



Create. Enrich. Design: Delivering tech innovation

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At Agorafy, we get excited talking about design. Now more than ever, we believe that design is essential to successfully delivering technology innovation. It is through design that great, value-added ideas are given life. Thus, we frequently think about creating, enriching, and designing. Technology and innovation can not flourish without function, value, and a certain level of visual and stylistic appeal. Thus, design choices are at the intersection of function, value and aesthetics; they are the common point at which users are given a product and begin their experience with a company. Design elements, therefore, become critically important to ensuring functionality, determining brand image, message and connecting with users.

As a CEO, I wear many hats and I am tasked with making many different decisions. That being said, there are rarely any decisions that I find more important than those related to our product design. While I generally believe Agorafy's design is constantly evolving, I do place a strong focus on our immediate design decisions. This is because those choices have a profound effect on the feel and usability of the Agorafy platform. That is, our design decisions produce a tangible result that our users identify and connect with our brand. Therefore, I continue to make design a priority wherever possible. I see the CEO as an active partner supporting the chief design officer. For me, I want to be involved in the process, see and hear design proposals, provide input and direction where necessary. In doing so, I enjoy viewing design questions through many different lenses, including function, experience, and aesthetic.

From our perspective, design must be functional and elegant. This point of view is not groundbreaking, but can prove difficult to execute on depending on the context. For example, in real estate technology, firms are constantly grappling with how to relay the vast amounts of data and information they house and collect. Unfortunately, organizing and sharing huge troves of data and media can become technical, which does not always lend itself to an ease of use or a beautiful aesthetic. Questions often arise as to whether or not the chosen design meets the product's goal, addresses the needs and intentions of the target audience, is clear and easy to use, or provides adequate feedback, is engaging and helps users if they make a mistake. The inquiry can go on and on. Embracing these and other design challenges pays off. For us, we use our design planning to try and strike the right balance of look and feel without frustrating core goals and functions.

Another key rule we follow in our design process is that "experience comes first". This is an increasingly important mantra, because users demand easy, user-friendly experiences, no matter whether they are at home or at work. Users no longer tolerate antiquated, bland user experiences because they are "at work" or are doing something complex or corporate. As an on-line real estate platform, we know that we may have just a few seconds to hold a viewers' attention. And if the experience is clunky, our quality is compromised. Users might immediately leave the page or become frustrated. At Agorafy, we want to maintain broad appeal by making our platform accessible

to everyone - from novice, low-tech real estate searchers to tech-savvy, sophisticated real estate professionals. One way we attack the design challenge is to constantly evaluate our ease of use and site navigation capabilities, including searches for varying levels of information complexity. In that way, we are always working to help our users quickly and more easily solve their problems. We also focus strongly on our interface. With function and process polished, the aesthetic must be of equal caliber. In our mind, simple design gets the message across quickly and easily. Nowadays, many websites and applications shy away from busy layouts, because it is distracting and counterintuitive. This can be particularly significant for real estate technology companies, considering the breadth and scope of data and information being presented for review and analysis. Reserving aspects of pages to be displayed through drop down menus or slide transitions have been trending, as they maximize user experience.

Throughout all forms, design heavily correlates with brand. A company's brand is their name, face, and identity. This is all conveyed through their logo, voice, style, and strategy. Thus, my designers and I continue to work hard to set Agorafy apart, and provide a real estate technology solution that is functional, informative, and elegant. Because, in the end, we want to help you best serve your customers and colleagues by providing an open real estate marketplace where all major stakeholders can connect to get business done faster. Please come visit us at www.agorafy.com. We would love to receive feedback at hello@agorafy.com so that we can better serve you! Richard Du is the founder and CEO of Agorafy, New York, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540