Steps to creating an effective and inspiring Mood board

1. Research, brainstorm, and plan

   a. **Research** all aspects of the company or brand.

   b. **Prepare** ahead of time what you want to say in each mood board. Will there be one mood board or a couple of them? How many ideas and directions to want to give the client?

   c. **Know** what the client or brand is all about. Show images and direction that improves on their existing concept.

   d. **Provide** at least one mood board that is different from the others. One that pushes the limits of the brand.
2. Key Words

a. **Thematic keywords** reflect the meaning. So write these down and use them as a guide.

b. **Literal words** can help – either related to the brand name, the product, or target audience

c. **Conceptual words** work toward a tone. (words like rustic, masculine, and adventurous).

d. **Words with Purpose** are essential to guiding your design choices.

e. **Descriptive words** and phrases can be used as well.
3. Search for images

a. **Images that are literal** to your keywords can get the message across.

b. **Main photos** helped drive the vibe and tone.

c. **Secondary images** support the main photos.

d. **Textures, patterns, lettering style**, etc, encompasses the conceptual words but also compliments the style of the main image.

e. **Colors** are packed full of meaning and have a huge impact on the mood. (Find sites that have psychology of color.)

f. **Pinterest** can guide you on color. People have boards solely on color.
4. Design

a. **Format shows organization.** So decide on a format early on. Look at other mood boards. What size will it be? If on computer screen than the size of computer screen can determine your format.

b. **Grid structure should be obvious.** So develop a strong visual grid

c. **Establish Hierarchy** by build your design around a large image. When a viewer see the big image, they will wonder what is about and scan smaller images to find out answers.

d. **Provide contrast in size of images.** By placing smaller supporting images around the large image you are clarify your message.

e. **Add text** and don’t ignore the power of a few isolated words on the boards. Big bold words juxtaposed with images and color can create the drama, tone, or meaning for the project.
5. Theme:

a. **Be obvious** with the theme. Obscure references can be fun but can confuse certain viewers. Have a list of touch points that are obvious and can be pointed out when presenting.

b. **Combine** 2 themes to create something new:
   Example: Punk & Aristocratic; Urban and Cosmic
6. Spark emotion

a. **Tell a story** with one object.

b. **Relate to the humans** by choosing images that are related to everyday activities or objects that relates to your inspiration. So if you had an idea while you were riding on the bus, show a bus ticket to spark a story. The narrative will spark an emotional connection.
7. Keep it real

a. **Don’t make assumptions:** Don’t assume the people looking at the mood board know what you are talking about.

   *For example: You may have a client that brings in their human resource employee because they want everyone to be a part of the process of the company branding. If that is the case, you cannot assume they know what branding is.*

b. **Use real world objects** to help the client related to the tone or message.

   *For example: if you are inspired by the beach, show an object from the beach that everyone can related to. Also bring and actual shell to the presentation. (Just make sure the picture of the object relates the color and tones of your message.)*
8. Critique

a. **Step back** from what you have created and check to see if it matches your keywords.

b. **Show your mood board** to 2 other people or to many people. Post it on social media or display it to friends on your phone or in print and find out what they get from the board.

c. **Ask questions**: You want to project a mood and meaning, so ask questions to see if they see what you see.

d. **Refine and improve**.
9. Pitch your ideas:

a. Be ready to pitch.

Generally mood board are separate to a pitch or presentation of work: they stand alone to show the mood and tone. This standard practice shows it is part of your pitch or presentation. However, the purpose is to use subliminal visual tricks to make the client “get it.”
Look like a designer in every way.
Mood boards should be labeled and designed.
You have the power.
Use the power.