

Canva: streamlining work through accessible design tools

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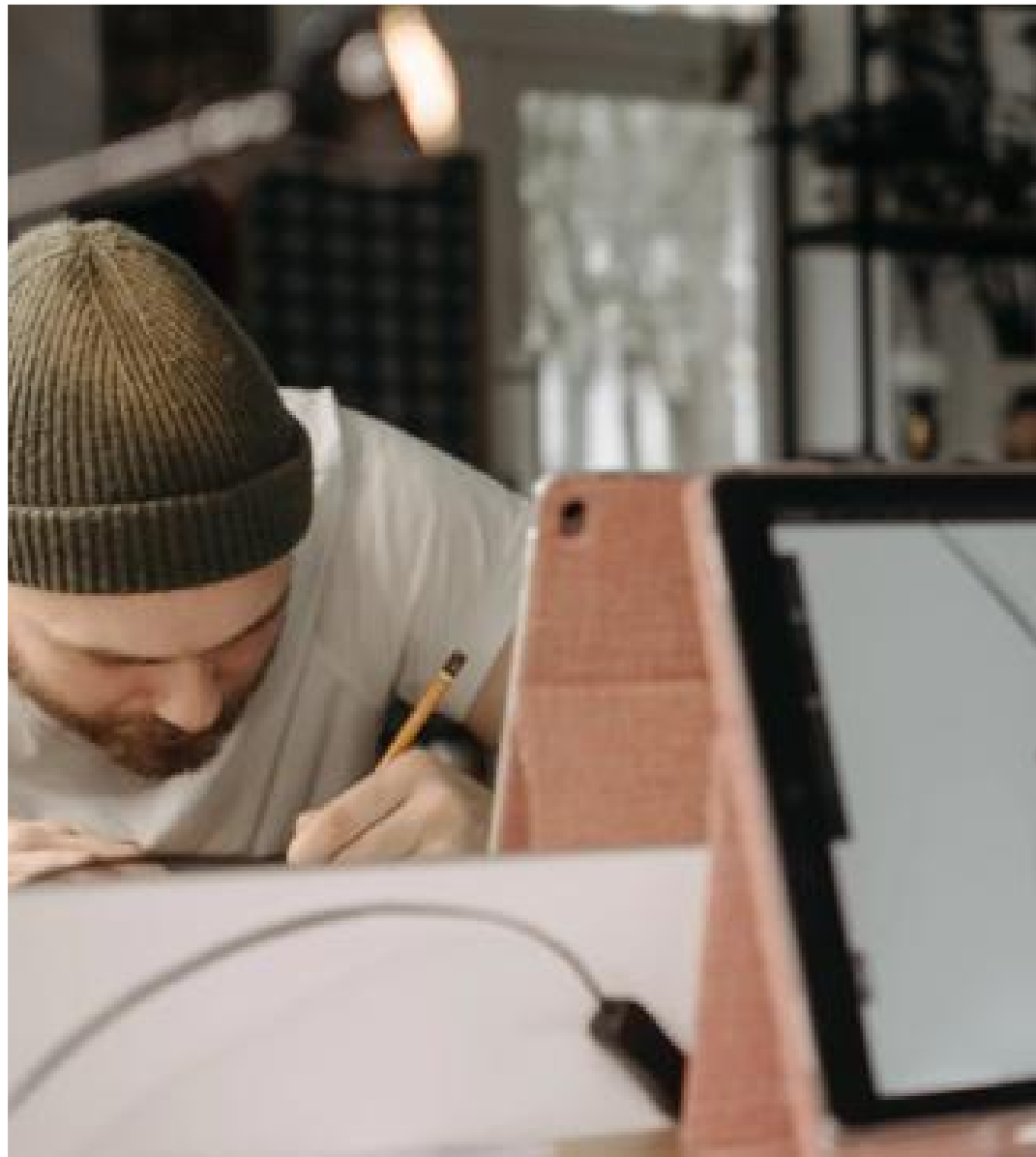
As hybrid working ushers in a range of digital services to streamline people's working lives, many still come with their share of challenges. Graphic design platform Canva is looking to provide a solution, prioritising the needs of individuals and businesses alike through accessible design tools.

