

Toward an Ethical Design Checklist

Process

- Have I sought and acted on meaningful criticism on my work from designers, subject matter experts, stakeholders, and users? Have diverse, informed perspectives informed my work?
- Is my research sample representative of the people who would actually use my product? Have I inspected my recruiting process for bias?

Interaction

- Have I balanced usability and efficiency with patterns that help people make informed, mindful choices? Does my product encourage conscious choices and minimize impulsive choices?
- Is my product accessible to the range of mental and physical abilities of people who might use it? Have I inspected and tested my product for able-bodied bias?
- Does my product use established design patterns in predictable ways? Have I ensured that people's trust and intuitions are respected?

Experience

- Does my product prevent on-screen engagement from becoming an end in itself? Does my product prioritize or reward usage at the expense of meaningful off-screen experiences?
- Does my product respect the range of emotional states in which people may encounter it? Designing for delight may be the wrong goal.
- Does my product treat users with respect? Would I encourage a friend or family member to use what I've made?

Transparency

- Do my product's default settings favor the user's best interests? Are they obvious and easily changed?
- Does my product show users how their data is used — not only how it is used to improve their experience, but how it benefits the company? Have I taken steps to reveal the workings of my product in easily understood ways?

Consequences

- Have I anticipated the harm that could be done with what I have designed? Have I communicated these risks with my client? "Your job is not just to produce that work but to evaluate the impact of that work. Your job is to relay the impact of that work to your client or employer."
- Have I established a process for assessing the results of my product: not only how it impacts the business, but how it impacts its users? How will necessary changes be made?
- Will my product make the design industry more trustworthy, credible, and reputable in the eyes of my users and clients? Am I creating a better future for the next generation of designers? If all designers made decisions like mine, would our industry be in a better state?