# DESIGN BEFORE HIRING

## Telling the whole story when it comes to your team's vision

JESSA PARETTE | 2022 DESIGN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

@jessaparette

# A little about me:

## HEAD OF DESIGN RESEARCH STRATEGY & SYSTEMS

AUTO FINANCE | CAPITAL ONE

# First

## Let's start with a familiar story

# Once upon a time…

## Everything was terrible

# Yikes

**Does this sound familiar?**

Surprise!

That person was me 👋

# What will we cover?

1. Hiring the RIGHT people requires leadership skills that are often untaught, undeveloped or taken for granted.
2. Interviews alone cannot clarify who the right person is and why. We must learn how to write the full story.
3. We have the design tools and training we need to rethink our self-discipline in hiring and building a team.

# Why now?

## THERE IS A WAR FOR TALENT

Even if you have don't have positions to fill, you are battling the fight for developing people

## IMPORTANT DECISIONS ARE ABOUT PEOPLE

Choosing a team is about creating culture and ecosystem that produces despite adversity

## THERE IS A NEW GENERATION OF DESIGN LEADER

We owe it to our community to be the mentors we may or may not have had

# WHAT I HOPE YOU GET OUT OF THIS

**A greater appreciation for the role you, as a leader, play when it comes to building culture**

# WHAT I HOPE YOU GET OUT OF THIS

**A fresh perspective on how you are empowered to envision your team**

# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Organizations often **take leadership skills in hiring for granted**, or rely on systems designed for efficiency in filling roles, not necessarily human empathy, to hire candidates.

# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

While companies have abundant systems for interviewing and recruiting, leaders face an **anemic level of resources in learning the art of hiring well.**

We are not as good at it as we may think.

## Things you may see as a result

# Everyone is the same-ish level, but job duties are all over the place

## Things you may see as a result

"Welcome to [blank company]"

## Things you may see as a result

# Different design teams have different hiring practices

## Things you may see as a result

# Every few years, someone tries to recreate the onboarding system

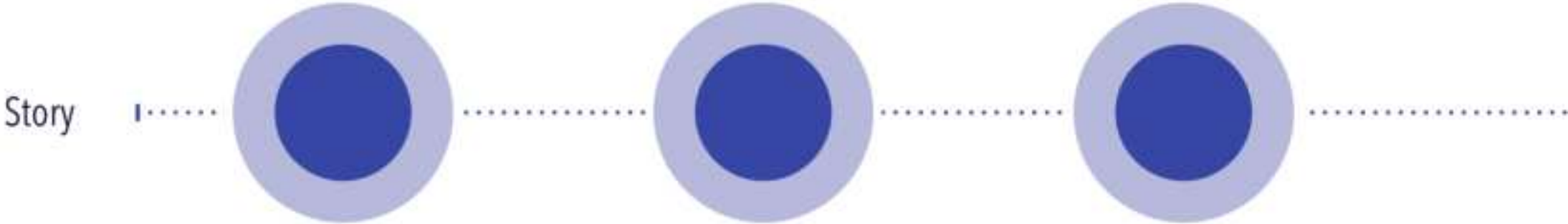
## Things you may see as a result

# Minimum requirements are written in "legal language" and cannot be changed

# So, as design leaders, what are we do to?

# Why, design differently, of course

# Joining your team is like a story



Story

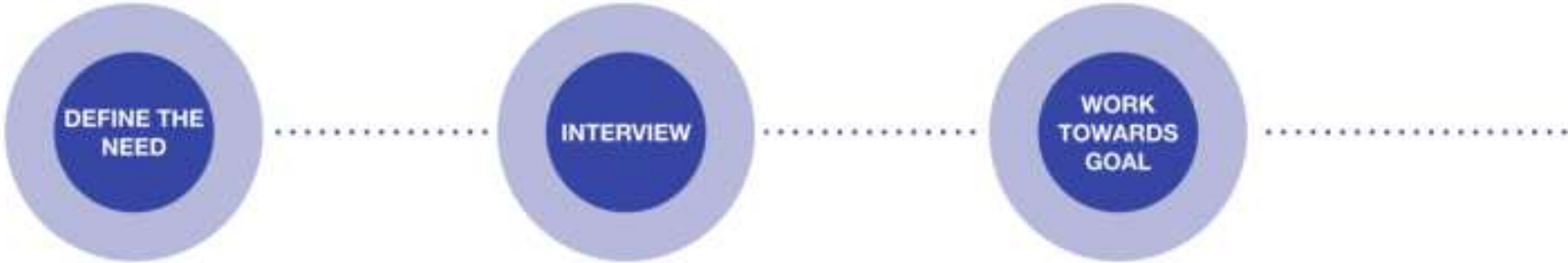
BEFORE
Candidate

DURING

AFTER

Design Leader

Story



# BEFORE: "What is the vision?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

"What motivates this person?"

