

# Design Trends Report: Talent





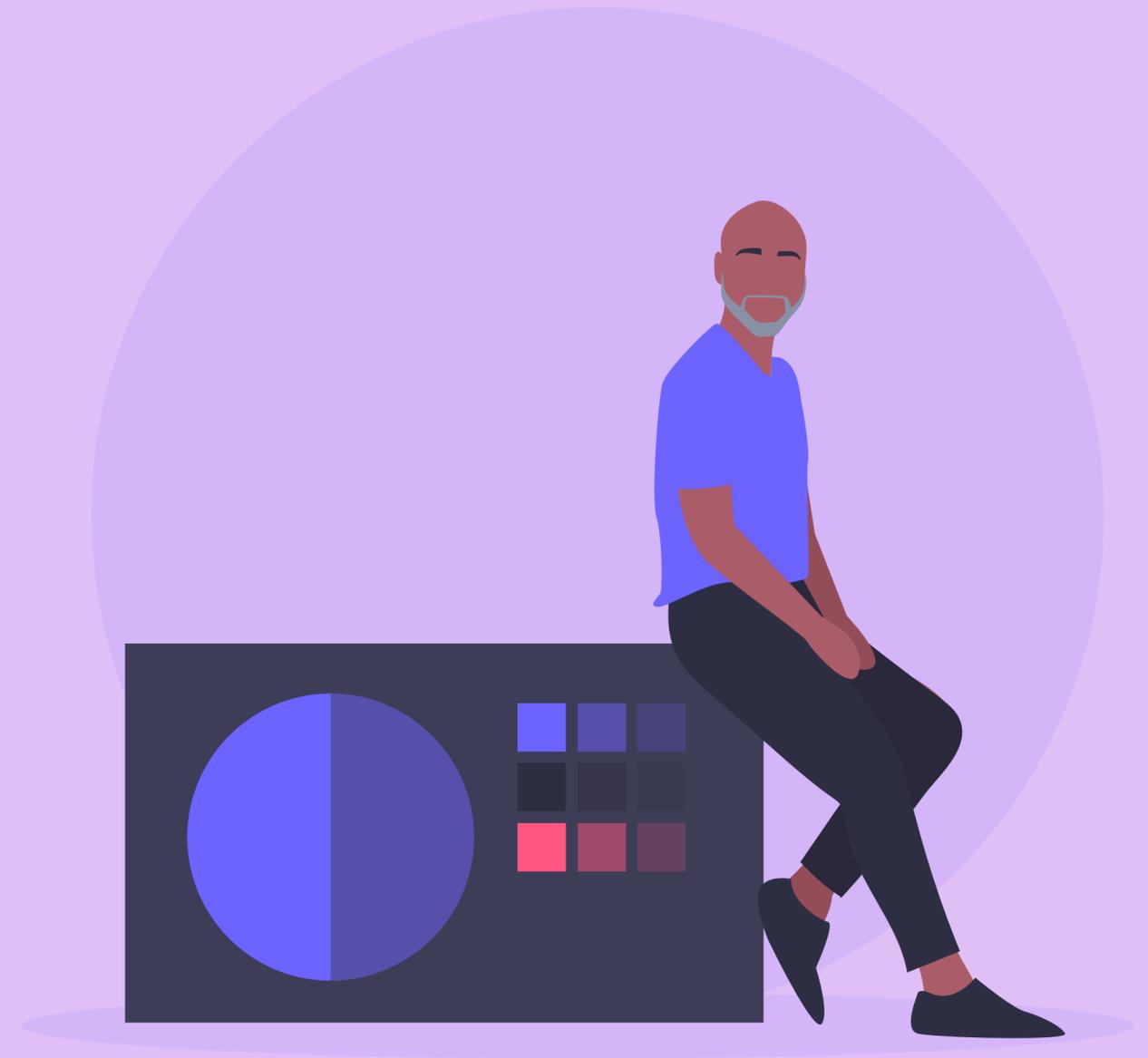
# Trends spotted from InVision's unparalleled global perspective.

At InVision, we interact with organizations that span all levels of design maturity, including 100% of the Fortune 100.

The InVision Enterprise Marketing team created this report to highlight the trends we've observed in our partnership with global design leaders.

# Every report focuses on a theme.

We outline emerging trends and explore the opportunities and challenges they present. From here, we distill best practices and offer insights to spark further discussion.





# Start with *The New Design Frontier* report.

Before you dive into the trends report below, get familiar with the five levels of design maturity outlined in *The New Design Frontier* report.

# How can you use this trends report?

Each trend offers insights around emerging industry trends and aims to provoke conversation. With each trend, we recommend an action to take.

We encourage you to discuss the trends with your peers and teammates, and tell us what you think on social media or via the [Design Leadership Forum](#).



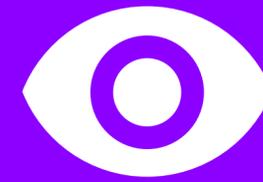
# Start, watch, or stop.

As we share these trends and insights, we offer simple start/stop/watch recommendations.



## Start or continue.

Design-mature teams take advantage of this trend and you should, too.



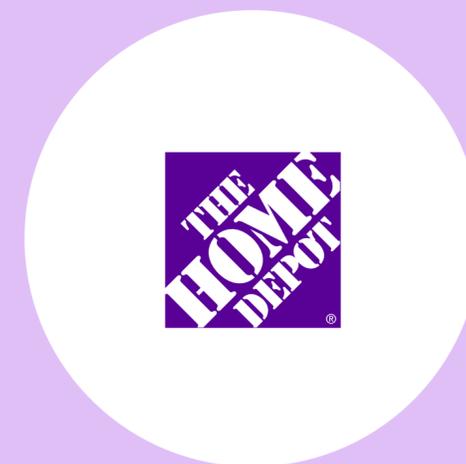
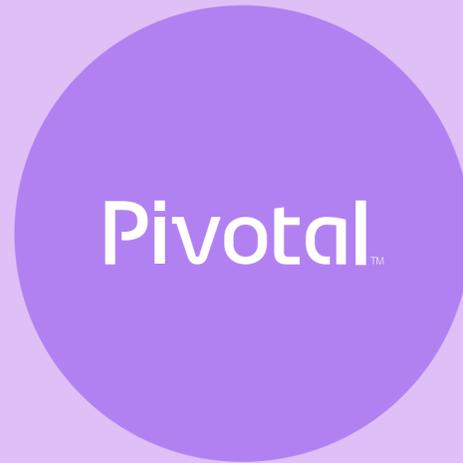
## Keep an eye on it.

This trend could be the next big thing (or it could flame out).



## Stop or modify it.

This trend will cause problems, or there's a better way to solve the problem.



**We interviewed  
leaders from  
these companies  
and more.**



## Stephen Gates

**Head Design Evangelist  
at InVision**

Global design leader building world-class organizations that integrate human-centered design to drive product and service innovation.



## Adam Fry-Pierce

**Director, Design Community  
at InVision**

Maven in the product design space, currently connecting over 2000 design leaders worldwide to help solve their most wicked challenges.

# About the authors

# Why talent?



# Talent sets design-forward organizations apart.

How we find, grow, and keep our best people is becoming more difficult due to record low levels of unemployment, the increasing demand for creative skills, and the expanding role of design. Let's start by looking at the current landscape, the problem we're up against, and what's happening as a result.

# There is an unprecedented demand for creative talent.

According to the [2019 In-House Creative Industry Report](#) there's 11% more creative jobs this year. Additionally, creative professionals and their companies understand design's value like never before, which means the old ways of finding and retaining your best talent aren't working as well as they used to.

# Low unemployment has a downside.

3.5%

We're seeing some of the lowest US unemployment rates in history, and the lowest global unemployment rates in a decade. That gives your people more options. Today, recruiters reach out to employees via email, on social media, and at networking events — driving the competition.

# The old ways of working don't work for creative talent anymore.

Many companies struggle because their traditional recruiting methods do not appeal to today's creatives, and they move too slowly to address top issues like work-life balance, career development, and imposter syndrome. This unresponsiveness causes frustration and retention problems.

84%

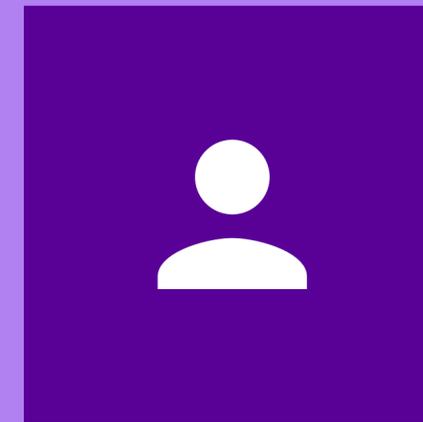
of employees are just  
"coming to work."

According to ADP Research Institute's Global Study, employees are unengaged. Top reasons cited are unhealthy work-life balance and lack of options for remote work. This results in high turnover for design teams.

# The impact they want seems unattainable, so people leave.

Many design leaders and designers were hired on the promise of product or organizational impact. But those same design pros are realizing that what they were promised in the interview is unrealistic, as most of their organizations are stuck in the lower levels of design maturity (where design is still treated as a siloed function). As a result, they're taking advantage of the healthy job market and moving on.

**“They hired me for a vision that they couldn't commit to, so I left.”**



**Anonymous  
design leader**

Previous employee  
at a Fortune 500  
company

83%

Just 5% of companies have high design maturity, empowered design teams, and are getting the greatest business benefits; and 41% are at the lowest maturity level. Having such a large percentage of middle to low maturity teams means many companies aren't getting the most out of their design teams, which contributes to talent churn.

**of design teams are stuck in the middle to bottom levels of design maturity.**

Third quarter 2019

# What's in this report?



**Part 1**

**New ways  
to find the  
best talent.**

**Part 2**

**Rethink  
how you  
work.**

**Part 3**

**Make tough  
decisions about  
your team.**

**Part 4**

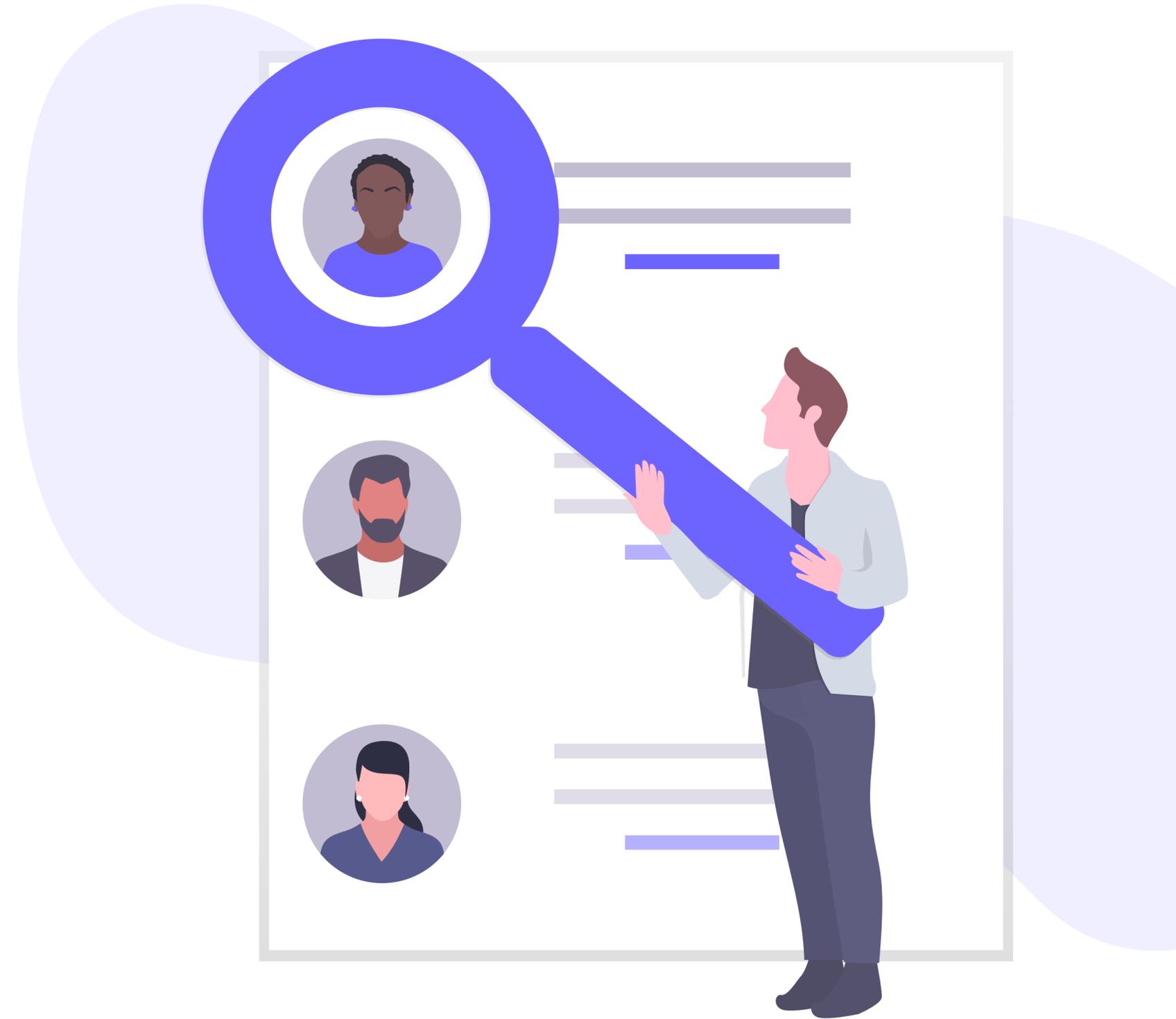
**Smarter  
ways to grow  
your talent.**

**Part 5**

**How to  
keep your  
best talent.**

Part 1

# New ways to find the best talent.



**“Interviews are the first step in a long road for both sides to establish trust.”**

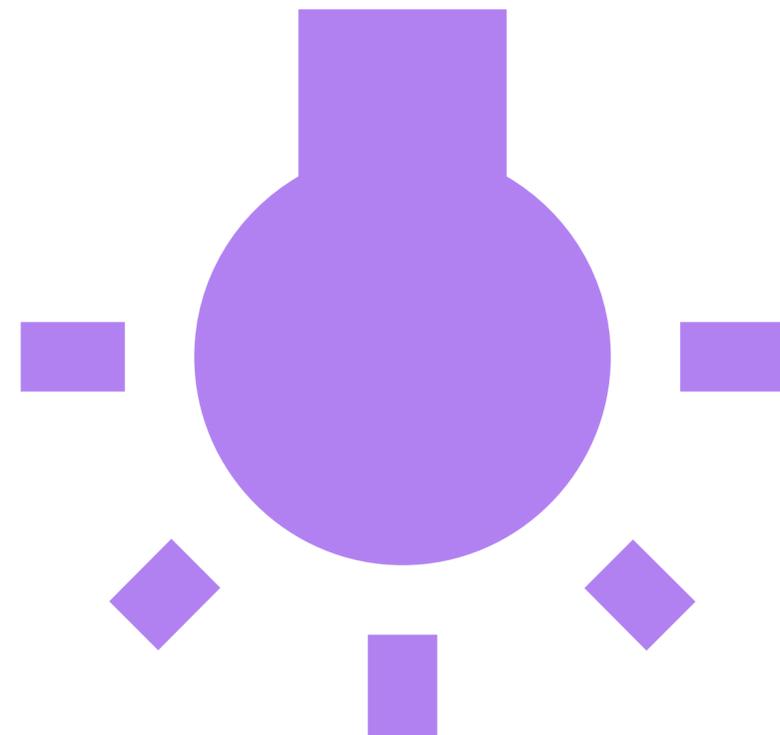


**Cecilia  
Ambros**

Head of Global  
Creative Studios

# It's about creating trust right from the beginning.

If you want to find the best people and keep them, you need to make your hiring process a top priority. Leadership should invest in creating strong emotional bonds among the team and with potential new employees. This is the mark of a high-maturity team.



