

# Janine Child

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**CONTENT DESIGNER & STRATEGIST**

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Janine Child

# ABOUT ME

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As a multidisciplinary writer and experience designer, I've applied my skills to a wide range of situations and experiences in technology, websites, and publishing.

**Systems thinker**

**Content creator**

**Designer**

**Information architect**

**Researcher**

**Observer, Listener, Questions-asker**

**Organizer**

**Individual contributor, Team lead, Manager, Mentor**



Janine Child

# Experience Summary

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# EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

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## Experience Designer & Content Strategist

Botanists Hill · Apr 2023 - present

Creating a luxury getaway experience in south-eastern Tasmania, including styling, branding, and developing a content strategy and social media presence.

## Content Strategy Lead

IBM Partner Plus · Jun 2022 - Mar 2023

Worked with executives, marketing, creative consultants, and other designers to develop the IA and content for a new IBM business partner experience.

## Content Design & Strategy Lead

IBM Carbon Design System · Jun 2019 - Jun 2022

Managed content strategy and messaging for the design system and created resources and guidance for designers and content designers to help development and drive consistency.

## Senior Content Designer

IBM Watson Assistant · Aug 2018 - Jun 2019

Worked with designers and stakeholders to follow content and UX best practices.

## Senior User Experience Designer

Lifesize · Jun 2015 - Jul 2018

Experience and content design for videoconferencing solutions across web, desktop, mobile, and hardware devices.

## Head of Publishing | The Secret film and book series

Prime Time US Inc. · Jan 2007 - May 2014

Managed the design of books and digital assets for The Secret film and book, and four subsequent New York Times bestsellers, with worldwide sales 30 million+.



[See my full resume.](#)

# How I Work

Janine Child

# HOW I WORK

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How do I work through and deliver my projects?  
It varies every time but these are the common elements/activities.

**Determine constraints**

**Establish & build relationships**

**Build foundations**

**Iterate and review**

**Drive for consistency**

**Conduct usability tests & research**

**Use collaborative tools**



# HOW I WORK

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## Determine constraints

- How much time to deliver? Release schedules?
- What's the budget? Are you staunching the bleeding or is this exploratory visioning?
- How much real estate on the screen?
- What are the rules to follow?
  - interactions, design system components
  - syntax (common syntax reduces translation budgets)
  - vocabulary (preferred and do not use words)
  - corporate style guides
- Time for research? Any existing research?



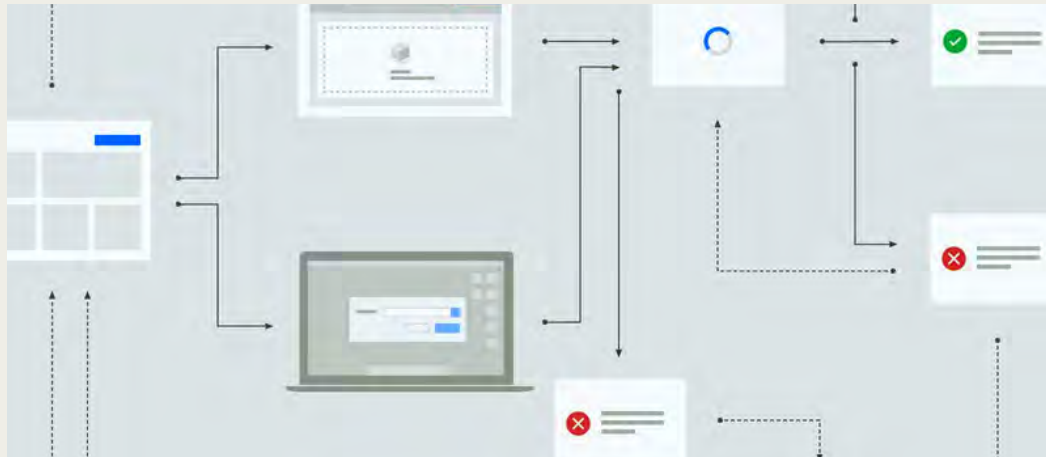
## Establish & build relationships

- Establishing the stakeholders and understanding their expectations is the first step for any successful project.
- I like collaborating and making sure stakeholders and everyone on the team has buy-in along the way. I listen to the words they use to describe parts of the projects and build up a vocabulary of words that I can talk to them about and possibly include.
- How will the team review your work? How do team members like to work?
- Ask questions about their expectations and establish a healthy line of communication.



# HOW I WORK

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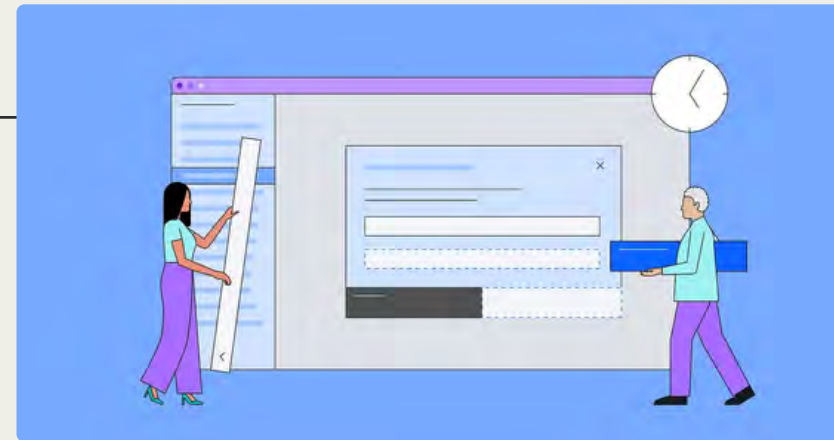
## Build foundations

- What resources do you have to build from?
  - Corporate style guides
  - Design systems
  - Content guidelines
  - Translation and localization guides
  - Word list of preferred terms
- If you don't have these tools at your disposal, start building them while you work. Scrappy is good.
- Is there existing research you can leverage?
  - If not, trawl for third-party research and best practices (like Nielsen Norman Group articles) to help sell your choices.
  - Even general research on interaction or word choices can be helpful to sell an idea to your team.

## Iterate and review

- Conducting mini-reviews throughout to get direction and buy-in ALWAYS pays off
- Hit all the high points:
  - what's broken
  - what's new
  - any context to understand what you're recommending
    - place of interaction in a bigger flow
    - any research that prompted explorations
- Give your reviewers choices. Even if you know one way is better, it's nice to show options so that your teammates can be a part of your work too.
- At final reviews, give credit where credit is due.

