HARD
LEARNED LESSONS
IN LEADING DESIGN
@aarron
From a few thousand to ~10,000,000 customers
From 6 to 550 employees
COMPANIES
Inflection Points
1-30
Family, Easy Communication
Quick Decisions Based on Hunches
31-50
Family more like a business, harder to keep up, more communication required, discovering process, lots of generalists
51–200
No longer know everyone, need to define values, hiring is key, big role changes, no more hunches
Awkward teenage years, optimizing, slowed innovation, more specialists, you need connector people
Culture and values are defined, watch for self interest over company interest.
FUD
If you personally want to grow as fast as your company, you have to give away your job every couple months.

Molly Graham, VP Operations Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
You Can Be Something New
PRODUCT
Evolution of Ideas
Priorities and direction are clear. Hunches are strong.
Right product, but not yet aligned with needs of customers. Time to refine.
New ideas are out of reach. You’ll need to talk to customers.
The best product companies in the world have figured out how to make constant quality improvements part of their essential DNA.

Phil Libin, former CEO of Evernote
PEOPLE
Hiring
Mediocrity Begets Mediocrity
If you hire people just because they can do a job, they’ll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they’ll work for you with blood and sweat and tears.

Simon Sinek, author of Start With Why
Soft Skills
ADAPTATION
If you want diversity of thought, you have to bring in people around you who have diverse experiences.

Victoria L. Brescoll, Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior, Yale University
Communication
Design Brief
Mon

Staff meeting—define the work

Tue

Team design review of roughs

Thurs

Team design review of refined work

Fri

Pencils down, executive review
Culture of Feedback
PROCESS
A Perfect Team Structure
People tell me or wonder: what’s the best team configuration—centralized or decentralized? There’s no answer because it depends on the stage of an organization's growth, change, the market conditions.

John Maeda, Global Head, Computational Design and Inclusion at Automattic
Owning Design
Ideas
Me/We
crazy
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Divergent Thinking
If I knew where I was going I wouldn’t go there.

Frank Gehry
Your legs are your most effective design tool. Get out and connect with people.

Mark Opland, Design Manager at Facebook
Social Capital
You don’t earn a VP position with your headphones on.

Ryan Page, Director Digital Design Capital One
I often invited influential people in the company to my team’s design reviews so our work remained visible.

Laura Martini, Medisys
The graph of impact tends to correlate with how many people you need to work effectively with. Once I realized this, I started to see my interactions with other people differently. It was no longer about winning battles and proving that I was right, but about developing stronger collaborative relationships.

Julie Zhuo, VP, Product Design Facebook
Meet me at booth #401 in the Expo Hall (Italian Room) to talk more.