

FROM THE COMPLEXDISCOVERY BRAND STORY

Eight questions for vibe-heavy initiatives

The framework cuts both ways: an initiative rich in color and panache can be wrongly assumed to be marketing. Prompts, not a validated scorecard. Weak answers on the primary job and measurement suggest styling is substituting for strategy.

01 **Name the job**
Label the initiative awareness, credibility, demand generation, or integration in one word.
If the answer needs a compound sentence, the initiative lacks a center of gravity.

02 **Name the measurement**
One job implies one primary metric. A dashboard that measures everything is optimizing for nothing.

03 **Strip the styling**
Remove the color, the motion, and the production values. If no message remains, the styling was the message.

04 **Trace the brand system**
Does the initiative extend the organization’s existing design system, or did it invent a look for the occasion?
Invented looks build recall for the campaign, not the brand.

05 **Explain the choices**
Anyone on the team should be able to say what each visual decision represents. Choices no one can explain are decoration.

06 **Find the path to action**
If the initiative claims demand generation, there must be a direct line from impression to mechanism.
Buzz is not a mechanism.

07 **Show the selective neglect**
Name what was deliberately not funded so this could be. If nothing was declined, this was an addition, not a decision.

08 **Run the vibe test**
If the initiative’s best defense is how it feels, it has a mood. Moods are real assets, but they are not centers of gravity, and a board should not fund one without deconstructing what the vibe actually provides.