# DRIVE FOR CONSISTENCY



content	Data shared during a meeting. Whenever possible, introduce the concept by talking about specific types of content such as presentation materials, documents, or DVDs. Then, switch to using <i>content</i> .  Capitalize only when using the People+Content trademark. Don't capitalize for other use. Avoid using <i>data</i> .			
continuous presence	??Don't capitalize.  also presentation mode, discussion mode, full screen mode, auto mode			
control view	Use control view for the screen where you can make a call. Use full-screen view when you don't see the controls.			
CPE	Customer Provided Equipment. Do not use.			
CSU	Channel Service Unit. Spell out at first use.			
CTS signal	Clear to Send. Don't spell out when you use it in text.			
D				
Data	Avoid using. Instead, use <i>content</i> to refer to slides, Word documents, or DVDs that users share during meetings.			

Global audiences	
Marketing	
Mobile	
Social media	
Tone	
Videos	
<b>Language and grammar</b>	
Abbreviations	
Adverbs - only	

## Using design systems

Design systems create building blocks for applications and sites, and depending on the components used and patterns followed, determine the real estate a content designer has to tell the story.

After working on two design systems at IBM, I wrote content for Partner Plus on the web, where I got to use my own guidance!

## Creating word lists

I've created word lists in every job in my career. Words are my tools and so I need to be clear about meanings, preferences, do-not-use words, and also what competitors are calling things.

Simple is good — a spreadsheet or a word document that can be shared with your co-writers will do the trick!

## Building style guides

At IBM I was part of the Style Council, responsible for maintaining corporate writing guidelines for all IBM content.

Our goal was consistency of style company wide and we met weekly to field questions and maintain IBM Style with the latest additions, revisions, and deletions.

# CONDUCT USABILITY TESTS & RESEARCH

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**Even hearing one recording of a customer struggling or misunderstanding is incredibly valuable and forever humbling!**

- I've conducted card sorts, tree testing, heat maps, A-B, and think-aloud recorded sessions. My favourite type is think-aloud, watching and listening someone navigation through screens. You can watch the mouse for hesitation, and hear them talk to understand the struggles.
- Think-aloud is great for on-screen content to test word choices too. You can ask them directly for their thoughts, or run two sets of tests with different words on screen.
- At Lifesize, I worked with UserTesting and focused on think-aloud testing for the redesigned conferencing app. Following the assertion from the [Nielsen Norman Group](#) that five well-chosen people will tell you 85% of the usability issues, I would sign up 7 users, and the answers would start repeating at 4 or 5 tests. And I was almost always surprised by my results. Nine times out of ten, the results call for simplification.
- At IBM, I traveled to Europe with the Watson Assistant team to meet with customers about their use of the chatbot builder.
- On the IBM Ecosystem team, I mentored first year researchers, helping them structure online tests and write them up so as not to lead the test subjects.



- Testing and customer visits are essential but often not done because of time. However, I will always find a way to do some kind of testing or research.
- At the very least, I will try to find third-party research or articles that will help guide my decisions and also help to get buy-in for my proposals.
- And I listen to everyone on the team. Team members have a lot of knowledge too and I'm always on alert for anything they have to say.

# USE COLLABORATIVE TOOLS

## My favorite tools for IA creation

**Gloomaps** is a fabulous little program that I've been using for preliminary IA work. I also used it for a new Partner Support page.

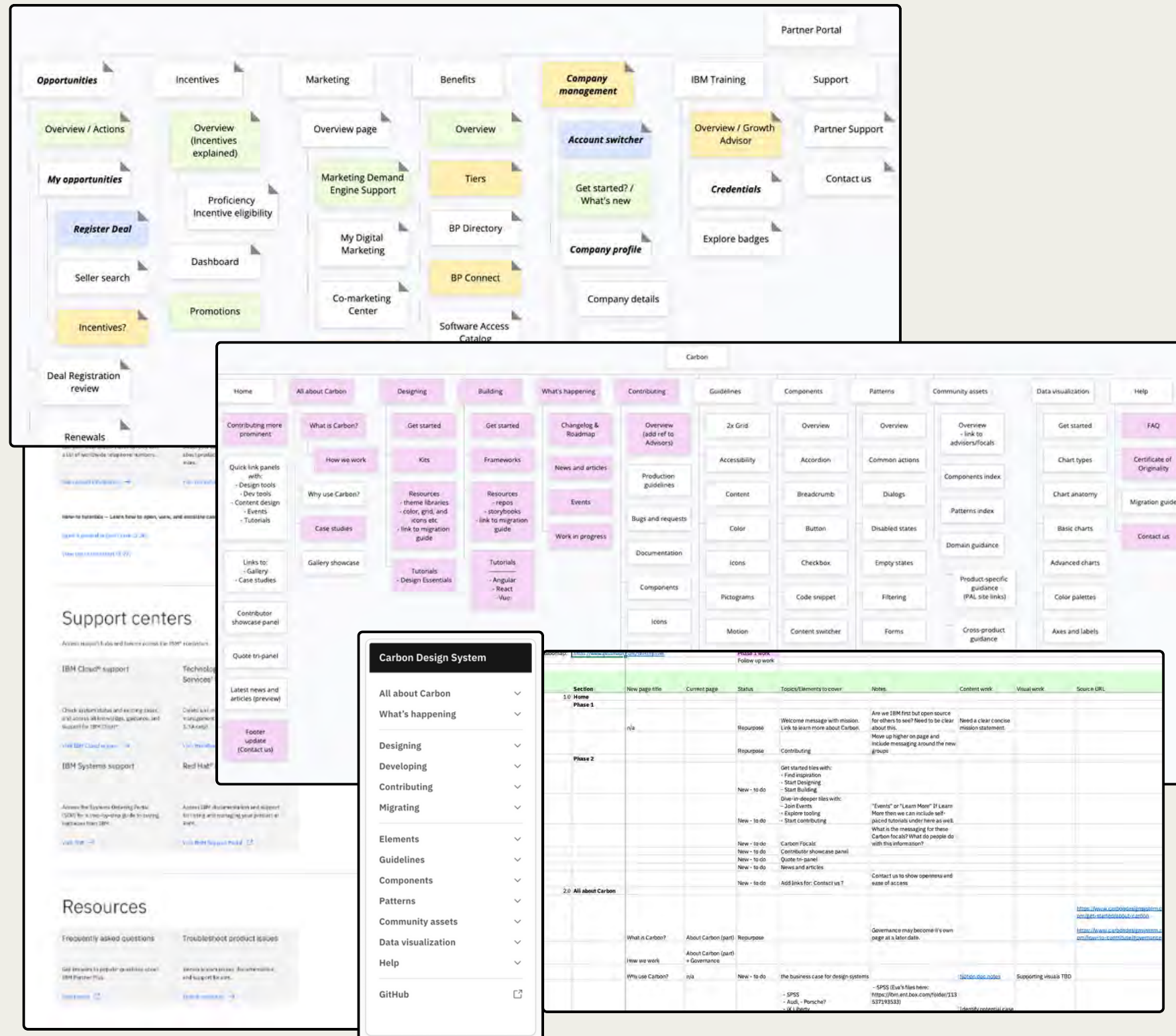
What I love:

- It's fast and you can drag cards around. You can get an existing site documented at speed.
- It has colour coding! You can build layers of meaning quickly.
- You can write notes on cards and keep them hidden.
- When you're gathering information and feedback, your workmates can see the changes instantly, see that you're taking notes and they feel heard!

