# UX Design Institute

## Industry Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

26 March 2020

The UX Design Institute's latest Industry Advisory Council meeting took place on March 26th, 2020, remotely.

The aims of the meeting were to:

- Give members a progress report since the last meeting
- Have a roundtable discussion on practicing UX remotely
- Have a roundtable discussion on the changing roles of UX designers
- Discuss any other business

**The Industry Advisory Council members in attendance were:**

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

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

Mark Mulhall, *Senior Experience Designer at Verizon Connect*

Conor Normile, *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, P*rincipal Designer and Director at Each&Other*

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

Dara Boland, *Enterprise Sales at Hubspot, formerly Associate Director at Morgan McKinley*

**Industry Advisory Council members not in attendance:**

Tansy Murray, *Vice President at Mastercard*

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

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

Lynne Doran, *Senior UX Researcher at HubSpot*

Goran Peuc, *Principal UX Designer at SAP*

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

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

**Mark Mulhall**
Senior Experience Designer
**Verizon Connect**

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

**Dara Boland**
Enterprise Sales
**Hubspot**

**Gareth Dunlop**
CEO
**Fathom**

**Conor Normile**
Former Head of Design
**Wipro Digital**

**Tim Bicknell**
Founder
**Deep Cove**

**Frank Gaine**
Lead Designer
**Frontend.com**

**Garry Cleere**
Managing Director
**Complivero**

**Brian Herron**
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Founder and CEO
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## 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 remotely due to Covid-19.

### 2. Progress report

Colman Walsh demonstrated how student numbers have increased since the last IAC meeting. The IAC's advice has helped the UX Design Institute deliver a high quality UX education, which is clearly reflected through positive student testimonials and feedback.

He then announced that the Professional Certificate in Visual and UI Design had recently launched. This specialist course was formed through industry research with the IAC.

Colman then moved onto the roundtable discussions.

## 3. Roundtable discussion - Practicing UX remotely

Covid-19 has made remote UX a necessity. Colman asked the IAC for advice on how to establish a successful remote mindset and practice.

**Establishing a remote mindset**

Gareth Dunlop expressed concern for introverted types in the remote environment. This opened the discussion on the importance of video chat for staying connected.

Conor Normile stressed the importance of showing your face on camera on platforms like [Zoom](#) to stop people retreating into their shells. Team rituals help too. He spoke of how his team have coffee together every morning to discuss what they're going to do that day. They've also moved their fortnightly team meeting to a weekly one.

Garry Cleere agreed with the cultural importance of video calls. His team has a "best-looking lunch competition." He's pleasantly surprised how well video works for meetings too.

Mark Mulhall pointed out it's vital to open channels of communication and keep them open when remote working. His team has a philosophy to treat online interactions "like pulling up your chair to someone's desk." Meaning a meeting request isn't necessary when a Slack message would do, or if email/messages risk turning into massive threads, it's better to meet on video.

Denis Cullinane is experienced with practicing UX remotely, a third of his company work this way. Video is also the number one tool for them. They have a policy that everyone is either meeting face to face or using Zoom. Even if just one person is missing, they will all use Zoom.

Denise Leahy stated it's vital that leaders teach people how to use tools before working with them. "While you might have very clever people who are about to work together, if they don't know the top-level tool, it won't work."

**Collaborating apart**

Digging deeper into remote UX tools, Colman observed that [Miro](#)
is a popular collaborative tool amongst professionals.

Mark stated that his team uses Miro for everything. He uses it for communicating design ideas and running workshops. Users can set up swim lanes, user journeys and whiteboard diagrams on it. Working with cross-functional teams he says it's essential to have a platform to share ideas. For best practice, he mentioned using Zoom simultaneously when collaborating as Miro doesn't have a video function. And decide who will steer Miro in a meeting. For a post-it session, he recommended that people create them silently then post them or talk together and the facilitator puts them down.

Conor is another Miro advocate, he started using it three years ago. It came out of necessity as he has a distributed team across three locations. He finds it works for traditional workshop activities and online collaboration too. "When you log in you can see changes made by colleagues in different time-zones. You can leave notes for developers too."

His team uses it for deep service blue-printing, using a technique called 'Project Wall.' He explains "You've got your complex UX enterprise customer journey, your normal swim lanes but then swim lanes for data, Giro integrations and Agile user stories, which can be represented on blueprint. It's brilliant because developers and designers are on the same page, talking about the same problem."

Going back to Gareth's concern for introverts, Conor said that Miro can encourage feedback from quieter team members too: "Many people don't like workshops, they aren't particularly comfortable speaking within a workshop environment. Plus, there's a bias towards people who speak the loudest. A platform like Miro allows quieter people to feel comfortable contributing or contributing away from a real-time session."