# BEFORE: "What is the vision?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

**"What are their strengths?**

# BEFORE: "What is the vision?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

**"Why do I need this role?"**

# DURING: "Where are we now?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Candidate

"What is the vision for your team?"

# DURING: "Where are we now?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

**What does your work look like?**

# DURING: "Where are we now?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

**Why do you want this role?**

# DURING: "Where are we now?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Candidate

**"What is happening now?"**

# DURING: "Where are we now?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Candidate

"What caused you to need these particular skills?"

# AFTER: "Where are we going?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

"What do they want to achieve?"

# AFTER: "Where are we going?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

"What outcome should their quest have?"

## AFTER: "Where are we going?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Design Leader

"In the end, what do they accomplish?"

# AFTER: "Where are we going?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Candidate

"What will a job be different by work?"

"What will a job be different by work of my skills"

# AFTER: "Where are we going?"

Story

DEFINE THE NEED

INTERVIEW

WORK TOWARDS GOAL

Candidate

"What will change because of my work?"

# Most hiring journeys cram everything into the interview

# The consequences last longer than you think

# CONSEQUENCE #1

## YOU ADJUST THE CULTURE WITH EACH HIRE

Every hire & promotion changes the standard

# CONSEQUENCE #2

## YOU BUILD A HOMOGENOUS TEAM

Diversity does not just "happen". It must be intentional.

# CONSEQUENCE #3

## HIRING MISTAKES ARE EXPENSIVE

It takes up to 12 months for a new hire to gain traction

# CONSEQUENCE #4

## HIRING IS EASIER THAN FIRING

Poor leadership drives out good team members

# CONSEQUENCE #5

## YOUR TEAM CHARTER SEEMS UNEVEN

Role confusion, poor level clarity & lack of direction

# Questions pile up

"How does this role fit with the larger team?"

# Questions pile up

"What should motivate this person?"

# Questions pile up

"How does this particular UX research role differ from the other roles we have at the same level?"

# Questions pile up

"Are we all doing the same work?"

# Questions pile up

"Are we promoting arbitrarily or do we actually have clear paths for what is required?"

