



*Canva*

Case  
Study

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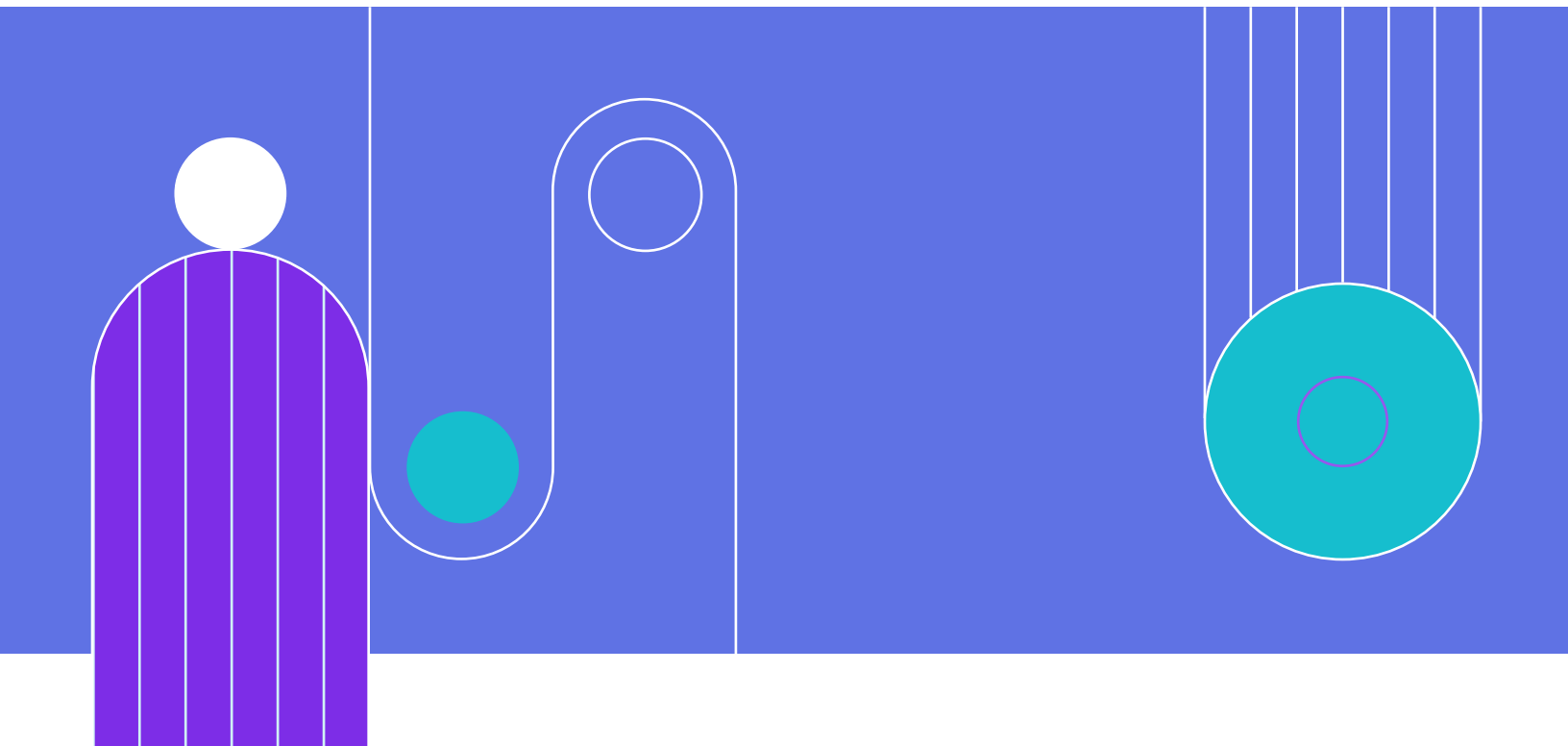
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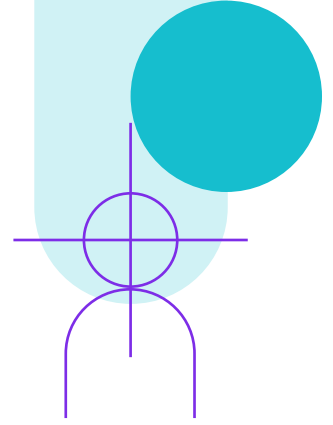
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# 01 Identity & Logo



2013 | 2021



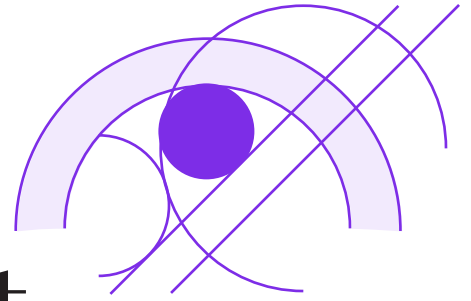
The original Canva logo features a handwritten-style white script inside a bright turquoise circle, possibly chosen to feel friendly, modern, and approachable. It's very reflective of the style popular in the early 2010's and by standards just 10 years later comes across the plane for such a multifaceted business.

