

The Harvard Innovation Lab (now Labs) and the “Hi” icon have become University-wide beacons for innovation at Harvard and the surrounding community.

## Harvard Innovation Labs Visual Identity, 2011–2016.

Could a welcoming visual identity help ease tensions between a University and a residential community? In 2009, Harvard halted plans for a \$1 billion science center in Allston. This action only increased “town-gown” tensions as large swaths of Harvard-owned land in Allston lay dormant. Thus, when Harvard sought an identity for its newly formed LEED Gold certified Innovation Lab, it became quite clear early on that, first and foremost, it needed to be welcoming—to the academic community (as an interdisciplinary center for entrepreneurship) but also to the local community of residents in Allston. The identity also needed to be flexible enough to support the highly diverse, interdisciplinary mission of the labs. The design team also strongly lobbied the client to open a portion of the building (the first floor) to the public. The labs welcome students and entrepreneurs from all across the University, from the local community, and visitors from around the world. Working alongside architects from Shepley Bulfinch and as the brand lead on the project, the former headquarters of WGBH was renovated and transformed into a vibrant new center connected to the business school campus.

On a fast-track schedule, I led a graphic design and brand team in developing a series of concepts that were initially presented on a spectrum of “Harvard” to “Un-Harvard.” For instance, on the far end of the spectrum, we presented the bold idea to disguise the building entirely, perhaps as a boutique hotel (inspired by the Boston urban apparel store Bodega). On the near end of the spectrum were concepts that used more traditional academic iconography, such as the Harvard seal. The “Hi” icon sat somewhere in the middle. The resultant Hi icon resembles periodic table-like app icons, such as the ones used by Adobe for its Creative Cloud apps. As such, the identity is, in some ways, more of an “icon” or “gesture” rather than a traditional logo. The Harvard community and the Allston community alike quickly fell

(Right) Original Innovation Lab launched in 2011 at 125 Western Avenue.





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in love with this symbol for “Harvard innovation.” The illuminated “Hi” icon that was installed on the main building’s facade is nearly eight feet square. Months after the building opened, I received an email from Harvard informing me that school children—as their school buses drove by were waving “Hi” back at the building.

Just as my design team commenced working on this project, we attended a virtual workshop with the New York-based identity designer Sagi Haviv of Chermayeff & Geismar & Haviv. In his workshop, Haviv conveyed the following criteria for designing a “good” graphic identity:

