Bringing UX writing guidelines to the design surface

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The project

Shopify is an e-commerce platform offering a suite of retail services, including payments, marketing, shipping, and customer engagement tools. [Polaris](), Shopify's design system, is considered among the best design systems in the tech industry. In addition to a robust component library, Polaris offers well-documented UX writing guidelines for the Shopify admin experience.

This hackathon project was an effort to streamline design efforts by integrating the UX writing guidelines in Polaris with design components in Figma.

The goal

The goal of this project was to reduce redundant work for content designers by making it easy for visual designers to access UX writing guidelines directly in Figma.
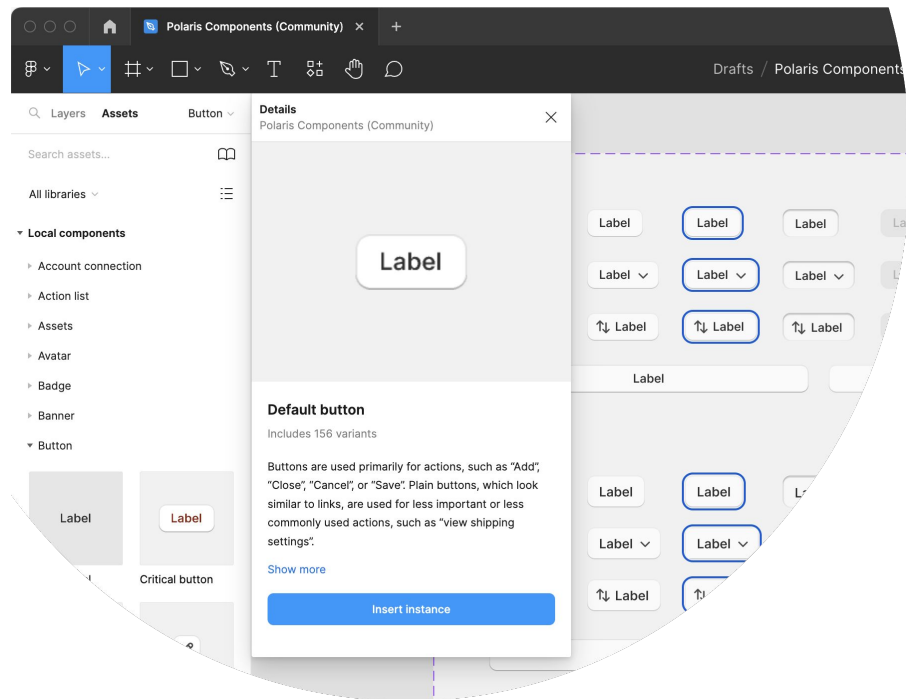
The measure of success was:

- Visual designers are able to review and implement UX writing guidelines directly in the design surface.
- Content designers are able to focus their attention on more complex content design tasks.
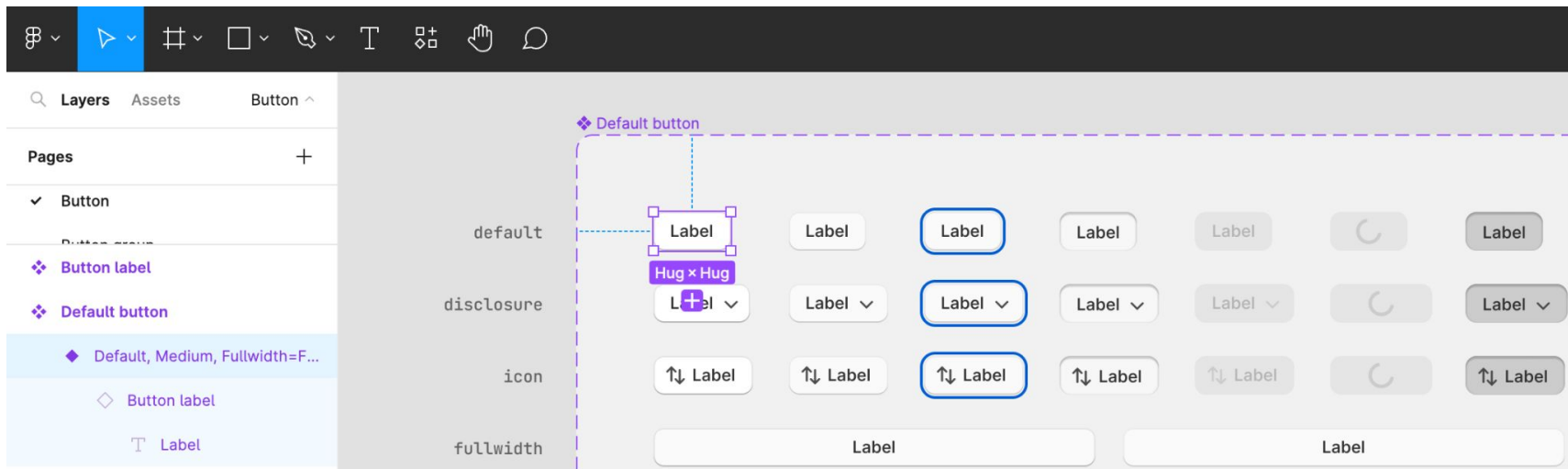
Bringing the style guide into Figma