Being founded in 2012 so after 13 years it's a mature player in the market despite looking fresh faced when compared to the legacy monopolist in the field - Adobe, which began

its dominance in 1982. Naturally Canva has evolved and expanded in that time, which can be seen reflected in its logo "refinement", specifically not a rebrand (Canva 2021).

The refreshed Canva logo retains the essence of "effortless flow," refining it for clarity and scalability- from "tiny buttons to huge billboards." (Canva 2021). The turquoise-to-purple gradient is symbolic: guiding users "from left-to-right, from creation-to-completion."

## 02 Origin & Context



Like many creative students, Melanie Perkins found herself continually baffled by the difficulty, cost, and sheer gatekeeping of Adobe's industry-standard design tools. While studying at the University of Western Australia, she taught graphic design to her classmates and quickly realised she wasn't alone. "These tools are crazy hard," students would say, and Melanie agreed (Kuzmenko, 2025.). So, instead of just accepting it like so many have in the past, she built a solution.

Her first venture was Fusion Books, a browser-based tool that let students design their own school yearbooks online which naturally was much more limited in scope. It was a quiet success across here down under, and I think put the wind under Melanie's wing to dream of a platform that could service the entire design process from print, digital, brand, marketing, everything.

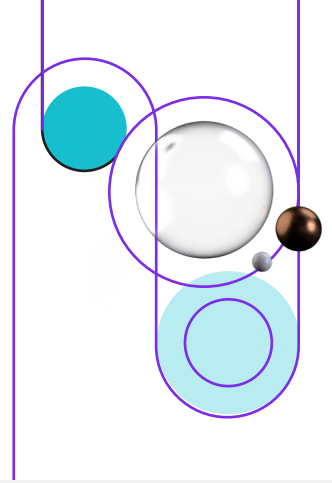
That dream became Canva. It took years of pitching, a hundred rejections, and a long string of no's before a single yes. "We got 100 no's before we got our first yes," Perkins later

said (Perkins, 2020). But eventually, with co-founders Cliff Obrecht and Cameron Adams, and the backing of investors and Australian government grants, Canva launched in 2013 (Kuzmenko, 2025.).

From the start, the mission was clear: "We wanted to do the whole thing," Perkins said. "Make it ridiculously simple, fully online, and collaborative" (Perkins, 2020). Today, Canva is used by over 165 million people across 190 countries (CanvasBusinessModel.com, 2024.).



# 03 Personal Experience



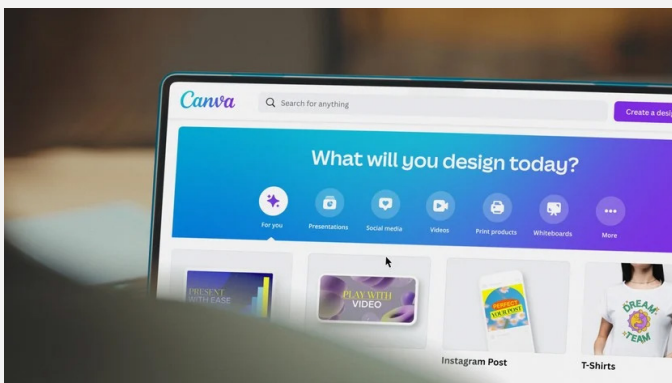
My personal experience with Canva started in 2018. I was freelancing at the time and was a regular user of both Pixabay and Pexels - both of which were acquired by the rapidly expanding Canva that same year. Then and now, the free assets on those platforms were an incredible help to someone working with thin or non-existent margins. As the founders of Pexels and Pixabay put it, they were “inspired by their collective vision to democratize content” (McKenzie, 2019).

