

The History of Motivational Posters

1920



BILL JONES

One of the most prominent producers of motivational posters from this era was Parker-Holladay. The print company's most notable contribution during the 20s was Bill Jones, a fictional character that was developed to encourage the workforce to embrace positive habits—like punctuality, teamwork, and respect—and a positive attitude.



Late

1930

Early

1940

WWII ERA



The most iconic motivational poster of this era is, without a doubt, the “We Can Do It” poster featuring **Rosie the Riveter**.

The motivational posters of the WWII era were more political propaganda than office decor. Their message was clear: It was a civilians’ civic duty to support the war effort by any means necessary—whether by enlisting, going to work in the factories, or rationing resources to support soldiers.



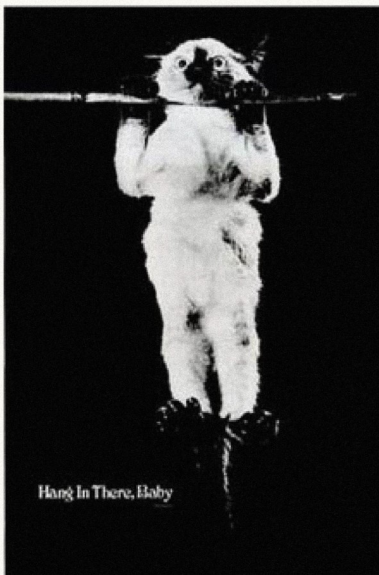
Other popular motivational posters of the time also came straight from the military. The United States Armed Forces also used motivational posters as a way to inspire men to enlist and support the war effort overseas.

The design of **WWII** era posters speaks about what was going on in the world.

These motivational posters also used design to inspire a sense of patriotism.

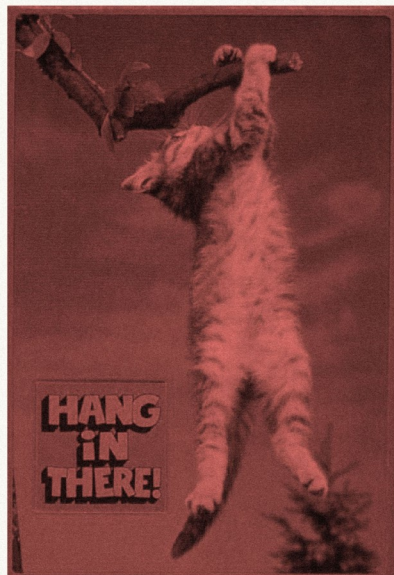
“Hang in There, Baby” by Victor Baldwin

1970



One of the most iconic and recognizable motivational posters of all time comes from the 1970s. This poster was the “Hang in There, Baby” poster.

In the mid-1960s, Baldwin did a photo shoot with his Siamese cat, Sassy.



The “Hang In There, Baby” also inspired multiple iterations. While the original black-and-white is the most well-known, thousands of variations with other cats, other photos, and other color palettes have flooded the market and become a motivational favorite in the years since.

1980

1990

Launched in 1985 by entrepreneur Marc Anderson, Successories created a design formula that carried across all of their motivational posters: A solid border and background (most often black or dark gray), a photo, a bold-text headline with a single inspirational word or phrase (like “Excellence” or “Make It Happen”), and a smaller subheader that explained the inspiration (usually no more than a sentence or two).



This formula, while not exactly innovative, proved to be highly effective. The consistent designs created an unmatched level of brand recognition in the poster industry. It also proved that when it comes to design, you don’t always have to reinvent the wheel in order to get results.

TODAY

Now that we’ve explored the history of motivational posters, let’s talk about where they stand today.

Thanks to technology, pretty much anyone can design their own motivational posters (or, in 2019, motivational posts). And while that means that there isn’t one specific trend or design style that dominates the motivational poster space these days, it also means that there’s a wide variety of creative designs out there to inspire and motivate the masses.

In 2019 motivational poster design, anything goes. If it’s well-designed and inspirational, it’s a go!