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LOCATIONS:
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EXPERTS

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 01** Canva has become a major player in the graphic design industry with a focus on seamless user experiences and ease of use for amateurs and professionals alike
- 02** The brand is aiming to streamline workplace technology by prioritising accessibility and user-friendly tools, helping it to become a go-to service for both businesses and individual users
- 03** As hybrid work becomes the norm, there's a demand from employees and employers for easy-to-use tools that facilitate effective remote collaboration

DATA

- Over 20% of employed Australians work from home
- Australia has the highest percentage of hybrid workers (34%) compared to the US, UK, and Canada (29%)
- Over 900,000 Australian workers – that's 6.5% of the workforce – held multiple jobs in Q2 2022 as Australians turn to creative ways to earn money on the side

SCOPE

The pandemic triggered a worldwide shift in the way people work, as conventions were thrown out the window in favour of hybrid working lifestyles. Flexibility, remote work, and self-starter attitudes are ushering in a new era of conversations about careers. Australia has become a global leader in this regard – it has the highest percentage of hybrid workers (34%) compared to the US, UK, and Canada (29%). [1] But what tools are people and companies looking for to help them adjust to new ways of working?

Canva is one product tapping into the hybrid work transition. At first glance, it looks like a humble web-based design tool for users who have no professional design skills, allowing them to create social media graphics, presentations, videos, banners, and more in a user-friendly way. But it's this focus on creating a seamless user experience that has led Canva to become a major player in the graphic design industry. Founder Melanie Perkins was frustrated with expensive and clunky-to-use design tools, such as Adobe InDesign, which led to her founding Canva as a solution that prioritises the needs and experiences of users. [2] The brand has grown to include 3,200 employees and over 100 million active monthly users, 11 million of which are paying customers that generate \$1 billion in annual revenue. This led to the business being valued at \$26 billion in late July 2022, the highest of any female-founded and woman-led start-up globally. [3]

Furthering the company vision to “build the world’s most valuable company,” Canva is expanding into other areas of visual communications, offering design-focused alternatives to products offered by Microsoft, Google, and Squarespace in the hope of streamlining workplace technology for users. [4] Products such as Canva Docs, a competitor to Google Docs that will incorporate design templates and video tools, will allow the brand to cater to personal use as well as work for businesses and organisations. [5] The success of Canva has signalled an era of tools that foreground convenience and accessibility for users. With this pivot towards becoming a go-to tool for businesses and individual users alike, can Canva empower companies, creators, and everyone in between?



Canva’s user-friendly design tools are helping to streamline workplace technology for users

Canva (2022)

CONTEXT

ACCESSIBILITY AND CONVENIENCE IN TECH

Increasingly, people want convenience in their everyday lives and are seeking technology that makes their day-to-day work hassle-free. A Microsoft survey of US teachers found that 84% believe equity in education cannot be achieved without accessible learning tools; as the business leaders of tomorrow move from the classroom to the boardroom, a lack of accessibility can become a roadblock to success. [6] With a simple interface and a ‘freemium’ subscription model that offers a wide range of features, Canva has built up a reputation for being incredibly easy to use, adaptable, and multifunctional, even for users with no prior design experience. By allowing people to work with a majority of its design features for free, Canva has been able to bring in millions of users for whom an upgrade is a no-brainer as their design needs grow. “Canva has disrupted the design industry in the same way that Uber disrupted the taxi industry,” says Brodi-Rose Newsome, the founder and creative director of Brodi-Rose Creative Co. and an approved Canva Creator. “The reality is that technology is evolving, business is evolving, and as humans, we want things faster than ever. My clients are small businesses that don’t always have the budget to outsource their design. Canva allows them fast access to design a graphic and reacts to social trends such as creating an Instagram Reel or TikTok video.” [7]

