

Design Team Phase 3: Where We Raise the Bar

By Niteesh Yadav 3 min 19 👍 2

We've come a long way.

What started with fixing broken parts has now moved into a space where we're shaping systems, setting benchmarks, and influencing how the organisation thinks about design.

Let's take a moment to reflect before we look ahead.

Phase 1: The Clean-up

We acknowledged that our design hygiene was off, the app didn't reflect the kind of team we wanted to be and frankly, there was little anyone could be proud of. So we rolled up our sleeves.

We cleaned up the mess, evaluated where we stood, and built a first line of stability across screens, teams, and expectations.

Phase 2: Structure and Elevation

With the basics in place, we moved from cleanup mode to systems thinking. We pitched and built the design system. We redefined how we work with research, with content, with product. This was also when the team began stepping up not just in execution, but in mindset.

Cross-functional trust started forming. Research began influencing product direction. Design was no longer a final coat of paint.

We weren't chasing tasks anymore. We were solving problems.

Phase 3: Raising the Bar

Now we're here. A more mature team, a clearer foundation, and higher expectations.

i This phase is about pushing beyond "functional" or "good enough." It's about thinking strategically, collaborating deeply, and delivering work that doesn't just tick boxes it moves things forward.

What This Phase Demands

From execution to ownership

You're not here to polish someone else's specs. You're here to question, investigate, define, and drive.

From follow-up to foresight

If something's broken, fix it. But also ask what could this be if we reimagined it? What's missing that nobody's asked for yet?

From solo work to shared wins

Most projects now need multiple perspectives. Know who to pull in, and make space for their input. Don't wait to be asked.

What We're Reinforcing

Credit where it's due

If someone contributed, say it in reviews, retros, even founder syncs. Insights, nudges, feedback, brainstorming, they all count. Your acknowledgement helps others grow, and it builds a culture where good work doesn't go unnoticed.

No hierarchy here

Titles don't matter. Everyone has a voice. If an intern challenges a decision and makes a better case, their idea wins. That's the bar.

Inspiration, not imitation

References are useful. But if you stop there, you're not doing your job. Build on it. Contextualise it. Add your brain. We're not here to copy what's trending. We're here to shape what's next.

Accessibility isn't optional

Any new feature, flow, or design if it's not accessible, it's broken. Build with inclusion from the start. Not as a patch later.

What I Expect From You Now

- Ask better questions. Start with "What's the problem we're solving?"
- Don't just fix, suggest. Push for new directions.
- Be proactive about blockers. Raise them early. Don't wait till review week.
- Credit people who helped. Make it a habit.
- Contribute to the culture. Not just with good work, but with how you work.
- Keep learning. If someone around you is better at something, learn from them.

↳ keep learning. If someone around you is better at something, learn from them.

Why This Matters

This is a building phase. And building phases don't last forever.

The freedom to experiment, the space to shape direction, the chance to leave your fingerprints on the foundation all of that shrinks once things mature. So use this time.

You have a rare window right now to do work you'll actually be proud of years later. Make it count.

And if you're aiming high Apple, Airbnb, Spotify, Meta, ask yourself:

Is my body of work heading in that direction?

If not yet, what's missing?

This phase is where you close that gap.

One Last Thing

You're not just here to do your job. You're also shaping what this team becomes known for.

How we show up, how we work, how we talk about our work, it sets the tone for who joins us next.

So act like owners. Scout people you want to work with. Share what you're building.


And remember, the people who shape a company early on are the ones future teams talk about.

Let's be that team.

Niteesh

03/07/2025

Related content 1

 Add a comment

 Add labels   2 