**“Too many hiring managers keep their blinders on and do not understand hiring trends. This is not a plug-and-play market anymore.”**



**Frank  
Duran**

Head of Global  
Creative Studios



**Raquel  
Chandler**

Senior Design Talent

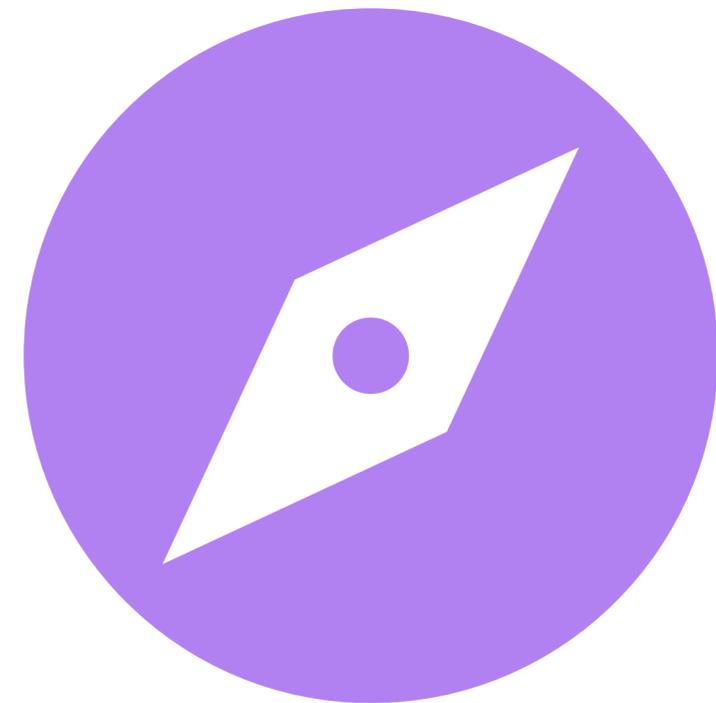
Find the best talent

# Rethink recruiting.



# Outreach is the new recruiting.

When a design-mature team expands, they reach out to the people they would like to see on their team (or to the person they would like to see as their new leader).



**“In order to maintain a pipeline of high-caliber talent, design leaders have to spend 15-20% of their time doing strategic outreach.”**

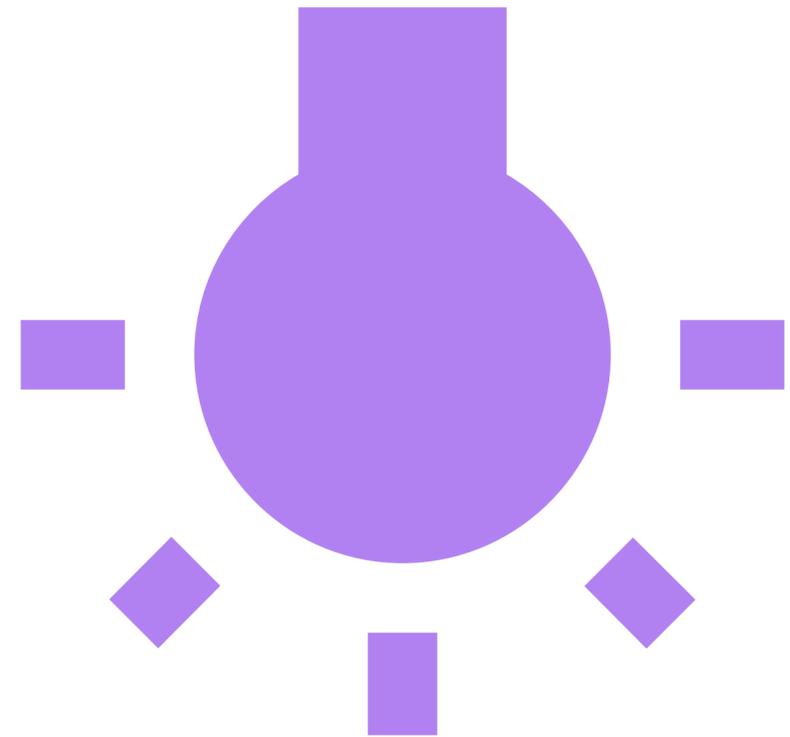


**Bob  
Baxley**

SVP of Design  
and Experience

# HR departments have not matured quickly enough to land the best people.

Design teams question whether HR understands what it takes to find and hire great creatives, so they are getting more involved in the process through outreach and networking.



# Build relationships with the people you want to work with.

Even if you don't have an open position on your team, you can always work to build a network of people you want to add to the team in the future. This way, you can better react to sudden departures, have a vision for how you can grow your people, and gain a greater understanding of what draws people to your team.



**“It’s about human-to-human connections as the industry shifts to relationship-driven recruiting. Hiring managers and staffers would benefit from planting seeds with future prospects and building trust overtime. This is critical.”**

**Google**



**Rick  
Johanson**

UX Program Manager  
and UXCC Lead

# Establish design team hiring standards.

Some Design Leadership Forum members apply the 80/20 rule and claim that you don't need to build out a full hiring playbook; instead, you can write up a one-page doc with candidate personas you'd like to add to your team. Some call this a "hiring brief." Work with your team or recruiting to build and follow the brief. Many leaders will include a red flag/green flag list in this doc: things to look for, things to avoid, and recommended scripts to include in outreach.



**“In this competitive market, you have to tell the story of your team and company if you want to attract the best talent.”**



**Kim  
Williams**

Group Manager  
UX Core

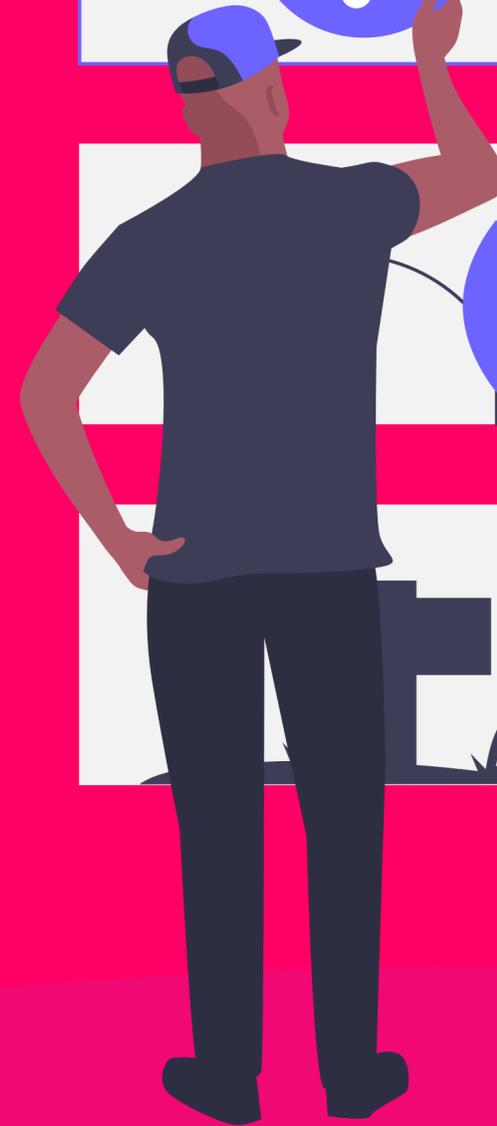
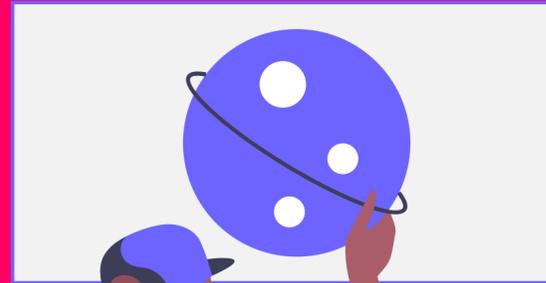


# Start or continue it.

The more engaged your team is in the hiring process, the more they are going to trust and bond with the new hire. Give your people a framework or quota to engage candidates and support them along the way.

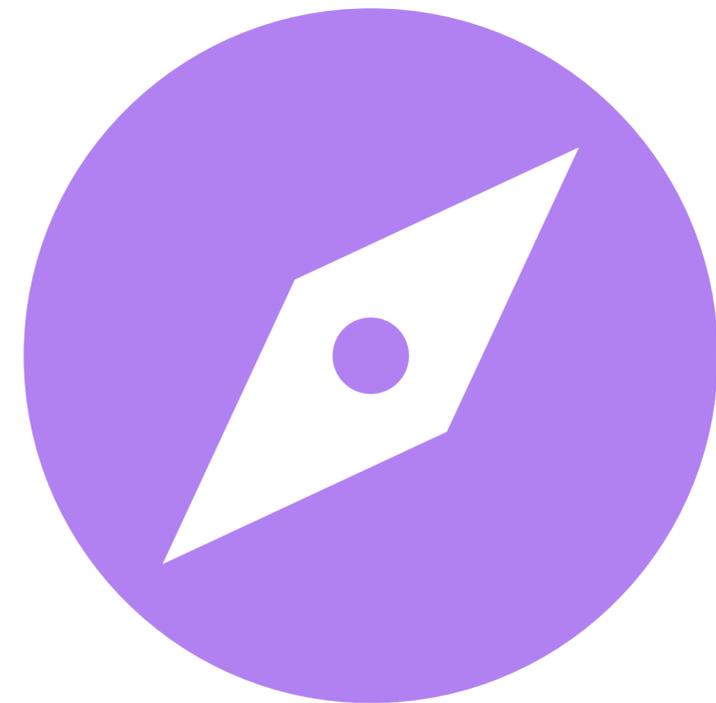
Find the best talent

# Portfolios are dying.



# Real products are replacing portfolios.

Portfolios have been a staple of the creative hiring process forever, but that's changing. High-maturity companies search for a product or experience they admire. Then they track that work back to the people who created it. These candidates don't need up-to-date portfolios because their work speaks for them.



**“Find a product or feature that you love, and then research the people who created it. Then go hire them.”**

**Google**

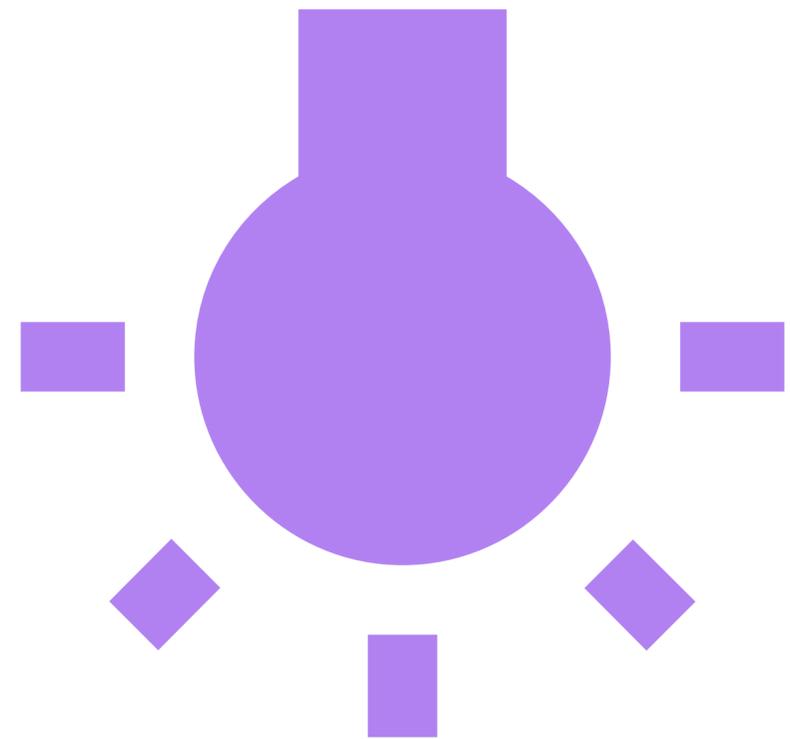


**Rick  
Johanson**

UX Program Manager  
and UXCC Lead

# Companies need people who can launch products.

One of the biggest challenges many companies face is their inability to launch products on time or in a state that can impact the bottom line. As a result, they need people who can produce results. Hiring people who have a proven ability to ship products makes them feel more confident in their choice.



**“I see more senior designers without live portfolios, especially as they shift towards management. It's difficult in a portfolio to demonstrate leadership qualities, the ability to solve organizational problems, business acumen, etc.”**

**Google**

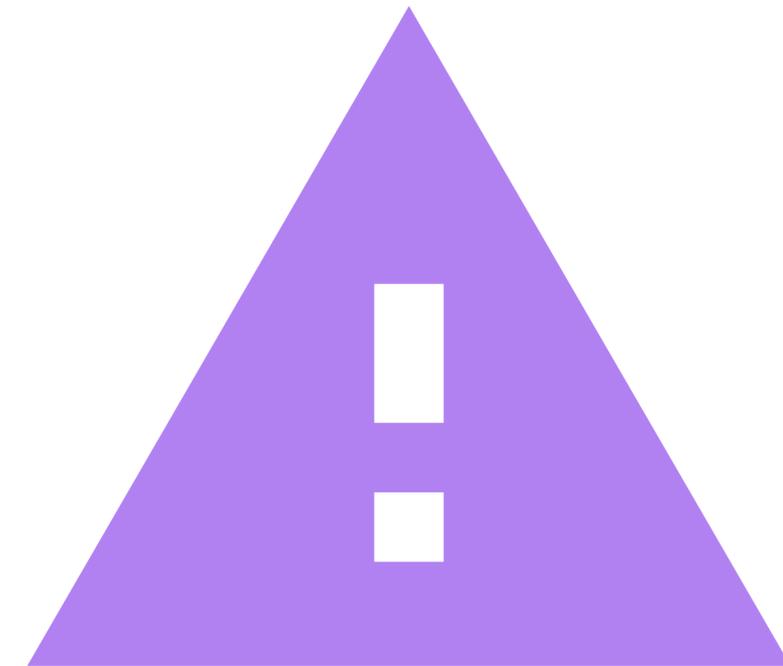


**Rick  
Johanson**

UX Program Manager  
and UXCC Lead

# Understand the difference between individual and team contributions.

No one person is responsible for a product, which is why you need to understand the candidate's role in bringing it to life. You don't want to hire someone who merely tells a good story about their contribution (when what you really want is the candidate's leader or one of their teammates).