## Figma or Sketch

Once I start zeroing in on a solution, I like to see the words "in situ" so I'll switch to Figma or Sketch (or the program du jour) and start playing with layouts. Pushing things around pixel by pixel is also great when you're thinking in those later stages.

**Excel** is my next step, once I've got buy in, I use it to organize the work. I know Airtable is a thing but I love Excel because it's simple!



# Projects

Janine Child

# CREATING FOR CREATORS

*Foundational guidance... style guides, word lists*

## IBM Style, Lifesize, Polycom

As a member of the IBM Style Council, I helped maintain IBM Style – the corporate writing guidelines for all IBM content created for an external audience.

At Lifesize and Polycom, I created style guides and word lists to share with other content creators and also the testing teams to ensure the interfaces were accurate and consistent.

**Sentence style capitalization** means that you capitalize the first word but make the rest lowercase, except for proper nouns.

Element	Capitalization style	Examples
Menu items	Title case	
Push buttons	Title	Create a Meeting Add a Participant Invite by Email
Modal titles	Title case	Schedule a Meeting
Radio buttons or checkbox text	Sentence	Meeting is one-time only Start meeting without moderator
Links to other pages for secondary actions	Sentence	How to call someone not in your directory Forgot password? Copy link
Messages	Sentence	Are you sure you want to...? Just a moment... we are waiting for your internet to reconnect?
Tooltips	Sentence	Call with camera on Mute microphone

**Accessibility and globalization requirement:** People who have limited vision, or who use interfaces that are translated into a bidirectional language, might not understand information if it is conveyed only by location. When you refer to the location of an element in a graphical user interface, do not use sensory words, such as *top*, *bottom*, *right*, or *left*. Instead of sensory words, refer to the element by its label or tooltip, or use these alternatives:

- *top*: *beginning* or *start*, or can often be removed
  - ✗ Select an action at the top of the window.
  - ✓ Select an action from the menu bar on the header.
- *bottom*: *end*
  - ✗ Scroll to the bottom of the page.
  - ✓ Scroll to the end of the page.
- *above*: *previous*, or can often be removed

# CREATING FOR CREATORS

## *Mid-range guidance*

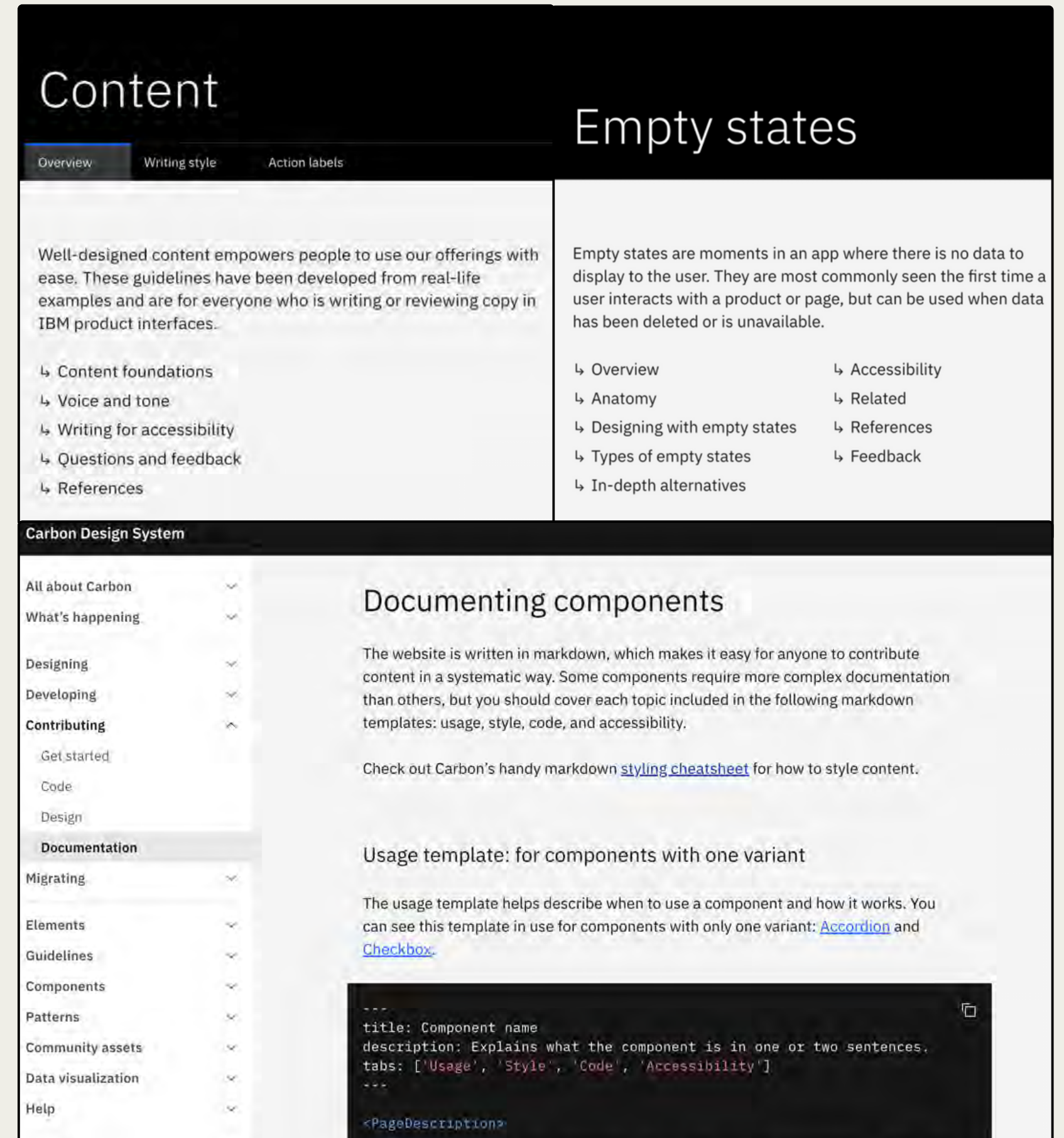
### Templates and guidelines for designers

Nothing speeds up work more than having guidelines and templates! You get more consistency too.

