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Research: efficient UI Design

Here's everything I've learned from designing 10,000+ UI screens as a lead product designer

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Besides: "Yes, that is still misaligned."

Quick Note: I learned all of this from amazing designers like you, fantastic mentors, and lots of trial and error. If you learn something from this article, share it with another designer. I'll love you for it, and they will, too.

Also, go follow [Christian Beck](#). He's a brilliant designer and mentor.

1. Prioritize your design efforts.

I always use this analogy:

No one cares what color the stitching is on the leather seats of your fancy concept car if it doesn't even have wheels yet.

Prioritize your design efforts so that you're satisfying all baseline requirements *first*. Then **AND ONLY THEN** can you move on to fancier things like custom illustrations and animation.

Which conveniently leads us to...

Build in a logical way; start MVP then work towards bigger goals

2. No one cares about animation.

Sorry, everyone. It's true. And I'm not saying this out of spite because I'm just not that good at it (which is also true).

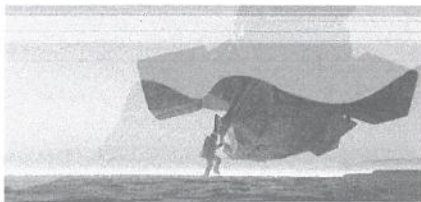
World-class products have little to no animation at all:

[Facebook](#), [Salesforce](#), [Medium](#).

These products are worth billions and billions and billions of dollars because they solve problems and deliver value, not because they have cute animations.

Yes, there is a time and place for animation, but start by spending your time delivering exceptional value through a best-in-class user experience. *Then* you can spend all the time you want making a cute little menu button that morphs into a McDonald's Big Mac.

Animation can be good but later in the process



Stop reinventing the wheel and you'll have more time and energy to design a spaceship.

This animation by Pete Sana couldn't have been more perfect. (source)

3. Don't reinvent the wheel.

A pattern is something that's regularly found in comparable objects.

Design patterns are called *patterns* because they're found all over the place. Users are accustomed to doing things a certain way and that usually comes with expectations for the user experience.

I could design you a hundred different ways to filter a data table, but **nothing** will ever be as efficient as a left-hand rail of check boxes like the ones found on every eCommerce website.

Don't spend your time being fancy for things that don't need to be reinvented.

Follow Patterns and guidelines



4. "Templatize" your work.

In the spirit of not reinventing *your entire being*, for the love of all things holy, make yourself some design templates.

You'll *save yourself seven metric boatloads of time*.

In a week and a half, I designed 52 screens for a client sprinting toward an important sales presentation and even wired them up into a clickable InVision prototype. It's a fully custom design, too, and is completely customized to fit the tone of their brand. This would have been impossible without templates at the ready to help me jumpstart my work.

Here's an example screen from my personal master UI boilerplate that I use on every single project as a way to get a head start:

i don't think i will need a template here; i will use a styleguide



This is a real screen element from my Design Tools

You can check out some of the design systems I've built over at UX Power Tools. I think they'll really help you out.



5. Consistency begets efficiency.

The more consistently you design, the faster you'll become.

How do I know?

Well for one thing, you're dramatically reducing the number of design decisions you have to make along the way.

If you make yourself a button symbol in Sketch and use that throughout your design, not only will all of your buttons look consistent, but all of the sudden you're working far more efficiently because you're not making buttons from scratch every time you need one.

Earth-shattering, I know!

be consistent for time sake

6. Efficiency begets consistency.

These are pretty symbiotic, so it also works in the reverse.

In order to work faster, you'll have to create shortcuts for yourself. These shortcuts can be tangible things like design resources, or more intangible like establishing and following a set of design principles (like sticking to an 8px grid system).

As you become faster, consistency will naturally follow.

Components Library?

7. Business and user value usurps EVERYTHING.

By last estimates, Craigslist was valued at around \$3 BILLION.

I have you ever seen that site? It's hideous.



But it doesn't matter. It solves a problem and delivers value to the user.

Plain and simple. *Just like Craigslist!*

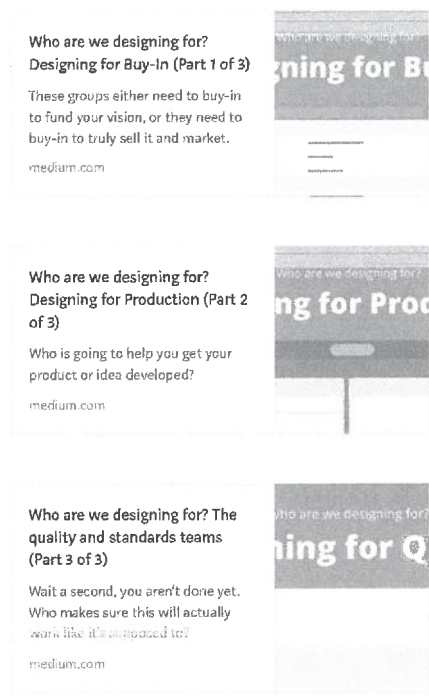
Look, I'm not advocating design oversimplification. All I'm saying is that if you can deliver value to the user, you will create customers who will drive value to the business.

Solve the right problem for the right person and you'll be golden.

8. I am not the center of the world.

There are **LOTS** of other people who matter in the product design process.

Just take a look:



9. Great designs will fail with bad presentation.

Ever been on a date with someone that was **SUPER HOT**, but couldn't really carry on a conversation to save their own life?

Visuals alone won't carry a great design very far. I'd argue that visuals are really only about 20% of the entire presentation process.

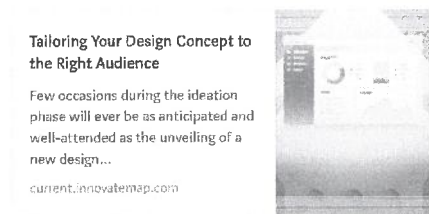
The rest?

Well, that's **storytelling**. If you don't hook your audience with a compelling story, demonstrate business value, and speak on behalf of the user, then you will fail.

What does failure look like?

Lots of questions. Playing design defense instead of design offense. Design sacrifices. Lack of trust. Go-to-market anxiety.

You don't want these things.



The Marketing around the design / app

10. Get. It. Built.

I saved this one for last because it's **SO SO SO SO SO** important:

Functional Product > Dribbble

Literally nothing else matters.

Beautiful design? **Awesome!**
Didn't launch? **Failure.**

Am I saying that in order to be considered a successful designer that you have to actually design something that gets built? Well to be honest, yeah, kinda. *Talking* about the plans you had for your spouse's birthday that you didn't follow through on aren't going to prevent you from having to sleep on the couch for the next month.

Get. It. Built.

Here's everything I've learned from designing 10,000+ UI screens as a lead product designer.

Even if it's scrappy. Even if it's imperfect. Even if no one ever uses it.

At least you showed through and shared something along the way.

When I'm not reflecting on my design career, I'm working on Sketch design tools at [UX Power Tools](#) to make you a better, more efficient designer.

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Follow through and learn along the way