

2019 Product Design Hiring Report

The first global survey of its kind to assess the product design hiring landscape

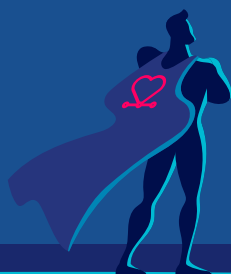


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About the survey

In the first global survey of its kind, we assessed the product design hiring landscape. A total of 1,635 product designers, design students, and those responsible for recruiting and hiring designers were surveyed in seven key markets around the world (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia, Singapore and New Zealand).

Survey participants were asked a variety of questions ranging from what's most important to job seekers when searching for a new opportunity to what hiring managers consider the most essential skills in candidates.

Because we believe designers are more valuable than ever to businesses today, we commissioned the **2019 Product Design Hiring Report** to help those responsible for building teams attract, recruit, and retain top design talent. We also hope these insights will enable product designers to grow their career, or successfully break into what we consider the most exciting field in the design industry.

The rise of product design

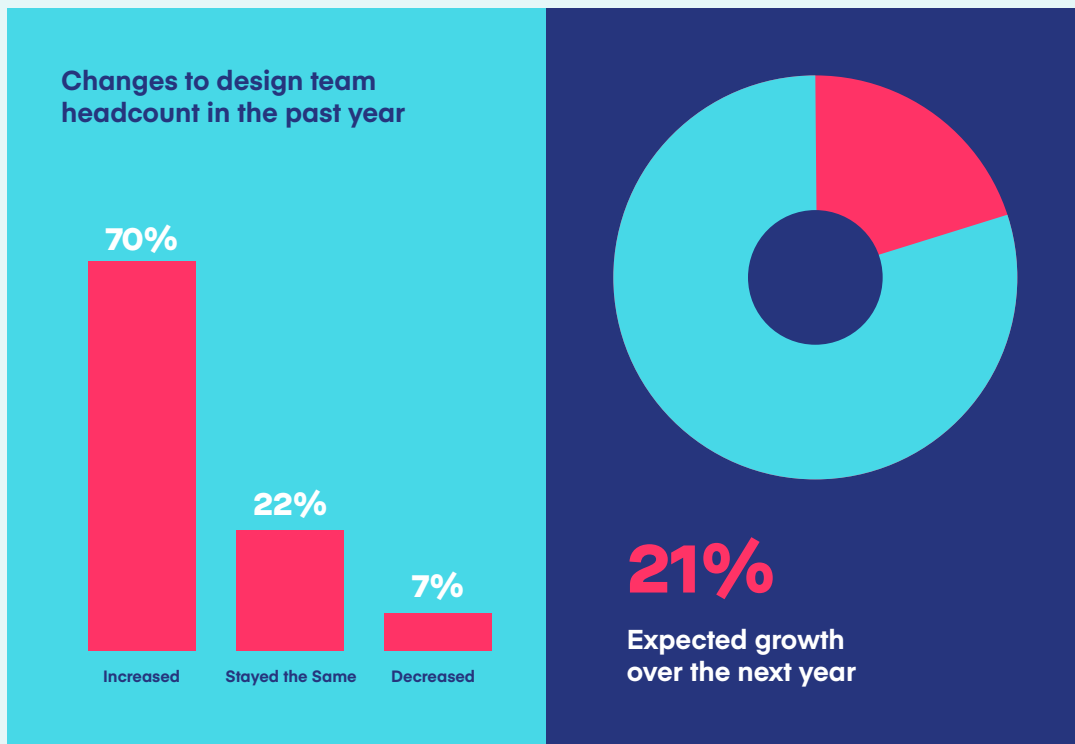
The best, most mature organizations in the world—like Amazon, Starbucks, IBM, and McKinsey—have embraced design as a critical component of corporate strategy. Design-driven businesses have been proven to significantly outperform their competitors, increasing the demand for skilled designers. In fact, **92% of companies who rank at the highest levels of design maturity can draw a straight line between the efforts of their design team and their organization's revenue.**

Within the design and tech industry, product design is one of the fastest growing fields. Our 2019 Product Design Hiring Report found that **70% of people managers increased the headcount of their design team in the past year.**

And there's no sign of slowing down: survey respondents expect their design teams to grow over the next year by an average of 21%. What's more, managers hired for three different design-related job titles in the last year, and are expecting to hire four more new design roles in the next 1-2 years.

Today, a company is defined by its products and the customer experience it delivers, which is why product designers are so integral to every organization's success—whether a retailer, automaker or tech startup.