As Content Design Lead for the IBM Carbon Design System, I created what I'm calling "mid-range" guidance for other creators, including:

- [content guidelines](#) for UX writing
- templates for [documenting patterns](#)
- templates for [documenting components](#)
- a case study template

I also managed the effort to develop comprehensive patterns to drive consistency across IBM products, and authored the pattern for [Empty states](#).



# CREATING FOR CREATORS

## *Detailed guidance*

### Guidelines for website content designers

I also created detailed documentation for the Carbon for IBM.com Design System — the system used by content creators of the IBM.com website.

My work included:

- how to use typography for hierarchy and impact.
- streamlining component guidance.
- leading content guidance for components for choosing and configuring components to tell a story.

This foundational work ensured consistency of experience at the detailed level of typography and website elements.

Overview | Styling strategies | Type pairing

### Blending type sets

The spaces we are designing for are no longer neatly divided between productive and expressive. Both product and web pages can be blended with what we call “moments” if the alternative type set better supports the function.

If your users are working in a product but pausing to read or scan for options, an expressive moment can facilitate easy reading and/or create a desired impact or pause. In these cases, however the “moment” would span a full page or banner where there are no containers.

If your users are reading on the website but then switch to a focused task within the web experience, using an expressive moment would facilitate the focus required to complete a form.

### Content guidance

Element	Content type	Required	Instances	Character limit (English / translated)	Notes
Wayfinding	<a href="#">Breadcrumbs</a> or <a href="#">Tags</a>	No	1	—	—
Heading	Text	Yes	1	40 / 55	—
Subheading	Text	No	1	120 / 150	Lead space short variant does not allow subheading under the heading.
<a href="#">Button group</a> <a href="#">CTA</a>	Component	No	1	25 / 35	Lead space short variant does not allow a CTA under the heading.
Background media	<a href="#">Images</a> or <a href="#">Video</a>	No	1	—	—
Image alt text	Text	No	1	75 / 100	Image description for accessibility.
Gradient	UI element	No	1	—	Consider contrast between lead space elements and background media.

For more information, see the [character count standards](#).



# CONSTRAINTS AS SAVIORS

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## Out of an impossible deadline came inspiration and a clear path for Carbon Design System's new navigation.

IBM's Carbon Design system had grown organically and the website's navigation was a bit of a jumble.

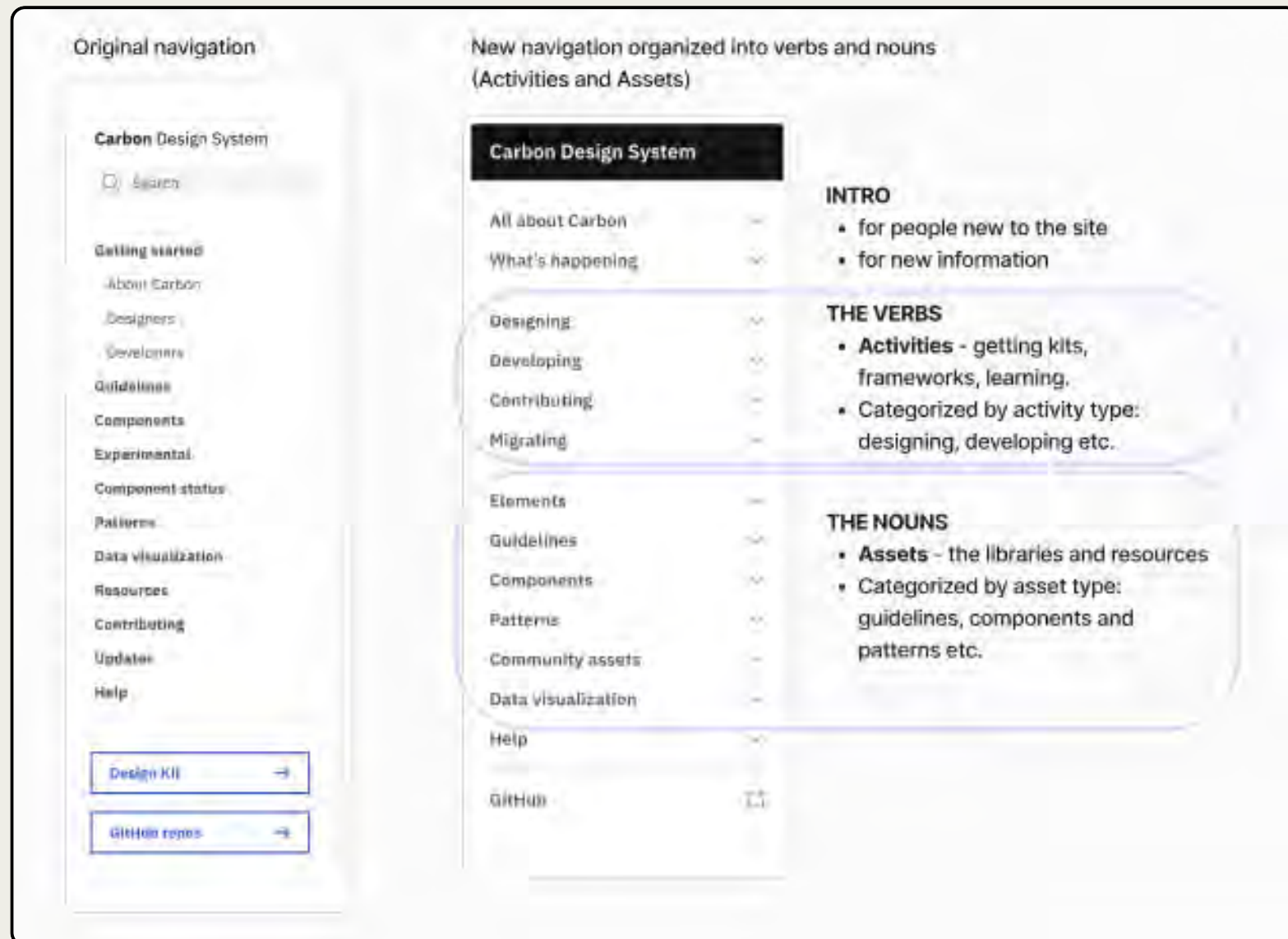
I'd spun up navigation discussions at different times and struggled with the wildly different ideas people had about what it should be. Others were used to the jumble and worried that changes would bring in more support requests.