By using nested components, variants, and component descriptions, we can seamlessly integrate UX writing guidelines with the Figma design surface.

This makes it easier for visual designers to adhere to UX writing guidelines from the beginning of a project.

The button component use case

The [button component](#) was my proof of concept. Button variants (such as default, disclosure, icon, fullwidth) are well documented in Figma. Button label variations, however, are less so.

Buttons and actions

In the component library in Figma, four button actions are noted: Add, Close, Cancel, and Save. However, the Polaris web site has documentation for at least 20 common button actions with specific guidance about which verb to use when to convey a specific meaning.

This disconnect between the component library and the Polaris web site means that the relationship between design components, content patterns, and word choice are left to content designers to implement.
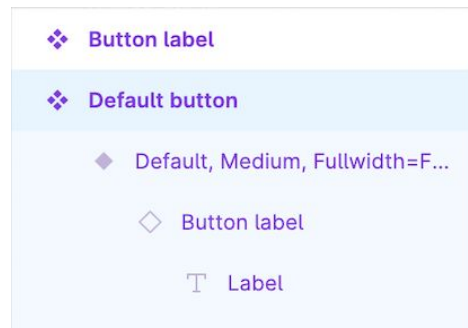

Polaris for Admin

Button

Buttons are used primarily for actions, such as "Add", "Close", "Cancel", or "Save". Plain buttons, which look similar to links, are used for less important or less commonly used actions, such as "view shipping settings".

View on Polaris Style Guide
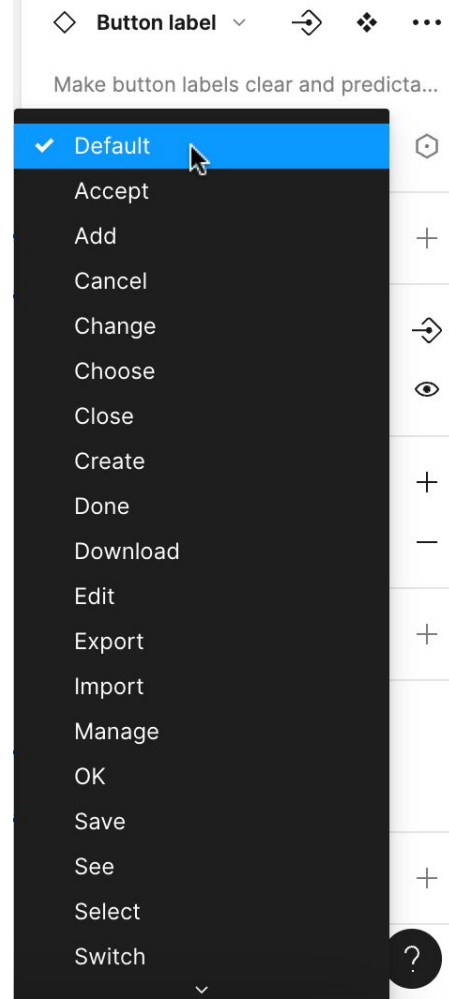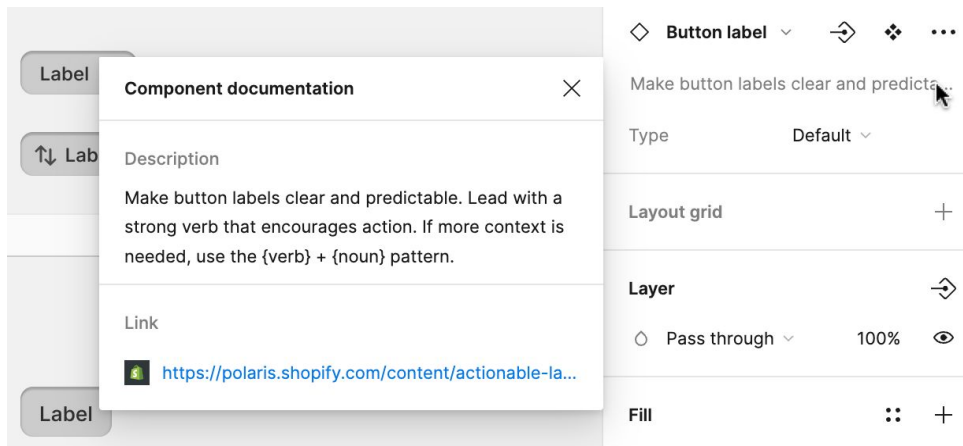
Introducing content components

