

s l o w l y

THEN SUDDENLY AND ALL AT ONCE

building a design-led culture at Delivery Hero

Sara Kalinoski, Product Design Director at Delivery Hero

(2024)

Suddenly and all at once,
product approached UX,
eager to hear our solutions

Design built so much trust,
*product was ready to implement
solutions before even seeing them*

Within less than a quarter
the solutions were green-lit
by our new CPO

How did our UX team get to this moment?



Sara Kalinoski

Product Design Director, Delivery Hero



Minnesota

San Fransisco

Berlin

Digital Agencies +

Tech Companies

Design Leadership

Design-led discovery

Creating an experience north star

Driving influence based on org timelines

Design-led discovery

Super-powered ICs

Creating an experience north star

Building confident IC leaders

Driving influence based on org timelines

Building & embracing strong partnerships

Design-led discovery

Super-powered ICs

Finding opportunities during org changes

Creating an experience north star

Understanding PM & business team goals

Building confident IC leaders

Driving influence based on org timelines

Building & embracing strong partnerships

Building trust through consistency

Building momentum

“Before times”

(2020)

Product prescribed solutions *design built them, no questions asked*

- **few established processes**

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- **design team pulled in different directions**

- **prescriptive UX requests**

scaling rapidly > increased demand

May '26

embracing fast experimentation

few established processes

low design influence

design team pulled in different directions

prescriptive UX requests

reactive decision-making

Design-led culture

scaling rapidly > increased demand

May '26

embracing fast experimentation

few established processes

low design influence

lack of planning ahead

design team pulled in different directions

lack of customer centric culture

prescriptive UX requests

no accountability for quality or debt creation

reactive decision-making

Design-led culture

low standards

impact on our product

We built competing features
and a disconnected experience
with A LOT of debt

impact on our customers

We didn't understand
the needs of our customers

impact on our team

High burnout, low pride

– a reactive culture has a price

Triggering the shift

from reactive to proactive (*not quite all at once*)

I heard the team

– designers craved stability

**Let's start making work
we're proud of**

How can design take more ownership of our process & the solutions?

how do we want to shape the experience?

what is our POV?

ask designers to estimate effort

how do we want to shape the experience?

don't wait to be invited "into the room"

what is our POV?

introduce capacity planning

ask designers to estimate effort

How can design develop a strong point of view?

01. Determine our goals for the user experience

02. Consider the connected user experience

03. Experiment intentionally –
consider how features will scale

Our transformation ✨

our concrete steps

structural changes

How can we collect requirements to plan ahead?

structural changes

- 01.** Check with PMs in advance to understand potential opportunities and their approach to planning
- 02.** Gain access to business requests & signals
- 03.** Plan designer capacity; protect their time

behavior changes

Elevate IC designers into trusted leaders

behavior changes

- 01.** Encourage designers to develop & share their POV – take ownership and carve out space for ideation.
- 02.** Encourage designers to seek feedback across tribes to ensure a connected user experience

behavior changes

03. Designers developed data and strategy fluency

04. UXR built a strong culture around user insights

05. Designers considered the vision for each feature
– enabling teams to build in a scalable & strategic way

design leadership changes

Show up & follow-through consistently

design leadership changes

- 01.** Listen. Align solutions to business & product goals
- 02.** Don't wait for permission – build the deck, host the strategy workshop, embed our POV at all touch points
- 03.** Do what we say we're going to do. Build trust

design leadership changes

04. Find opportunities in gaps – show up with a plan during organisation transitions. Seize opportunities

05. Seek feedback from partners – iterate and improve

06. Accept some discouragement and discomfort

Resistance & pushback

... as it turns out
when you make the job easier for
everyone, there's no resistance

the problem

**users perceived our product
to be unaffordable**
citing confusion over deals & fees

relationship impact

**we delivered our extensive
x-tribe e2e proposal**
in time for PMs to plan the quarter

consolidating deal types

clean deal and price UI

dedicated deal color

clear fee communication

deal display logic – show best deal

removing competing offers

segment offers to user lifecycle

e2e communication audit

celebrating savings at checkout

product impact

the solutions were
implemented over 3 quarters
and generated nearly 17M revenue

product impact

**the customer perception
of our product affordability
significantly improved**

product impact

**we created a strong
foundation for adjacent
opportunities**

culture impact

**design established trust
at a moment of transition,
building a lasting impression**

Seize opportunities

Find a way to take ownership of time & capacity

Develop a strong POV rooted in strategy

Show up consistently & follow-through

With great power comes great responsibility

... what are we doing today?

continuously iterating our approach

**The org and industry
are constantly changing**

What worked two years ago
may not be effective today

The trust we built
enables our partnerships
to evolve together

**Our consistent approach
earned this trust – we must
continue to invest & follow-through**

We need to keep aiming high
and avoid getting too comfortable

No mention of AI? ;)

Naturally we're experimenting
with collaboration improvements

asking ourselves a new question

How can design take ownership during this new industry & org transition?



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