

DISCUSSING DESIGN

Improving Communication and Collaboration through Critique

What: Critique is a form of analysis. During a critique, participants examine a design, theorize the impacts and effects of its components. Those impacts and effects are then compared to the goals and principles that the design is being created to achieve in order to identify where the design is strong (achieving goals and principles) and where it can be improved upon (not adequately achieving goals and principles).

Why: The design process is cyclical in nature and requires us to regularly step away from our creation and evaluate it so that we can better understand where to focus our attention as we move forward. Critique is one such tool for doing this. Additionally, by doing it with our teams we can foster collaboration and a common language for discussing and evaluating our designs.

When: A critique can happen at any time. The most important criteria for a critique to take place is the opportunity to use the learnings from a critique to iterate upon or generate a new design or idea.

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TIPS FOR GIVING CRITIQUE - CHAPTER 2

Use a filter

Gather initial thoughts and reactions. Revisit them in the right context

Don't assume

Find out the reason behind thinking, constraints or other variables

Don't invite yourself

Get in touch and ask to chat about the design

Lead with questions

Show an interest in their process

Talk about strengths

Critique isn't just about what isn't working

TIPS FOR RECEIVING CRITIQUE - CHAPTER 2

Remember the purpose

Critique is about understanding and improvement, not judgement

Listen and think before responding

Do you understand what the critics are saying?

Participate

Analyze your design with everyone else

Set the right foundation

Use knowledge and prior agreements to get everyone on the same page

RULES OF CRITIQUE - CHAPTER 5

- Everyone is equal
- Try to avoid problem solving and design decisions
- The designer is responsible for follow up and next steps
- Everyone is a critic

WHO TO INVITE - CHAPTER 5

- Can be anyone: Stakeholders, SMEs, Business Analysts, other Designers, Developers, etc.
- 3-6 people
- Choose attendees based on session goals
- Consider personalities as well as roles

Tip: Try not to use the same people every time. Changing up participants means you collect more perspectives and see other's ability to critique.

PREPPING FOR AND BEGINNING A CRITIQUE CHAPTER 5

- Send out materials ahead of time along with a description of what you plan to cover
- Begin by describing the relevant goals and principles, then present your design or idea
- Present quickly
- Be careful when talking about constraints

TOOLS FOR FACILITATING CRITIQUE - CHAPTER 5

- Critique Session Goals
- Active Listening / Question for Clarity
- Round Robin & Quotas
- Direct Inquiry
- Six Thinking Hats
- Facilitators

Tip: Don't forget to take notes or have someone do it for you.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A CRITIQUE - CHAPTER 5

- Take note of how people participated
- Document key observations and any open questions and share them
- Follow up with individuals to further explore an observation or potential solution
- Communicate your next steps to participants

MAKING CRITIQUE PART OF YOUR PROCESS - CHAPTER 3

There are 3 main ways to integrate critique in your design process:

Standalone: Scheduled & Impromptu -

Standalone critiques are discussions dedicated to stepping back and evaluating a design or idea and not tied to any project timeline dates. They can be held as a recurring scheduled event or done on-the-fly when a designer feels like the analysis will be helpful in moving the design forward.

Design Reviews

Design Reviews are a common element in the process used by many organizations, but differ from critique for a number of reasons, however, with good facilitation some critique can be collected in these sessions. You should not rely on design reviews for critique.

Brainstorms & Collaborative Activities

When working with others to generate ideas and build consensus in the form of a brainstorm or other collaborative workshop, critique can be a powerful tool to aid in the iteration of ideas while avoiding personal preferences and organizational politics.

TOOLS FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE - CHAPTER 6

- Set expectations at the beginning and make sure everyone understands what critique is
- Ask quiet people for feedback directly
- Refer back to goals, principles, scenarios and personas to keep discussions focused
- Use Laddering (The 5 Whys) to help separate meaningful critique from personal preferences
- Critique with people one-on-one ahead of time