Product design growth (according to people managers)



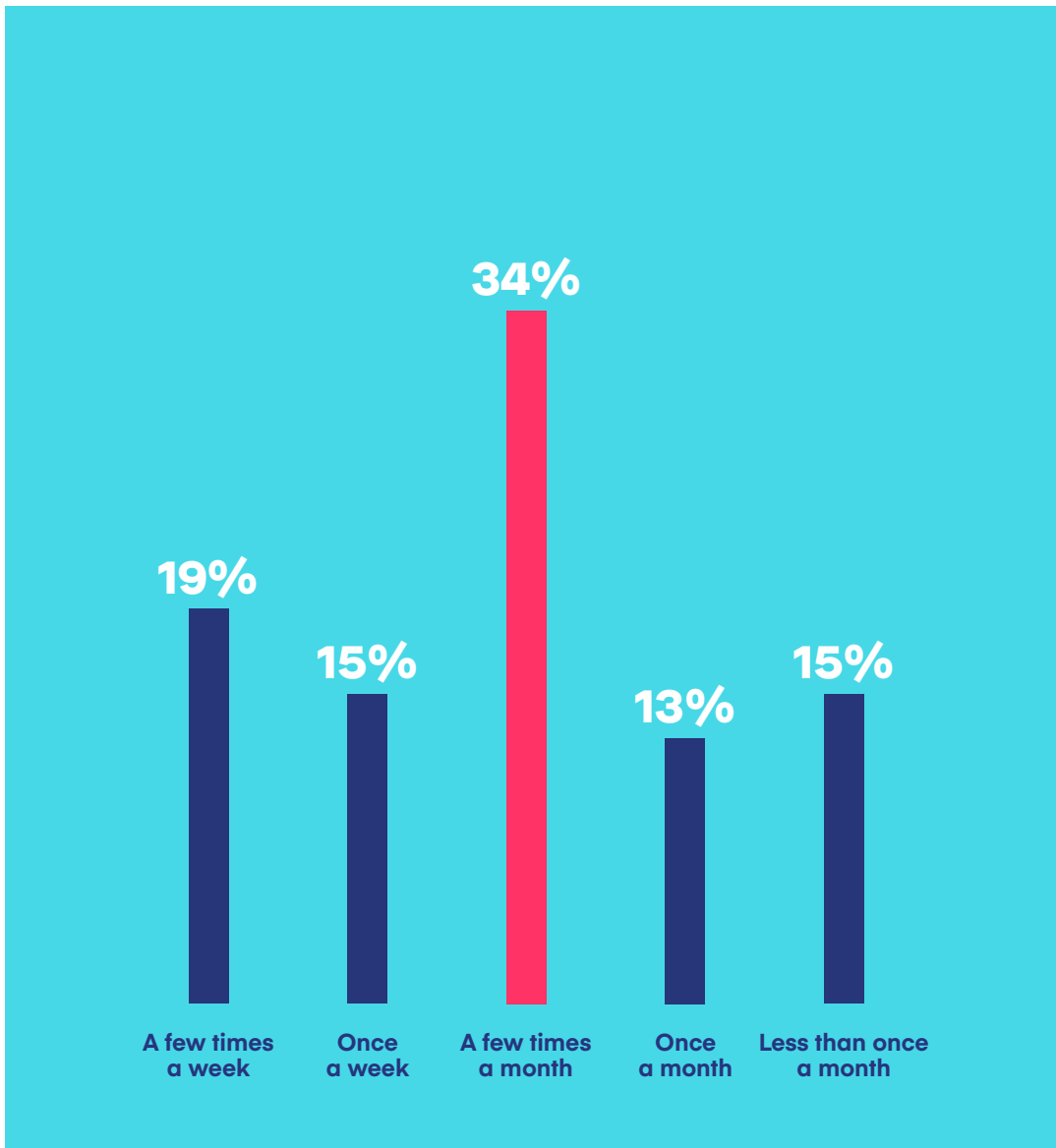
In fact, product designers are now in greater demand than ever. **Our survey revealed that four in five (81%) are contacted by recruiters on at least a monthly basis, while one in three (34%) are contacted by recruiters weekly.** Among those product designers contacted, 61% said that recruiters are reaching out more frequently compared to last year.

So it's no surprise that product designers' salaries are on the rise. UX designers are generally compensated higher than other designers within an organization, but the current pay increase is also likely due to today's highly competitive market, record low unemployment, and cross-company poaching.

In fact, 84% of product designers enjoyed a salary increase in the last 1-2 years, and they expect their compensation to rise by nearly 20% in the next 1-2 years. In highly competitive markets like the Bay Area and New York, top design talent can expect an even higher pay raise compared to the national average.

