Creating Consistency through Constant Change

How a resilient DesignOps team can become a pillar of consistency.

Maggie Dieringer

Agency
Project
Manager

Brand
Producer

Uber

Rides
DPM

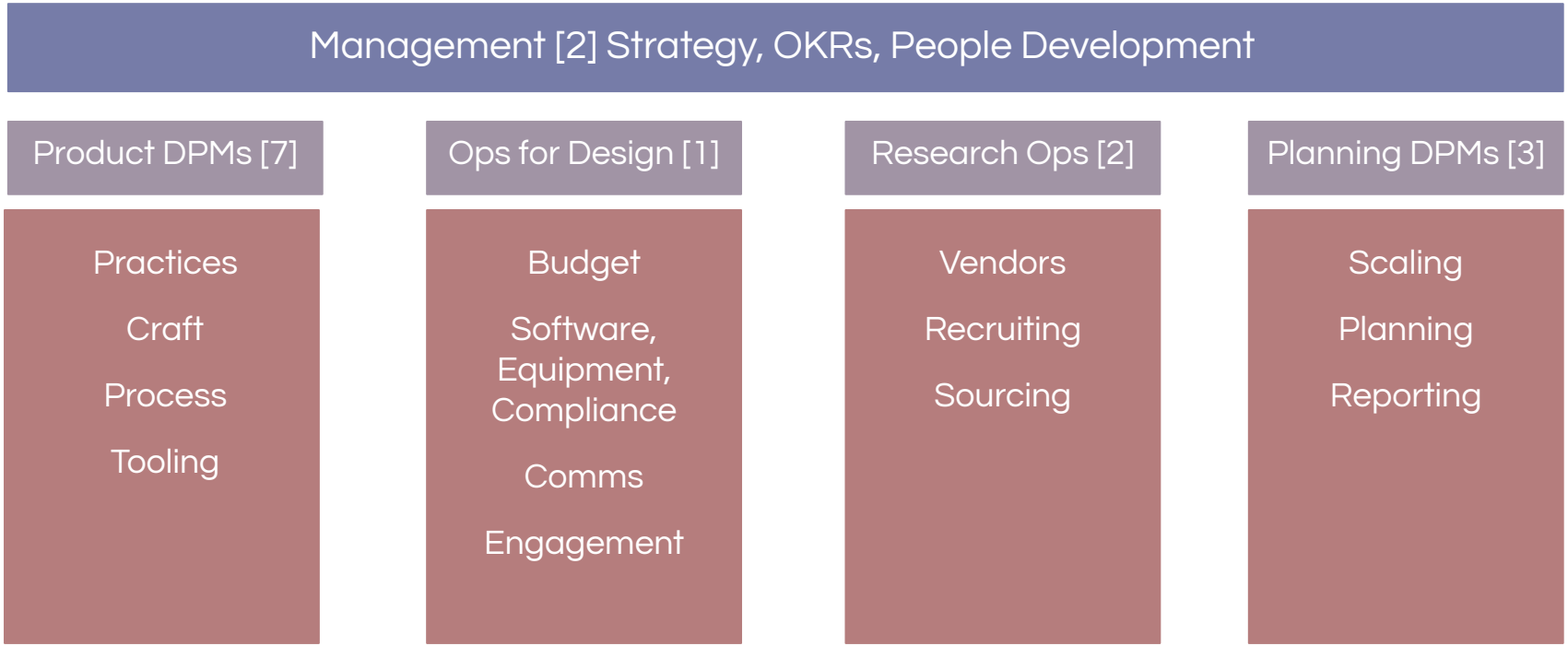
Uber

Eats
DPM

Uber
Eats

15 Design Ops Practitioners Globally

working with designers, researchers and writers across 7 locations


Management [2] Strategy, OKRs, People Development
Product DPMs [7]
Practices
Craft
Process
Tooling
Ops for Design [1]
Budget
Software, Equipment, Compliance
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Engagement
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Vendors
Recruiting
Sourcing
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Scaling
Planning
Reporting

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2016-2018

Uber blasted by investors for 'toxic' culture

USA TODAY

Uber C.E.O. to Leave Trump Advisory Council After Criticism

The New York Times

With just her words, Susan Fowler brought Uber to its knees

recode

Over 200,000 people deleted Uber after the company operated its service at JFK airport during the Trump strike

BUSINESS INSIDER

Uber loses London license over 'a pattern of failures'

engadget

"Your role seems the same as an EA, what's the difference?"

