

What skills will Technical Communicators need in the future?



Ellis Pratt
@ellispratt

What we'll cover

1. Who am I?
2. Why this topic?
3. Skills needed for the role today
4. Fluency
5. Skills needed for the future
6. Questions

We won't cover



Industrie 4.0
Augmented and Mixed Reality

I may have bias towards

Changes in software
Technical communication

Technical communication as
it is in the UK



Why this topic?



It's a better question than

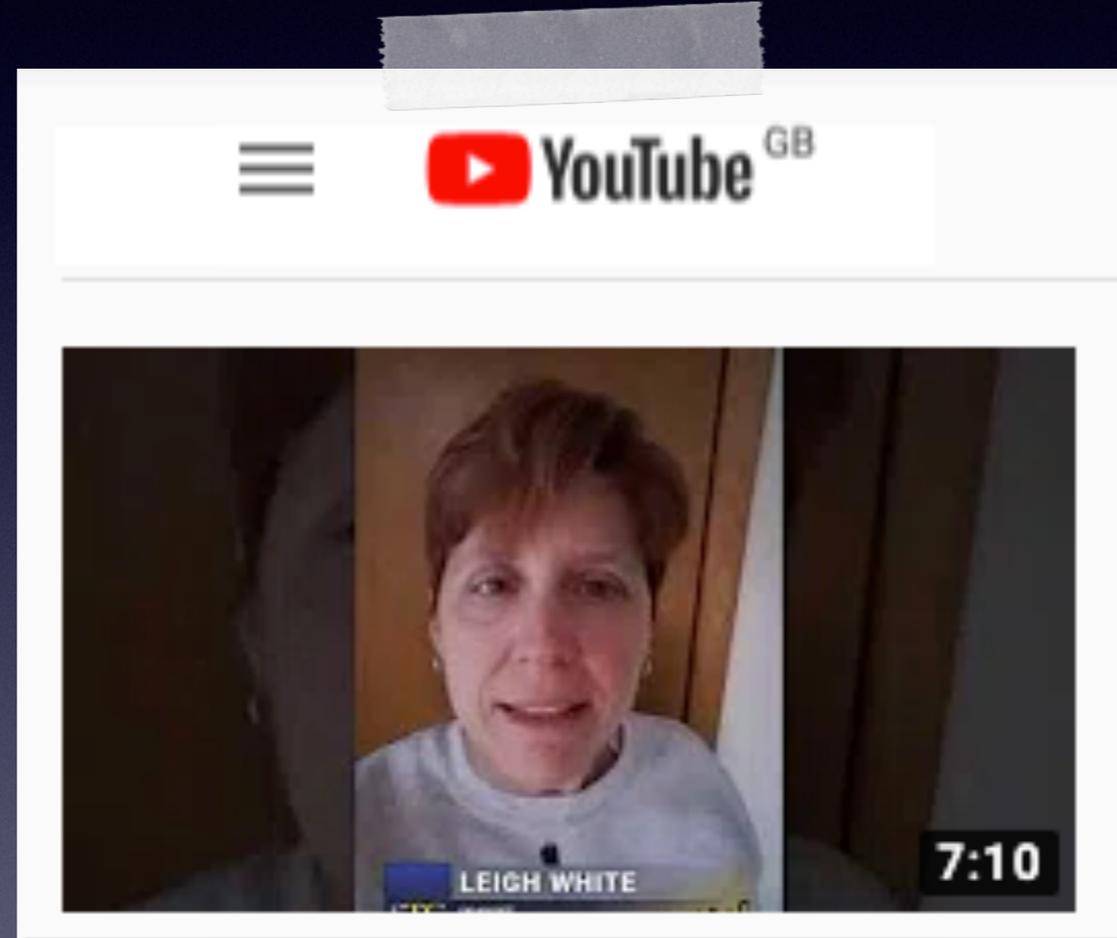
What are the future trends?

A better question because

It is actionable

It's being asked by others

<https://youtu.be/lqWnPBzPuE8>



So we can compare ideas

Skills needed for the role today



There are competency frameworks



Core skills needed for the role

1. Writing skills (using the principles of Minimalism)
2. Time management skills
3. Domain knowledge
4. Tools knowledge

We need to ask

Will any of these become less relevant?

Will any of these change?

Will we need extra skills?

There is no one right answer

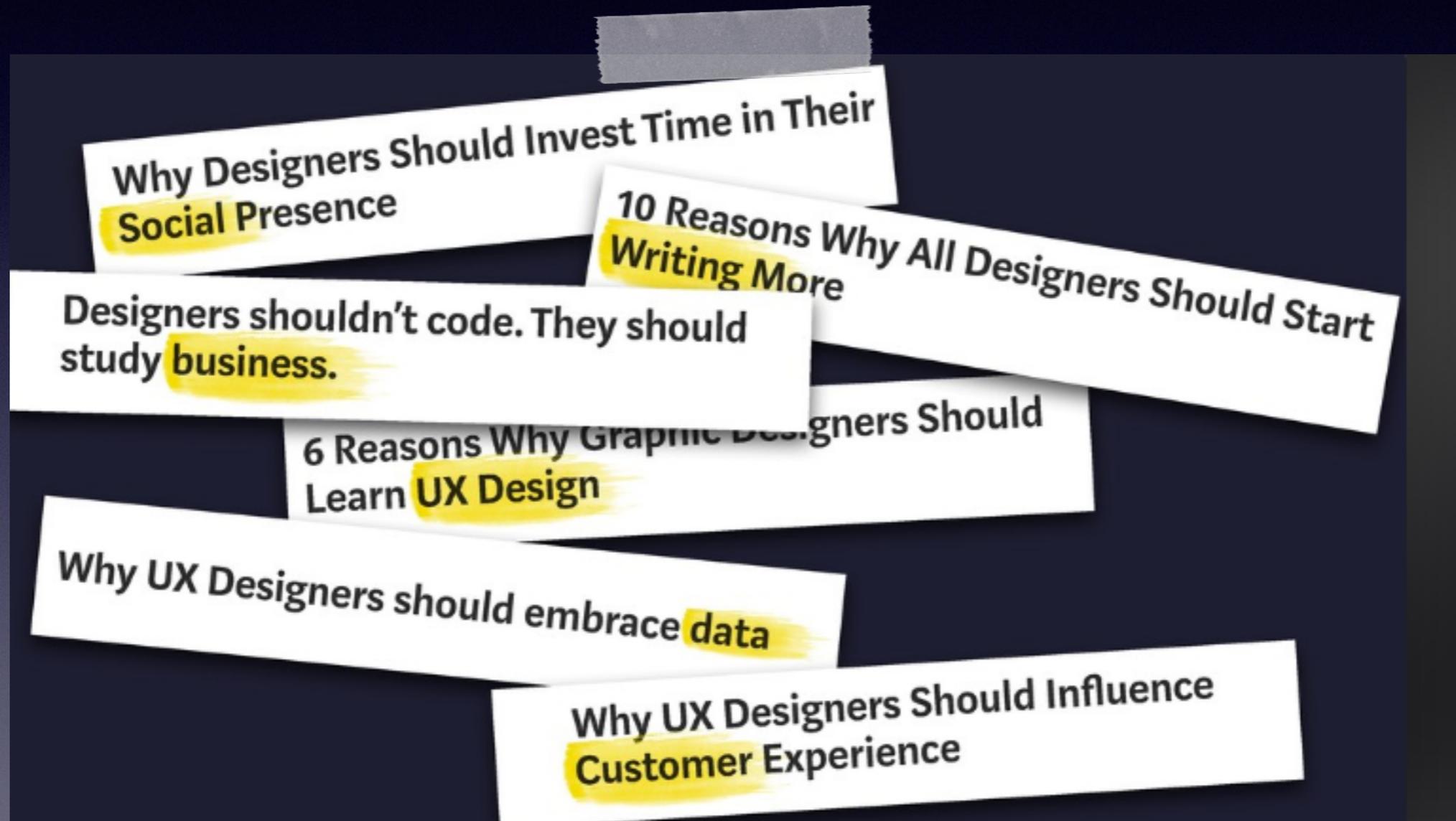
There can be multiple skill sets

We can play to our strengths

What's happening in the
world of design?



