Bridging the gap between designers & engineers: a how-to guide for designers – A Reflection

Sara Cagle

During my experience as a software developer and a student within the HCDE program, I have frequently heard other students and occasionally guest speakers ask questions and initiate discussions that, to me as a developer, are very puzzling or almost insulting to the developer discipline. Despite the HCDE program including "E" for "Engineering," the "us versus them" mentality between designers and engineers/developers is unfortunately apparent. I realized, as a full-time developer in this program, there is ample room for designers to grow and foster better empathy with their developer counterparts to build more robust products.

Creating a guide on how designers can better bridge the gap between themselves and engineers was a great exercise for me to practice not only improving my own empathy with designers but to also help other designers build this empathy. While drafting the content for this guide, I considered my own experience in a large company, interviewed other software developer colleagues, and touched base with designers as well.

I wanted to create a guide that didn't *tell* designers how to *accommodate* engineers, but simply how to better address pain points I noticed were common between the two roles in a large company. Software developers/engineers are also in desperate need of a similar guide on working with designers, but for scoping purposes, I focused solely on designers in this guide. After publishing this, I am optimistic a designer will volunteer to create the counterpart guide.

Overall, the goal of this guide is to encourage designers and engineers to better align and build human-centered products better and faster together, both for the sake of any overarching stakeholders, as well as for their own learning and growth as professionals.