Denis agreed that Miro is brilliant for opening communication channels, and not only within UX teams: "Asynchronous workshops can run for weeks and weeks. It can bring workshopping to another level. We do a lot of service blueprinting, we go right to the support teams who are looking after the products. They can be in different time-zones, speak different languages... Over time, these sessions give you feedback from someone who wouldn't normally be involved in a session."

Gareth remarked how Miro is great for presentations if looked after and kept tidy. "We can take screenshots of the canvas. Plus, contributors can see their own fingerprint. You can really knock the canvases into good shape."

Colman concluded that Miro seems like a great tool aside from its remote benefits.

From a recruitment perspective, Dara Boland pointed out that employers are looking for remote skills like the ability to use Slack, etc..

**Practicing remote user research effectively**

Colman moves the discussion onto practising remote user research.

Denis stated that remote interviews are pretty straightforward. He finds Zoom good for face to face interviews, and recommended [Silverback](#) with video as a cheap way to get up and running. Prior to Covid-19, his team took a hybrid approach, with a mixture of remote and face to face interviews. "I think it [remote user research] is a challenge. It works, but it's not as good as being in a room for observation."

Conor asked the committee if anyone has effectively done mobile user testing and how.

Colman replied: "Our students do a lot of mobile user testing. Our team has figured out a way to use Zoom. They use [Reflector](#) to capture the remote usability testing. You have to ask the participant, the user, to install Reflector on their PC or Mac to display. The participants can then share their screen so the test can be recorded on Zoom."

Brian has an alternative solution: "[Lookback ](#)can do it. This disadvantage with Lookback is that you have a fair amount of heavy weight instructions to give the client and it has a failure rate of people who can't use it that's reasonably high." He feels like there are less steps involved than Reflector, but you still have to deal with audio issues. However, that doesn't reflect on the app itself. Lookback's fee is fairly small for a commercial operation. Plus, it allows his team to keep all the tests together.

Gareth warned against bias when it comes to remote user research. There are two things on his mind when doing remote testing. First, he believes every step you move the user away from their natural environment, introduces more noise for bias. As discussed, many user research tests can be tricky to set up. Every time the user is investing in something that they wouldn't use, it takes them away from how they would behave in the real world. Secondly, he thinks users with a low degree of tech

literacy shouldn't be tested. In his opinion, if you're doing work for an industry where you're pursuing universal design, you have to recognise that you're designing for a whole chunk of people who you can't get at.

Colman then asked about best practices for tools at the tail end of UX (like feedback, communications and design).

Gareth said it depends on both the clients culture and UX maturity. Some are comfortable with remote meetings, others aren't.
"You've got to be sensitive culturally."

Brian Herron flagged risks with text feedback. "Sometimes a random comment can throw you off because it feels like it's about something that's already been decided." Text communication is fine with him as long as they're manageable with set ground rules.

Denis Cullinane believed remote UX working is going to continue to grow. For him, face to face interviews are at the core of UX over video. He pointed out that if you're working with large distributed teams, and you're getting feedback from lots of different places, it comes back to how you store and manage your data.

Colman moved onto the second roundtable.

# 4. Roundtable discussion - The changing roles of designers

Colman told the IAC that many students are faced with confusing job titles. Many UX design jobs don't even mention 'UX' in job titles or descriptions, with titles ranging from product designers to experience designers. He asked them where this trend comes from and what guidance they could give to students.

Tim believes it's due to the speed of digital transformation: "It's impossible to think of a product role in any type of company without UX being at the centre of that. UX is broadening the focus and it needs to stay connected to that trend."

Conor attributed this confusion to the expectation of what a designer is. "There is a concept now of the full stack designer. You're usually at one end of the spectrum or the other, but now you have design ops and design systems in pure digital companies. There's an expectation that you're full stack. I think the idea is that you can do end to end in a way you couldn't in the past when we had a design system in place."

Dara added that many UX designers don't want to be seen as UI only. "A drive towards a higher level term might give the term more credibility." He has seen an increase in product design job titles.

For Denis, UX has become quite a generic term because it has become part of strategy in everything. He added "there's a whole load of different names, but there's a lot of overlap."

Mark has experienced this overlap personally. "I was a Product Designer in Daft but I'm doing the same job in Verizon where I'm a Senior Experience Designer. There's a lot of confusion, but I think people are trying to take ownership of a particular area, potentially."

Denis believes it's less about the job title and more about what they bring across in their CV.

Brian agreed that UX has become broader, but there are more specialisations now. A generic CV won't resonate with employers. He advised that students should tailor their CV to suit the job specification.

Gareth uses the term 'Experience Design' in his business. For him, the differentiating factor of job titles come from processes. An agency's process could differ from a product designer for example, and this is reflected in the job title.

Colman pointed out that while this is confusing for experienced designers, it must be very challenging for those new to the field. It was great for the IAC to give new professionals some insight here.

## Conclusion

Colman thanked everyone again for their time and said that the Council will reconvene in 3 months time.