HOPE IS NOT A METHOD

How to improve diversity in your design team and make better products.

Lisa deBettencourt, VP Design at Confer Health
@ldebett
It means exactly what you think it means.
Clearly Better by Design

Pregnant
Not Pregnant

reddot design award winner
How does a woman pee?
“It’s gross. Really gross”
Study finds gender and skin-type bias in commercial artificial-intelligence systems

Examination of facial-analysis software shows error rate of 0.8 percent for light-skinned men, 34.7 percent for dark-skinned women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Classifier</th>
<th>Darker Male</th>
<th>Darker Female</th>
<th>Lighter Male</th>
<th>Lighter Female</th>
<th>Largest Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98.3%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACE++</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>99.7%</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above illustrates the accuracy of gender classifiers for darker and lighter males and females, along with the largest gap in performance between the two classifications.
"The same data-centric techniques that can be used to try to determine somebody’s gender are also used to identify a person when you’re looking for a criminal suspect or to unlock your phone.

-Joy Buolamwini
FEMALE GEOMETRY

• The smaller the person, the fewer crash forces the body can tolerate.

• The positioning of head restraints, fails to take account of the size and strength of women's necks.

• Women typically need to sit closer to the gas and brake pedals and more upright to see over the dashboard, which brings their heads and chests closer to the steering wheel and its air bag

• The angle of their knees and hips as their shorter legs reach for the pedals makes their legs more vulnerable
NOPE
THESIS
Conway’s Law says:

“Organizations which design systems ... are constrained to produce designs which are copies of the communication structures of these organizations.”
I propose a corollary to that law:

“Organizations which design systems are constrained to produce designs which are copies of the beliefs, biases, and identities of the people within those organizations.”
Therefore...

A diverse and inclusive team will naturally create products and services that serve a broader audience more authentically*.

*I know it’s not quite that easy. But it’s an important start.
Hiring to improve team diversity
Chance

GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL

DO NOT PASS GO, DO NOT COLLECT $200

© 1935 PARKER BROTHERS
I am not a lawyer.
This is not legal advice.
This is based on what I’ve learned and experienced.
YMMV.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (orientation and gender identity are protected by Mass. state laws)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>National origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age (over 40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military service or affiliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bankruptcy or bad debts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genetic information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizenship status</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MARKETING YOUR JOB

What you write,
Where you advertise,
When you recruit,

affect who will apply.
LANGUAGE MATTERS

Instead of:
• Ninja, Rock Star, A-Player
• Work hard/Play hard
• Mission-critical
• High performance
• Foosball

Consider:
• Team player
• Self-starter
• Valuable
• Collaborative
• Family
# The language of 10 tech cultures

Commonly used phrases in company job descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Commonly used phrases in company job descriptions</th>
<th>Frequency of phrase usage, compared to other tech companies</th>
<th>% of applications from women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>“wickedly” “fast-paced environment” “maniacal”</td>
<td>33x</td>
<td>11x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>“comfortably” “maintaining control” “empathetic”</td>
<td>16x</td>
<td>8x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>“our-family” “intensely” “storytelling”</td>
<td>23x</td>
<td>20x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>“first rate” “prove that” “tackle”</td>
<td>20x</td>
<td>16x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>“driven person” “insatiably” “competing”</td>
<td>24x</td>
<td>22x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netflix</td>
<td>“sweet spot” “built by the home” “disciplined”</td>
<td>17x</td>
<td>15x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salesforce</td>
<td>“work hard play hard” “hungry for” “building alliances”</td>
<td>16x</td>
<td>8x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slack</td>
<td>“making relationships” “meaningfully” “care deeply”</td>
<td>14x</td>
<td>5x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>“nerd” “passion for learning” “diverse perspectives”</td>
<td>11x</td>
<td>5x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uber</td>
<td>“whatever it takes” “high-performance culture” “all-star”</td>
<td>30x</td>
<td>23x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Orange: Outperformed by 2x more applications from women
- Purple: Outperformed by 2x more applications from women

Source: Textio
WIDE SELECTION OF JOB BOARDS

- uXpa
- IxDA
- AIGA (the professional association for design)
- UX Jobs Board
- dribbble
- Krop
- Smashing Magazine
- COROFLOT
- indeed
- Hired
- glassdoor
- Monster
TIMEING

- Mostly affects **volume** of candidates
- Recruit summer interns Feb – April.
- Late July, August, and early September tend to be more difficult to recruit for senior/leadership roles.
- After October 31, most people are focused on the holidays and family.

