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**NAVIGATING UX MATURITY: EXPLORING
MODELS, FRAMEWORKS, AND THEIR
PERSONAL IMPACTS ON DESIGNERS**

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Dissertação apresentada ao IADE, Faculdade de Design,
Tecnologia e Comunicação da Universidade Europeia,
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Management realizada sob a orientação científica da
Doutora Sara Patrícia Martins Gancho, Professora
Auxiliar do IADE, UE.

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Haig Vartanian, que sempre me apoiaram em minha jornada
acadêmica

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palavras-chave

Maturidade em UX; Design de Experiência do Usuário; Cultura de Design; Defesa do Design; Gestão de Design

resumo

Navegar pela maturidade em UX é entender como o contexto organizacional impacta diretamente o dia a dia e o bem-estar dos designers. Esta tese parte de uma revisão bibliográfica sobre modelos de maturidade em UX e aprofunda o tema a partir das vivências de profissionais da área, reunindo tanto perspectivas teóricas quanto experiências práticas. Este é o primeiro estudo a analisar a maturidade de UX pela ótica pessoal dos designers.

Os resultados mostram que a maturidade em UX vai muito além dos processos. Em ambientes com baixa maturidade, é comum que designers se sintam desvalorizados, frustrados e inseguros quanto ao seu papel. Estes fatores afetam diretamente sua motivação e bem-estar. Por outro lado, contextos mais maduros tendem a oferecer mais apoio, liberdade criativa e um senso de propósito mais claro. Ao reunir padrões e relatos pessoais, este estudo evidencia como o valor que uma organização atribui à UX influencia diretamente a satisfação e o desenvolvimento de quem trabalha com design. Evoluir em maturidade, portanto, não é só uma decisão estratégica é um caminho para construir culturas de design mais humanas e resilientes.

keywords

UX Maturity; User Experience Design; Design Culture; Design Advocacy; Design Management

abstract

Navigating UX maturity requires understanding how organizational context shapes the daily work and well-being of UX designers. This thesis explores existing UX maturity models through a literature review and investigates designers' personal experiences via surveys and interviews, merging theoretical insights with practical realities. This is the first study to examine UX maturity through the lens of designers' personal experiences

The findings highlight that UX maturity influences far more than process. In low-maturity environments, designers often feel undervalued, frustrated, and unclear about their roles. These are conditions that undermine well-being and motivation. In contrast, higher maturity fosters creative freedom, support, and a stronger sense of purpose. By revealing both broad trends and subjective experiences, the study shows that the value an organization places on UX directly shapes designers' satisfaction and growth. Advancing UX maturity, therefore, is not only a strategic decision but also a step toward building more resilient and fulfilling design cultures.

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List of Abbreviations

UX: User Experience

UI: User Interface

CX: Customer Experience

HCI: Human–Computer Interaction

NN/g: Nielsen Norman Group

PO: Product Owner

PM: Product Manager

QA: Quality Assurance

MVP: Minimum Viable Product

B2B: Business to Business

R&D: Research and Development

SaaS: Software as a Service

ROI: Return on Investment

Chapter 1 – Introduction

User experience (UX) is more than just addressing the users' needs and interface features. It integrates disciplines such as engineering and marketing to create a holistic user journey and usage experience that extends beyond the user interface (UI). It is crucial to distinguish UX from UI and usability. UI and usability focus on the tangible/visual aspect and how easy, efficient, and pleasant it is for the user while UX design has historical roots dating back to the 1950s. It became a distinct area in the early 1990s when Donald Norman coined the term "UX" in his book “The Psychology of Everyday Things” published in 1988 (Nielsen, 2017). Since then, this field has gained significant attention not only for academics but also for industry.

As technology advances, UX design plays a big role in crafting products and services that align with user needs, pains, and expectations. Despite efforts to promote design practices across organizations, many still perceive design as being primarily visual and aesthetic (Invision, 2018). To address this, several UX and design maturity models have been proposed to shed some light and guide organizations towards a more strategic approach to user experience design. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the influence of design maturity on designers' individual experience on their daily jobs and the benefits it offers to designers and their organizations.

This study aims to investigate and analyze the significance of design maturity within organizations, particularly in the context of experience design, particularly how it affects the people doing the design work. While many maturity models focus on processes, workflows, and/or outcomes, they often overlook the individual's perspective. We aim to explore how different levels of maturity shape the daily job experiences, taking into consideration their responsibilities, frustrations, sense of impact, and strategies for coping in their work environments. We will gather insights from designers on this topic, contributing to a better understanding of the relationship between design maturity and designers' daily work. We also intend to contribute to the discussion on maturity by focusing on designers' individual experiences, ultimately providing organizations with insights to build better design cultures.

1.1 Research Problem

This study investigates how the level of UX maturity in an organization affects the experiences and perceptions of designers. It aims to explore the extent to which UX maturity influences the nature of design work, the strategic involvement of designers, and their overall sense of impact and satisfaction. By examining both organizational processes and individual experiences, the research seeks to uncover patterns that may contribute to or detract from designer engagement and retention.

1.2 Research Question

How does the level of UX maturity within design teams impact designers' individual experiences and perceptions?

1.3 Objectives

Investigate how UX maturity levels correlate with designers' daily work experiences and perceived impact.

Analyze designers' interpretations and perceptions of UX maturity across different contexts.

Assess how UX maturity influences designer well-being, professional development, and talent retention.

1.4 Hypotheses

Designers in organizations with advanced UX maturity generally report greater support and less frustration, although leadership and team dynamics influence this.

Organizations with high maturity foster strategic, research-focused design work, while lower maturity teams concentrate on UI and implementation.

Designers in low-maturity organizations often champion UX practices internally.

Most designers do not explicitly use formal UX maturity models, but they recognize maturity-related patterns.

Current UX maturity models often neglect key emotional and contextual aspects of the designer's experience, such as isolation, burnout, or cultural misalignment.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research context, research problem, research question, objectives and hypotheses. Chapter 2 goes deep into the literature on UX and design maturity models, looking at the current maturity models, comparing them as well as looking at how design is incorporated into companies. Chapter 3 talks about the methodology, including the methods and the data gathering procedure, as well as a description of the results. Chapter 4 discusses the findings that came from both the survey and interviews, making a bridge to the literature review. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the conclusions, highlights practical implications and limitations as well as proposes directions for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature on user experience (UX) and design maturity, highlighting their significance in contemporary organizations. It begins with an exploration of the concept of UX and traces its historical development and theoretical underpinnings. The discussion then moves to various frameworks for evaluating UX maturity, emphasizing how these models help organizations integrate and enhance UX practices. In addition, this chapter examines influential design frameworks that underscore the strategic importance of design in driving innovation and competitive advantage. Through this review, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of UX and design maturity and elucidate their critical roles in fostering effective and user-centered business strategies.

2.1 The Concept of User Experience (UX)

Coined in the 90s by Donald Norman, a cognitive scientist and user experience architect who worked at Apple at that time (Nielsen, 2017), the concept of “user experience” has become “a buzzword in the field of human – computer interaction (HCI) and interaction design” (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). For Norman, UX is “everything; it’s the way you experience the world; it’s the way you experience your life; it’s the way you experience a service” (NNgroup, 2016). However, according to Norman, the term user experience has been misused as a catch-all phrase limited to a device or a website. He added that the term was intended to encompass all aspects of the end-user's interaction with the company, its services, and its products.

There is no universally accepted definition of user experience (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006; Law et al., 2008; Forlizzi & Battarbee, 2004). Forlizzi and Battarbee state that UX is associated with a wide range of meanings. They also add that designing experiences for interactive systems can be even more challenging than understanding the concept of “user experience” (Forlizzi & Battarbee, 2004).

UX can be associated with an array of fuzzy and dynamic concepts, such as emotional, affective, experiential, hedonic, and aesthetic variables (Law et al., 2008). Additionally, the unit of analysis for UX can range from individual interactions with a single application to including all aspects of

interactions between users, companies, and across multiple disciplines (Law et al., 2008). On the research landscape, there are different models and perspectives focusing on different aspects such as emotion, affect, experience, value, pleasure, beauty, etc. (Law et al., 2008).

Hassenzahl & Tractinsky (2006) emphasize the complexity of UX as it is shaped by several factors. User experience is not only influenced by the user's internal state (such as predispositions, expectations, needs, motivations, humor, etc.) but also the characteristics of a system including its complexity, purpose, usability and functionality. Additionally, the context or environment in which interaction takes place, and the significance of activity and voluntariness of use are important aspects as defined by Hassenzahl & Tractinsky (2006).

Despite the lack of shared definition, “there is a common understanding that it is a complex concept and should not be equaled to usability or user interface simply” (Hellweger & Wang, 2015). This differentiation is also reflected in the role of designer as companies and universities embrace the idea of user experience (Chapman & Plewes, 2014). Chapman and Plewes state:

“More and more programs at universities are cropping up than ever before, to meet the demands in industry. Large name companies such as Google and Apple have incorporated UX design as a centerpiece of their successes. There have been a number of well-known treatises on the introduction of usability into an organization (p.12)”

For decades, designers were limited to receiving requirements from the business and simply executing them, primarily focusing on the look and feel (Merholz & Skinner, 2016). Despite the growing recognition of design's importance, many businesses initially viewed it as an afterthought rather than a strategic imperative. Companies relied on external vendors to handle design needs, lacking in-house capabilities and failing to grasp its true value beyond aesthetics and appearances (Merholz & Skinner, 2016). However, as the digital landscape evolved and the complexities of software-driven businesses increased, this mindset shifted. The emergence of networked software and multi-touchpoint services required a fundamental change in approach. Design could no longer be simply specified and handed off to external partners; it had to be integrated into the core strategy and development processes of organizations. (Merholz & Skinner, 2016).

While there is a growing appreciation for the value that UX design brings to products and services, it's important to acknowledge that achieving success in this domain requires more than just skilled designers (Merholz & Skinner, 2016, Chapman & Plewes, 2014). The user experience of a product is a result of how the entire organization executes the product creation process, encompassing aspects such as strategy, development, and alignment with user needs (Chapman & Plewes, 2014). Many companies, however, still prioritize functional aspects over holistic user experience, focusing solely on the number of features rather than considering the emotional and utilitarian needs of users (Chapman & Plewes, 2014). Understanding an organization's true UX goals and maturity level is crucial in guiding decisions related to hiring, processes, and decision-making frameworks (Chapman & Plewes, 2014). As such, the adoption of maturity models can serve as a valuable tool for organizations seeking to enhance their UX capabilities and deliver more meaningful experiences to their users.

2.2 UX and Design Maturity Model

As design evolved from being simply a deliverable-focused process to a strategic area of organizations, there has been a growing interest in understanding and improving the User Experience. From this moment, UX is not only seen as the deliverables that it offers but as a strategic area of the organization (Ellwanger et al., 2017). Because of that, several organizations have directed their effort into studying and developing frameworks to measure and improve UX Maturity.

In the literature, the terms “UX maturity” and “design maturity” are often used interchangeably or in overlapping contexts. While “UX maturity” usually emphasizes the integration of user experience research and design practices into organizational processes, “design maturity” tends to refer more broadly to the strategic role of design within a company. In this dissertation, both concepts are considered together, as the models discussed ultimately assess how design practices evolve and influence organizations whether labeled as UX or design focused.

UX Maturity refers to how well and consistently an organization's research and design process, tools, and operations are executed, as well as how likely it is for it to continue supporting and improving UX depending on the leadership, workforce, and company culture (Pernice et al., 2021). Based on that, several maturity models have been developed to help organizations assess

their current design maturity levels and develop strategies for improving them. These models typically consist of a set of maturity levels, each with a specific set of capabilities and pain points as well as practices that an organization should adopt to reach the next level of maturity.

2.2.1 Overview of Existing Models

One of the earliest design maturity models is the Design Ladder introduced by the Danish Design Center in 2001 (Figure 1) proposes a four-level model that categorizes design application within organizations: non-design, design as styling, design as a process, and design as innovation. According to this model, the greater involvement of design methods during early development phases and its integration into overall business strategy leads to higher economic gains (Danish Design Centre & Confederation of Danish Industry, 2018). Although some step names and specifications have been modified over time, this model remains relevant and has been used in several studies (Whicher et al., 2011, Doherty et al., 2015, Wrigley & Straker, 2017, Danish Design Centre & Confederation of Danish Industry, 2018, Björklund et al., 2018).

Figure 1

The Design Ladder from the Danish Design Centre (2001)

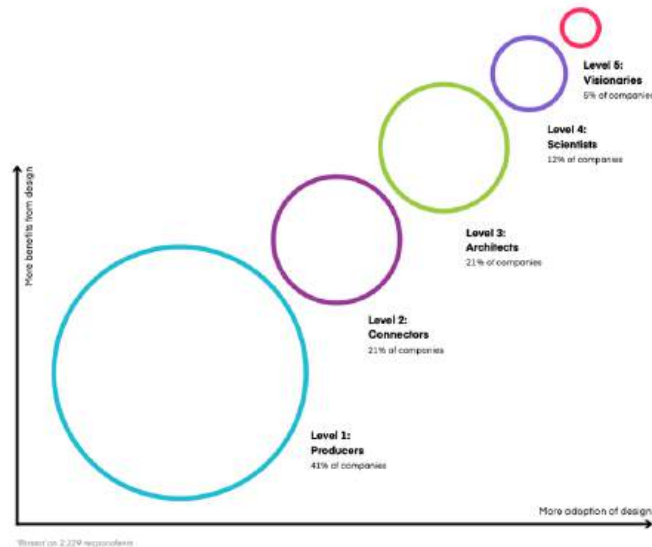


The first stage of this model, the non-design, refers to organizations that do not prioritize design and is not applied systematically throughout product development. The next step, design as form-giving, refers to organizations that view design as making their products visually appealing without fully integrating it into the development process. The third step, design as a process, refers to organizations that actively integrate design into their development process. This means that design becomes more structured, and the organization establishes guidelines for its use. The last step, design as strategy, refers to organizations that have fully integrated design into their overall strategy and culture. So, design is a critical driver in the strategic development and management of an organization creating value in several aspects and for different stakeholders (Doherty et al., 2015).

Another important example is the Design Maturity Model developed by InVision in 2018 (Figure 2), which sets five levels of design maturity: producers, connectors, architects, scientists, and visionaries. This model results from a survey of over 2,200 organizations across 24 industries to identify their design practices and determine the correlation between design maturity and business success. Each level is based on key activities and benefits for the company. Therefore, level 1 is the least mature, and Level 5 is the one that employs the most mature design practices and delivers the highest value to the organization. According to this report, when organizations make room for design in their core processes, there are positive outcomes such as a deeper understanding of their customer, bolder exploration and documentation, and more informed decisions that can lead to tangible business impacts, like revenue, valuation, and time to market (Invision, 2018).

Figure 2

Levels of Design Maturity from Invision (2018)

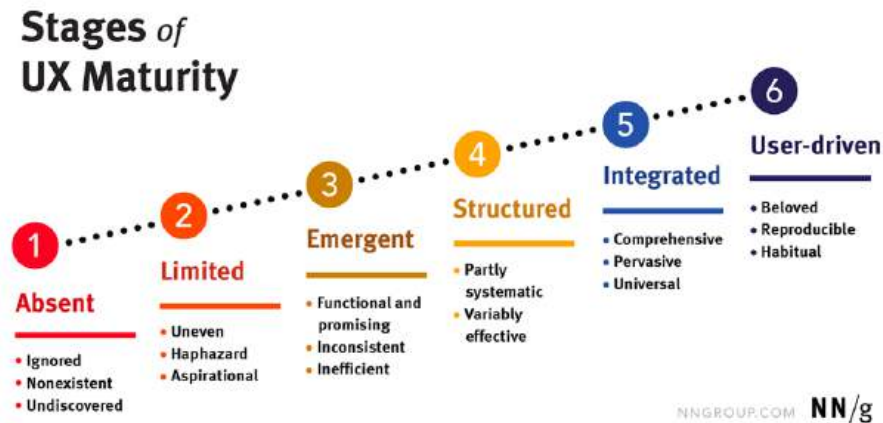


The report shows that 41% of companies are at the first level. At this level, the role of designers is primarily focused on visual aspects. Therefore, there is an attempt to improve efficiency and visual consistency, but there needs to be more processes, collaboration, and advanced tools. At Level 2, the teams are already developing a more collaborative work process with non-designer stakeholders. Besides that, they use tools such as user stories, usability testing, and personas. This level corresponds to about 12% of the companies. Then, at the third level, the businesses moved beyond the primary participation in design. So, more shared ownership, role clarity, and documentation enable more complex product ecosystems.

At Level 4, the organizations are masters of data-driven design. So, designers use more sophisticated practices for analytics, experimentation, and recruiting for user research. Besides that, the design operation is formalized to support all these processes. Finally, at Level 5, which only 5% of companies are at, design and business are the same. The design brings strategy to products through sophisticated techniques such as conducting exploratory user research and trends and foresight research and delivering cross-platform strategies.

Figure 3

Stages of UX Maturity from the Nielsen Norman Group (2021)



One of the most famous design models is the UX Maturity Model from Nielsen Norman Group (Figure 3), which focuses on user experience design and the capability of a company to deliver user-centered design. This model is a revised version of the 2006 UX-Maturity model developed by Jakob Nielsen, one of the earliest models (Pernice, Gibbons, et al., 2021). The article published by the NNGroup describes the six-stage model of UX maturity in an organization, with each stage progressing from a lack of design integration to UX being a driving force. The stages go from Absent to User-Driven and analyze all the several factors that contribute to UX maturity, which are strategy, culture, process, and outcomes. Besides that, it highlights the obstacles that organizations may encounter during each stage of UX maturity (Pernice, Gibbons, et al., 2021).

In the first stage, the company may be unaware of the importance of design and may have little or no focus on it. The main obstacle is the lack of education and understanding of design's value to the company. This can progress to the second stage, the Limited stage, where design is present but in an erratic manner without a clear strategy or process for executing it. The Limited stage's main obstacle is the inconsistency of the design approach and a lack of understanding of how to integrate design into business objectives. As the organization progresses, it reaches the Emergent stage where design plays a more significant role and is integrated into business goals. The

outcomes are clear and improved. However, the metrics vary and are not aligned with the business strategies.

In the last stages, design becomes a fundamental part of the organization's culture, so there is an organization-wide understanding of UX, and it is integrated into all business processes, including well-structured user research methodologies, design guidelines, and standards. However, in the fourth stage, the Structured stage, the design is not fully present on the strategy level yet, meaning it is not well integrated into the business goals. According to the article published on the NN/g website, some of the factors that lead to the lack of alignment in the strategy area can be related to the leadership that does not fully support UX, conflicts over responsibilities and ownership as the team grows, and development processes that neglect discovery research or iterative design. These are some obstacles that are tackled in the next stage: Structured. As the name states, this stage is characterized by having a well-structured design process with clear guidelines, standards, and roles, along with an aligned strategy, which enables high-quality outcomes and effective, successful metrics (Pernice, Gibbons, et al., 2021).

The sixth stage is the User-Driven stage, where UX is a driving force in the organization, and all business decisions are made based on user needs and insights. Notably, the User-Driven stage represents the pinnacle of UX maturity, where design is not an afterthought but a central focus to every aspect of the company. As UX becomes a norm, respected, and beloved, the processes are defined and well-structured, and the success metrics are based on the user experience. As a result, the outcomes at this stage will be exceptional, with high customer satisfaction rates and a competitive advantage in the market (Pernice, Gibbons, et al., 2021).

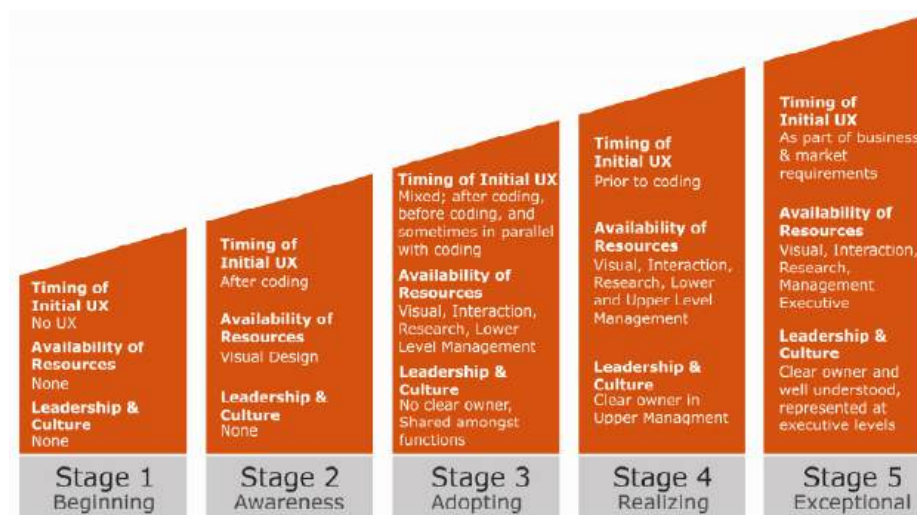
Chapman and Plewes (2014) discuss the importance of User Experience design in product development and the maturity of organizations in implementing UX processes. It emphasizes that effective UX design is not just about aesthetics, but also about functionality and usability. According to the authors, there are six factors that influence the maturity of UX practices in organizations: the timing and depth of UX involvement in the design process, the availability of in-house UX expertise or quick access to external resources, the utilization of appropriate techniques for user input and design comprehension, the leadership's appreciation of UX value, the integration of UX processes with corporate functions, and the application of design thinking to ensure a consistent customer experience.

Based on that, the authors have proposed a framework (Figure 4) for classifying organizations into five levels of UX maturity. The first stage is characterized by a perception of UX solely as visual design, with little to no formal structure or expertise within the organization. As awareness grows, organizations begin to consider UX design but may lack understanding and structure, leading to inconsistent implementation. In the adopting stage, organizations experience growing pains as they invest in UX practices and expertise; however, success remains inconsistent across projects.

Moving into the realization stage, organizations set themselves apart by achieving UX excellence with clear goals and strong senior leadership support. In the exceptional stage, UX design becomes fully integrated into every aspect of the customer experience, establishing a reputation for excellence throughout the organization. Each stage signifies a step towards better alignment between UX goals and business objectives, impacting product differentiation, customer satisfaction, and overall organizational success.

