

# How do you create a design language that speaks medical grade?



## PLANAR MEDICAL DISPLAYS

Design Research and Product Identity

Planar, a leading marketer of medical grade displays, faced a challenge. They needed to reduce costs and increase profits while maintaining superior quality, functionality and brand presence. Medical displays were viewed as commodities and Planar needed to rise above the prevailing mindset in a competitive market. They needed a new product platform strategy that focused on the needs of the entire value chain and its stakeholders.

To define an appropriate design language, we identified the key stakeholders Planar needed to target and satisfy, including doctors, nurses, radiologists, radiographers, and hospital administrators. Rapid ethnographies were held with these groups on hospital floors and in nurse stations. Prototypes were developed and tested. The research showed that medical professionals considered trustworthiness to be Planar's biggest corporate asset. In addition, they had very specific sensitivities towards equipment that made too much of a statement.

→ The result was a visual brand language called *modern medical*. This aesthetic spoke directly to medical professionals' requirements, reduced all superfluous detail, and evoked the perception of precision and efficiency. In short, monitors needed to look like they could deliver in life-and-death situations. Frames were minimized to emphasize the picture. Controls and cabling were hidden. Monitors needed to have rounded, approachable corners for easy handling. Display screens were surrounded by gaskets, telegraphing that they were splash-proof and impervious to moisture.

A unifying set of design principles was created to guide the creation of future products for Planar. These guidelines represented a significant competitive advantage that would help speed time to market, reduce development costs, increase brand equity, and create value for Planar's customers and end-users. Most importantly, the design language strengthened the Planar brand within the medical community.



Design by THRIVE partner Jonathan Dalton and team, while at ZIBA Design, Inc.  
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