

## **Case A**

**Participant: Designer 1 (P)**

**Facilitator: Xiao Zhang (R)**

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**R: #00:01:06-5#** In our last interview, you talked about how you incorporated your experience with email and meetings into [the name of the product]. So how did you communicate your experience, or how did you communicate your idea with your team member, other interaction designer and the product owner?

**P: #00:01:14-5#** We spend time talking about what we gonna(can) do next for the product and those discussions are had different stakeholders. So for instance, I will talk to the product owners and we will talk about where, what I would call the points of friction are with the product. Where is their problems with the product right now? What would make it easier in use the product. And because we used the tool for our own work, we are always looking through the lens of how could we make this easier for us. So we have meetings to talk about what we gonna build next because we had this spring model, and during those meetings, we will talk about our own experiences with the product and, because everybody uses email, and everybody has meetings. It's easy for everybody to talk about how the tool can support those contexts. Everyone is familiar with what is like to do that kinda work and everybody is also familiar with the tool we are trying to build. So what we will do is we talk, and it's just simple conversation, and some people will have different perspective, other people will agree. And then based on those conversations, we take our designs to the next levels. So we will decide, ok, now, we are going to do X feature, and then we will sit down and do some sketches. But as far as communicating, my interest in using email whatever tool, and having meetings with whatever tool, most is just in a conversation, in a meeting.

**R: #00:03:15-7#** So how did other stakeholders in the meeting justify and evaluate this experience and this idea and this feature?

**P: #00:03:25-5#** I think it's just, it's a same thing, you know, you just use the tool, and using the tool, you recognize that it is complicated to try to get an email or your email client steak it in extreme, it takes too many steps, and we are also busy that when something isn't convenient, and something isn't intuitive, just doesn't happen. So to justify it, they just, I guess it's about a common standard that they have some similar experiences as I do. And so, because they have their experiences as well, they relate to the comment and assign it via some giving. And because they relate to it, the whole active justifying it, is just not really needed. So there is no formal justification process beyond, or I agree or I disagree that I haven't have that experiences, or yes I did have that experiences, therefore I agree.

**R: #00:04:29-0#** So you also said some people may don't agree with this idea, so what are their points? and why they didn't agree?

**P: #00:04:42-4#** Well, there is a lots of different reasons, right? I think depends on values and also you are responsible for on the team, so we require a lot of the engineers and they had different responsibilities. They got paid to do different kinda job than I got paid to do. And so they are interested in making sure the product performs well and stable, and you know, this kinds of things. It's not part of their job to worry about the users necessarily even though it is everybody's job to do that. I think that also based on their training, they will evaluate a work

situation or their work. What I find is depending on how someone is being trained, whether it's going to school or you know through experience. They will think about dime in a different way, what is dime look like? right? what is the finishing thing we were trying to achieve look like? And so I don't think that convenience and intuitive features are necessarily that important to an engineer when he thinks about what dime looks like. It's more you know, like, does it stable? does it perform well? these kinda thing. So I think part of the reason why they don't necessarily... They may agree that it will be good to have the feature that I am trying to convince people to build, but they may not see it as a priority. And so there is that side as well, is that people's priority is different. So that's really what it comes down to, is priorities and also what are they think, you know, their particular value set, as professional value set.

**R: #00:06:50-7#** You said in meetings, you talked with product owners about what features should go into [the name of the product], so How did your team add this experience into the design decisions?

**P: #00:07:47-6#** Well, there is different important lenses that we look through. One is customers, so the customers have said that they want X feature, then we often will build it. If user experience says, we wanna invest in some certain kinda feature, it's typically that we need more than just our opinion. We need to make a really strong case for it. And so we will do perhaps supported with usability testing, perhaps will supported with a prototype to show how much better it would be. Perhaps we will spend a lot time with product management and argue why we are think it's important? And other being factor in picking the design features we are gonna build is whether our VP agrees it or not? So we have a vice president of engineering, and he has a very strong voice in determining what we build. If he agrees, then no one disagrees. So we have senior executives who have a very strong hand in determining what we build and what we don't build. So if I want something build in the product, I will sometimes go to him, and I will talk to him and say, "look, I think this is really important, do you agree?" And if he does agree, then I don't have to worry too much, I just go to the rest of the team, say, Our VP says this is what we should do, so lets do it, and everyone will agree.