Enter Phil Gilbert, IBM's VP of Design...

"I'd like to see a new site navigation for the design system, in next week's meeting."

Uh oh!

READ MORE



# IBM PARTNER PLUS LAUNCH

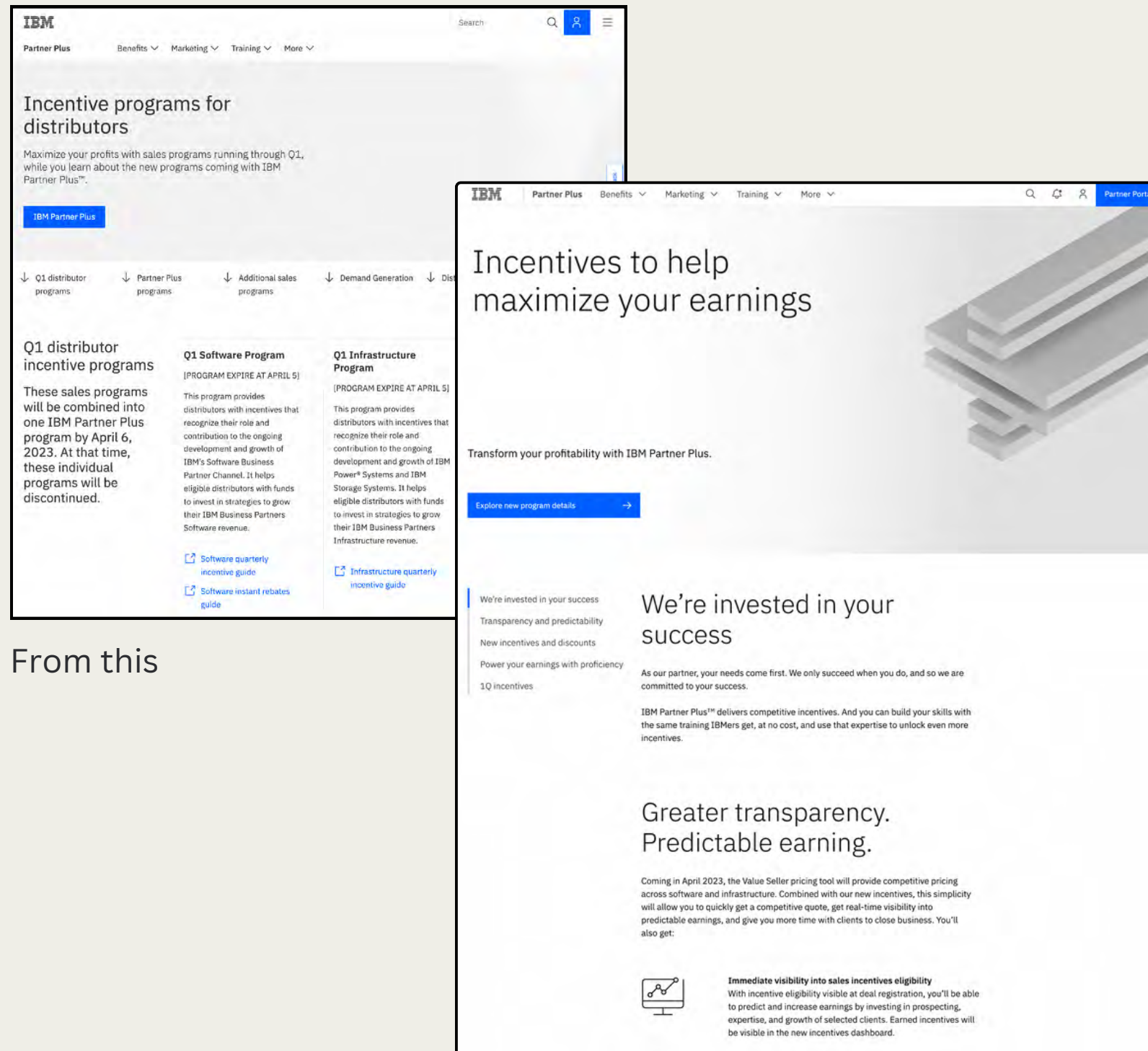
## Working with a huge, cross-functional team

As the Content Strategy Lead of the Ecosystem design group, I worked with a cross-functional team including marketing, product and program managers, Blue Studio (an internal IBM agency), external agencies, and executives to support the launch of Partner Plus, IBM's partner program.

Together we planned the launch, developed the strategy, and created the supporting content.

Highlights for me:

- working with brand experts and other content strategists from the different groups.
- creating content and web pages with components, using documentation that I'd written in my previous role as Content Design Lead for the design systems.
- the process of creating the navigation for the new site, pitching it, tweaking it, and seeing it released.
- cross-functional content clinics where we reviewed each other's work — these were amazing and supportive!
- being part of a program that was a big deal for the company was an honor!