"I don't think we need DPMs, we can manage projects ourselves."

2019-2020

Coronavirus is forcing Uber to return to its start-up roots

With rides down as much as 80 percent, the pandemic is testing whether Uber and other large start-ups can still innovate

The Washington Post

Uber, Lyft Cut Costs as Fewer People Take Rides Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

Uber said Wednesday it is cutting 14% of its workforce as pandemic upends sharing economy

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Will Uber and Lyft shut down in California?

BY **DANIELLE ABRIL** AND **AARON PRESSMAN**
August 18, 2020 6:30 AM PDT

FORTUNE

"We will lose our business in x city if we don't launch this tool in 2 weeks"

"Why was the Design Ops team not affected during the layoffs?"

"The Product Managers are just going to design in Figma since you can't give us any designers."

WHY?

We persevere

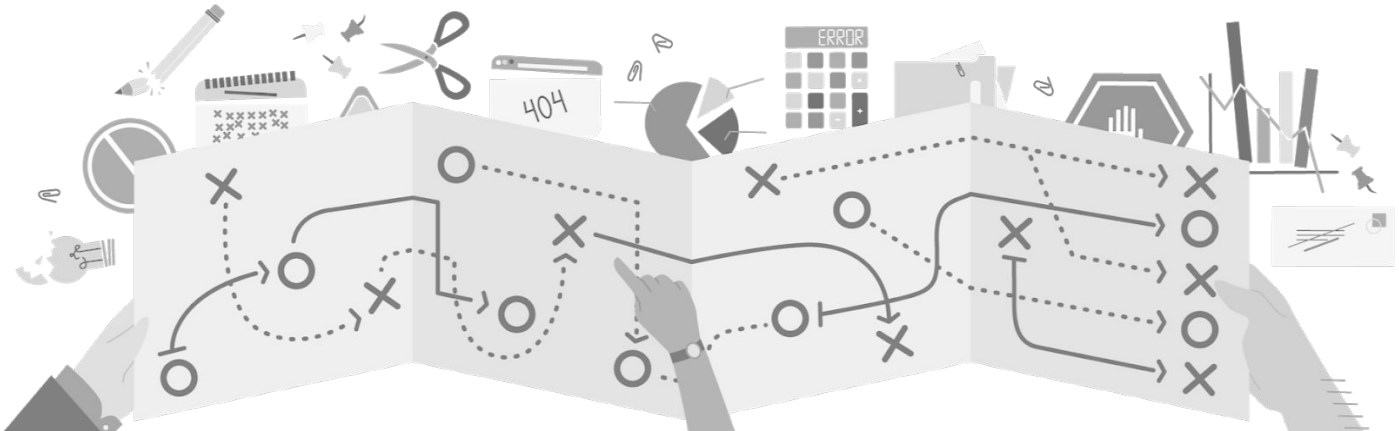
We act like owners

We make bold big bets

“Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”

— Nelson Mandela

We create consistency through many layers of change.



The Next Fifteen Minutes

The resilient team

Three common challenges

Tactics to tackle

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES.

Shifting Responsibilities

Constrained Resourcing

External Chaos

ONE

Shifting
Responsibilities

Partner with the Skeptics

Inconsistent design approvals and lack of visibility.

Solution

Launch Characterization Process and XFN Stakeholder Reviews

4 “Track” Designations

Launch characterizations

PMs will submit this form, and projects will be assigned tracks by Driver Leads within 1 week

	Definition of characterization	Examples
No Track	• Poses minimal organization, Legal, PR, or platform risk. • Can range from small to large in scope; characterization based on risk and cross-team exposure. Products not launching externally generally get this track.	
Experiment Track	• Poses minimal organization, Legal, PR, or platform risk during a first experiment phase. • Designation used to help bring data to future reviews.	
Normal Track	• Has meaningful cross-organization complexity, PR, Legal, product complexity, or platform risk such that oversight is helpful. • Review before external rollout (experiment or full)	
Full Track	• Collection of features that amount to a full-scale program, or a significant product change that introduces significant risk. • Separate governance model and steering group established for decision-making and oversight.	