# Keep an eye on it.

If the job market cools down and teams continue to grow, this trend may become problematic. It will be harder to track work back to just one individual.

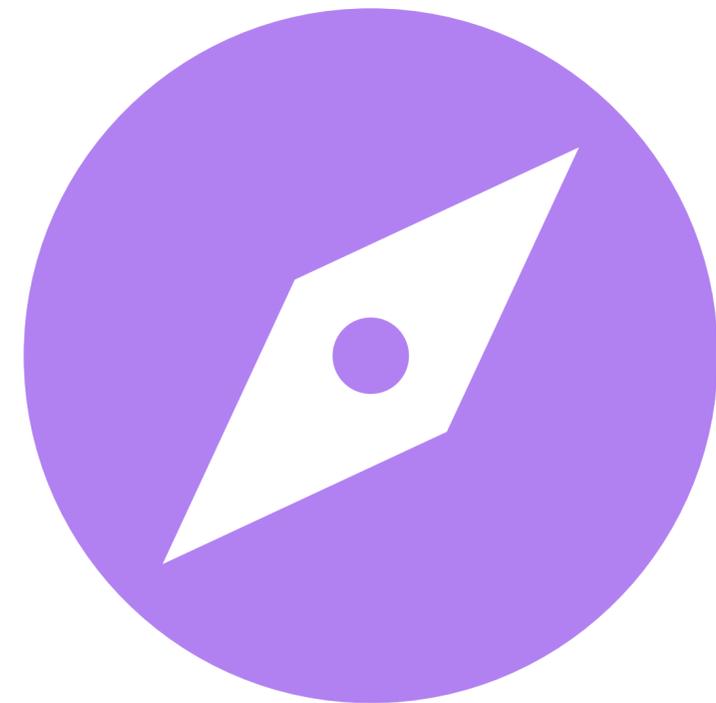
Find the best talent

# Tests and working files are the new interviews.



# Companies want to see creative talent in action.

Many design-mature teams ask candidates to work through a test on their own. Sometimes the candidate is also asked to work through a problem with the people they'll be working with. The team does this to get a firsthand look at the candidate's skills and test team chemistry.



**“ We do white-boarding sessions with candidates to see how they think and interact with the team.”**



**Frank Duran**

Head of Global Creative Studios

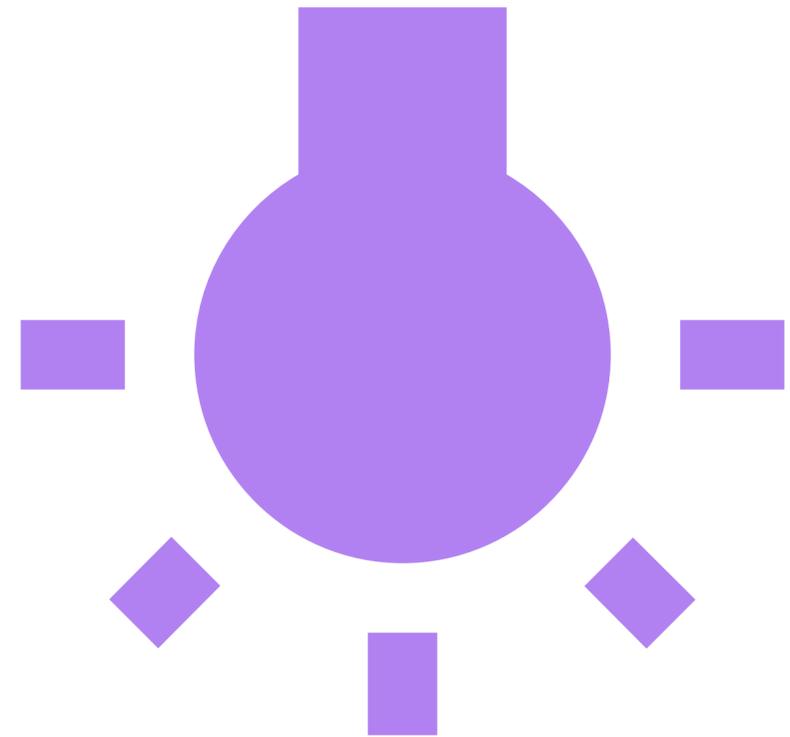


**Raquel Chandler**

Senior Design Talent

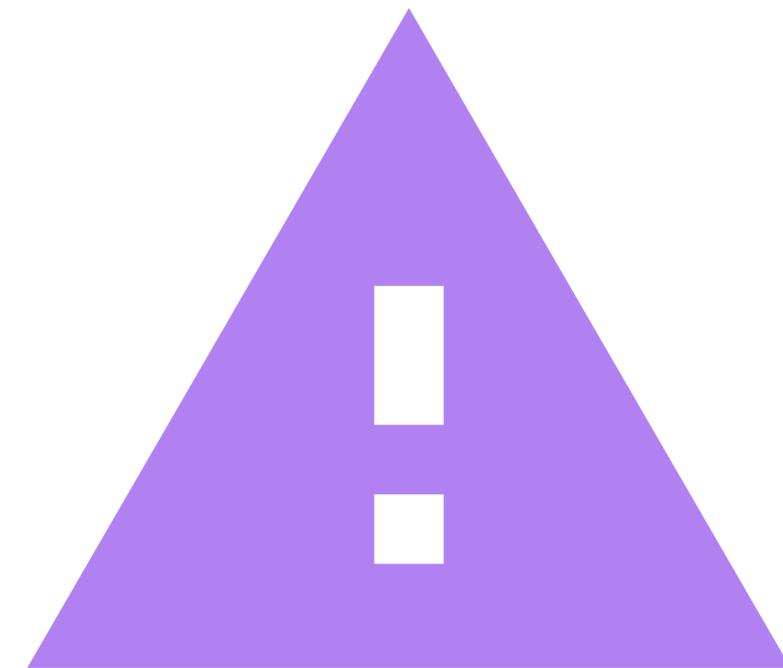
# Teams want to be sure the talent is real.

Companies have been burned too many times by candidates who, once they're hired, don't live up to their stories. As a result, they don't leave hiring up to chance and ask candidates to prove that they can deliver on what they say.



# Not everyone loves this approach — sometimes, with good reason.

Some candidates believe that they shouldn't have to prove themselves beyond their experience. And some have had too many run-ins with companies that use this process to get free ideas.

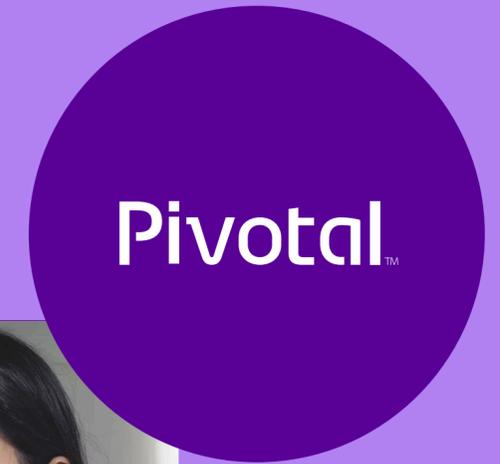


# Use hypothetical or exaggerated problems.

To overcome this perception, you can ask candidates to solve problems that have nothing to do with your industry or could never be used (like redesigning your homepage using only emojis).



**“Portfolios get you in the door, but it stops there. We'll give you a design challenge to solve with our team to gauge how you think, design, and collaborate.”**



**Salome  
Mortazavi**

Design Workstream Lead

# Ask them to walk you through real working files.

This is a great way to understand a candidate's work and creative process. You will quickly be able to understand their role in the project and see the depth of their thinking.





# Start or continue it.

When done correctly and with respect for the candidate, tests and project walkthroughs can be an effective way for both sides to understand the expectations of the role.

Find the best talent

# Social engineering in the hiring process.



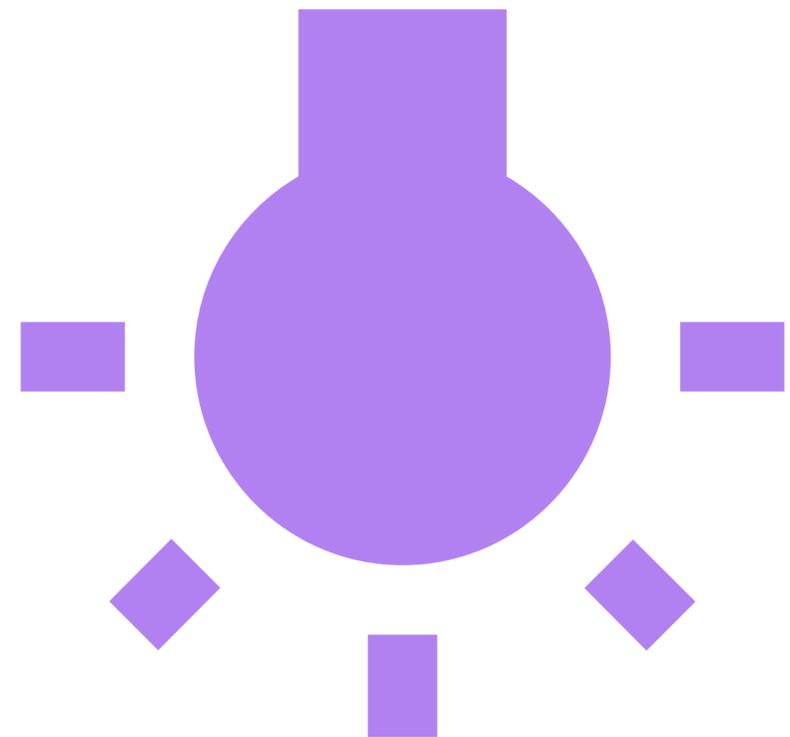
# Companies try to find talent with smarts and heart.

In addition to experience, clients, and tools, teams look for social skills and cultural fit. To do this, they turn to social engineering experiments to gauge how a potential candidate may fit into their team's culture and values.

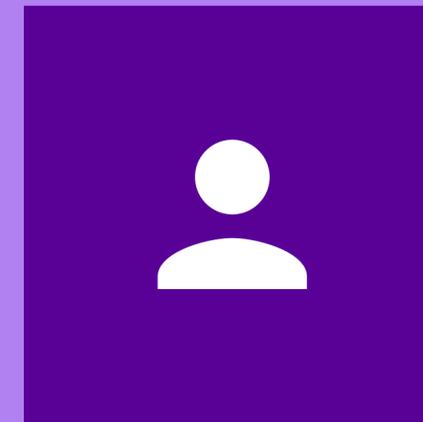


# Emotional intelligence is important — but hard — to measure.

Traditional interview processes don't work when it comes to understanding cultural fit and personal motivations, so companies look for new ways to test whether a candidate will be a good fit for their team.



**“We always make sure candidates get a hot drink or glass of water. Then we take that back, have our interview, and one of the things I’m always looking for at the end of the interview is, does the person doing the interview want to take that empty cup back?”**



**Anonymous  
design leader**

Previous employee  
at a Fortune 500  
company

# Experiments hurt your team by limiting diversity of thought.

It's important to find people who are a cultural fit, but you don't want to place too much of the hiring decision on arbitrary behaviors. Experiments can wrongly eliminate talented candidates and undermine diversity.



# Use emotional and cultural value scorecards.

Instead of social engineering experiments, ask questions that will tell you how a candidate might align with your company or team values. This also helps the candidate understand what your company looks for, which will help them decide if it's a good fit for them.



# Create detailed job descriptions.

Include details like the type of work the role will involve, the metrics the role will be evaluated against, and your company's values. When you lay this groundwork, you're more likely to bring in the candidates you want.



**“You have to invest in job descriptions. Add your mission, what someone could expect to accomplish in the first year, etc.”**



**Kim  
Williams**

Group Manager  
UX Core

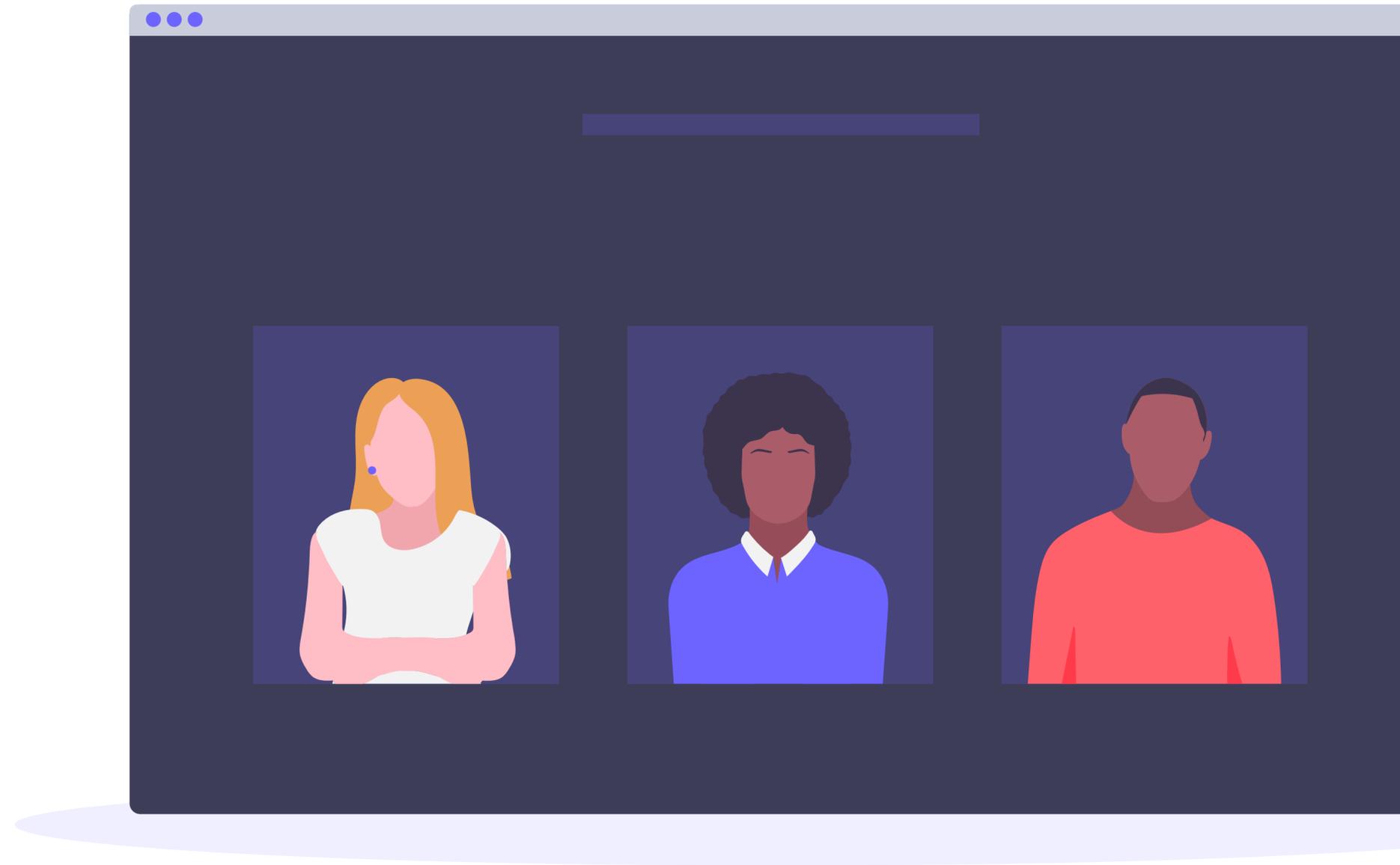


# Stop or modify it.

If you are using social engineering experiments as the sole indicator of cultural fit, then we recommend that you stop. This practice can disqualify good candidates. Focus on the role requirements and company values to get results.