As the demand for product designers increases, and the job market becomes more competitive, it's now even more challenging—and more critical to an organization's business success—to recruit and retain top design talent. Likewise, aspiring and established designers are having to uplevel their skills to get hired—and get ahead.

Frequency recruiters contact product designers



81%



Are contacted on a monthly basis at least

61%



Increase in recruiter contact compared to last year, among those who have been contacted

Employer key insights

“It’s a candidate-driven market, you should be trying to impress them, as much as they are you.”

—Sam Gale, Digital Product Design
Recruitment Consultant at Zebra People



Introduction

Every brand wants to build products that delight their customers. Hiring the best designers for their company, regardless of the size or industry, is crucial to delivering the best customer experiences and business outcomes.

In fact, nearly three quarters of companies say they have improved customer satisfaction and usability through design. Not only that: **design is reshaping product development and corporate portfolios at nearly 70% of companies.**

However, as more organizations recognize the importance of having a strong design team as part of their business strategy, many hiring managers are struggling to build their teams with top talent.

Through our survey findings, we hope to equip employers with the insights needed to uplevel their recruiting and interview strategy, such as what makes a job seeker choose one company over another (it has less to do with money than one might think), when's the ideal time to reach out to potential candidates on employment networking sites, which attributes to highlight in initial outreaches to job seekers, and more. This essential data will help guide communications with candidates at each stage of the hiring process, from attraction to hiring and retention.

How companies can attract top talent

At InVision, we have the pleasure of communicating with design leaders and hiring managers from all sizes of companies and industries. Despite their differing backgrounds, brand recognition and budgets, they share one common, recurring pain point: the struggle to recruit the best designers onto their teams.

So how can employers improve their talent acquisition strategy? The first step is understanding what's most important to job seekers when evaluating new career opportunities. Armed with this information, companies can more strategically craft their pitches to candidates by emphasizing the qualities they value most in their next employer.

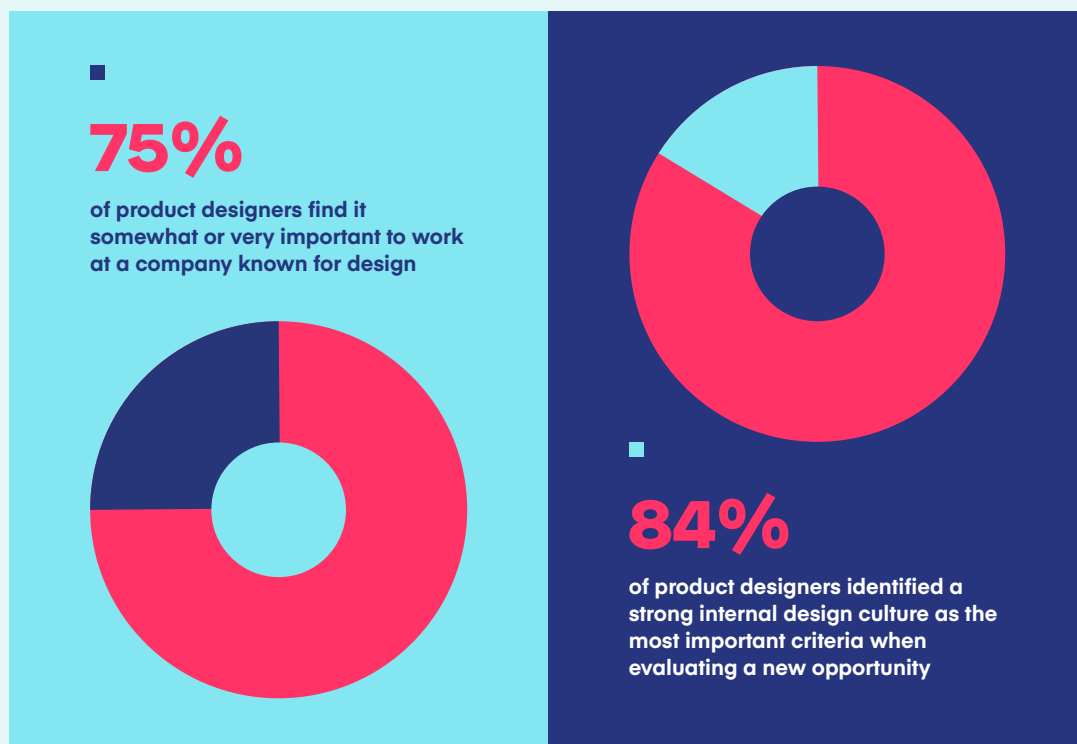
We discovered that for many designers, a well-known design brand isn't the most important factor when choosing a new role. In fact, **the #1 criteria for job-seekers is a strong design culture.**

Elements of a strong design culture

So what does it mean to have a strong design culture? Design culture is more than hiring a chief design officer. It describes a work environment rooted in design thinking principles with a high priority placed on the user experience. An organization with a strong design culture focuses on creating experiences that add value to their users' lives.