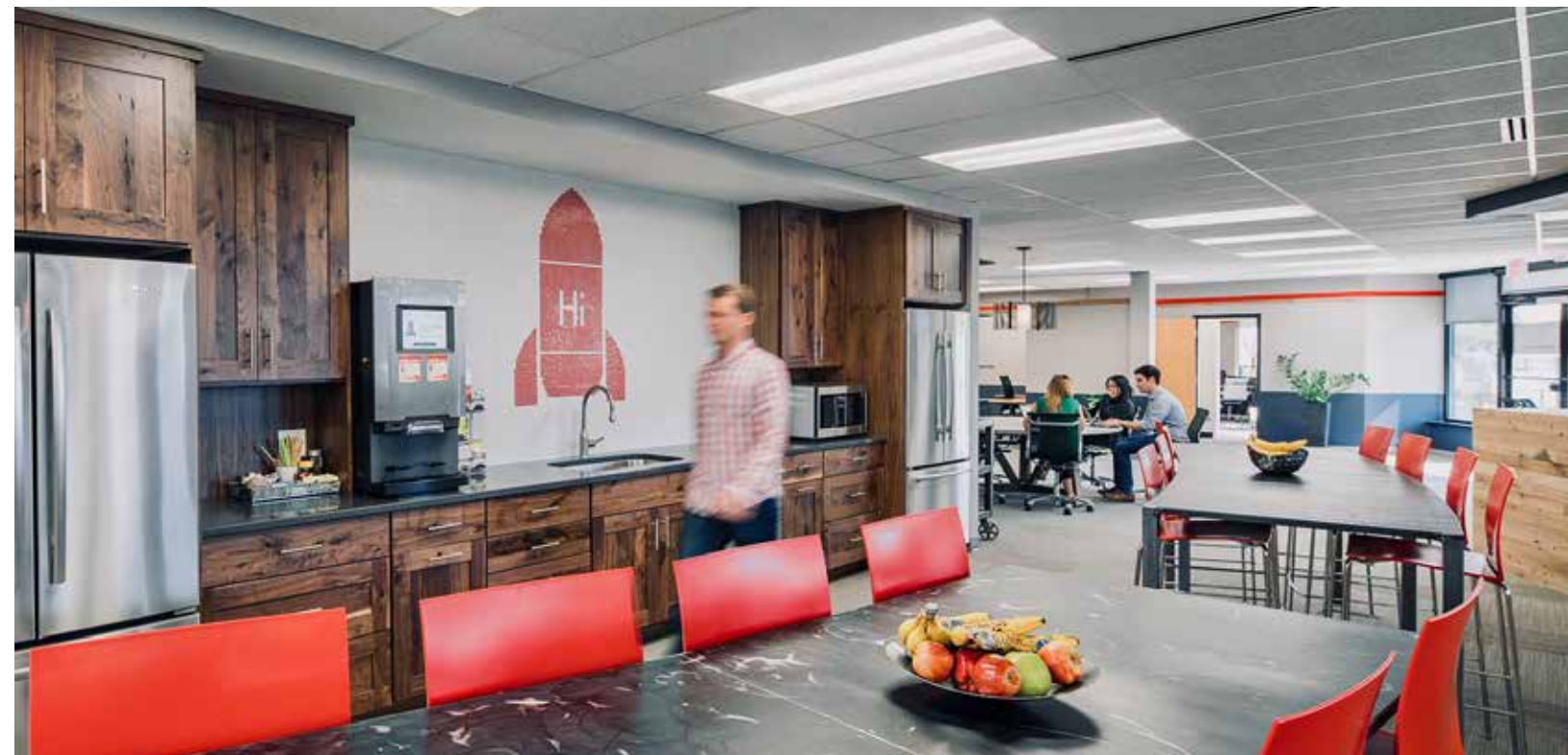
- Appropriate in form and concept
- Pragmatic: works well in the required range of applications and media
- Simple and bold
- Distinctive and memorable

### Credits—

- Architecture Firm: Shepley Bulfinch
- Principal Architect: Tom Kearns, FAIA
- Brand Identity and Strategy: Dan Vlahos
- Signage Consultant: Roll Barresi & Associates
- Signage and Environmental Graphic Designer: Anna Farrington
- Junior Graphic Designer: Erin Deeley
- Photographer: Anton Grassl

(Top Right)  
Harvard Launch Lab  
launched in 2015 at 114  
Western Avenue.

(Bottom Right)  
When WHBG relocated to  
its new headquarters, the  
building and land leased  
to the organization were  
returned to Harvard. The  
building served WGBH from  
1963–2007. The renovation  
preserved 75% of the  
original building and  
was LEED Gold certified.  
The building was later  
dubbed the “Grand Central  
Station for entrepreneurial  
thinking” by the Dean  
of Harvard’s School of  
Engineering.