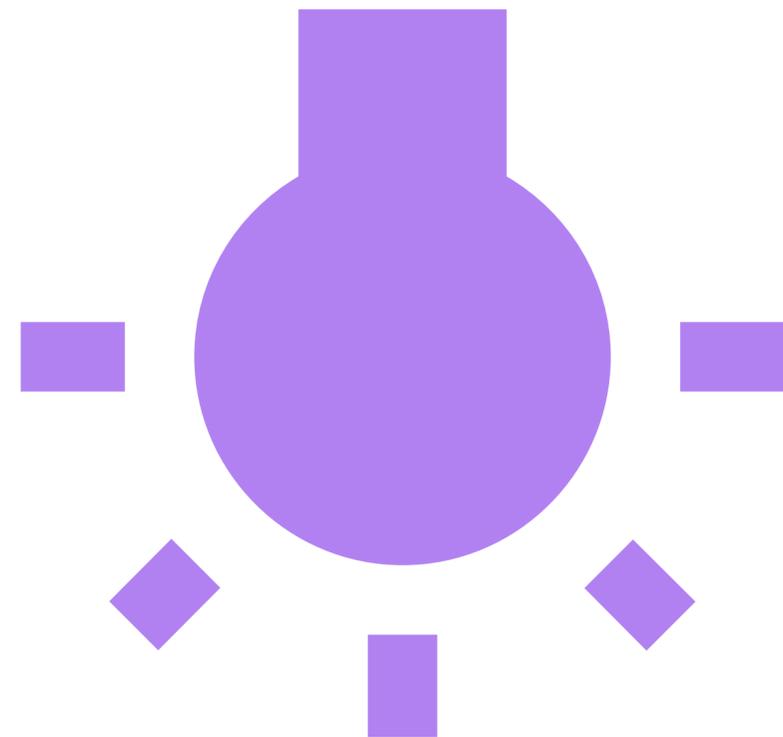
Part 2

# Rethink how you work.



# Technology has freed us from our desks, and there's no going back.

We're seeing a rise in remote work and alternate ways of working. People want better work-life balance and are rethinking traditional work constructs.



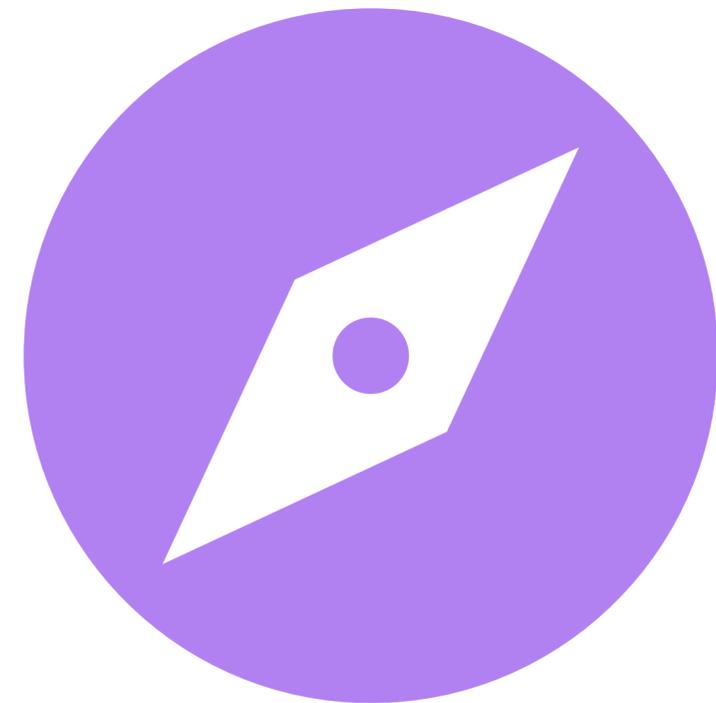
**73%**

Companies are becoming more global and employees are demanding better work-life balance. According to UpWork's 2019 Future Workforce Report, 73% of all teams will have remote employees by 2028.

**of all teams will have remote employees by 2028.**

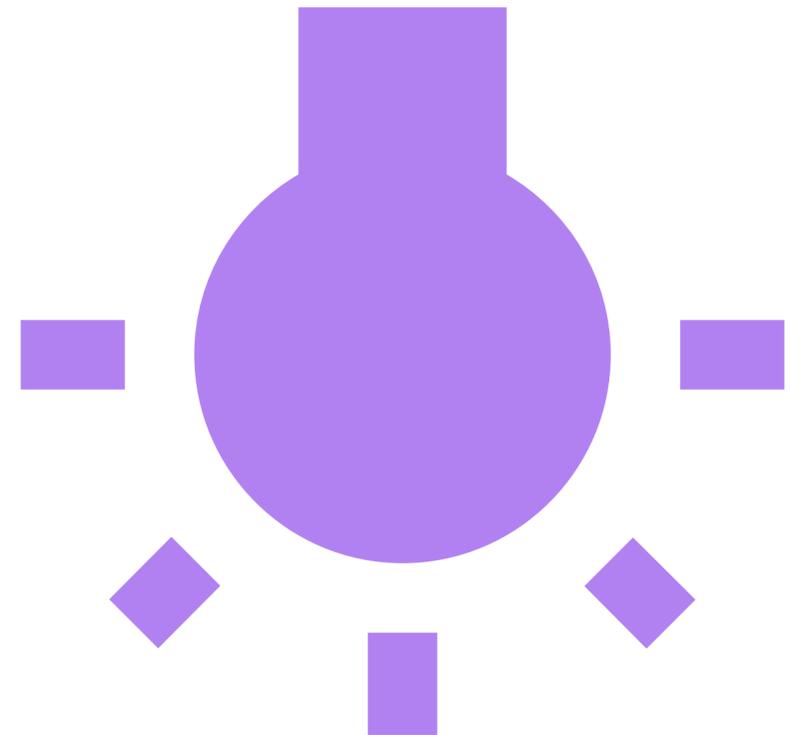
# The traditional agency model is struggling.

As creative talent continues to migrate towards in-house teams, agencies are struggling to find business models that keep people on board as strategic partners, instead of treating them as staff augmentation or creative product.



# The gig economy and the digital nomad lifestyle impacts how we work.

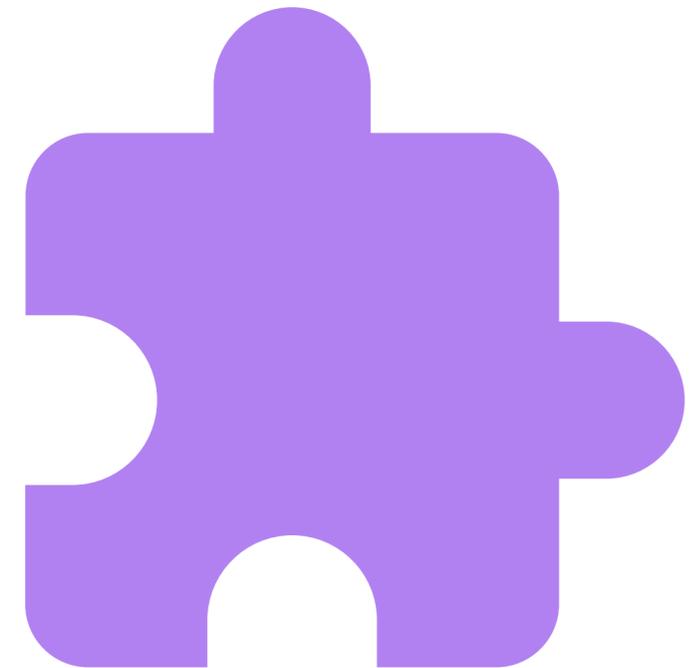
Creatives don't want to work 14-hour days anymore. They want to have flexibility in their hours and diversity in their clients. And they don't love the idea of being tied to just one company. Technology has freed them from their desks and given them the global reach that lets them work anywhere, anytime.

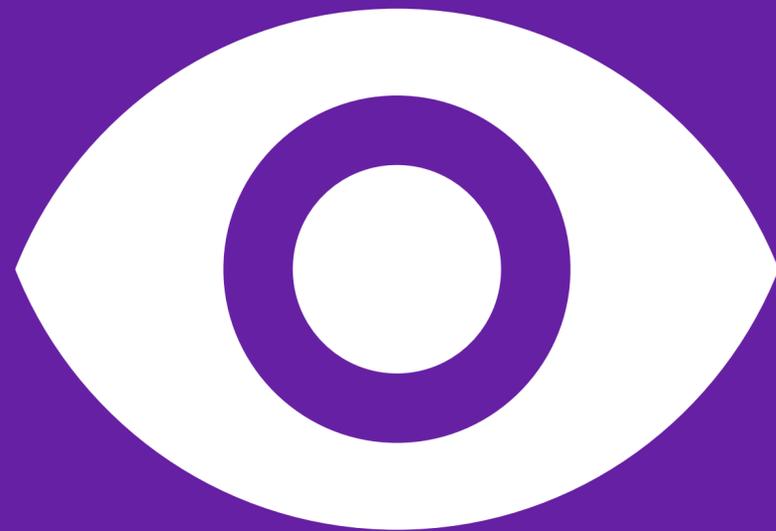


# Group of Humans

Group of Humans project teams are small, flexible, and adaptable. Each team is selected from our global network for their project-specific skills, processes, and experiences.

Learn more at [groupofhumans.com](https://groupofhumans.com)



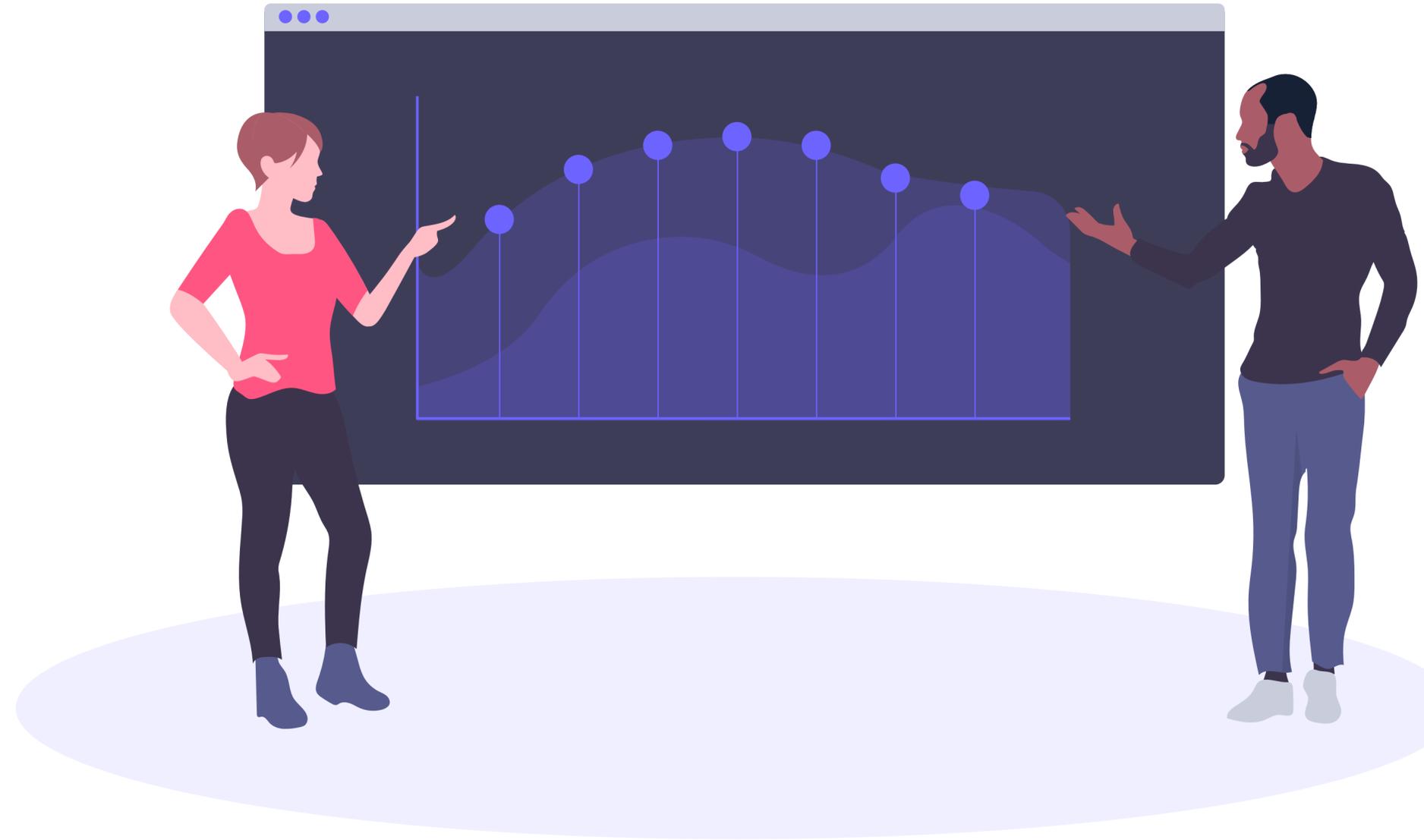


# Keep an eye on it.

This trend lets companies work with the best talent (and keep that talent pool fresh). Only time will tell if it will provide them with the stability they need.