Figure 4

Stages of UX Processes from Chapman and Plewes (2014)



2.3.2 Analyzing and Comparing Maturity Models

In this section, we compare four prominent design maturity models: Invision, Nielsen Norman Group, Chapman and Plewes, and the Design Ladder from the Danish Design Center. Each

model provides a unique perspective on the evolution and integration of design within organizations. The following table summarizes their key attributes, strengths, and weaknesses, followed by a detailed analysis of what each model might be missing.

Table 1

Comparison table with the analyzed maturity models

Model	Key Attributes	Strengths	Weaknesses
Invision Design Maturity Model	Five levels: Producers, Connectors, Architects, Scientists, Visionaries	Data-driven insights Clear progression Emphasis on business impact	Complexity Resource-intensive
Nielsen Norman Group UX Maturity Model	Six levels: Absent, Limited, Emergent, Structure, Integrated and User-driven	Comprehensive coverage Practical focus User-centric	Assumes linear progression Lack of depth in later stages
Chapman and Plewes UX Maturity Model	Six key indicators: Beginning, Awareness, Adopting Realizing and Exceptional	Holistic approach Evolutionary stages Focus on organizational culture Emotional and utilitarian values	Complexity in implementation Potential for stagnation
Design Ladder (Danish Design Center)	Four steps: Non-design, Design as Form Giving, Design as Process, Design as Strategy	Simplicity and clarity Strategic focus Broad applicability	Limited depth Emphasis on form and outcome

The Danish Design Ladder, Invision Maturity Model, and Nielsen Norman Group Levels and the Chapman and Plewes model provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the

evolution and growing importance of design within an organization. While each has its own distinct structure and nuances, they all illustrate a fundamental shift from minimal consideration of design to becoming central in business decision-making and strategic planning. These models emphasize that as an organization matures along its design journey, there is a significant transformation from neglecting or underestimating design to fully embracing it as a pivotal factor for success.

Furthermore, they all serve as guiding frameworks that encourage organizations to evolve their approach to design, emphasizing its importance as a driver of innovation, competitiveness, and user satisfaction. Additionally, these models advocate for a systematic and phased approach to integrating design principles into organizational culture, processes, and strategies. However, they differ in emphasis on specific aspects such as strategic alignment, user-centricity or broader integration within business operations.

When it comes to their primary focus, each model differs significantly. The Danish Design Ladder mainly focuses on the strategic development of design within an organization. It tracks how design evolves from being nonexistent to becoming a strategic necessity. In contrast, Nielsen Norman Group's model specifically revolves around the growth of User Experience Maturity in an organization. It emphasizes stages related to quality, consistency, and organizational commitment to user-centered design. Meanwhile, Invision's Maturity Model takes a broader view by examining the integration of design across business operations, product development, and stakeholder relationships beyond just UX.

There is a significant contrast to the focus on different organizational aspects. The Danish Design Ladder highlights the company's approach and application of design principles, depicting the developmental phases of design maturity based on this approach. On the other hand, while Nielsen Norman Group's model assesses the effectiveness and uniformity of UX processes, tools, and organizational support, it does not expand its assessment to areas beyond UX. Invision's Maturity Model provides a more comprehensive perspective by analyzing how design integrates with business models, product development, and stakeholder relationships; thus, presenting a broader view that encompasses organizational aspects beyond just design or UX processes.

Chapman and Plewes' UX Maturity Model takes a holistic approach, integrating emotional and utilitarian values and emphasizing the importance of organizational culture and leadership in achieving UX maturity. It outlines six key indicators of UX maturity, providing a clear framework for assessment and improvement. However, the model's complexity in implementation and potential for stagnation without significant changes in mindset and practices are notable drawbacks. It could be improved by offering more detailed strategies for fostering a design-centric culture and aligning organizational structures to support design integration.

2.3 Design Applied to Organization

This chapter examines three frameworks: Buchanan's Four Orders of Design, Junginger's Bubble model, and Merholz and Skinner's 12 Qualities of Effective Design Organizations. Each offers distinct perspectives on how design can be embedded and leveraged within organizations, providing valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of design work. Buchanan's Four Orders (2001) spans symbolic, material, interactive, and environmental dimensions of design, emphasizing that design roles extend from communication to building space. Junginger's Bubble Model (2009) illustrates where and how design thinking can manifest inside an organization (from isolated "bubbles" to enterprise-wide practice). Merholz and Skinner's Qualities (2016) enumerate the leadership, process, cultural, and measurement attributes of organizations with mature design practice.

These frameworks not only highlight different dimensions of design but also underscore areas that traditional design maturity models might overlook. By examining the breadth and depth of design's influence through Buchanan's conceptual orders, Junginger's dynamic bubbles, and Merholz and Skinner's comprehensive qualities, we can identify potential gaps in maturity models that often focus on linear progression and predefined outcomes. This exploration aims to enrich our understanding of design maturity, emphasizing the importance of flexibility, context-specific integration, and the holistic development of design capabilities within organizations.

Incorporating insights from these frameworks can help organizations pinpoint missing elements in their design maturity journey, enabling a more nuanced and effective approach to integrating design. By recognizing the complexity and variability of design's role, organizations can better

navigate their paths towards maturity, ensuring that design is not only seen as a functional necessity but as a strategic asset that permeates all levels of their operations.

2.3.1 The Four Orders of Design by Richard Buchanan

Buchanan's Four Orders of Design (Figure 5) provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of design, complementing discussions on design maturity models. Buchanan proposed this model as a framework to understand the shifting debate on design in the contemporary period, aiming "to understand the changing meaning of product in design and the consequent problems and issues of design practice, design education, and design research" (Buchanan, 2001). It was invented to provide a heuristic device for investigating the different areas in which design is explored and to identify designers' natural abilities (Buchanan, 2001).

Figure 5

Four orders of design from Buchanan (2001)

	Symbols	Things	Action	Thought
Symbols	Graphic Design			
Things		Industrial Design		
Action			Interaction Design	
Thought				Environmental Design

The first order of design focuses on the creation and management of symbols and visual communications (Buchanan, 2001). This includes graphic design, typography, and other forms of visual expression that convey messages and information. Buchanan (2001) emphasizes that this

foundational order is crucial as it shapes how information is perceived and understood by people. Effective communication design ensures clarity, engagement, and meaning in the myriad forms of visual media that saturate everyday life.

Moving beyond mere communication, the second order involves the design of physical objects. This domain encompasses industrial design, product design, and the creation of tangible items that serve functional purposes. Buchanan highlights that this order addresses both aesthetic and utilitarian aspects, balancing form and function to enhance the user experience. It is here that design intersects most visibly with manufacturing and engineering, creating products that are not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly.

The third order expands the role of design into the orchestration of activities and services. This includes service design, interaction design, and experience design, where the focus shifts from objects to experiences. Buchanan's insight here is that designing interactions and services requires a deep understanding of human behavior and needs, aiming to create seamless and meaningful experiences. This order is particularly relevant in today's service-oriented economy, where user experience often determines the success of a service or product.

The fourth order represents the most complex and systemic level of design, involving the creation and management of large-scale systems and environments. This includes urban planning, organizational design, and policy design. Buchanan asserts that this order demands a holistic approach, integrating multiple disciplines to address intricate problems that impact society at large. Designers working in this realm must consider the interdependencies within systems and strive for sustainable and innovative solutions that can adapt to changing conditions.

Mapping Buchanan's Four Orders of Design onto design maturity models can shed light on the developmental stages and evolution of design within organizations. The Orders—symbols, things, actions, and thoughts—can align with the progressive levels of design maturity. For instance, at the foundational level, the focus might be on tangible elements (symbols and things) where design is perceived as aesthetic or functional. As maturity progresses, it moves towards encompassing actions, indicating the integration of design into processes. Finally, the highest level involves leveraging design as a strategic tool, reflecting thinking at a higher level.

On the other hand, it is crucial to note that Buchanan's framework is not a maturity model per se but rather a way to understand the domains and breadth of design's impact. Design maturity models often emphasize linear progression, and specific outcomes tied to each stage of maturity. In contrast, Buchanan's Four Orders highlights the expanding scope and complexity of design work, encouraging a broader appreciation of how design evolves and contributes to various aspects of organizational and societal development. This perspective underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of design, providing a comprehensive view that complements the more structured approach of maturity models.

2.3.2 Junginger's Bubble

Another framework that can be considered in the context of design maturity is Junginger's Bubble model (Junginger, 2009). Junginger's Bubble model (Figure 6) provides a different perspective on the location of design within organizations, using a bubble metaphor to represent the influence and reach of design (Marx et al., 2021). Marx notes that design thinking can appear in as something “peripheral, somewhere, central, and everywhere” within an organization (Marx et al., 2021). Therefore, this model suggests that design thinking can occur in various locations, each representing different degrees of integration and engagement with design principles. These locations, or "archetypical" spaces, provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of design within organizations. By recognizing these diverse locations, organizations can gain insights into where, when, and how design thinking is applied across different facets of their operations.

According to Junginger, there are four places where design can be situated within an organization: as an external resource, as a part of the organization, at the core, and as integral to all aspects of the company (Junginger, 2009). The placement of design in these archetypical spaces is not necessarily indicative of a linear progression as the design maturity models do. Instead, it offers a framework for understanding where design can be positioned within an organization. Unlike design maturity models that often depict a progressive advancement of design integration and emphasize outcomes, Junginger's model emphasizes the dynamic nature of design's role within organizational structures.

Figure 6

Junginger's Bubble (2009)



The first position, design as an external resource, involves hiring external designers or consultants to provide design expertise. This is common in organizations where design is not yet a core competency but is recognized as valuable for specific projects. As organizations become more familiar with design thinking, they may begin to integrate design as a part of the organization. This involves creating in-house design teams that work alongside other departments, ensuring that design principles are considered throughout the project lifecycle. This stage represents a shift from viewing design as a standalone function to seeing it as an integral part of the organizational fabric.

At the core stage, design becomes central to the organization's strategy and operations. Here, design thinking is not just applied to products and services but also to processes, business models, and organizational culture. The integration of design at this level signifies a deep commitment to leveraging design as a strategic asset, with designers playing a critical role in decision-making processes. Finally, when design is integral to all aspects of the company, it permeates every function and activity within the organization. This holistic integration means that design principles guide everything from product development to customer interactions and internal processes, resulting in a cohesive and innovative organizational culture.

It is important to note that Junginger's Bubble model is dynamic and does not imply a linear progression or a one-size-fits-all approach. Organizations may move between these archetypical spaces based on their needs, goals, and external influences. As Junginger states, typically the company tends to navigate from left to right, growing just as the maturity models (Junginger, 2009). However, depending on the context of the company, it can go the other way around as design can be found in different places at the same time (Junginger, 2009). The author emphasizes that there is no good or bad positioning; rather, it provides a flexible framework for understanding the role of design within different organizational contexts (Junginger, 2009). This dynamic nature of the model allows organizations to adapt and evolve their design practices in response to changing circumstances, fostering continuous innovation and improvement.

In summary, Junginger's Bubble model offers a comprehensive and adaptable framework for understanding the positioning of design within organizations. By recognizing the different archetypical spaces where design thinking can occur, organizations can better appreciate the multifaceted role of design and its potential impact on their operations. This perspective contrasts with traditional design maturity models that often emphasize a top-down, progressive integration of design, focusing on outcomes rather than the dynamic processes that underpin design practices. Junginger's model, therefore, provides a valuable lens through which to view the fluid and evolving nature of design's role within organizations.

2.3.3 12 qualities of effective design organizations

Peter Merholz and Kristin Skinner's framework (Figure 7), outlined in "Org Design for Design Orgs", identifies twelve key qualities that distinguish effective design organizations (Merholz & Skinner, 2016). These qualities, grouped into three categories (Foundation, Output, and Management) address different aspects necessary for a design team to achieve and sustain high performance (Merholz & Skinner, 2016). Their research indicated that existing design maturity models were too simplistic, prompting them to develop a more nuanced set of criteria to evaluate and guide design organizations (Merholz, 2023).

Figure 7

Merholz and Skinner's 12 Qualities of Effective Design Organizations (2016)

Foundation	Output	Management
1. Shared sense of purpose	5. Support the entire journey	9. Treat team members as people, not resources
2. Focused, empowered leadership	6. Deliver at all levels of scale	10. Diversity of perspective and background
3. Authentic user empathy	7. Establish and uphold standards of quality	11. Foster a collaborative environment
4. Understand, articulate, and create value	8. Value delivery over perfection	12. Manage operations effectively

The first category, Foundation, encompasses qualities that form the bedrock of a design organization. Shared Sense of Purpose is critical, as it provides a clear mission and vision that unifies and motivates the team. This sense of purpose not only attracts talent but also rallies team members around common objectives and values, signaling the broader organization about the team's direction and priorities.

Focused, Empowered Leadership is another foundational quality. Effective leaders possess a deep understanding of design processes and make decisions that benefit the team. They bridge internal team dynamics with the larger organization, ensuring that the design team is set up for success. Moreover, Authentic User Empathy underlines the importance of understanding and empathizing with users. This user-centered approach ensures that design solutions are meaningful and useful, ultimately leading to better product outcomes.

Finally, the ability to Understand, Articulate, and Create Value is crucial. Design teams must not only comprehend and communicate the value they bring but also ensure their work aligns with business objectives and user needs. This alignment is essential for demonstrating the impact of design on the organization.

The second category, Output, focuses on the tangible and intangible results of the design process. An effective design organization should Support the Entire Journey, involving itself in every

stage of the product lifecycle, from initial concept to final implementation. This holistic approach ensures consistency and coherence in the user experience.

Moreover, the capability to Deliver at All Levels of Scale is vital. Effective design organizations can operate at various scales, addressing a wide range of design challenges from detailed interface elements to overarching strategic initiatives. This versatility allows them to adapt to different project requirements and complexities.

Establishing and Upholding Standards of Quality is another key output quality. Design organizations must develop clear guidelines and principles that drive their work, ensuring consistent quality benchmarks. However, they should also Value Delivery Over Perfection, prioritizing rapid prototyping and continuous improvement over striving for perfection. This iterative approach enables teams to respond to feedback and evolve their designs effectively.

The third category, Management, involves qualities that ensure the smooth operation and well-being of the design team. Treating team members as people, not resources, is essential.

Recognizing the individuality and personal development needs of team members, managers should support professional growth and create an environment where team members feel valued and motivated.

Diversity of Perspective and Background enriches problem-solving by bringing varied viewpoints and approaches, enhancing creativity and innovation. Effective design organizations actively seek and embrace diversity within their teams. Additionally, fostering a Collaborative Environment is crucial. Creating a culture that encourages open communication, teamwork, and respectful disagreement leads to better outcomes and a more cohesive team.

Finally, effective management of operations is necessary for sustained success. Clear processes, efficient resource allocation, and strategic planning ensure that the team can consistently deliver high-quality work.

Merholz and Skinner's 12 qualities framework differs from traditional design maturity models by providing a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to evaluating and guiding design organizations. While design maturity models often emphasize a linear progression and specific outcomes tied to each stage, the 12 qualities framework focuses on the foundational elements, outputs, and management practices that contribute to an organization's overall effectiveness.

This framework addresses the complexity and dynamism of design within organizations, recognizing that achieving high performance involves more than just moving through maturity stages. It emphasizes the importance of a shared sense of purpose, strong leadership, user empathy, and the ability to create and articulate value. Additionally, it highlights the need for a holistic approach to the design process, the importance of maintaining quality standards, and the value of iterative improvement.

2.4 Turnover and Designer Happiness

High turnover rates and the overall happiness of designers are critical factors that influence the effectiveness and productivity of design teams. The issue of employee turnover extends beyond the design field. Ongori (2007) reviews the broader literature on employee turnover, identifying various factors such as job-related stress, lack of commitment, and job dissatisfaction as significant contributors to turnover rates. He emphasizes the need for organizations to develop comprehensive strategies to manage turnover, including improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ongori, 2007).

Turnover can translate to a substantial increase in costs related to expenses related to recruitment, onboarding, training of new employees, and potential loss of productivity during this period of transition (Ongori, 2007). High turnover rates can also reduce the morale and can have negative impacts on performance.

Kacmar et al. (2006) also discuss the cost implications of turnover, stressing that high turnover rates can negatively impact organizational performance. They argue that turnover incurs significant costs, both direct (e.g., recruitment, training) and indirect (e.g., loss of organizational knowledge, reduced morale) (Kacmar et al., 2006). This reinforces the importance of retention strategies in maintaining a stable and productive workforce.

A report by Figma (2023) emphasizes the growing importance of collaborative design in enhancing designers' job satisfaction. According to the designers surveyed, the collaborative environment led to an increase in the quality of the final product and a decrease in the time to market (Figma, 2023). The transition to remote work has fostered a more collaborative environment, where designers feel a renewed sense of purpose and satisfaction (Figma, 2023). According to the report, 69% of designers report being more satisfied with their jobs than they

were before the pandemic, attributing this to the increased use of collaborative tools and practices (Figma, 2023). This finding underscores the importance of creating a work environment that promotes collaboration and values the strategic contributions of design professionals.

In 2025, Figma release a new report. The report reviews that 41% of designers and developers are more satisfied with their jobs compared to the previous year (Figma, 2025b). The report came accompany by a blog article where reinforces some of their finding by also adding quotes from Senior Directors of multinational companies (Figma, 2025a). They reinforce the importance of positioning design as a strategic partner rather than a support function. Marianne Guillen, Senior Director at Spotify, notes that this shift “comes with a higher level of customer centricity” and allows designers to make the strategic impact they seek (Figma, 2025a). When leadership embraces this role for design, the pressure on individual designers to constantly justify their work is reduced, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable work environment (Figma, 2025a).

Similarly, a report from McKinsey & Company (Cooney et al., 2022) highlights that successful design departments are those that integrate designers into cross-functional teams, fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. This integration not only enhances the designers' job satisfaction but also contributes to higher retention rates (Cooney et al., 2022). The report reveals that companies with high levels of cross-functional integration are more effective at attracting and retaining design talent (Cooney et al., 2022). Specifically, these companies see higher employee satisfaction and are better able to retain their design talent for longer periods (Cooney et al., 2022).

However, one factor that may contribute to dissatisfaction is the recurring need for designers to advocate for the value of their work. Buis Elaine et al. (2023) estimate that UX practitioners may spend as much as 50–70% of their time on advocacy efforts, which could limit the time available for actual design activities. While these efforts may be essential for building support and educating stakeholders, they could also lead to frustration or fatigue, especially when recognition or change is slow to materialize. This ongoing negotiation of value could be a contributing factor to job dissatisfaction or eventual turnover.

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2.5 Closing Thoughts and Future Directions

This literature review has explored the significant role of user experience (UX) and design maturity within contemporary organizations. By examining various UX maturity models, such as the Design Ladder, InVision's Design Maturity Model, the Nielsen Norman Group's UX Maturity Model, and Chapman and Plewes' UX Maturity Model, we have highlighted the progressive integration of design as a strategic component within businesses.

The analysis has shown that high levels of UX maturity are closely linked to enhanced job satisfaction and lower turnover rates among designers. Reports from Figma and McKinsey underline the importance of collaborative environments, cross-functional integration, and supportive organizational cultures in fostering designer happiness. Conversely, high turnover rates, driven by factors like job-related stress and dissatisfaction, impose significant costs on organizations and hinder their performance.

These insights underscore the importance of investing in UX capabilities and integrating design into core business processes. Organizations that achieve higher UX maturity not only benefit from improved designer retention but also from a more innovative and productive workforce.

As the next step, empirical research, including surveys and interviews with designers, will be conducted to validate these theoretical insights. This research aims to further elucidate the relationship between UX maturity and designer satisfaction, providing practical recommendations for organizations to enhance their UX practices and foster a thriving design culture. Ultimately, advancing UX maturity stands as a critical strategy for organizations seeking to retain top design talent and drive sustainable business success.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research process, outlining the methodological principles and methods used. It thoroughly discusses the rationale behind the methodological choices and the necessary next steps for this investigation. The goal is to analyze theories and extract qualitative and quantitative data from an investigation that aims to gather and process indicators related to the maturity models of UX and design within organizations.

The focus is on understanding designers' perceptions of existing maturity models and their effectiveness. The collected results include insights from UX designers, product designers, and related professionals to understand their experiences and opinions on UX maturity models as well as their impact on organizational practices. By examining the perspectives of these designers, we aim to shed light on the practical implications of these models to identify areas for improvement or further development.

3.1 Mixed Method Approach

The following research aims to elucidate knowledge about the degree of design maturity of companies from the participants' point of view, building on the insights from the literature review. We also seek to understand the impact they perceive in their daily lives, in addition to the challenges they face. To expand the analytical spectrum of this study, we decided to follow mixed methods research. Therefore, this investigation employed more than one research method, consisting of quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews, focusing on designers in the user experience area. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define this method as:

“Mixed methods research is formally defined here as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study (p.17)”

Using mixed methods research is particularly beneficial because it combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, addressing their respective weaknesses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). While quantitative research generates generalizable data, it may struggle to capture contextual nuances and participant voices. On the other hand, qualitative research excels

in providing rich insights from participants' perspectives but may be limited by researcher “background, and their own personal biases and interpretations” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

To plan and decide which methods should be done in research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) propose a conceptual framework. It involves making two primary decisions: whether to operate within one dominant tool (qualitative or quantitative) and whether to conduct the phases of the research concurrently or sequentially. The following image summarizes these possibilities:

Figure 8

Mixed-method design matrix from Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004)

		Time Order Decision	
		Concurrent	Sequential
Paradigm Emphasis Decision	Equal Status	QUAL + QUAN	QUAL → QUAN QUAN → QUAL
	Dominant Status	QUAL + quan QUAN + qual	QUAL → quan qual → QUAN QUAN → qual quan → QUAL

Note. “qual” stands for qualitative, “quan” stands for quantitative, “+” stands for concurrent, “→” stands for sequential, capital letters denote high priority or weight, and lower case letters denote lower priority or weight.¹¹

3.2 Study Design

Among the various possible combinations of techniques, this study employs a sequential exploratory design in which the quantitative survey data informs and guides the subsequent qualitative semi-structured interviews. The quantitative survey will provide an overview of perceived design maturity, gather demographic information, and assess the perceived maturity of the companies and its impact on designers. After that, the semi-structured interviews will dive deeper into these topics to explore the weakness of the existing design maturity models and potential areas for improvement.

To ensure the investigation remains focused and objective, the study design includes a structured approach for developing the survey and the interviews. The table below illustrates that.

