Design Your Design Organization

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Agenda

1. Your Product and Design Organization
2. The Expanded Role of Design
3. Organizational Models and Design Output
4. The 5 Stages of Design Organizations
5. The Untapped Opportunity for Design
1.
Your Product and Design Organization
Describe your Design Org

On a big sheet of paper:

• draw your org chart
• list your roles
• anything else (charter, OKRs, etc.)
What do you want to talk about?
2. The Expanded Role of Design
Why are companies investing more in design?

Generates new business value

Software is eating the world
Everything is, or is becoming, a service
All design is service design
adapted from Rob Brunner’s talk at 2016 O’Reilly Design Conference
management ➔ marketing ➔ design ➔ engineering ➔ manufacturing ➔ sales ➔ support

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Definition
Strategy and plan, aka “Build the right thing.”

Execution
Working through tradeoffs to deliver optimal solution, aka “Build the thing right.”

Design makes strategy concrete

Design supports delightful, engaging experiences

Design informs planning

Henrik Kniberg
The Three-Legged Stool

Adapted from Don Norman
Design...

...generates value

...tames software complexity

...coheres service experiences

...enhances all practices

...defines new offerings

...informs planning
Why do I teach this?

Drawn from running a design firm, going in-house

Concern that these big investments are not going to pay off, at least not to nearly their potential

At issue is not the product of design, but the unseen stuff ‘behind the scenes’ that ultimately affects that quality
3. Organizational Models and Design Output
Centralized Internal Services

*Your in-house agency*

Project-based, organized by function

**PROS**
- Strong design community
- Clear lines of authority
- Wide range of projects
- Interface consistency
- Efficiencies of work product
- Optimized headcount

**CONS**
- Design is not strategic
- Little influence on important “upstream” decisions
- Designers easily dismissed
- Us vs Them
- Slow
Decentralized and Embedded

*Everyone Gets A Designer!*

Program-based
Decentralized and Embedded

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<th>Leadership</th>
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Decentralized and Embedded

Everyone Gets A Designer!

Program-based

**PROS**

- Business units gain control
- Part of the team
- Design included throughout entire lifecycle
- Feeling of ownership
- Quick iterations post-launch

**CONS**

- One narrow problem for a long time
- Lonely
- Fractured user experience
- Less efficient use of time and people
So, you’re screwed either way?
KOBAYASHI MARU

CLASSIFICATION: Class III Neutronic Fuel Carrier

REGISTRY: Amber, Tau Ceti IV

CREW: 81

PASSENGERS: 300

DEAD WEIGHT TONNAGE: 1,479,943 M.T.

CARGO CAPACITY: 97,000 M.T.

LENGTH: 237 m.

BEAM: 111 m.

HEIGHT: 70 m.

MAX CRUISE SPEED: 6 ft 3

MAX EMERGENCY SPEED: 6 ft 6
Think in terms of design teams
Centralized Partnership

aka “hybrid”, “federated”

Designers supported in career, development, and day-to-day.
Design teams maintain commitment across a meaningful set of products/features.
Yet centralization helps maintain a holistic view across the entire customer experience.
Teams allow for complete spread of needed skills.
Freedom to shift after ‘tours of duty’.
“Load balancing” keeps designers most productive.
Let’s say you have a set of product teams...
Focus design on customer types

Buyer Design Team

Buyer Experience
- Search/Browse
- Product Page
- Shopping Cart and Checkout
- Reviews

Seller Experience
- Seller Tools

Seller Design Team
Focus design on customer types

Buyer Design Team

Buyer Experience

Seller Experience

Seller Design Team

Growth

Search/Browse

Product Page

Shopping Cart and Checkout

Make an Appointment

Reviews

Focus design on customer types
And stick with it as you scale...

Buyer Design Team

Discovery Design Team

Purchase Design Team

Post-Purchase Design Team

Growth

Search/browse

Shopping Cart

Make a Reservation

Reviews

Share experience

Promotions

Detail Page

Checkout

Redeem

And stick with it as you scale...
Organize your product managers around customers, not code repositories. Connect PM areas of ownership to users and their product experiences. Maybe you have a buyer PM and a seller PM instead of back-end and front-end PMs.

Just like it’s ideal to organize your PM team around customers and use cases, the same goes for engineering. Otherwise, you risk having a PM responsible for a use case having to work with half a dozen engineering teams to ship a feature: server, web, iOS, Android, infra, etc.

From Ken Norton’s “Don't Ship The Org Chart” Parts 1 and 2
How could you embrace the Centralized Partnership?

Design in teams
Organize by customer journey
One design organization to tie it all together, organized by customer journey
...which requires a lot of skills!