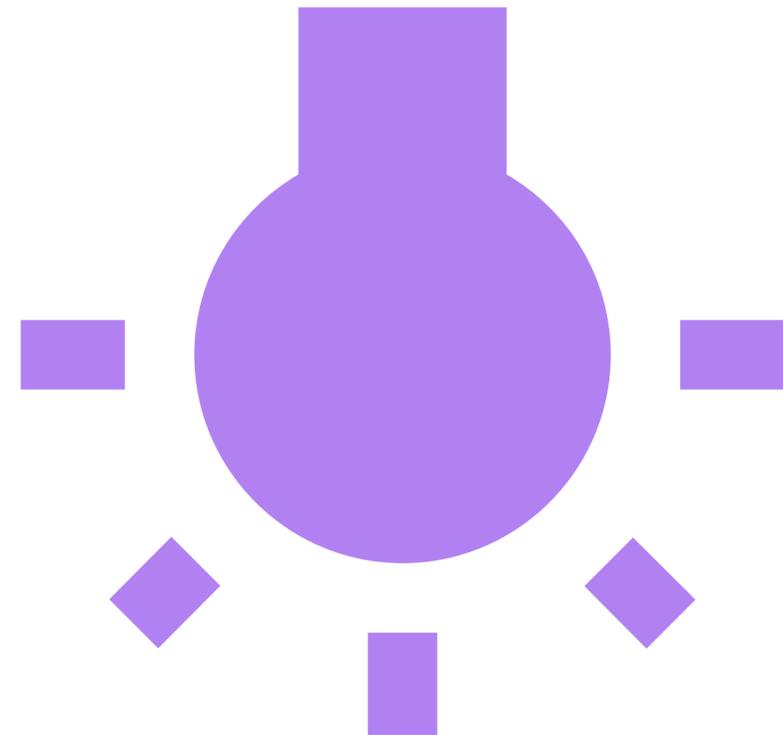
Part 3

**Make tough  
decisions  
about your  
team.**



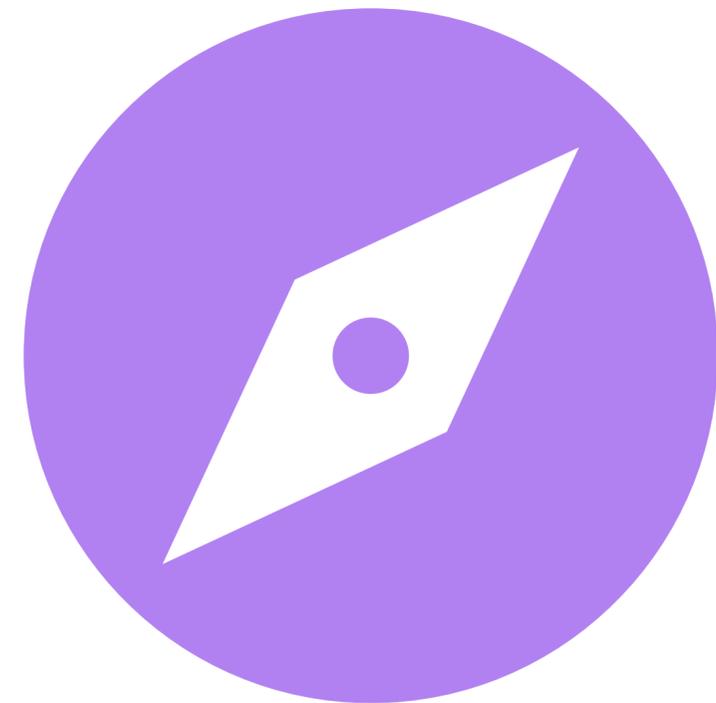
# A leader must grow their team's skills to stay ahead.

This growth sets the standard for the team — and presents a new challenge for its leader.



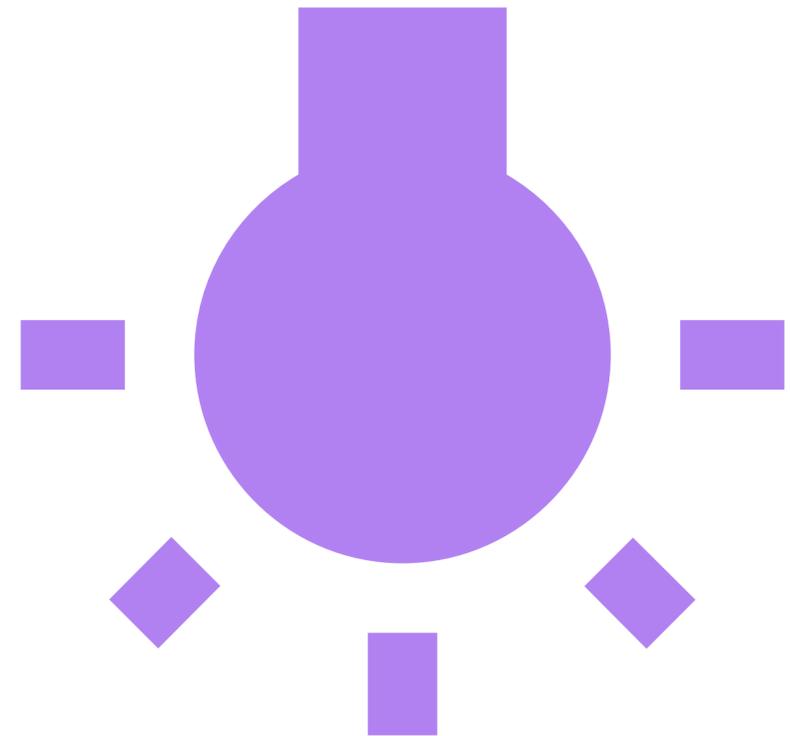
# The people who got us here may not be the ones who can take us where we need to go.

As design teams mature, they're expected to take on bigger and bigger challenges. This means that the skills they needed in the past are not the skills they need now. Leaders must regularly review their teams to ensure that they can succeed.



# Visual design is now product design.

Product design is done by a diverse set of teams and incorporates product roadmaps, research, data, and design systems. This, in turn, impacts what the design team is asked to do. But most teams have not taken the time to look at their team's skillsets and plan how they will evolve them to meet the new demands of the business.



**“Your team needs to see that you will kill the dead weight.”**

**Google**



**Abigail  
Hart-Gray**

Director UX

# Set standards and let everyone decide if they will rise or fall.

The worst changes are the ones that feel arbitrary or lack transparency around how they were made. You need to create clear standards that all roles are evaluated against, and communicate the timeline for evaluation, so everyone has the opportunity to succeed.



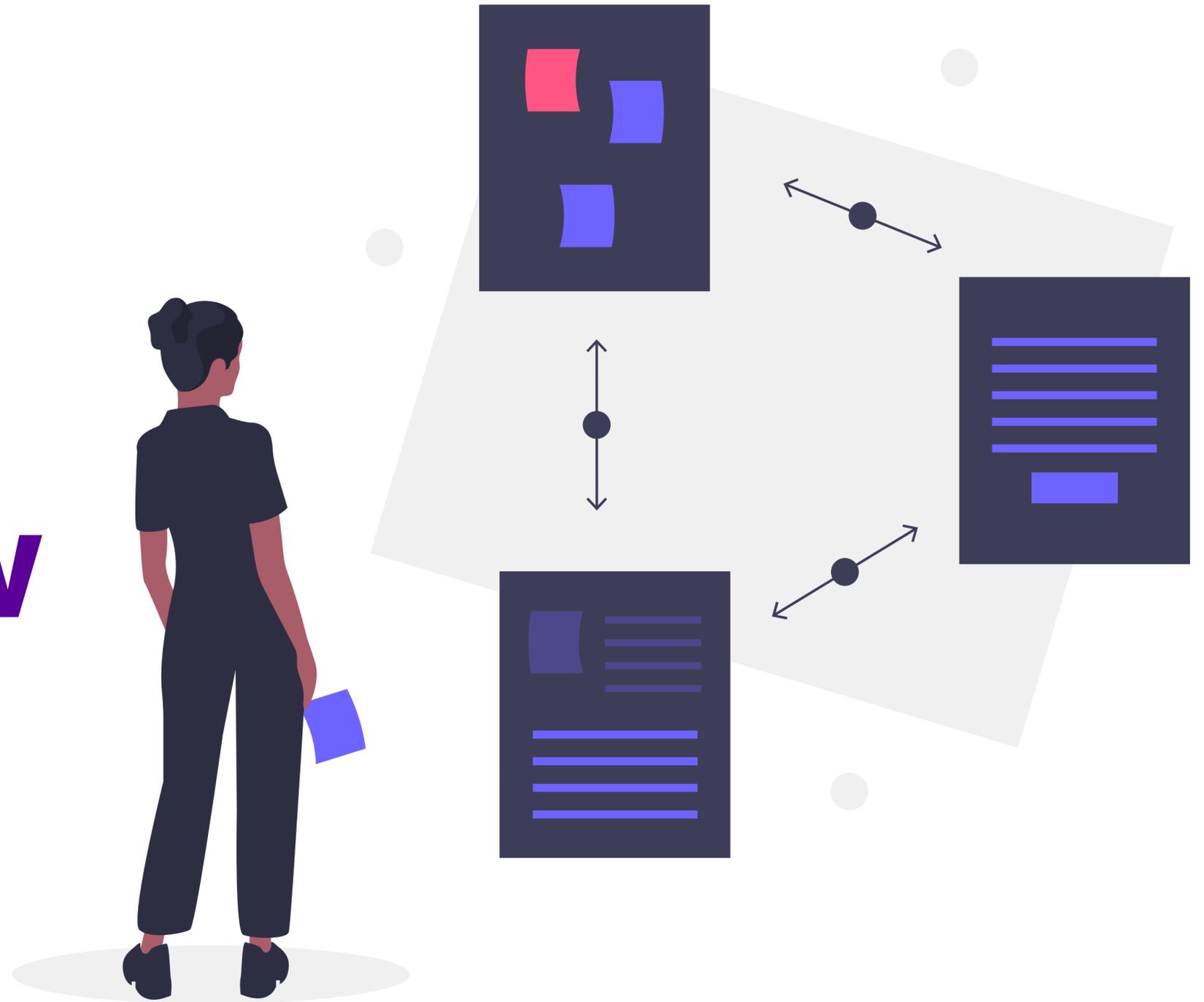


# Start or continue it.

Leadership and success continually evolve, so you need to ensure that your team evolves, too. But you need to do it with structure, clarity, and humanity, so everyone knows they can have a long future on the team (if they work for it).

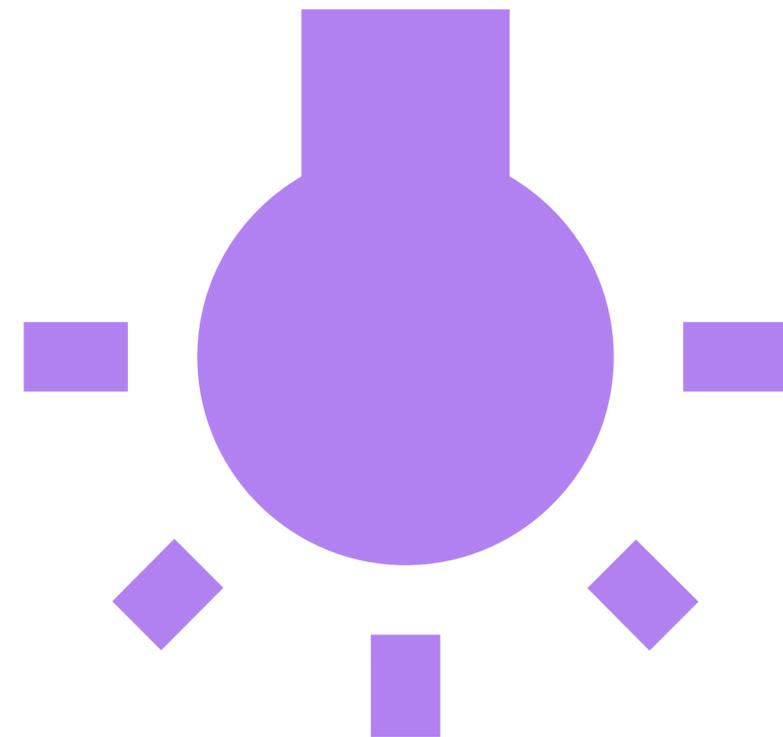
Part 4

# Smarter ways to grow your talent.



# Create new training methods, career paths, and concepts of leadership.

To mature, design teams need to develop their own values and culture within their company. The silos, politics, and old ways of approaching problems kill innovation and drive away the best talent.



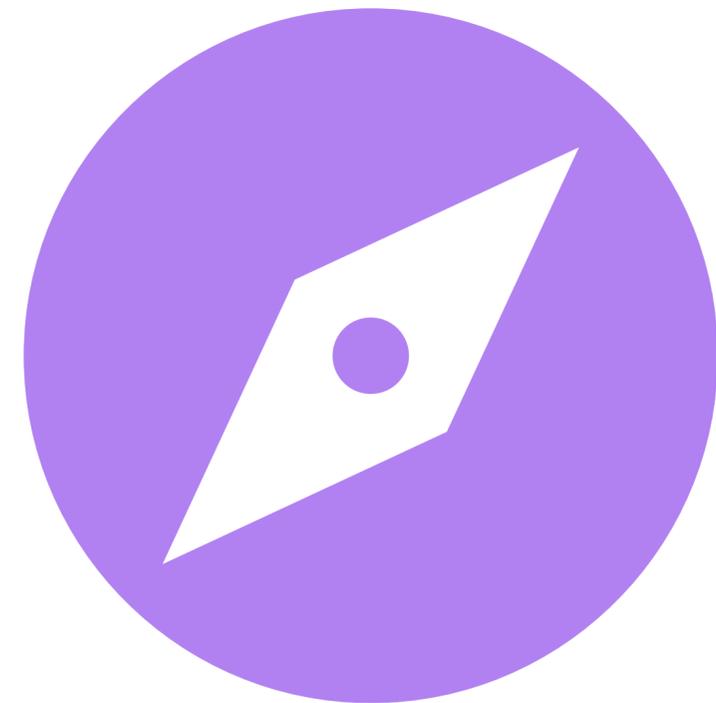
Grow your talent

# Look beyond your project roadmap.



# Teams can fall into the project roadmap innovation “trap.”

Too many teams bind their thinking to the scope, time, or requirements of a project — and fail to see the big picture. This can lead them to create weak products that don't consider the broader customer experience.