4 Step Process

All projects are expected to follow a four step process

1. Get your launch characterized

As soon as an effort has been formalized, seek feedback from Rider Leads on how extensive a review process to follow.

- No track
- Light track
- Normal track
- Full track

Key actions:

Submit this Google Form.

2. Write your PRD

All launches impacting external users should be documented.

- No track + Light track → Mini PRD
- Full track + Normal track → PRD

Key actions:

Write a PRD, send to prd-rider@.

Always receive Privacy and Legal approval.

Complete a design source of truth artifact as required.

3. Schedule a review and/or Surface Jam

Launches with significant cross-team or external impact require at least one discussion.

- Full track + Normal track → reviews required
- Other tracks: come in if you'd like!

Key actions:

Sign up for a design review

Sign up for a surface jam

Facilitate a discussion of tradeoffs and options with leads.

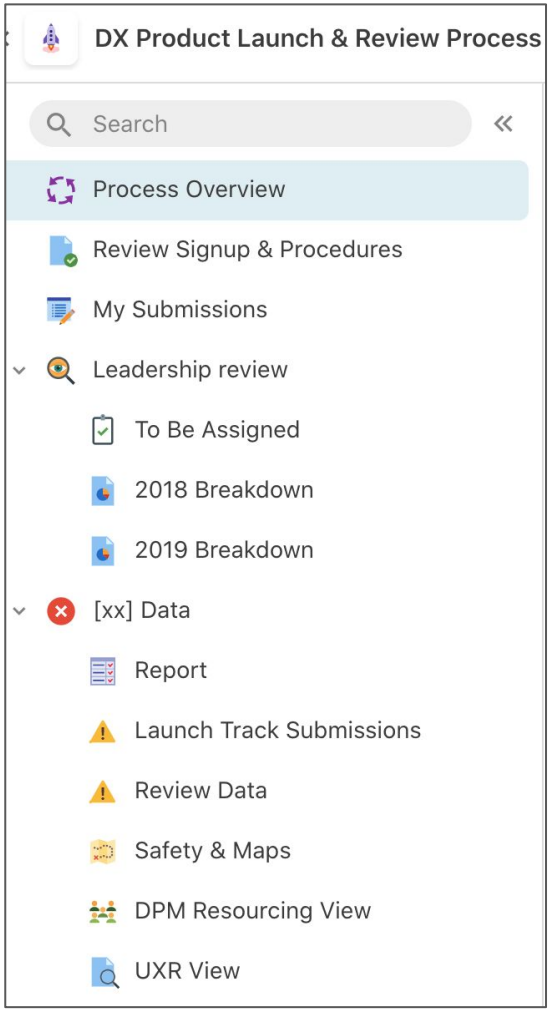
4. Start a launch thread for visibility

Before an effort is made visible to external users, effort leaders should announce intention to release, and follow up with experiments results, so everyone can learn together

Key actions:

Email **rider-launch-status-group@uber.com** using this template.

Rollout (or ramp up) only once approval received.



DPM Management Hub in Coda

Results.

Clear picture into upcoming work.

Understanding the relative risk of projects.

Visibility into who and when work was being reviewed, approved, and launched.

A tracking and reporting system that gave us leverag with product leaders.

Operationalize Great Ideas

Designers care about Quality and QA, but had little time to prioritize “fixing things.”

Solution

Product Quality initiatives to “Ship Magic”

~20 experience bugs filed monthly through Ship Magic
~10 bugs committed by eng monthly associated with program

Average of 220 Experience-focused bugs fixed since program launch

‘Ship Magic’ is a program to raise the bar on quality across our experiences.

- 🎯 Fixing broken experiences
- 🔍 Identify the most harrowing customer facing issues
- 🚀 Moving quickly to execution
- ❤️ Ship delightful experiences
- 💪 Building the product quality muscle

Workstreams and Projects

★		⊗	☹
1. More delightful features	2. Better crafted copy	3. Fixing broken experiences	4. Prevention & future proofing

Results.

45+ experience bugs addressed monthly.

Shared definition of quality across teams.

Looking at how to scale beyond Rider.

Resonance on what it means to “Ship Magic”.

Teams valued social responsibility in design, but didn't know how to activate it.

