



INTELLIGENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Building the Future of Scalable Design Systems

As product development teams realize the value of incorporating AI tools into their workflows, a well crafted design system is the key to delivering consistent, inclusive and engaging experiences to people.

FREE GUIDE

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an  Mphasis company

Introduction

Businesses scaling fast, or growing over time through acquisitions often face outdated design practices, tech and UX debt, and disjointed legacy experiences. Teams struggle with fragmented UI kits and coded components, rushed releases without proper QA, leading to inconsistent visuals and poor user experiences.

Most enterprise companies have teams managing small parts of a product, each with different timelines, stakeholders, and goals. Teams work to ensure their product kingdom runs smoothly, without much regard for the cohesion of the entire product or service set. These siloes make building and adopting a design system an uphill battle.

Design systems are about human relationships. This means you need to fully understand and empathize with the viewpoints of everyone in the product development process (product owners, designers, researchers, testers, engineers) in order to create a strategy that will be adopted by everyone in the organization.

Tasked with building, refactoring, or extending a design system?

This report is your go-to guide for crafting an extensible design system, aligning your teams, and driving adoption across your entire organization.

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Laying the Groundwork: Align Teams and Create a Shared Vision

Gain alignment, address resistance, and perform deep discovery to pave the smoothest path for future implementation.

02 Building the Foundation: Start Small, Test, and Extend

Establishing the operating model, defining the foundational elements for piloting, refinement, and expansion.

03 Future-Proofing: Driving Adoption for Lasting Change

Creating support mechanisms and metric frameworks to ensure consistency and track progress towards adoption goals.

Considerations for the AI-focused future

Building a robust, extensible design system now is critical with AI transformation on the horizon because it sets the foundation for scale, consistency, and adaptability in a future where design and development will increasingly be automated, accelerated, and democratized.

AI needs structure to be effective

AI systems operate well when they have a well-defined structure and information to draw and iterate from. Design systems should have consistent patterns, defined rules, constraints, and guidelines, and semantic metadata so that AI can make contextual decisions.

Without these guidelines, AI-generated templates and products risk perpetuating inconsistencies, or worse, hindering accessibility.

AI will democratize design

In the near future, not only will design and engineering teams leverage your design system but marketers, product managers, writers, and other collaborators may use AI tools to rapid prototype and eventually, speed time to market.

As AI enables non-designers to create interfaces, your design system becomes a teaching tool - via patterns, templates, and constraints, and a safety net that enforces accessibility, usability, and brand standards.



A strong design system is the bridge between human creativity and machine execution. It ensures AI augments design in a way that is **scalable, ethical, and on-brand.**



Laura Blanchard, VP of Design at Blink UX

01

Laying the Groundwork: Align Teams and Create a Shared Vision

Introducing a new design system or way of working has many benefits (time and money savings, better user experiences); however, it can also cause stress for those who are used to working a certain way.

Before you start the creation and design system implementation process, it's important to remember that people might resist the change, and that's a normal part of the process.

There will likely be naysayers or detractors that may disagree about which team should spearhead the effort (common interdepartmental conflict and competition), or disagree about the value such a disruption might create for their own teams (and in turn derail their metrics and deliverables).

It will be paramount to get these detractors on board, often that means getting executive sponsors and stakeholders on board so that the whole organization is moving towards the same customer-centric goal and agrees on the importance of a mature system that can support every business unit.

This can feel time-consuming and stressful upfront, but can speed up production in the long run and help teams create better, aligned user experiences.