Similar questions are being asked



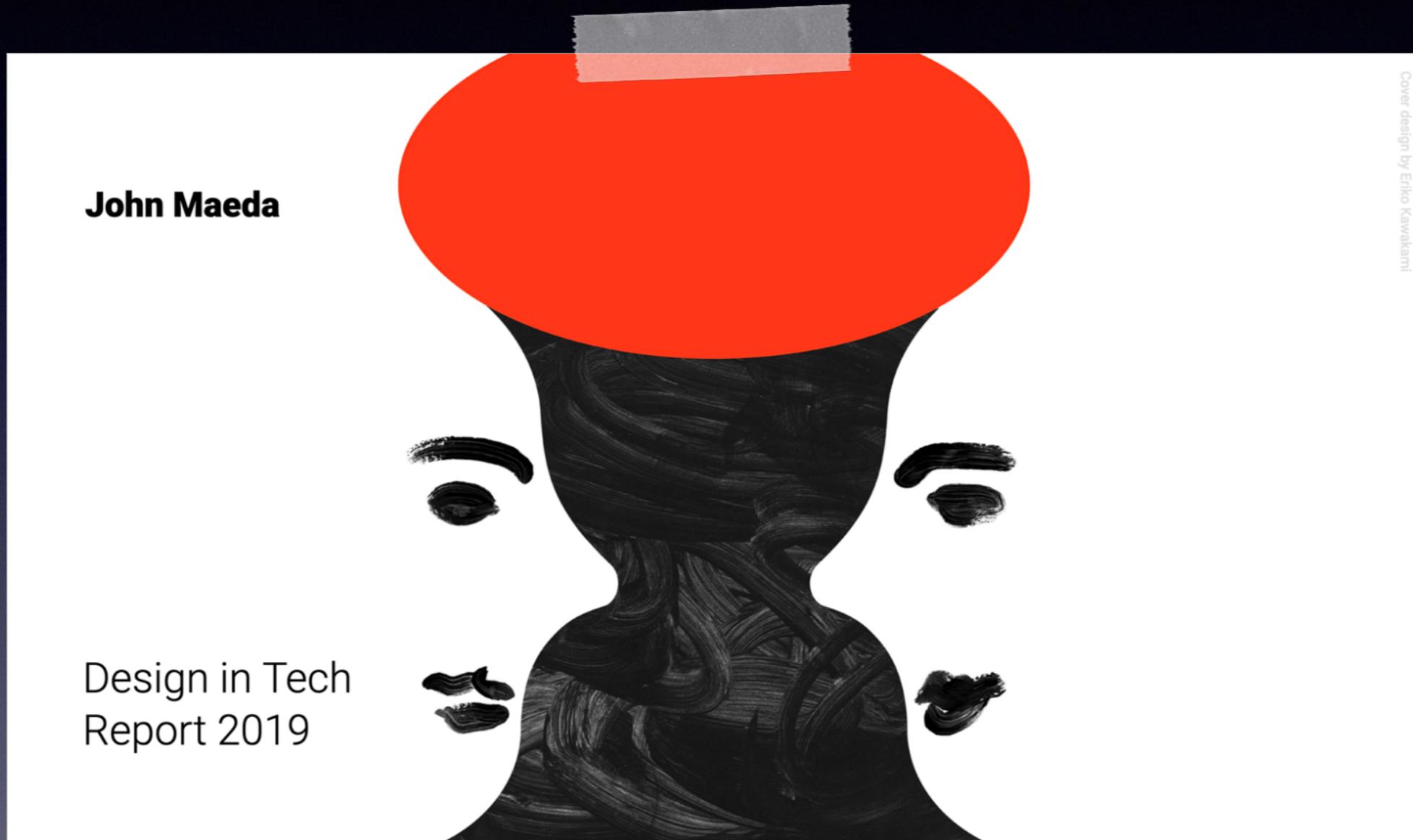
Di MacDonald

Should I really
bother learning to code?

Diana MacDonald

Product Designer
Culture Amp

“Design in Tech” reports



<https://designintech.report/2017/03/11/design-in-tech-report-2017/>

Design is becoming more writing based

Chatbots

Voice interfaces

Smart Home devices

Verbal Design

"We talk about the power of words – both content and style – all the time. When it comes to friendships, romance, work dynamics, and, dare we even mention it – though nothing is more telling, more relevant – politics, words have the power to change our opinions, incite action, divide or unify us, move us. Words can shape reality."

JENNIFER VAN [↗](#)

Words as Material

"I think of design as a process of articulation. We join together to express an idea in a coherent form. We bring ideas to life. We connect the dots or build bridges for our users. That often means being specific about what a product does, who it's for, why it matters, and how it works. We have to trek through a pile of ambiguity to do this."

NICOLE FENTON [↗](#)

Why UX Design is a Lot Like Writing

"Here's where I'd like to draw the parallel with writing – because a core skill of the interaction designer is imagining users (characters), motivations, actions, reactions, obstacles, successes, and a complete set of "what if" scenarios."

SUSAN STUART [↗](#)

Image: John Maeda

Writing is seen as one of the unicorn skills



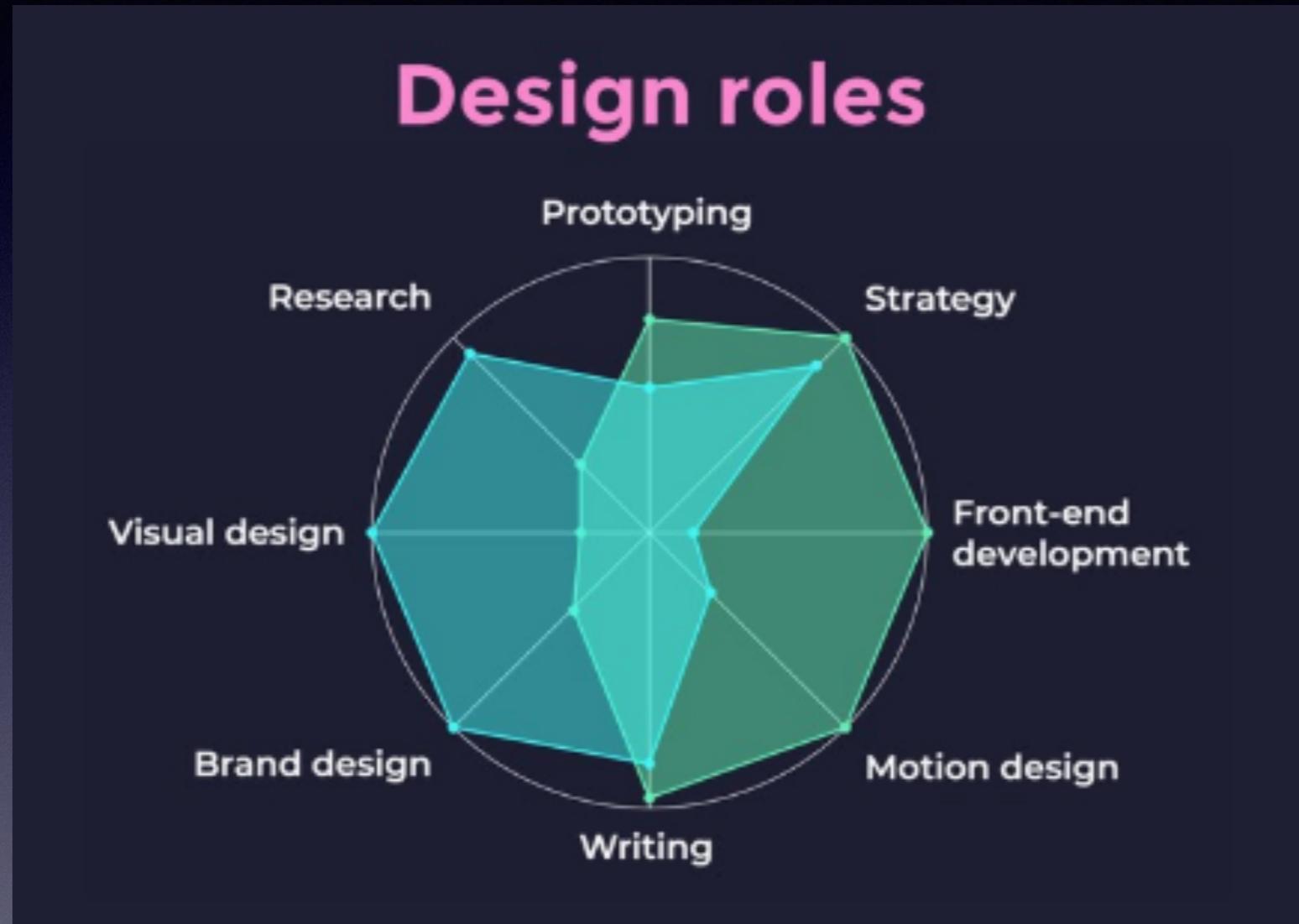
Image: Di MacDonald

But there is a time cost for designers

Learning one skill means they have less to learn or improve other skills



So it makes sense to have a team



With different skillsets

If only there were....