From this

To this

# CREATING A CONTENT INVENTORY MURAL

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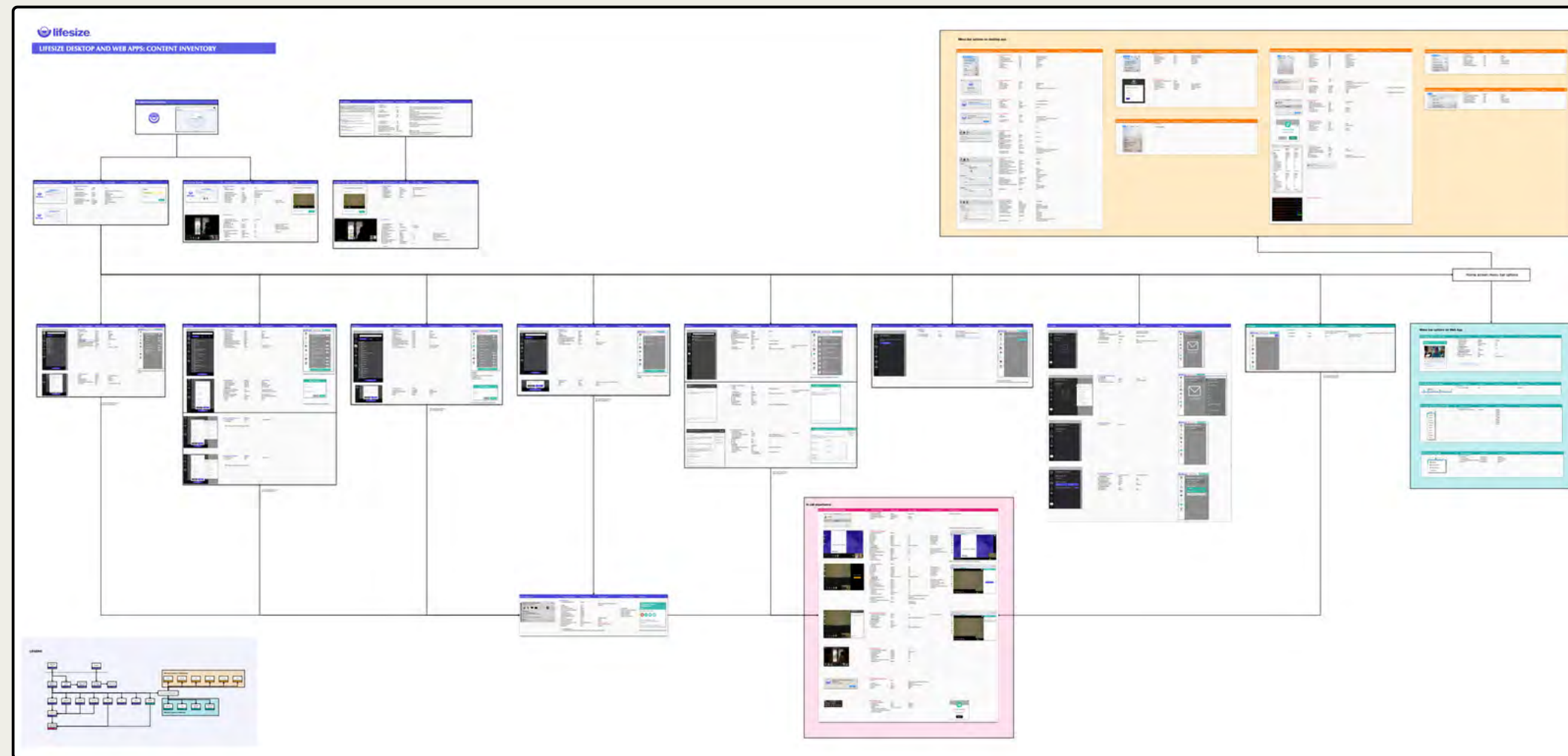
## New content versus original at scale

We were redesigning the web conferencing app and part of the redesign was a review and update to all of the interface content.

To help show the changes, I created a mural of the original screens with strings listed in tables, and then added proposed strings as we'd developed them.

I wanted my teammates to see all of the changes and be able to provide feedback.

We had a deadline for release and translations in 14 languages. I couldn't afford to have any surprises at the last minute. If there was a problem, I wanted to know about it as soon as possible.



# ORGANIZING CONTENT FOR COHERENCE

## At Lifesize, we were creating a new web conference feature and our meetings were going nowhere.

There had been multiple meetings with product managers, designers, and engineers and our conversations were going around in circles. I'd been observing and could see it was an information problem.

I thought about LATCH, the five ways to organize information:

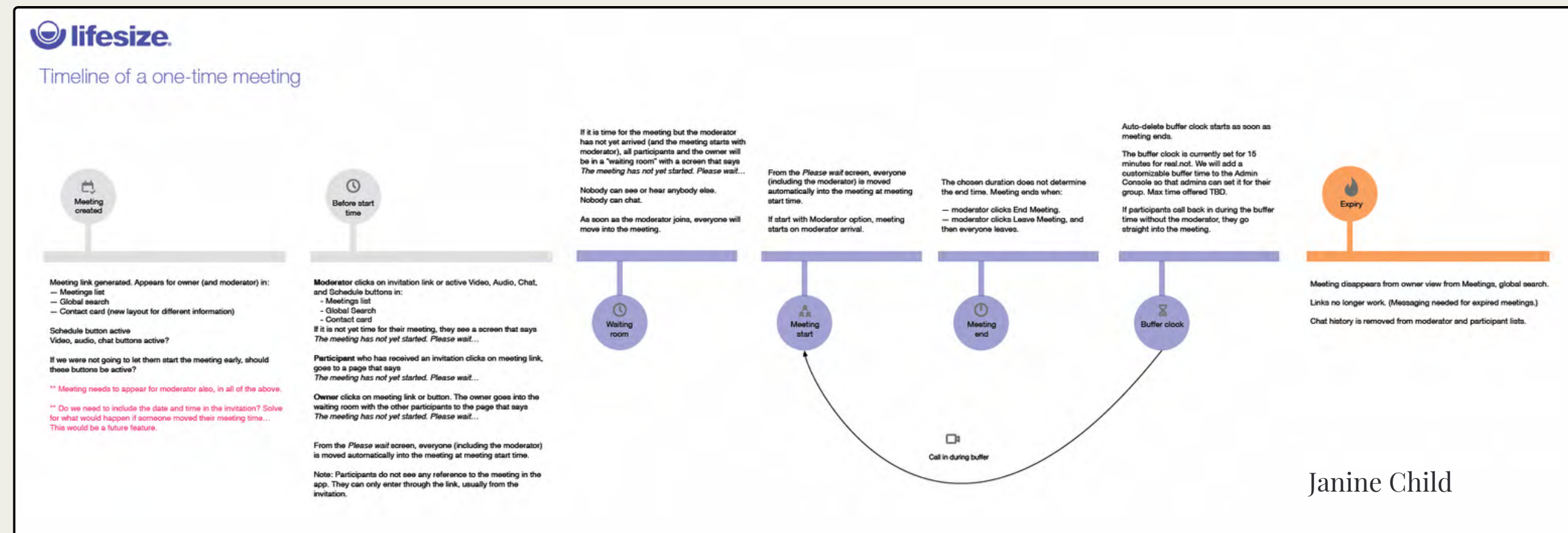
- Location
- Alphabet
- Time
- Category
- Hierarchy

## The communication struggles were all about TIME

The most important part of the conference service was **time**. The service was cyclical and the system features changed according to phases.

I created a timeline, came up with phase names, and added as much detail as I could about the service. I set up a meeting to present to the team. When I finished presenting, everyone was quiet because by then it seemed so obvious. :) Then we worked together to flesh out the details.

We used variations of this timeline for product definition, scope and release planning, and ultimately testing.