Solution

"Design for Good" Hackathon

Social Responsibility Hackathon

Owner: [redacted]

Contributors: [redacted]

Timing: H2 (1 week)

Category: Social Responsibility

Audience: Designers & Researchers, open to PM/Eng as well as other orgs but initiated and led by design

Idea: basically people can submit Hackathon ideas for Social Responsibility projects for Uber and then other can sign up to be on the squads and then you have a full week to design prototype and build - where at the end each team would present to leadership (maybe with awards?)

13 teams. Amsterdam. San Francisco. Seattle. Bangalore. Rider. Driver. Eats. 40 participants.

Results.

Energized teams.

Passionate conversation.

Leadership donations to relevant organizations of choice.

Fifteen concepts for Uber to work on across the teams.

TWO

Constrained
Resourcing

Clearly Define Engagement Upfront

There were no expectations around how much time our ICs could give to a project.

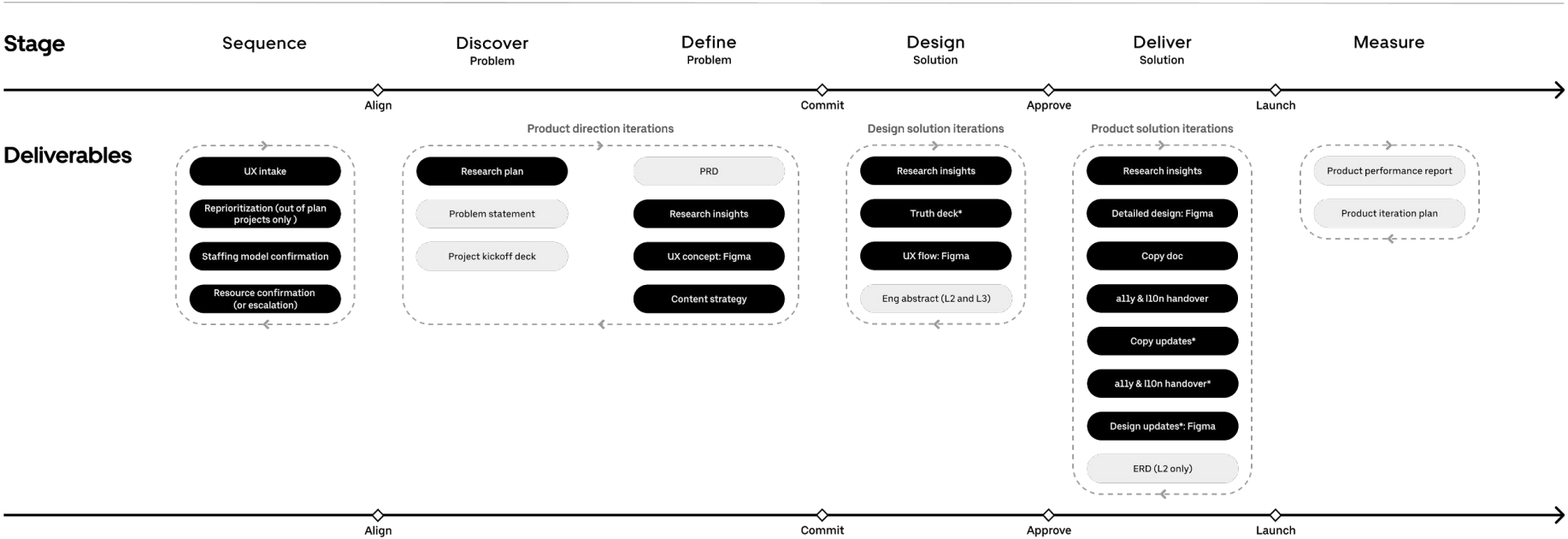
Solution

Levels of Engagement

LEAD
PARTNER
ADVISE
NOT
STAFFING

UX Partner

Project Execution



Results.

Expectations are clearer to XFN partners.

Teams working on highest priority work.

We can better timebox our work.

Expand Team Toolkits

We lost half of our UX Research team.

Self-Service UX Research: Conduct your own UX Research

Created by **Yuri Choi**, last modified by **Hallie Saber** on **Jun 16, 2020**

Mission

To empower our cross-functional teammates with research skills, build a more user-centered Uber experience, and foster an inclusive, supportive community by sharing tips on research fundamentals.

Who is this page primarily for?

For those without full UX Research support wanting to conduct basic research studies.