Create a Collective of Champions

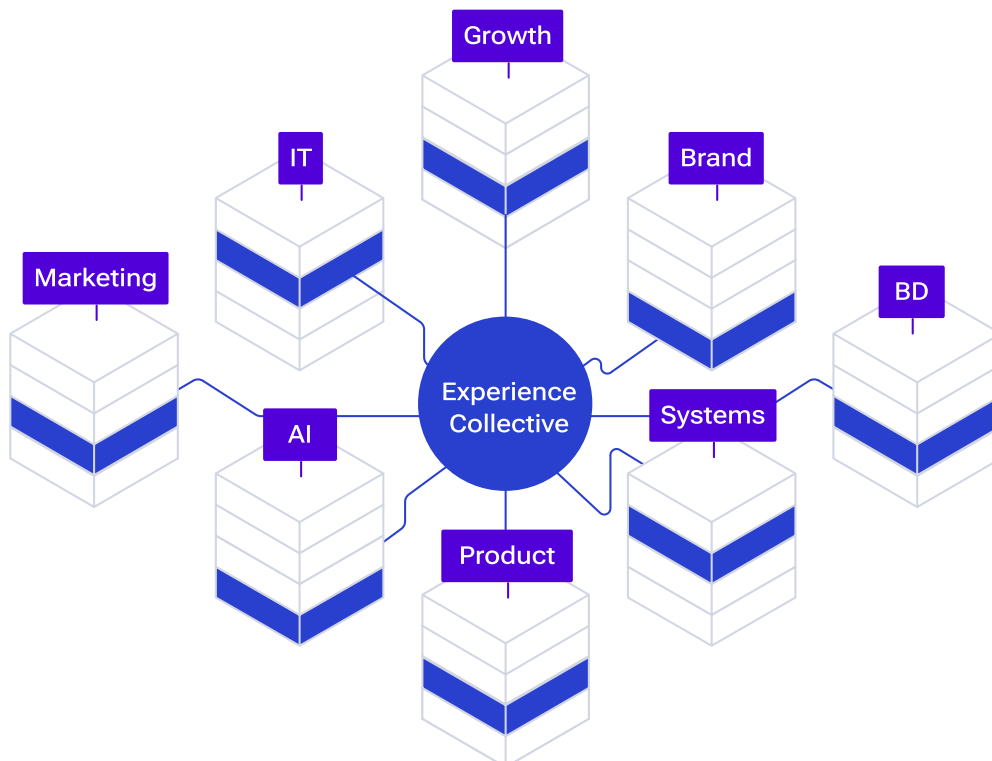
With large organizations, we always recommend starting with a core cross-business group or collective that will be the driving force behind researching, evolving, and driving the adoption of a new (or updated) design system, all with the shared goal of improving your organization's customer experience.

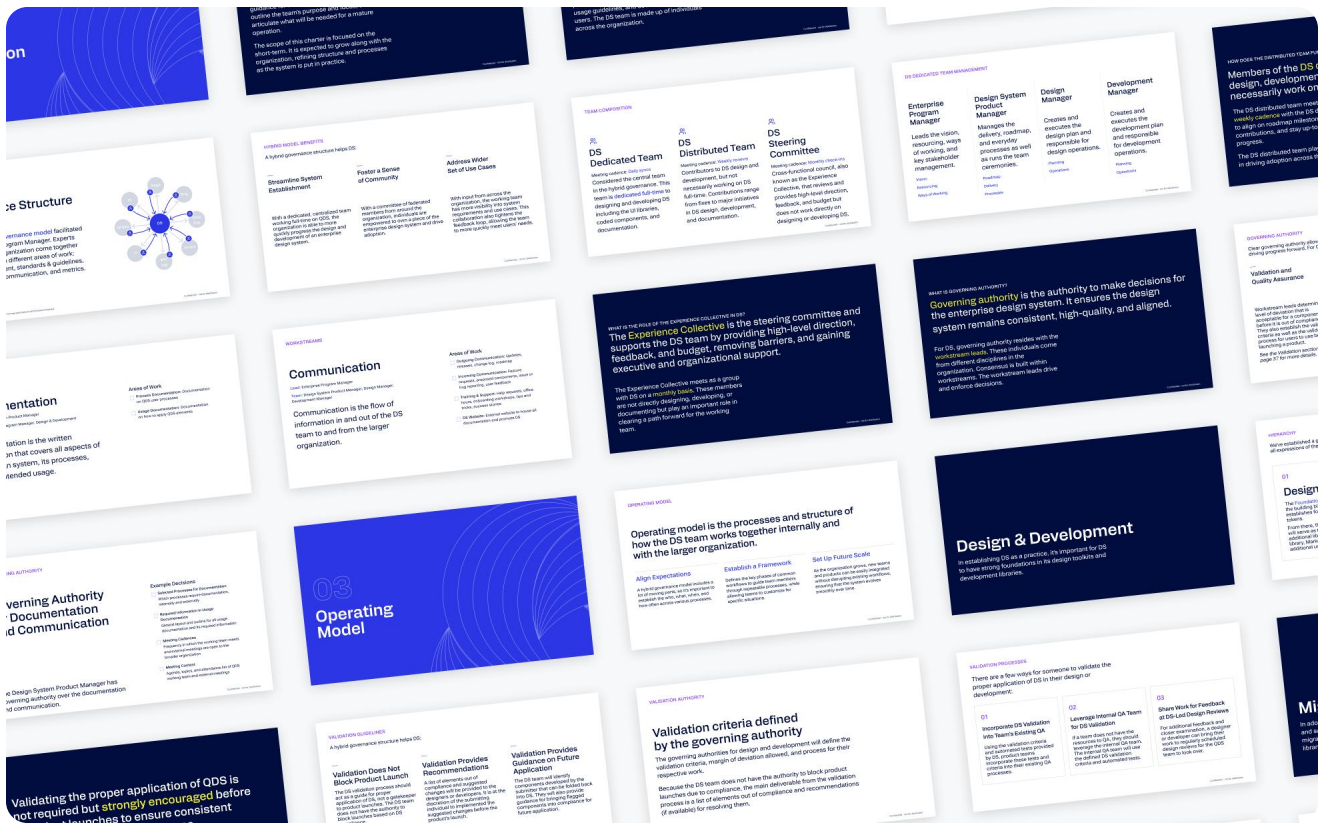
Who should be on the collective?

