

Product Design is not UX Design

Ever since I jumped into the world of startups in 2014, it's been an exhilarating ride watching design roles evolve and adapt! I've closely followed these changes, and now I want to share my thoughts about the differences between product design and UX design roles.

Product Designers play a central role in digital product creation teams, helping to shape the future of technology.

□ Many tech companies that develop products have established "product trios" consisting of the product manager, tech lead, and a product designer. These teams collaboratively drive product discovery, strategy, and delivery.

□ In many job postings, the terms Product Designer and UX/UI Designer are used interchangeably. However, there is a key difference between these two job descriptions: Product Competence.

□ Product thinking and product sense are the essential skills that set Product Designers apart from UX/UI Designers.

If you want to put it simply:

□ A product designer is a UX/UI designer with strong product competencies. While many former UX/UI designers have grown into the product design role, the product designer is not another term for a UX/UI designer. It's a different role with different requirements. The scope of the role is more extensive than before. It is about impacting the product vision and roadmap and driving it together with the other functions. Product designers with product competencies will have a more significant impact on the product.

Here are some examples of relevant product competencies for product designers:

Product Vision – Ability to imagine and design the future and drive proactively towards it

Product Strategy – Ability to define, influence, and build support for long-term product strategy

Product Thinking – Skill of knowing what makes a product useful — and loved — by people

Product & UX Metrics – Ability to understand and define metrics to track and measure customer and business benefits.

Product Delivery – Ability to break down the product vision into meaningful increments while delivering high-quality products

Product Discovery – Ability to understand and use tactics and frameworks to inform product decisions about what to build

I want to wrap this topic up with an inspiring quote from **Julie Zhuo**, from her great article about product thinking:

"Nurturing and developing product thinking is therefore relevant to anyone in the business of covering trends or building great products. And in a time where technology companies focus more on product-led innovation than, say, financial engineering, it's not just an academic or technologist exercise — it's one that actively contributes to market value, too." [...] As with all skills, it can be nurtured and developed; it's not just an instinct one does or doesn't have (and even instincts are trained, after all)" [#product-design](#)

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