...a person
who had writing skills
and
who could add value to a product design
team

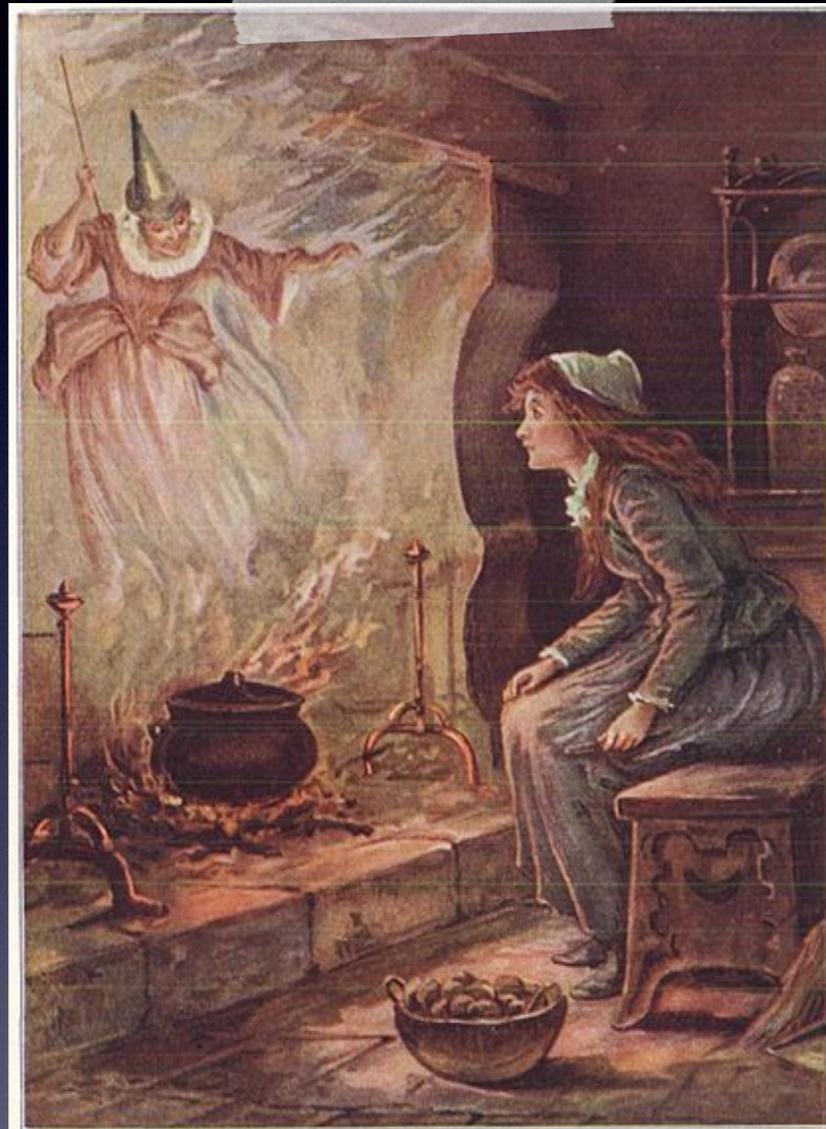
So this is all good news for
Technical Communicators...

...Isn't it?

A need for fluency



A need for fluency



IT WAS HER FAIRY GODMOTHER!

To avoid not being asked to the ball

Image: Wikipedia

What do we mean by fluency?

