UX Design Institute

Industry Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes

25 September 2019

The UX Design Institute's latest Industry Advisory Council meeting took place on September 25th, 2019 in Dublin, Ireland.

The aims of the meeting were to:

- Give members a progress report since the last meeting
- Have a roundtable discussion on the roadmap of future programmes
- Have a roundtable discussion on age as a barrier in UX
- Discuss any other business

The Industry Advisory Council members in attendance were:

Colman Walsh, *Founder and CEO of the UX Design Institute*

Tansy Murray, *Vice President at Mastercard*

Chiara Henderson, *Senior Manager of Customer Success EMEA at LinkedIn*

Goran Peuc, *Principal UX Designer at SAP*

Catherine Wilson, *Lead UX Strategy Designer at Aer Lingus*

Denis Cullinane, *Senior Manager User Experience at Dell Technologies*

Mark Mulhall, *Senior Experience Designer at Verizon Connect*

Conor Normile, *former Head of Design at Wipro Digital*

Tim Bicknell, *Founder at Deep Cove*

Gareth Dunlop, *CEO at Fathom*

Garry Cleere, *Managing Director at Complivero*

Frank Gaine, *Lead Designer at Frontend.com*

Brian Herron, *Principal Designer and Director at Each&Other*

Denise Leahy, *Quality Chair of IAC, formerly Associate Professor of Computer Science at Trinity College Dublin*

Dara Boland, *Associate Director at Morgan McKinley*

Industry Advisory Council members not in attendance:

Ruairí Galavan, *Senior Manager of Customer Engagement at Intercom*

Lynne Doran, *Senior UX Researcher at HubSpot*

Ronan Costello, *Senior Manager of Digital Platforms and Services at Virgin Media*

Goran Peuc
Principal UX Designer
SAP

Tansy Murray
Vice President
Mastercard

Chiara Henderson
Senior Manager of
Customer Success EMEA
LinkedIn

Colman Walsh
Founder and CEO
UX Design Institute

Catherine Wilson
Lead UX Strategy Designer
Aer Lingus

Dara Boland
Associate Director
Morgan McKinley

Mark Mulhall
Senior Experience Designer
Verizon Connect

Conor Normile
Former Head of Design
Wipro Digital

Tim Bicknell
Founder
Deep Cove

Gareth Dunlop
CEO
Fathom

Garry Cleere
Managing Director
Complivero

Frank Gaine
Lead Designer
Frontend

Brian Herron
Principal Designer
and Director
Each&Other

Denise Leahy
Quality Chair of IAC
Formerly Associate Professor
of Computer Science
Trinity College Dublin

Denis Cullinane
Senior Manager
User Experience
Dell Technologies

Council summary

1. Welcome

Colman Walsh welcomed everyone to the latest Industry Advisory Council of the UX Design Institute and thanked them for their time. It took place in Dublin, Ireland.

2. Progress report

Colman welcomed Catherine Wilson (Senior UX Designer at Aer Lingus) to the IAC committee.

He outlined how he formed a task force group along with Conor Normile (Head of Design at Wipro Digital), Frank Gaine (Lead Designer at Frontend.com), and Brian Herron (Principal Designer and Director at Each&Other) to determine new courses, market gaps, and student requirements.

He demonstrated how student numbers and positive reviews are continuing to rise.

The course completion rates have also increased significantly, due to an adjustment in the quantity of required project work.

He also mentioned that the UX Design Institute successfully completed its first audit by Glasgow Caledonian University.

Colman then moved onto the roundtable discussions.

3. Roundtable discussion - Roadmap of future programmes

Colman opened the discussion by outlining how the task force considered course ideas and feedback from the previous IAC meeting. In light of this, a UI for UX course will be produced in 2020.

Aside from "practicing UX" education, Colman asked for their thoughts on the need for "business in UX" education.

Business in UX education

The IAC aimed to determine what business skills UX professionals required. Some UX designers could be transitioning into people management for the first time, for others it's about managing relationships with the top-level, or a combination of the two.

Tansy Murray (Vice President at Mastercard) said she sees a lot of value in being able to "translate UX into commercial language."

Chiara Henderson (Senior Manager of Customer Success EMEA at LinkedIn) agreed, saying "70% of my job has been about championing UX, showing the value in it. I'm in UX research and strategy. Money comes from proving your worth, which comes from building a business case, and getting interest by educating at the top-level."