REMOTE WORK MAKES COLLABORATIVE TOOLS NECESSARY

The pandemic has resulted in a rapid shift to remote working. In Australia, of the 12 million people employed on Census day in August 2021, more than 20% worked from home. [8] However, for remote work to succeed, people are seeking seamless, connected, and collaborative platforms that allow multiple employees to collaborate. Additionally, the rise of entrepreneurship and the growth of side hustles means people are turning towards tools that aid them in streamlining their personal brands. The Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that over 900,000 Australian workers – that's 6.5% of the workforce – held multiple jobs in Q2 2022 as Aussies increasingly look to earn money on the side. [9] “So many businesses were started during the pandemic, and having access to Canva really allowed small businesses to create their own graphics and get the ball rolling,” says Newsome. “There definitely comes a time when a growing business needs to have a legitimate brand identity and templates their team can use to build brand recognition. Design without communication is just decoration.” [7]

APPEALING TO PEOPLE'S VISUAL NATURE

While people can be daunted by new technologies, brands are adapting to changing needs and trends occurring across different platforms to pique consumers' interest. [Moo](#), a London-based company that allows users to design eye-catching business cards and marketing materials, stands out from its competition by understanding that in addition to printing and delivery services, customers want beautiful, easily-personalisable designs that can be created quickly. Canva, rather than positioning itself as a competitor to Google and Adobe, is building upon its reputation as a graphic design program by emphasising the visual tools it offers. Its outlook demonstrates a fundamental understanding that humans are visual creatures, and it has made the visual appeal and nature of graphic design easier and more accessible for everyone. An estimated 50 million people are contributing to the creator economy, with at least 46.7 million of them considering themselves amateurs. [10] With the creator economy continuing to boom, tools like Canva can appeal to people's visual nature and cater to professional and amateur creators alike.



The brand has made the visual appeal of graphic design accessible for everyone

Canva (2022)

INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

ADAPT TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

To stay competitive, brands are looking to adapt to changing trends across different social media platforms and tailor their offerings according to what users in different spaces want and need. For instance, once Tiktok became the go-to social media of choice for younger users, Canva quickly introduced video templates to align with this shift. “The era of social media is blindingly fast, and my clients need to be evolving and creating content for their services or products to be seen online,” says Newsome. “Canva is allowing them to put out on-brand content, in record speed, at the touch of their fingertips.” [7] Canva is building on its reputation as a graphic design platform and is adapting to technological change and interest through new, innovative product offerings that keep modern consumers' digital needs in mind.

PROVIDE CROSS-PLATFORM COLLABORATION

Not only can cross-platform collaboration work for brands, businesses, companies, and teams that have different ways of approaching the same problem, but it can also spark new ideas, innovation, and evolution by utilising different skill sets and areas of expertise. [11] Canva understood this from the very beginning and has allowed its users to collaboratively create content for multiple platforms, its product-led people-first approach also aids in the development of communication and collaborative skills and brings people together even in an era of remote and hybrid work. The video messaging platform [Loom](#) is also aiming to streamline workplace collaboration in a world of hybrid work, introducing asynchronous video communication to help employees convey complex ideas and scenarios to one another with ease and empathy.

DECENTRALISE CREATIVE CONTROL

Canva is opening up a creator network for designers and photographers to upload their own templates as well as an app store where developers can introduce additional features, thus fostering a closer relationship between creators and their audiences. A network of this sort can allow brands to build goodwill among its core users while making ambassadors out of them who speak about the brand and their experiences to their audiences and communities. In 2020, Newsome was invited by Canva to their Beta program to become a Canva Creator and build templates for the back end. “Every time one of my templates is used, I earn a royalty,” she says. “I’m also an element designer, so I earn royalties for icons and illustrations that I upload.” [7] Elsewhere, decentralised media company [Channel](#) is encouraging community building in the emerging Web3 space. It aims to empower creators to forge deep connections with their fans through social tokens and creative collaboration.

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4. Startup Daily (May 2021)
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7. Interview with Brodi-Rose Newsome conducted by the author
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10. Influencer Marketing Hub (May 2022)
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