Kam's Design Process



Tell me the problem you are trying to solve

The first part of the process starts with what you are trying to solve? A well-defined problem is a great starting point. While it may be tempting to want to redesign something to make it look better, it is a better compass to have something that is a user centric. For example, helping users solve an everyday problem can help make a product the people love and use.



Democratizing design through data

A common pitfall that I have seen far too often is not having clear success benchmark for design. I like red, you like blue, this can be a back and forth cycle that results in a lot of time and energy wasted. I found the democratizing of design through an agreed success metric to be a better approach. For example, conversion is improved by 10% with the design that has red in it.

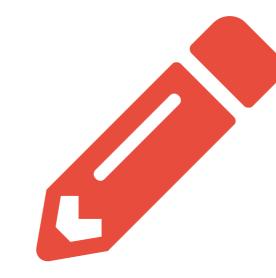


Observation and understanding

Letting the research help guide the design process can be quite interesting and nerve wracking at the same time. Part of the process can help move the product into new territories that is outside the team's comfort zone, but it may also help pivot to a new channel that is better served with the current offering.

At a high level I like to undertake two main areas of focus to help define a research baseline, user feedback and competitive landscape study. User feedback can come in quite a lot of forms from surveys, feedback forms and usage observations. For competitive landscape, SWOT analysis of direct competitors is great. For an existing product, analytics can provide another area for identifying usage pattern.

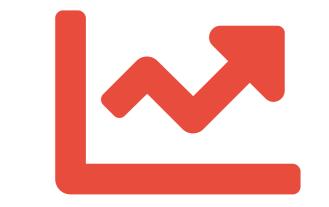
A research baseline study is really useful for understanding where the industry trends are heading and how users are using the product/service. This allows us to best position the value proposition for future growth.



Whiteboarding

Conversation driven by research can help facilitate a vibrant discussion between business wants and user needs. Working closely with the stakeholders to tell the users stories and solving real world problems can help pivot direction in the roadmap to new opportunities.

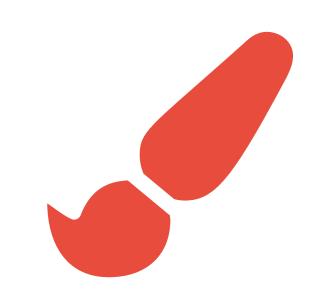
This stage of the process for me is driven around discussing long term business strategy, market trends and user research. I enjoy using the whiteboard for sorting and hashing out wireframes. This allows the stakeholders to provide input at a high level without getting too much into the details of the visual design.



Testing

Taking the lo-fidelity whiteboard wireframes, I convert them into clickable porotype for feedback. I find the low fidelity allows users to provide feedback on the structure and navigation of the application.

Real world application of this testing phase has included guerrilla testing and paper prototyping. I have had successes with creating Invision clickable prototypes to gather feedback from local team members. Lately I have been using remote user testing to gather feedback on a more randomized group.



Design

After a few iterations of wireframing, testing and discussion. I start gradually increasing the fidelity of the design. At this stage I like to examine any preexisting design guidelines for visual elements, such as typography, color and design standards.

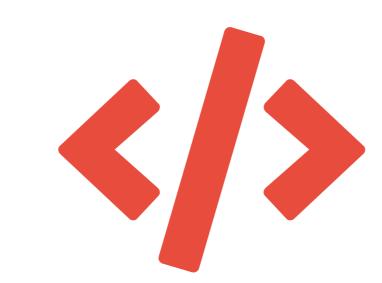
Going through a couple of rounds with the compliance team to ensure the design is in line with brand look and feel is not only important for a consistent look but also help builds users trust.



Feedback

Being an iterative process there is continuous cycle of design, testing and discussion to define the product. As the fidelity of the design goes up, the sophistication of the testing and feedback process changes as well.

At a low-fidelity phase I find methods such as gruella testing with hand sketch wireframes to be effective. At mid-fidelity, I like using invision and clickable prototype to test and capture feedback. At high-fidelity, the testing is more sophisticated using timing to completion and heatmaps to optimize the design.



Implement

As the design is becomes more defined, there is a good middle ground to begin working with the development team for implementation. While their involvement was in the earlier phase to help with understand the system limitation, this phase is more with the front-end group to prepare assets for handoff and working through use cases.

Invision at this stage for me has been a great tool for collaboration with the development team to provide specification and assets. I find having well defined UI Kits to be very helpful for the front-end development team to reference while you work on designing the next sections of the application.



Test against benchmark

Once deployed to the production environment, user feedback would be essential in ensuring the product is doing what we indented to do with our original problem statement. Although the user testing has been involved thought-out the process to validate the product against the problem statement, there is an element of adaption that is beyond the research.

At this state getting user feedback from surveys can be helpful in capturing the first impression of what users think when using the application in their day to day lives. Once feedback has been captured the core team would prioritize in accordance improvements and the design cycle would start over again, though in smaller in scale.