This collective should comprise folks in IT, development, UX/design/product, and marketing, with extended stakeholders from the same groups, preferably at a VP or executive level. These VP or executive stakeholders will also be the first recipients of the evangelizing deck from the collective.

What's the benefit of having a cross-business collective?

When you have champions from every business unit, they can help get the rest of their unit informed and excited about the new system. Typically, a business unit leader will have more trust and pull among their team than you will, so they can field questions and help you gain more buy-in than you would on your own.





SHARED VISION CHARTER

STEP TWO

Communicate a Shared Vision

Map out your stakeholders and extended stakeholders

These are people across the business who may hold unique roles or have teams with unique needs that require consideration in the final strategy. The collective must deeply understand the products, features or software they're responsible for so that the final iteration of the system takes them into consideration.

Develop a variety of materials that resonate

Once you've interviewed your collective team members and conducted a workshop to align on your goals, build a final presentation that you can share with executive sponsors and other stakeholders involved in the next phase of the design system evolution to bring them up to speed as the project progresses quickly.

STEP THREE

Do deep discovery

Conduct Competitive & Comparative Analysis

Conduct competitive/comparative reviews to understand how organizations of similar sizes are organizing their design systems (this negates the feeling of blank space that can happen when creating something new and leverages industry best practices)

Conduct Technology & Asset Reviews

A technology and asset review can help you identify important tech limitations or uncover tools that are already in the organization's arsenal that may not be leveraged that are perfect for the new or updated design system (it also identifies technology that could potentially be eliminated in future phases once the new system is implemented)

Get clear on your brand identity

If you're starting from scratch, it can be helpful to conduct some brand envisioning work to explore more modern visual concepts that will become the foundation for all design directions and applications

- Conduct Brand Reviews
- Conduct Inspirational and Comparative Reviews
- Create Moodboards
- Create Visual Sketches

STEP FOUR

Demonstrate the value

Often, the metrics used to prove the value of a design system are only those focused on direct metrics like saved development time, but the reality is that there are multitudes of proof-points that can be tied back to a healthy, extensible enterprise design system.

See talking points on the next page →

Use these talking points to help illustrate the **organization-wide value** of your new design system:

Invest wiser

Enable our business to identify the most promising customer opportunities, minimizing the risk of investing in less impactful and less profitable solutions.

