

The **Expensive** Look

10 checks to make your product look like it costs what you charge.

Your product isn't cheap. It just looks cheap.

I spent ten years making private jets, hotels and airlines look expensive. The budget was rarely the difference. What we left out usually was.

Run these in order. Most take less than an hour. A few take ten minutes and the delete key.

SHAHBAZ

01

Run the stranger test.

Put your page next to the most expensive competitor you can find. Cover the prices and the names. Show both to someone who has never seen either, and ask which one costs more.

TRY THIS

If they pick theirs, work through this list. If they pick yours, raise your prices.

02

Count your colors.

Every extra color makes it look cheaper. One neutral and one accent will carry almost anything. Two is plenty.

TRY THIS

Screenshot it and count every color that isn't in a photo. More than three? Cut until two do the work.

03

Give it room.

Cheap things are crowded. Expensive things breathe. Space tells people you're not desperate for their attention.

TRY THIS

Double the space around your headline. If it suddenly looks better, keep going.

04

Say one thing.

One message, one thing to look at. When everything is shouting, nobody hears anything.

TRY THIS

For each page, finish the sentence "This is where they learn ____." If you need the word "and", split it in two.

05

Delete half.

Luxury is mostly what you leave out. Before you pay for a rebrand, take half of it away.

TRY THIS

Remove everything nobody would miss for a week. Then remove one more thing.

06

Turn off the shouting.

"NEW!", "50% OFF", stickers and exclamation marks. Sale language makes a full-price product look like it's on clearance.

TRY THIS

Find every badge and exclamation mark. Keep one, if any.

07

Let the price sit quietly.

\$49 in a red starburst says bargain. The same \$49 in calm type says it's worth it.

TRY THIS

Set your price in the same typeface as everything else, at a modest size, with nothing crossed out.

08

Write two lines before the logo.

Most founders start with a logo and colors. Start with what you stand for, in two plain lines. The design follows from those.

TRY THIS

Write the two lines. If the current design argues with them, the design changes, not the lines.

09

Be distinctive, not just consistent.

A brand can follow every rule and still be forgettable. Consistency keeps you recognizable. Distinctiveness gets you remembered.

TRY THIS

Name one decision nobody else in your category would make. If you can't, make one.

10

Never brief "clean".

"Just make it clean" is the most dangerous brief. Clean without a point of view comes back generic.

TRY THIS

Replace "clean" with the feeling you want people to have, in a few words. Brief that instead.

Expensive things don't shout.

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