

Insights and Lessons...

# Working with a UI Designer

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# Today's Agenda

- ➔ Intro
- ➔ Identifying the need
- ➔ Hiring a designer
- ➔ Core design skills
- ➔ General design process
- ➔ Major deliverables
- ➔ Related issues...
- ➔ Last bit of advice



# → Typical scenario: Sound familiar?



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## → Identifying the need

You need a designer to create software products that are **desirable**, help achieve user's tasks & goals, add polish and quality, ensuring an integrative fit of features to user contexts & perceptions.

It's more than skinning widgets or cutting icons.

A helluva lot more!



## → **Hiring a designer**

Who do you need?

- Visual Designer crafts the pixel details: type/color/grids/icons
- UI/Interaction Designer drives the taskflow, layout, behavior
- Information Architect organizes content, makes sitemaps
- Prototyper vividly animates digital behavior



# → Core design skills

What to look for...

- Empathy
- Imagination
- Iterative
- Holistic
- Sketching
- Writing
- Wires / Comps
- Prototyping
- Communicates well
- Debates on the merits
- Values criticism
- Adaptable to tech
- Considers all sides



## ➔ **Hiring a designer**

How do you find the right one?

- The Portfolio vs The Resume
- A Design Interview
- The Design Exercise
- Venues: BayCHI, IxDA, AIGA, IDSA, UPA



## → **Typical backgrounds**

- Fine and Liberal Arts
- Graphic / Industrial / Interaction Design
- Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)
- Human Factors / Usability / Cog Psych
- Library Science / Information Studies
- Architecture / Interior Design





# → Design process

verify

assess

evaluate

**DISCOVER**



**INTERPRET**



**CREATE**

understanding

modeling

visualizing

users, goals, values, tasks,  
contexts, markets,  
requirements

flows, systems, maps, object  
models, diagrams

sketches, wires,  
comps, prototypes



# → **Design approaches** \* Thanks to Dan Saffer Kicker Studio

## **User-Centered Design**

common design philosophy, asking users for input

## **Activity-Centered Design**

for complex activities, refining taskflows, efficiency overall

## **Data-Driven Design**

for incremental modest updates, tedious

## **Systems Design**

for large-scale big picture, systems/models rethink

## **“Genius” Design**

rapid expert situations, needs experience!



## → **Key design deliverables**

**Design Brief** statement of the problem, scope, goals, criteria

**Personas** archetype profiles of primary users

**Scenarios** contextual stories of usage

**Task Flows** diagrams of tasks, branches, and paths

**Architecture** overview map of content & actions

**Wireframes** schematic structural drawings of UI layout

**Comps** hi-fidelity visual renderings of UI

**Prototypes** behavioral renderings of the UI

**Specs** detailed recipe for construction of approved design



## → **Teamwork/collaboration**

It takes mutual respect and trust. Value each other's expertise and professional judgment. Designers are fair to challenge the tech constraints, and Devs are fair to challenge the design rationale.

Designers aren't there to finish your spec by tomorrow. They want to create a great product.



## → **Important to remember...**

**There is no perfect design.** Everything is subject to compromise, trade-offs, constraints, etc.



## ➔ **Some stern but fair points**

- Tomorrow is not a schedule. It's a freakout.
- No doc'd requirements or functional specs? No design!
- Need a DACI model with clear roles defined.
- Designers don't have to react to every opinion.
- PMs (and devs) are not art directors. Period.
- Want user feedback? Great! Just fit it in the schedule.
- Email is not the record. Get a trackable online place.
- Sketches and wires are not the spec.
- Design is a full-body commitment. Get ready!



## → **Last bit of advice**

Tradeoffs are essential to the working relationship. All about managing expectations, assumptions, and dependencies. The designer should be your ally in delivering a great product.

provocateur • therapist • advocate • visualizer



## → Other big issues...

- Design within Agile situations
- Factoring in user feedback
- Who makes the call among options?
- Sources of design authority?
- When is a design right (or done)?
- Where is design within an organization?
- Cross-geo design vs co-located
- Engaging with execs





*Thank you*

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