301%

ROI for IBM clients using customer-centered design

[FORRESTER](#)

89%

of companies that lead with customer experience perform better financially than peers

[FORBES](#)

32%

increase in revenue growth after implementing user-centered design practices

[MCKINSEY](#)

Design Better

Empower our teams to create the most desirable products that improve satisfaction, engagement, and sales (delight customers, increase adoption + retention)

1.9x

more likely to report improved customer satisfaction

[MAZE](#)

60%

of market share Intuit gained through customer-centric experiences

[HBR](#)

2.3x

increase in Customer lifetime value

[FORRESTER](#)

Move faster

Enable our business to identify the most promising customer opportunities, minimizing the risk of investing in less impactful and less profitable solutions.

100%

increase in development productivity

[TOPTOTAL](#)

2.5x

more likely to focus on solving customer problems over competitors

[FORRESTER](#)

50%

improved time to market

[HBR](#)

02

Building the Foundation: Start Small, Test, and Extend

Once you have completed discovery activities and have brought key stakeholders together around a shared vision for the future of product development at your company, you are ready to begin building the foundation of your system.

STEP ONE

Establish Your Operating Principles, and Design System Strategy

Design System Principles

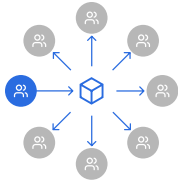
Similar to developing experience principles for products that you build, it's important to align teams on principles for your organizations Design System, or in other words, the underlying reasoning for the design approach.

Operating Model

Operating model is the processes and structure of how the team works together internally and with the larger organization to develop and execute on the system: align expectations, establish a framework, set up to scale in the future.

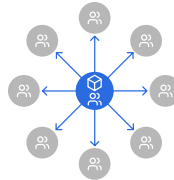
Governance Model

Design system governance models define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority, ensuring a streamlined process. Some common structures are:



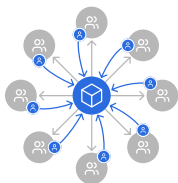
Solitary

The system is built by one team for their product, and made available to all.



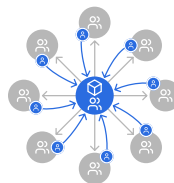
Centralized

A centralized, dedicated team supports the system for everyone.



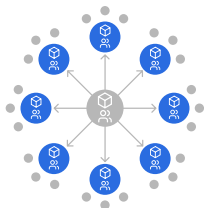
Federated

Employees from around the org are designated to work on the system.



Hybrid

A federated committee collaborates with a centralized team.



Distributed

Different teams manage their own interconnected systems.