Software Products
- Interaction Design
- Information Architecture
- Visual Design
- Prototyping

Hardware Products
- Industrial Design

Research
- Ethnographic research
- Usability testing
- Quantitative studies

Environments
- Wayfinding
- Interior Architecture

Communications
- Brand Identity Design
- Graphic Design
- Information Design
- Motion Graphics
- Packaging

Content
- Copywriting
- Content Strategy
- Videography
- Photography

The Journey
- Service Design
...and presence at all levels of scale

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A team Peter inherited...
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Structure of each design team

4-7 folks

**Singular strong leadership**

- Manages down – gets the most and best out of their team
- Manages across – collaborates with cross-functional partners
- Manages up – presents to executives and other stakeholders

Dedicated to a customer type and their journey

Spread of skills – strategy, planning, research, IxD, IA, visual design, prototyping
How capable is your team in delivering across the entire customer journey?

Across skills and scales?

How could you augment?

How integrated is the team to all corporate functions?
Where does design live?
Who's the head of design?
A design team needs to be in charge of its own destiny, and this requires:

**Focused leadership with autonomy and executive access.**
Focused leadership

- VP of Product
  - Head of Design
    - Design Director
    - Design Director
    - Design Director
  - Dir of PM
  - Dir of PM
  - Dir of PM
  - Dir of PM
Executive Access

CEO

VP of Product

Head of Design

Dir of PM
Dir of PM
Dir of PM
Dir of PM

Design
Design
Design
Does your design leadership have autonomy and access?
Is design leading design?
Can they shape their org as they see fit?
Are they two or fewer rungs from the CEO?
4. The 5 Stages of Design Organizations
Stage 1: The Initial Pair

Head of Design
- creative
- managerial
- operational
- (and, at this stage, a maker)

Product Designer
- Structure and/or Surface
Stage 2: A Full Team

**Content Strategist**
- Voice and tone
- Content structure
- Copywriting

**Communication Designer**
- Visual designers
- Online and offline
- Brand
- Information design
Stage 3: From Design Team to Design Org

Team Lead
- Not (necessarily) a people manager
- Manages down, sideways, and up

Head of Design, revisited
- May struggle with scale
- Might need a new one

UX Researcher
- Generative and evaluative
- Highly leveraged
Stage 4: Coordination to Manage Complexity

**Service Designer**
- Strategy and Structure
- Integrates across teams

**Program Manager**
- Design Operations
- Organizational effectiveness
- Not delivery

**Design Manager**
- Might be Team Lead
- People manager
- Still practices
Let’s take a little detour...
Does your team suffer these issues?

• trouble **coordinating** internally, particularly around process, communications, and file management

• difficulty **collaborating** with other parts of the organization

• inappropriate **staffing** on projects and programs

• lack of **visibility** into related work streams

• **duplicated** efforts

• **non-existent** **measurement**
Little “o” Operations

“The sand in the gears”
Scheduling and budgets
Tools and procedures
Communication and coordination
Measured by effectiveness
Big “O” Operations

Annual planning ensuring adequate headcount
Compensation packages that are fair for the market
Adjustments to performance reviews to suit designers
Facilities and IT to support collaborative work styles
Policy changes to support real customer research
How effective is your design team?

Do people feel like they’re spinning their wheels, putting in a lot of effort but seeing few results?

Are projects/programs appropriately staffed?

Does the team have the resources they need to do great work? (Machines, devices, physical space)
Stage 4: Coordination to Manage Complexity
Stage 5: Distributed Leadership

Design Director
• Oversees a swath of teams/experiences
• Integrates across teams

Creative Director
• Focused solely on creative leadership
• Establishes quality standards

Creative Technologist
• Prototypes new experiences
• NOT a Front-end Dev

Director of Research
• Leads research team/efforts
• Insights hub
The Roles, Revisited

**Leadership**
- Head of Design
- Design Manager/Director
- Creative Director
- Team Lead
- Director of Research
- Director of Design Program Management

**Staff**
- Product Designer
- Communication Designer
- Content Strategist
- UX Researcher
- Service Designer
- Program Manager
- Creative Technologist
How do these stages resonate?

How about the roles?
5. The Untapped Opportunity for Design
Designers can keep a lot of other people busy
With a
1) centralized partnership, 
2) teams with strong leadership, 
3) influencing definition, and
4) a relatively small team, 
you have leverage.
Leverage = Power

There’s no reason design can’t be the driving force.

We just need confidence, evidence, and commitment.
One more thing...
## Decentralized and Embedded

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**Leadership**

- DEC
- DESIGN
- PRODUCT MGMT
- ENGINEERING

**Categories**

- Search/Browse
- Product Page
- UGC/Reviews
- Personalization
- Checkout
Centralized Partnership

Leadership

Search/Browse

Product Page

UGC/Reviews

Personalization

Checkout
Still stuck in a ‘features’ world

Leadership: Search/Browse, Product Page, UGC/Reviews, Personalization, Checkout

Design:
- D (Design)
- S (Support)
- CS (Customer Support)

Product Management:
- DP (Design Product Management)

Engineering:
- DE (Design Engineering)
- E (Engineers) +n (N/A)

UGC/Reviews:
- P (Product)

Personalization:
- P (Product)

Checkout:
- P (Product)
Thank you for your consideration.

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