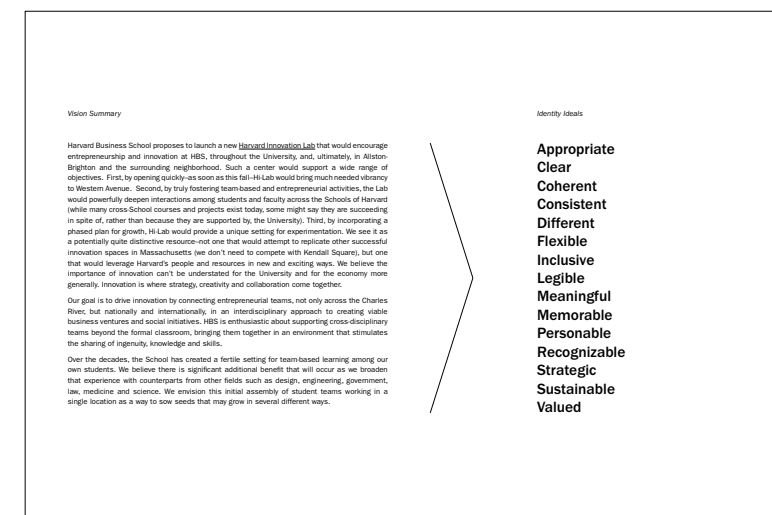
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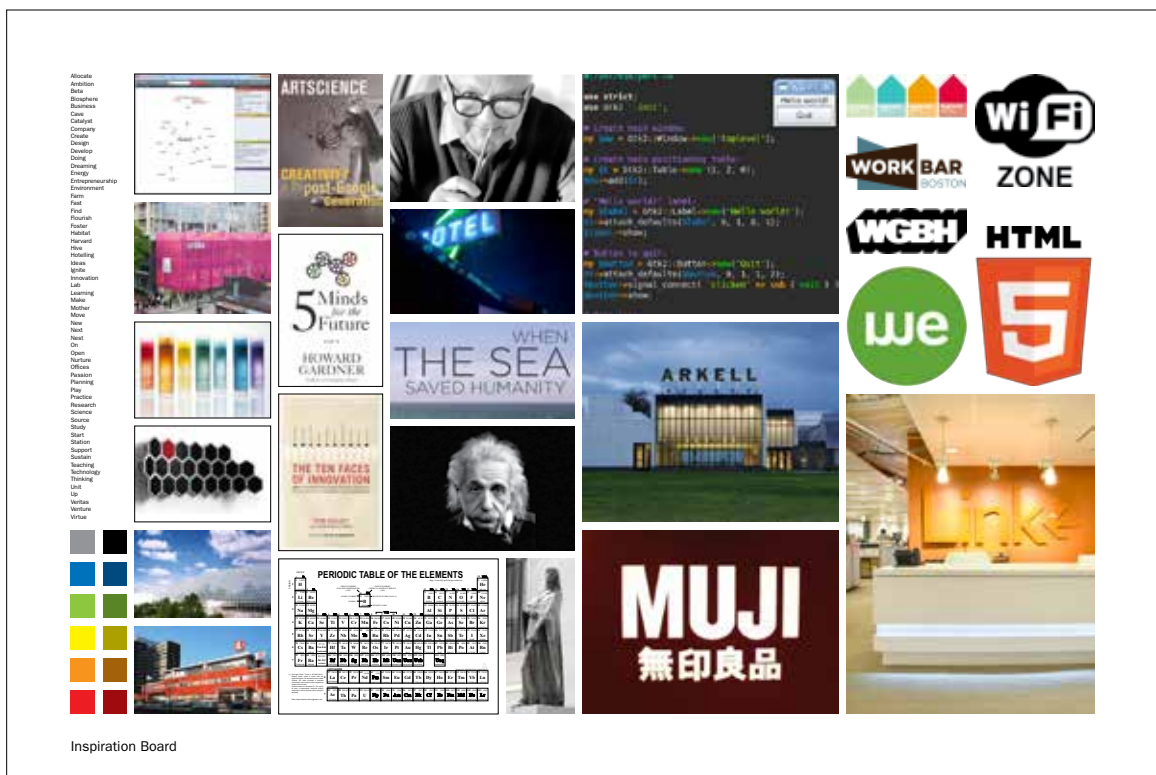
Pagliuca Harvard Life Lab, 2016



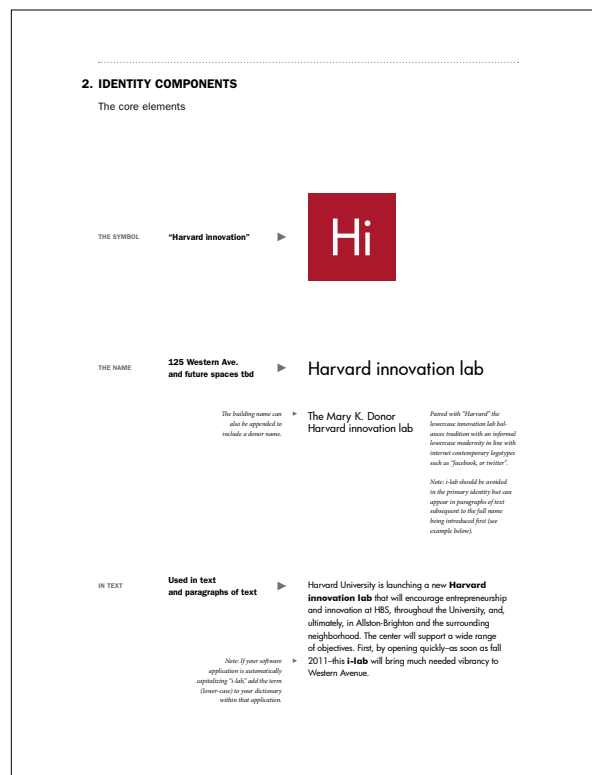
This project was included in the exhibition "Above the Fold: Alumni Works in Design, 3rd Biennial Juried Alumni Exhibition" at MassArt.