Table 2

Illustration of the objectives and focus of each research method

	Exploratory	Confirmatory
	Quantitative	Qualitative
Objective	Analyze survey the current state of Design Maturity, its perceived level and the impact of it.	Confirm and explore through interviews people's perceptions and opinions regarding the maturity of design and the current frameworks for assessing that.
Sample	>70	15
Data Collect	Survey using Google Forms distributed via LinkedIn and Teams Channels.	Remote interviews recorded for later analysis. Duration of 45 minutes, with semi-structured script.
Data Analysis	Descriptive statistics of the results	Description and Analysis of results

3.3 Quantitative Research – Survey

3.3.1 Description

A survey was conducted to gain insight into how designers at organizations with varying levels of design maturity perceive the maturity of their company and its impact on their work. Note that this survey serves as an initial investigation rather than comprehensive research. The findings from this survey will serve as a foundation for further research and provide valuable insights into the relationship between design maturity and the daily work experience of designers.

The survey is divided into 5 sections to streamline the data collection process. The first section focuses primarily on collecting demographic data such as age, gender, location, and job title. It also asks questions about the company's size and the number of designers in their team. On the second section the focus is on some challenges they might encounter daily. Besides that, to filter participants in the next two sections, there is also a question asking if they are aware of what UX Maturity is. According to their response, they will see either section 3 or section 4.

In section 3 of the survey, participants are asked to evaluate their organization's current level of UX maturity using the NN/g scale. Moreover, respondents are required to assess the impact of their organization's UX maturity on their everyday work experience using a scale ranging from 1 (indicating "Minimal Impact") to 5 (indicating "Significant Impact"). These inquiries intend to measure how participants perceive their organization's design maturity and its influence on their daily activities as designers. Conversely, in section 4, participants who indicate unfamiliarity with the concept of UX maturity will be given an explanation before being presented with the same questions. This methodology enables a comparison between responses from individuals familiar with UX maturity and those lacking familiarity, offering valuable insights into potential variations in perceptions and experiences based on prior knowledge.

In Section 5, participants have the chance to freely express any further remarks, thoughts, or considerations they may have about the survey topic. This section permits participants to offer detailed feedback, share personal experiences, or raise any pertinent points related to the research question. Moreover, participants can choose to provide their contact details voluntarily if they wish to take part in subsequent interviews scheduled for later in the research phase. This allows participants to continue contributing through comprehensive discussions and interviews.

This categorization simplifies the analysis of the findings and helps in breaking down the information into smaller segments. This prevents participants from feeling overwhelmed and leaving the survey prematurely. Screen captures of the Google Forms survey are shown below, with the complete transcript available in Appendix A at the end of the dissertation.

3.3.2 Sample

The survey was conducted from 10/02/2024 to 20/02/2024 and included 90 professionals such as UX designers, product designers, UI designers, and others in related fields across various industries. Participants were targeted within the UX design community through professional groups, forums dedicated to UX design, and networks of product and UI designers. Efforts were also made to reach individuals working in UX-related roles via platforms like LinkedIn. The survey aims to gather insights from professionals actively shaping user experiences across various products and services while ensuring participant privacy and confidentiality.

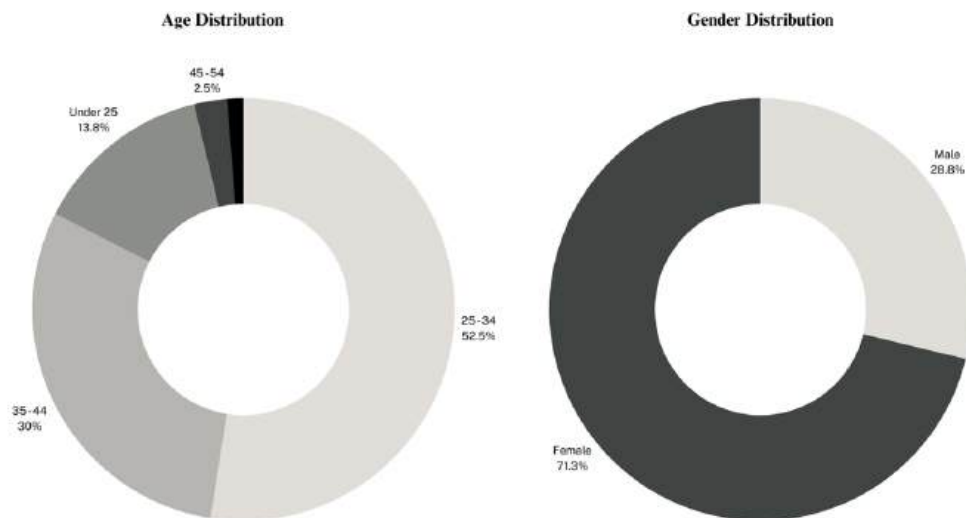
3.3.3 Results Description

Section 1

The survey primarily captured data from young professionals in the design field, with the majority (52.5%) aged between 25 and 34 years, and a significant proportion (30%) aged between 35 and 44 years. The gender distribution was notably skewed towards females, who represented 71.3% of respondents (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Age range and Gender of respondents

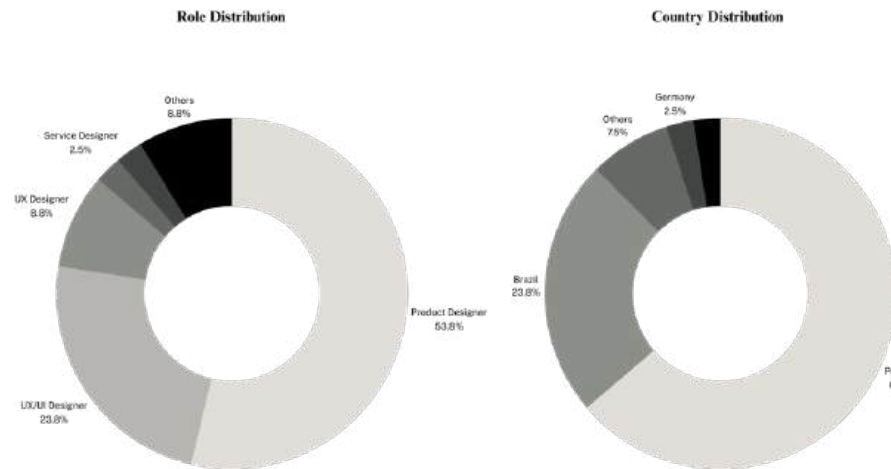


In terms of professional roles as shown in Figure 10, over half of the respondents (53.8%) identified as Product Designers, making it the most prevalent role among participants. UX/UI Designers also formed a substantial group, accounting for 23.8% of the total. Other roles, such as UX Designers, Service Designers, and UI Designers, were less common but collectively highlighted the diversity of specialties within the field.

The respondents were predominantly based in Portugal (63.7%) and Brazil (23.8%), with minor representations from other countries, indicating a strong concentration of the survey population in these two regions as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10

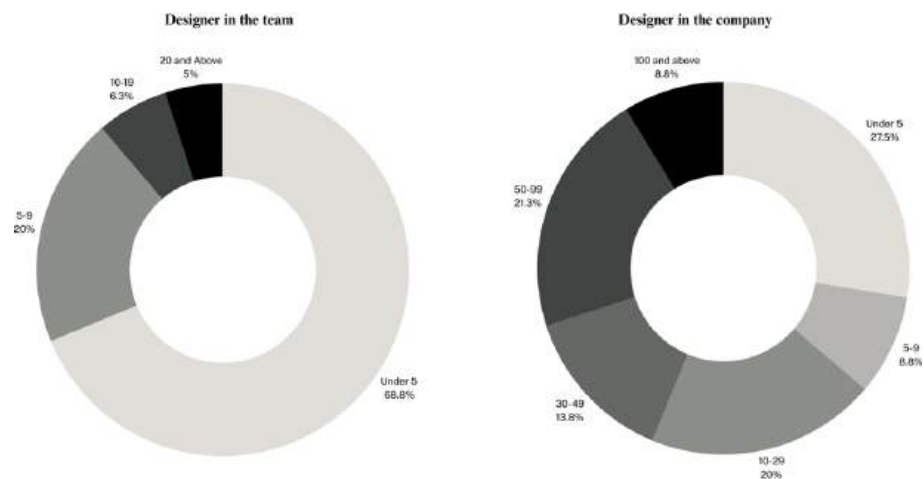
Country of the respondents



Regarding team and the number of designers in the company (Figure 11), most respondents worked in smaller design teams, with 68.8% in teams of fewer than five members and 20% in teams of five to nine members. This trend was mirrored in the size of the companies; 27.5% of respondents worked in companies with fewer than five designers, while larger design teams (50 to 99 designers) and moderately sized teams (10 to 29 designers) were also significant, comprising 21.25% and 20% of responses, respectively as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11

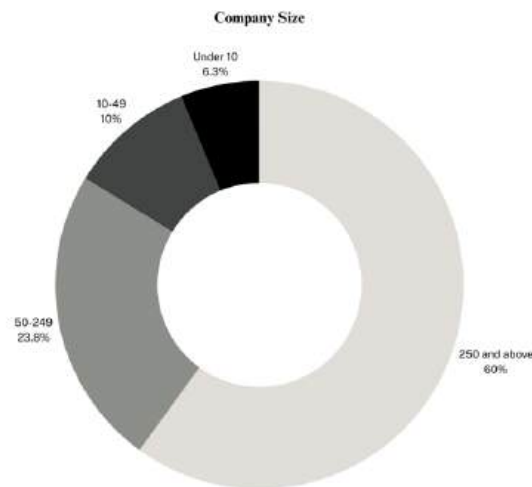
Team size and number of designers in a company



A significant majority of respondents (60%) work in large companies with 250 or more employees as shown in Figure 12. Another 23.75% work in mid-sized companies having 50 to 249 employees, while smaller companies (10 to 49 employees and fewer than 10 employees) are less common, constituting 10% and 6.25% of responses, respectively.

Figure 12

Company size of the respondents



Section 2

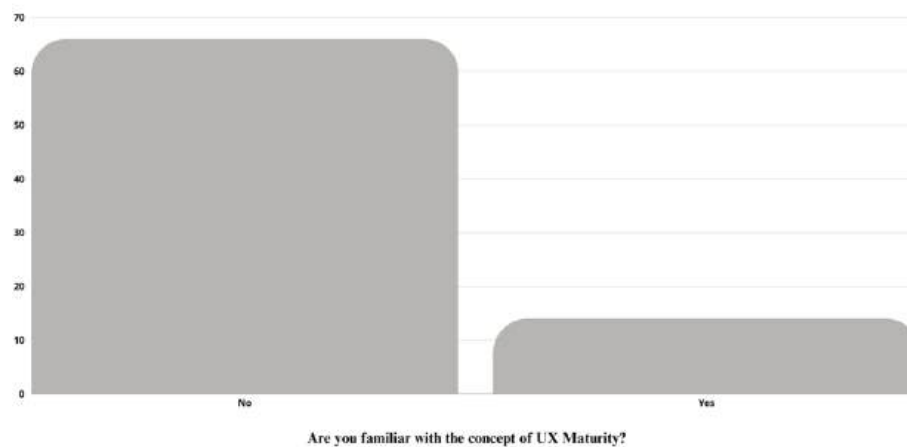
The most frequently cited challenge, mentioned by approximately 19.05% of respondents, is that stakeholders do not fully understand the role and expectations of designers. This is closely followed by the challenge of achieving a balance between user needs and business goals, which accounts for 15.75% of responses. Other notable difficulties include effective collaboration with cross-functional teams (12.82%) and the lack of clear design briefs (9.97%).

The challenge perceived to have the greatest impact on daily work is stakeholders not understanding the role and expectations of designers, highlighted by 31.25% of respondents. This is a critical issue that likely affects many aspects of a designer's work, from project initiation to execution. Achieving a balance between user needs and business goals also ranks high in terms of impact, cited by 17.5% of respondents, followed by issues with cross-functional collaboration (15%) and the clarity of design briefs (12.5%).

According to the survey data, most of the respondents, approximately 82.5%, reported being familiar with the concept of UX Maturity (Figure 13). This suggests a high level of awareness about UX practices and their importance in the design community. The remaining 17.5% of respondents were not familiar with the term.

Figure 13

Familiarity with the concept of UX Maturity

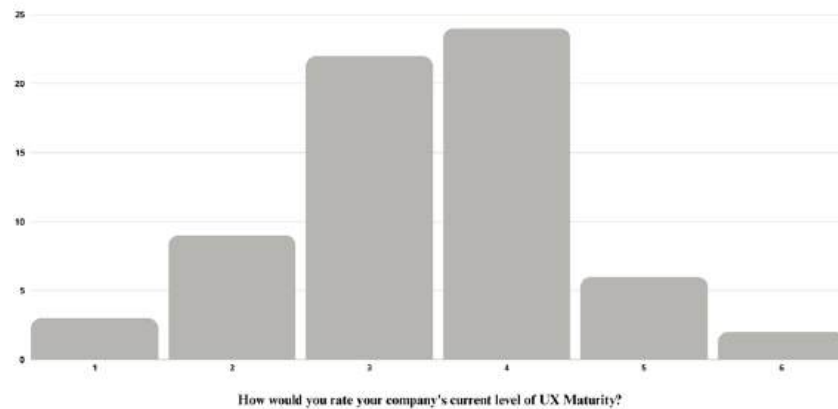


Section 3 and 4

From the portion of respondents that are familiar with the concept of UX Maturity, 36% percent rated their companies at Level 4 as shown in Figure 14, indicating robust but not fully optimized UX integration, while 33% perceived their organizations to be at Level 3, suggesting established but not comprehensively integrated UX practices. Those who saw their companies achieving the highest standards, Levels 5 and 6, accounted for approximately 12%, highlighting the strategic impact of UX in their organizations. And 18% rated their company at Levels 1 or 2.

Figure 14

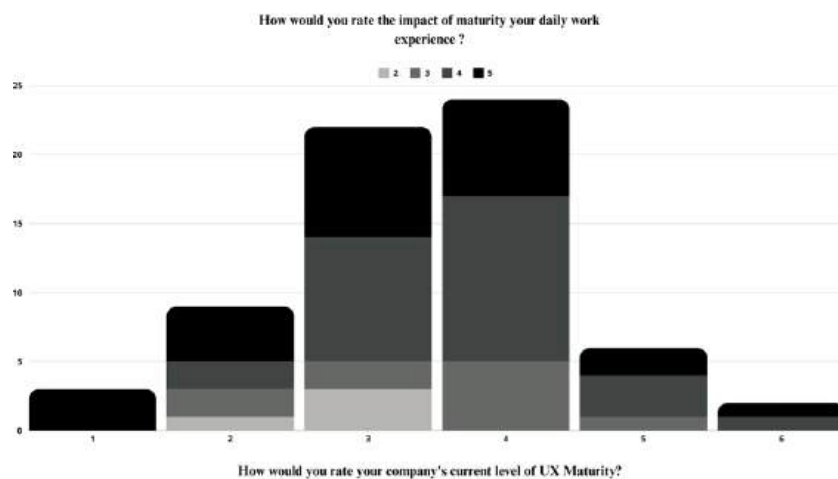
Maturity Level among those that are familiar with the concept of UX Maturity



When it comes to the impact perceived shown in Figure 15, more than 75% of the participants that were familiar with the concept rated the impact on their daily experience it as a 4 or a 5. On the extremes (Level 1 and 6), all participants answer 5 as the rate for impact. In the middle around 22% answered 2 or 3. None of the respondents answered 1, which might suggest that all participants see the impact of maturity on their daily job experience.

Figure 15

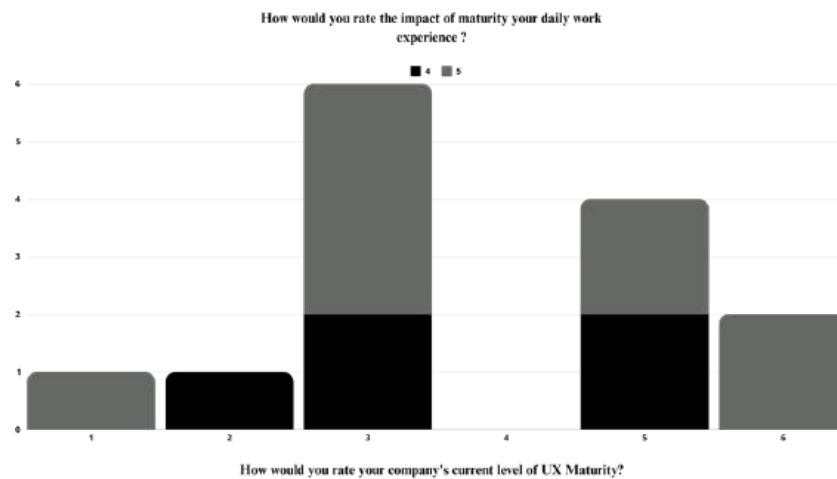
Maturity Level among those that are familiar with the concept of UX Maturity shaded by the perceived impact



Respondents not familiar with UX Maturity still provided assessments of their organizations' maturity levels, though possibly lacking in depth. Around 43% placed their companies at Level 3, indicating some degree of UX practice integration, while a surprising 43% rated their organizations at Levels 5 or 6, possibly overestimating their UX maturity. Around 14% rated their companies as Level 1 or 2. The impact of UX maturity perceived by this group was high, being either 5 or 4 across the different levels. No patterns were identified.

Figure 16

Maturity Level among those that are not familiar with the concept of UX Maturity shaded by the perceived impact



3.4 Qualitative Research – Semi-structured Interview

3.4.1 Description

The interview is semi-structured, there the respondent has room to add more information, and the interviewer might explore topics that were not in the script but can be relevant to the research. The main goal was to uncover not only current practices and challenges, but also the impact of UX maturity on team dynamics, decision-making, and business outcomes. The script has five main sections, each focusing on different aspects of the participants' professional backgrounds, organizational practices, challenges, UX maturity and its impact.

1. Background Information

This section aims to understand the participant's background and experience as a designer. Questions cover their overall experience, length of time in the design field, types of products they work on, and the size of their design team. This information provides context for their responses and helps establish their expertise level.

2. *Organization's Design Practices*

In this section, participants describe the design practices and processes within their organization. Questions explore the structure of these practices, the stakeholders involved, daily collaborative interactions, and the stages of the project in which the participant is involved. This helps to map out the design environment and collaborative dynamics.

3. *Understanding Challenges*

This section delves into the challenges participants face in their work as designers. They are asked to identify key challenges, share specific examples, and discuss the emotional impact of these challenges. Additionally, participants describe strategies and approaches that have been effective in overcoming these challenges.

4. *Maturity Assessment*

Participants assess the overall maturity of their organization's design practices and explain their reasoning. This section seeks to gauge the participant's perception of UX Maturity within their organization and understand the factors influencing their assessment.

5. *Impact of Design Practices*

Participants reflect on their impact and contribution within the company. They also discuss how the level of design maturity influences the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes. This section aims to understand the participant's perception of their role and the broader implications of UX Maturity.

3.4.2 Sample

The interview will be conducted with a sample of 15 designers who left their contact information on the survey forms. These participants were selected because they have shown interest in

sharing more about their experiences. As shown in table 3, those participants vary in years of experience, team size and employment type. All the interviews were recorded after a verbal agreement from the participant's side. As previously agreed with the participants, the names of the companies were Redacted during the transcription.

Table 3

Participants Codes and Information

Participant Code	Years of Design Experience	Team Size	Employment Type
P1	3 years	1	In-house
P2	3 years	3-4	In-house
P3	7 years	5	Consultant (Agency)
P4	3 years	2	In-house
P5	3 years	2	Consultant (Agency)
P6	14 years	2	Consultant (Agency)
P7	17 years	3	In-house
P8	12 years	2	Consultant (Agency)
P9	3 years	3	Consultant (Agency)
P10	4 years	17	In-house
P11	10 years	2	In-house
P12	3 years	4	In-house
P13	2.5 years	3	In-house
P14	8 years	12	In-house
P15	2 years	1	In-house

3.4.3 Results Description

3.4.3.1. Background Information

All fifteen interviewees are either UX Designers or Product Designer (digital), but their backgrounds and experiences vary widely. Participants' design experience ranges from a few years to over 15 years in the field. Some began their careers by transitioning from completely different backgrounds while others have been designers from the start and then transitioned to UX Design. Illustrating a non-traditional path, P4 came from a completely different background:

“I transitioned to UX design in 2021. Before that, my background was in communication and information. I originally trained as a broadcaster. I have a bachelor's degree in it. Then I made this shift into UX design and that's what I've been focusing on since.” (P4)

In contrast, another interviewee had an academic background in design and communication:

“I started my career in digital design around 2015 and transitioned to UX around 2020. My academic background is in Design and Communication. (...) So when the pandemic hit, I just decided to do a UX focus online course and go for it.” (P14)

Like P14, P3 also shifted from graphic design to UX Design although he doesn't have formal academic background:

“I started my career in a marketing agency, focusing on graphic design first. As I gained experience, I realized I wanted to move into digital product design. I completed a UX/UI online course and then worked in various companies.” (P3)

This mix of trajectories reflects a diverse sample: some participants had formal bachelor's degree in design and some form of specialization in UX, while others came from completely different backgrounds and used online courses to specialize and shift their areas.

Participants work in a variety of industry contexts and product domains. They all work either as UX/UI Designer or Product Designer, but the industries differ. For instance, one designer works on digital financial services while another is focused on the automotive sector “designing digital experiences for that industry” (P15). Yet another participant (P1) mentioned projects in

agribusiness, designing software for private-sector clients in that field. This variety shows that, while working on digital products, the sample brings perspectives from more than just one industry. Despite different sectors, all share a focus on user-facing digital design, whether it be consumer mobile apps, internal corporate tools, or client-driven solutions.

The team contexts are quite similar across the participants. Most of them identify as the sole or one of very few designers on their projects independent of the company size:

“There are over 100 designers in the company, but I’m the only designer on my team.”
(P15)

There were two examples of Designers that are inserted into teams with only designer:

“We have three full-time designers, including me, and eight contracted designers. So, in total, including supervisors, we’re a team of 17. (..) Once the design is done, we align with the developers and Product Managers or whatever stakeholder is behind that. But the design team just has designers.” (P10)

“Our team size is somewhat flexible. It only has designer, and we serve several different products like app, ecommerce and user dashboard. We have a core team of three designers. But when there’s a big project, the company sometimes hires additional contract designers to support us” (P7)

Collaboration structures also vary a bit, but most designers are embedded in multidisciplinary teams working closely with POs, PMs and developers:

“We have a design “chapter”. We meet every two weeks to discuss ideas, present projects, and share case studies. We also have a dedicated designers’ chat for updates. Day-to-day, I mostly work independently. I collaborate with the Product Owner and developers when needed, but I’m the only designer on my projects.” (P1)

“Our team currently has five people. There are two product designers, two front-end developers, and one QA specialist.” (P4)

3.4.3.2. Organization's Design Practices

The designers reported a range of design processes and practices within their organizations, from informal or evolving workflows to more structured methodologies. In several cases, participants described the design process as ad hoc or not yet fully matured. For example, one noted, “Our process is very personalized... it’s not standardized across all projects” (P1). Similarly, another designer characterized their process as “collaborative but still quite ad hoc”, adding that “our UX maturity is still developing” (P4). In these settings, design procedures tended to be flexible and dictated by immediate project needs rather than a strict company-wide methodology.