The ability to communicate with other specialisms

A shared language/ understanding

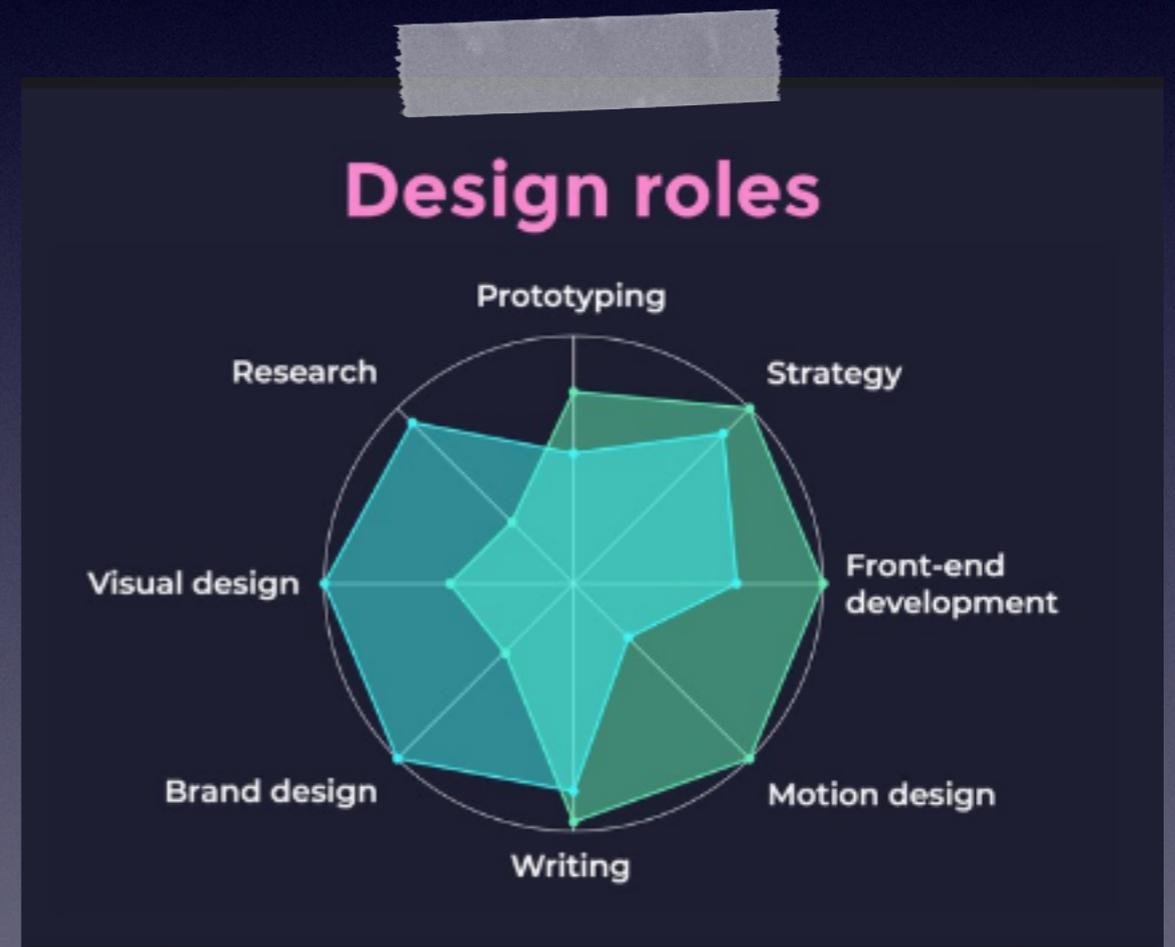


Image: Di MacDonald

What we can bring to the team



In the context of the design team

What we can bring to the team



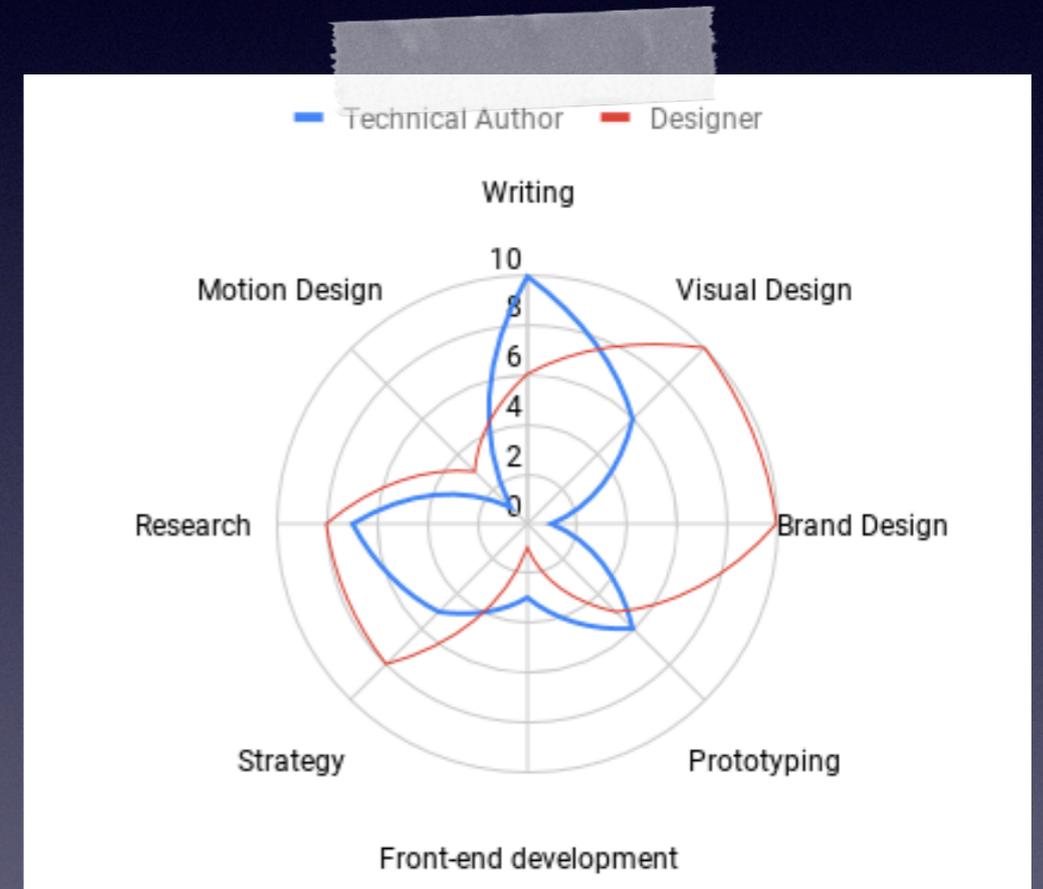
In the context of the development team

You can educate people

On the edges of your role

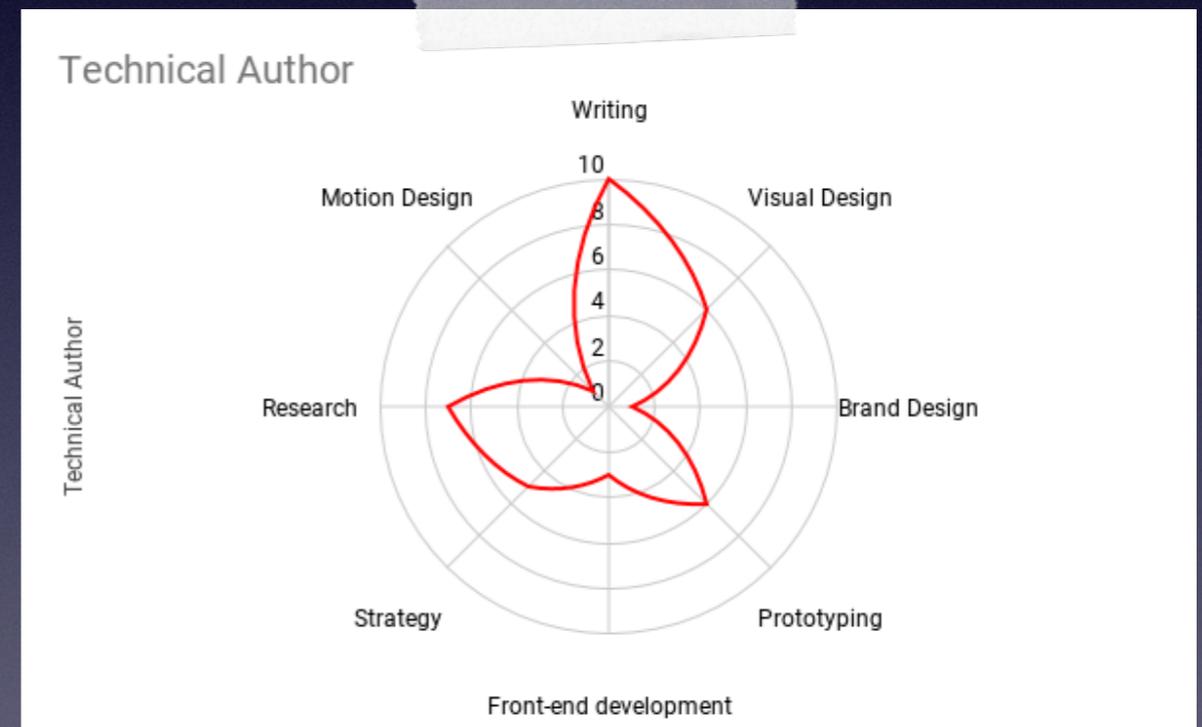
On the overlaps

How your skillset is different from anyone else's



You can educate people

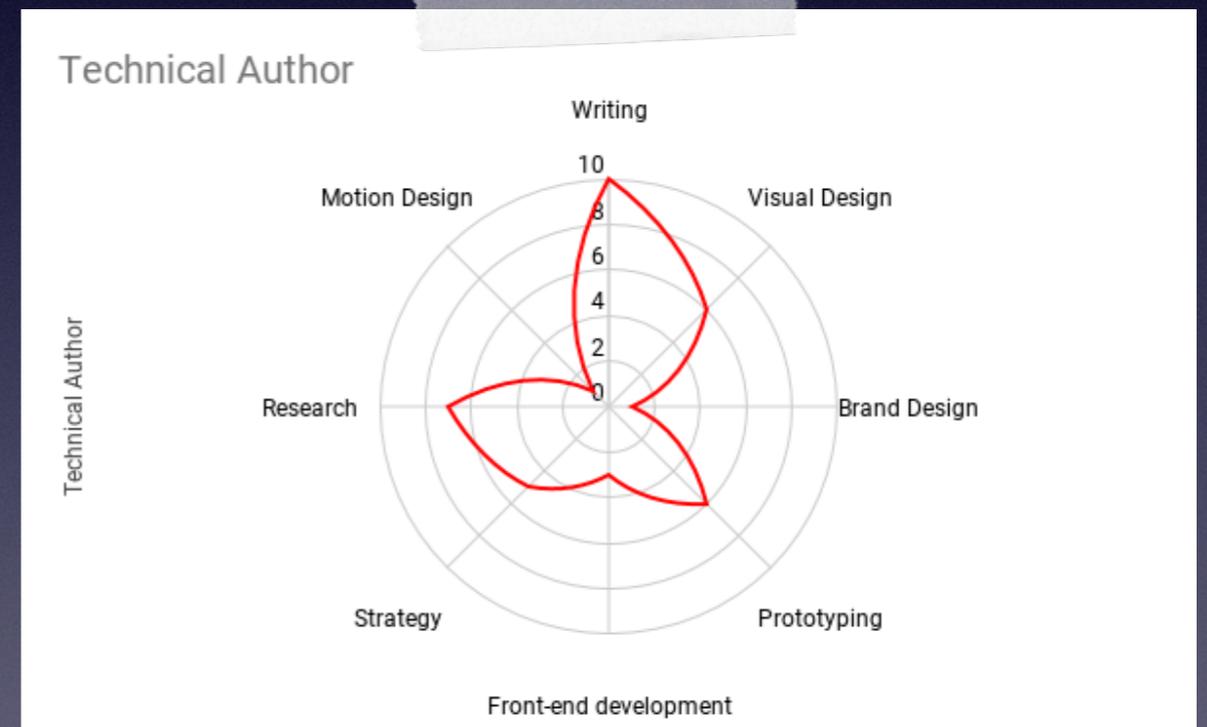
On your processes



We need to figure out where we fit in

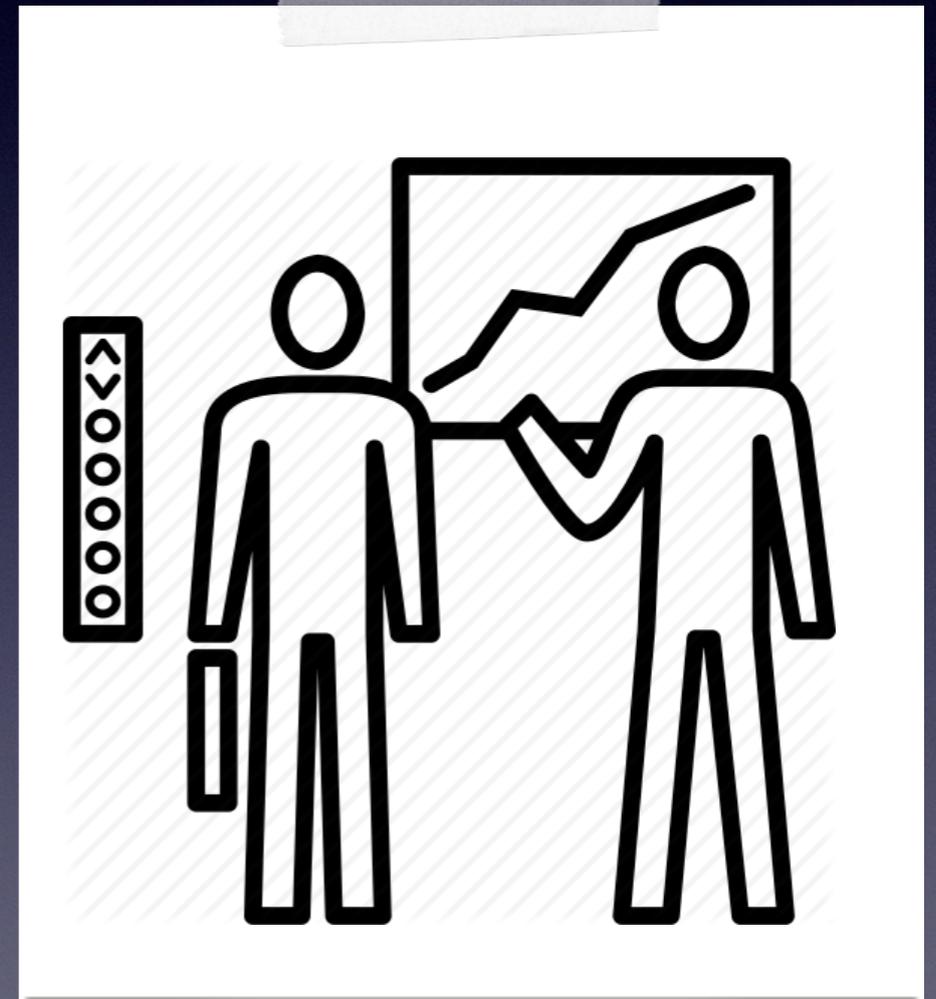
Build our own radar diagram

And how we spend our time on learning the missing skills



Communicate effectively internally

Understand the business so you can put your work and plans in context



A need for leadership

Provide a vision for the future (a goal/what are we doing for user assistance)

Explain why it matters (what's at stake/why are we doing it)

Tell others what is their role (where do I fit in?)

Skill - Writing



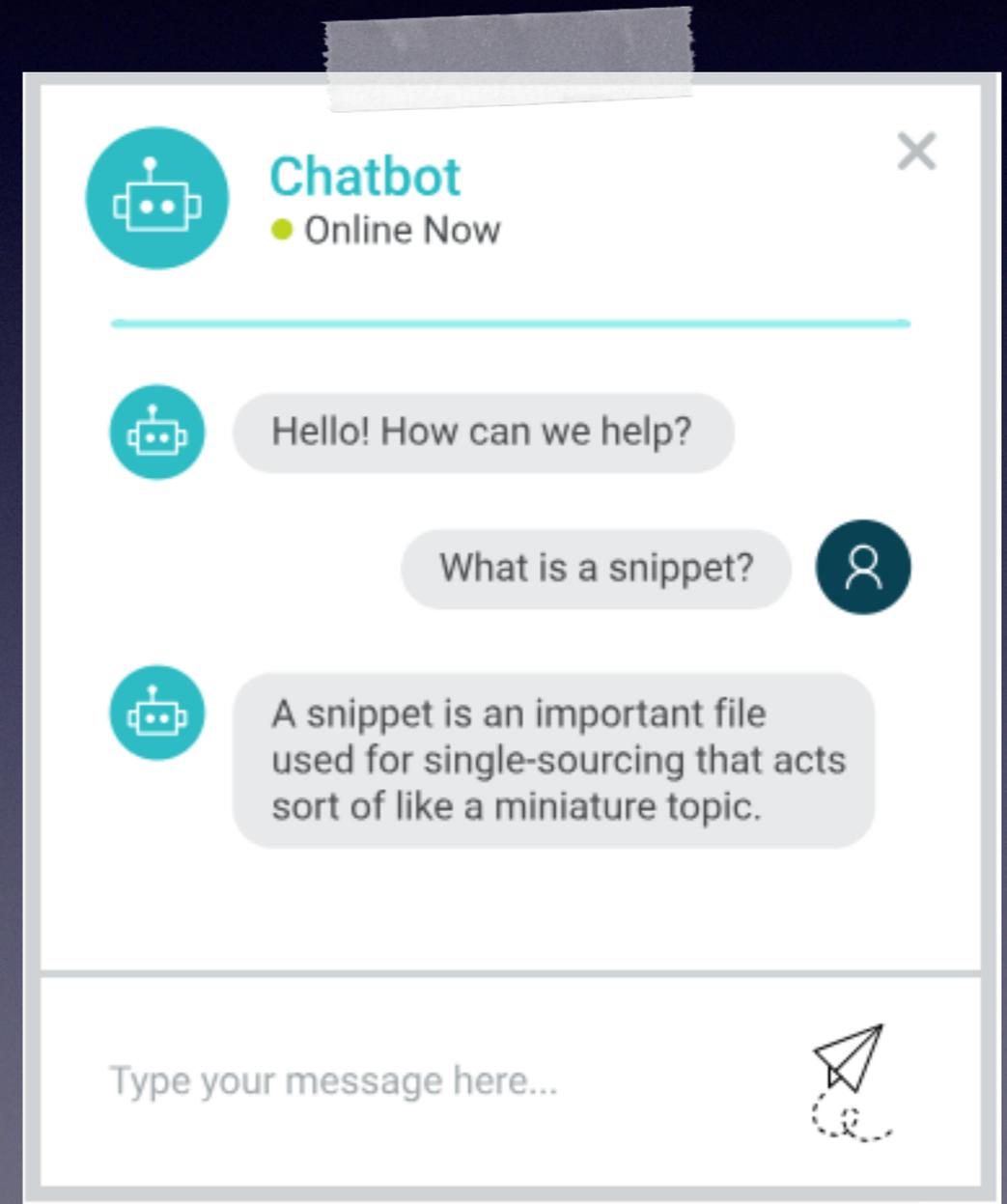
Core skill likely to still be writing skills

Developers and Designers
don't have the time to
improve their writing skills



Even in chatbots

They need a source of truth



Even in API documentation

What does this do?

Why should I use it?

How do I start?

API CATALOG

SHIPMENT TRACKING API

