

Self-reflection exercise: How to know if a company's design culture is right for you

If you're wondering how to find a company culture that's ideal for you, this exercise can help.

It's a self-reflection exercise that's grouped into 3 sections:

1. Your ideal work environment
2. Your design career goals and philosophy
3. Questions you can ask to learn about a company's design culture

Some of the questions may take some time as they ask you to reflect on your past experience or project yourself into the future. Complete this exercise over 3-5 sessions for the best effect.

For more information on how this exercise can help, [see the accompanying video on our YouTube](#) or [read the show notes on our blog](#).

1. Your ideal work environment

In the first part of the self-reflection, you're asked to consider your ideal work place, schedule and setting.

1. Looking back at the past year, what's been my favorite project and why?

2. What about the work setting -- whether it was the people, office, schedule, -- made this project so great?
3. When I think about the last 3 group projects that I was a part of:
 - a. Which was my favorite? Why?
 - b. Which was my least favorite? Why?
3. Who are my 3 favorite teachers? What makes them special?
4. In what schedule do I thrive in? In the morning, afternoon or evening? Another way to look at it is, when do I perform my most challenging tasks. The ones that require the most focus?
5. Do I prefer working in an office setting or remotely? Or another way to put it is: Do I prefer working in the same place most often or do I prefer the flexibility of being able to switch up my working environment
6. In the past year, did I do my best work when I was highly collaborative with others or when I lead a project by myself with little collaboration?
7. On learning: Do I prefer to learn through close collaboration with others, say in a classroom or workshop, or do I prefer to learn on my own?
8. On decision making: Am I more methodical and like to plan ahead thoroughly before making a decision or do I like to make decisions quickly and learn on the go?

2. Your design career goals and philosophy

In this part of the self-reflection, you're prompted to consider your design journey and what good design means to you.

Design career goals

1. What can I contribute that will significantly impact the performance of the next organization that I work for?
2. What are the things that I seem to be able to do with relative ease, while they come rather hard to other people?
3. What do I do that justifies me being on payroll or getting hired by Clients?
4. If I could only pick one thing, where do I wish to improve the most this year as a designer?
5. Which designer(s) do I really admire, and what do I admire about them?
6. Where do I wish to be in the next 5 years?

Design philosophy

1. Are there design tools that I absolutely must have access to in order to do my job? Or am I more flexible and can adapt as needed?
2. If someone asks me, what is good design, what would I say?
3. What are 3 examples of good design that I stand by, and why?
4. If I had to choose 3-4 principles, or fundamental truths, that every good design depends on, what would they be?

3. Questions you can ask to learn about a company's design culture

Finally, you'll find some questions you can ask during an interview to get a sense of what it's like to work at a company and what the design culture of a company looks like. These questions are good to ask both leadership and employees.

1. What's it like working here? This will give you a sense of the energy at the company
2. How are design decisions made? This is a good way to get to the heart of a company's design philosophy
3. What do you do when things don't go well around here? Also a good way to extrapolate information about design philosophy
4. What's the most important thing you're working on at this time, and how are you making it happen? If you're hearing answers from leadership that are related to improving product or team satisfaction, these are good signs
5. Who are the different people in the team and what's their responsibilities? More responsibilities means more pressure but it also means the company is more trusting in employees
6. How does the team coordinate on activities and how often?
Non-meeting heavy cultures are a good sign bc that means designers can own a process
7. What's the design operation look like? Companies that embrace design give design the seat it deserves in product development
8. How do you define design?
9. How do you support the ongoing education of employees?
10. How easy is it to make friends?
11. How would you describe the personality of the team?

12. What's the last thing you've learned that's excited you?

Closing Thoughts

Nice work! You're all done.

Was this helpful? Let us know in the comments.

If you have any questions about user experience or product design, reach out to us at any time.

Best of luck!

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