# Back Up

## Continuing the story…

# OMG

**This is a design problem. Duh.**

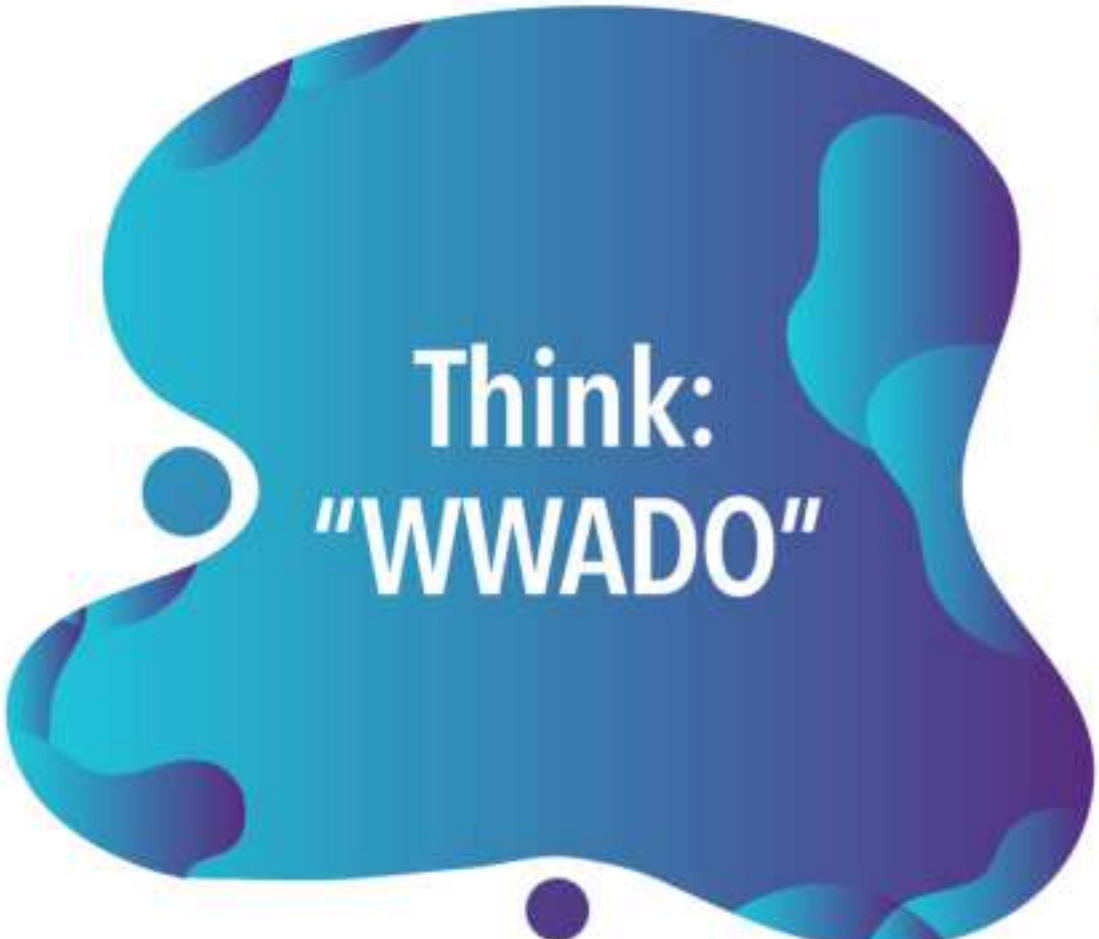
# I was missing parts of the story

## But I was a designer. I could design anything.

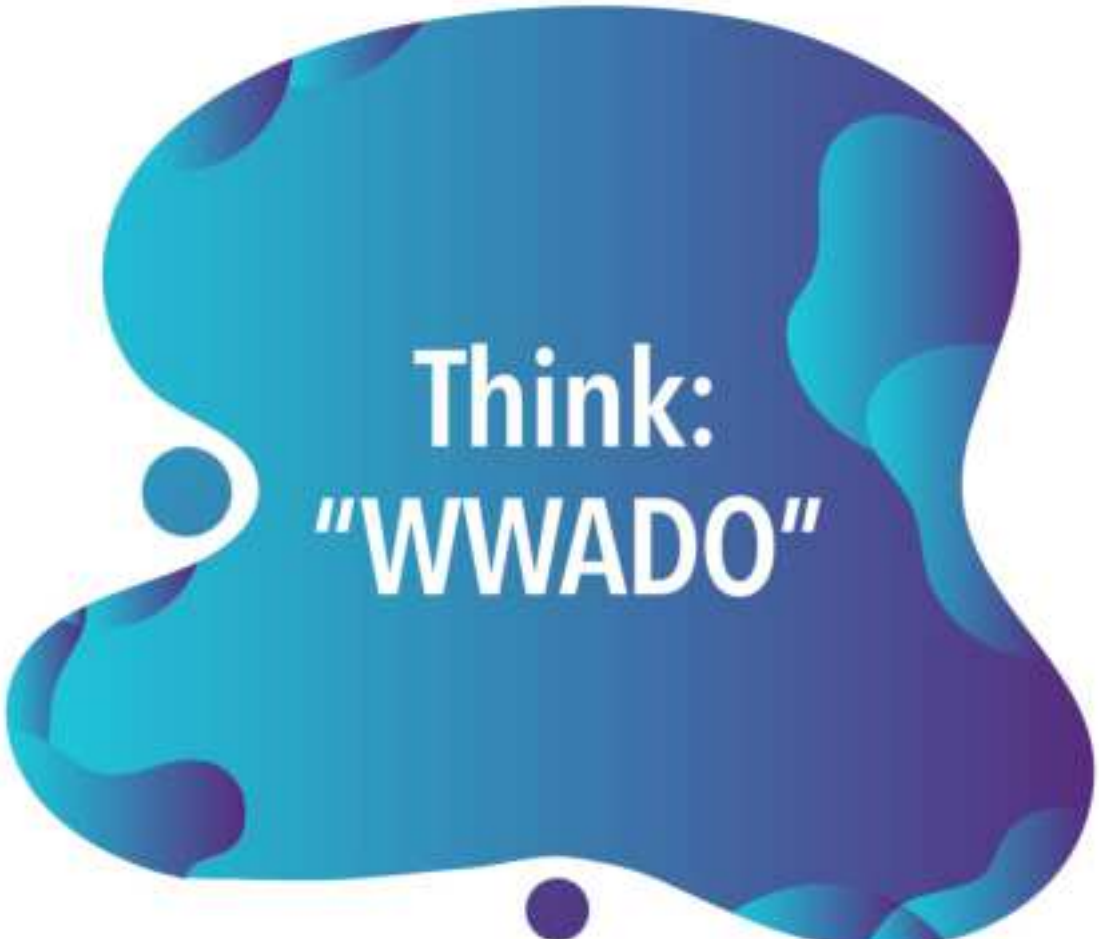
THE BEFORE

# PART 1:

# Clarify the need




# WHAT WOULD A DESIGNER DO?




# A DESIGNER WOULD DESIGN

# CREATE PROTO-PERSONAS FOR YOUR VISION

Articulate the subjective and objective needs of the role with creativity & freedom

What if I designed a persona of my perfect candidate?