IDEO defines a robust design culture by five characteristics:

- 1. Constant curiosity.** Everyone at the company is always asking questions and there are systems in place to use data to help inform and answer them.
- 2. Frequent experimentation.** Employees are always exploring as many solutions as possible, resulting in more successful launches.
- 3. Cross-team collaboration.** Different teams across varying verticals are comfortable working with each other. Nothing is done in a silo.
- 4. Intentional storytelling.** Instead of letting an idea die as it volleys back and forth between teams, it's assigned to someone who can truly own it, like a project lead, design lead, or passionate team member. Their job is to tell the kind of story that generates momentum and excitement.
- 5. More ideas.** Coming up with a wealth of ideas is a daily habit at the organization, allowing teams to iterate and receive feedback quickly. Teams are always honing how to ship new products.



Qualities job seekers value most

In addition to a strong design culture, we also asked survey participants a series of questions to determine which other factors they consider most important in their next employer. Particularly valuable for lesser known brands, these insights offer guidance on which aspects and tradeoffs to highlight when communicating with candidates.

When evaluating direct trade-offs, we found that product designers value the following qualities the most:

- The ability to solve challenging problems
- Meaningful work
- Working remotely and/or work flexibility
- New design team, which often offers opportunities to experiment, make an impact, and shape team direction

Qualities product designers want most in their next employer



Other company attributes job seekers value

Our survey revealed a variety of other qualities job seekers consider, even if the company is not known for design.

Hiring managers can use these insights when communicating with candidates by highlighting the company attributes within their control, such as the option to work from home, and the ability to do meaningful, challenging work.

Employer attributes that attract designers

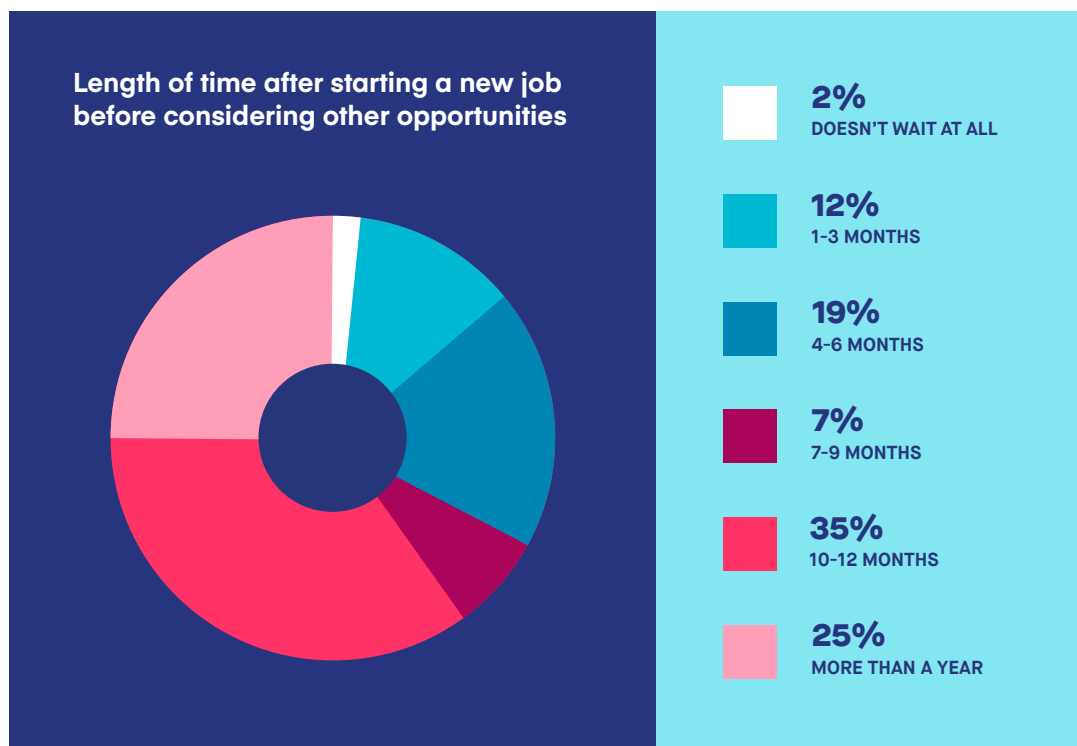
QUALITIES ASIDE FROM A STRONG DESIGN BRAND JOB SEEKERS VALUE	TOTAL AUDIENCE	PRODUCT DESIGNERS	PEOPLE MANAGERS
Offers the ability to grow my career	84%	86%	83%
Conducts meaningful work	84%	84%	85%
Offers high pay	67%	68%	62%
Solves a major challenge	61%	60%	69%
Offers option to work remotely (part or all of the time)	60%	61%	55%
Has a new design team that I could be an early member of	39%	39%	44%
Has an established design team in place	37%	39%	22%
Allows free time to work on creative projects	36%	36%	33%
Has well-known design leaders	30%	30%	25%
Is located in an area with reasonable cost of living	24%	24%	20%
Has a new and well-designed office space	20%	20%	18%