The ability to nest components allows for using content components within design components. It also enables us to surface commonly used words and phrases from the style guide along with any additional guidance.

Nested within this button component is a second component, button label. This content component includes all of the recommended button labels in Polaris as Figma variants.
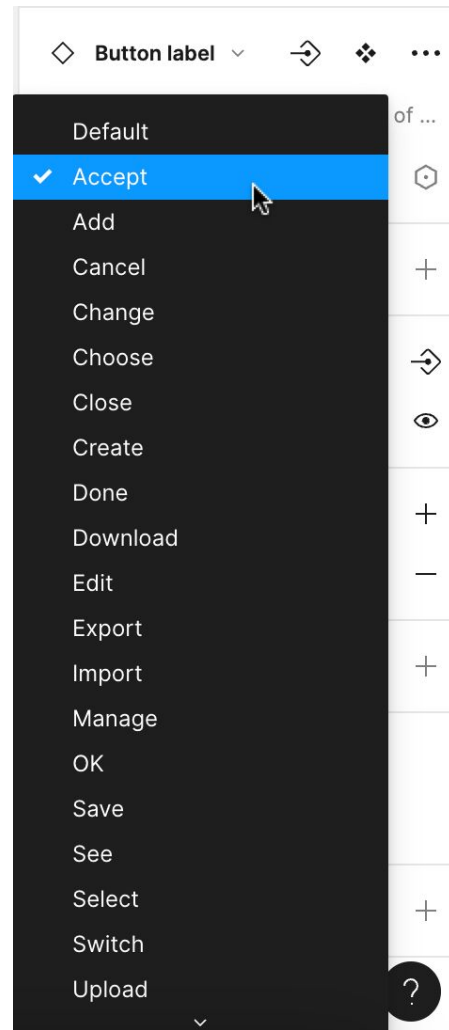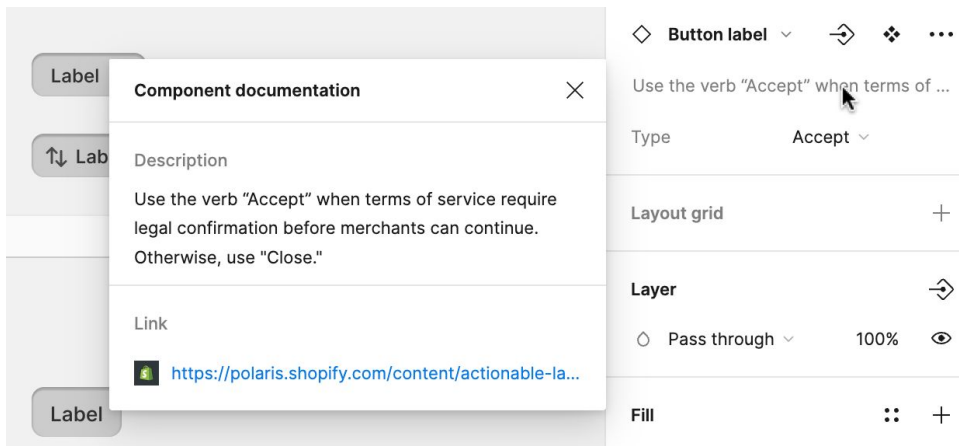
The button label component