FIRST NAME
**LAST NAME**

**"What quote would illuminate what this individual cares about in relation to their role?"**

JOB: General Idea of a Title

## BIO:

What background is important for you to think through? What kind of work or collaboration would signal that their experience gets close to what you need to look for in a candidate? Put that here

## GOALS:

- What is the vision that drives this individual?
- How does it relate to the vision for your organization?

## KEY ROLE

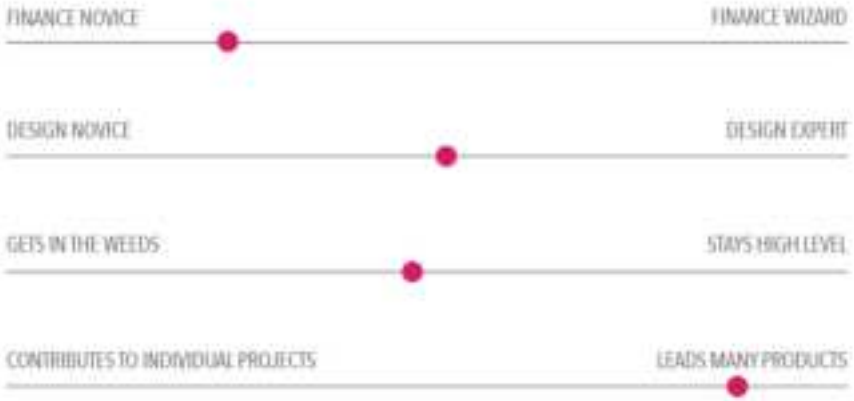
- What are the 2 - 3 specific focuses that matter for this role?
- This isn't a job description, but one step lower than the goals section, which is how you translate the key outcomes or results that are expected

## STRENGTHS:

- What is the person good at doing that matters? Are they a good people leader?
- Do they know when to push back against product, or mentor others into lead ing work? Are they a good storyteller or do they shine when given a problem?
- Do you need someone who is a linear thinker or more abstract? This is where you put strengths or personality compositions you know you need

## RESPONSIBLE FOR

- Think through 3 - 4 categories of responsibility that would encompass the general idea of the role. For example:
- Drives the reasoning and decisions for the budget that will meet the team's needs in the next year
- Meets 1:1 with peer leaders monthly
- Recruites, hires and mentors members of their team
- Willing to do whatever it takes to remove roadblocks within her organization



# HERE IS WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE

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LEX
FAYED

**"Where does our strategy need to have strong operational discipline in place?**

JOB: Program Operations Strategist

BIO:

Lex got their MBA from Ohio State before securing a job as account lead for a financial firm in London. There, they joined a professional organization for product management, learning how to build great teams with great practice

GOALS:

- Pursue value adds of support & proactive operational process that will help teams focus on serving the customer
- Make design operations a hub of innovation

KEY ROLE

- Create and maintain a holistic view of the work happening on the teams in order to make connections, identify opportunities, and ensure alignment to strategic priorities
- Partner with team leads to assess, identify & improve portfolio management

STRENGTHS:

- Has an eye for organization and knows how to create macro and micro views that tell leadership where to focus
- Strong program management that drives deadlines and coordination of work
- Knows how to lead people & gain buy in
- Can identify when and how to make tradeoffs between speed and quality

RESPONSIBLE FOR

- Collaborating with peer partners and the head of design to improve shared systems, processes, and rituals for the organization at large
- Runs program-level view of work in flight, sprint prioritization and velocity for entire team
- Leading effective program level planning routines, such as initiative refinement and PI planning
- Hires, trains and develops members of the team reporting to them to build well-managed and high performing team