**“We encourage our people to take on side projects that focus on business problems. It lets them develop their skills, get visibility inside the organization; and helps us solve business problems.”**

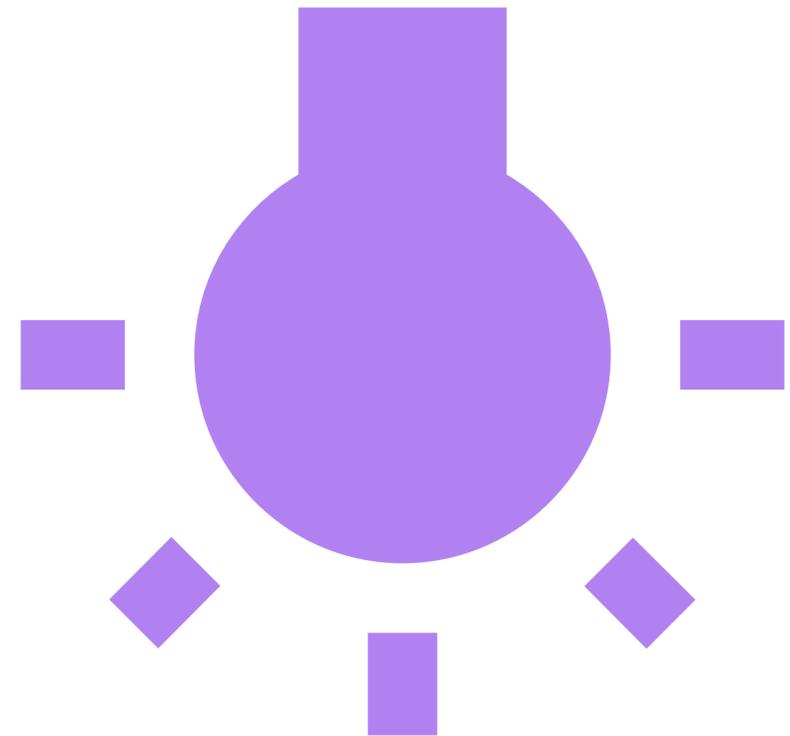


**Danny  
Brosche**

User Experience  
Manager (UX) of Apps

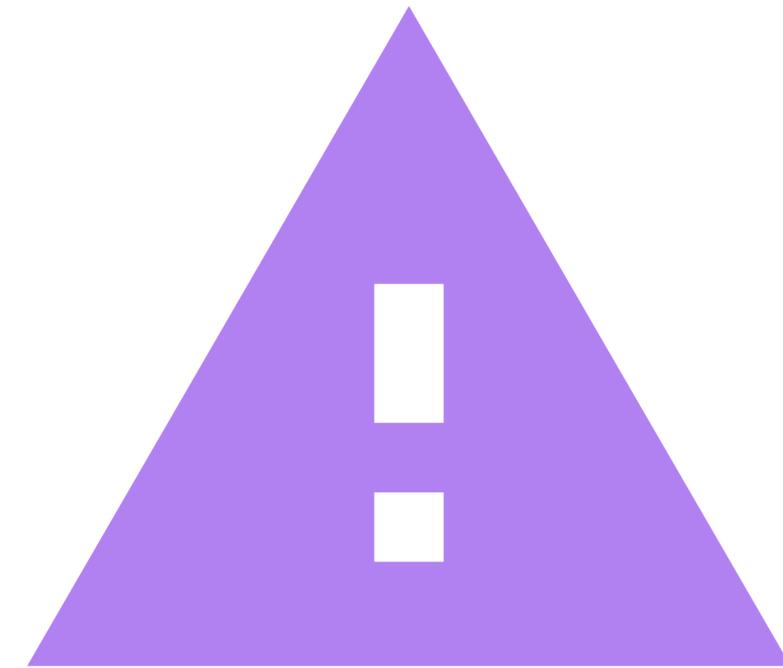
# Designers want to be seen differently. They want the ability to influence their work.

Designers work hard to make an experience better and can get frustrated when they feel like they aren't solving the "real" problem. They like to be seen as problem-solvers who can help any team create better ideas. If they are told to just "make it pretty" they will find other ways of being creative or they'll simply leave your company.



# Don't become the problem you're trying to solve.

Your team can't work in a vacuum; they need strong partnerships with teams like engineering, data, and marketing. Work with them on the best way to go about your team's initiatives. This will make them feel included and ensure that your team's work can actually launch.





# Start or continue it.

Keep your team motivated, get them exposure, and solve key problems — without losing the trust of product, engineering, and marketing.

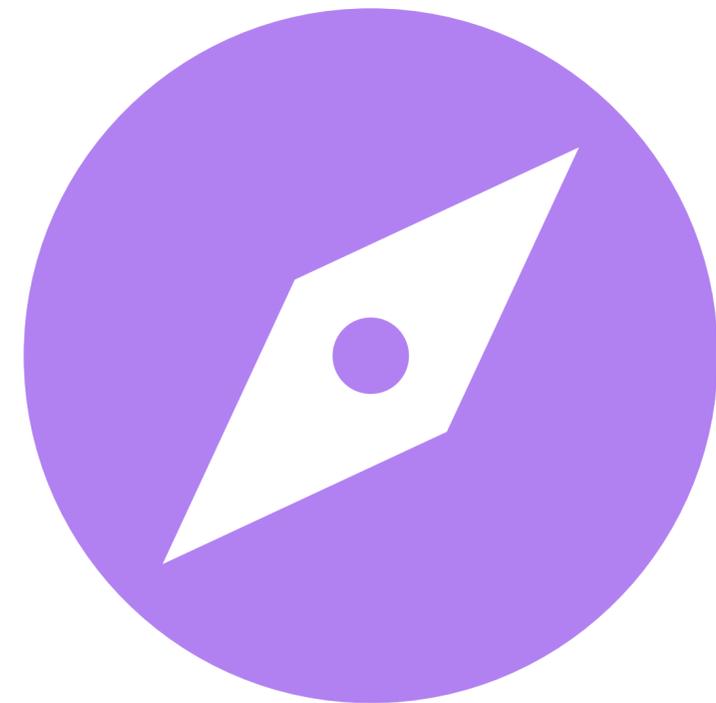
Grow your talent

# The rise of the introverted designer.



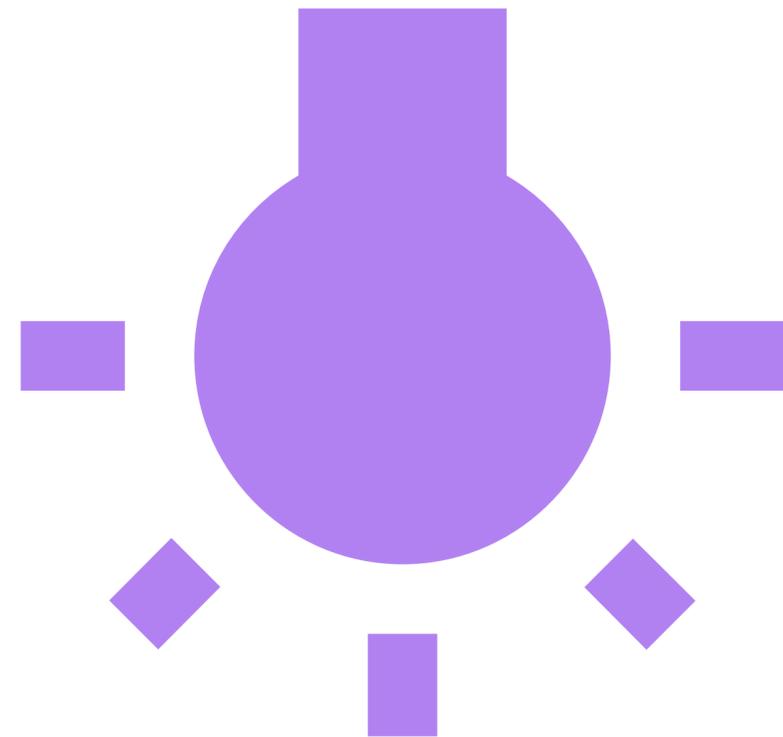
# Not every leader has an alpha personality. That's a good thing.

For a long time, people thought "good" leaders needed to be extroverts. However, we're finding that's not true. While some describe introverts as shy, or even weak, introverts merely have a style of working that many are not used to.



# People are tired of poor leadership, so they are stepping up.

This is happening because leadership can be the biggest champion or the biggest blocker to creativity. More people are jumping into leadership roles, regardless of whether they are extroverted or introverted, because they feel the problems of poor leadership more than anyone.



# Teach new skills on how to work with introverts.

What makes introverts who they are is also what makes them valuable. High-maturity teams give their introverted teammates context in meetings, alone time, and more — so they can do their best work, the best way they know how.



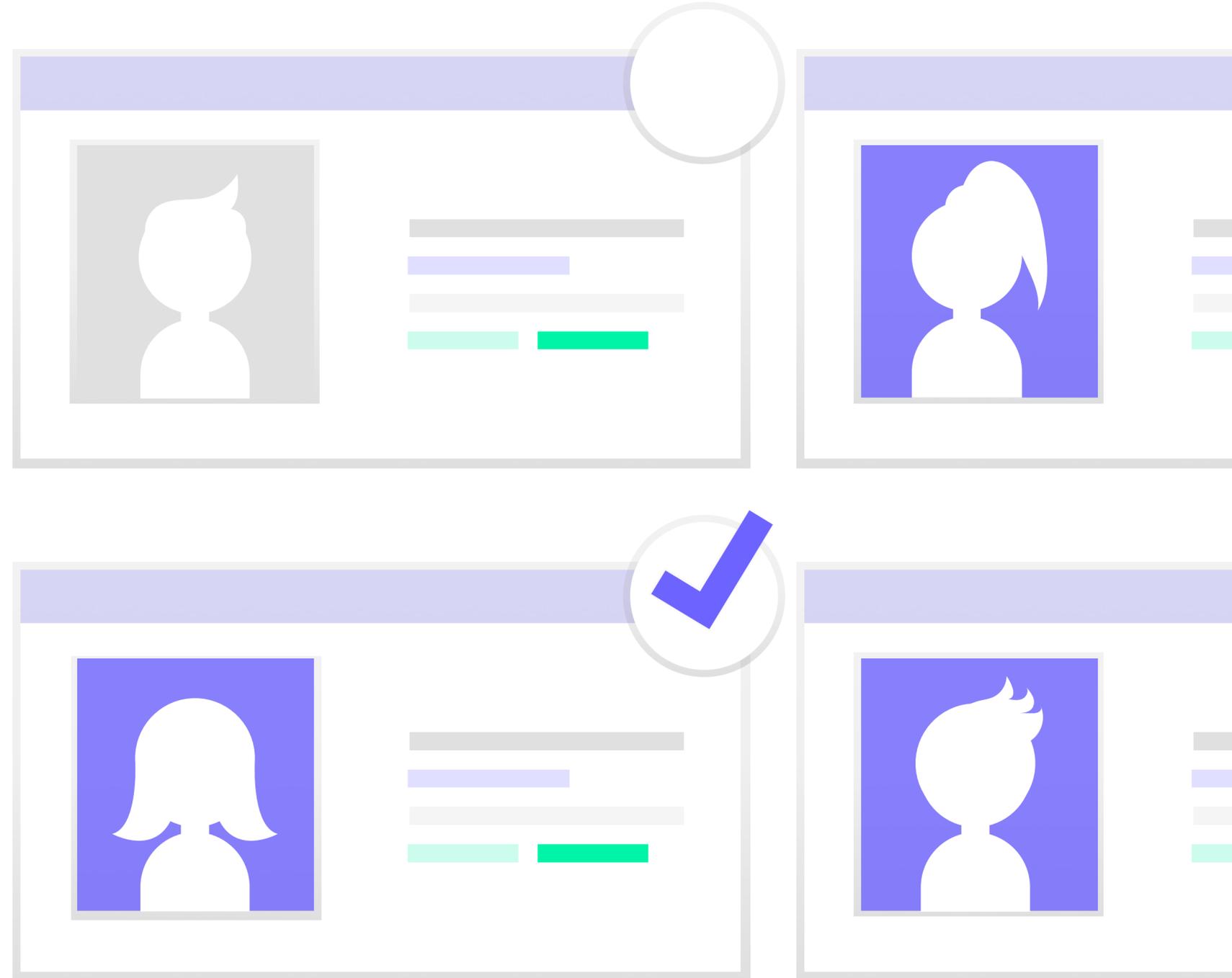


# Start or continue it.

All leaders need to know they have a voice and can succeed on your team. Open a broader view of what leadership looks like and let each person bring their own unique style to the table.