Looking back on his earlier career, Colman mentioned he was "fighting the wrong fights because he didn't know how to speak the business language of UX."

The IAC debated whether this business acumen is built through work experience and networking or if it can be taught and if online learning is the best format to teach it.

Mark Mulhall (Senior Experience Designer at Verizon Connect) pointed out that UX is cross-functional in many companies now. It's having increasing importance in different industries.

Goran Peuc (Principal UX Designer at SAP) agreed. He said this could be achieved by "having connectors, knowing a little bit about development, a little bit about business."

Colman commented that "there's management and business courses, but none of them really look through the lens of design."

Tansy stated that she's "hiring for this position right now. A VP or SVP of design. Your role is not to make business decisions, but to advocate for the customer at board level. This skillset is one hundred per cent tied to UX, but it requires business skills too. I need someone who is articulate enough to say what a vision is and understand the desirability piece too. Essentially, I'm looking for influence at senior level and the ability to write good decks and persuade. **They're bringing a completely different point of view compared to someone at Harvard Business School.**"

Gareth Dunlop (CEO at Fathom) thinks it's vital to "empower product teams to speak to senior management, to secure budgets. When we engage with a boss, they are often surprised there is any connection between design performance and commercial performance."

Colman commented that many people in the room are in senior positions. He asked them what they would like to know in hindsight, what gaps in knowledge did they have.

Conor Normile wished he knew about people management: "Building a team and managing a team is a big adjustment. When you make that step up you make mistakes and you learn. Maybe if I had some training I would make fewer mistakes."

Tansy agreed that "you often learn the hard way."

Goran made the point that "the more you go up, the less it actually becomes about hard skills of just the design itself, you know, operating the tools and the processes and wireframing and whatever. They become the easy parts. It's less about that and more about people and what goes under that umbrella. First, it's people around you, but there are also other cultures to consider too."

For Chiara, it was having more knowledge about the "commercial piece. When I was at Aviva, there was a focus on the UX side of things. Then I went to Dell and it was a different world. The CX (customer experience) is a given. The level of data you need to understand is vast."

Creating thought leadership content

Dara Boland suggested peppering content about the business value of UX through other mediums like social, webinars, webcasts and the blog. "You can fill that content gap in other ways."

Intercom was cited as a company who has successfully done this thought leadership model, providing their audience with high quality educational content.

Colman agreed and mentioned his overall vision for the UX Design Institute is about value- adding content:

"I think what we're trying to do here is build a community, and educate people."

As Mark said, "think about the customer at lifespan, once they've graduated, you [the UX Design Institute] want to keep them along that journey as they could eventually want to get into senior leadership roles."

Colman moved onto the second roundtable.

4. Roundtable discussion - Is age a barrier to a career in UX?

Colman asked the IAC if age can be a barrier for succeeding in UX.

He observed that many UX Design Institute's students are looking for a career change, but worry they're "too old" to go for it.

The council discussed why someone older might feel hesitant to transition to UX. As many of the council are in senior roles, they know that responsibilities can often grow with age, whether that's supporting your family or financial responsibilities. Without generalising, these factors could deter someone in their mid-forties compared to someone in their mid-twenties.

They unanimously agreed that someone older considering a career change is likely to be really passionate about UX. Plus, those coming from professional backgrounds are likely to have transferable skills and insights that are invaluable to the organisation they apply for.

As Chiara highlighted, "it's not like you become a baby UX designer and forget everything that's happened to you in the last twenty years and that life experience. There's a great book called 'The 100-Year Life' that speaks to exactly what we're talking about here.

The children born today have a good chance of living over one hundred years. It's financially impossible for them to do the model of education, career, retirement because they cannot fund their retirement. They will probably change careers every 10-15 years."

Dara from Morgan McKinely has seen ageism can affect graduates too. They just need an opportunity to tell their "career narrative." He finds that the barrier problem often lies within recruitment processes/HR departments.

For the IAC, they concurred that age shouldn't be a barrier, but it boils down to a positive mental attitude and willingness to learn. They also agreed that ageism can be a problem in the tech industry as a whole, but working on the fundamentals like a UX qualification, networking, building a strong portfolio, defining your career narrative and a visually engaging CV can help the transition into the industry.

As Tansy put it: "Because I hire so many designers who have good visual knowledge, I don't look at age or gender. I'm looking for a beautifully laid out CV. Age doesn't come into it."

Conclusion

Colman thanked everyone again for their time and outlined that the IAC will reconvene in 6 months time.