Why designers fail

1. Why Designers Fail: A survey

This simple survey is aimed at identifying which issues contribute most to why designers fail.

Biases in this survey:

First, the survey is cynical in nature since it is about failure: it's a list of negative attributes and mistakes. The goal however is positive: by identifying which issues designers, and non-designers, believe contribute most to failure, there's a path for discussion and ways to improve common causes for failures.

Second: The notions of a "designer" and "failure" are broad terms. Please consider both your own experiences as a designer (if you are one), or experiences working with designers as the core basis for your opinions.

Definitions:

Designer - anyone whose primary responsibility is designing something.
Failure - not achieving the balance of a goal.

It's only one page of questions - should take 5 minutes.

Prizes: $100, $50 and $25 Amazon gift certificates awarded to randomly chosen completed surveys.

Results will be posted to http://www.scottberkun.com/blog and the IXDA mailing list.

* 1. Do you current manage or lead a team?

- Yes
- No

* 2. Describe your primary role at work

- Designer
- Usability engineer
- Programmer / Tester
- Marketer / Business Development
- User Assistance / Documentation
- Project Manager
- Group manager
- Other / too cool to be listed above (list below)

Other role

* 3. What kinds of designers have you worked with? (Check as many as apply)

- Visual / Graphic designers
- Interaction / UI designers
- Product / Industrial designers
- Print designers
- Theater / lighting / film
- Software designers (Engineering)
- Architects (buildings / cities / places)
- I'm not sure what kind they were

* 4. PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES. For the following issues, score each on its significance in contributing to why designers fail to achieve their goals.

Consider both your own personal issues as well as issues you think are common to designers in general.

	1 (Least significant)	2	3 (Neutral)	4	5 (Most significant)
Unwilling to take political risks					
Do not seek enough data before designing					
Lack of conviction / Willingness to fight for a position					
Desire to be safe and not stand out					
Big Ego / Expects others to cater to their whims					
Not receptive to critical feedback					
Do not realize their own skill limitations					
Unwilling to make firm commitments					
General apathy and passionless					
Bitterness and/or Burnout					

Why designers fail

* 5. SKILL ISSUES. For the following issues, score each on its significance in contributing to why designers fail to achieve their goals.

	1 (Least significant)	2	3 (Neutral)	4	5 (Most significant)
Poor collaboration skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Poor understanding of domain	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Poor understanding of technologies involved (SQL, AJAX, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Poor communication skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Over-reliance on one kind of design style	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Poor persuasion / idea pitching skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Little interest/ proficiency in rapid prototyping	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Weak visual design skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Weak interaction design skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lack of awareness of informal user-research methods	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lack of awareness of the business fundamentals	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Poor schedule estimation skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Difficulty bonding with non-design team members	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lack of a clear individual process for how they design	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Limited experience with common design tools (Photoshop, Flash, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Limited experience with tools used by team or industry	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Why designers fail

* 6. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES. For the following organizational issues, score each item based on its significance for explaining why designers fail.

	1 (Least significant)	2	3 (Neutral)	4	5 (Most significant)
Managers do not trust designers	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
It's never made safe to fail or experiment	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Managers making design decisions without design training	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Diluting designer's powers by letting everyone on the team have their say	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
People in non-design roles making design decisions (e.g. Marketing)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Management insistence on using latest technology despite impact on design	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Organizational pressure to use first solution, not a good solution	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Design team is understaffed	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Design team has inadequate budget	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Only lip-service is paid to "User centered design"	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
There is too much chaos for good design to happen	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
The management team is fundamentally incompetent and can't managing anything well	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Designers are encouraged to compete with each other	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Designers not given enough time to do more than band aids	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
No time is provided for long term thinking	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

7. Enter an email address if you'd like any of the following:

- To enter the prize drawing Prizes ($100, $50 and $25 Amazon gift certificates)
- To be notified of final results

8. Is there an important reason why designers fail that was not listed? Please list it and describe below. If you want a response, leave your email above. (This question optional)