SUPPORTS OPERATIONS — DEFINES OPERATIONS

CONTRIBUTES SOLO — LEADS LEADERS

GETS IN THE WEEDS — SEES HIGH LEVEL

MANAGES DEVELOPMENT — INVESTS IN DEVELOPMENT

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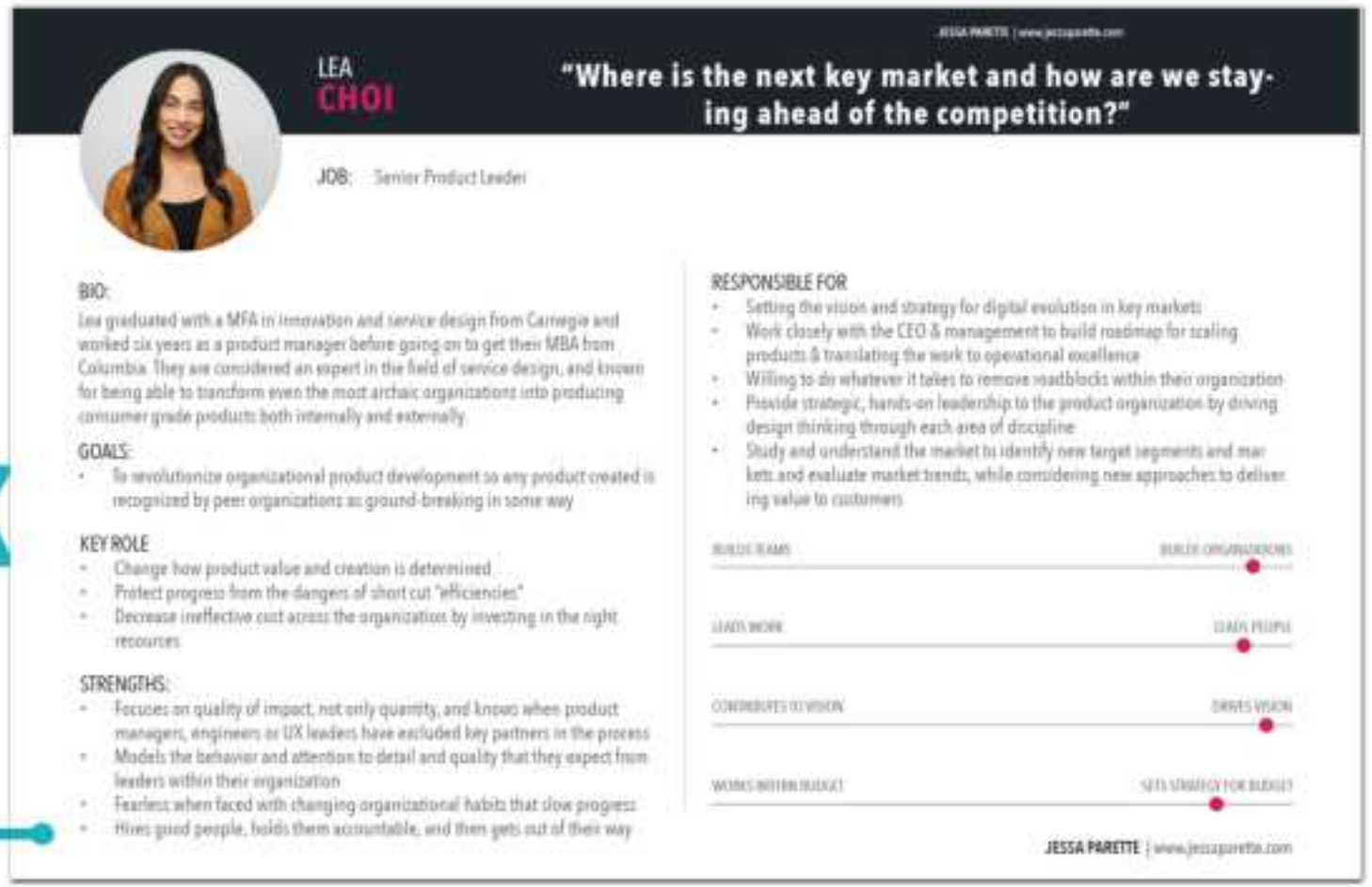
# HERE IS WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE



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LEA
CHOI

"Where is the next key market and how are we staying ahead of the competition?"

JOB: Senior Product Leader

BIO:

Lea graduated with a MFA in innovation and service design from Carnegie and worked six years as a product manager before going on to get their MBA from Columbia. They are considered an expert in the field of service design, and known for being able to transform even the most archaic organizations into producing consumer grade products both internally and externally.

GOALS:

- To revolutionize organizational product development so any product created is recognized by peer organizations as ground-breaking in some way

KEY ROLE

- Change how product value and creation is determined
- Protect progress from the dangers of short cut "efficiencies"
- Decrease ineffective cost across the organization by investing in the right resources

STRENGTHS:

- Focuses on quality of impact, not only quantity, and knows when product managers, engineers or UX leaders have excluded key partners in the process
- Models the behavior and attention to detail and quality that they expect from leaders within their organization
- Fearless when faced with changing organizational habits that slow progress
- Hires good people, holds them accountable, and then gets out of their way

RESPONSIBLE FOR

- Setting the vision and strategy for digital evolution in key markets
- Work closely with the CEO & management to build roadmap for scaling products & translating the work to operational excellence
- Willing to do whatever it takes to remove roadblocks within their organization
- Provide strategic, hands-on leadership to the product organization by driving design thinking through each area of discipline
- Study and understand the market to identify new target segments and markets and evaluate market trends, while considering new approaches to delivering value to customers

