design basically has a lot of attributes
so there's a perception that design really focuses on
things like the aesthetics
and we heard this morning at Google
Larry's like I wanna change the visual design
to make everything the same
so at a at a surface level
one could assume he doesn't really get design
cause he's just talking about
the visual treatment of something
I'm sure he gets it very deeply however
but a lot of people actually still see design as being
very much just the aesthetics
of what it looks like
added to that you also have kind of the deliverables
that design teams are often tasks with
with giving you back
so there's specifications and there's mockups
and there's comps and very tangible artifacts
that basically embody the aesthetics
and the visual presentation of
they don't always have a chance to really go deeper
and really talk about what's really behind that design
you also have kind of the perception of designers uh
squirrel being my favourite
uh kind of way of looking at it
a lot of times designers can get easily distracted
because they think very holistically about a problem
and they look at things from a much bigger lens
than the average
engineer marketer
salesperson support person etc
that can create the perception that we suffer
massive amounts of add
um because just like me right now
I'm completely fixated on the fact that my font is
way too small for you guys
to read
um and I'm I'm really distracted by it
uh
designers suffer this kind of perception uh
design some designers also propagate that perception
unfortunately
not all designers are equal in that in that perspective
but so
there's that kind of perception around what design is
and then

there's the areas where design can have impact
and this is where it gets a little more interesting
as we're just hearing from Todd
both the what and the how are on the table these days
in terms of what design really can do
the process behind design
the thinking of design
can really have a big impact there
also on the organization
design as a whole as a culture as a philosophy
if you well can have a really big impact
the thing that's interesting is that
you know different parts of design
in terms of brand or product or service
or customer support
all of those things can actually be part of the design
deliverable it's a question of
who's going to do that design work
in that organization
but the other big piece is the measurements
so when you're actually designing something
you have to think about the success metrics
now oftentimes um
you know
friends of mine who work at other companies the valley
one of them just sent out an update a couple weeks ago
they won some big design award that
from the IGA
about something that they've done on their website
my reaction was like who cares
no offense to the Aga
but it's really not that important
to me that that award was won by that team
that's not a to me
that's not a core metric of the success
of how well the service was designed
aligning the metrics around the rest of the company
becomes much more interesting
to me where you really wanna have upfront alignment
so this morning
some of the folks were talking about you
how do you build consensus
how do you basically get alignment
one of the big things is upfront saying
what is success
gonna look like for this thing that I'm designing
and really being able to also tie back
the impact to the bottom line
that
had an interesting conversation last night on esharias

about customers versus uh
money but uh you wanna have an impact on the
the key metrics that your CEO
the board of directors your investors
the things that they really look for
in terms of whether the company is doing well or not
you wanna be able to tie back to those attributes
when you come up with these metrics
the other thing is around the potential that design has
this is the tricky part
because there's kind of the big d and the little d
and there's the momentum
and the desire and the interest that people have um
your CEO um
not to name names
we may have a CEO who went to New York
had a conversation with Walt Mosburg
and Walt basically beat him up
because he didn't feel that the design was evolving
fast enough
on your products
returning home
you have a conversation with your vice president
to say why aren't my products evolving fast enough
and then you can basically say
you haven't given me resources
allocations roadmap
etc
but
you have to be able to kind of have that conversation
and not run screaming from the room
no matter how much
you may wanna run screaming from the room
um the other big thing is
if you look at design from these types of attributes
they're not really equal like to strategy right
so design and strategy aren't really parallel
if you kind of define design more traditionally
from this point of view
at the same time what strategy
so just taking a step back
and looking at it more from a Harvard
NBA
Wharton Business School
kind of classic corporate strategy level
what is strategy
strategy is basically the definition of the vehicle
which is how you gonna get there
the arena where you gonna play
the resources

