March newsletter

Hello everyone, and welcome to the first issue of Design System's monthly newsletter! Going forward, this will be an additional way of connecting all of the creators who use our design system to one another, and to the work our design systems team is focused on.

Since our offsite at the beginning of the year, the team has been focusing on trimming the low-hanging fruit in Seeds that was left as a result of Nectar. We've been improving documentation to match our new standards, and working to pay off some of our technical debt ahead of bigger changes down the road. In addition, we've been listening to and learning from many of you with a series of interviews that will shape the future of Seeds over the next few quarters.

Here's a quick round-up of what we've worked on in March:

🆕 What's new

- We have new Slack channels! And a blog! If you haven't already noticed, **#announce-design-systems** is the dedicated place for updates as they happen. [We also have a blog on the Seeds site](#) with more details on all of our updates.
- We rolled out [an entirely new process for managing our icon library](#) that integrates with Figma and allows our designers to own the process from end-to-end.
- [We redesigned our alerts in the app](#) (and we now call them banners!) to have a slick new look that better integrates with our alert framework.
- With the help of friends on the brand team, we introduced new guidelines for [Video](#) and [Photography](#) at Sprout.
- We introduced two entirely new components — [Avatar](#) and [Breadcrumb](#).
- We welcomed our latest Design Systems Resident to the team! Jules Simplicio spent the month with us working on some awesome projects that [you can read all about here](#).
- Speaking of Jules, they have created a custom Figma plugin for our product design team that allows them to instantly generate custom cover pages for their designs. Look for more Figma plugins from the team in the future!
- We've conducted over 24 interviews (with more planned!) with designers, engineers, PMs, and more to better understand our system's users. We also connected Fullstory to Seeds so that the team can research user behavior on the site.

Refreshing Landscape:
Susan Densa and Kevin Restaino

A look at how marketing and brand creative are refreshing Landscape with the help of our design system.

LANDSCAPE

Sprout's brand positioning statement is "Elegant solutions to power human connection," and one of the most elegant solutions that Sprout has ever delivered is Landscape — our tiny app that streamlines image resizing and cropping for social media.

Created originally in 2016, Landscape started as a hack day project that quickly became an indispensable tool for our customers. A tool that we offered to everyone, free of charge, no Sprout account necessary. While there has been no dedicated staff working on Landscape for some time, it remains available today and tons of customers continue to use it. That's exactly why creators on our brand marketing team are reviving Landscape this year with the help of our design system. We asked some of the folks involved to fill us in on this project and how Seeds is making it possible.

Susan Densa is a Lead Web Designer, and **Kevin Restaino** is a Web Engineer, both on the brand creative team.

Design Systems: Tell us a little bit about Landscape as a product. What is it, and what's the history of it at Sprout?

Susan: Landscape is a free tool from Sprout that gives users the ability to resize images to various social platform sizes (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest) as well as custom sizes. Landscape predates my existence here at Sprout, but I believe it started off as a hack day project back in 2016 to give users an easier way to spruce up their social media pages while keeping up with ever changing social media image sizes.

DS: Why are we refreshing Landscape? What problem were we noticing that we are trying to solve?

Susan: Since Landscape was created in 2016, it hasn't really been updated that much since then. Kevin might be able to speak to this part better - but the initial driver for updating Landscape was that the Marketing Devs officially inherited all of Landscape and Kevin was passionate about building it better. Another driver was based on Landscape's traffic. You might remember from Marino's kick-off presentation that 900

people search for "Landscape by Sprout Social" every month. We also recently added the Sprout core site navigation to Landscape which led to more clicks through to trial. Then, once I got wind that we were reworking some backend things, I volunteered to work on the redesign to get the landing and success pages up-to-date with our current brand styles and get the application more inline as part of the Nectar family.