Best time to contact candidates about new opportunities

Recruiters and hiring managers may feel that contacting candidates on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn is akin to shooting into the dark—they never know if they'll reach their target. Candidate response rates also may be lower than ideal, or candidates may show initial interest in a new opportunity and then disappear.

Our survey revealed that on average, the most common time **product designers begin considering new opportunities is 10-12 months after starting a new job**. Based on our data, at this time candidates should be most receptive to recruiter outreach. We also found that 37% of designers stay at their job for an average of two years.

When designers start considering new job opportunities



Jobseeker key insights

“I now look for companies to work with where I’m making a contribution to something that matters, rather than whether I’ve got a nice desk.”

—Bethany Jarroussié, Director of Experience Design at Sopra Steria



Introduction

There's no doubt about it: product designers are hotter than ever right now, with UI/UX designer rated as the most in-demand product design title. In fact, four in five (81%) product designers are contacted by recruiters on at least a monthly basis, while one in three (34%) are contacted by recruiters weekly.

The work that designers do is increasingly recognized not just for its aesthetic value, but for the proven business impact it has on an organization, such as on a company's product usability, customer satisfaction, revenue, cost savings, time to market, and much more. In fact, **92% of the most mature design organizations can draw a straight line from the efforts of their design team to their company's revenue.**