On the other hand, a few participants worked in organizations with established processes. One interviewee from a product company described a formalized dual-track approach:

“We follow a dual-track agile process. There’s a discovery track where we do research and ideation, and a delivery track for execution” (P14).

Another, who was the sole UX designer in a larger firm, said their team “follows a user-centered design approach with brief analysis, stakeholder engagement, and iteration” (P15). These statements suggest that while some organizations had begun to implement systematic UX practices (e.g. dedicated research phases or agile design sprints), others relied on more individualized or project-specific methods.

A common theme was the stage at which designers are involved in projects. Many participants indicated that design input should occur as early as possible, but in practice it often happened later once the requirements and specifications are set. “Ideally, we’d be involved from the very beginning of projects, but in practice we’re usually brought in after major decisions have been made,” one designer explained, noting that they often “end up just “painting screens””. That means that the designers are basically doing the UI after the direction is set rather than shaping the product’s direction from the start” (P3).

Another participant shared something similar:

“We’re usually brought in after major decisions have already been made... Often I’m brought in once a project is already defined” (P7).

In these cases, initial requirements and solutions might be decided by product or business teams before designers start their work. This reactive mode was not universal, however. Some participants stated that they were involved in everything from ideation to delivery.

In consultant roles, designers tend to be involved throughout the whole process: “Since I’m often the only designer on a project, I usually get to start from the very beginning of that project” (P6). Those in more UX-mature product companies also stated that:

“From the very beginning... identifying problems, validating with research, designing, and staying through implementation” (P14).

Similarly, another stated that they take part in all phases “from the beginning through implementation and validation” (P15). However, many interviewees experienced late involvement while also stating their wishes for full lifecycle participation in design activities.

Collaboration with other roles and stakeholders is a central part of design practice, and participants consistently highlighted teams composed of a PO, Developers, FE, and BE in some cases. Most described close daily interaction with either product managers or product owners and developers. For example, one designer summarized:

“Day to day, I work closely with the other product designers and our development team... we align requirements with the PO” (P4)

Another similarly said that collaboration is “mainly with eight developers and one product owner” (P15). Designers often acted as internal consultants to product teams: one participant noted, “I collaborate daily mainly with product managers... and coordinate with developers during the implementation phase” (P2).

In organizations with multiple designers, peer collaboration was also common; one interviewee said they work “with the other designer and our product manager” as the core team on a project (P3), and another mentioned frequently consulting the other designers on their team design team for feedback (P2). Overall, the daily design process was portrayed as highly collaborative, with designers integrating their work with PMs for direction and prioritization and with engineers for technical feasibility and implementation of the designs.

The interviews also shared on which stakeholders influence design work and how design requirements are initiated. In many cases, especially in less design-driven organizations, design tasks were driven by other departments or clients rather than originating from the designers themselves. “Often, requests come from customer support or marketing teams,” one participant explained, “stakeholders like Marketing or Customer Support drive a lot of requests, and we work with them to address those needs” (P3).

Another designer shared a similar experience “Requests often come from departments like Customer Support or Marketing” (P7). These stakeholders typically seek design changes to meet business goals such as boosting conversion, so designers find themselves responding to externally defined problems or ideas. In a consulting context, the “stakeholders” are the clients; one consultant stated that “As a consultant, the primary stakeholders are our clients. In my current context, that means managers or team leads in various city government departments” (P5).

In such scenarios, clients or their representatives bring requests. Those requests can sometimes be very specific and sometimes very vague. Therefore, the designer’s role also involves clarifying those requests to understand if what’s asked is indeed what the user needs. A few participants highlighted that when requirements are unclear, they push to make their own discovery:

“Often, the requirements we get are vague at first, and it’s on us to figure out the real needs and scope” (P5).

In summary, the organizational design practices varied widely: some companies are more structured while others have design coming in late. Most of the interviews showed that designers work closely with other roles, and the goal or the requirements for design work frequently came from outside the design team (whether internal business units or external clients), requiring designers to advocate for the user’s need while also being flexible enough to fulfill their clients or their stakeholder’s request.

3.4.3.3. Understanding Challenges

When discussing daily challenges, some recurring difficulties appear across different interviews. A primary challenge stated by many was the lack of understanding, or buy-in, for real user

experience practices among stakeholders. While all those designers had either UX/UI Designer or Product Designer title, several described as having to persuade clients or colleagues of the value of UX research and design, rather than just surface aesthetics.

“A major challenge is convincing clients of the importance of UX. Many clients initially think design is just making something look good” (P6)

Another echoed this from an in-house perspective:

“The biggest challenge is design maturity. Not ours, but our clients’. Many clients still see design mainly as making things look good. So, while we emphasize that design is more than visuals, sometimes to show value we present shiny results first.” (P8).

In corporate settings, designers sometimes struggle with internal stakeholders as well. One participant noted the difficulty of “dealing with stakeholders who don’t understand UX”, especially when pressed under “time constraints” (P15). Similarly, a product designer in a financial company described “dealing with stakeholders jumping to solutions” without proper research as a common issue (P14).

In some organizations, educating stakeholders is practically part of the job. One of the participants stated that “Stakeholders often have a limited understanding of UX and UI, which means we do a lot of educating” (P10). This comment illustrates the battle that designers face when stakeholders are focusing on visual aspects and do not fully understand what the User Experience is.

Time pressure and resource limitations were common issues. Many participants mentioned tight timelines, high workloads, or insufficient resources for design activities especially related to research, as challenging aspects. One participant shared that “The biggest challenge is the lack of time or resources dedicated to following best practices” explained one designer, referring to the difficulty of conducting a proper UX process with the timeline of the project (P9).

Another described the tension of “managing design timelines while working within business priorities”, noting that because their company’s focus is not primarily on software, design initiatives often feel rushed or cut short (P13). Heavy meeting loads and multitasking across

projects are also included in these issues. “Time management is a huge challenge. My role involves a lot of meetings, which cuts into my design time” one participant shared (P12).

Designers in consultancies or supporting multiple products particularly felt the strain of context-switching. A consultant noted, “One of the main challenges is managing and understanding a vast amount of project information... I frequently switch projects... so there’s a learning curve each time” (P5). In dynamic organizations, structural changes added to the challenge: “A huge challenge has been the constant team and management changes” said an in-house designer, describing how frequent a single feature was “reworked and rethought three or four times with different managers” resulting in a disjointed process (P11). The overall picture is one designer often feeling they must deliver quality work under significant time pressure, with limited opportunity for the iterative, research-driven design process they would prefer.

Participants also recounted specific incidents that exemplified these challenges and the emotional impact they had. Several stories involved stakeholders pushing for design decisions that conflicted with user experience principles, leaving the designer feeling frustrated or undermined. For example, one interviewee described a project where an outside stakeholder commandeered the early design phase:

“During one project, an external stakeholder essentially took over the discovery phase... He decided everything based on his gut feelings. I felt like I was just a “Figma girl”, which was frustrating” (P1)

In another case, marketing demands clashed with UX best practices. A senior designer talked how “Marketing really wanted a very intrusive visual change... I was frustrated. It felt like they were ignoring UX principles” (P7). He went on to explain that, by negotiating a compromise, he turned that situation into a “teachable moment”, but the initial experience was difficult.

Another designer faced a similar scenario with a marketing request:

“Marketing once wanted a huge banner on every page... I felt anxious pushing back initially, but once I showed them how an alternative could work, they were on board. That experience was frustrating at first, but... rewarding when we found a solution that satisfied marketing and kept the design user-friendly” (P3)

These examples show designers that are trying to balance stakeholder wishes with the user needs and a user-centric design. That often leads to stress or frustration in the process. A junior designer shared about a stakeholder that didn't fully understand her work:

“A stakeholder rejected my design without understanding it, which was frustrating. I was working in this new feature, I was going to do an overall presentation, but the stakeholder opened Figma, decided that he didn't like it and told me he was rejecting it. I had to present a rationale to defend it. It's fine, I was gonna do it anyway, however he could have waited for it.” (P15)

Being asked to make superficial changes without addressing underlying problems was another common frustration. One participant recalled being “once asked to just “make it prettier”” without further context. In this case, the designer also had to advocate for the user. According to them, “I ran usability tests to prove the issues. It was frustrating but ended in a win” when evidence convinced stakeholders of deeper UX problems (P14).

Coping with these challenges required the designers to adopt various strategies, many of which they discussed. To combat stakeholder misunderstandings, several emphasized the importance of communication and documentation. They stated that “Clear communication, documentation, and building trust with stakeholders” were key tactics for one interviewee in gaining credibility and ensuring their design decisions were respected (P15).

Another designer similarly found that “clear documentation is vital for me. I make sure to note down design decisions and processes. That safeguards me” when confronting “mysterious ideas” imposed by stakeholders (P1). Several participants have learned to use evidence as a persuasive tool. “Quick user testing has been my ally,” one designer said. “It's far more powerful to show them evidence... When stakeholders see that a certain approach doesn't yield the result they want, they're more open to alternatives” (P7). This sentiment was echoed by others who reported doing informal tests or gathering user feedback to back up their recommendations (P3, P14).

In organizations where proactive design input was not always solicited, some designers took initiative:

“I try to be proactive: I propose features ahead of time with supporting research so that I can steer the conversation rather than always react” (P11)

Adaptability to the stakeholder mindset was another technique, especially for consultants:

“Adapting to the client is key. If I know a client values visuals above all, I’ll deliver top-notch visual design, but I’ll incorporate good UX practices as much as possible. Once they see the results, I explain those UX aspects were vital. It’s kind of like meeting them where they are, then bringing them a bit forward.” (P8).

Internally, managing workload and priorities helped address time challenges. “Prioritization and communication are key” said one designer who juggled multiple projects, “I’ve learned to be very clear with my team about my workload and capacity. I focus on critical tasks...” (P12).

Another designer also described creating personal systems to handle information overload:

“I sort of create my own cheat sheet for each project. How are the key stakeholders, goals, constraints. So, I can refer to it easily. I’ll also block off some time either to digest information or to get questions answered by teammates or clients” (P5). By documenting decisions, presenting evidence, staying proactive, and communicating boundaries, the designers endeavored to mitigate the daily challenges they faced. These strategies were often born out of necessity, to navigate environments where time is short and UX maturity is limited.

3.4.3.4. Maturity Assessment

When asked to assess the overall maturity of design practices in their organizations, most participants described their companies as being on the lower to mid end of the maturity spectrum. Several gave frank evaluations using informal “levels”, which means that instead of classifying based on the scale, they described using words as “low” or “mid”. One designer rated their company “around two out of five in terms of design maturity”, conceding that it was “still quite low” (P4). Another similarly said, “I would rate it as low to medium. Around a level two or three on a design maturity scale” (P1). According to them, the reason for that is that:

“Our projects are often short-term with limited scope. (...) We don’t have the time or resources for comprehensive research, so our work ends up revolving around UI and then the design maturity is limited.” (P1)

“When I joined, design was almost non-existent, maybe close to zero on that scale. (...) We often focus on quick deliverables rather than thorough UX research or strategy. Also, we rely on an existing design system but haven’t fully developed it due to resource constraints. All these factors keep our maturity on the lower side.” (P4)

Even among those who have seen progress, the consensus was that there was room for improvement. For example, one participant acknowledged an improvement in maturity from the past but still adds: “I’d call it intermediate at best” (P7). Designers in consultancy settings had slightly different perspectives. While their internal processes might be advanced, meaning that their own company understood their role, when allocated to a client they might still face challenges. Therefore, their work is often constrained by client maturity:

“I’d place our team’s maturity at a mid-level, maybe between a 2 or 3 out of 5. We have talented people (...). On top of that, most of our client departments have very low maturity regarding UX. Many don’t know what UX really is (...)” (P10)

In contrast, a participant in a more design-oriented company stated a relatively high level: “I’d say we’re at a solid level 3 going to 4” on the maturity scale (P14). This was one of the highest self-assessments and came from an organization that had formal UX processes and a larger design team.

Several interviewees mentioned that design maturity was not uniform across the entire organization and was also tied to leadership or the business varying by department/product. “It varies by product here,” explained one participant working in a large company with multiple product lines. “Some products have low maturity, especially those with lots of management churn... The product I work on is a bit more stable now, largely because our new product manager values design and consistency more. But overall, the company’s design maturity fluctuates. It depends on who’s in charge at any given time” (P11). This insight suggests that individual in leadership roles, such as POs and PMs, can raise the maturity level within their sphere, even if the organization has not reached that level.

Another designer similarly observed, “On the flip side, when someone in management understands design, everything runs more smoothly... our new PM involves design more and it has improved our productivity and alignment” (P4). Thus, leadership support was cited as a key

factor that can boost maturity from within. In one of the high-maturity scenarios (P14), design was both respected and integrated, though even there the participant noted that design was “still seen as a service rather than strategic in some areas” (P14).

Working in low or intermediate maturity environments often came with emotional strains. Many expressed frustration that their organizations were not making the most of user-centered design practices:

“Honestly, it can be pretty frustrating at times. I feel like my skills aren’t always utilized to their full extent, because we’re often in execution mode rather than strategic mode,” one designer admitted (P6).

“It can be pretty frustrating. There’s a sense that design is seen more as a final step. Just making things look nice rather than as a core part of product strategy. That’s demotivating at times” (P4).

“I do feel frustrated, especially when I know more UX research would benefit a project, but we can’t pursue it due to time or resource limits. It can be demotivating,” (P1)

The constant rush and inability to implement ideal processes was described as “draining” and “frustrating” (P12) by another. In the words of one designer, “We could do so much more if UX’s value was recognized consistently. It often feels like we’re just patching things up” (P11).

That said, not all feelings were negative. A few participants struck a balance between frustration and optimism. “I remain hopeful” one interviewee remarked, noting that new leadership changes gave them optimism that UX maturity would “slowly improve” (P4).

Another explained that while day-to-day can be dispiriting, they try to focus on small victories: “I keep hoping those add up over time to improve things” (P1). Designers also found morale boosts in the positive outcomes they achieved. As one put it, “I do try to stay focused on positives. Like user feedback when something I insisted on actually works well. That’s motivating” (P11).

In higher-maturity environments, the emotional tone was much more positive. “Mostly positive. I feel valued and supported, though sometimes frustrated,” said the designer from the team

approaching a level 4 maturity (P14). And a consultant mentioned that “Within my company, I feel quite confident and supported... The frustration comes when working with clients who don’t understand UX” (P5).

In summary, working at a low design maturity level often left designers with a feeling of frustration although many held onto hope for improvement. When maturity was higher, designers felt more respected and satisfied, experiencing only occasional frustration. This emotional backdrop shows why many participants strove to raise UX awareness and maturity in their organizations.

3.4.3.5. Impact of Design Practices

Participants reflected on the impact and contribution they feel they have as designers in their organizations, and their answers are often related to the maturity levels. In general, designers believed they were making a positive difference, but many saw their impact as constrained by the scope they were given. Several described their contributions as significant in execution but limited in strategic influence. As one designer put it:

“As one of the first UX designers here, I do feel my contributions are recognized to a degree... I ensure the UI is clean and functional... But I know my impact could be greater if design had a bigger role earlier in projects. So, I’d say I have a moderate impact – significant in the areas I’m allowed to influence but limited by the company’s current approach to design” (P4).

Another, working in a consultancy, described a mix of scenarios:

“My impact really varies project by project. When I have a client who allows me to do more UX-focused work, I feel I have a strong impact... For projects where I’m limited to UI tweaks, I feel my impact is smaller... So, it’s a mix... I do believe I contribute positively, but not always to the extent I know I could” (P6).

This sentiment was echoed by others who often act as “problem solvers” on a tactical level but wish they could shape strategy more. “I do everything I can to make an impact, but because I usually come in late in the process, my contribution is more tactical than strategic,” one participant explained. “I improve the interface and fix immediate issues... I’m proud of those

improvements. However, I know I could contribute much more... if I were given the chance earlier” (P3).

Another senior designer noted that due to late involvement, “I often end up improving what’s there rather than creating something ground-up. I see my role as making sure that even if we are brought in to “make it pretty”, I also make it functional and user-friendly. (...) It’s not as big of an impact as I’d like, but it’s still important” (P7) These reflections show that participants take pride in the improvements they bring even if it’s just small usability improvements. They are also aware that their potential impact is curtailed when they are not part of earlier product definition or when broader UX practices are not employed.

Despite these limitations, many interviewees could point to tangible positive outcomes from their work. Some mentioned direct user feedback or metrics improvements resulting from design changes they led. “I feel the impact is positive, especially when I get to see user feedback” said one designer. “For example, we redesigned the navigation and users appreciated it. Hearing that made me feel good” (P11). Another who had more autonomy in certain projects remarked, “I think I have a real impact, especially when leading projects that improve onboarding and reduce support tickets” (P14). At least one participant framed their impact in terms of risk reduction and quality control: “My biggest impact is reducing usability risks. I make sure we do at least some user testing or validation on our designs, so we catch obvious usability issues” (P2).

In the absence of formal research phases, simply advocating for and implementing small UX enhancements was viewed as meaningful. For example, one designer successfully pushed an accessibility improvement (adding keyboard focus indicators) into development, which they cited as a gratifying “win” that “make me feel I am contributing meaningfully” (P2). Another added that, “Overall, I know I’m delivering quality within the scope I’m given. I’ve had instances where something I design and push for ends up significantly improving a feature... In those cases, I feel very positive about my contribution” (P6). These comments reveal that even within constraints, designers perceive themselves as guardians of the user experience at whatever level they can operate.

The level of design maturity in the organization heavily influences both the design process and the ultimate quality of design outcomes, according to participants. Many drew a direct line

between how integrated design is (mature vs. immature) and how effective the design work can be. “Low design maturity definitely affects both process and outcomes,” one designer observed. “It means we might skip important steps like proper research or testing due to lack of time or buy-in... So, design maturity has a huge impact: where it’s low, the process is rushed and reactive; where it’s higher, we work more efficiently and produce better, user-informed designs” (P4). Another offered a similar analysis:

“Absolutely, the maturity level is a big factor... when timelines are tight or design isn’t given enough time, we might cut corners on research or testing. That inevitably affects the outcome (...) maybe the design looks good but isn’t as user-friendly as it could be. In a more mature scenario, we’d base decisions on real user data and iterate (...) leading to a much more refined end product” (P6)

In low-maturity environments, participants said they often had to make design decisions with insufficient data while simply executing stakeholder requests. “When UX isn’t fully integrated, the process becomes reactive. We’re just trying to quickly fix what’s asked for, rather than proactively researching and iterating,” explained one designer, contrasting it with higher maturity cases: “In a higher maturity scenario, we’d base decisions on solid user research and have time to refine, leading to better, more validated outcomes” (P2). Another succinctly described the difference in outcomes: “When UX is integrated early, we create better outcomes. When it’s late, we polish bad ideas” (P14).

The consensus was that mature design practices that integrate design as strategy leads to a better outcome which can be seen as designs that truly meet user needs and are well-thought-out. On the flip side, immature practices result in more suboptimal solutions. One participant noted, for instance, that without UX maturity, “we might focus on short-term solutions and miss strategic, user-centered improvements” (P2).

In summary, designers reported that while they aimed to make impact, and succeed on a small scale, their influence is constrained by organizational factors. In low-maturity contexts, their role is frequently reduced to implementing pre-decided changes or visual enhancements, making it challenging to address underlying user needs or strategic design opportunities. In more mature environments, designers can engage in early research and iterate through feedback. That can lead

to more substantive improvements, creating outcomes they feel proud of and fully responsible for. All participants understood that elevating design maturity would enhance not only the design process but also the final product quality. The interviews conveyed a strong sense that these UX professionals are eager to deliver greater impact and are continually advocating for the user even when the conditions don't fully allow design to flourish as strategy.

Chapter 4 – Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from both survey and interview data, organized into five key themes that emerged during analysis. These themes reflect how designers perceive and experience UX maturity in their work environments, from their understanding of what maturity means to the emotional and practical consequences it brings. Throughout the chapter, findings are interpreted considering existing literature, allowing for comparisons between participant experiences and established models and theories discussed in Chapter 2.

4.1 Awareness and Understanding of UX Maturity

Designers generally described UX maturity in broad, intuitive terms rather than formal models. In our survey, which used the Nielsen Norman Group's six-stage maturity model, most respondents placed their organizations at "medium to low" levels of maturity. However, in interviews they rarely cited any formal framework by name. Instead, participants described maturity using everyday terms like "low" "mid," or scores on a simple scale. Their comments were typically grounded in concrete observations such as short project timelines, lack of user research, or minimal design process, rather than explicit model criteria.

This pattern confirms Hypothesis 4 that most designers recognize maturity concepts but do not explicitly use formal models. In other words, their experiential knowledge precedes formal terminology. As noted in the literature, models like the Nielsen Norman Group's model are comprehensive with stages from "Absent" to "User-driven" quality and consistency, but practitioners often default to simpler label or simpler expressions. These findings align with the idea that maturity frameworks are mainly descriptive guides. Designers rely on these lived descriptions to assess their context. In summary, the data suggests that designers often lack knowledge of formal UX maturity schemas, instead drawing on intuition and workplace experience to judge whether their environment feels "low" or "mid" in maturity.

However, that doesn't mean they don't see the importance of maturity. During the literature review, it was possible to see that even though those scales use different names and metrics, the end level or stage has design in the center of the organization. That might be called "Design as Strategy" like on the Design Ladder from the Danish Design Centre, or "User-Driven" as on the

Nielsen Norman Group scale. However, an analysis of these descriptions shows that they all share the same feeling of having design going together with strategy and product goals, not just as a complement for visual aspects. This shared goal is what those designers also shared as a wish and why they didn't rate their company as being "high" or "5".