Kevin: Marketing [developers] inherited the project. I was uncomfortable having to maintain the back-end portion of the project as it's written in Java, which I don't have any experience with. The back-end was a simple service that made the image transformations, zipped up the files, and sent it back to the client. I was curious if we could do all this client side. There were three motivations for this exploration. First, by removing the back-end service, we can distribute the load of image processing to everyone's client, rather than having a single server doing it. Second, if possible to be done client side, the entire app can be written in JavaScript, a language our team is comfortable with. Third, we could use this as a chance to refresh the app and Nectarize it, bringing it up to date with Sprout design standards.

DS: Briefly describe your role in the project. How did you get involved with the refresh of Landscape?

Susan: I am the lead designer of this project -- working on both the web pages and application design. I have been working closely with Michael Patterson from a marketing/acquisition perspective, Heliz Mazouri around getting the right copy together for the app's marketing pages, Kelsey Gregorc on making sure we are delivering the best user experience, and Kevin Restaino who is leading the development of this project.

Kevin: I'm building the new Landscape app, written in React using Nectar components. After discovery on the possibility of doing everything client side, I brought this to our team and marketing. The idea was approved and then marketing strategy, design, and copy were started. Development is underway now!

DS: How have you been using Seeds in your work on the project?

Susan: For the app portion of the project, I relied a lot on the info that was in Seeds for interface styles and the Figma components that were built out for the Sprout App design library. I was already familiar with spacing/typography/color styles since I was one of the designers that helped update all of our product images for the refresh. One of the newer elements that I had to figure out how to incorporate into the UI was having an easily recognizable path that the user could go back to and reference as they were going through the steps of resizing an image. Lucky for me, at the same time I was working on the redesign, Jules shipped the breadcrumb component in Seeds which made my design decisions that much easier.

Kevin: I've been using the React components and Seeds documentation during development.

DS: How has Seeds made a difference in your work?

Susan: The thing I appreciate most about Seeds is the ease of consistency. With so many designers working across multiple facets of the app and organization, it can be challenging to all be aligned visually on what we are producing. Seeds helps us stay on the same page and helps us produce a product that users can easily navigate and easily identify as being a part of the Sprout family.

Kevin: The components are easy to use and the docs are fantastic. This has helped tremendously in the speed at which I was able to prototype the initial app discovery. Manually styling the components with CSS would add a bunch of extra development time. Having the components styled already allowed me to quickly iterate and focus on the application logic instead of spending time on styling things.

DS: When will the refresh be launching to customers?

Susan: The landing and success pages have been developed and the shell of the app is currently in development based on approved desktop designs. I am currently working through designing the mobile experience and hoping to have that wrapped up by next week. We've had some priorities shuffle around some projects these past few weeks but I believe we are still focused on getting this launched Q2 (waiting on exact confirmation for that timeline).

A huge thanks to Susan and Kevin for taking the time to share this story with us! If you want to check out the current version of Landscape yourself, it's at sproutsocial.com/landscape.

— Coming soon —

As we head into April, the team will be looking to wrap-up interviews and begin working on the next phase of our system's maturity — comprehensive contribution models, a standardized intake process, and architectural changes to Seeds that will make using our system easier than ever. In addition to those larger projects, here are some things that you can expect to see over the next month:

- We'll be working with engineers in the Engagement zone to deliver **a new Menu component** that can be used for consistently styled popouts containing lists of options.
- **Date Pickers!** We are moving ever closer to consistent date pickers across our application, and we'll be getting one step closer by making our official components available in Seeds.
- We have been working with designers on the Analytics team to deliver **updated documentation on data visualization, charts, and data states.** Expect to see this soon!
- We are also exploring **a refresh of Seeds' resources page** to make it a useful, always-up-to-date home for common resources.
- In an effort to make designing and building responsive experiences easier, we

will be rolling out **documentation and guidelines around responsive design**.

Thank you for reading the first issue of our newsletter! You can expect to see us in your inbox at the end of every month going forward. We'd also love to hear any feedback you have about the newsletter itself, or any of the information within it. Please don't hesitate to reach out to the Design Systems team on Slack or via email at design-systems@sproutsocial.com with any thoughts or questions. Stay safe and healthy, and we'll see you next time 👋

— Design Systems

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