

## How do teams in big companies like Facebook do feature designs and design reviews?



**Jérôme Cukier**, worked at Facebook (2013-2014)

Answered 10 months ago · Author has 3K answers and 40.3M answer views

I can't really comment on Facebook anymore, but I can say how it's done at Google. The process at Google is focused on the lifecycle of a document and is heavily reliant on Google Docs.

While a design doc is not strictly necessary to do any kind of feature work, I found that at Google, the threshold for whether a design doc will be written for any given work is pretty low. One reason is that design docs definitely help, but we are also incentivized because every design doc is a tangible evidence of our work and will count towards having favorable performance rating.

There are multiple templates for design docs. Google is really multiple organizations which have slightly different processes. There's also different phases for design docs; very early on, you can use a doc to describe an idea and just explore whether it's worth pursuing, then you can describe what a proof of concept or a prototype would look like (proof of concept is earlier than a prototype, FTR). The template is very useful to structure our thoughts and also helps guide the discussion, as readers are familiar with the structure of the document. For bigger projects, the design docs are a group exercise written through many working sessions, but it's common that they have a sole author.

Then, the design doc is shared with a small group, who offer comments, that the author will engage with. Then, the doc may be discussed in a design review meeting. These come in all shapes and forms and are more or less formal. In my organization, which is about 150 people, the main design review meeting has all the more senior people as regular attendees, both people managers who usually have a broad view of the organization and of other teams that could work on similar problems, and expert ICs who have a deep technical understanding on some aspect of the work. The most common way the meeting goes is that the author of a design doc will go through all open questions in the doc, and try to address them, but there will be live questions too. Those meetings are typically very dynamic and fast-paced, and authors often get hard questions that they didn't think of during writing their doc which is the whole point. This discussion really helps authors mature their concept and address blind spots.

Finally, the design doc is formally approved. It is sent to a number of people who have to explicitly approve it and who may add further comments.

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### About the Author



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