The importance of designing for simplicity

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Look at Steve Harvey's Card – He Was Set up to Fail

Steve Harvey messed up big time.

The Miss Universe pageant was down to the last two contestants and he crowned the wrong winner, leading to one of the most awkward moments I've seen on TV, on par with the cringeworthiness of [Ms. South Carolina's answer](#) in the 2007 Miss Teen USA Pageant. Such as.

But as more information comes out, I'm starting to think that **Steve** here was set up to fail with bad **design** and it wasn't *entirely* his fault even though the internet seems to feel otherwise.

JUST LOOK AT THIS TWEET OF HIS REFERENCE CARD:

https://twitter.com/darrenrovell/status/678779849687695360

What do you see on first glance? I got a blank postcard addressed to Miss Universe 2015– a whole lot of negative space.

While simplicity can be good for maintaining clean, deliberate **design**, it should always take a back seat to functionality. Art can get away with it because it elicits personal emotion juxtaposing our own experience with the collective consciousness of societal norms. And private parts.

But if this card has one single task, to inform the host of the winners and losers, the only thing that matters is that the necessary information gets across as quickly and easily as possible. **Steve** needs to know who lost, who got second, and who won. That's it. Everything else is superfluous since, assuming there's no royal disaster, literally only 5 people will ever see that side of the card.

What the card should've looked like

First off, I gotta say the whole 2nd runner up and 1st runner up is unnecessarily complicated. It's like ordering a coffee at **Starbucks**. Can't we just say small, medium, and large instead of

first loser and second loser?

Get rid of that "runner up" repetition and make it clear who won, lost, and hit the depression jackpot (according to psychology the Silver medalists are the least happy because they almost won).

But more important than the terminology is the font size and positioning of the information. Here's the card **Steve** was given:

Assuming the you have full access to card's entire area, let's see how much space is occupied by the **important** information.
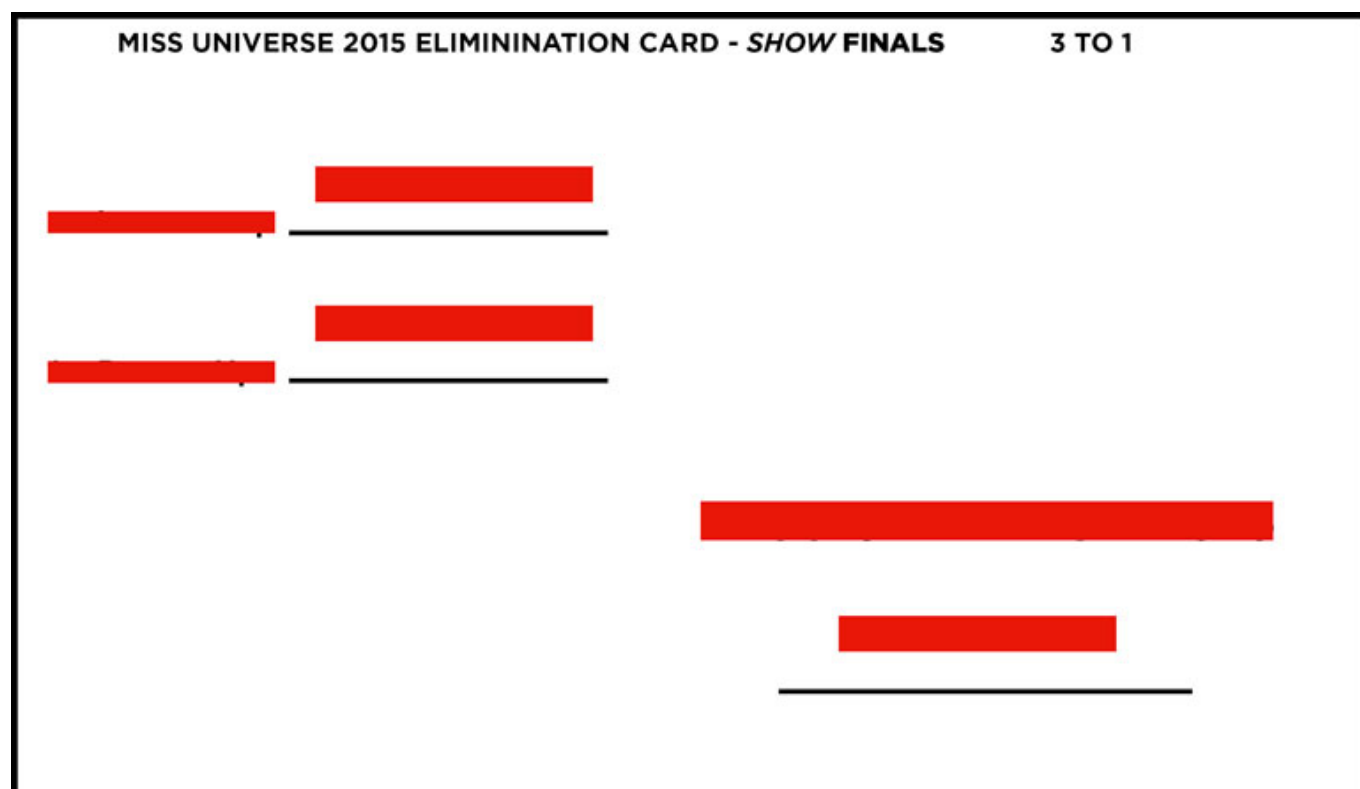
That's where the contestant's placement and associated country goes. When compared to the overall area of the card, these highlighted boxes account for only 5.8% of the available room. While unquestionably minimal and clean, there's a lot of room leftover for activities.

So increase the font size, got it. The other consideration that could lead to confusion is the positioning of information on the card itself.

The title at the top is fine– it's useful to make sure it's the right pageant, year, and stage of the competition. But why does it jump from the top left quadrant to the bottom right? Aesthetically it would look nice if there were accompanying pictures but, again, thinking about functionality, there's no reason why the eye should have to make that leap especially considering how damn small the country names are printed.

HERE ARE TWO OPTIONS FOR BETTER LAYOUTS:

MISS UNIVERSE 2015 ELIMININATION CARD - *SHOW* FINALS   3 TO 1

4 / 5

2nd Runner Up   **USA**

1st Runner Up   **COLOMBIA**

MISS UNIVERSE 2015   **PHILIPPINES**

Option 1 follows a logical reading path (left to right, top to bottom) and you can read those country names all the way from Timbuktu.

MISS UNIVERSE 2015 ELIMININATION CARD - *SHOW* FINALS   3 TO 1

2nd Runner Up   1st Runner Up

USA   →   **COLOMBIA**

MISS UNIVERSE 2015*

PHILIPPINES

* Don't f#%k this one up, Steve

Option 2 gets a little fancy with the positioning but the text is *a lot* easier to read, the arrow makes it like a fun little game, and there's even a friendly reminder for the host to pay a bit more attention when announcing the winner!

These are 2 out of infinite **design**s you can play around with for readability but the results are the same: the crucial information in both of my suggestions takes up more of the surface area (15%) and is positioned logically.

Try to keep design in mind

Design matters but it's easy to dismiss it by comparing it to putting "lipstick on a pig" or the inevitable "just look at Craigslist." A middle ground will always exist between form and function and rarely do you want to go to either extreme. Like with most things in life, moderation goes a long ways.

Steve here got a rude reminder of Murphy's Law so, even if you think something is absolutely foolproof, you can always hedge your bet by considering your **design** from a complete stranger's perspective.

Take a step back, identify the purpose, highlight the core information, and then try to make it look like you put in a little effort.

Like double checking the spelling– eliminination? Really?

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