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Establishing design principles

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Words before pixels

Design principles bring clarity to product, prior to visuals. By clarifying what a product is and isn't going to do, you enable high level conversation around product goals and potential compromises.

Good principles are controversial

“This experience will be delightful” isn’t a good principle because it’s goal is not unique to your product, and doesn’t help . A good principles should contain tension.

Example •



Some examples

We will optimize for aquisition, even at the expense of engagement.

This experience will avoid creating one-off patterns, and instead will evolve our design system.

This experience will be designed around users building _____ habit.



They bottom out hard decisions

By aligning with partners on compromises in early stages by creating design tenets, you can point to that decision during design presentations.

PRO TIP: It's helpful to keep design principles in deck/doc appendix's.

Make it a team thing

You shouldn't create Design Principles alone. They are a great mechanism to drive alignment early with your extended partners, so invite anyone you think would participate into the fold.

Defend with data

Make sure you're able to back your points of view with data. This will not only make it easier to align others with your points, but it will also ensure you're going down the right path.

Save this post
and think in principles.



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