

5 Questions to Our Head of Product Design

At Clayton, we work hard to get our product design right so that it is user-friendly and makes your life easier. To illustrate the care and attention that goes into designing not only Clayton's product - but the entire customer experience, we quizzed our Head of Product Design, Davide. We asked him about his role at Clayton, and how he goes about creating the products and experiences our customers love.

What's the product designer's role and what's their chief goal?

In essence, a product designer is responsible for a user's experience of the product. He or she needs to empathise with users to understand their motivations and challenges in order to design the best user experience (UX) their product can offer.

UX (User Experience) can seem a rather vague term but we use it for good reason. When it comes to UX, customers (end-users) don't just experience a product in silo. All a user's interactions with a company - from usage to maintenance (and anything in between) go towards building a holistic user experience.

A product designer can be involved in any aspect of this customer journey. From user onboarding to designing the API (Application Programming Interface) and UI (User Interface). The specific area of focus for a product designer is largely dictated by the industry and structure of their organisation.

In the past you've worked for some big players. What motivated you to move to a startup?

It is all about impact. As a young software engineer I focused on the user interface because I saw it as the media with the most visibility and direct impact on users. As I grew my career, I measured my impact in terms of how many people I could reach with my work. In recent years while working for Amazon Web Services, I maximised that reach.

However I began to feel a lack of correlation between what I was designing and delivering and the actual success of the product team itself. I started to see the 'number of users' as a vanity metric at that point. Amazon's product was well known and established before my input - and it still is today. So I later joined HubSpot for the launch of a brand new service. Again, however, playing a small part in an already successful large environment made it very difficult to measure how much of that success was down to my individual work.

At Clayton things are completely different. My input and the subsequent impact on users is far more direct, and I see my contributions reflected in a variety of ways. This makes me feel highly satisfied with my job - and keen to achieve even greater success. Clayton is a SaaS company and provides services for software engineers and engineering organisations. Since I'm a software engineer myself, I feel strongly connected to both aspects.

Clayton is already well-positioned in a fast-growing market (Salesforce) and recognised as a robust code scanner. The company's impetus is now on transitioning into a platform designed to enable engineering organisations to tackle security issues and tech debt. I'm confident my extensive experience in leading or

being part of successful software engineering teams will help Clayton achieve these goals.

In your opinion, what's the main difference between UX Design and Product Design, and what's the biggest trend in the PD field?

In my opinion this really depends on the organisation's size, structure and ultimately culture. Larger organisations are often more focused on UX which requires specialist roles. Smaller organisations tend to make people wear a lot of hats so specific roles have big overlap areas.

UX designers focus on human-computer interactions and work closely with UX researchers so they can understand all a user's needs. A typical deliverable for a UX designer could be to implement a UX design system that can be used by the whole organisation to build the product and overall future versions of the product.

Product designers are focused on a specific set of users or potential users for their product, usually focusing on an element of the whole product. Based on a UX Designer's initial work on e.g. design systems, a Product Designer could be tasked with designing a UI / UX to serve a specific group of users so they can accomplish specific tasks. Product Designers need to perform work whilst taking into consideration all the business and technical constraints their product team is currently facing.

How do you test your product designs at Clayton, and how do you evaluate the product usability?

I work on a daily basis with Gabriele (our Head of Customer Success) and Lorenzo (our founder) to identify our core users' struggles and successes when using our product. In terms of product testing, I tend to use two tools: User interviews and empathy sessions.

Because our customer base is still relatively manageable, we try to carry out user interviews with the majority of our customers. Of course, it is time consuming but infinitely valuable and useful when both designing a new feature (by diving deeper into customer needs) as well as after a new release to evaluate the effectiveness of the design.

The second tool is empathy sessions. These allow us to evaluate the product internally. It's a formal step back from the implementation phase where I define certain scenarios and a set of end to end tasks users would likely try to perform. At each step of these tasks, I ask our team participants questions to capture pain points and foster critical thinking.

Both the above methods are qualitative measures. We're also planning to run Customer Satisfaction Surveys (CSATs) after the new releases and utilise the many valuable usage metrics we already track. For instance, we're closely monitoring Early Fix Rate of all accounts within Clayton to determine if we are delivering long term value and helping software engineering teams tackle code base issues sooner in the development process.

**Thank you for sharing your insights with us
Davide!**

**And now for our last question, we'd love to
know: what does it take to be a great product**

designer - and why do you like working at Clayton?

For me a great Product Designer has to have a genuine empathy with and curiosity about customers, their stories and their experiences of the product. A Product Designer needs to have a good understanding of a product's technical features and of the technologies behind the design. This is extremely important, because a good design needs to be both user friendly - and also 'engineer-friendly'.

Product development is a continual process with the product designer placed right in the middle of many stakeholders, so they need to be aware of all related internal/external constraints.

A great initial design (naturally) makes implementation, delivery and usage of the product easier and more reliable.

Here are some of my final thoughts/ takeaways when it comes to the future of product design:

- Design systems are not new, but more and more companies are beginning to understand their value and are attempting to implement their own version
- Since Covid-19 all organisations are having to embrace a digital-first approach, and this will drive a host of new software product and solutions developments
- In line with new post Covid-19 digital transformation all digital services will put the emphasis on improving collaborative software features

We hope you've enjoyed learning a bit more about the work of our Product Design Manager. Davide plays an integral role in making sure Clayton's products not only live up to - but exceed our customers' expectations!