# PUBLIC COLLABORATION

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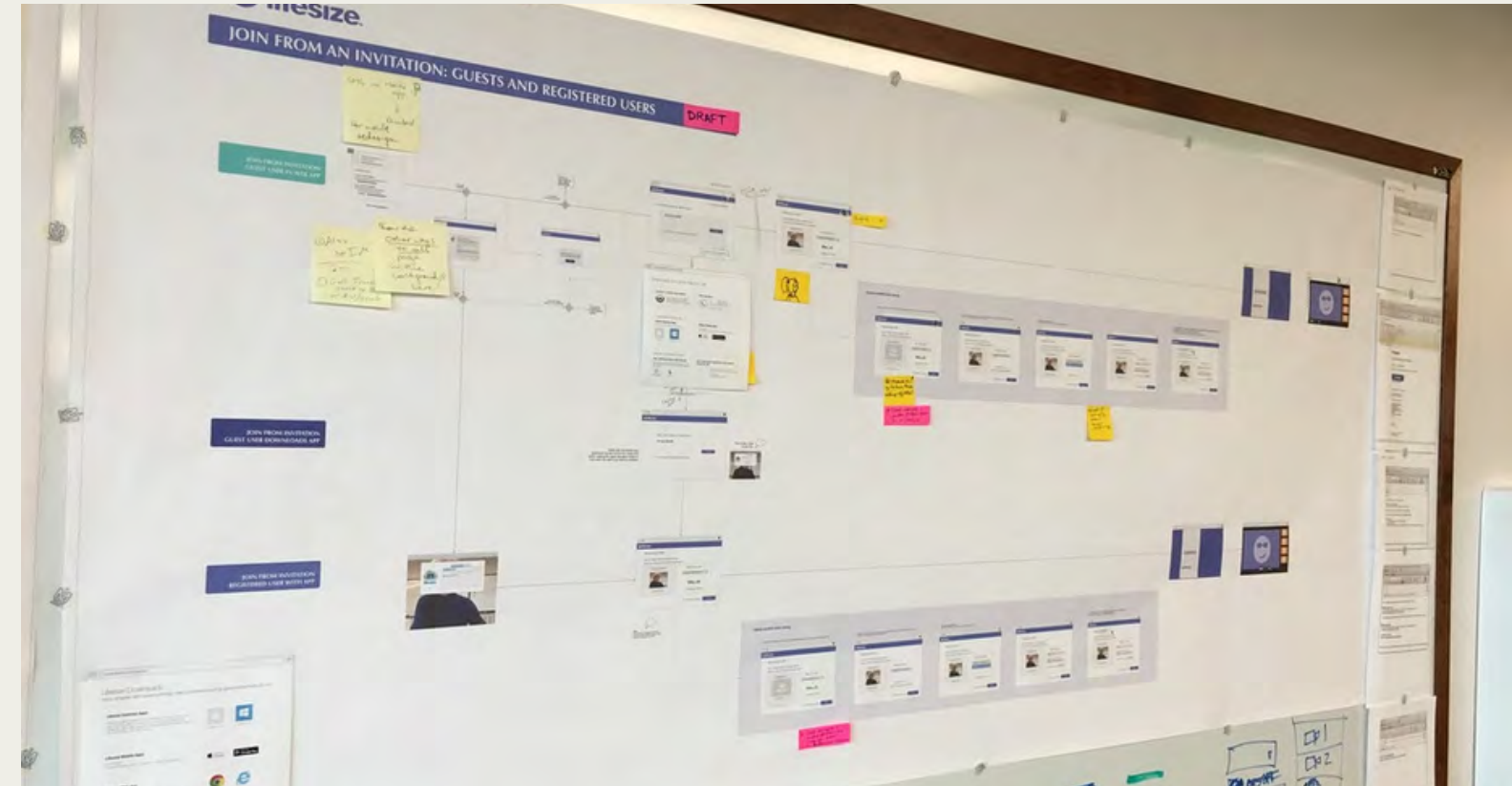
## At Lifesize, I posted my work in a public place and then watched to see what happened.

Filling walls with user flows and a content inventory was probably the most enjoyable way to gather feedback... for everyone. It was novel, attracted attention, and was fun.

I left sticky notes and Sharpies close by and I watched as people stepped along the wall, reading through a new flow for our web conferencing app.

Allowing space and time gave people more time to reflect, and the feedback I received was far deeper and more thoughtful than anything I could have received in a one-hour meeting where people don't always have enough time to think but feel pressured to say something.

When I first put the flows up, I was calling it a review but it became more of a collaboration.