BUILDS TEAMS — BUILDS ORGANIZATIONS

LEADS WORK — LEADS PEOPLE

CONTRIBUTES TO VISION — DRIVES VISION

WORKS WITHIN BUDGET — SETS STRATEGY FOR BUDGET

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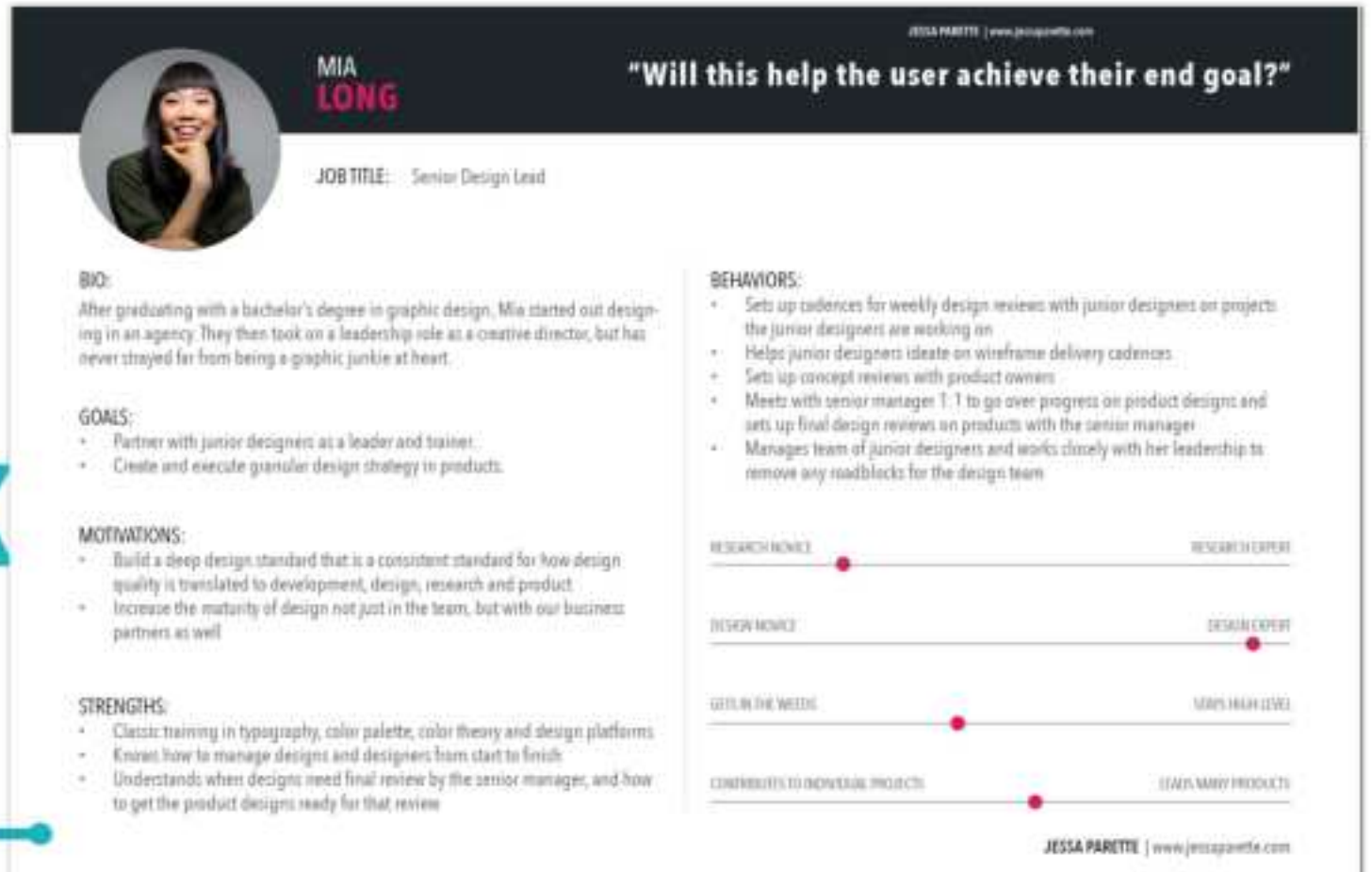
# HERE IS WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE



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MIA
LONG

"Will this help the user achieve their end goal?"

JOB TITLE: Senior Design Lead

BIO:

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in graphic design, Mia started out designing in an agency. They then took on a leadership role as a creative director, but has never strayed far from being a graphic junkie at heart.

GOALS:

- Partner with junior designers as a leader and trainer.
- Create and execute granular design strategy in products.