AWARENESS
TELLING THE COMPANY STORY

Who is on the team,
Who is in management,
What is on the web site,
affect who will apply.
Apple Leadership

Executive Profiles

Tim Cook
CEO

Katherine Adams
Senior Vice President and General Counsel

Angela Ahrendts
Senior Vice President Retail

Eddy Cue
Senior Vice President Internet Software and Services

Craig Federighi
Senior Vice President Software Engineering

Jonathan Ive
Chief Design Officer

Luca Maestri
Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

Dan Riccio
Senior Vice President Hardware Engineering

Philip W. Schiller
Senior Vice President Worldwide Marketing

Johny Srouji
Senior Vice President Hardware Technologies

Jeff Williams
Chief Operating Officer
Confer Health Leadership Team

- Dr. Mounir Koussa
  Founder and Chief Executive Officer

- Joshua Forman
  Founder and Chief Product Officer

- Dr. Zhi-Yang Tsun
  Founder

- Rebekah Coelho
  Clinical Research Manager

- Nick Lancaster
  Vice President, Engineering

- Lisa deBettencourt
  Vice President, Design

- Dr. Andrew Ward
  Research Director

- Masa Hoshino
  Director of Operations
QUALIFYING CANDIDATES

How you handle applications
How you communicate
How you determine fit
affect who you will interview.
HIRE BLIND!

Anonymize or “blind” demographic-related information about a candidate

Increases workplace diversity by allowing people to be more objective when evaluating a candidate’s skills, knowledge, and potential to succeed
HIRE BLIND!

Remove names, gender, education, photos, etc.

- Resumes
- Cover letters
- Portfolios

Ask preliminary screening questions through a digital format (e.g. a survey, form, or email).
HIRE BLIND!

Focus on fit

- Accomplishments
- Transferrable skills
- Experiences with tools or techniques
- Domain knowledge (or lack of it)

Look for dealbreakers at this stage
INTERVIEWING

Who is on your interview team
What you ask the candidate
How you quantify competencies affect who you will hire.
THE INTERVIEW TEAM

• Choose people who the candidate will work with directly, who are good representatives for your team

• One “rando” to check for values alignment

• Assign topics to the interviewers: relevant skills AND company values
USE A HIRING SCORECARD

### Clarity of thought and communication?
Can explain their rationale or thinking behind their design decisions. Why did they do the things they did? A couple of project examples should show deep thought and aren’t just “that was the brand”

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### Originality
Original work. Not one who just goes out and copies what’s currently hot or trending on Dribbble or Enhance for the sake of getting the job done. Likely understands, artistically, the rationale behind current or previous styles, trends, or artistic movements.

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### Craftsmanship
Quality matters. Thrives in a world of craftsmanship where the details make or break a design. Attention to details can see a designer of place from across a room.

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### Strives for continuous improvement
Sees problems in current solutions, processes, tools, etc. and is internally driven to improve them. Practice and president. Self-starter and lifelong learner.

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### Takes feedback well.
Takes feedback well. Thoughtful. Interpretable. Stands up for one’s designs while listening to the challenges to it. Willing to negotiate and come to a solution that works well for all concerned.

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IN SUMMARY,

- Write gender-neutral and inviting job descriptions.
- Post on job boards that serve people from a range of backgrounds.
- Time your recruiting for maximum volume of candidates.
- Review your company’s “about us” and “company values” pages for the stories they tell about diversity and inclusion.
- Blind the applications, resumes, cover letters, and portfolios to fairly judge a candidate’s abilities and qualifications.
- Choose your interview team carefully. Assign topics and questions to each interviewer. Include one “rando” to focus on fit with company values.
- Use a hiring scorecard throughout the interview process to rate candidates on key metrics you are looking for and more fairly compare them to each other.
WHERE DO I START?
3 EASY THINGS TO DO TOMORROW

If you’re a hiring manager:

• Edit your job descriptions for tone and word choice. Check out textio.com for help.

• Review your application process and remove all questions regarding name prefixes, age, gender, years of experience, education level, or work status.

• Write skill-based evaluation metrics for scoring a candidate’s strength in important requirements.
3 EASY THINGS TO DO TOMORROW

If you’re an individual contributor:

• Evaluate your company’s values and culture with regard to inclusivity and diversity.

• Review any public job positions for your team. Discuss language concerns with the hiring manager.

• Get on the interview committee. Recommend using a scorecard.
Bias manifests in the products a company makes. Diversify your design team to make safe products for all. Your team will keep you honest.

-@ldebett
THANK YOU

@ldebett