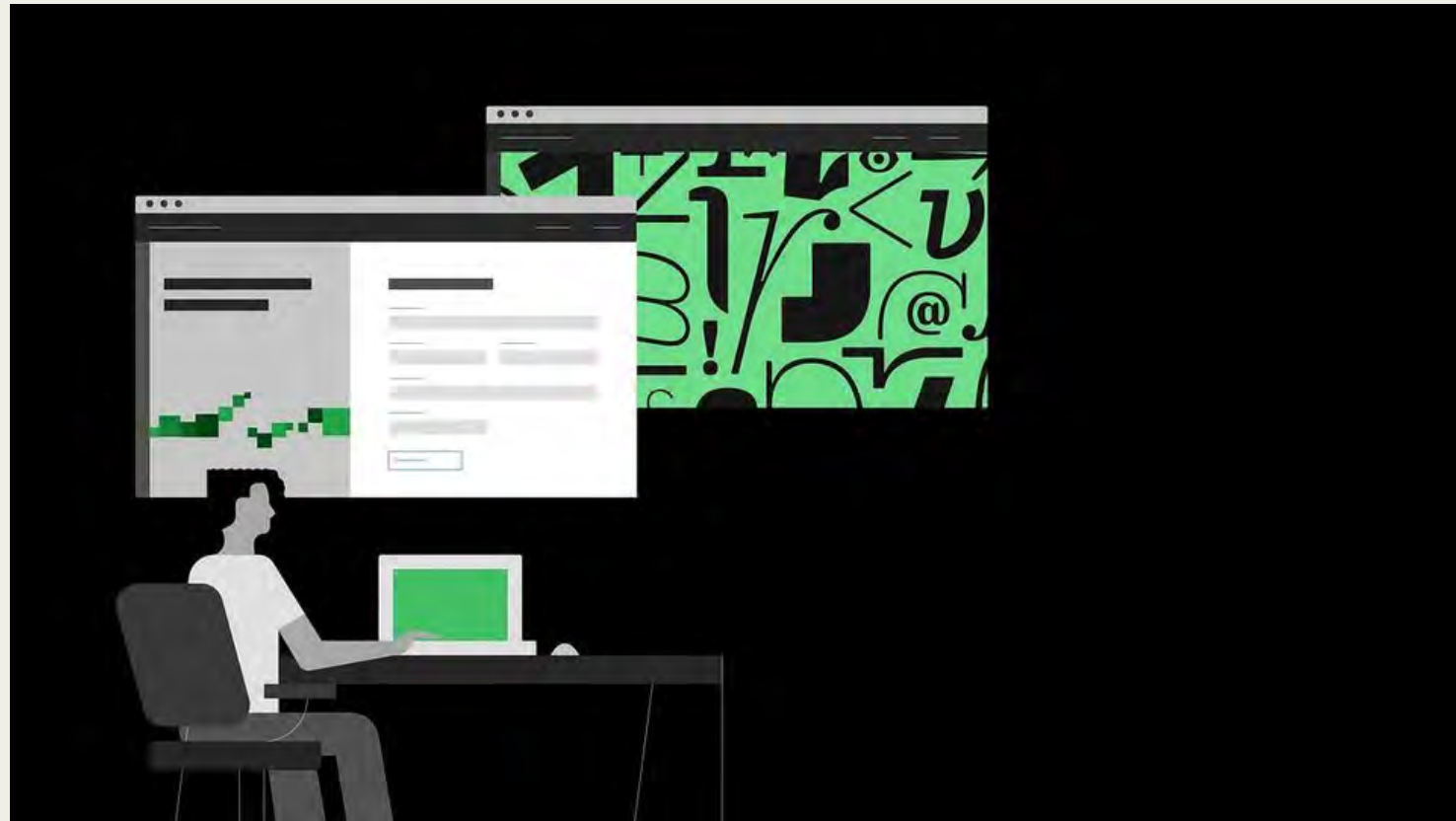


# Articles

Janine Child

# STYLING STRATEGIES USING TYPOGRAPHY

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Published on Medium, January 2022

**IBM designers combine Carbon’s productive and expressive type styles to bring hierarchy and clarity to product and web pages.**

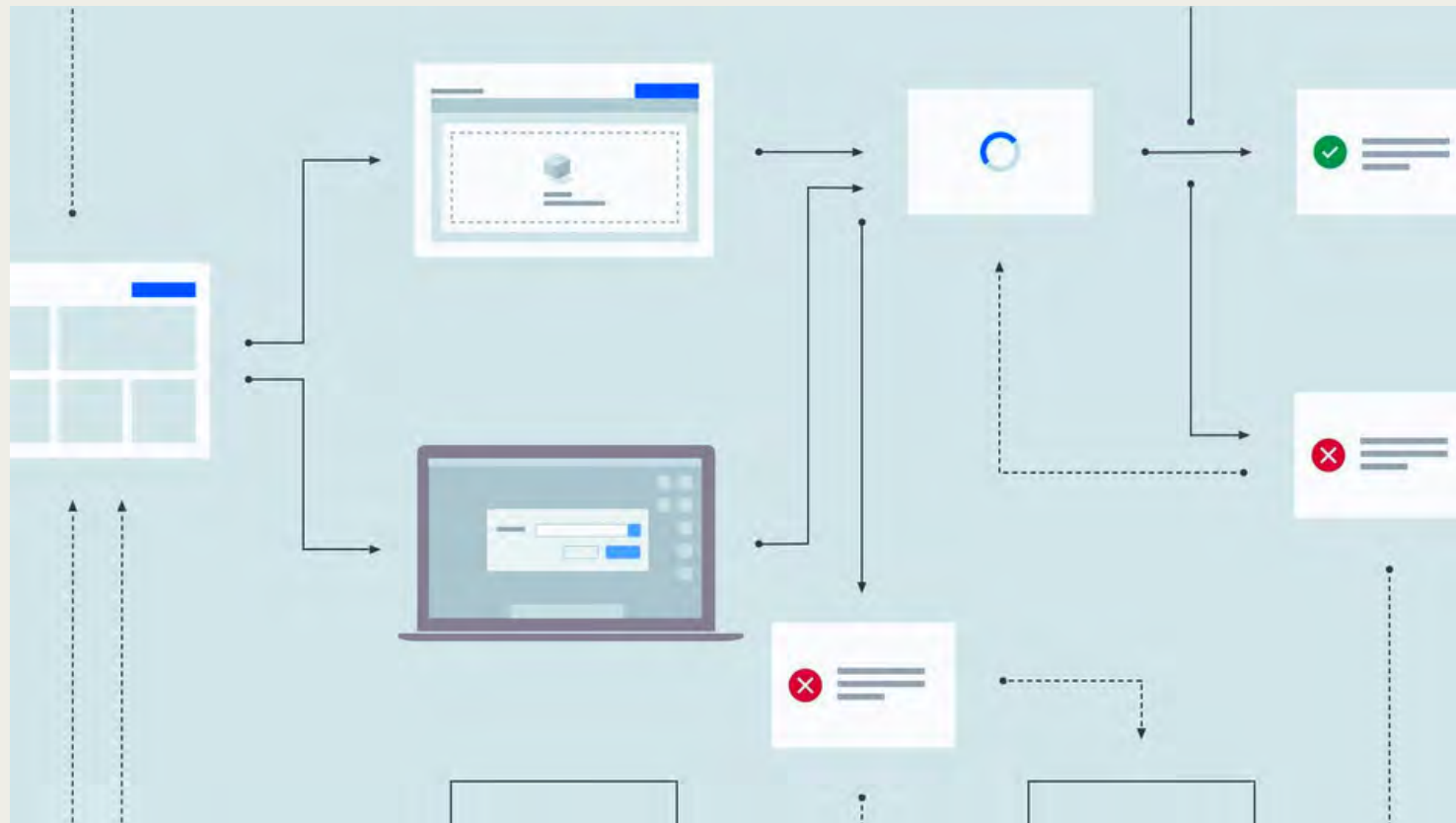
Carbon Design System uses type tokens to manage typography, and these tokens sit within two type sets: productive and expressive.

These type sets support designers creating for a full range of user needs and activities across product and web pages.

[READ MORE](#) 

# SEVEN NEW UX PATTERNS FOR CARBON

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Published on Medium, January 2020

## Use IBM's Carbon Design System to solve common UX problems with comprehensive guidance.

A design system should be more than a library of tools and components. To build great applications, designers and developers also need strong, validated, and comprehensive guidance as a foundation.

The Carbon team conducted rigorous internal and industry research on UX patterns, striving to better understand how users should (and shouldn't) be designing common experiences.

READ MORE 



# CARBON'S NEW INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

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Published on Medium, September 2020

**To support the release of the updated site, I published a Medium article.**

**Highlights:**

- To better support the Carbon experience, the site is now divided into two main areas:
  - Activities
  - Assets
- New hubs for **Designer** and **Developer** resources
- **What's happening** for latest news, roadmap, the system changelog, design reviews, and Meetups
- **All about Carbon** with the team, how we work, and design system case studies

**READ MORE** 

# Thank you!

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