The branding team distilled a vision summary down to 15 identity "ideals" that helped focus our conceptual development.



Early concept development board.



The final concept was delivered to the University in a brand standards guide.



The main entry to the entrepreneurship lab section on the first floor of Batten Hall.



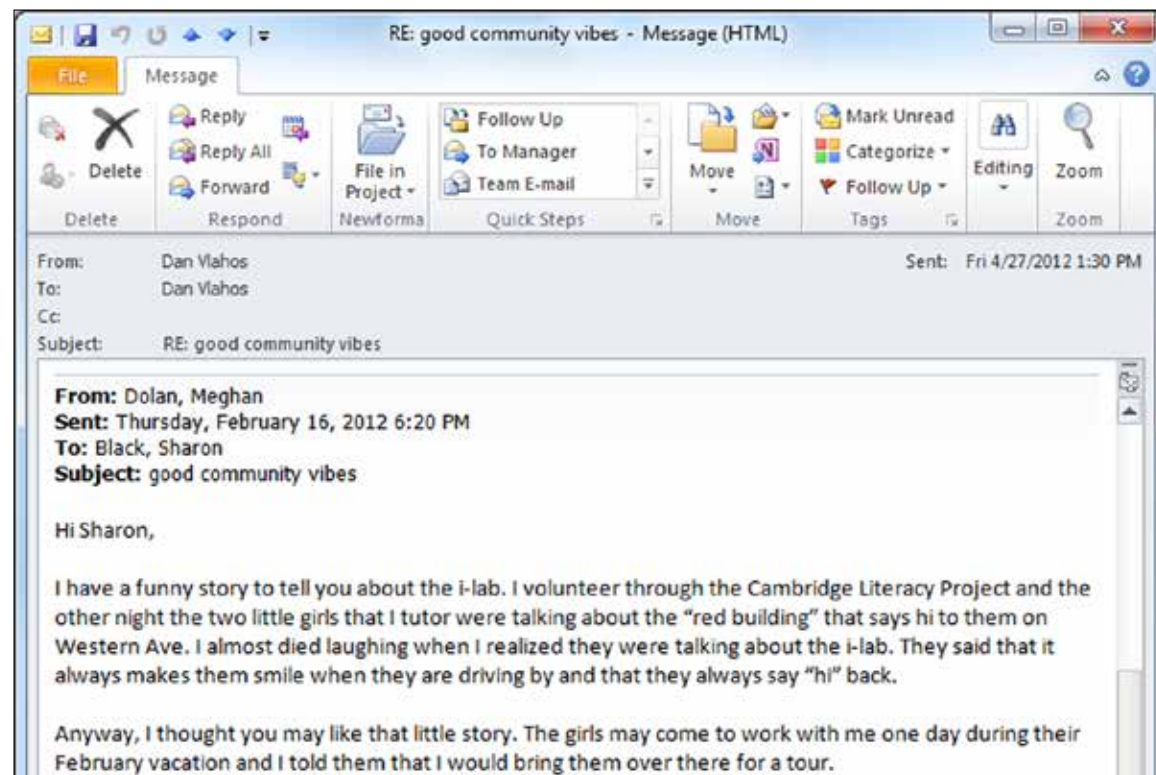
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The team worked with a local projection artist (John Powell) on a site-specific typographic LED light mural for the launch.



In 2023, 1,700 students signed up as members of the university innovation center—a more than 50% increase in one year.



An email forwarded to me from Harvard telling the story of children waving "Hi" as they pass the building each day.



Editorial in the Boston Globe, 2011.



In 2014, I also led the whimsical adaption of the icon for use in the Harvard Launch Lab.





Hi