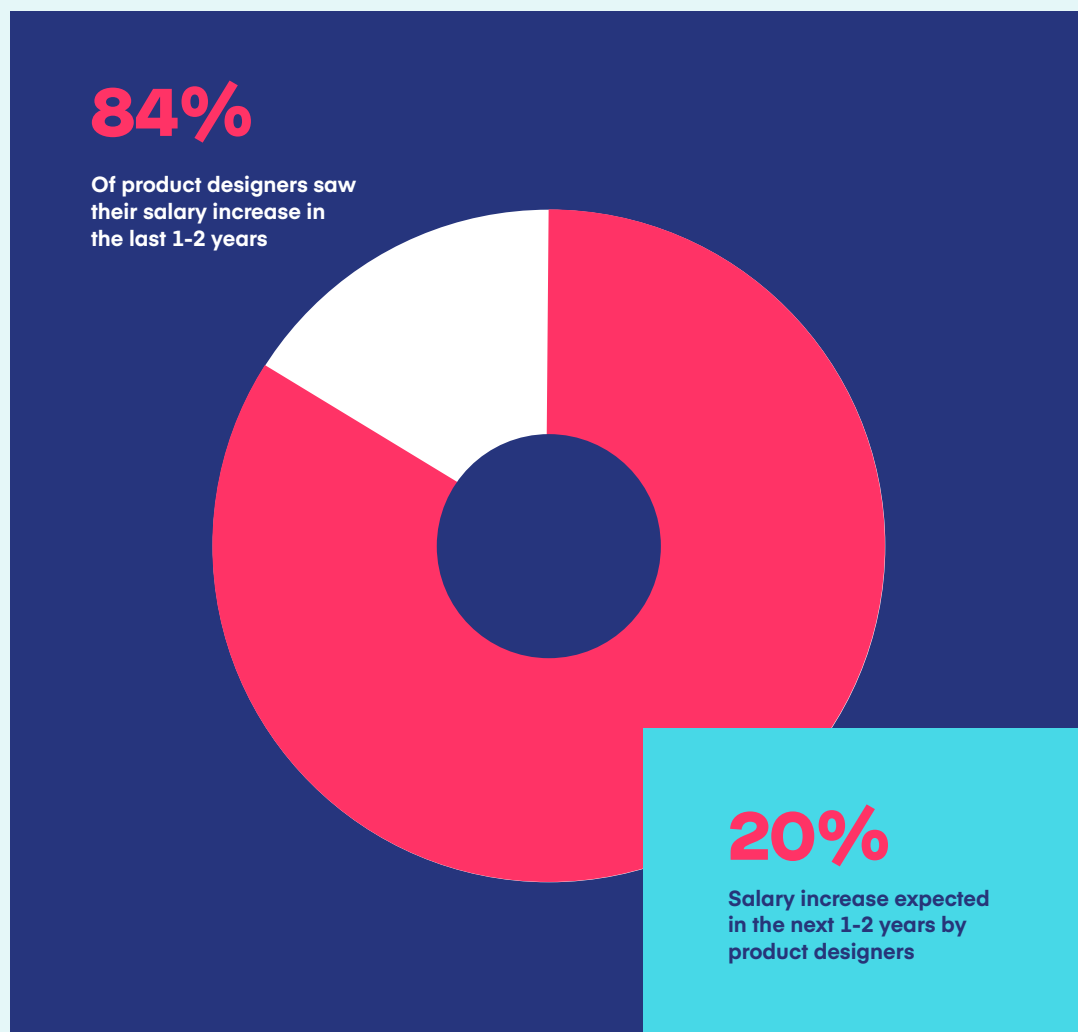
Most in-demand product design titles

	TOTAL AUDIENCE	PRODUCT DESIGNERS	PEOPLE MANAGERS
UI/UX Designer	62%	63%	58%
Product Designer	51%	51%	48%
UX/UI Researcher	18%	17%	23%
Senior Product Developer/Designer	14%	14%	13%
Lead/Head/Manager of Design/Product	13%	13%	15%
Senior UI/UX Designer	9%	9%	9%
Interaction Designer	9%	9%	10%
Visual Designer	5%	5%	5%
Product Manager	4%	4%	4%
UX Writer/Copywriter	4%	4%	4%
Director of Design	3%	3%	5%
Design / UX Engineer	3%	3%	2%
Experience Designer (XD)	3%	3%	4%
Motion Designer	2%	2%	3%
Digital Designer	2%	2%	4%
Front-End Developer/Engineer	2%	2%	2%
Service Designer	2%	2%	2%
Creative Director	2%	2%	1%
Content Strategist	2%	1%	3%
Product Owner	2%	2%	0%
Other	13%	13%	17%
Unsure/No answer	5%	5%	3%

Product designers' salaries continue to rise

Product designers also rank highly in the salary stakes, enjoying an average yearly income of \$106,766 in the United States. Our survey found that 84% of product designers saw their salary increase in the last 1-2 years, and they expect their compensation to rise by nearly 20% in the next 1-2 years.

While product designers are clearly in high-demand, it's still a competitive, rapidly evolving job market. **These insights will help designers at each stage of their career—whether just breaking into the field or advancing to the next level—up their game to get hired, and get ahead.**



How designers can capture recruiters' attention

The role and responsibilities of product designers have evolved significantly in recent years. Today, aspiring and established designers are required to stretch beyond their comfort zone as pure creatives, learn new skills, and work cross-functionally. Not only that, they must be able to “speak the language of business” by effectively communicating their ideas and the impact design has on business outcomes to key stakeholders.

As such, **100% of people managers agreed that the best way for product designer candidates to set themselves apart is by having a diverse skill set that includes both hard (technical) and soft skills**, especially as only 1 in 4 product designers report currently possessing both of these skill sets.

The top hard skills managers value most in product designers include UX design, UI design, and user research. The top soft skills that managers look for in candidates include collaboration/teamwork, communication, and empathy. **Ninety-eight percent of people managers agreed that a designer needs to be able to work effectively across teams in order to effectively problem solve.**

Hiring managers rate collaboration as most desirable soft skill

As the cross-functional nature of design projects increases, designers must be able to work collaboratively and build powerful partnerships with different teams across the organization.

In fact, **design leaders at the most mature companies are three times more likely to be peers with their counterparts in engineering and product management.** They are also four times more likely to jointly own and develop key products and features with partners.

Job seekers can use these insights to sharpen resumes (and conversations with recruiters) by highlighting the hard and soft skills they possess, which are most attractive to hiring managers.

"I often invited influential people in the company to my team's design reviews so our work remained visible. My team was a little nervous about showing their early work to company leaders, but I knew it was important to do."