MOTIVATIONS:

- Build a deep design standard that is a consistent standard for how design quality is translated to development, design, research and product
- Increase the maturity of design not just in the team, but with our business partners as well

STRENGTHS:

- Classic training in typography, color palette, color theory and design platforms
- Knows how to manage designs and designers from start to finish
- Understands when designs need final review by the senior manager, and how to get the product designs ready for that review

BEHAVIORS:

- Sets up cadences for weekly design reviews with junior designers on projects the junior designers are working on
- Helps junior designers ideate on wireframe delivery cadences
- Sets up concept reviews with product owners
- Meets with senior manager 1: 1 to go over progress on product designs and sets up final design reviews on products with the senior manager
- Manages team of junior designers and works closely with her leadership to remove any roadblocks for the design team

RESEARCH NOVICE — RESEARCH EXPERT

DESIGN NOVICE — DESIGN EXPERT

GETS IN THE WEEDS — SEES HIGH LEVEL

CONTRIBUTES TO INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS — LEADS MANY PRODUCTS

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# HERE IS WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE

ELLA
SAMEL

"It's my job to make the details delightful for the user."

JOB TITLE: UI Designer

BIO:

After graduating with a bachelor's in graphic design, Ella went on to get their master's degree in interactive design with a concentration in service design. This is their first job since graduation, and they are relocating from Houston.

GOALS:

- Break new ground in user experience design by exploring design where few companies have ventured
- Become a design leader in the company and within the industry

MOTIVATIONS:

- Be able to see the impact of their design ideas
- Being a thought partner with the business, not just a designer

STRENGTHS:

- Has an eye for color balance, pixel perfection and design alignment across an entire product
- Creative in blending technical, user and business requirements in the design into experiences that go beyond what was simply asked
- Cares about the quality of what is delivered, not just the quantity

BEHAVIORS:

- Meets weekly with the senior designer to go over design progress and get feedback on the latest design for products
- Interacts with engineers and product owners early on in the lifecycle of the product and throughout the design lifecycle
- Brings designs to the team during design reviews
- Partners with researchers to understand how testing will impact what users want from the designs

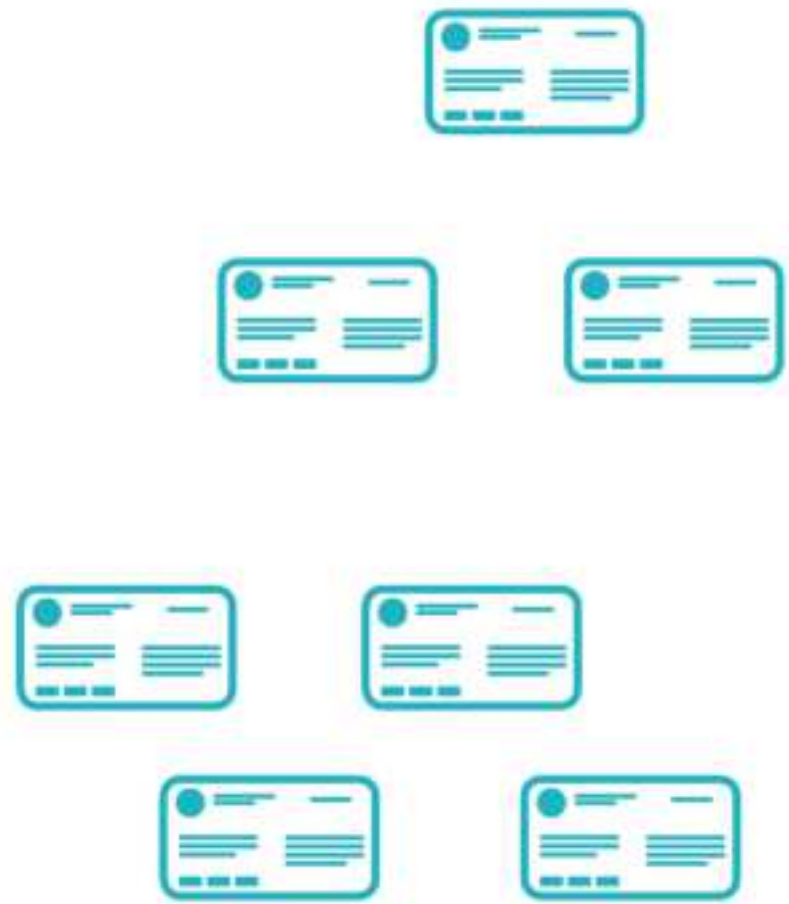
RESEARCH NOVICE — RESEARCH EXPERT

DESIGN NOVICE — DESIGN EXPERT

GETS IN THE WEEDS — STAYS HIGH LEVEL

CONTRIBUTES TO INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS — LEADS MANY PRODUCTS

