

SHAWN GRANT

# Breaking down silos and transforming UX culture

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## Responsibilities

UX Team Lead

## When

2021-2022

## Where

Akamai Technologies



## BACKGROUND

**Design at Akamai had been siloed for years.** UX teams sat in the same org but collaboration was rare and leadership conflicts were frequent. Cross-team efforts often fizzled because a lack of support and morale suffered.

A wave of leadership attrition provided an opportunity to rethink and rebuild our culture, process, and team dynamics. I was tasked by executive leadership to lead the efforts to finally bring our teams together.

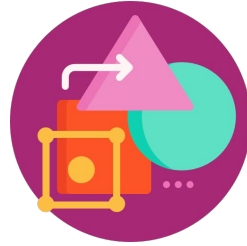
## APPROACH

To bring the teams together, I created opportunities for the entire team to pursue **shared goals** while **nurturing collaboration and inclusivity**



### Shared Design Principles

Rallying around a shared vision for the way we think about design



### Holistic Design System

Akamai's first unified and inclusive approach to a design system



### Unified Design Process

One approach to product design

## ACTIVITY 1

# Shared Design Principles

At Akamai, an effort to create design principles would not only help set the direction of the team but also provide us with several opportunities to transform culture and unite the group.

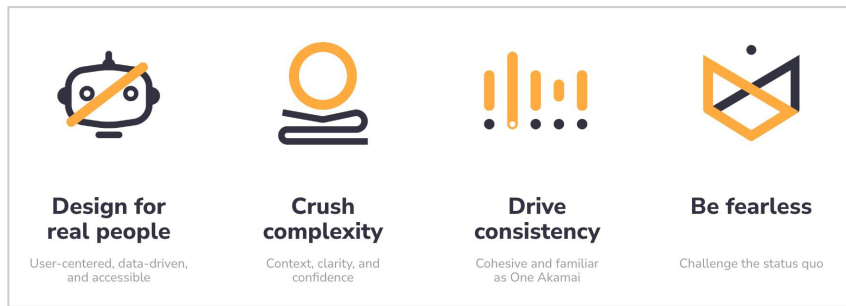
I started with a team-wide workshop to brainstorm then group ideas into key themes. We then took those themes and further distilled them into four powerful design principles that represented the voice of the entire design team.

Upon unveiling the finished design principles, **our team felt instant ownership because of our inclusive process**. This great collaboration that led to a shared win made a **major impact on our team's culture**.

“When we come together, we can do amazing things”



Initial workshop



Finished design principles

## ACTIVITY 2

# Holistic Design System

Akamai has had several attempts at design systems over the years, but our silos have always prevented a holistic and inclusive design system from taking shape.

I proposed that we take on our next challenge as a team to build something that the entire team was proud of and would elevate design at Akamai. With over 100 products and 10 existing design systems to consider, it was a massive design effort that required setting the vision for design then breaking that down into detailed plans for execution.

Over the course of a year, I worked to set and socialize our vision, lead multiple design exercises with the team, and gain support at all org levels from executive to product and engineering.

My focus was on creating an industry-leading design, driving team inclusivity, and ensuring holistic design along the way. On the surface it was an exercise to make Akamai's UI better, but it was ultimately an effort to align our design team to focus on solving a previously impossible problem together.

## Activities Led

Design Exploration

Art Direction

Executive Sponsorship

Design Swarms

Engineering Planning

Design Planning

Socialization

## ACTIVITY 3

# Unified Design Process

Akamai's design silos resulted in teams of designers that were at various levels of UX maturity. With the effort to transform UX culture, I led the effort to document and socialize a design process.

The security team I've built is known for our high-level of UX maturity because of our product knowledge, focus on relationships, and approach to user-centered design.

I went to work creating and documenting an end-to-end design process that started with our high-level approach down through the details of the individual steps. To support this process, I created a product design checklist to make sure we're putting these concepts into action and a new Confluence space for designers and their teams to share their work and to promote transparency.

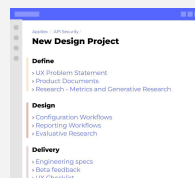
With the trust we've built from the design principle and design system work, our designers were excited to try a new process and elevate their skills.

We also socialized this new process with product and engineering teams and were met with incredible support for the new approach.



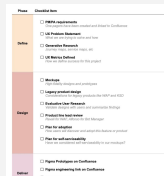
## Process Documentation

From the high-level double diamond to process details, I documented and socialized a proven design process



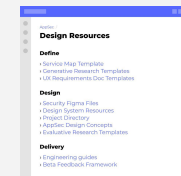
## A New Project hub

A new project space was created in Confluence to promote our work, encourage transparency, and connect daily design work to the high-level process.



## Product Design Checklist

Helpful for connecting design details to the process, and ensuring consistency.



## Resources Directory

Provides designers the tools they need to design efficiently, focus on solving the right problems, and level up their skills.

## OUTCOMES

### **01 / Design culture transformation**

By creating opportunities for our team to solve problems previously thought of as impossible, the design culture at Akamai has seen a massive positive shift over the last 18 months. Morale is up, collaboration is up, and designers are producing great work.

### **02 / Improved quality of work**

With an updated design process and a design system

### **03 / Trust within the product teams**

This successful project helped bring more trust to the relationships with had with product leadership