Insights and Lessons...

Working with a UI Designer



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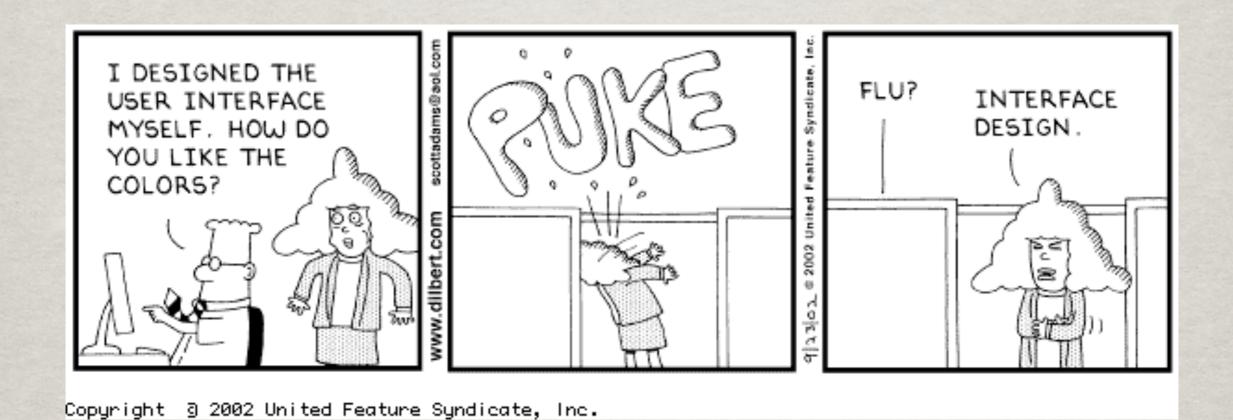


Today's Agenda

- 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?



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 evaluate assess **DISCOVER** INTERPRET **CREATE** understanding modeling visualizing flows, systems, maps, object users, goals, values, tasks, sketches, wires, contexts, markets, models, diagrams comps, prototypes requirements



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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