Titles for Designers

We use the following criteria to assess the level and title of designers at Basecamp. These criteria aren't exhaustive, and they aren't mere checklists. We use the criteria as a guide for having individualized discussions about career progression.

These criteria chiefly examine the scope of work someone is capable of tackling independently on a series of projects over an extended period of time (doing something well once isn't enough to justify advancement). In addition to that assessment, we also look at the quality of the execution itself. Basecamp pays in the top 10% of the industry (based on San Francisco rates), so the quality of the work itself should be commensurate with that target.

Junior Designer

- Work is thoroughly reviewed with substantial back-and-forth.
- Works primarily on tightly scoped, single element, routine problems with another designer.
- Follows existing design patterns, works within our existing look and feel.
- Usually less than 2 years of experience being a professional designer.
- WEB: Can write basic HTML/CSS with guidance.
- MOBILE: Can create prototypes w/ static screens.

Designer

- Work is reviewed with the occasional need for material direction or implementation changes.
- Works mostly on tightly scoped features, individual screens, or small problems with another designer.
- Usually at least 2-5 years of experience being a professional designer.
- WEB: Fully capable of writing modern HTML/CSS.
- MOBILE: Can create basic prototypes demonstrating interactions and animations.

Senior Designer

- Work doesn't necessarily need to be reviewed, but general approach may be.
- Can run point on small batch projects, taking them from concept to shipping as the sole designer (alongside a programmer).
- Can occasionally run point on large batch projects, sometimes with assistance.
- Usually at least 5-8 years of experience being a professional designer.
- WEB: Fully capable of writing modern HTML/CSS and basic proficiency in Javascript.
- MOBILE: Can create detailed interactive prototypes demonstrating flows, interactions, and animations.

Lead Designer

- Work happens completely autonomously without regular need for review.

- Can run point on large batch projects, taking them from concept to shipping as the sole designer (alongside a programmer).
- Can lead a small department or longer-term initiative.
- Helps set and maintain professional standards for the entire organization.
- Makes regular, material contributions to the look-and-feel of our general aesthetic and brand.
- Usually at least 8-12 years of experience being a professional designer.
- Typically at least 3-5 years experience at Basecamp internalizing how we work.
- WEB: Fully capable of writing modern HTML/CSS/JS + the ability to make moderate progress in Rails.
- MOBILE: Can create detailed interactive prototypes demonstrating flows, interactions, and animations.

Examples: JZ, Jamie

Principal Designer

- Can run point on our most complex, critical, big batch projects, taking them from concept to shipping as the sole designer (alongside one or more programmers).
- Leads major product redesigns (from version 2 to 3, 3 to 4, etc).
- Can spin up new concepts and prototype new products from scratch.
- Regularly publishes and shares design process insights inside and outside the company.
- Moves the industry forward by introducing novel techniques, approaches, or ideas.
- Completely comfortable discussing complex application logic with programmers.
- Usually at least 12-15+ years of experience being a professional designer.
- Typically at least 5-7 years experience at Basecamp internalizing how we work.
- WEB: Fully capable of writing their own HTML/CSS/JS + the ability to make significant progress in Rails.
- WEB: Can spin up new Rails apps from scratch, and make initial progress without outside help.
- MOBILE: Can create detailed interactive prototypes demonstrating flows, interactions, and animations.
- MOBILE: Can work in native environments and put together their own app from scratch.

Examples: Scott, Jonas