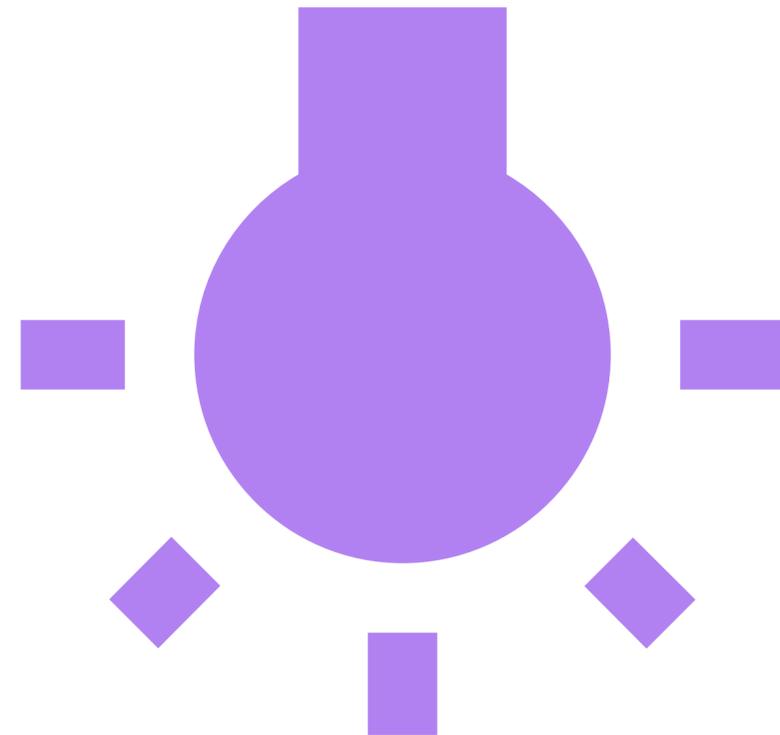
Part 5

# How to keep your best talent.



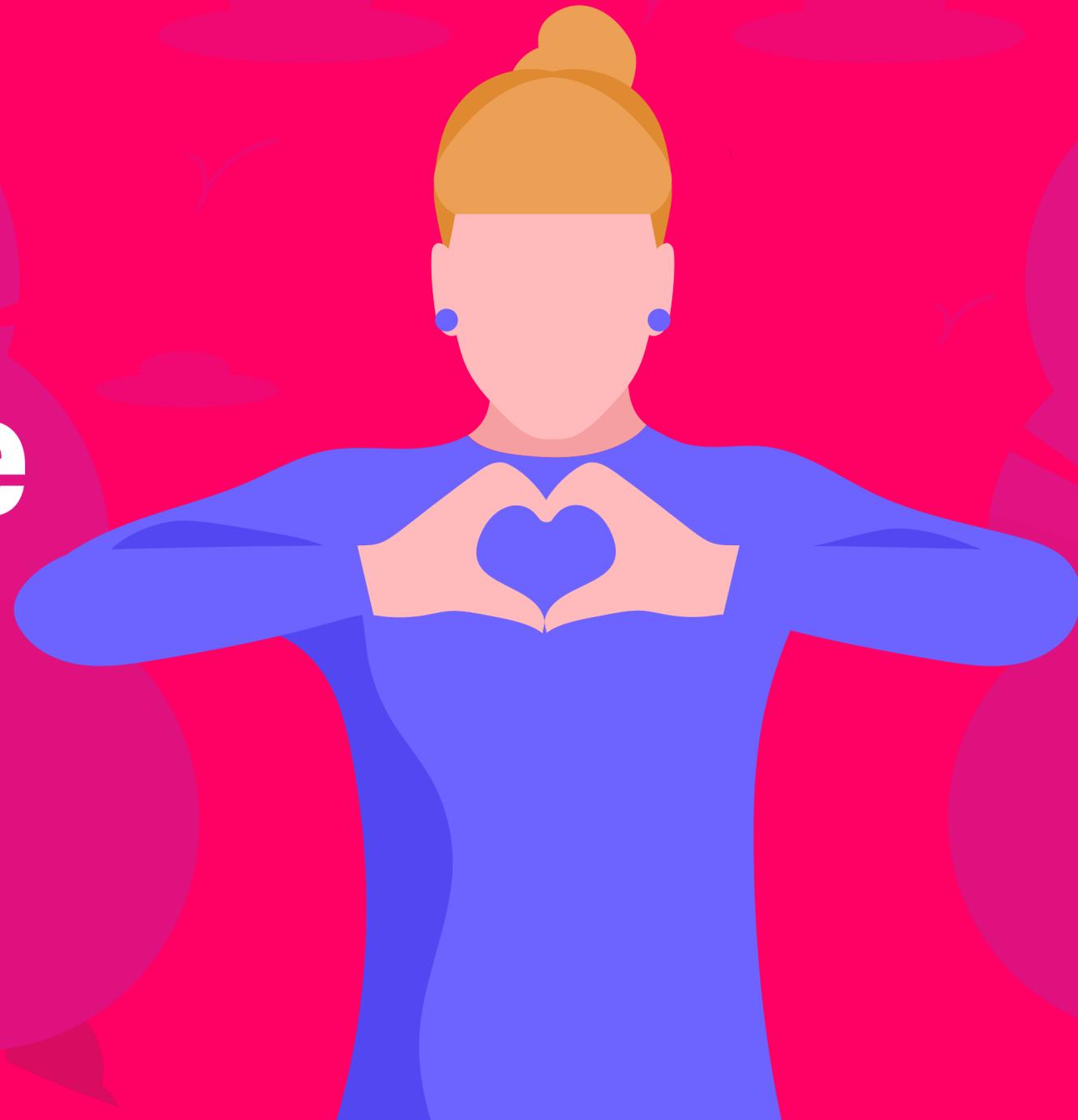
# Focus on cultural innovation — as much as product innovation.

Many companies try to improve their work processes in the hopes that it will fix their team culture — but it's actually the other way around. When you have a strong culture, the team (and their work) progresses.



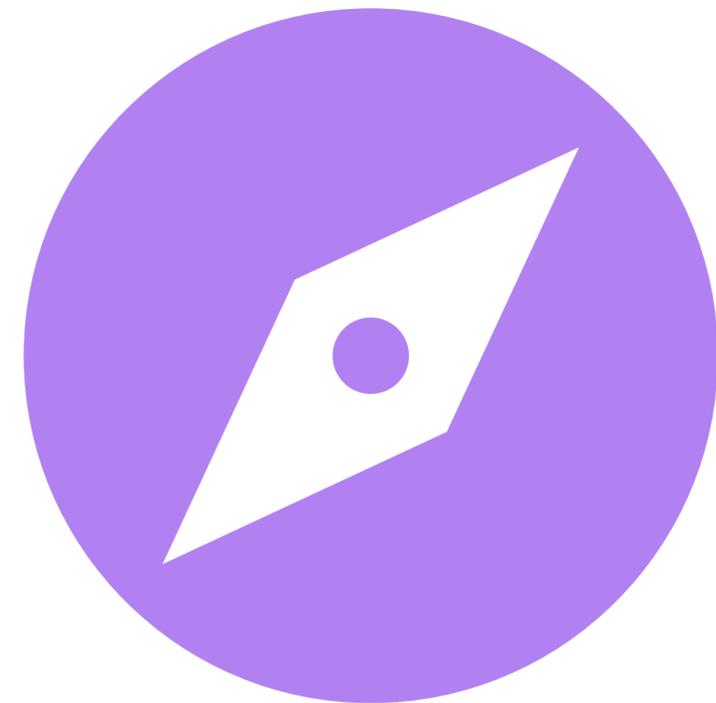
Keep your best talent

**Culture  
matters more  
than ever.**



# Talent gravitates towards a great culture.

To attract and keep talent, more and more leaders are investing in culture amplification projects. Employees want to feel that they're creating exciting, impactful work at a culture-forward company. We're seeing an increase in teams producing non-product specific work and sharing that work on different platforms like design field guides, special events, and podcasts.

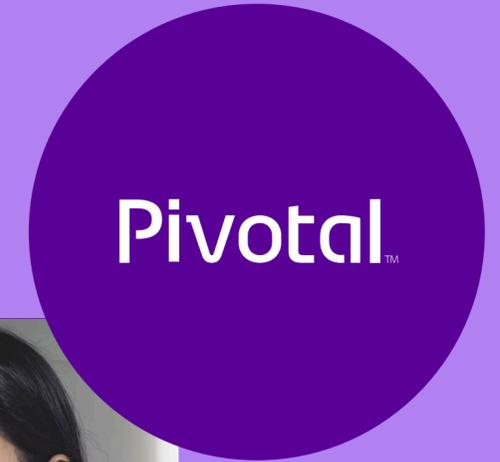


# Tell your team's story everywhere you can.

To bring in the best talent, you need to share what makes your team unique, from the challenges you're tackling to the culture you're building. Get your team's story out there: your website, social media channels, conferences, and design field guides are great places to start.



**“Our design field guide was meant to support our clients and internal partners. We ended up unifying our team along the way.”**

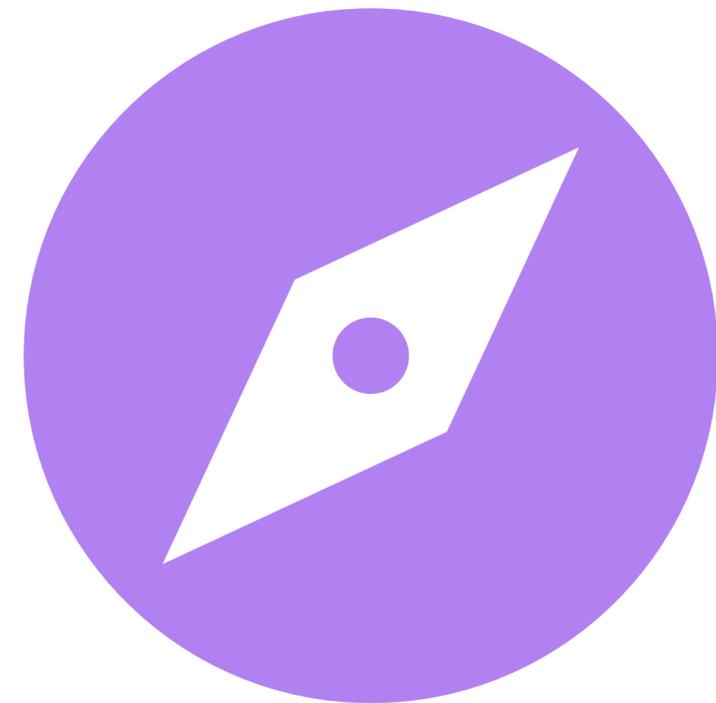


**Salome  
Mortazavi**

Design Workstream Lead

# Most company cultures do not promote or support creativity.

As in-house design teams continue to grow, designers look to have bigger impact, get closer to problems, and play a role in the company's direction. However, many designers find that their company's culture can hinder (and even kill) creativity through excessive process, internal politics, and bad leadership.



**“ Career development conversations are about personal fulfillment. Corporations are not good at personal fulfillment. They work in a competitive, unemotional, linear way that doesn’t induce creativity.”**

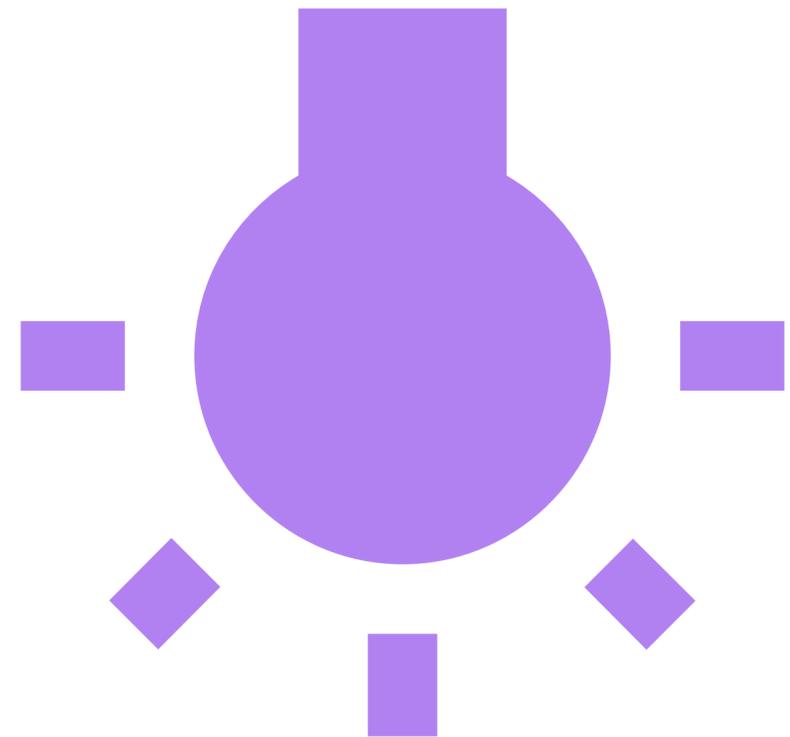


**Cecilia  
Ambros**

Head of Global  
Creative Studios

# Invest in cultural innovation — like you do in product innovation.

Most teams focus their energy on solving problems in their work, but spend very little time addressing the emotional or cultural issues on their teams. Those problems are harder to solve. But as designers continue to be asked to contribute more, they need to feel like their creative processes and emotional well-being are also being looked after.



# Build your team's culture and values.

To keep creativity from getting lost in the larger corporate culture, you must have a robust culture and strong values. This foundation will help retain your talent. It's also important to recruiting; creatives don't want to work on a team that lacks an identity.



**“You can't be a successful unicorn hunter if you're going to bring people into a horrible culture. You have to create an environment that creatives want to be a part of.”**



**Rachel  
Kobetz**

**SVP Head of  
Experience Design**



# Start or continue it.

Make sure your team's values are grounded in your company's values, so your team doesn't get conflicting messages.

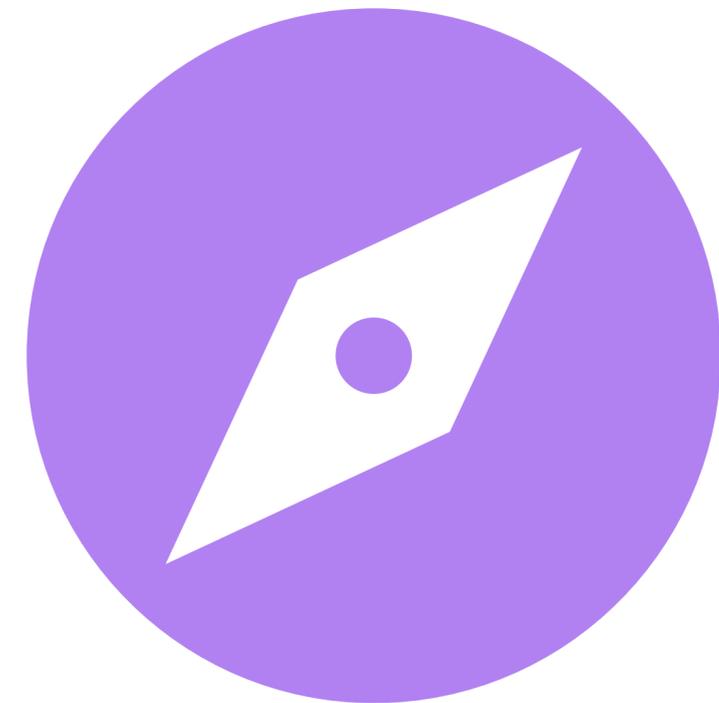
Keep your best talent

# Private creative support groups.



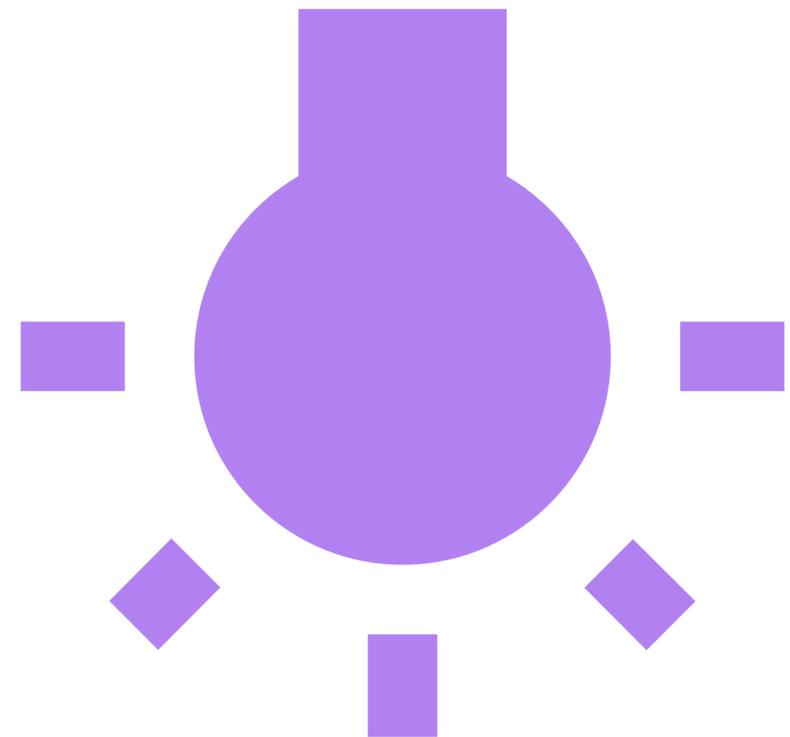
# Creatives need support and community outside of work.