That democratization has always been important to me as a creator and coder born in the '90s - the golden days of the internet and software development. Which is why, in 2024, I was genuinely impressed when I needed a web-based design platform while

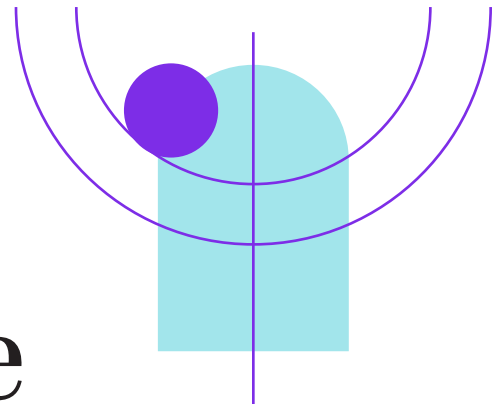
working on a work-provided Chromebook and stumbled onto Canva. I guess the new logo I'd been subconsciously absorbing on Melbourne trams had worked.

More recently, in class, I was chatting with a classmate about how long I'd been an Adobe customer and, tangentially, how much money I'd spent on their products before regaining free access through study. They suggested I check out Affinity by Serif, a fantastic alternative with a consumer-friendly one-time purchase license. I've been testing it, integrating it into my workflow, and I've been impressed by its rich feature set and familiar, polished UI. Canva's acquisition of Serif in 2024 – “likely spending more than \$1 billion” to compete directly with Adobe caught my attention (Bonyhady, 2024).

It wasn't until researching for this project that I realised all of these platforms, Pexels, Pixabay, Serif - had been rolled into Canva's ever-expanding universe of user-centric design tools. I've become a fan, and I'm genuinely curious (and a little excited) about what their IPO might bring.



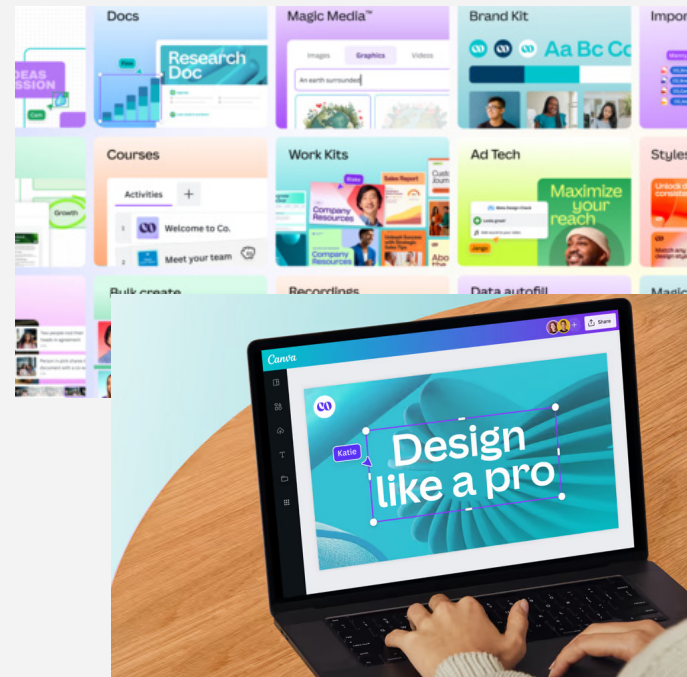
# 04 Target Audience



Melanie Perkins has repeatedly described Canva's mission as building a design platform for everyone, not just professional designers. But amongst its primary users you'll find small businesses, freelancers, educators, students, non-profits, marketers, and content creators. As the platform has evolved, so too has its audience.

The strategic acquisitions mentioned earlier have allowed Canva to appeal to a broader range of users including developers, storytellers, and visual communicators. Its educational partnerships, non-profit tiers, and enterprise focused "Pro" plans reflect a deliberate move to scale to more than just students.

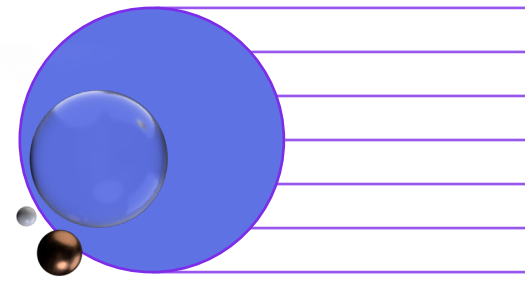
The platform targets "a wide spectrum of individuals and businesses seeking professional design solutions," with an emphasis on accessibility, affordability, and speed (BrandCredential.com, 2024.). What started as a student-friendly tool is now embedded in startups, classrooms, and boardrooms alike.





05

# Main Competitors



Adobe has long been Canva's biggest rival, especially in the professional design space. Tools like Photoshop, Illustrator, and Premiere remain dominant for industry creatives. However, Canva's latest moves, including AI tools like Magic Studio - directly challenge Adobe Express and Firefly. Adobe has had to make most of their stock website free with their subscriptions to compete with Canva's acquisition mentioned earlier.