# I started building teams



# Clarify vision & create space for possibilities

# IT DOES NOT STOP WITH YOU

**Send these to your recruiters - they will love you for it**

# IT DOES NOT STOP WITH YOU

**Easy to send to candidates when they ask "Can you tell me more about this role?"**

# IT DOES NOT STOP WITH YOU

It is easier to show the vision of team expansion to leadership

# Tips when designing proto-personas

## Use diverse photos & names

**Diversity doesn't start after someone applies for a role. It starts with how you build a vision for your team**

# Tips when designing proto-personas

## Bio is about background

**Not a list of demands, but gives an idea of what background and experience you and your recruiter should seek**

# Tips when designing proto-personas

## Make it bigger than the role

Goals and motivation should be evergreen. Make them big but achievable with the ability to expand as the person grows.

THE AFTER

# PART 2:

# Setting the goal

# WHAT WOULD A DESIGNER DO?

# A DESIGNER WOULD DESIGN

# IN A YEAR, WHAT WILL YOU THANK THEM FOR DOING?

Articulate what will be different or what will change in 365 days because of this role

What am I thanking this role for doing a year from now?

# HOW TO BUILD THE THANK YOU NOTE

Clarify the specific outcomes & expectations that this role does

## FIRST ASK YOURSELF

"Why do I need this role?"

- Put a few reasons
- Be specific
- Example: **"We need a design system engineer to bring our code up to standard"**

# HOW TO BUILD THE THANK YOU NOTE

Clarify the specific outcomes & expectations that this role does

## FIRST ASK YOURSELF

"What will this person work on?"

- Be specific but not prescriptive
- Example: **"They will work on creating standard documentation and bringing all design teams up to speed on the changes."**

# HOW TO BUILD THE THANK YOU NOTE

Clarify the specific outcomes & expectations that this role does

## FIRST ASK YOURSELF

"If they work on this, what will be different in one year?"

- When they work on X, what will be different?
- Clarify but don't dictate
- Example: **"In a year, we will retire all old documentation and have a roadmap for converting to the new token code."**

# HOW TO BUILD THE THANK YOU NOTE

**Dear [ROLE]**

Thank you for **[doing something]**. Because of your work in **[project]** we are now able to **[outcome]**. Thanks to your work this year, we now we have **[thing that is different]**.

Because of your great ability to **[do the role expectation]**, we've seen a difference in **[outcome]**.

# THEN, FILL IN THE BLANKS

Dear **Design System Engineer**

Thanks to your work this year, **we now we have reduced our tech debt from old documentation** and **have a clear roadmap** for what the next year will be!

Because of your great **ability to mentor junior engineers** in how to work with design teams, we've seen a difference in **how designers want to collaborate with our design system team!**

# THEN, FILL IN THE BLANKS

Dear **Design System Engineer**

Because of your great **ability to mentor junior engineers** in how to work with design teams, we've seen a difference in **how designers want to collaborate with our design system team!**

# THEN, FILL IN THE BLANKS

Dear **Design System Engineer**

Thanks to your work this year, **we now we have reduced our tech debt from old documentation** and **have a clear roadmap** for what the next year will be!

Thank you for **bringing our design code up to standard.** Because of **your work in documenting tokens** we are now **able to standardize how other design teams use code.**

Because of your great **ability to mentor junior engineers** in how to work with design teams, we've seen a difference in **how designers want to collaborate with our design system team!**

It became easier to clarify how the individual contributed to the team's purpose

It reaffirmed trust in the purpose for the role, and that anyone in the role would indeed have a purpose behind their work

"Purpose affirms trust, trust affirms purpose, and together they forge individuals into a working team."

Stanley McChrystal

# HOW YOU CAN USE THESE

**Like a team charter, writing it down clarifies purpose - first within yourself and then to others**

# HOW YOU CAN USE THESE

**It makes you evaluate if you need one role or several**

# HOW YOU CAN USE THESE

**Like a team charter, writing it down clarifies purpose - first within yourself and then to others**

# Tips when writing the thank you note

"Dear [insert role]"

It's been a year and ....

## Use action verbs

"Thank you for changing _____"

"Because you _____ were were able to _____"

"When you proactively _____ it made way for _____"

# Tips when writing the thank you note

## Make room for personalization

You are not telling someone how to do their job. HOW they do the work is up to THEM. You are clarifying where the team is going and WHAT needs to happen.

# Tips when writing the thank you note

## It's imagination, not evaluation

**Uset this to show where you want to go, but do not use it as a performance evaluation.**

Our story

"What is the vision?"

NEED

INTERVIEW

"Where are we going?"

TOWARDS GOAL

# PART 3:

# In conclusion

Nothing you do as a leader is going to be more important than how you hire and develop people.

# Thank you