—Laura Martini, Senior Interaction Designer at Google

Top “soft skills” needed in product design

TOP “SOFT SKILLS” NEEDED IN PRODUCT DESIGN	TOTAL AUDIENCE	PRODUCT DESIGNERS	PEOPLE MANAGERS
Collaboration / Teamwork	77%	76%	83%
Communication	72%	72%	75%
Empathy	57%	58%	55%
Emotional Intelligence	36%	35%	36%
Presentation / Public Speaking Skills	35%	35%	30%
Leadership	10%	10%	10%
Business Operations	10%	10%	10%
Other	1%	1%	1%

Top technical “hard skills” needed in product design

TOP TECHNICAL “HARD SKILLS” NEEDED IN PRODUCT DESIGN	TOTAL AUDIENCE	PRODUCT DESIGNERS	PEOPLE MANAGERS
UX Design	83%	82%	86%
User Research	59%	59%	60%
UI Design	55%	55%	61%
Information Architecture	31%	32%	29%
Design Software Proficiency	17%	18%	14%
Data Analytics	14%	13%	16%
Coding	9%	9%	5%
Typography	9%	9%	7%
UX Writing	8%	8%	7%
Motion Design / Animation	6%	6%	6%
User Modeling	4%	4%	4%
Other	2%	2%	1%

Hiring managers value non-design experience in candidates

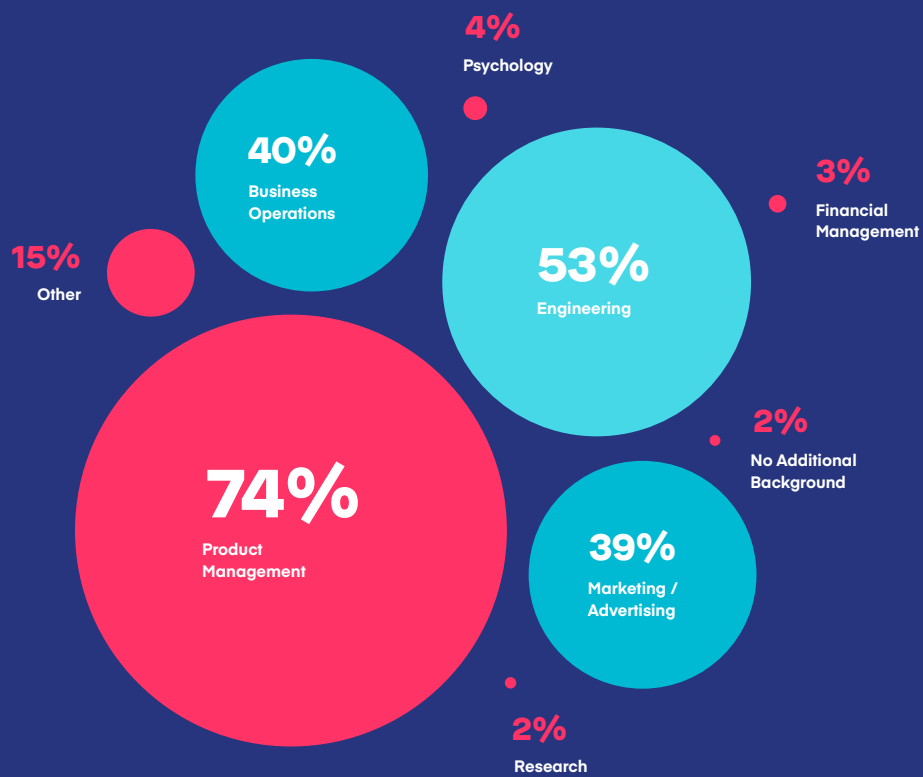
Our survey found that in addition to having a diverse skill set that includes both hard and soft skills, hiring managers place a high value on diverse, non-design related background experience, most notably product management (74%) and engineering (53%).

Today, a designer's role is much more than pushing pixels on the screen. **At the most mature and successful companies, design is considered core to the business strategy and design leaders have a "seat at the table" with other key stakeholders.**

Having a diverse professional background will help designers fulfill their evolving responsibilities, and is considered a strong indicator of future career growth and success. In addition, a strong understanding of other disciplines and their processes better equips designers for collaboration with other teams. It's also an advantage for job seekers from non-design backgrounds planning to make a career change into product design.

Most desirable experience

According to people managers,
top backgrounds that make
product designers successful



Coding experience is an expected design skill

To code or not to code? Our survey results shed some light on the debate.