v 1.0.6

[Try now!](#)

[Description](#) [Get Started Docs](#) [Reference Docs](#) [User Guide](#) [Release Notes](#)

The Shipment Tracking API provides up-to-the-minute shipment status reports. Users of this API can:

- Retrieve tracking information for shipments.
- Identify the Deutsche Post DHL (DPDHL) service provider involved with the shipment.
- Verify DPDHL is using the correct delivery address. This can reduce the number of misdelivered shipments.

This API covers all of the DPDHL Group, except:

- Services to...
- Post (jet)

Early Access

The DHL Ship...
This means y...
for testing an...
integrate the...
use the API...
reach out to

BENEFITS



TRACKING MADE EASY

The DHL Shipment Tracking service offers a simple and unified all-in-one interface for tracking your shipments and goods. You can get information on a huge range of DHL shipment services, such as: DHL Express, Parcel, eCommerce, Supply Chain, Freight and Forwarding.



RELIABLE INTERFACE

You'll get information in a standardized format, which you can process across multiple applications and services. You can also see this information in your preferred language.



SEAMLESS INTEGRATION WITH YOUR WEBSITES AND APPLICATIONS

Use the API to enable your customers to track their shipment on your website or apps, as the shipment travels towards them. You can integrate this information seamlessly with the "look and feel" of your website.