Define the Foundational UI Kit

Establish your main hierarchy of assets

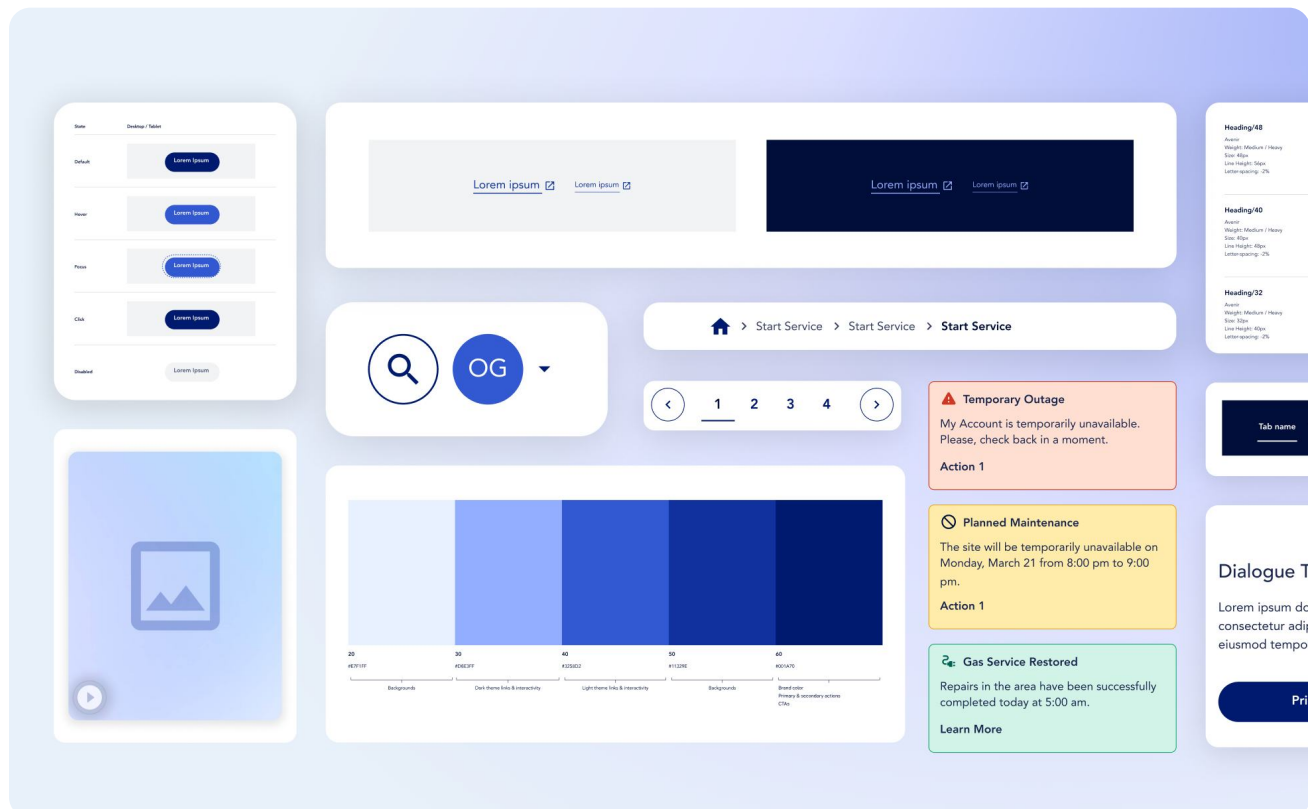
Begin building out the main hierarchy of assets that need to be expanded from existing components or modules to support all of your prioritized use cases and product sets. Have your 'Pilot' use cases in mind, prioritizing those that give you the most coverage across components and patterns

- Foundational Elements: color, typography, spacing
- Basic components: buttons, links
- One or two more complex patterns: navigation, tables, etc

Start outlining the documentation strategy

Identify the supporting documentation and communication systems that will be the foundational support for making sure your design system has success and high adoption

- Accessibility Guidelines
- Content Guidelines
- Developer Guidelines
- Validation/Quality Assurance
- Roadmap & Priorities
- Updates & Releases



FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR A UTILITY SERVICE CLIENT

REQUIREMENT

Accessibility is a key pillar of a progressive design system

Accessibility isn't just a checkbox—it's a core element of any modern design system. It ensures that your products and services are usable by everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Accessibility covers everything from color contrast and font size to keyboard navigation and screen reader support. It's about ensuring all users, including those with visual, auditory, or motor impairments, can interact with your product seamlessly.

Beyond legal requirements, accessibility improves everyone's user experience. It leads to cleaner, more intuitive designs, better usability, and broader reach. Plus, prioritizing accessibility demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity, strengthening your brand, and building trust with your audience. Making design choices that consider accessibility is simply smart, forward-thinking business practice.

STEP THREE

Pilot the System

Create a cross-functional pilot of the documentation, the UI Kit and the system to make sure that teams in your organization can use it

- ☐ Create a scripted test asking teams to build one of the more basic elements of the system
- ☐ Invite designers, engineers, product managers, and QA technicians to the pilot process
- ☐ Give them the independent assignment asking that they complete it within a few days
- ☐ Do a de-brief of the pilot with participants getting feedback

STEP FOUR

Refine and Extend

Refine the existing UI Kit, documentation, and coded components to additional use cases and keep testing

- ☐ Append documentation to make it more useful
- ☐ Adjust UI kit components and variables based on feedback
- ☐ Refine built component process to make sure engineering teams can immediately grab components and build products

03

Future-Proofing: Driving Adoption for Lasting Change

When done right, design systems can deliver huge revenue-growing benefits for a company, but if you don't have a clear strategy for maintaining and scaling your design system, your investment might fall short.