Feelings aren't always welcome or appropriate at work, so creatives need outside groups to lean on.



# Online communities and small meet-ups offer what conferences don't.

Creatives find that Slack and in-person meetups give them the community they need. The on-demand feel of Slack communities and the personal bonds that form in small meet-ups are winning out over large, in-person conferences.



# Connect talent to communities.

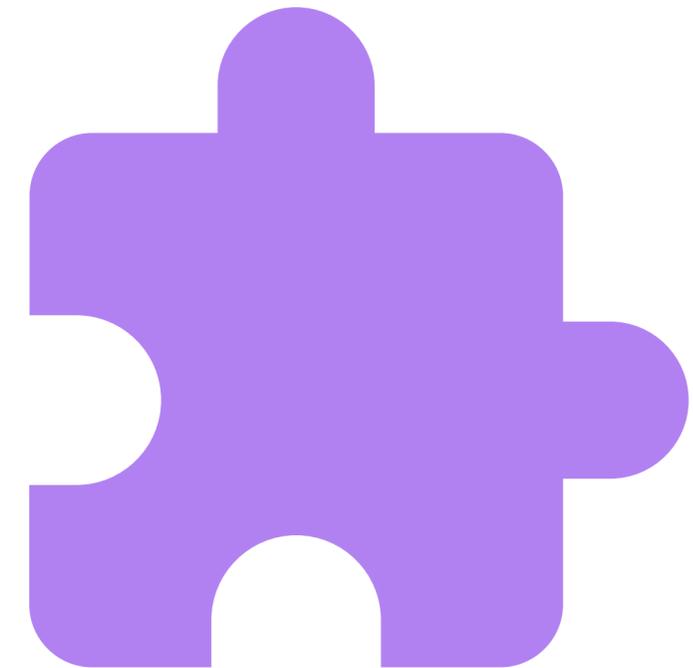
We're seeing a rise in product, design, and tech communities (made up of experienced leaders who are excited to share their knowledge). Take time to introduce your team to groups that reflect their aspirations.



# Design Leadership Forum (DLF)

DLF is one of the largest design leadership communities in the world with 2000+ members from 40+ countries. All members are people leaders (most are directors or above). DLF's mission is to advance the practice of design leadership by fostering a community where the world's best can learn from one another.

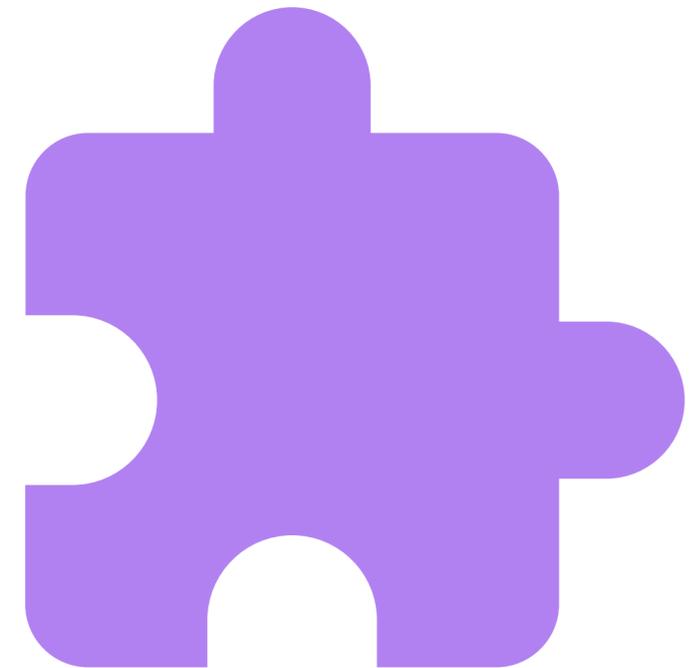
Learn more at [designleadership.com](https://designleadership.com)



# Within

Within is a leadership community for women in design. It exists to challenge the status quo in design and technology, create environments where all people thrive, and amplify stories of diverse leaders.

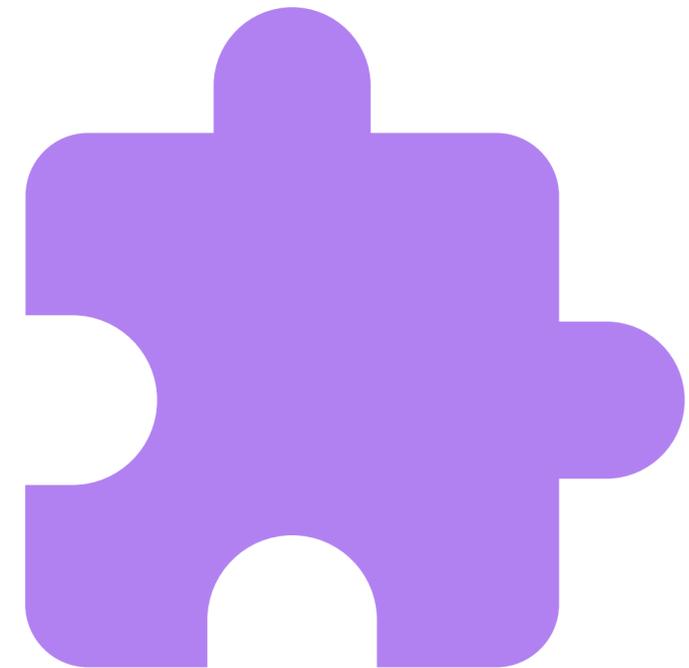
Learn more at [gowithin.co](https://gowithin.co)



# Design Leadership Camp

Design Leadership Camp brings design leaders together to share stories and learn new methods for running effective design teams. Unscripted and refreshingly honest, it goes beyond the familiar to uncover the insights and connections you need to grow and evolve as a design leader.

Learn more at [bureauofdigital.com](https://bureauofdigital.com)





# Start or continue it.

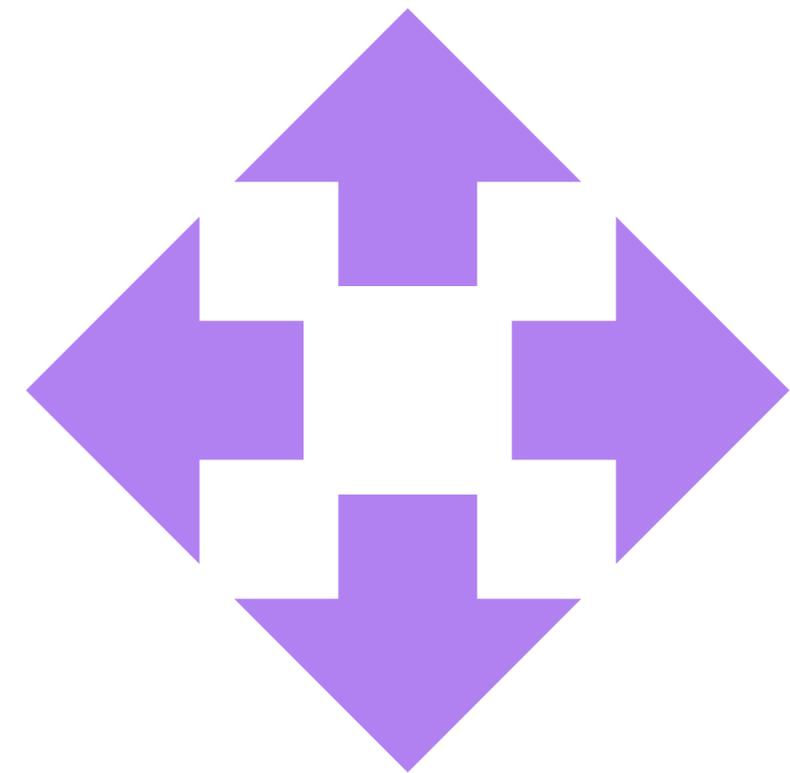
Creative work can be challenging and isolating at times. We highly recommend that you check out one of these groups to make connections and broaden your perspectives.

# Top takeaways from this report.



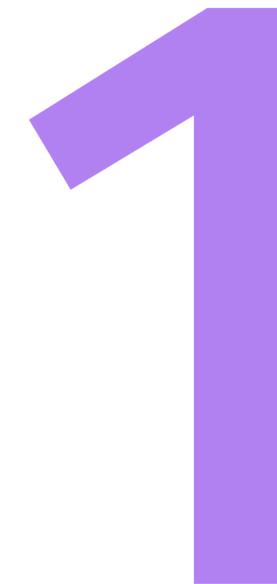
# Talent is going to be critical in the next wave of experience design.

Product design is in a maturation period as VR, AR, AI, wearables, voice, and other new technologies take hold. Teams need to focus on talent to prepare for the future.



# Outreach is the new recruiting.

HR departments have not matured quickly enough to consistently find the best people, so you have to reach out to build relationships with the people you want to work with. It's about human-to-human connections as the industry shifts to relationship-driven recruiting.



# Products, tests, and working files are replacing portfolios.

Today, teams see a product or digital experience they like, and then try to recruit the person who created it. Candidates don't need up-to-date portfolios as their online work speaks for them.

2

# Companies want talent with smarts and heart.

Traditional interview processes can't always gauge cultural fit and personal motivations, so companies look for new ways to test whether a candidate will be a good match for their team.

3

# The gig economy and the digital nomad lifestyle impacts how we work.

We're seeing a huge increase in remote work and alternate ways of working. People want better work-life balance and unconventional work environments.

4

# Teams can fall into the project roadmap innovation “trap.”

Too many teams bind their thinking to the scope, time, or requirements of a project — and fail to see the big picture. This can lead them to create weak products that don’t consider the broader customer experience.

5

# Learn to value and support introverts.

What makes introverts who they are is also what makes them valuable. High-maturity teams give their introverted teammates context in meetings, alone time, and more — so they can do their best work, the best way they know how.



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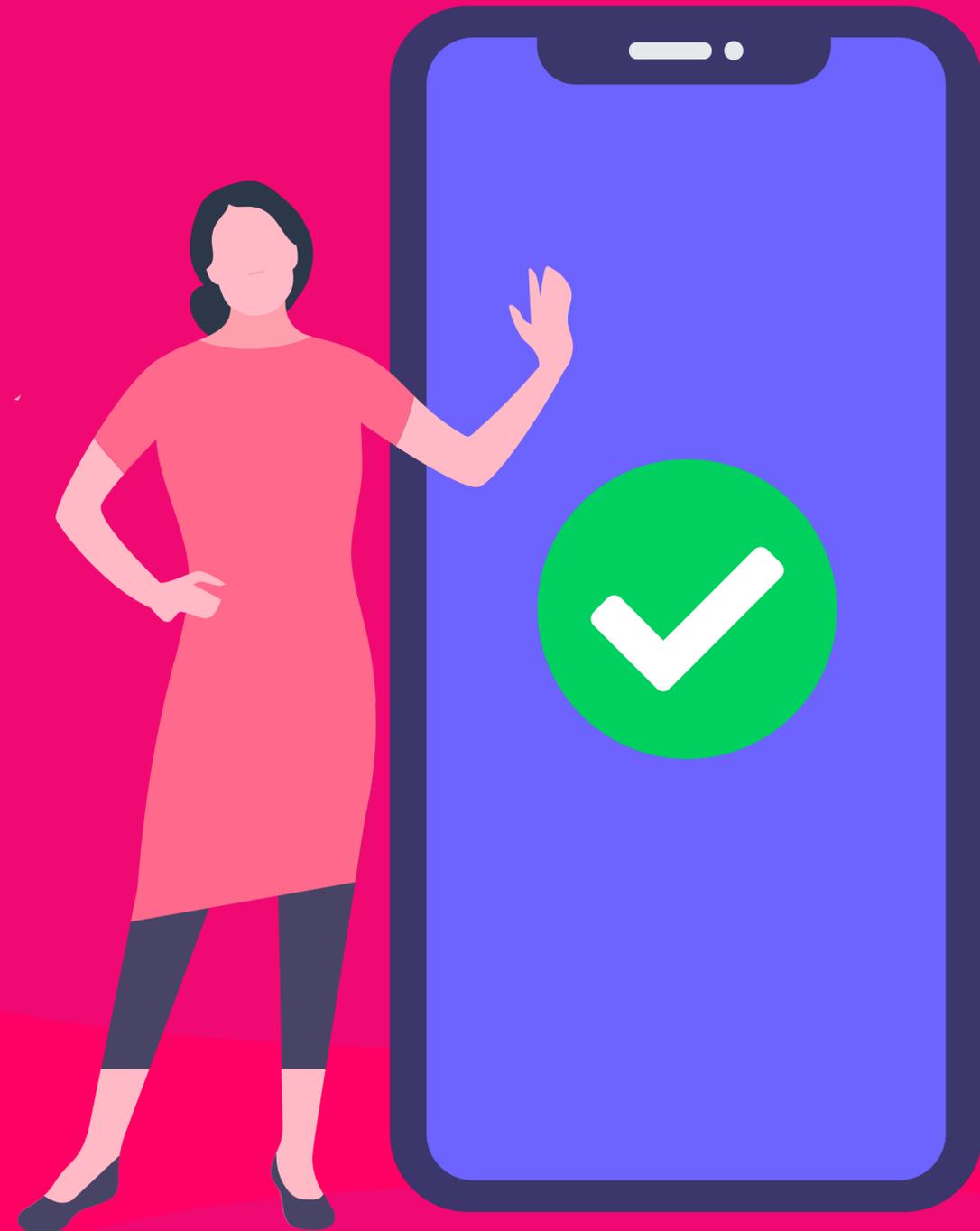
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Want more insights? Check out *The New Design Frontier*, our recent industry-spanning report that redefines design maturity today.

[Go deeper](#)



# Thank you!