The rivalry has intensified, with Canva now "undercutting a Silicon Valley titan" to win over corporate clients (The Australian, 2025). While Adobe still leads in creative depth, Canva's speed and accessibility have helped it become the platform of choice for non-designers and marketing teams alike. And with the recent growth of subsidiary, Serif - it might not be too long before team red is under attack on all fronts.



Figma is expanding from UI/UX into full-stack product creation. With tools like Figma Buzz and Draw, it now competes with Canva for branded marketing content and creative assets (Weatherbed, 2025). Adobe's failed \$20B acquisition attempt only reinforced its competitive weight. It's telling how hungry Adobe was for this deal, as well as the lack of meaningful competition from them or Canva in the full-solution wireframing source. Both companies would be wise to keep an eye as Figma expands into full-stack.



Canva's new AI-powered productivity tools now compete with Microsoft Designer's image generation and Clipchamp's video editing suite. As Canva pivots into productivity, it's taking direct aim at Microsoft's "Office-meets-AI" dominance (Faisal, 2025). It's been a long time since it's felt like Gate's gargantuan baby had its finger on the pulse, but with their early investment in AI and large existing user base - you can never count them out.

# 06 Core Values & Culture



Be a force for good · Be a good human · Empower others · Make complex things simple · Pursue excellence · Set crazy big goals and make them happen.

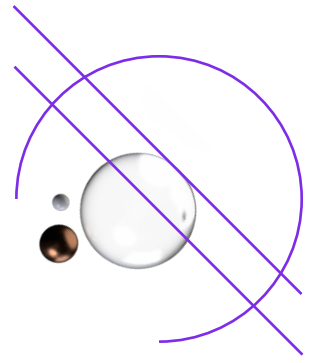
Canva's culture is built on simplicity, inclusivity, and the belief that everyone should feel comfortable creating. Core values like "be a good human," "make complex things simple," and "set crazy big goals" aren't just posters on the wall, they guide how teams work, build, and grow (Canva, 2020.).

The vibe is reportedly collaborative and strives to be ego-free; even the co-founders sit out in the open. There's a big focus on

storytelling, growth, and showing respect - including a strong connection to First Nations cultures and visual traditions (Canva, n.d.). As the company's grown, it's worked hard to keep that same inclusive energy, making sure the internal culture reflects what the product promises: that design should be for everyone. It is obviously impossible to know without being on the inside, but to an outside observer it seems true that with Perkins still at the helm after all these years, her vision for the company's culture and values have become a core part of their DNA.



# 07 Marketplace Position



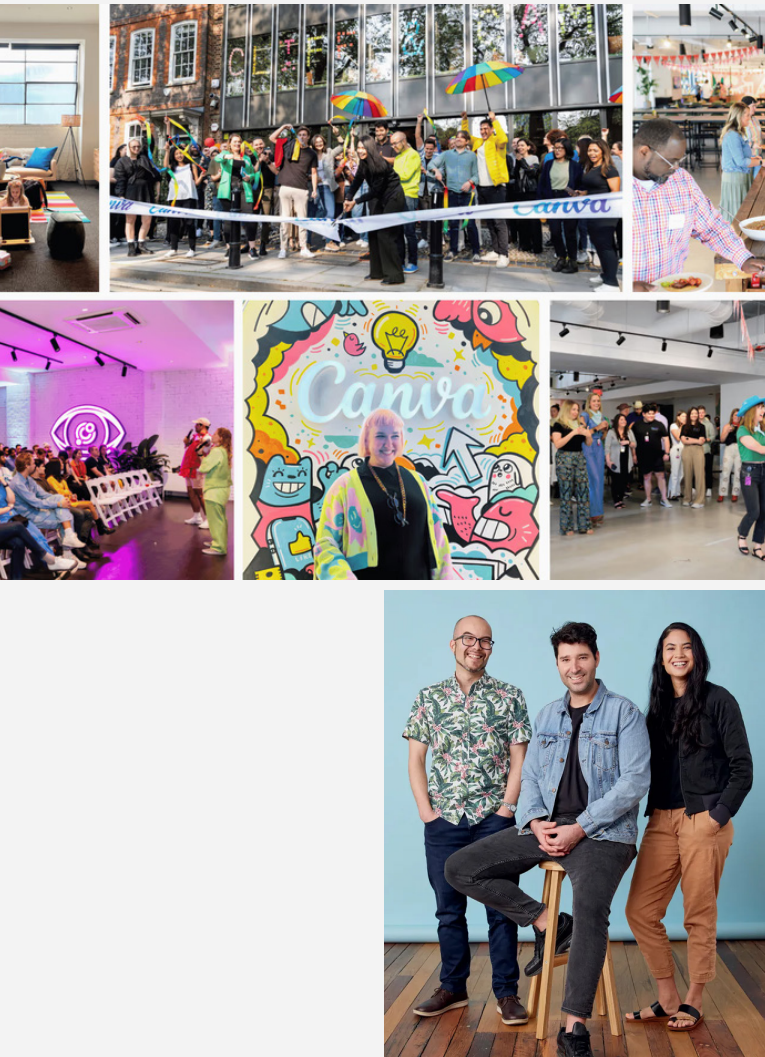
Canva positions itself as a mass-market, all-in-one design platform, from small businesses and social media managers to students and nonprofits - with a slick interface and mostly intuitive tools. Its freemium model offers robust functionality for free, while paid tiers unlock advanced features like Brand Kits, premium assets, and team collaboration. It's no charity though, users will quickly find that a lot of the best assets, features and templates are tied to a subscription, and they're not shy about showing you what you're missing out on. Pricing is straightforward: Free for individuals, Pro at \$165/year AUD, and custom pricing for enterprise clients, with dedicated offerings for educators and charities (CanvasBusinessModel, 2024).