In fact, according to the UXPin State of Design Systems Report, **41% of design systems fail within two years.**

The good news? There are proven strategies and mechanisms that large organizations can use to keep their design systems fresh, aligned with business goals, and continuously evolving.

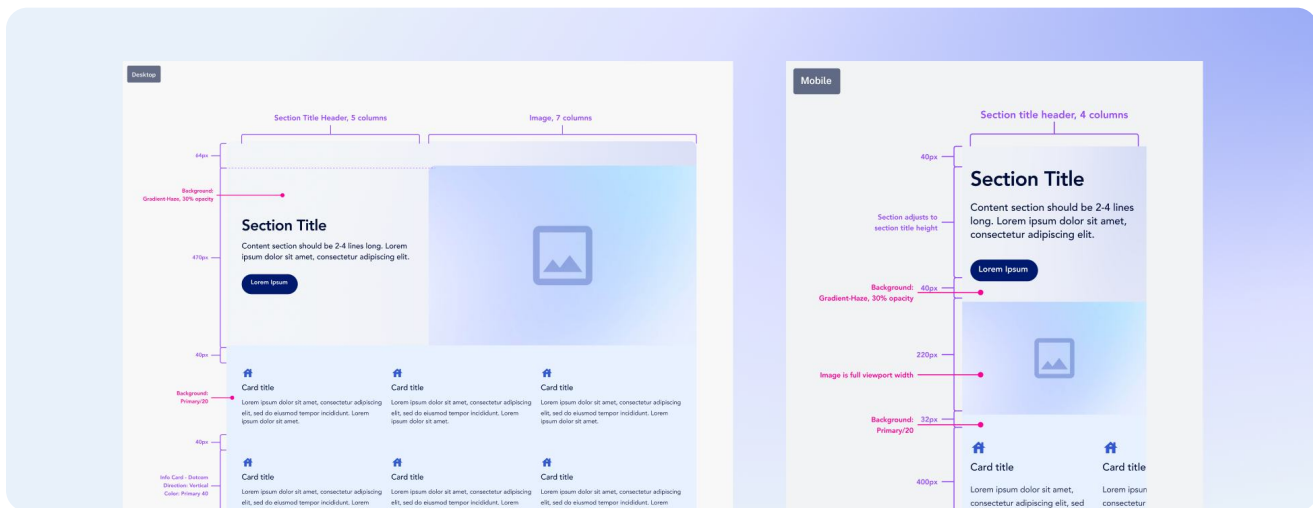
Strategies for Adoption and Enduring Success

Teams from different parts of the organization that are working towards system releases are likely to have other responsibilities directly related to their primary role that can distract or sideline progress on the system. Creating mechanisms and support frameworks can go a long way to ensure consistency and progress towards goals.

Prioritize your documentation

Solid documentation is crucial for maintaining an extensive design system across multi-platform or multi-site experiences.

Your documentation will serve as a central resource for designers, developers, and other stakeholders to refer to and ensure consistency in applying design elements.



In your documentation,
include clear guidelines, such as:

- ☐ Naming conventions
- ☐ How to use different components
- ☐ Different component variations
- ☐ How to combine components to create new layouts
- ☐ Accessibility standards
- ☐ Coding guidelines
- ☐ Usage restrictions
- ☐ Any known issues or bugs

