of production is the final stage of the process. The last bits like ironing/steaming the goods or adding hang tags to the garment will be done during this stage, and then packed to your specific requirements, such as folded in a polybag.

Full-package Manufacturing: When you do a full-package deal with a factory, that means that the cost you are paying per unit for a garment should include the fabric and components, the cut/make cost, finish and packing cost, etc. It's exactly how it sounds - you are paying one set price for a "full package deal". This ensures there are no surprise costs on your final invoice. This method is usually used when working with overseas factories, as factories in the US do not function this way.

Line/Range Plan: This is your merchandised plan for the products you will be producing for the season or for your project. The plan should include every style you plan to create, along with fabric and trim information, color information, etc. and laid out in a digestible way in order to ensure there are no gaps in the offerings. If you are offering 20 shirts and 1 bottom, there is probably an issue in planning and there should be another look taken on the assortment. Range plans are best laid out on linesheets so that everything is in one place and can be easily viewed.

Marker: A marker is a digital plot that is printed out to ensure that you are getting the best yield/use from your bulk fabric. This ensures that there is as little fabric waste as possible.

PP: A PP sample is the final sample you will see/approve before production begins, and is a way for you to catch any mistakes with sewing or with fabric/trims. This sample should reflect what your final product will look like post-production.

SKU: Stock-keeping unit. Every item you produce, in its own color and size, is one SKU.

Tech Pack: A detailed guide the manufacturer will use to build your product. Measurements, detailed sewing constructions, etc. should be called out here.

TOP: The TOP is one of the first items to come off the actual production line and will be reviewed to ensure any changes on the PP will be reflected in bulk.