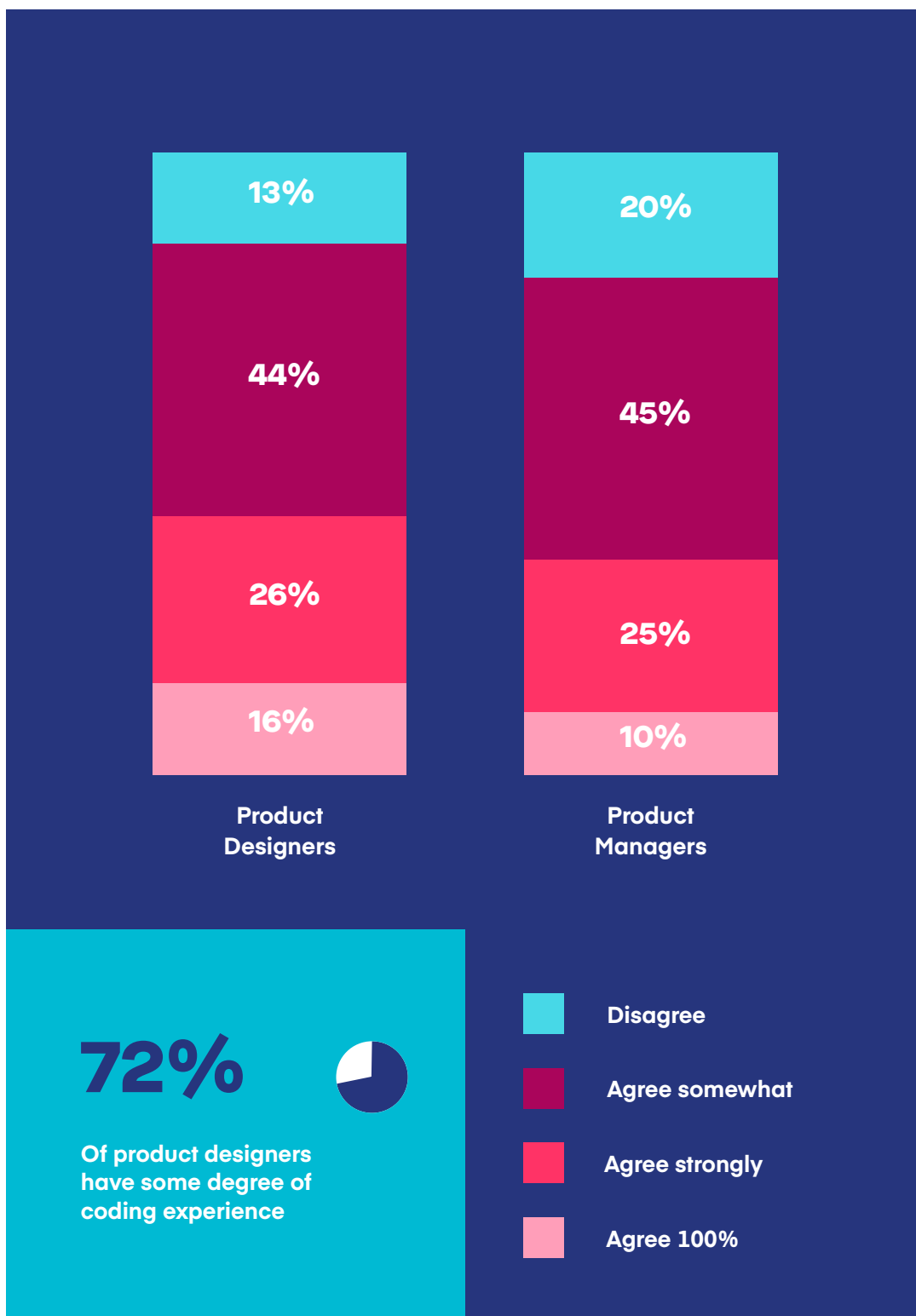
Some may argue that product designers who have coding knowledge are more valuable because they understand the possibilities and constraints of the technology that will bring their designs to life. It will also better equip them for collaborating with software developers, as they are able to “speak the same language.”

Our survey revealed that **coding experience is attractive to the majority of hiring managers, but does not impact salaries**. Eighty percent of people managers reported that they are looking for coding skills in candidates (which 72% of surveyed product designers possess). However, only 13% of people managers are willing to pay significantly more in salary for coding experience. So while coding experience may get a designer through the door, it’s probably not going to command a higher salary.

“An architect would understand the properties of concrete, so why wouldn’t a designer understand the properties of code?”

—Aarron Walter, VP of Design Education at InVision

Coding experience makes designers more attractive to potential employers



Gain the competitive edge

We hope the 2019 Product Design Hiring Report provided you with valuable insights into the product design hiring landscape. Whether you're a hiring manager, a designer breaking into the field or advancing your career, we can help you gain that competitive edge to stand out from the crowd. Wondering where to go next?

InVision helps companies level up their design program. Want to learn more?

Reach out today