**R: #00:09:45-7#** So how did you communicate your experience or idea with the interaction designers in your team?

**P: #00:10:16-0#** Very similar to how we will communicate to product owner. Often, it's easier to communicate an idea with the picture. So if I have an idea of how to improve the product. I will do what I call, a sketch or a mockup, and then I will explain it to the interaction designer. And the interaction designer will ask questions and I will answer those questions. We will often in this, this is an important step. We will spend a lot of time arguing, not arguing, but discussing why we should do something? But it's also really useful to try to flip that upside down, and say, ok, why shouldn't we do this? This is an important question when you are thinking about design, why should we not do this? And what that does is even we all think we should do it, by asking the question why shouldn't we do it. We force ourselves to think about the negatives, you understand what I am saying there? So I will be sitting with 3 interaction designers, and I will say why shouldn't we do this, and allow this does that. But as far as the active communicating a feature, it really is mostly with a sketch and a verbal discussion.

**R: #00:11:54-3#** So I'd like to know, who was responsible for implementing the emails and the meetings?

**P: #00:12:22-5#** I think me, [the name of Designer 2],

**R: #00:12:36-9#** Last question, what are is dominant design approach or design principle that guides this project?

**P: #00:13:01-6#** Right, I think I know. So what are the design principles? Ok, so there is one principle which we call, nearness, So it's near I mean. So when we talk about asking information workers or users to adopt a new tool, it's really important that we make it as easy as possible for them to adopt it, right? and so, a big part of that is, does it work with the tools that I am already using? So I already use email, I already have meetings, right? So it's gotta feel like it's close to me, like I don't have to go somewhere else to do it, right? So nearness is something we talk about a lot. And I think that there is, you can take that idea of nearness, and say, ok, what will make the product feel closer. And if it worked perfectly with email, then it will feel closer, right? So nearness is one of them. We also talk about mobile first, so sometimes we will sit down and think about a feature and design it so that it will work on a mobile device, and then that forces you to keep it simple. you know I mean. And also if you design for mobile first, it makes it easier to translate the experience to the mobile context side. I am trying to think of principles.

**R: #00:15:11-2#** So maybe like some design approach?

**P: #00:15:18-5#** Yeah, ok, so there is another one, which I will say, go fast go ugly. So the idea there is, we want to move as fast as possible and get the product in front of the user as soon as possible. And it doesn't matter if it doesn't look great because we are gonna change it anyways, right? And based on the feedback from the user, so let's get it out there fast, let's not worry about goal plating it, and get feedback as soon as possible, and then iterate. So for a big part of the period where we developed the product, we have this go fast, go ugly approach.

**R: #00:16:03-3#** So is this approach that is user center design?

**P: #00:16:12-3#** No, I think user centered design is a, yes, iteration, and getting lots of feedback from users, is user centered. But user centered design often means you sitting down with users and doing kinda formative usability testing. And we didn't really do that, instead, we release the product once a month, and we got feedback that way. So yeah, you would say it's user centered because the point of doing it, is that you get feedback from the user, right? As far as design principle? I think that, just trying to think a way, I think it has to..... I mean we have always recognize that it has to work with existing tools that people have, so it has to work with established tools, or has to fit into the information (accollege) of the user. So I think not being not destructive design, right? the solution should not destruct the user's existing workflows. So those are the 2 ideas I think. It's the non destructive and work with the existing (college) of information. I have a couple of more that I can dig up, forgetting it, because there is 2(too) more I can't remember up on the top of my head.

**R: #00:18:55-1#** Do you have some design documents regarding the design principles?

**P: #00:19:11-5#** Yeah, I mean I have... we plan for strategy every year, and I have some slides that I put together to support that.

**R: #00:19:39-0#** How do you figure out these design principles that you should follow?

**P: #00:20:05-5#** I think there is just a general awareness that...well, let's take for instance, nearness, the reason that we embrace nearness is we recognize that people won't change how they do something unless it's easy and convenient., right? So a lot of people do the kinda work [the name of the product] is meant to do with email. So when you sit down and think to yourself,