STEP TWO

Establish Clear Communication Channels

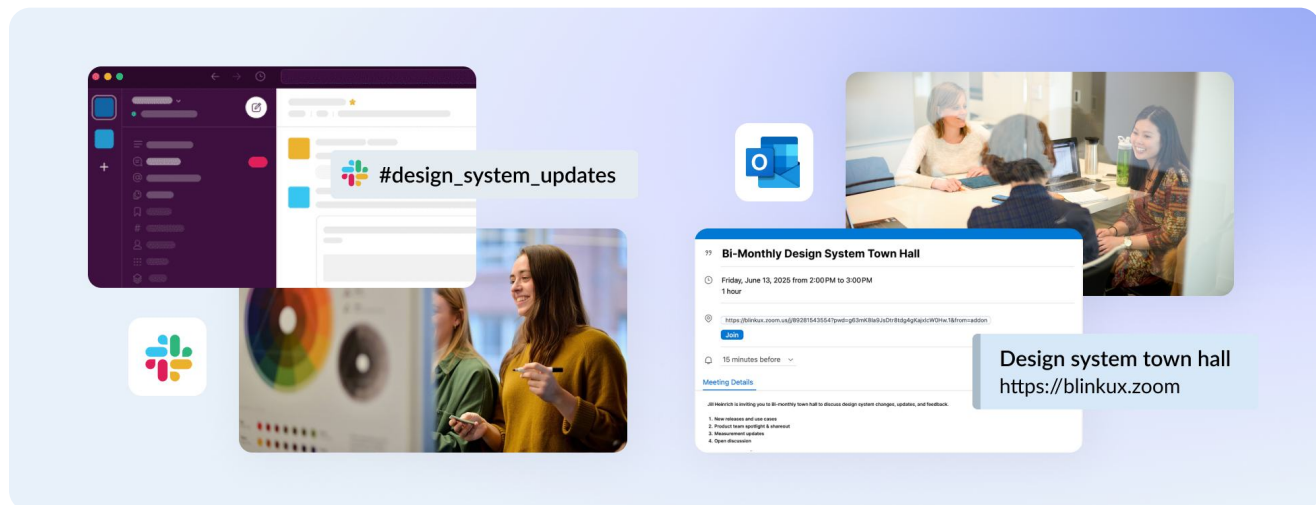
Transparent and frequent communication is key to sustaining alignment around the design system.

Create dedicated channels to broadcast updates and gather input

Most organizations establish a Slack or Microsoft Teams channel for the design system to communicate updates and provide a forum for questions and addressing issues.

Build channels for design system users to provide feedback and receive support

Consider building in an embedded feedback mechanism into the reference site so users can easily report bugs or make requests for updates and new use cases. Establish regular office hours so that users can get support and have their questions answered.



Schedule regular “town hall” sessions “for the design system”

A monthly meeting open to designers, developers, and other stakeholders can include demos of new components, discussions of proposed changes, and opportunities for those using the design system to share their experiences.

Provide regular updates and transparency

Keep the wider organization in the loop on the design system’s growth and status. One way could be sending out a regular brief email newsletter about the design system. Include highlights like new components added, improvements made, and a spotlight on an individual who made a noteworthy contribution.

Mitigate Resistance

It's normal to encounter some resistance when introducing a new system or way of working. Being prepared to anticipate and address common resistance points and concerns compassionately will help maintain momentum. Example concerns include:

RESISTANCE	FEAR	REFRAME
“I’ll lose creative freedom.”	The system is too rigid	It handles the basics so you can focus on creative and UX challenges
	It will diminish creative work	A good design system is not about stifling creativity but creating a structure that enables innovation on a solid foundation.
“Using the system is extra work.”	This is going to be a burden to learn	Make onboarding easy and friction-free Highlight the long-term time savings Offer office hours or tailored team support
	I have to learn new tools or refactor existing work	Over time, as teams see that using the system speeds them up, this resistance should fade.
“The design system doesn’t meet our needs.”	The system won’t cover every edge case or desired component	Establish a channel to request new components or changes. The idea is to be responsive and iterate—to show that the system is a living project that will evolve to accommodate real use cases.
“We’ve always done it this way.”	Other attempts at creating a better system have failed	Leverage executive support and governance to demonstrate that this time will differ.
		When people see leadership actively asking about design system adoption in status meetings or tying bonuses/goals to its success, they’ll understand it’s a serious initiative.