New skills



Skill - User Experience

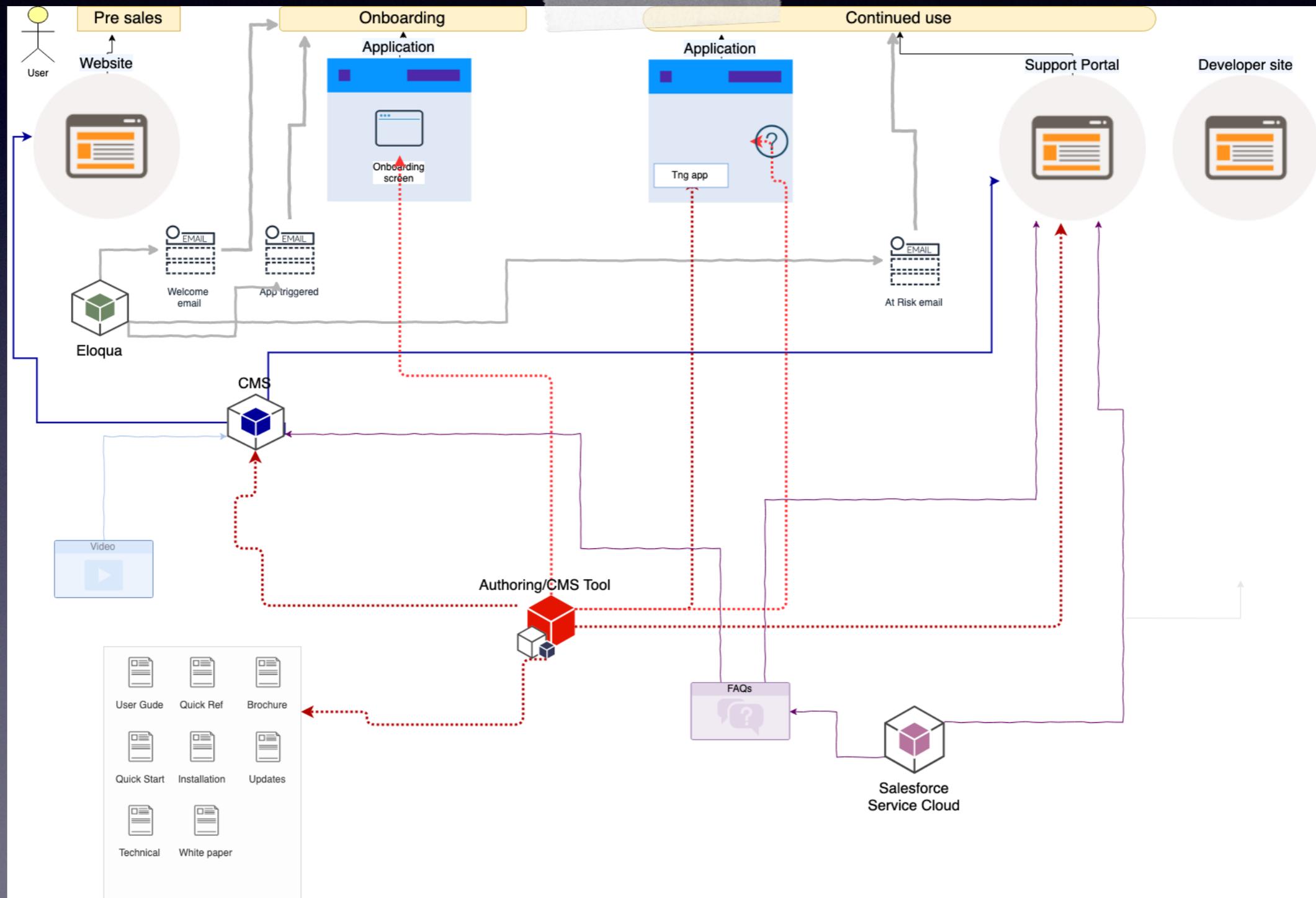


Documentation is now part of a bigger eco-system

Part of the customer journey

“Content Will Be Your Best Salesperson”

Documentation is now part of a bigger eco-system



Writing for the right context

In the context of the customer journey
and the product's design

Putting the content where it needs to go

But in places instead of/in addition to a user guide or
Help file

In the UI

Chatbots

Throughout the customer journey

Documentation is now part of a bigger eco-system

We must think beyond the boundaries of traditional
technical communication deliverables

From multichannel to omnichannel

Users are on a single journey, where they are using a range of devices to reach their goal

As they move through this journey, from device to device, we need to deliver them content optimised to the reading device, and the context

From multichannel to omnichannel

This means content that is personalised and contextually aware

Multisourcing

Content will need to be structured and formatted so that it is ready to be readable by machines