Saying that a company is "low" or "mid", can be seen as saying that the company is still not close to the end goal of having design-driven processes. However, that also shows that the designer understands the importance of their role and, as we could see in the previous chapter, even when confronted with challenges, they still advocate for their users. It reveals that these designers are not passive observers; they are actively trying to change as we will see in the next section.

4.2 How Maturity Shapes the Designer's Role

While maturity models suggest linear progressions toward optimized UX processes, real-world practices often fall short. Both survey and interview participants described design practices that were inconsistent, reactive, and dependent on stakeholder understanding of their role.

Standardized UX methodologies are rare.

UX maturity deeply influences what designers do. In high-maturity organizations, designers reported being involved early, working on research and strategy. In contrast, in low-maturity settings designers typically end up doing mostly visual work. In other words, they ended-up doing mostly UI based on pre-defined requirements from their stakeholders. Survey and interview data converged on this topic. The survey showed that one of the biggest challenges was that the stakeholders don't fully understand what UX is. On the interviews this topic was further explored, and the designers shared that many times stakeholders bring ideas already pre-defined to them showing that they don't really see the value of evolving the UX a bit earlier.

This also relates to a survey finding: the lack of time, or the constrained timelines. On the interviews we saw quotes that dive a bit more into this topic. The participants explain that tight deadlines and limited resources often force designers into execution mode. Meaning that they end up skipping the research and going straight to the visual part, which is basically UI. While they describe this as low to medium, that falls perfectly into the first stages of the maturity models we analyzed. For instance, on the Invision Model they would be either on the "Producer"

or the “Connectors” (Invision, 2021). While on the Nielsen Norman one, they might be seen as “Limited” or “Emergent” meaning that UX is still either “Uneven haphazard and aspirational” or “Functional, promising, inconsistent and inefficient” (Pernice, Gibbons, et al., 2021). These findings are deeply related to the second hypothesis: low-maturity teams concentrate on UI and implementation, while higher-maturity teams handle more strategic, research-driven tasks.

4.3 Emotional Impact of UX Maturity

One of the most striking patterns across the qualitative interviews was the emotional toll of working in low-maturity environments. Participants frequently described frustration, demotivation, and even burnout. Especially in roles where their main stakeholders don’t understand their role or job scope, the designers can feel particularly unmotivated. As we saw on the literature review, having motivated employees is quite important when it comes to talent retention. Having this sort of culture where designer express frustration can lead to a negative impact on talent retention which is closely linked to the cost of undervaluing design.

By contrast, designers in higher-maturity teams reported much more positive feelings. One designer described the emotional tone as “mostly positive”. While they can feel frustrated from time to time, they still share more positive feedback. These comments echo the first hypothesis: advanced maturity generally brings greater organizational support and less everyday frustration. The literature review also suggests that emotional well-being is tied to culture and leadership.

Our findings align with this: the designers’ own words reveal the emotional toll of low-maturity work, something that all the scales ignore as predicted on the fifth hypothesis. While they focus a lot on the designer’s position on the company, they don’t reflect on this human individual aspect. In sum, low UX maturity contexts were described as emotionally taxing (“frustrating”, “draining”, “demotivating”), and higher maturity environments tended to leave designers feeling more respected and optimistic.

4.4 Designers as Advocates

Despite the difficulties of working in less mature settings, many designers naturally become advocates for UX. Instead of accepting a small role, they often push for better practices beyond what is expected. This can include creating guides, offering quick tips, starting conversations

about user needs, or carefully questioning decisions not based on research. These actions show designers not just doing their jobs but promoting the value of their field within the company.

While these situations can be tough, many designers feel good about small successes. Making even minor improvements, like adding a new design step or helping others understand users, gives them a sense of purpose. These wins often happen quietly but provide motivation and strengthen a designer's belief in their work's importance.

This behavior supports Hypothesis 3: In the absence of organizational structures that support UX, designers often become the main champions of the practice. Their role expands beyond execution into advocacy and internal influence. These advocacy efforts are not always part of the official process, highlighting that in less mature environments, UX maturity is often driven by individual initiative rather than company support.

This also ties into Hypothesis 5. Traditional UX maturity models tend to focus on process, structure, and leadership but rarely account for the emotional and relational labor designers invest when they're advocating for better UX. These experiences show that maturity is not just about checklists or documented methods but also about the cultural space for design to thrive. Designers in these contexts often act as quiet change agents, finding ways to improve things from within. This kind of behind-the-scenes effort is a critical part of how UX evolves in many organizations, even if it doesn't always show up in maturity assessments.

4.5 Coping strategies

When faced with the challenges of environments with low maturity, designers came up with different ways to cope and adjust. Surveys and interviews showed that this was more than just a process, as it's often described in maturity models, but about resilience. It's about taking it day-by-day. Many designers said they had to defend their work and promote its value in places that didn't always get or support UX.

The most common method was clear and consistent documentation. Designers found that explaining their choices helped build clarity and trust with stakeholders. It protected them and ensured everyone was on the same page. Communication was also key. Many learned to manage expectations, explain their decisions, and state their limits to avoid last-minute problems or unrealistic demands.

Another common theme was using proof. Designers often used quick user tests or simple research to convince stakeholders when their opinions differed from user needs. Showing real data, even if informal, helped them make stronger arguments and build trust over time.

Some also changed their design approach to align with what stakeholders valued. For example, if a client or team cared a lot about visuals, designers would focus on that first, while subtly adding UX principles. Once the results were clear, they would explain the reasoning behind their choices, slowly gaining support for more in-depth UX practices.

Other methods were more personal. Designers mentioned setting limits, managing their energy, and creating their own systems to stay organized. From prioritizing tasks to setting aside time to focus, these actions showed a sense of control, even in tough situations.

All these approaches show that designers are actively dealing with difficult situations. These coping strategies show resilience, creativity, and a commitment to doing good work even when things aren't ideal. More importantly, they highlight that UX maturity is about the everyday effort of people working behind the scenes, not just processes or models.

4.6 Final Considerations

The findings in this chapter highlight that UX maturity is not just a matter of frameworks or organizational processes, it's something designers experience and interpret in deeply personal and practical ways. From navigating unclear expectations to managing emotional stress and advocating for better practices, designers often carry the weight of UX progress on their own shoulders, especially in low-maturity contexts. Their perceptions of maturity were grounded in real-world challenges like short timelines, lack of stakeholder understanding, and limited strategic involvement.

Despite these barriers, designers consistently demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and a strong belief in the value of their work. However, the data also suggested that without leadership support, progress is slow and often emotionally taxing. As lived by these professionals, maturity depends not only on processes and models but also on culture, advocacy, and a work environment where design is seen as a strategic asset and not only a visual apparatus. These insights emphasize the need for a more human-centered view of UX maturity, one that includes emotional wellbeing and leadership as core components.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions

In this final chapter, we reflect on the study's key outcomes. We summarize the main findings and discuss their implications for the design industry. We also acknowledge the study's limitations and suggest directions for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Our research set out to explore how different levels of UX maturity influence designers' day-to-day work and job satisfaction. Using a mixed-methods approach (survey data and semi-structured interviews), we identified several key insights:

1. **Small, siloed teams:** Designers often find themselves working in small, isolated teams, even within large organizations, which limits opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. This isolation can hinder the growth and consistency of design practices across the company.
2. **Gap between theory and practice:** There is a substantial gap between the idealized design process outlined by maturity models and the reality that designers experience. In practice, design work frequently becomes reactive, driven by immediate project demands and the level of understanding stakeholders have of the design process. In other words, designers often need to adapt on the fly rather than following a structured, theory-driven process.
3. **Emotional impacts:** Many designers in lower-maturity environments reported significant emotional strain. Feelings of frustration, stress, and even burnout were common when working without clear processes or adequate support. The pressure of continuously advocating for design and navigating unclear expectations can take a serious toll on designers' well-being.
4. **Perceived limited impact:** Designers generally feel that their impact within the organization is limited. Despite these constraints, they still find motivation in achieving small victories. For example, improving accessibility or streamlining workflows. They appreciate the incremental value of these contributions. These small successes highlight the resilience and dedication of designers even in challenging conditions.

5. Role of organizational culture: We observed that organizational culture plays a critical role in shaping how UX maturity and the value of design are perceived. In organizations with a supportive, design-focused culture, UX practices tend to be more integrated and valued. In contrast, cultures that underestimate the importance of design tend to reinforce the limitations and frustrations that designers face.

Together, these findings reveal a clear mismatch between the ideal of mature UX processes and the lived experiences of designers. They also highlight the emotional challenges designers face in low-maturity contexts and point to the importance of culture and support in improving design practice.

5.2 Practical Implications

The study's findings suggest that UX maturity impacts not only processes but also the people who perform the work. To move beyond reactive or ad hoc design roles, organizations should integrate designers early in project lifecycles and improve work conditions. This includes providing adequate time and support for user research and iterative design, rather than relegating designers to late-stage visual or interface tasks. In practice, this can mean forming cross-functional teams where designers collaborate closely with product managers and developers. Establishing clear communication channels and shared goals helps ensure that design input is valued and integrated, leading to better product outcomes and more meaningful work for designers.

Leadership commitment is critical for shaping a healthy UX culture. Executives and managers should actively champion design thinking, allocate budgets and resources for UX activities, and model user-centered decision-making. To foster broader understanding, leaders can provide UX training and workshops to non-design stakeholders, dispelling the myth that design is just “making things look good.” By celebrating early research insights and highlighting design wins, management communicates that user-centered improvements are linked to strategic success. This supportive culture empowers teams to implement UX best practices without fear of resistance.

The findings also highlight the human side of UX maturity. Many designers in low-maturity contexts report frustration and burnout from constant pressure to deliver without sufficient support. To address this, organizations should monitor workloads, encourage realistic timelines,

and recognize the emotional labor of advocating for users. Providing formal channels for design advocacy, such as regular UX reviews or peer design reviews, can reduce the burden on individual designers. Acknowledging and rewarding the "invisible work" of user advocacy and iterative improvement not only validates the designer's effort but also reinforces a company's commitment to human-centered design.

5.3 Limitations

We considered that this research project has some limitations.

Small and potentially non-representative sample size, both in the survey and in the interviews. With only a limited number of designers participating, the findings may not generalize to the broader population of UX professionals or organizations. As the USC Libraries' (2009) research guide cautions, "if your sample size is too small, it will be difficult to find significant relationships from the data". In other words, a small sample means the study's insights might only reflect the specific individuals involved rather than indicating trends applicable elsewhere.

Another limitation is the use of self-reported data, which can introduce bias and affect accuracy. For example, a designer might misremember past project outcomes or overstate their organization's UX maturity, which could skew the findings. As the USC Libraries' (2009) guide explains, "self-reported data is limited by the fact that it rarely can be independently verified." This means the conclusions may reflect personal perceptions rather than objective facts and should be interpreted with caution.

Finally, the study is constrained by the lack of a standardized UX maturity framework across its participants. While on the survey they based their answers on the Stages of UX Maturity from the Nielsen Norman Group, on the interview, they answer in a more abstract way by referring as "low" or "mid" instead of referring to a scale. That means that the data collected are not based on a single consistent metric. Without a uniform maturity model, the author had to make parallel with the maturity level based on the described experiences which introduces a degree of subjectivity in the analysis. This variation made it harder to compare results across participants or draw firm conclusions about how specific maturity levels affect designer experiences. As a result, the findings should be seen as exploratory rather than definitive.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This study opens several important directions for future research. One of the main opportunities lies in developing new UX maturity models that incorporate emotional and cultural dimensions, not just procedural stages. Current frameworks tend to focus on processes and outputs but often overlook how maturity shapes designers' day-to-day experiences, especially from an emotional perspective. Including aspects such as well-being, a sense of autonomy, and team culture could provide a more complete and human-centered approach to evaluating maturity.

Another promising area involves exploring the impact of leadership across different maturity levels. While this research touched on how designers feel supported, a more targeted investigation could clarify how leadership styles and organizational priorities influence designers' motivation, job satisfaction, and ability to advocate for UX. Understanding the role of leadership would not only enrich maturity frameworks but also provide actionable insights for companies aiming to foster better design environments.

Lastly, future research would benefit from larger and more diverse samples, especially including freelance designers, startups, non-tech companies, and international perspectives. This study focused on a relatively small and specific sample, so extending the findings to other contexts would be a valuable next step. Broader studies could reveal new challenges and strategies that differ across sectors and team types, helping to refine our understanding of UX maturity in varied, real-world environments.

5.5 Final Thoughts

UX maturity is often framed as a matter of process optimization, organizational charts, and formalized stages. But as this research has shown, it's also deeply personal. It affects how designers feel, how they work, and how they navigate day-to-day decisions. Behind every maturity label, being it on a formal scale or not, there are individuals doing their best, often in less-than-ideal circumstances, to create meaningful experiences for users.

Throughout this thesis, we've seen that the reality of design work often clashes with theory. Designers are adapting, advocating, and coping in environments that don't always support their role. Despite this, they continue to push for better outcomes. That persistence, holding on to

those small wins and quiet moments of advocacy, are also markers of maturity, even if they aren't captured in formal models.

As the field continues to evolve, it's essential that we broaden how we define and assess UX maturity. By centering on the voices and lived experiences of practitioners, we can move toward frameworks that are not only strategic but also human. And in doing so, we can build workplaces that truly support good design and the people behind it. Ultimately, UX maturity is measured by our ability to empower those who shape experiences and to infuse every interaction with empathy and insight. A truly mature organization is one where design isn't just practiced, but where design is embedded into its culture, decisions, and every user touchpoint.

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Appendix

Script

1. Background Information:

1.1. Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

1.2. How long have you been working in the field of design?

1.3. What types of products do you typically work on?

1.4. Can you describe the size of your design team?

2. Organization's Design Practices:

2.1. How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

2.2. Which stakeholders are involved in the design process? (Select all that apply)

2.3. With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

2.4. At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

3. Understanding Challenges:

3.1. In your experience as a designer, what are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work? (Select all that apply)

3.2. Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

3.3. What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

4. Maturity Assessment:

4.1. How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

4.2. Why?

4.3. How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

5. Impact of Design Practices:

5.1. How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

5.2. In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

Interview Scripts:

Interview Transcripts P1

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P1: I started as a graphic designer around 2016, working for about six years in that role. My first job was with a smaller company, where I also helped in the marketing department. I worked on various design tasks, including the company's website. Later, I transitioned into UI design, and in 2021, I fully shifted to UX. I left graphic design altogether, even freelancing, to focus on UX. My current company, Company Name Redacted, specializes in low-code solutions, mostly for private-sector clients.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P1: I've been a designer since 2016, with a focus on UX since 2021.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P1: Currently, I work on projects related to agribusiness, focusing on private sector clients in that field.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P1: We have a design "chapter". We meet every two weeks to discuss ideas, present projects, and share case studies. We also have a dedicated designers' chat for updates. Day-to-day, I

mostly work independently. I collaborate with the Product Owner and developers when needed, but I'm the only designer on my projects.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P1: Our process is very personalized. We follow a general structure that works with clients, but it's not standardized across all projects. For example, each project starts with a contract renewal and a discovery phase where the PO and I define requirements for the next delivery. We then develop the project alongside developers and deliver it to the end.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P1: The main stakeholders are the PO and the developers. I also interact with clients. I meet with them about twice a week to review progress and plan next steps, but it depends a lot on the client. If they are available or not. How engaged they are.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P1: It's also the PO and the developers. The PO handles requirements. Once the project is ongoing, we validate screens and answer developers' questions.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved in?

P1: I'm usually involved from the design phase onward. So it's basically UI. The research and so on is not always done. We don't invest much in it, so most of my work revolves around creating screens and then validating them with the team.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: In your experience as a designer, what are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work?

P1: One challenge is that stakeholders don't always understand the value of research. We rarely do it, but when I do, I try to document my processes and design flow. I'm usually the one with a deep understanding of the product. Sometimes the clients want to join a discovery phase, but it disrupts our flow. In fact, I once experienced burnout after a very stressful discovery week. After

I gave feedback, management decided that going forward only the PO and I would handle discovery phases to avoid that kind of chaos.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P1: During one project, an external stakeholder essentially took over the discovery phase. It made it hard for the PO and me to contribute. He decided everything based on his gut feelings. I felt like I was just a “Figma girl” which was frustrating. Thankfully, after that, management adjusted the process. Most of the time, the stakeholders don’t have a proper idea on how the experience should look like. Their ideas most of the time make the product more complex and harder to use and don’t solve any actual problems.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P1: Clear documentation is vital for me. I make sure to note down design decisions and processes. That safeguards me, especially when the solution comes from some sort of mysterious idea of a stakeholder. Also, we learned to involve only the necessary stakeholders in discovery phases. Keeping the group focused helps maintain a good workflow.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

P1: I would rate it as low to medium. Around a level two or three on a design maturity scale.

Interviewer: Why?

P1: Our projects are often short-term with limited scope. We focus more on low-code development than deep UX work. We don’t have the time or resources for comprehensive research, so our work ends up revolving around UI and then the design maturity is limited.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company’s current design maturity level?

P1: I do feel frustrated, especially when I know more UX research would benefit a project, but we can't pursue it due to time or resource limits. It can be demotivating. Still, I try to incorporate bits of UX thinking in small ways like following heuristic, pushing for some sort of user testing even if it's small/informal using friends or family. I keep hoping those add up over time to improve things.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P1: My impact depends on project and client. On some projects I work closely with the PO and feel very effective, especially when the team is aligned. But often, because of short timelines and little focus on UX research, it's challenging to contribute more strategically beyond just delivering UI designs. Those UI usually come from a requirement that I don't know if are real problems or not, so how can I know if I'm solving a problem? It's hard to measure the impact.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P1: Lower design maturity means for me that I'm a UI builder. It limits our ability to gather valuable user data, and that affects our outcomes. For example, simple tools like Google Analytics or Hotjar are often postponed or deprioritized here, so we miss out on key insights that could improve the product. When design isn't valued or integrated, we end up solving issues that might not even be real or a problem to the user.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies you may have worked for compared to your current organization?

P1: Yes. In a previous company, the focus was mostly on visual appeal rather than functionality. So, it was even worse then here. My former manager even suggested replacing me with a graphic designer. They already had a good graphic designer, so he suggested to use her as UX/UI as well. They didn't really see the value of UX. For then It was just UI. Here, my work is more valued than that, but I still wish the design role would grow further in influence and recognition. I wish I was more involved on the requirements, rather than receiving it ready for creating the UI, but some POs involve me, so it's getting better.

P2

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P2: I'm currently a Product Designer and have been working in the field for three years. I started out as a UX/UI Designer, handling everything from initial designs up to usability testing. These days, I cover the entire process . from discovery to implementation . and then I follow the product over time to see how it performs. I initially graduated in Philosophy, then took various design courses and got certifications. Now I work at a B2B e-commerce company. I'm in the whole process the whole process: I do discovery with PMs, ideation with different teams, prototyping, testing, and even track user behavior through tools like Microsoft Clarity to see how our solutions are used. I also contribute to our internal design system and work on improving accessibility during the handoff to developers. Before this, I spent a year as a UX Researcher at my previous company, and I try to bring that research perspective into my current work. I'm now developing a research guide for our PMs to help them reduce bias.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P2: I've been working in design for about three years.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P2: I typically work on B2B e-commerce products that function as sales enablement tools, somewhat like an evolving CRM. I also contribute to internal projects like developing our design system and improving accessibility in our applications.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P2: We have three designers and one more joining soon, so we're expanding. It's a lean team, especially since we have about seven PMs in the company. Each designer is usually assigned to specific PMs and project areas.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P2: It really depends on the complexity of the problem. For simpler tasks, we often get requests to improve specific system functionalities. In those cases, I usually jump straight to the design. I take a quick look on the current solution to see what's not working and then I create the UI, present it to the stakeholders and they approve it. Then I hand them off to developers and follow up on implementation. For more complex problems, we work in four stages. The PM identifies a problem from market research, brings it to the team, and we conduct a sort of discovery phase. Once we have a proper problem, we move on to the ideation. Then we move to prototyping, design reviews, and then handoff. We organize everything in Figma. We also do design reviews via Slack, where everyone provides feedback before development. Since we don't have a QA team, I also end up validating some aspects during implementation.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P2: Our primary stakeholders are product managers. It's like I'm a consultant internally to different product areas, I mainly interact with two PMs who bring the requirements. We also consider input from business stakeholders when they have specific requests. And of course, we involve the development team as we refine solutions for implementation.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P2: I collaborate daily mainly with product managers, since each designer is paired with specific PMs on different projects. I also coordinate with developers during the implementation phase to ensure the design is built correctly. But my closest day-to-day interactions are with the PMs I'm assigned to and the other designers when we consult each other.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P2: I'm involved in all stages of the project. I'm there from the initial discovery with the PM, through ideation and prototyping, to testing, and then I remain involved during implementation. I also participate in post-launch activities. So we are tracking user behavior and iterating on the design. So end-to-end involvement.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: In your experience as a designer, what are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work?

P2: One key challenge is that stakeholders have a limited understanding of UX. That means I spend a good amount of time educating them on what UX involves and why certain processes are important. Another challenge is recruiting users for testing. Some bureaucratic restrictions, it's hard to get users.. We also lack proper process documentation, which makes it hard to track who is doing what and how projects are progressing. That can lead to confusion and inefficiencies in handoffs and collaborations.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P2: For example, because I often have limited autonomy in research, I sometimes felt I was solving the wrong problem on a project. In one case, I had to design a solution quickly without much discovery. But then we found out it was the wrong problem. That was really frustrating. We have a discovery phase, but some of the market data comes with bias from the stakeholders wishes. I felt that if we'd had a more structured discovery phase, we could have identify the real issue. It made me realize how important upfront research is and how constrained I was without it.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P2: One approach has been education. As part of my personal development initiative, I actually created a research guide and training for our PMs. They sometimes mix up research methods. So I put together a training session covering how to ask users good questions, how to form a hypothesis, the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, and general best practices. This training helped clear up a lot of misunderstandings. I also try to integrate at least some user testing or use Microsoft Clarity data whenever I can, to bring evidence to our design decisions. That has helped educating people about UX value.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

P2: I'd say our design maturity is low to medium.

Interviewer: Why?

