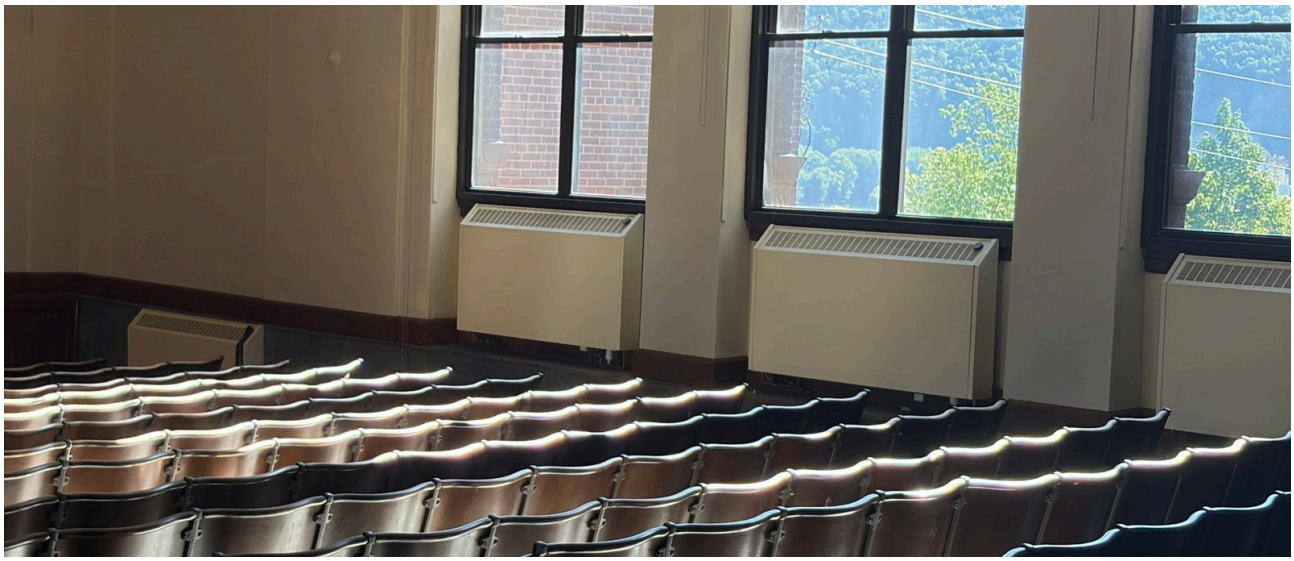


CASE STUDY · BRAND & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

# Building the Brand of an Internal Design Organization

Global technology company · Embedded, multi-year · Peter Darling, writer and communications strategist

## CHALLENGE

I was the writer and communications strategist for the user-experience team inside a global technology company's internal systems organization. Several thousand engineers there built the tools the company ran on, and the UX team shaped how those tools worked. It was spread across several regions, and few of the people who commissioned or built the tools understood what it contributed. Engineering groups saw design as a late-stage review or a service to request. The team had a mission statement but no shared story, and no consistent voice.

## DIAGNOSIS

The team's own communications were the first problem. They were inward-facing and organized around activity, and they used design vocabulary the engineers and product owners didn't share. They described what the team did, not what changed because of it. The people who decide when design gets involved weren't being addressed. Distance made it worse: a team spread across regions can't rely on hallway reputation, so what it publishes has to carry its credibility.

## THE STRATEGIC DECISION

The team could promote its craft or position itself around outcomes. I recommended outcomes, which meant three commitments:

- Build everything around three themes: collaboration, the user, and accountability for results.
- Lead every headline with the outcome, with metrics wherever the team had them.
- Write plainly and concretely, with no clever phrasing.

I also chose a single voice for every region over localized versions, trading regional nuance for consistency and speed. Engineering's center of gravity was at headquarters, and the regional teams took their cues from it.

Before any of that could hold, the team had to agree on how it wanted to be perceived. I ran a facilitated brand-personality workshop. It produced four shared dimensions of voice and character that every later piece could be checked against.

### EXECUTION

The strategy ran through four connected workstreams.

- **Brand and voice.** The workshop result became the team's core story and a messaging framework that designers in any region could adapt. I prepared the mission and values language that management used to guide the team's work.
- **The team website.** I designed the information architecture and wrote the content for a new team site, released in phases and timed to a leadership review so it would be seen when it counted.
- **A creativity-training program.** The team ran a program that taught engineers to generate ideas through simple sketching and sticky-note brainstorming. I rewrote its language, rebuilt its site section, and wrote the insights content that explained the thinking behind it.
- **A case-study series.** I created a process for choosing which projects to profile, then interviewed the teams and wrote a series of case studies that went to the entire training community, each framed around results.

I also led communications for the team's design system, a shared framework for building internal apps, writing its articles, its explanatory content, and a case study built on its adoption data.

### RESULT

- The design system reached well over a hundred product teams. By the teams' own measures, they built nearly 40% faster, spent about 20% less on ongoing maintenance, and saw fewer bugs and support requests by a similar margin.
- On one flagship collaboration app, roughly 40% of the accessibility issues the team had worked through would not have arisen at all had they started from the system.
- The case-study series gave the team a body of outcome-led stories to point to.

### WHAT THIS SHOWS

I can take an organization that does valuable work no one can explain, decide what it should stand for, and turn that decision into a narrative, a voice, and a publishing system the team can run itself, across regions.

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Client details have been removed. peterfdarling.com