Limitations of this resource

This resource covers basic UX research methods. For more complex research questions and methods, please work directly with your team's UX Researchers.

Overview of the research project lifecycle

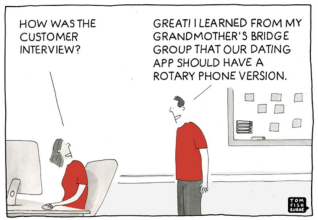
- Learn the basics
- Define your research question(s) and methodology
- Define the population you're interested in understanding
- Kick off with your team
- Recruit participants
- Conduct the research
- Analyze the research
- Build your report and share your findings
- Wrap up

#self-service-uxr ☆

Forum to ask questions about your UX research study. Self-service UXR Guide here:

UXR 101 Edit

Who do you want to learn from?



How to select the right users

Selecting the right users is tied to your research questions. For example, let's say that you want to learn about the onboarding process from the perspective of drivers. Then you should select users who are currently going through the onboarding process and those who have completed the process in the last 30 days, in order to limit recall bias.

A **cohort** is a group that shares similar characteristics, for example, new drivers, experienced drivers, or Uber Black drivers. For recruiting drivers for more general studies, some relevant metrics that we try to balance are acceptance rate, cancellation rate, rating and lifetime trips.

Talking to Humans
Doing research: step by step
What do you want to learn?
Who do you want to learn from?
How do you prepare for a session?
How do you ensure an effective session?
How do you make sense of what you learn?
Teaching exercise #1: Mock interviews
Teaching exercise #2: Interview the trainer
Teaching exercise #3: Beyond basics
What are the biases that research can have?
Acknowledgements & References

Results.

Helped UXRs to focus on highest impact Research.

Used by designers, PMs, and writers.

Leveled up teams' confidence to make products usable and loved.

THREE

External
Chaos

Bring Order to the Basics

We didn’t have many rules.

Solution

Budgeting, Headcount

+ Policies

Policies & Budget

- WFH @ Uber
- Travel Policy
- Vendor Spend
- Hiring Temp Workers
- Conference Sponsorship
- Morale Budget
- Education Expenses
- External Speaking & Publishing

Travel Request Form

Before completing the form you must look up your trip details in Egencia (accessible via OneLogin) to determine your travel cost estimate.

You must fill out this form before booking ANY travel on Egencia, whether it is for Education, Research, Offsites, etc. Upon completion of this form, your Program Manager will triage with your director to review your request. SLA is 5 business days. Once you have director approval, you're cleared to book your travel.

Software Access

Created by **Elizabeth Castro Abrams**, last modified on **Jan 10, 2020**

Overview	Get access to the tools you need on Design. Interested in vetting a new tool? Write to Jeff Jura, on Design Platform.
Coda	Coda helps us build dynamic tables & docs. Gain access when someone shares a Coda doc with you. Visit coda.io for more info!
Figma	Figma is a collaborative interface Design tool of choice for the Design team. Gain access when someone shares access to a file with you.
Framer	Framer is a design and prototyping platform - think visual editing with the flexibility of code. Individuals on the Design team should write to dpm-approvals@uber.com for access.
InVision	InVision is a web and mobile prototyping tool. Write to IT@uber.com for access.
Zeplin	Zeplin is a tool you can use to design specs for handoff to Eng. Individuals on the Design team should write to dpm-approvals@uber.com for access.
Dribbble	Share your work externally! Write to mark.b@uber.com for more information.
Adobe Creative Cloud	IT manages this license for the whole company. Write to IT@uber.com for access.
Cinema 4D	Design has only 8 seats for Cinema 4D. Get in touch with eca@uber.com to find out if any are available.

Results.

Sense of organization within the team.

Accurate picture of spend in tight times.

Effective approval policies managed by DPMs and Design Directors.

Move Where the Work Is

Things *never* stop changing.

Solution

Structured Flexibility

Results.

Created a design culture around resilience.

Design teams have a “home” but can step in to support changing business needs comfortably.

DPM is the consistent pillar when things are shifting around.

Challenges.

Shifting Responsibilities.

- Partner with the skeptics
- Operationalize great ideas

Constrained Resourcing.

-Define engagement models early

- Expand team toolkits

External Chaos.

- Bring order to the Basics
- Move where the work is

WHY?

(2020 edition)

Let's Chat!

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