P2: Some areas are organized. For example, we have a structured design handoff process with checklists, and we've implemented parts of a design system with a long-term roadmap. But we lack UX metrics and don't have consistent, formal research phases. Don't get me wrong, I know other companies don't even have a discovery phase, but we are sometimes biased and limited by what our PMs and their stakeholders bring to us. It's hard to measure the impact of our work because we don't always track user data. And if we suggest doing more research, it often depends on a client's or stakeholder's willingness to do more research. So without consistent user research and metrics, our maturity stays relatively limited.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P2: I feel frustrated because I often sense that I'm not solving the right problem due to our limited research autonomy. It's demotivating at times. I wish we could do more thorough UX work. When the company doesn't have a structured discovery phase, my work can feel like just executing pre-set ideas rather than really shaping solutions strategically. On the upside, when I do manage to implement a bit of UX process and see a positive effect, it gives me hope. But overall, it's a bit of a struggle and can be discouraging.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P2: My biggest impact is reducing usability risks. I make sure we do at least some user testing or validation on our designs, so we catch obvious usability issues. I also push for introducing research practices and for future accessibility improvements. For instance, I recently proposed adding keyboard focus indicators to our interface for better accessibility. My design manager supported it, and now it's in the pipeline to be developed. Wins like that, where I can directly improve the product, make me feel I am contributing meaningfully.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P2: Lower design maturity means the design process is more constrained. We often have to make decisions with less user input and under tighter timelines. When UX isn't fully integrated, the process becomes reactive . we're just trying to quickly fix what's asked for, rather than proactively researching and iterating. That can affect quality: we might focus on short-term solutions and miss strategic, user-centered improvements. In a higher maturity scenario, we'd base decisions on solid user research and have time to refine, leading to better, more validated outcomes.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies you may have worked for compared to your current organization?

P2: Yes. In my previous company, there was actually more trust in the research process. Colleagues would rely on my UX research findings . but other things like handoff to development were chaotic . In my current role, I'm learning a lot about design systems and implementation , but I have less influence in the early stages like discovery or problem definition. So I've seen that design can be valued very differently. My past workplace trusted my research input more, whereas here I sometimes have to fight to include research or be involved early. On the other hand, here the execution is smoother. It's a trade-off, but it definitely feels different in terms of where design is valued in the process.

P3

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P3: Sure. I started my career in a marketing agency, focusing on graphic design first. As I gained experience, I realized I wanted to move into digital product design. I completed a UX/UI online course and then worked in various companies. From agencies to fintech and other product-related firms. I had roles that involved both marketing design and UX/UI. Those experiences gave me a broad background across different industries.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P3: I've been working in design for around seven years now, across various roles that helped expand my skills in both UX and UI.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P3: I've worked on a range of products, from marketing materials to complex digital products in fintech. Nowadays I focus more on product design. For example, I'm currently working in the automotive industry, designing digital experiences for that sector.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P3: Our design team is relatively small . it's usually just two designers .

We do have support: we collaborate closely with a product manager, and occasionally we might get extra help for a specific project, but generally it's a two-designer team.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P3: Ideally, we'd be involved from the very beginning of projects, but in practice we're usually brought in after major decisions have been made. Often we end up just "painting screens" . basically, doing the UI after the direction is set . rather than shaping the product's direction from the start. That said, I have seen some improvements recently: for one project, they actually waited for our designs before moving forward. It's a small step, but it shows the company is starting to understand the value of good design. So the process is in flux: historically it was pretty top-down and last-minute for design, but we're pushing to integrate design earlier.

Interviewer: Who are the primary stakeholders involved in these processes?

P3: It depends on the request. Often, requests come from customer support or marketing teams. Their focus is usually on boosting visibility or engagement metrics. For example, marketing might push for bigger, flashier buttons or elements, assuming that will drive more purchases . even though that's not always true. So stakeholders like Marketing or Customer Support drive a lot of requests, and we work with them to address those needs.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P3: On a daily basis I work closely with the other designer and our product manager. We

form the core of the product team. I also interact regularly with the customer support and marketing folks when their requests are what I'm working on . I try to understand the impact they intend and then collaborate to make sure the design aligns with user experience. So daily, it's my design teammate and product manager, plus communications with whichever stakeholder department is relevant to the project at hand.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P3: I should be involved from the start, but typically I'm involved after the initial concept or decisions have been made. Usually I come in at the design phase to focus on UI once a project is approved. Recently, for a new project, I was involved at the start . But that's the exception. So to summarize: usually later stages , but we're advocating to be part of the early stages too.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: In your experience as a designer, what are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work?

P3: Initially, I was very firm about protecting the integrity of my designs . I'd push back a lot. Over time I learned to adapt and be more flexible. Now, a big challenge is dealing with requests that might not be the best for users. I try to understand what impact the stakeholder is looking for . for example, if Marketing asks for a very specific visual change, I'll dig into why. Then I work with them to ensure whatever we do still aligns with a good user experience. Often it involves guiding stakeholders toward an alternative solution that better achieves their goal. For example, instead of adding an intrusive pop-up as they requested, I might suggest a subtler animation or sound effect to draw attention without harming the UX. Getting stakeholders to realize there might be a better way is challenging, but that's a big part of my role now.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P3: For example, Marketing once wanted a huge banner on every page to boost visibility for a campaign. I felt that would ruin the user experience. Instead, I suggested using a small animation and a sound cue to draw attention when needed, rather than a constant giant banner. It was a bit

of a negotiation . I felt anxious pushing back initially, but once I showed them how the alternative could work , they were on board. That experience was actually rewarding: it was frustrating at first, but I felt accomplished when we found a solution that satisfied marketing and kept the design user-friendly.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P3: One strategy I use is quick-and-dirty user testing. I'll create a prototype and run a very brief test or get quick user feedback to show stakeholders evidence of what works or doesn't. For instance, if a stakeholder insists on a design change, I might test it with a few users and show the results . like "See, users didn't understand that big banner, but they did notice this other approach." Presenting that kind of data helps build respect for our design decisions. It shifts the conversation from opinion to evidence. Over time, doing this has actually gained our design team more trust . stakeholders see that we're backing our decisions with real user input. Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

P3: It's better now than when I started, but I'd still call it intermediate at best.

Interviewer: Why?

P3: When I joined, design was barely part of early discussions . we were just executing decisions already made. I actually initiated a push for more user testing participants , and now more people in the company know about what we do and why. That's improved things. However, we still face resistance integrating design strategically. So while awareness of design has grown a bit , we haven't fully embedded UX into how the company plans projects yet.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P3: It's a bit of a roller coaster. I often feel frustrated because the design role is underutilized . we often end up compromising due to time or being involved late. It's tough to stay motivated

when I know our work could be so much better if design had more support or earlier involvement. At the same time, I have moments of optimism: like when I see small improvements, such as a project where they waited for our design input. Those small wins keep me going, but the day-to-day can be quite frustrating and sometimes demotivating given the limitations.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P3: The maturity level affects stakeholder expectations. When design maturity is low, we're involved late and often just expected to make things "look pretty," which means our impact is limited to surface-level changes. If we were involved early, we could make a real difference in the product. Unfortunately, with constant pressure and a small team, we're often forced to cut corners just to deliver on time. That definitely affects the outcome . we do the best we can, but it's not as thorough as it could be.

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P3: I do everything I can to make an impact, but because I usually come in late in the process, my contribution is more tactical than strategic. I improve the interface and fix immediate issues, which I know helps users in the short term. I'm proud of those improvements. However, I know I could contribute much more . like shaping features or influencing product strategy . if I were given the chance earlier. So I'd say I have a positive impact within the scope I'm allowed, but it's not as large as it could be in a more design-driven setting.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies you may have worked for compared to your current organization?

P3: Yes, definitely. At some places I've worked or even observed, design was given a seat at the table from the get-go. Those companies moved faster and delivered higher quality products because of it. In contrast, at my current company, we're only now starting to be brought in

earlier. Also, in earlier roles, design was the core service, so it was obviously valued, whereas here our company's main focus isn't design, and that shows. It's slowly changing here, but experiencing a more design-valuing environment in the past has shown me what a big difference it makes. It makes our current situation feel a bit like an uphill battle, though I see it improving gradually.

P4

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P4: I transitioned to UX design in 2021. Before that, my background was in communication and information. I originally trained as a broadcaster. I have a bachelor's on it. Then I made this shift into UX design and that's what I've been focusing on since.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P4: Since 2021, I've been focusing on product and UX design.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P4: I'm involved in product design primarily for web-based solutions. I wear multiple hats, handling everything from design to some implementation oversight. So, I work on web and internal tools, ensuring the UI/UX is solid for those products.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P4: Our team currently has five people. There are two product designers, two front-end developers, and one QA specialist. It's a small team structure, which means we collaborate closely but also everyone has a broad role. Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P4: Our process is collaborative but still quite ad hoc. I'd say our UX maturity is still developing. Typically, requirements come from our product team or product owners after they talk with business stakeholders. Sometimes they give us very detailed briefs, which can be challenging because it limits our ability to explore design solutions. Generally, if a timeline is tight or

requirements are fixed, we stick closely to the brief. If we have some flexibility, we try to discuss alternatives and refine the solutions. Also, our CEO is very involved in ideation, which means sometimes decisions get made top-down quickly and we adapt our design process around those.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P4: Primarily, it's the CEO, the product owner PO, and the development teams. Our CEO often initiates ideas, and the PO translates business needs for us. As product designers, we coordinate with client representatives too for feedback, since we often design solutions for clients. So you could say stakeholders include internal ones and external ones .

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P4: Day-to-day I work closely with the other product designers and our development team . We align on requirements with the PO and often check in with the CEO or client representatives depending on the project. So, daily collaboration is usually with the product manager/owner for direction and with developers and QA to ensure what I design is feasible and implemented correctly.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P4: Ideally, I'm involved from the discovery phase . designing initial flows and screens. In practice, I am usually there from early on, but sometimes we're brought in only after certain decisions are made by the business side. Generally, though, I participate from the beginning of a feature's design through to its development and iteration. Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some of the main challenges you face in your day-to-day work?

P4: One major challenge is proving the value of UX within the company. We have very limited resources for user testing, and with tight deadlines we often skip formal user validation steps. That impacts our ability to measure how effective our designs are. Another challenge came after a team restructuring . our design team got smaller, so each designer now supports multiple product squads. Managing that workload across different projects is tough. Each project might have different timelines and priorities, so juggling them becomes a challenge.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P4: Recently, we had a high-priority project that was rushed through design and given to a junior developer without enough oversight. The implementation had a lot of issues, and it caused delays and quality problems. It was frustrating to see that happen. I felt that if we had taken a bit more time in design and paired it with experienced development, we could have avoided those issues. It made me feel a bit helpless, because I did what I could on the design side, but the rush and resource assignment were out of my control.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P4: I've tried to take a proactive approach. Given the constraints, I invest time in learning and introducing best practices wherever possible. For instance, I might conduct a quick internal review or small usability test even if it's not officially planned. Just to gather some feedback. I also try to propose features or improvements backed by any research or data I can gather, to show their value upfront. I've pursued some leadership training as well, which helps me communicate the value of design to decision-makers better. Sometimes, though, I have to accept certain limitations and focus on delivering within those boundaries.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

P4: I'd rate it around two out of five in terms of design maturity.

Interviewer: Why?

P4: When I joined, design was almost non-existent, maybe close to zero on that scale. We are slowly building up UX maturity, but it's still quite low. There's a limited understanding of design's strategic value in the company. We often focus on quick deliverables rather than thorough UX research or strategy. Also, we rely on an existing design system but haven't fully developed it due to resource constraints. All these factors keep our maturity on the lower side.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P4: It can be pretty frustrating. There's a sense that design is seen more as a final step . just making things look nice . rather than as a core part of product strategy. That's demotivating at times, because I know we could do more meaningful, user-centered design if given the chance. On the other hand, I remain hopeful. We have new leadership , and I'm optimistic that might slowly improve our design maturity. So it's a mix of frustration with the status quo and hope for gradual improvement.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P4: As one of the first UX designers here, I do feel my contributions are recognized to a degree. For example, work I've done on making our product more consistent has been appreciated. However, because design isn't fully involved strategically, a lot of my impact is on execution. I ensure the UI is clean and functional and that we maintain some level of user-friendliness. But I know my impact could be greater if design had a bigger role earlier in projects. So, I'd say I have a moderate impact . significant in the areas I'm allowed to influence, but limited by the company's current approach to design.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P4: Low design maturity definitely affects both process and outcomes. It means we might skip important steps like proper research or testing due to lack of time or buy-in. For instance, without user feedback loops, we rely on assumptions which can hurt the final product quality. On the flip side, when someone in management understands design, everything runs more smoothly. I've noticed that with our new PM . he involves design more and it has improved our productivity and alignment. So, design maturity has a huge impact: where it's low, the process is rushed and reactive; where it's higher, we work more efficiently and produce better, user-informed designs.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies you may have worked for compared to your current organization?

P4: I haven't worked in many other companies as a UX designer, but from what I've seen and heard, there are places that involve designers much earlier and give them more influence. In my previous roles, design was treated differently. Often more as a visual or production role. Here, we are starting to integrate UX thinking but it's still early. Honestly, my main comparison is within this company over time: when I started, design was barely on the radar; now it's somewhat valued. I imagine companies that prioritize UX from the top would offer a very different experience. More support, earlier involvement, and likely a bigger impact from design. That's something I aspire to see here or experience in the future.

P5

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P5: I started out in graphic design. During my degree, I actually took a year off to explore other fields, but I found myself drawn back to design. After finishing my degree, I completed a postgraduate course in design. Now I work at Company Name Redacted, which is a usability and design consulting firm. In my role, I handle various UX and UI projects, often collaborating with different teams and managers. I've been able to work on multiple projects across different domains because of the consulting nature of my job.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P5: I've been working in design for a few years now. Roughly three to four years in total, including my time at the consultancy and some internships before that.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P5: Because I'm in a consulting firm, I work on a variety of UX/UI projects for different clients. It could be mobile apps for one client, a website or an internal tool for another. It really varies. So I've touched e-commerce interfaces, corporate websites, and even some service design

projects. Each project can be quite different, which means I adapt to the product type and industry the client is in.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P5: Our company has a design unit. In my immediate team, there are three full-time designers . We also have about eight contracted designers who may join for specific projects. Including our supervisors, the wider team can be around 17 people, though not all 17 are working together at the same time on the same project.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design process in your organization?

P5: Since we're consultants, we actually juggle multiple workflows. Some work comes through our design system team . for example, if a client or internal team needs a new component or an expansion of an existing component, that request goes through a specific workflow. Other requests come directly from different municipal services . Each of those has varying needs and processes. Often, the requirements we get are vague at first, and it's on us to figure out the real needs and scope. That means we end up doing a bit of discovery ourselves . like having follow-up meetings to clarify what the client or department actually wants. So, in summary, the process can vary: sometimes it's component-driven , other times it's project-driven , but generally we need to be flexible and define the design process on a case-by-case basis.

Interviewer: How does the team typically receive project requests?

P5: It varies a lot. Occasionally, a client department will give us a very detailed request . but more often, they don't fully understand UX, so the request might just be "we need this feature" without details. We often find stakeholders only know certain buzzwords . In those cases, we suggest other UX methods that fit better. For example, once a department wanted a usability test on an interface, but given the time and budget constraints, we recommended doing a heuristic analysis instead. We sometimes need to guide the client on what UX approach makes sense. So, the intake of requests is a mix of clearly-defined tasks and very open-ended asks that require us to figure out the right approach and scope.

Interviewer: Who are the main stakeholders you work with on a daily basis?

P5: As a consultant, the primary stakeholders are our clients. In my current context, that means managers or team leads in various city government departments . Internally, I mainly work with other designers . we have a small core team . and our unit manager, who oversees our assignments. Occasionally, I'll collaborate with development team members if a project requires it, but day-to-day it's mostly other designers and the unit manager for internal coordination, and clients for project input and feedback.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P5: Day to day, I collaborate a lot with my design teammates and my unit manager. We touch base frequently, especially if I'm jumping between projects. If I'm actively on a project, I'll have daily or near-daily interactions with that client's point of contact to ask questions and share progress. So, essentially: daily collaboration happens with my internal design team and with whatever client or stakeholder group I'm currently serving on a project.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P5: I'm usually involved from the point a project is assigned to me all the way through to its completion. Because I'm a consultant, I often "jump between projects," as you said. So I might be brought in at the start of Project A and see it through its design phase, then shift to Project B that's midway, etc. Typically, once I'm assigned to a project, I ramp up quickly , then carry it through design and sometimes through implementation support. After finishing, I move to the next assignment. So I'd say I'm involved from kickoff to delivery on each project I get, but then I move on . I don't usually stick with one product long-term after deliverables are handed over, unless it's an ongoing engagement.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are the main challenges you face in your day-to-day work?

P5: One of the main challenges is managing and understanding a vast amount of project information. Because each project has a unique set of requirements and context, it can be overwhelming at first to get up to speed. I often have multiple meetings to clarify things. Another challenge is that I frequently switch projects. I might finish one and start another with a

completely different context . so there's a learning curve each time. Keeping track of all the details is tough. I also have to constantly adapt to different teams and managers' styles, since I work with many.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P5: Sure. When I first joined my current firm, I was immediately assigned to a complex project with a huge amount of existing documentation. I remember feeling overwhelmed by the volume of information . different user personas, process flows, previous design drafts . all thrown at me. I had a week to catch up and it was very stressful; I felt anxious that I might miss a crucial detail. Thankfully, my colleagues recognized this and set up extra time in the afternoons to answer any questions I had. That initial period was challenging and even a bit discouraging , but with their support I got through it. It taught me how important it is to ask for help when facing that kind of information overload.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P5: A big one for me is mapping out essential information. I sort of create my own cheat sheet for each project. How are the key stakeholders, goals, constraints. So I can refer to it easily. I'll also block off some time either to digest information or to get questions answered by teammates or clients. Basically, I focus on prioritizing what I need to learn first and I lean on my team. We also hold regular meetings in our design unit where we discuss these kinds of issues . Those have been helpful in sharing coping strategies. Over time I've gotten better at quickly zeroing in on what's important and not getting lost in the weeds.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you classify the design maturity of your organization and why?

P5: I'd say my company's design maturity is fairly high, internally. We're a design consulting firm, so internally we value UX a lot. However, I've seen contrasting levels of maturity in our clients. For example, some clients have a much less mature approach to design. They focus on execution and quick results over user-centered processes. We often have to meet them where

they are. So, while within our own team we operate at a high level of UX maturity, the environment we work in client-wise might be lower, and we have to balance that.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P5: Within my company, I feel quite confident and supported. That part is great. The frustration comes when working with clients who don't understand UX. For example, I feel frustrated when a client just sees us as "people who make the screens pretty" and doesn't want to invest time in discovery or research. It can be demotivating because I know we could do so much more. However, I also feel motivated when I see signs that this is changing . like when a client starts to understand the value of our work after we show them results. So emotionally it's a mix: frustration when UX is undervalued by some stakeholders, and hope or satisfaction when we're able to educate them and show the difference good UX can make.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P5: It's a bit complicated because my impact is partly measured by how our clients implement what we deliver. I know that my designs and recommendations are solid . I feel that I contribute significantly to each project by delivering good UX solutions. But when a client has low maturity, sometimes my impact is reduced . So, within our company, I know I'm valued and my work is considered high quality . I see that in feedback from my managers. But externally, the impact on end users or projects depends on the clients following through. I sometimes feel we deliver excellent work that isn't used to its full potential, which can be a bit disappointing. Still, I take pride in providing the best solutions and in the instances where clients do encourage collaboration, I see that I contribute significantly to successful outcomes.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P5: It influences it heavily. Take our client relationships: if a client organization has low design maturity, our process with them is usually rushed or we have to skip steps like thorough research or iteration because they don't see the value. That affects the outcome . maybe the solution

works, but it could have been better if we had more UX input. In organizations where design is highly valued, the process is smoother . we get to be involved early, we iterate more, and the outcome is more user-centered and higher quality. I see that difference even within the various city departments I work with: some are very open to user feedback and design thinking , others just want a quick UI fix . So yes, the maturity level essentially dictates how deep we can go in the design process and that directly translates to the quality of the final design.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies you may have worked for compared to your current organization?

P5: Rather than other companies I've worked for, I'll compare clients: In my current consulting role, I expected that a large government organization would have pretty established processes. But I found that, in terms of design maturity, there's a lot of room for improvement . much more than I anticipated. In contrast, when I collaborated with a private sector client , they were very design-driven, which was a pleasant surprise . they integrated our UX work very thoroughly. So it varies. Compared to those experiences, I'd say my own company holds design in very high regard , whereas many of our clients still see design as something a bit secondary. That gap is interesting . it shows me how cultural differences in organizations make a huge difference for a designer's work. I've learned that top-level recognition of design really sets the tone for everything else.

P6

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P6: I've been working in design for about 15 years. My academic background is in Communication Design . I studied at the Fine Arts Faculty and started off focusing on graphic design. Over time, I transitioned into UX design, which has been my primary focus for the past two and a half years or so.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P6: I'd say roughly 15 years in total in design.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P6: I work at Company Name Redacted, which operates somewhat between a consultancy and an agency. My work has been on web-based products mostly. I also have been involved in some website and application design. Most of the projects I handle are SaaS products. Essentially, I cover both UX and UI aspects for clients, since we're a small team.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P6: Our team is relatively small. Usually it's just me and one other designer. Because our projects vary, we might be the only two designers working across several projects. We also collaborate closely with a product manager on projects, but as far as designers go, it's typically just the two of us.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P6: Since I'm often the only designer on a project, I usually get to start from the very beginning of that project. That means I work closely with clients from the outset to understand their needs. However, some clients come in with very fixed requirements or tight budgets, and in those cases we sometimes have to skip UX phases and jump straight into UI design to deliver what they want. So, I'd say ideally our process is end-to-end UX, but in practice I often have to tailor it to what the client will accept. A big part of the process for me has become convincing clients of the value of doing proper UX work, because not all see it as necessary initially.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P6: Our primary internal stakeholders are pretty minimal because the team is small, really just me, another designer, and our product manager who coordinates things. Externally, the key stakeholders are our clients. They typically have their own product or business goals. I also find our sales team indirectly impacts the process: they sometimes sell our services focusing on UI, which means clients expect quick visual results. So in a way, our sales team's approach is a stakeholder factor. I have to work with them to better sell UX, not just UI. But day-to-day, it's mainly me collaborating with the client's team and our product manager.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P6: On a daily basis, I work with the other designer in our team if we're both on the same project. I also talk a lot with our product manager, who helps coordinate project goals and timelines. Since we embed ourselves in client projects, I often consider the client as daily collaborators too. I'll have check-ins with them regularly. If the project has developers or other team members on the client side, I'll collaborate with them as needed, but again, given our structure, daily collaboration is mostly internal and directly with clients.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P6: Typically, I'm involved from the very start of a project to the finish. Because we often handle projects end-to-end, I get to be there at kickoff, do the discovery, then design, and follow through until implementation. In many projects, since I'm the sole designer, I maintain involvement throughout. There are cases, though, where a client comes with a very specific UI need. In those, I might just be involved for that piece. But most often, I start at the beginning and see it through to delivery.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: In your experience as a designer, what are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work?