Each button label variant includes a description of the label and when to use it. The default label also includes guidance on how to draft bespoke button labels.

Button label

Make button labels clear and predicta...

- ✓ Default
- Accept
- Add
- Cancel
- Change
- Choose
- Close
- Create
- Done
- Download
- Edit
- Export
- Import
- Manage
- OK
- Save
- See
- Select
- Switch

Component documentation

Description

Make button labels clear and predictable. Lead with a strong verb that encourages action. If more context is needed, use the {verb} + {noun} pattern.

Link

https://polaris.shopify.com/content/actionable-la...

Label

Lab

Label

Button label

Make button labels clear and predicta...

Type   Default ⌄

Layout grid   +

Layer   ⟶

◇ Pass through ⌄   100%   👁
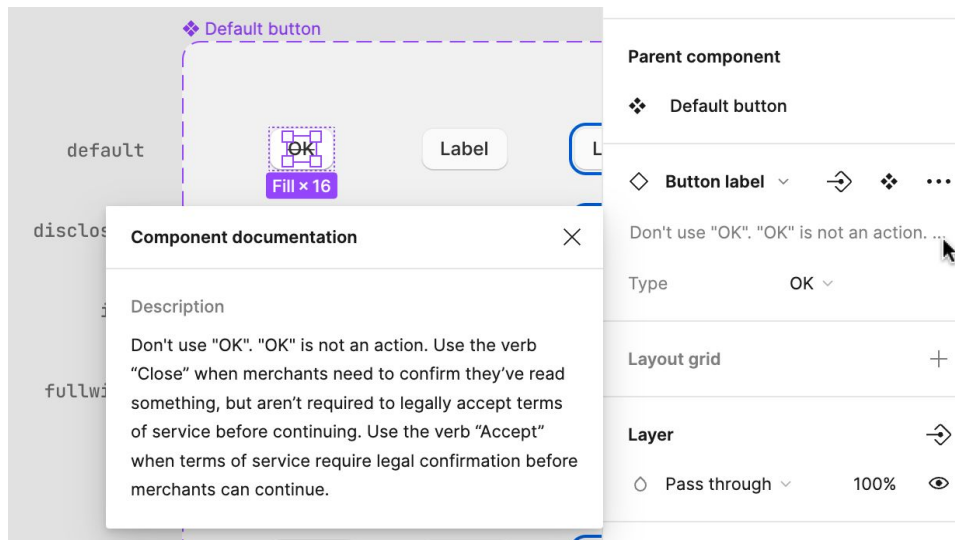
Fill   ⠿   +

Assessing variants

This integration enables visual designers to quickly assess which labels to use in the context of the experience they're designing.

Updating guidance

Style guides are living, breathing documents subject to change. When new content design decisions are made, updates can be reflected directly within this integrated design system.

Streamlining collaboration

Integrating UX writing guidance with design tools helps streamline design collaboration by ensuring:

- Visual designers have easy access to guidance that drives consistent language across experiences.
- Content designers are no longer solely responsible for ensuring adherence to the style guide.
- New designers learn by interacting directly with the style guide on a daily basis.
- Style guide changes are easily communicated and implemented across design files.

Outcome

The idea of integrating content guidance with design components was well received. Unfortunately, at the time of this project, Shopify's use of Figma 1.0 prohibited the ability to use features available in Figma 2.0.

Because of this limitation, I submitted this proposal as a future enhancement for the Polaris backlog. There was a lot of enthusiasm and support from the Polaris team for making these updates.

I left Shopify before I was able to see this work implemented. What I learned, however, has informed how I collaborate with other designers ever since.