Be transparent about progress and setbacks

If someone is resisting because “it’s not perfect yet,” acknowledge that the system is not complete – and never will be. A design system is a continuous work in progress that will grow with the organization’s needs.

STEP FOUR

Provide Onboarding and Training

Interactive training sessions and workshops are most effective in the early rollout.

Hold hands-on workshops where designers and developers can explore the new system together. This creates a space to build understanding and surface questions in real time.

Use a mix of formats to keep it engaging

Include short videos for quick overviews, interactive tutorials or sandbox environments where people can try building with the system, and in-person workshops for collaborative learning.

PRO TIP

Consider running a workshop where teams use the design system to rebuild a small existing feature. This helps them learn by doing.

Onboard different roles appropriately.

Tailor your training approach to the needs of different disciplines.

Designers, engineers, and product managers interact with the system differently

- Provide **front-end developers** with training focused on coding (how to import the component library, examples of using components in code, component API documentation, etc.).
- Provide **designers** with training on using the shared design tokens, adhering to the style guidelines, and where to find various UI patterns.
- **Product managers and QA** might just need an overview of how the system improves consistency and what to consider when scoping features.

Establish Performance Metrics

The most impactful design system metrics focus on both efficiency gains and quality improvements.

Adoption metrics include the amount that teams are using the system and where components are reused across new projects.

- # of components reused
 - % of teams who have migrated over to the new system
 - Time to onboard a new team into the system
 - % of teams who use the maintained design tokens
-

Quantitative metrics include development velocity, design debt reduction, and resource efficiency.

- Time to market for new features
 - # of legacy components replaced
 - Design & development hours before and after implementation
-

Quality metrics should track consistency improvements across the system that relate to friction reduction or adherence to guidelines, this also includes customer-facing metrics that can demonstrate broader business impact.

- % reduction of design variants
- Rate of accessibility compliance
- % decrease in design-related bug reports
- improved NPS scores
- % reduced support tickets

*Quality metrics are best captured by establishing benchmarks before implementation and using a combination of automated tracking tools, project management software, and regular team surveys to monitor progress.

Conclusion: Planning for the Long Game

Design systems are living products. They require ongoing investment and organizational support from executives, dedicated resources, maintenance, and training. A well-governed, extensible design system can – and should – adapt to change over time as the organization, its products, and its design preferences evolve.

Teams should treat the system as a key piece of infrastructure that's critical to overall business success.



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breakthrough products, services, and experiences?**

Get in touch.

newbiz@blinkux.com

Resources

People to follow

[Brad Frost](#)
[Dan Mall](#)
[Josh Clark](#)
[Michael Schultz](#)
[Molly Hellmuth](#)
[Nathan Curtis](#)
[Sil Bormüller](#)

Conferences

[Into Design Systems](#)
(Sil Bormüller) - in addition to producing this conference, the Into Design Systems organization produces workshops and meetups throughout the year.

Workshops and Courses

[Design System Bootcamp](#)
(Molly Hellmuth, 5-week cohort)

[The Complete Guide to Design Tokens](#)
(Brad Frost, on-demand course)

Books

[Design that Scales](#)
(Dan Mall)

Figma/UI Kits

[Building smarter Figma components: crafting for efficiency](#)

[The Sorry State of States](#)
(Nathan Curtis)

Articles & Videos

[Design System Maturity Model](#)
(Sparkbox)

[Design system 104: Making metrics matter](#)
(Figma)

[Design System Operations: A collaborative process](#)
(Propelland)

[Design Systems are Infrastructure: The evolution of design systems in the age of AI](#)
(Sam Anderson)

[Designing design systems: Supporting implementation and adoption](#)
(Adobe)

[The Folly of Design System “Foundations”](#)
(Dan Mall)

[Ship Faster by Building Design Systems Slower](#)
(Josh Clark)

[The Fallacy of Federated Design Systems](#)
(Nathan Curtis)

Real-World Perspectives on Design Systems

[Q&A with Atlassian's Lead Design System's Designer](#)

[Design Systems Q&A](#)
(Molly Hellmuth interviews Brad Frost)



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