how much money you gonna invest it's very logical
very objective
and it looks across everything in an organisation
design is one of those things
user experience is one of those things
everything in the company is up for grabs
at that point in terms of the strategy
in terms of which lever gets moved forward
which one gets pulled back
which one gets more investment
which one gets less investment
and the horizon line for these strategies varies
so having done consumer work and enterprise work
the horizons for the strategies are very different
being able to accommodate those strategies
become truly critical
um at the same time um the definition of the strategy
so we've heard a lot about user experience strategy
design strategies other strategies at a high level
the expectation that most of
the executives have in the organization is
strategies are gonna be defined very top down
it's the job of the CEO to define the strategy
that strategy can cascade down
it can be split apart and come into chunks
user experience can be one of those chunks
if you try to design your user experience
strategy from the bottom up
and it doesn't align with what
the CEO's cascading down
there might be some disappointment
I'm just saying you you may be a little sad um
the other thing is that the sea level
the cross functional piece
all of those types of things
the process for the strategy piece is very large
and arduous in terms of the conversation uh
there's a term that I picked up at s
a P called syndication
where you basically syndicate these ideas
through the organisation I'll get into that later
but a lot of the focus
and the stakeholders around the strategy
basically it's all around the alignment and 1
1 conversation I had with the guy uh
about strategy he said
it's the closest thing to religion that a business has
it's totally faith based
you have no idea if it's really gonna work
until it's over um

and it's never really over um
hopefully it's not over too soon in a bad way um
but it really has to take into account a whole bunch of
like the whole universe of that company
so that's why it's like it's not just the
the e staff and the shareholders
but it's also the partners and the distributors
the customers as well
it's a whole comprehensive view of the organization
and as much as it it
it's as easy as it I should say
for designers to kind of look at that holistically
there's still a question of credibility
and whether or not
you have the credibility to participate in that
religious discussion around the strategies
um then there's the execution of the strategy
and this is where it gets
where the rubber kinda hits the road um
one of the big things around the strategy is
transparency and honesty and feedback uh
being able to really know that um
when that strategy is ruled out
even if the individual thinks
it's the dumbest thing they've ever heard
they're still gonna do it
and they're gonna give it their best
and this is where one of the little points of conflict
you can come up with the U
X strategy is that the designer may not have
participated in the definition of the strategy
they may think it's really stupid
um designers have a tendency to express themselves very
uh easily
um both visually verbally
non verbally um
uh a colleague of mine who's gone on to do great things
uh actually at one point at apple uh
was so disappointed in the strategy that rolled out
he sent out an email to everyone at apple
it was about a three page email
he articulated why he thought the strategy was flawed
and uh
everything that was wrong with it
uh
uh and uh
surprisingly he kept his job
uh but uh
he did have to change companies soon after that
they didn't fire him on the spot

but basically no one wanted to work with them
cause they didn't believe
he didn't they didn't believe
he believed that what he was doing made sense
and so basically he
somebody equated it to Martin Luther
nailing the thing to the door
it's kind of over at that point
then there's the challenges
for being able to deal with strategy
there are always challenges for being able to kind of
uh approach and roll out strategies as well
um one of the things with the design piece
around strategies is that
sometimes it comes very late
just naturally organically
it comes very late in the process
uh design can come at the beginning of
the kickoff of a project
but it's still going to be late in terms
of the overarching strategic definition
the trick is that you have to build up the credibility
to get involved early on
um
so here from this view
like in the previous view like definitely not equal
but here strategy is much bigger than design
in terms of the function of design
this is the point of view that most corporations have
around design
designers are able now to kind of
change this perception
both because of the external forces coming from media
the business press etc
around why design is so critical
and why it's such a key differentiation
the trick is
whether or not the designers are up to the tasks
to work with their executives
their CEO to kind of actually sit at this table
so the table I
I love the table metaphor cause it's just um
you can bring your own chair to the table
you could kick in the door
you could dance on the table oh
but there's still a bouncer in that room
who's either gonna take you and your chair
and drag them away
um
there there's somebody

like at the very least
there's gonna be the little kids table at the far end
and you can sit down there um
and uh
it's the the table is this great metaphor um
especially cause the at the table of the sap uh
headquarters in Germany actually
looks like it came from the set of a James Bond villain
um it's the
the
table itself could keep you from sitting at the table
yeah the
the chairs would retract and turn into like
a little thing um