P6: A major challenge is convincing clients of the importance of UX. Many clients initially think design is just making something look good. I have to spend time helping them see that spending time on UX research or iteration is an investment, not an expense. Another challenge is actually within our company: our sales team doesn't always sell the full value of UX. Because of that, we sometimes get projects that are scoped too tightly for proper UX work, which is challenging. I have to try to squeeze in UX thinking under a primarily UI brief. Also, because we're small, I handle multiple projects, so juggling different client needs and ensuring each gets enough attention can be tricky.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P6: One example: a client only wanted a visual redesign of their app and was resistant to any changes in functionality or additional research. They basically said, "Just give us a fresh coat of paint." I felt a bit discouraged, because I could see several UX issues that needed addressing, but

they weren't interested. I did the UI refresh as asked, but I also quietly tested a few critical screens with users and presented those findings. When the client saw concrete user feedback, they were kind of surprised. It was initially frustrating, but when I was able to slide in that UX insight and they actually responded, it felt like a small P11y.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P6: Demonstrating value is key. I try to show clients quick wins: for instance, a simple prototype and a quick user test. Seeing real adjustments based on user testing often opens their eyes. I've had clients ask for more rounds of testing after seeing the results from one. Essentially, I start by framing UX work as something that will save them money or improve metrics they care about. Also, internally, I've worked with our sales folks to equip them with success stories so they can better sell UX to new clients. In short: educate and show evidence. I also tailor my process: if a client is very visual-focused, I'll deliver something visually impressive that also incorporates better UX, then explain the UX parts after. It's like getting my foot in the door.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate your company's design maturity, where 1 is a focus purely on visuals and 5 is design central to strategy?

P6: I'd place us at around a 3.

Interviewer: Why?

P6: We still operate a bit like a startup in terms of organization. Things are a bit siloed and uncertain at times. Each team in our company works somewhat independently. Design isn't yet fully integrated into every strategic conversation; it's often reacting to client demands. However, it's not a 1 or 2 because we do have processes and at least internally we understand the value of UX, even if it's not always executed due to constraints. So, middle of the road. Not immature, but not as mature as I'd like either.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P6: Honestly, it can be pretty frustrating at times. I feel like my skills aren't always utilized to their full extent, because we're often in execution mode rather than strategic mode. It's demotivating when we're just "making things pretty" without being involved in deeper planning. However, I do try to focus on the positive . for example, when I get good feedback from a client or see a user respond well to something I designed, it's gratifying. So while day-to-day I might feel some frustration or even boredom if I'm just executing, I also feel determined. I want to help raise the understanding of UX here, and I guess I channel that frustration into trying to prove our value with every project. There's also a bit of hope; with new leadership joining recently, I'm hopeful things will improve in terms of UX integration.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P6: My impact really varies project by project. When I have a client who allows me to do more UX-focused work, I feel I have a strong impact . I can see it in the product outcomes and the client's appreciation. For projects where I'm limited to UI tweaks, I feel my impact is smaller, basically making things look nicer without changing how they work. Overall, I know I'm delivering quality within the scope I'm given. I've had instances where something I design and push for ends up significantly improving a feature . In those cases, I feel very positive about my contribution. But when I'm asked just to follow strict specs, I feel like my contribution is more that of a skilled craftsman than a strategic designer. So it's a mix . I do believe I contribute positively, but not always to the extent I know I could.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P6: Absolutely, the maturity level is a big factor. For example, in our case, when timelines are tight or design isn't given enough time , we might cut corners on research or testing. That inevitably affects the outcome . maybe the design looks good but isn't as user-friendly as it could be. In a more mature scenario, we'd get to base decisions on real user data and iterate, leading to a much more refined end product. I've seen how, due to lower maturity, we sometimes just

execute on client specs that might not be ideal . the outcome is okay but not groundbreaking. When maturity is higher , the process is smoother and outcomes are undeniably better . more thoughtful, more aligned with user needs, and often more successful. So, I'd say design maturity has a huge influence: lower maturity means reactive, last-minute design which can only achieve so much, while higher maturity means proactive, well-researched design which yields high-quality results.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies you may have worked for compared to your current organization?

P6: Yes . for example, earlier in my career I did more graphic design in organizations that saw design as just making things look nice. It was similar to some clients now . design was an afterthought. In my current role, because we're essentially an agency/consultancy, we do value design internally, but our value is often at the mercy of how the client perceives us. I have friends in product companies , where design was integrated from start to finish . hearing their experiences or recalling that, I can see a stark difference. Those companies treat designers as key players in product development; here, we sometimes are treated as vendors who deliver outputs. Experiencing both ends, I can tell design is much more fulfilling and impactful where it's ingrained in the culture. So, I'd say compared to high-maturity environments, my current context requires more advocacy for design. It's taught me a lot about how to articulate our value, but I do sometimes miss being in a place where design is automatically respected and included.

P7

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P7: I've been working in design since 2007, so it's been quite a journey. In the beginning I focused on website and e-commerce design. Only in the last eight years did I fully transition to UX design. Even now, my work is often a mix of design and research . I really enjoy diving into user insights and understanding user needs, so I wear both hats.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P7: I've been in design for around 16.18 years now, since 2007.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P7: Throughout my career, I've worked on a range of products. Early on it was websites and e-commerce platforms. In the past eight years, it's been more digital products . I did some work in fintech, and now I'm focusing on product design for the automotive sector. So, I have experience from marketing websites all the way to complex software in specific industries.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P7: Our team size is somewhat flexible. It only has designer and we serve several different products like app, ecommerce and user dashboard. We have a core team of three designers. But when there's a big project, the company sometimes hires additional contract designers to support us. Once that project ends, those extra designers leave, and we revert to the core team. It's an approach that reflects how our company views design . when they see value and need, they invest more. When they don't, we're back to the basics. It fluctuates.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design processes within your company?

P7: Ideally, we'd be involved in projects from the very beginning. We're usually brought in after major decisions have already been made by others. That often means we end up just "painting screens". Executing UI rather than shaping the product direction through UX from the start. I have noticed some improvement recently: on one specific project, they actually insisted on getting our designs first before moving forward, which was a first. It's a small win, but it shows the company might slowly be starting to value design input early. Overall though, the usual process is reactive. We get a brief or requirements late in the game, we design accordingly, and deliver. If we're lucky, we can insert some UX discovery, but that's not the norm yet.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P7: Requests often come from departments like Customer Support or Marketing. For example, support might say "users are complaining about X," or Marketing might say "we need to boost engagement or visibility." Marketing in particular tends to push for things like larger, flashier UI elements . they think bigger buttons or banners = more clicks. So, the stakeholders I interact with frequently are the heads of those departments who have specific goals. Internally, I also consider

the product owners and front-end developers as key stakeholders, since I collaborate with POs on requirements and with front-end on implementing the designs.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P7: On a daily basis, I collaborate most closely with the other designers and our product owner. The design team works together and we align with the PO to understand priorities. I also have frequent interactions with developers when we're in the implementation stage, to ensure what I design is feasible and built correctly. And as needed, I'll touch base with the support or marketing folks if a design is meant to address something they requested, to keep them in the loop or get feedback from their perspective. But day-to-day, it's mainly the product team .

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P7: I should be involved right from project inception, but in practice I'm usually involved later than I'd like. Often I'm brought in once a project is already defined and it's time to create the UI. I'd say I'm typically involved during the design and delivery stages. Sometimes I get looped in on something new from the start , but usually, yeah, I come in when it's design time and then stay through to implementation. We have had a recent project where they waited for our designs before proceeding . that was at the start, which was great. I'm hoping that becomes more common. But right now, being involved early is more of an exception.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are the main challenges you face in your work?

P7: One challenge has been learning to adapt my approach with stakeholders. Early in my career I was very protective of design integrity. If someone wanted a change that I thought was bad for UX, I'd really push back. I've since learned to be more flexible and to pick my battles. Now I focus on understanding what impact the stakeholder is trying to achieve. For instance, if Marketing requests a huge banner for visibility, I ask myself "what's their goal?" If it's to increase engagement, maybe I can find an alternative solution that achieves that without a huge banner. Guiding stakeholders to realize better solutions is a challenge but also a skill I've developed. A more tactical challenge is dealing with the "requests" that might not be great ideas . I have to diplomatically handle those. Additionally, working under time pressure is a constant

challenge. We're a small team handling high-priority projects, so we're always balancing quality and speed.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P7: There was a situation where Marketing really wanted a very intrusive visual change. Basically, they wanted to add a lot of flashy graphics to an interface, thinking it would drive more sales. I initially felt quite firm against it, because it would harm the user experience. We compromised by suggesting some subtle sound effects and animations as an alternative way to draw attention. When I first heard their request, I was frustrated. It felt like they were ignoring UX principles. But as we worked through it, I felt a sense of accomplishment turning that into a teachable moment. I essentially said, "We can get users' attention in other ways," and once I showed them that idea and how it could work without ruining the interface, they were okay with it. I felt relieved and pleased that I could protect the UX while also giving them what they needed.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found to be particularly effective in overcoming these design challenges?

P7: Quick user testing has been my ally. When stakeholders propose something, I sometimes do a rapid test or gather quick feedback to show whether that idea works or not. It's one thing for me to say "I don't think that's a good idea," but it's far more powerful to show them evidence. For example, I've done a quick A/B test or a quick prototype demo to colleagues acting as users to illustrate an issue. When stakeholders see that a certain approach doesn't yield the result they want, they're more open to alternatives. This approach has really built respect for our design team, because they see we're making decisions based on data and user behavior, not just aesthetics. In essence, turning challenges into collaborative problem-solving has been effective. Also, learning to frame my suggestions in terms of the stakeholder's goals helps a lot.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the design maturity of Company Name Redacted?

P7: It's better now than when I started, but I'd call it intermediate at best.

Interviewer: Why?

P7: When I first joined, design was really underutilized. I actually took the initiative to do things like recruiting more people for user testing sessions . Now, people across the company know a bit more about UX and what we do. For instance, more colleagues are aware of user testing and why we do it. That's a step up in maturity. However, we still struggle to integrate design strategically. We're not always in the room when early decisions are made. So while awareness has improved , actual integration and empowerment of design is still lacking .

Interviewer: Does the current level of design maturity affect your ability to demonstrate impact?

P7: Yes, significantly. One of the biggest obstacles is the lack of tools and processes to measure our impact. For example, I can redesign a page to be more user-friendly, but if we don't have analytics or tracking in place, it's hard to prove that my design improved anything like sales or engagement. Without those metrics , it's tough to quantitatively show our success, which can be frustrating. I often have to rely on anecdotal evidence or user feedback rather than hard numbers. I know our designs make things better, but the company's lower maturity in terms of measurement means it's hard to "prove" it, which would help build credibility.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P7: It's a bit of a roller coaster. I often feel frustrated because the design role is underutilized . Many times we're just brought in to make UI changes rather than collaborate on strategy. It's tough to stay motivated when I know how much more we could do with proper support. Sometimes I feel demotivated, seeing opportunities for better UX that we can't fully pursue. However, I try to focus on small wins and progress. When I manage to get something user-centered implemented , I feel a lift of motivation. I'd summarize it as frequently frustrated but still holding onto hope and doing what I can to push things in the right direction.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How does the level of design maturity influence the overall process and quality of outcomes?

P7: The maturity level sets the expectations stakeholders have. When design maturity is

low and we're involved late, stakeholders tend to see us as there to "make it look nice," and indeed our impact is limited to that . the outcome might look good but it hasn't solved the deeper issues because we weren't involved in solving them. We often have to cut corners due to constant pressure . So, our impact is often smaller and the outcomes, while visually pleasing, could be so much better if we had more input earlier on. If we had higher maturity . meaning being involved early, more support, more time . we could make a real difference in product outcomes. It's unfortunate, but the quality of our designs is often constrained by being brought in late and rushed.

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P7: I do my best to have a positive impact. I've learned to measure my successes in small increments. For example, I might not be able to overhaul a feature due to constraints, but if I can improve a workflow slightly or make an interface more intuitive and see that reflected in user feedback, I consider that a meaningful contribution. Because I'm usually involved later, I often end up improving what's there rather than creating something ground-up. I see my role as making sure that even if we are brought in to "make it pretty", I also make it functional and user-friendly. I think those improvements matter. Some of our POs and developers have come to appreciate how I can refine an idea to be better for users. So, I feel I contribute in making sure that whatever is delivered has the user's perspective considered, even if it's just in small ways. It's not as big of an impact as I'd like, but it's still important.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in how design is valued elsewhere versus your current organization?

P7: Yes . earlier in my career I worked at a place where design was just an afterthought, which was even worse than here. In contrast, I've also seen companies where design is part of the process from day one. In those environments, designers aren't constantly fighting for a seat at the table . they're already there. That not only makes the work more effective, but also more emotionally satisfying. In my current company, I sometimes feel like we're always trying to prove our worth. In other more design-mature places, that basic respect and inclusion is a given,

so they can focus on actually doing the design work well. The differences are pretty stark: here it's gradual and sometimes slow convincing of design value, whereas elsewhere it might be embedded and thus designers can drive really impactful changes with support.

P8

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P8: I've been a designer for about 12 years now. I've worked across various fields . I started in agencies doing marketing and design, then moved to companies focused on design and marketing solutions. Interestingly, I never completed a formal degree in design; I got into the industry by working and kept advancing. Over the years, I moved from web design to graphic design, and now I primarily work in UX. Currently, I'm at Company Name Redacted, a Canadian consultancy, and I've been here for about two and a half years. Our design team is just me and one other designer, so we handle everything design-related and also support the broader strategy team with experience design, research, and UI work.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P8: Including internships and early gigs, since 2014 . so about 10 years, but fully in a contracted professional role since 2017.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P8: It depends on the client. For example, I'm about to start a new project for a Canadian e-commerce company which will be heavily UX-focused . things like benchmarking their user experience, conducting analyses, and providing strategic consulting on it. Other times, the projects lean more towards UI. Generally, because I work as a consultant, I adapt to the client's needs: some projects are mostly UX strategy and research, others are more visual design and interface implementation. But a lot of my recent work has been in e-commerce and business platforms.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P8: It's quite small. It's basically me and one other designer as the in-house design team at the consultancy. We support each other but often work on separate client projects. We do have a

direct supervisor on the strategy side. Because we're consultants, day to day we mostly integrate with the client's team rather than a big internal design team.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: Do these projects involve more UI work, UX, or a mix?

P8: It really depends on the client and the project's nature. For instance, the project I'm about to start is going to be mainly UX . doing a lot of experience analysis, creating benchmarks, possibly revamping user flows, etc., for that e-commerce client. On other projects, I might do a mix: maybe start with UX discovery, then follow through with UI design. But to be honest, many clients still see design as visual, so we almost always have to produce visually appealing results. Sometimes that means I'll focus on producing a polished UI because that's what gets recognized, even though I'll be sneaking in UX improvements under the hood.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some main challenges you encounter in your day-to-day work?

P8: The biggest challenge is design maturity . Not ours, but our clients'. Many clients still see design mainly as making things look good. So while we emphasize that design is more than visuals, sometimes to show value we have to present shiny results first. It's a bit of a paradox: we know good design is more than skin-deep, but to get clients to value it, we might deliver something flashy that catches their eye, and then they acknowledge its value. Another challenge is adjusting to the varied understanding of design among different clients. Some are more enlightened about UX; others think our job is just to produce graphics. I constantly have to adjust my approach to each client's mindset.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you've faced and how it made you feel?

P8: Sure. A recurring scenario: a client mostly concerned with aesthetics says, "We trust you to make it look modern." They don't initially care about improving underlying UX. In one case, I delivered a visually redesigned dashboard for a client that looked a lot slicker. They loved it. What I had also done was reorganize some of the information in a more user-friendly way. Only after they loved the new look did I point out, "By the way, this change also reduced user

confusion . see how support tickets dropped?” That made me feel a little frustrated that I had to almost ‘trick’ them into a better UX by packaging it as a new UI. But it also was rewarding because they ended up appreciating the UX improvement once it was made.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found effective in overcoming these challenges?

P8: Adapting to the client is key. If I know a client values visuals above all, I’ll deliver top-notch visual design, but I’ll incorporate good UX practices as much as possible. Once they see the results, I explain those UX aspects where vital. It’s kind of like meeting them where they are, then bringing them a bit forward. Also, I communicate the business benefits of UX in terms they care about. For example, I might say, “By improving this form’s design, we’ll reduce drop-offs . which means more sign-ups for you.” Framing it in terms of ROI or efficiency helps a lot. Over time, I’ve noticed clients start to mention these things themselves, which is a sign they’re catching on to the value of UX, not just UI.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: Do you notice differences between how Company Name Redacted and your clients view design?

P8: Yes, definitely. Many of our clients are still developing their understanding of design. Some focus mostly on the whole user experience and are open to UX processes, while others prioritize immediate visual appeal. It’s interesting . I’ve noticed a difference even culturally: for example, I’ve worked with Brazilian clients and Canadian clients, and there’s a difference there. In Brazil, companies were often more design-driven and open to UX ideas. Here , it’s still evolving; they tend to emphasize quick, visually pleasing results. So I adapt to each environment. Within our consultancy , we of course value design highly . that’s our business. But we operate at the level the client is at.

Interviewer: How does the design process differ here compared to your previous experience in Brazil?

P8: In Brazil, I had more freedom to collaborate on ideas directly with marketing and product teams. There was a sense of partnership . I could be more involved in brainstorming features or strategies, not just delivering designs. Here, especially working in consultancies, often we’re

brought in more as implementers. The client has a plan, and we're helping execute it rather than form it. There's less room for involvement in early strategy like journey mapping or big-picture UX strategy. That definitely impacts design maturity . when we're just executing, the overall maturity feels lower because we're not embedded in strategy phases. It changes how I work; I find I do more documentation and explanation of design decisions here to bring stakeholders along, whereas before it was more collaborative upfront.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P8: There's some frustration, honestly. The low design maturity among many clients sometimes makes our work feel undervalued or misunderstood . like our efforts are undervalued unless they produce something "pretty." That can be demotivating because I know design can offer so much more. However, I do feel motivated when I get those small wins . like when a client finally sees the benefit of a UX improvement. Those moments are rewarding and keep me going. It's mixed: a bit demotivating when design is seen as decoration, but motivating when I can slowly change that perception. Emotionally, it can be tiring because I often feel I have to prove the value of our work, not just do the work.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: Do you feel that your impact differs between your current work and previous positions?

P8: It's quite different. In environments with higher design maturity , I could propose ideas and see them welcomed and integrated. I felt a direct impact because design was at the table influencing decisions. Here, sometimes even a small design insight can seem revolutionary to a client. Which is rewarding in a way, because they're impressed, but it also shows the gap in maturity. It feels good that I'm bringing new value to them, but also highlights how far behind some are. Sometimes I reflect that I have more impact in the sense of opening clients' eyes to UX than in making huge design changes, and that's a unique kind of impact. It's rewarding but in a different way. More educational.

Interviewer: Do you feel that design maturity affects how processes are carried out?

P8: Absolutely. For instance, data privacy is a big concern here in Canada, so reaching out directly to users for research is often encumbered by approvals and protocol. In Brazil, we often had a “jeitinho” approach . finding ways to reach users and do research, even informally. Here, we rely more on secondary data and benchmarks because direct user research requires so many hoops. That’s a maturity thing too . not just design maturity but organizational processes. It means our design process here can be less direct user-informed and more reliant on competitive analysis or industry benchmarks. That definitely influences outcomes: we make more assumptions because we can’t always test or research directly without a lengthy process. So, yes, maturity and context affect both the process and the results we can achieve.

P9

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P9: Sure. I started working in design at a young age, across different roles and industries. Currently, I’m a product designer at Company Name Redacted, where I’ve been focusing on various projects across both innovative and traditional sectors.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P9: I’ve been working in design for several years, with a focus on product and user experience design. I started around 3 years ago.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P9: It depends on the project. I’ve worked on web and mobile applications, mostly for clients ranging from very innovative startups to more traditional companies. So one project might be a cutting-edge app for an innovative client, another could be a more straightforward tool for a traditional industry.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P9: Our company is small, maybe 40-50 people in total. Only a few of us are designers. Typically, there are two main web designers, and the rest of us handle various other design tasks like product design, UX, etc. So a handful of designers are wearing multiple hats.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P9: It really varies by project. For more experimental projects, we might start with a conceptual phase that includes some user research. But on many projects, clients aren't willing to invest heavily in research up front. So often, how far we go in the design process depends on the client's willingness. Sometimes we can do things properly, but other times we abbreviate the process to deliver quickly.

Interviewer: Who are the main stakeholders involved in the design process?

P9: Mostly it's our project leads and the CEO, and sometimes the engineering team. Our CEO is quite involved in decisions. On projects, the project owner or lead is a key stakeholder giving us requirements. I occasionally work with engineers developers as stakeholders, especially if the design will significantly affect implementation. They need to buy in too.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P9: Primarily with the project owner and, depending on the project, with engineers or developers. If I'm actively working on a product, I'll be in regular contact with the developer team to ensure feasibility and with the project lead for priorities. Day-to-day communication with developers isn't always consistent though. It varies by project. Sometimes I work quite independently and just sync with them at milestones.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some of the main challenges you face in your work?

P9: The biggest challenge is the lack of time or resources dedicated to following best practices. Many clients want quick solutions, so even if we suggest a proper user-centered approach, budget constraints and tight schedules force shortcuts. So, limited time for research or

iteration is a major challenge. Another related challenge is educating stakeholders . many of them don't fully understand UX vs UI, so part of my job is aligning expectations and explaining what we do.

Interviewer: Can you share an example of a challenge and how it made you feel?

P9: One client had severe budget issues. They appreciated certain design approaches in theory, but they simply couldn't afford to implement them. Every time I suggested a user research step or an extra prototype iteration, they'd agree it was valuable but say they didn't have the budget. It was frustrating because on the one hand they acknowledged the value, but on the other hand I couldn't act on it due to their constraints. I felt a bit disheartened . it's tough when you see what needs to be done but can't do it.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found effective in managing these challenges?