Adaptive, structured and semantically marked up

We need to deliver experiences not documents

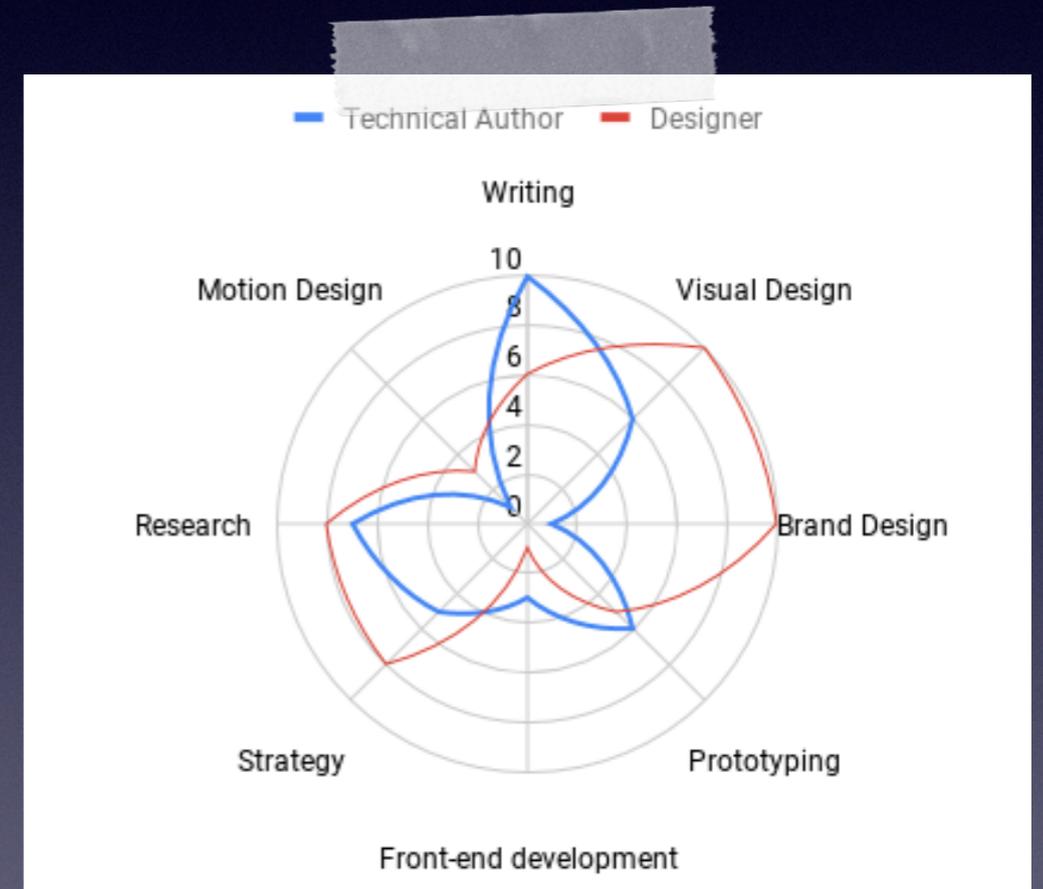
Contextually aware writing

Changes in tone

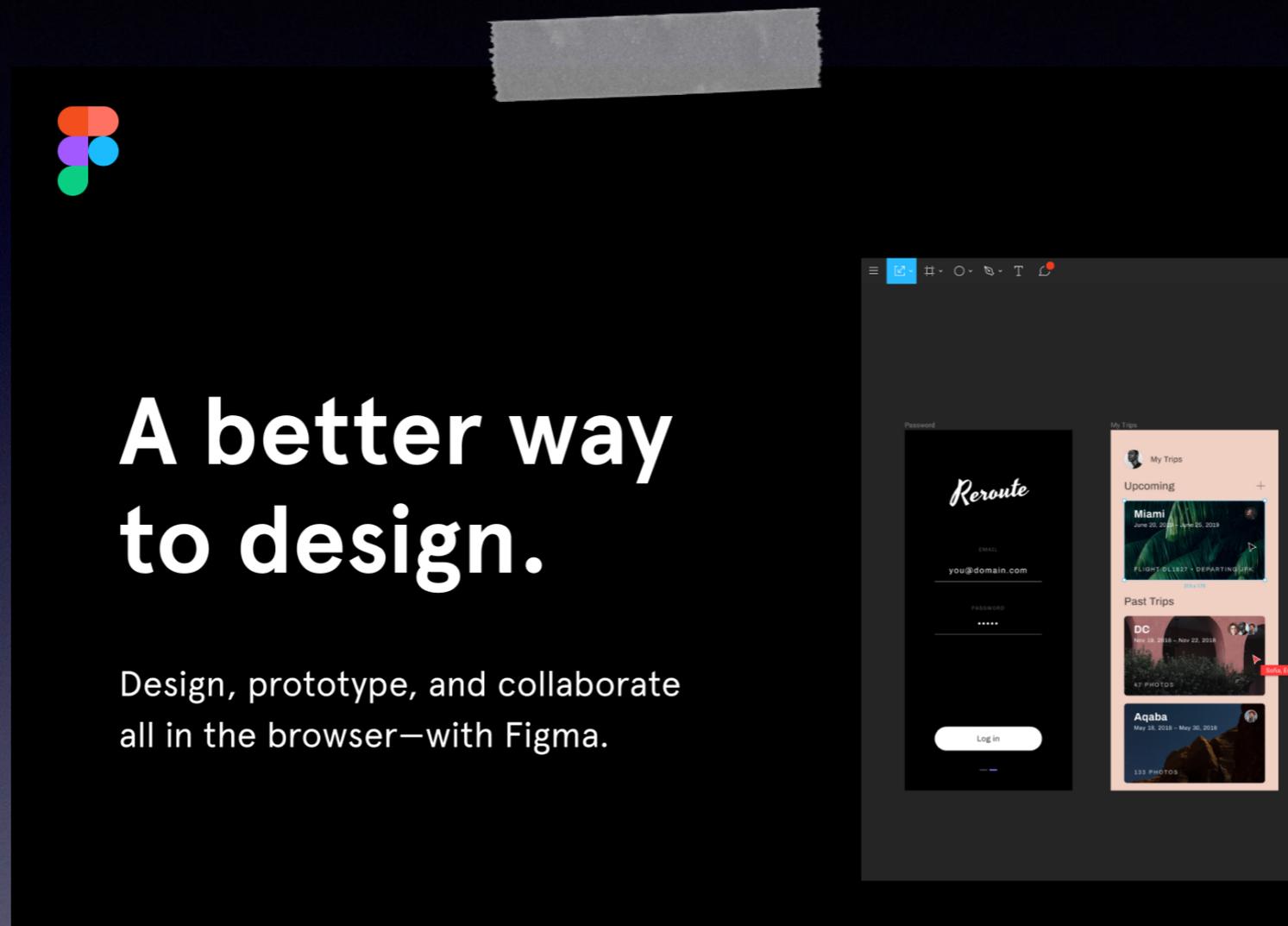
If we had some UX skills

We could build documentation into the design/development process itself

We could create examples of UI text in screens



Learn about the design tools



The image shows a screenshot of the Figma website. At the top left is the Figma logo, a stylized 'F' composed of four colored circles (orange, purple, blue, green). Below the logo is the headline "A better way to design." in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Underneath the headline is the sub-headline "Design, prototype, and collaborate all in the browser—with Figma." in a smaller white font. To the right of the text is a dark-themed mobile app interface. The app interface is split into two panels. The left panel is a login screen with the word "Reroute" in a white script font, followed by "EMAIL" and a text input field containing "you@domain.com", "PASSWORD" and a masked input field with six dots, and a white "Log in" button. The right panel is a "My Trips" dashboard with a header "My Trips" and a sub-header "Upcoming". It lists three trips: "Miami" (June 23, 2018 - April 25, 2019) with flight details, "DC" (Nov 18, 2018 - Nov 22, 2018) with 17 photos, and "Aqaba" (May 18, 2018 - May 20, 2018) with 133 photos. A red "View Itinerary" button is visible next to the DC trip.

A better way to design.

Design, prototype, and collaborate all in the browser—with Figma.

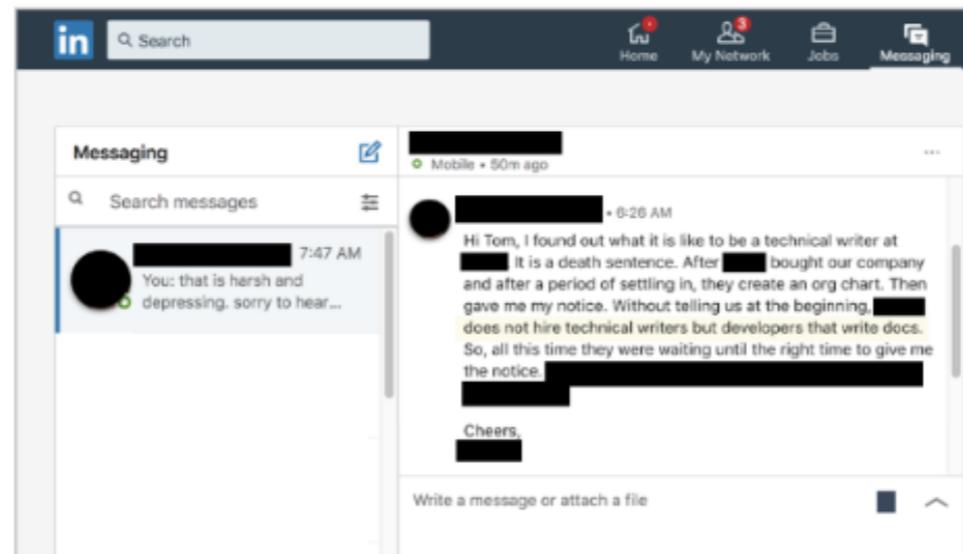
Sketch or Figma
Doesn't necessarily need to be to production-
ready quality

Skill - Coding



Tom Johnson

DEVS WRITING FOR DEVS -- A BRAND



a persuasive brand:

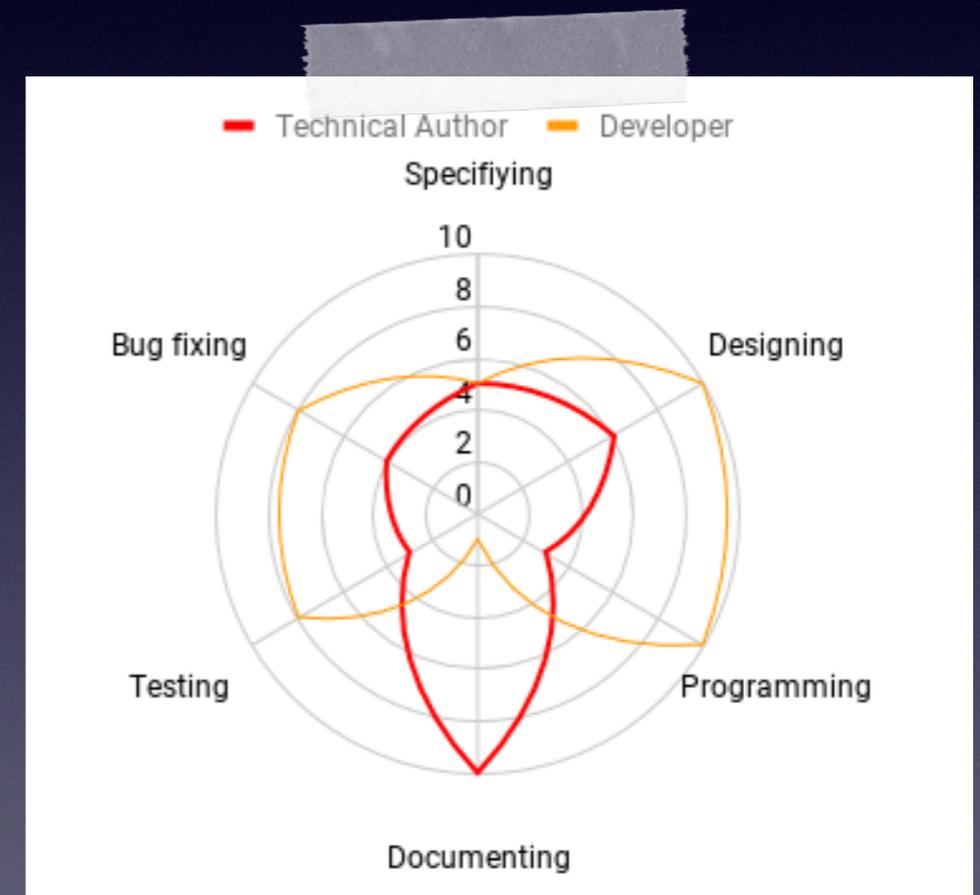
*One developer
writing to another
developer ...*



