

STUDENT EXERCISE

Designer's Roles in a Design Team

Aims

To encourage students to get to know their fellow group members
To encourage groups to discuss and negotiate their team make up

Introduction

This exercise enables a design team to get to know each other and to discuss and then negotiate team roles. This discussion will enable the team to work collaboratively and the risk of team conflict is reduced, as often conflicts occur because team roles are unclear.

How To Negotiate Team Roles

Task 1: Understand your fellow group member

As a team, on the large paper provided, copy and fill in the table below, to get to know your fellow group members:

| The names of my fellow group members are ... | Jo Bloggs | Sharon Smith | Fred Brown | Will Grey |
|--|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| What do they like most about group work? | | | | |
| What do they dislike most about group work? | | | | |
| What personality traits make a good team player? | | | | |
| What personality traits make a bad team player? | | | | |

Task 2: Discuss Team Roles

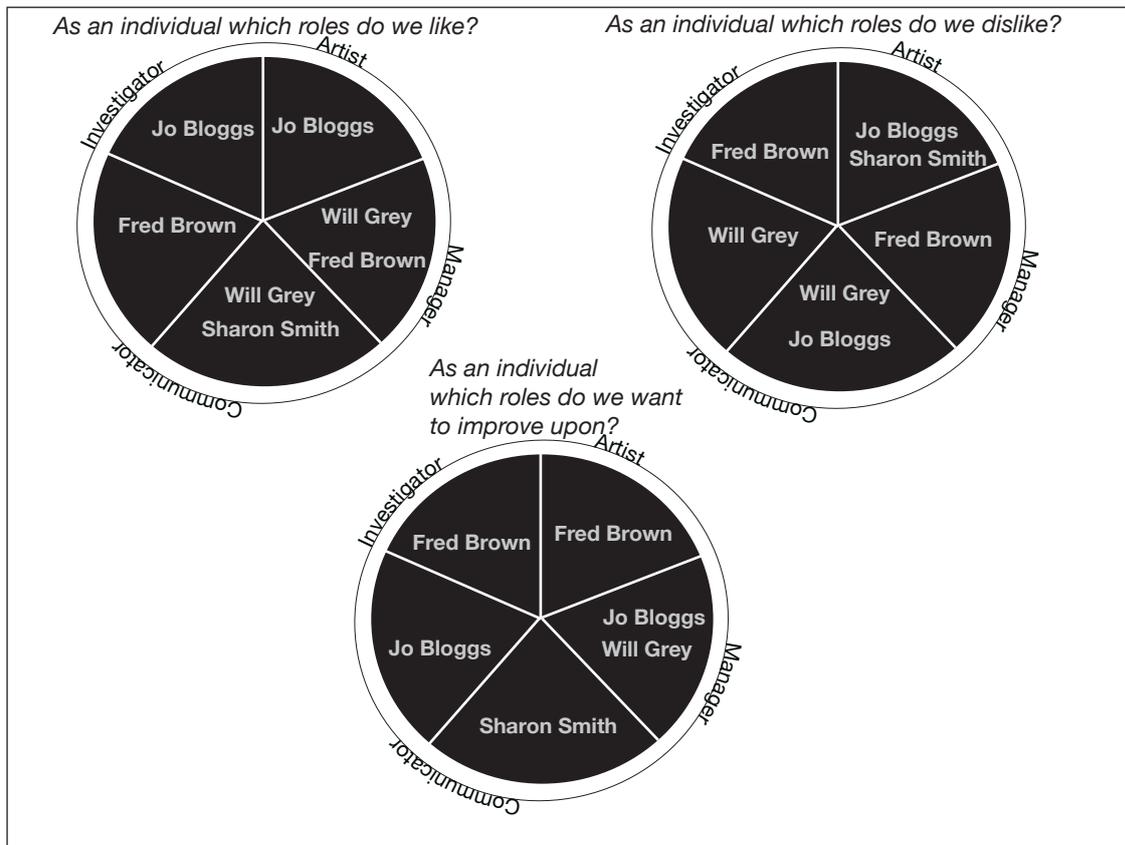
As a team, discuss the roles of a designer in Handout 1. When discussing these roles share your experience about times when you have taken on this role in past projects.

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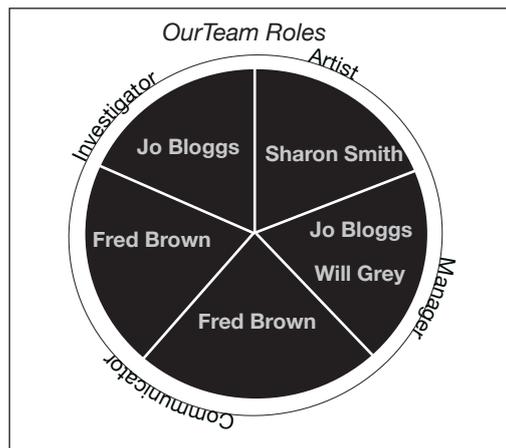
Task 3: Preferred Team Roles

As a team, use the large sheet of paper provided to map out each member's preferred roles as a designer and also to note down roles that they dislike and roles to they would like to improve on. e.g.



Task 4: Negotiate Team Roles

As a team, negotiate each member's role and visually map the results of this conversation on another large sheet of paper. Each member would have more than one role and these roles can change during the project. e.g.



Handout 1 - The Roles of A Designer In A Design Team

You may find that some 'roles of a designer' outlined below overlap or some roles are missed out. Therefore, please view the five roles outlined as a general guide to enable a conversation about group dynamics.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Investigator | <p>An Investigator engages in a phase of divergent thought, through asking questions, understanding user needs and trends, gathering sources of information. Then an Investigator engages in a phase of convergent thought, synthesising the information gathered into a coherent whole; while 'still staying in touch with the human behavioural elements, the sensitive experiential elements and the aesthetic craft' ¹ of a designer. Through divergent and convergent thought the Investigator identifies the design problems, opportunities and/or the users' needs to be addressed within the design solutions.</p> <p>The skills and attitudes of an Investigator are managing information, critical skills, awareness of current trends, inquisitiveness, open minded and quantitative and qualitative skills.</p> |
| Catalyst | <p>A Catalyst takes 'ideas that other people have... [or]...tap[s] into the one thing that the client has said' ², and through the process of drawing and thinking, 'conceptualises something that we know in a different way' ².</p> <p>The skills and attitudes of a catalyst are conceptualising, sketching, observing and facilitation skills used to engage customers in the creative process.</p> |
| Manager | <p>A Manager applies a wide range of professional skills to co-ordinate and optimise the design process, with the aim of ensuring that the delivery of a project exceeds the clients' expectations. A manager is crucial in helping create momentum and confidence in a design project.</p> <p>The skills and attitudes of a Manager are communicating the value of design, translating the language of design to a client, motivating the design team and business acumen.</p> |
| Communicator | <p>A Communicator conveys the design problems and tells the story of how the solution developed.</p> <p>The skills and attitudes of a Communicator are storytelling, visual, written and aural communication.</p> |
| Artist | <p>An Artist develops the aesthetic value of new ideas and solutions to a design problem. At the same time the Artist selects the medium and technology to convey the new ideas and solutions.</p> <p>The skills and attitudes of an Artist are technical skills, production skills and have an eye for detail.</p> |

References

1. McCullagh, K. (2008), *Provocation: The designer as accelerator*. Available at: http://www.vam.ac.uk/thinktank1/future_designer/provocation_2/index.html
2. Charny, D. (2008), *Provocation: The designer as synthesiser*. Available at: http://www.vam.ac.uk/thinktank1/future_designer/provocation_1/index.html