P9: A lot of communication. We have regular internal meetings to discuss these issues. Also, we're part of an initiative to streamline processes like user recruitment and data privacy . essentially trying to make it easier and faster to do good UX work within the big organization context. It takes time, but being involved in shaping those protocols is one way we're addressing the root problem. Personally, I've also learned to be pragmatic: I try to focus on what I can do within constraints and not get hung up on what I can't. Like if I can't do full research, I'll at least do a quick guerrilla test. It's about finding any opportunity to inject UX best practices even in a limited way.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the design maturity of your organization and clients?

P9: I'd say Company Name Redacted has a decent level of maturity. Internally, we document processes well, we're transparent, and we try to balance client opinions with our expertise. But our clients mostly have lower design maturity. Most of them don't fully value design strategically. They see us as executing their vision, not as partners shaping it. That affects how we can work.

Interviewer: What indicators make you feel clients have lower design maturity?

P9: Often, clients see us primarily as executors. They come with a vision and essentially want us to “make it so,” without integrating our expertise into their process. This lack of collaboration and not fully integrating our team into their workflow is a big sign. It limits our ability to work effectively, because we’re sometimes left fixing or adjusting things on the fly rather than being involved from the start.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company’s current design maturity level?

P9: I often feel frustrated, especially seeing missed opportunities. It’s tough when I know how to improve something but can’t pursue it due to schedule or mindset issues. It can be demotivating when our ideas don’t get the buy-in they deserve. However, I do find motivation in the small wins . like when I finally get to demonstrate a UX improvement and it pays off. Those moments make the effort worthwhile and keep me going despite the broader frustrations.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you feel about the impact you can make in your current projects?

P9: It varies. Some clients really listen to our input and encourage collaboration . on those projects, I can contribute significantly and I feel satisfied with the impact. However, with clients who view design as merely decorative, I feel like I’m often just putting out fires or making surface-level changes. In those cases, my impact feels limited, which can be a bit disheartening because I know we could do more.

Interviewer: Do you find yourself in other roles besides product designer?

P9: Yes, quite often. Because not every client understands or values the full scope of product design, I end up straddling roles . a bit of project management here, a bit of business analysis there. We adjust our work to fit their expectations. If they don’t want to invest in full UX, we do what we can . sometimes that means my role looks more like a UI designer in their eyes. We adapt, but it does mean I have to cover responsibilities beyond pure design to ensure the project goes well.

P10

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P10: I transitioned to UX design in 2021. Before that, interestingly, I worked in logistics for about three and a half years. My first UX role was at a design consultancy, where I grew from a junior to a senior position over a bit more than two years. Currently, I work for the city government of my hometown as a UX Researcher though in practice I do both UX and UI work. In this role, I work on service design, manage our design system, and help establish design processes in the team. I've been here for a year, and altogether I have about three and a half years of UX experience.

Interviewer: How many designers are in your team?

P10: We have three full-time designers, including me, and eight contracted designers. So, in total, including supervisors, we're a team of 17. But the contracted designers might not all be permanent. They're here as needed. It's a relatively large team because of the scale of the government projects, but it's split between full-timers and contractors. So basically, we receive a demand in our own design team, we assign to one of the designers, or to a group of designers. Once the design is done, we align with the developers and Product Managers or whatever stakeholder is behind that. But the design team just has designers.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design process in your organization?

P10: We juggle multiple workflows. Some requests come specifically through our design system team like if someone needs a new component or to expand an existing one. Other requests come from various municipal services, each with their own needs. Often these come to us somewhat vague, and it's up to us to clarify and define the scope. In practice, our design process is not one-size-fits-all; it's highly dependent on the source of the request. We frequently have to adapt. Sometimes we can follow a more standard UX process, other times it's very truncated due to the nature of the request.

Interviewer: How does the team typically receive project requests?

P10: It varies a lot. Sometimes, especially through the design system route, we get a fairly detailed request for a UI component or pattern. In contrast, from other departments, the request

might be something like “we need to improve service X” with little detail . they might not know exactly what they need from UX. In those cases, we come back with suggestions of UX methods. For example, some only know terms like “usability testing” or “user interviews,” so part of our job is suggesting the right approach. We had an instance where, due to time/budget, we did a heuristic analysis instead of a full usability test and explained why . and it addressed the need. So, we tailor our intake approach. It’s a lot about educating and negotiating what UX methods are most appropriate given constraints.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some main challenges you face in your work?

P10: A big challenge is that stakeholders often have a limited understanding of UX and UI, which means we do a lot of educating. Another is bureaucratic: for example, recruiting users for testing can be a nightmare due to regulations and privacy processes. Also, lack of process documentation historically was an issue . when I started, it was hard to track who was doing what and project status, which made handovers tricky. We’re improving that, but it was a major pain point.

Interviewer: Are there any strategies you use to address these challenges?

P10: Communication is our main strategy. We hold regular meetings to tackle issues like these. We’re part of an initiative to streamline how we recruit users and handle data privacy . aiming to simplify those bureaucratic hurdles. It’s slow because it’s a government, but at least it’s progress. We also document more now . creating a paper trail for decisions and processes so everyone knows what’s happening. Internally, we try to share our wins and insights with non-design colleagues too, in hopes of raising overall understanding.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you classify the design maturity of your organization?

P10: I’d place our team’s maturity at a mid-level, maybe between a 2 or 3 out of 5. We have talented people and some processes in place, but because of limited resources and not fully defined processes, we struggle to be efficient. On top of that, most of our client departments have

very low maturity regarding UX. Many don't know what UX really is, so they don't incorporate it unless we push. All that keeps our overall maturity low despite our efforts.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P10: I definitely feel frustrated at times . the bureaucracy and slow progress on obvious issues can be demotivating. For instance, we've discussed the lack of process documentation for a year and not seen significant change; that's tough. Sometimes I feel like we're banging our head against a wall. But I try to stay focused on what I can control . I take pride in improving things in my sphere and find motivation in small improvements . So, a mix of frustration with the pace of change, but determination to make a difference where possible.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: Does this level of maturity impact your work?

P10: Absolutely. The lack of maturity makes even simple tasks take longer. Without established processes, we waste time figuring out how to do things from scratch each time. It also makes us prone to errors or rework. Without a unified approach, sometimes two people might do overlapping work unknowingly. So yes, it affects efficiency and ultimately the impact we can have . a lot of energy goes into just navigating the environment rather than producing great design outcomes.

Interviewer: How does it feel to work in this environment?

P10: It's frustrating . I understand caution and bureaucracy in government, but seeing known issues linger with no urgency to fix them is challenging. When I know there's a documentation problem and a year later it's still a problem, it's disheartening. We talk about solutions but implementing them is slow. Honestly, it sometimes makes me consider if I should look for opportunities where design is taken more seriously . because it can be draining to keep advocating for the same fixes.

P11

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P11: I've been working as a designer since 2014 if you count internships, so about 10 years now. Fully employed in design since 2017. I've worked on quality control projects, focusing on industry software which involved a lot of forms and data analysis. I also created websites and apps for restaurants and some institutional sites. Currently, I'm focusing on an analytics platform. It involves complex data, dashboards, and things like integrating our software with Google Analytics.

Interviewer: How many designers are in your team at your current company?

P11: We're down to three designers, because two left recently. One of the three focuses on graphic design separately, not directly with our product team. So effectively it's me and one other product designer working on separate products, but we support each other as needed. Sometimes we collaborate with external or temporary designers if a project demands it.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: How would you describe the design process within your company?

P11: It's been frankly chaotic, partly due to constant changes in management and team structure. The company went through frequent reshuffles. My personal process is usually: align with the product team, gather initial requirements, create prototypes. Ideally I'd do user testing, but finding time and resources for that is challenging. We often fill the gap with internal testing, like getting feedback from customer success managers who use the product themselves. So we kind of jury-rig a process if formal UX steps aren't supported.

Interviewer: Who are the main stakeholders you work with daily?

P11: Day to day, besides fellow designers and developers, I work closely with a product consultant we have. He has a lot of decision power and deep product knowledge, which is super helpful in identifying issues. We also have a team member who's been with the company forever and has valuable insights; I consider him a stakeholder too because he often weighs in on design decisions informally.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some of the main challenges you face in your work?

P11: A huge challenge has been the constant team and management changes. To give an example, the same feature might pass through multiple managers, each with a different vision. It ends up a patchwork. For instance, we had a feature to reduce screen info overload . it changed direction multiple times under different people, each with their own motives. That complicates workflow and can muddle the final design. Another challenge is preemptively doing design tasks without formal mandate. Sometimes I just propose features with backed-up research on my own initiative, because if I don't, nobody will. It's a challenge stepping outside my formal role, but I do it to keep the product moving in the right direction.

Interviewer: Can you share an example of a challenge and how it made you feel?

P11: Yes, that feature I mentioned . seeing it get reworked and rethought three or four times with different managers was frustrating. It felt like we were going in circles. I was trying to maintain a coherent vision for it, but each new person had their own idea of success. It left me feeling a bit demotivated, like “what’s the point of designing something well if it’s going to get pulled apart?” But it also pushed me to try to be proactive . I started anticipating these shifts and designing with flexibility in mind, which is not ideal but necessary.

Interviewer: How do you handle these challenges?

P11: I try to be proactive: I propose features ahead of time with supporting research so that I can steer the conversation rather than always react. I also do small studies or user research on the side about our product to uncover issues we might not be formally looking at. This proactive approach helps because I come to meetings armed with evidence and suggestions, which can preempt some random changes. It's not foolproof, but it has helped me feel more in control and has occasionally influenced decision-makers to follow a more consistent strategy.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the design maturity of your company?

P11: It varies by product here. Some products have low maturity, especially those with lots of management churn. The product I work on is a bit more stable now, largely because our new product manager values design and consistency more. But overall, the company's design maturity fluctuates . it depends on who's in charge at any given time.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's design maturity level?

P11: I feel a lot of frustration. We could do so much more if UX's value was recognized consistently. It often feels like we're just patching things up. It's demotivating when you know the potential for bigger impact is there but not realized. I do try to stay focused on positives . like user feedback when something I insisted on actually works well . that's motivating. But in the day-to-day, there's definitely some demotivation from knowing we're not operating at the level we could be.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you feel about the impact your work has on users?

P11: I feel the impact is positive, especially when I get to see user feedback. For example, we redesigned the navigation and users appreciated it . hearing that made me feel that my work made a difference. I recently worked on a complex analytics feature and the client who uses it gave great feedback. That kind of direct result is really satisfying. It shows me even within constraints I can create things that help users.

Interviewer: Does the maturity level affect the process and your ability to make an impact?

P11: Yes, significantly. Having a product manager who understands and values design has improved productivity and outcome on my project. When design is involved from the start , everything's more organized and effective. In contrast, other projects where design isn't valued from the get-go are more chaotic and the results show it. So, a more mature approach . involving design early, listening to user feedback . definitely leads to better processes and outcomes. We've seen both at this company, which really highlights how important maturity is.

P12

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P12: I've been in the design field for about three years. I started as a product designer and gradually expanded into UX, though I still primarily identify as a product designer. My current role is with a health insurance provider, focusing on service design for brokers and clients.

Interviewer: How many designers are in your team?

P12: Currently, we have four product designers and we're about to have a manager join us. We used to have a bigger design team, up to twelve people, including design ops and design system managers, but due to budget cuts our numbers were reduced. So we've seen both ends: at peak we were 12 with specialized roles, now we're down to five including our soon-to-start manager.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: Could you describe the design processes in your organization?

P12: Our processes vary by project, but they usually start quite raw. I often switch between different product scopes . like sometimes I'm on something for brokers, other times for clients or finance . and each time I have to immerse myself in a new user group as if I'm unfamiliar. So, my process starts with absorbing stakeholder knowledge to understand the user journey and pain points. From there, I map processes and figure out what needs design attention. Importantly, I have a lot of autonomy to manage and streamline the design flow based on available time. That means I balance doing detailed process when possible with skipping or shortening steps when under practical constraints.

Interviewer: How do projects get assigned?

P12: It's mostly need-based. Sometimes I'll be dedicated to a specific product area if it's a big focus. Other times I float across multiple areas as needed. There's flexibility once a project is assigned . I often have the freedom to define how we execute it because they trust our design team to figure out the specifics. But assignment-wise, it's reactive to what part of the business needs design help at that time.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are the main challenges you face in your day-to-day work?

P12: Time management is a huge challenge. My role involves a lot of meetings , which cuts into my design time. I often end up having to decline or reschedule some meetings just to get actual design work done. Also, my squad handles high-priority projects that leadership is keen on, which adds pressure to deliver results quickly. So juggling that pressure with the need to do quality work is challenging . I sometimes have to compromise on depth of process due to time.

Interviewer: Are there strategies you've developed to manage these challenges?

P12: Prioritization and communication are key. I've learned to be very clear with my team about my workload and capacity. I focus on critical tasks and adjust the design process if time is tight . meaning I'll skip non-essential steps but keep the key objectives in sight. I ensure to meet the main goals even if I have to cut corners on less impactful details. And I communicate those decisions with stakeholders so they understand why we might not do every little step when we're under a deadline.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the design maturity of your organization?

P12: I'd rate it as intermediate. When I joined, we had a visionary CTO who championed UX and built a larger team . That was great and pushed us towards high maturity. But after he left, budget cuts downsized the team, which set us back . it impacted our ability to maintain processes at that high level. We're still pushing to improve, but the reality of a startup-like environment and limited resources keeps us from reaching full maturity.

Interviewer: Does this maturity level affect your ability to deliver quality results?

P12: It impacts our workload and sometimes means we can't reach the ideal level of polish we'd like. However, I wouldn't say it lowers the quality of our end products drastically. We're efficient given our constraints . we still do usability testing and iterate as needed to ensure valuable outcomes. We've gotten good at delivering solid work with the resources we have. But sure, with higher maturity , we could add that extra level of shine or depth that currently we might occasionally miss.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P12: It's emotionally challenging. The constant rush is draining, and I often feel frustrated when we can't improve processes or make adjustments we know would help, simply due to lack of time. I love contributing meaningfully . that part is fulfilling . but it sometimes feels like we're always racing against time, which can be demotivating. I communicate these feelings to my team and we try to align on priorities so we can manage the emotional stress as well as the workload.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: Do you feel that the current level of design maturity affects the design process overall?

P12: Yes, particularly in terms of workload. We often have to streamline our processes due to time constraints, which means focusing only on the essentials. Sometimes we must compromise on minor details to meet deadlines, but we always maintain a solid level of quality where it counts. On the plus side, our management is supportive and stakeholders value our contributions. So even if we're rushing, there's an openness to adjust when needed, which helps mitigate any negative impact.

P13

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P13: I currently work as a designer at Company Name Redacted, where I've been for about two and a half years. Before this, I had some experience in agencies doing graphic design. My day-to-day now is mostly UI design. Because of the company culture and business structure, we don't always get to do deeper UX tasks usually, we receive requirements and turn them into interfaces, which we then test and refine. We current work in a team of 3, so quite small but it's okay.

Interviewer: Are there opportunities to explore design more in-depth, or is it primarily focused on UI?

P13: It depends on the product stage. When a product is new, tasks are more open-ended and there's a bit more room for exploratory work . I can do some informal research or concept ideation. But for mature products, stakeholders generally have a set vision, so tasks are narrowly

defined. In those cases, it's mostly UI execution with little latitude to explore beyond given parameters.

Organization's Design Practices:

Interviewer: Do you feel that UX practices are well-integrated into your company's culture?

P13: Not entirely. Often, deadlines are set without factoring in UX exploration. We get requirements that seem doable within the timeline, but once we dig in, we uncover complexities that would really benefit from some UX research or iteration. However, to incorporate that, the company would need to culturally shift to allocate more time for UX stages. Right now, that isn't part of the culture, so we often end up just executing under the given constraints.

Interviewer: Who are the main stakeholders you work with?

P13: I collaborate closely with Product Owners POs and the front-end delivery team. Occasionally, I coordinate with the back-end team as well, but day-to-day it's the PO and front-end developers .

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some of the main challenges you face?

P13: The biggest challenge is managing design timelines while working within business priorities. Because software isn't my company's primary revenue source , there's less understanding of the ROI of investing in UX. I try to use whatever resources we have efficiently and to demonstrate UX's value in small ways . like using available data to validate design choices during discussions. However, I often don't have the availability or support needed to make a substantial impact beyond the immediate tasks.

Interviewer: Do you feel your efforts to show the importance of UX are effective?

P13: It's tough. We're limited by how the company manages resources. Sometimes it feels like no matter how well I demonstrate something on a small scale, I can't roll it out more widely because of resource constraints. I often feel like I could do so much more with the design if

given the chance, but I have to pick my battles and focus on incremental improvements that I can implement within my scope.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you rate the design maturity of your organization?

P13: I'd say it's quite low. We do have a R&D team, which is positive, but because of day-to-day challenges and deadlines, design maturity is low overall. Often, I feel like more of a "builder" in the design process . just delivering visuals . rather than being able to explore deeper user needs or business impacts. That indicates low maturity; design is seen as a builder/execution role here.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P13: I feel a mix of frustration and acceptance. It's frustrating knowing our work could have a greater impact if there were more support for UX; sometimes I do feel demotivated that our role is often limited to meeting immediate needs. But I've also come to accept that this is a gradual process . I focus on small wins and try to stay motivated by the little improvements we can make. It's not ideal, but I channel that frustration into doing the best with what we have.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you view your impact within the company?

P13: I feel positively about the role I play in supporting product and business objectives. However, I acknowledge that focus is usually on meeting immediate needs rather than creating long-term impact. I do what's asked and I know it helps the product meet its goals, but it's typically in a tactical sense. I'm proud that I can keep the UI consistent and improve things incrementally . that supports the business in the short term . but I am aware we're not often tasked with strategic, long-term UX improvements.

Interviewer: Do you feel that design maturity influences internal processes?

P13: Absolutely. If the company prioritized UX more, we'd focus on user feedback and iterative improvements more heavily, and that would enhance product development and delivery significantly. As it stands, design culture is not very strong here, and you can see that effect:

processes are a bit haphazard, design is reactive rather than proactive. A stronger design culture would greatly improve how we work and likely the quality of our products. I often try to evangelize this idea internally, because I have experienced environments where design was more integrated and the process was much smoother.

P14

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P14: I started my career in digital design around 2015 and transitioned to product design around 2020. My academic background is in Design and Communication. Before working as a UX, I worked for agencies as Graphic Designer, but it was not working for me anymore. So when the pandemic hit, I just decided to do a UX focus course and go for it.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P14: About nine years now, with the last five years focused primarily on product and UX design.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P14: I mainly work on digital financial products, including mobile banking apps, internal tools for financial advisors, and web dashboards.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P14: We currently have a design team of 12 people, split across squads.

Organization's Design Practices

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P14: We follow a dual-track agile process. There's a discovery track where we do research and ideation, and a delivery track for execution.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P14: PMs, developers, QA, customer support, and sometimes legal or compliance.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P14: Mostly with the product manager and developers in my squad.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P14: From the very beginning... So identifying problems, validating with research, designing, and staying through implementation.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work?

P14: Balancing speed with quality and dealing with stakeholders jumping to solutions.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you faced and how it made you feel?

P14: Once asked to just 'make it prettier,' I ran usability tests to prove the issues. It was frustrating but ended in a win.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found effective in overcoming these challenges?

P14: Showing evidence like usability tests or analytics. And tying UX improvements to business value.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

P14: I'd say we're at a solid level 3 going to 4.

Interviewer: Why?

P14: Because while design is respected and included, it's still seen as a service rather than strategic in some areas.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P14: Mostly positive. I feel valued and supported, though sometimes frustrated.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P14: I think I have a real impact, especially when leading projects that improve onboarding and reduce support tickets.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P14: It's everything. When UX is integrated early, we create better outcomes. When it's late, we polish bad ideas. Comparison with Other Companies

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies?

P14: Yes, in previous roles design was more visual and less strategic. Here, I'm more involved and appreciated.

P15

Background Information:

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your background and experience as a designer?

P15: I graduated in Graphic Design and Multimedia in Italy in 2022. My first professional UX experience came while working with a colleague, which sparked my interest in UX.

Interviewer: How long have you been working in the field of design?

P15: Around two years.

Interviewer: What types of products do you typically work on?

P15: Mainly digital platforms and tools to enhance customer experience.

Interviewer: Can you describe the size of your design team?

P15: There are over 100 designers in the company, but I'm the only designer on my team.

Organization's Design Practices

Interviewer: How would you describe the design practices or processes within your organization?

P15: We follow a user-centered design approach with brief analysis, stakeholder engagement, and iteration.

Interviewer: Which stakeholders are involved in the design process?

P15: Developers, a product owner, and occasionally others from the parent company.

Interviewer: With whom do you collaborate daily during the design process?

P15: Mainly with eight developers and one product owner.

Interviewer: At what stages of a project are you typically involved?

P15: From the beginning through implementation and validation.

Understanding Challenges:

Interviewer: What are some of the key challenges you've encountered in your work?

P15: Time constraints and dealing with stakeholders who don't understand UX.

Interviewer: Can you share a specific case example of a challenge you faced and how it made you feel?

P15: A stakeholder rejected my design without understanding it, which was frustrating. I was working in this new feature, I was going to do an overall presentation, but the stakeholder opened Figma, decided that he didn't like it and told me he was rejecting it. I had to present a rationale to defend it. It's fine, I was gonna do it anyway, however he could have waited for it.

Interviewer: What strategies or approaches have you found effective in overcoming these challenges?

P15: Clear communication, documentation, and building trust with stakeholders.

Maturity Assessment:

Interviewer: How would you assess the overall maturity of the design practices in your organization?

P15: It's evolving.

Interviewer: Why?

P15: The structure exists, but not all teams know how to integrate UX.

Interviewer: How would you describe the emotions you feel working within your company's current design maturity level?

P15: Mixed. So excited about opportunities but sometimes feel isolated or undervalued. It's sad to do just UI most of the time.

Impact of Design Practices:

Interviewer: How do you perceive your impact and contribution as a designer within the company?

P15: Valuable. My designs influence how users interact, though constraints limit full potential.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how does the level of design maturity within an organization influence the overall design process and the quality of design outcomes?

P15: It plays a huge role. Mature environments allow for better validation and outcomes.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any differences in the way design is perceived or valued in other companies?

P15: Yes. In previous companies, UX was often misunderstood. Here there's understanding, but it varies across departments.