

By

Jonathan Evans

Recognizing the need to improve

The design team at Blink has had a standing meeting that regularly evolved with the company. The meeting has never been restricted to just the designers but has always focused on design topics and project challenges. We noticed that the attendance of the meeting was down. This didn't surprise anyone, because we're busy UX consultants and client work always has to take priority. Still, we asked ourselves, "What could we do to make it a better experience for everyone so that they would make it a priority?"

This was a particularly important issue for Blink at the beginning of 2018 because we had just merged with Tectonic, and knew that this year we would continue to grow. While our work culture was evolving, we had to ensure that our design process was ready to evolve with it. And we felt that the design meeting was the ideal location for having those processes on the front line.

Workshopping the evolution

So, what do UX consultants do when we need to work out an issue? We workshop!

To ensure good attendance of all the designers, we ordered pizza. Then we tackled the problem. We began with the question of what people wanted in a design meeting. We whiteboarded, affinity diagrammed, voted, and came up with the following approach: We would split into

randomized small groups that would meet for 15 minutes every week, then come together once a month to talk about what the small groups found and any other design topics. And have snacks, of course.



Designer Rob and Tristan join the monthly design meeting remotely.

Identifying what's working and what's not

At first, this approach appeared to be working quite well. Attendance (virtual and in-person) went way up and people enjoyed connecting with colleagues in a different way. However, as time went on, we found new issues with this approach: The small group either had too much to share and felt their points weren't being addressed in the large group meetings, or the small group wouldn't get together at all because of the lack of a clear leader.

So, we evolved again. Instead of the randomized small group, we started small groups focused by design discipline: Interaction, Motion, Strategy, and Visual. Anyone can attend any of these meetings. The idea is that people will take the old college approach to these: They can have a major and as many minors as they want. The meetings will have leaders (starting with the higher level folk, but anyone can step into the role), and they will discuss items relevant to the topic at hand. Then once a month, we will get together to discuss what happened at the smaller meetings, as well as a main topic of the month. And have snacks.



Designer Ronald in a small group meeting.

Continuing the evolution

That's where we are today. As we grow, we plan on continuing to evolve. Issues we are still struggling with: all the designers want to now attend all of the meetings, how best to address project feedback from other UX designers, and how remote designers can also have snacks. We are still striving to evolve and adjust as we grow. But we think we're on the right path.

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Designers Ben, Tom and Josh with marketing manager Sara Keats.