If we had some coding skills

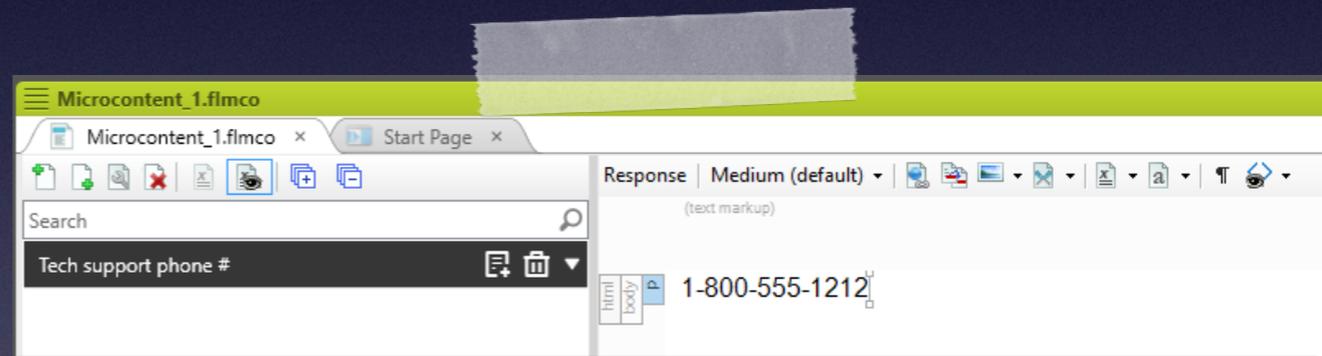
It might be easier to talk to programmers

We can understand the requirements of AI (chatbots), Machine Learning etc



Don't panic if you don't want to

There tends to a stage where the technology is made simpler for non-coders



What next?

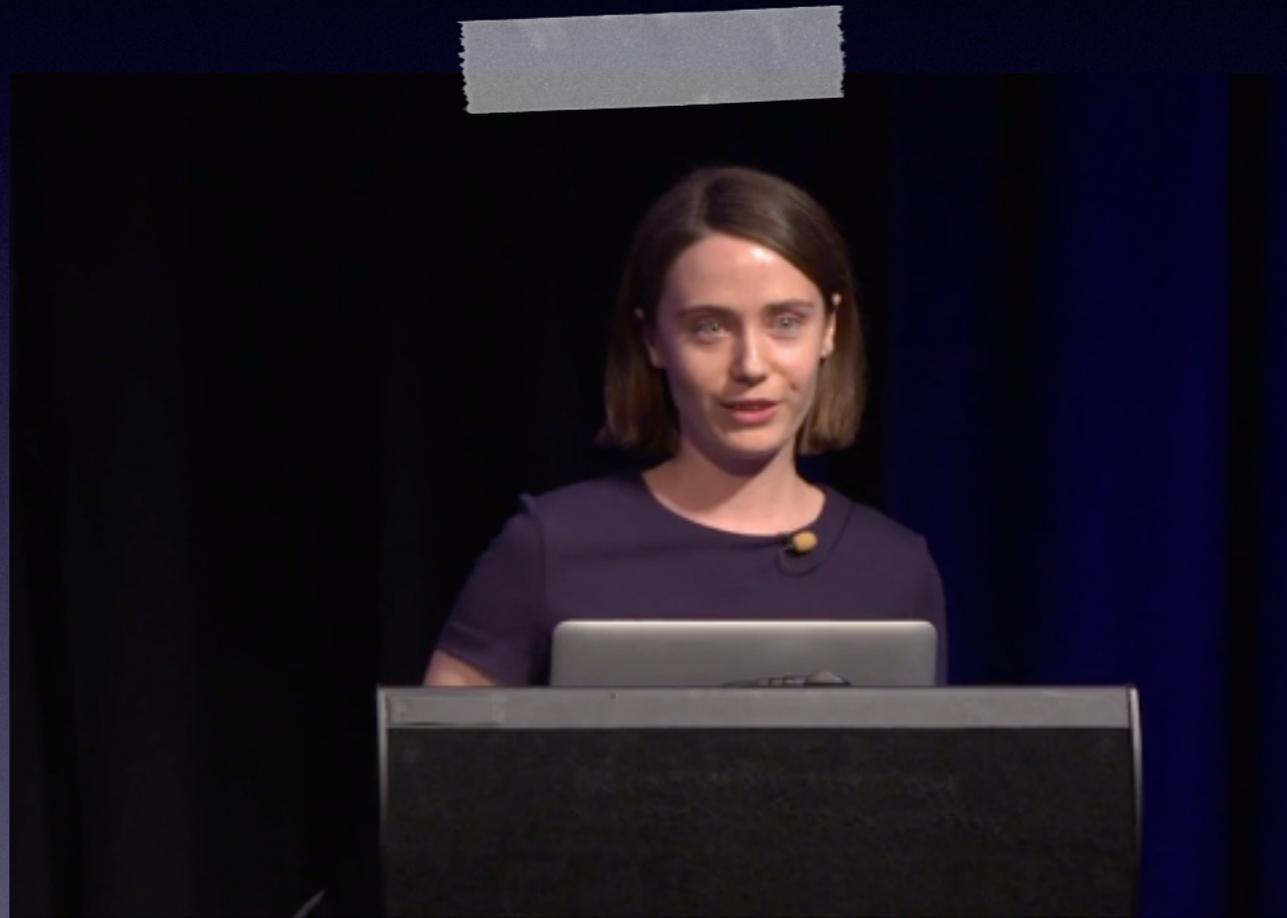


Make some Radar diagrams and improve your fluency



(and can I see them?)

Watch Diana MacDonald's presentation



(if you're interested in design and code)

Extend your skillset

Take courses (UI writing, Usability testing, User research...)

Listen to podcasts

Attend conferences

Summary



Summary

There's an opportunity cost in learning. We can help teams as we have skills already

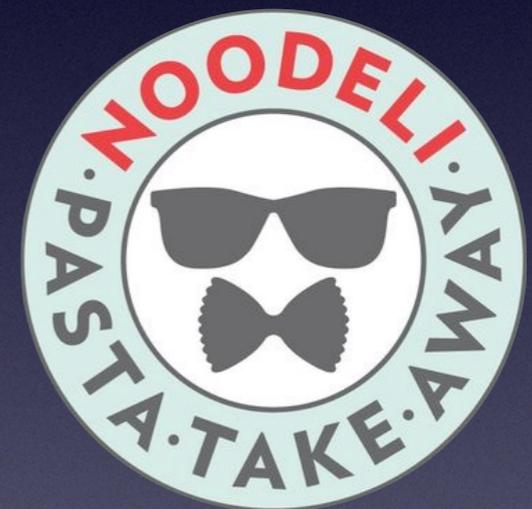
There is value in fluency even without doing any actual coding or designing



Summary

We need to improve and use the skills we already have

We need to promote the skills we have



More information



More information

Apple Podcasts Preview



CHERRYLEAF

58 episodes [Play ▶](#)

Cherryleaf Ltd.'s podcast on becoming a better technical and business communicator. Record a question for the podcast at <https://www.cherryleaf.com/useful-resources/podcast/> More info: [more](#)

The Cherryleaf Podcast - Cherryleaf

Technology
★★★★★ 5.0, 3 Ratings

[Listen in iTunes ↗](#)

25 APR 2019

58. Writing a presentation for a conference

We look at how to write a slide deck for a presentation.
Evolution of TC conference
<http://technicalcommunicationuk.com/>

[▶ PLAY](#) 28 min

11 APR 2019

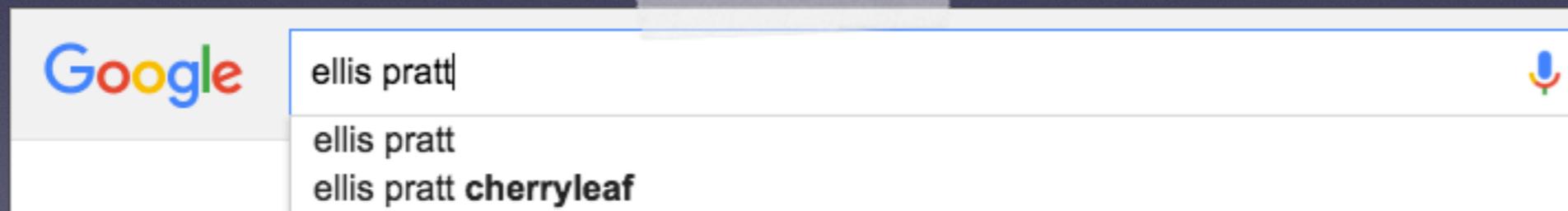
57. Word - saint or sinner?

We look at the pros and cons of using Microsoft Word.
Doc-To-Help
EditTools v8.0

More information

@ellispratt

ellis@cherryleaf.com



© Cherryleaf 2019

Images and screenshots © their respective owners

Questions?

(I have laptop stickers)

