Articulating Design Decisions

Communicate with stakeholders, keep your sanity, and deliver the best user experience.

@tomgreever
“simplicity”
“good use of space”
“When you can’t remove anything else...”
We suck at talking about design
1. Solves a problem
2. Easy for users
3. Supported by everyone
Your ability to be thoughtful about a problem and articulate any solution is more important than your ability to design the perfect solution every time.
Great designer = great communicator
Why?
The CEO Button

An unusual or otherwise unexpected request from an executive to add a feature that completely destroys the balance of a project and undermines the very purpose of a designer’s existence
Homepage Syndrome

A condition whereby the home screen of an application or website becomes a catch-all for everything, creating a garage-sale of links, buttons, and banner ads that unravels the fabric of usability, causing designers to cry themselves to sleep.

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Approaching

1. What problem does this solve?
2. How does this affect the user?
3. Why is it better than the alternative?
Understanding

1. See their perspective
2. Remove distractions
Understanding

1. See their perspective
2. Remove distractions
3. Anticipate reactions
Listening

1. Let them talk
2. Hear what they’re not saying
“The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said.”

— Peter Drucker, author & management consultant
Listening

1. Let them talk
2. Hear what they’re not saying
3. Uncover the (real) problem
4. Convert “Likes” into “Works”
5. Ask for examples
Responding

1. Give up control
2. Lead with a YES!

The first step to recovery is admitting you’re not in control
Tactics

• Appeal to a nobler motive*
• Show a comparison

* Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 1936

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Tactics

• Appeal to a nobler motive*
• Show a comparison

• Propose an alternative
• Give them a choice
• Postpone the decision
Don’t Say

• “You’re wrong”
• “From a design perspective...”
• What you like or don’t like
Common explanations

- Facilitates a primary use case
- Follows a common design pattern
- Meets a particular goal
- Data supports it
- Complies with a standard

- Limited by technology
- Draws the user’s attention
- Creates a flow for the user
- Establishes branding
1. What problem does this solve?
2. How does this affect the user?
3. Why is it better than the alternative?
Painting a Duck
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