how are we gonna convince users to use our tool instead of email. Well, the first thing to be, is really convenient, right? because email is so well established, right? and so it has to be close to the hand, I think there are other considerations, for example, there are so many digital tools in the world right now, there is so much software that's being developed. If you expect the user to choose to use your tool, you have to be as close to them and their work as possible. So I think that's how we prioritize nearness. It's just a kind of awareness that we won't be successful unless very easy to use. Mobile first is an awareness of the changing hardware landscape for technology, and mobile is just defining the way that the future software will be consumed, right? so again, we just recognize mobile is important, and therefore, we should design with that in mind. So that really just comes down to awareness of technology turns. Go fast go ugly is, I think there is been change in how softwares build. In the past, we had project models which were more about waterfall. So you will work for 2 years, and release something, and then wait another 2 years to update it, and what we found is that technology is just moving too fast, and so we have to shorten our cycles. And so in shortening our cycles, we embrace iteration more, and recognize that if we are gonna change something anyways, there is no point investing a bunch of time and making it a little pretty. And so that's where this kinda Go Fast Go Ugly approach came from. Just this recognition of a software trends are moving so fast, we need to, the way we construct software needs to change to meet that. And it's clear that the sooner we get feedback from our users and iterate the better. And I think also the best way to get feedback is not to put a sketching in front of a user, but give them something that they can actually use. And that fits into their day to day work already. You can get a basic feedback on a sketch, but the user has to use something, right? So therefore, you need to actually build something for them to use. I think that's for Go fast Go Ugly one, and what was the last one?

**R: #00:23:49-0#** So, working with the existing tool

**P: #00:23:51-3#** Yeah, so our tool needs to work with existing tools, I think that's just again recognizing that people don't like to change unless there is a real need to change. And people will not use something unless it currently works with what they have right now. And also we recognize that we are building a tool people use to do work from 9 to 5, right? And they have important responsibilities, and they don't have time to waste to learning a new tool. So that's just us recognizing the nature of work of information workers.

**R: #00:24:40-9#** Do you have other ideas or something that related to designer's personal experience?

**P: #00:24:51-1#** Other comments to make? I would say I think it's more common than people think. There is a lot of research of user centered design and all that kinda stuff, right? But at the end of the day, it's our own personal experiences that we bring in consideration, we bring, the designers bring. That's the craft of design, right? And so I think personal experience drives more design decisions than people think. In fact, I would probably say, the most dominant factor in making decision about a design. And that being said, I think it's important for designers to understand that their experience isn't their user's experience, and so I think you need to supplement your perspectives with other people's perspectives. But yeah, personal experience is one of the most important things, I think it is a really good research topic.

**R: #00:26:15-4#** Thank you.

**P: #00:26:17-0#** It's not easy though.

**R: #00:26:18-0#** It's not easy. Because I think the HCI community they advocate the rational

and objective design method and approach. But this research, designers' personal experience is very much related to the subjective design approach.

**P:** #00:26:38-3# Qualitative, not rational research topic.

**R:** #00:26:43-2# Yeah.

**P:** #00:26:53-5# I think there is the validity the researcher are doing, the scientific validity, right? It's kinda be, Yeah, I think based on what we valued from a scientific approach. People would have some comments to make about what you are doing, but the fact is, and this is why I really disagree with HCI approach, to thinking about humans and computers, is that experience isn't always rational. And this is the problem with HCI, right? is that they are fundamentally computer scientists, and human experience isn't always about science. So I am a harsh critic of HCI and the way they do things.

**R:** #00:27:45-8# And I also think although HCI draws on the user information, the findings from ethnography study are designers' interpretation of user information, which are relatively subjective.

**P:** #00:28:24-9# It's not scientific, it doesn't necessarily need to be studied in a strictly scientific way to get the value of it. I think that there is lots of value that didn't come out of research even though, even it's just that people are more aware of that this is the way that design happens, that's valuable.

**R:** #00:28:45-6# Yeah, and sometimes I ask if users are the important factors in the design process, where is the position of designers, who have devoted themselves, their time and energy, to the design job? And what's the role of designers?

**P:** #00:29:04-5# Yeah, I think the best example of personal experience driving successful design is apple, right? You know, everyone uses apple as an example, and it's kind of a little cliché, but apple doesn't do user testing, right? They are just good designers, and they build amazing products to people love to use, and so before we did was the HCI related work, we wouldn't end it up for that for sure, because as Steve Jobs always says most users don't know what they want, you have to tell them what they want, anyways.

**R:** #00:30:01-4# Yeah, thank you very much.

**P:** #00:30:01-5# You are welcome.