The company fills a sweet spot between accessibility and capability - delivering around 80-90% of what most users need, at a fraction of Adobe's complexity and cost. As its feature set has expanded into video, whiteboards, websites, data viz, and more,

Canva has transitioned from a product into a creative platform, even enabling developers to build inside its ecosystem (ShyamFuture, 2025). And it's hard to argue that they haven't struck that balance perfectly, its perceived value remains high, thanks to ease of use, visual polish and accessibility. Globally, Canva thrives in education, emerging markets, and APAC, but also counts over 450 Fortune 500 companies as users.



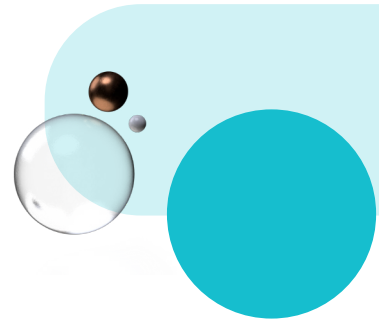
# 08 Personality & Tone



Canva's personality is open, optimistic, and unfussy, always aiming to make people feel confident and capable, not overwhelming. Its tone is friendly, plainspoken, and often playful, avoiding technical jargon in favour of clarity in stark difference to the competition - although their accusation of Serif's software may be an admittance that that complexity has its place. The company sees design not as something elite, but as something "everyone should be able to do," a belief that shapes how it speaks to its audience (Canva, 2025). Internally and externally, communication is built on values like "being a good human," "making complex things simple," and "empowering others" - and that tone carries through in everything from product copy to investor updates. Melanie Perkins puts it simply: "We wanted to create a product that our mums could use" (Kuzmenko, 2025).



# 09 Promise to Consumers



Canva promises to make design accessible, collaborative, and impactful for everyone - regardless of skill level, income, or geography. At its core, the platform exists to “empower the world to design” (Canva, 2023). But that promise extends beyond the product. Through what it calls its Two-Step Plan, Canva aims to grow as a business (Canva, 2024) and use that success to “do the most good we can”. This includes donating time, product, and profits through initiatives like Canva for Nonprofits and Canva for

Education - giving over 800,000 nonprofit teams and 130,000 schools access to premium tools at no cost. Much unlike Adobe who have famously eaten into educators budgets for decades.

The company’s pledge is clear: Whether you’re building a classroom presentation or a global campaign, Canva’s promise is to keep the tools simple, the mission big, and the door wide open.



# 10 Current & Potential Issues

As Canva grows into a global platform for everyone envisioned by Perkins in 2012, from students to Fortune 500 companies, it faces new pressures on several fronts. Socially, some professional designers argue Canva's template-driven model undervalues original creative work, especially as AI tools like Magic Design accelerate content generation. Its pivot into AI also raises questions around transparency, copyright, and the ethical use of user data. Environmentally, Canva has committed to initiatives like Pledge 1%,

supporting sustainability and social impact causes - but with millions upon millions of users and rising AI infrastructure demands, its actual environmental footprint may become harder to offset. At a brand level, the platform risks dilution as it expands into websites, docs, and productivity software, areas where it now competes with giants like Google, Microsoft, alongside their foe Adobe. Balancing innovation, ethics, and user trust will be key to Canva's long-term reputation.



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