

# A User Guide To Working With Me





## **This guide is based on an idea by Julie Zhuo**

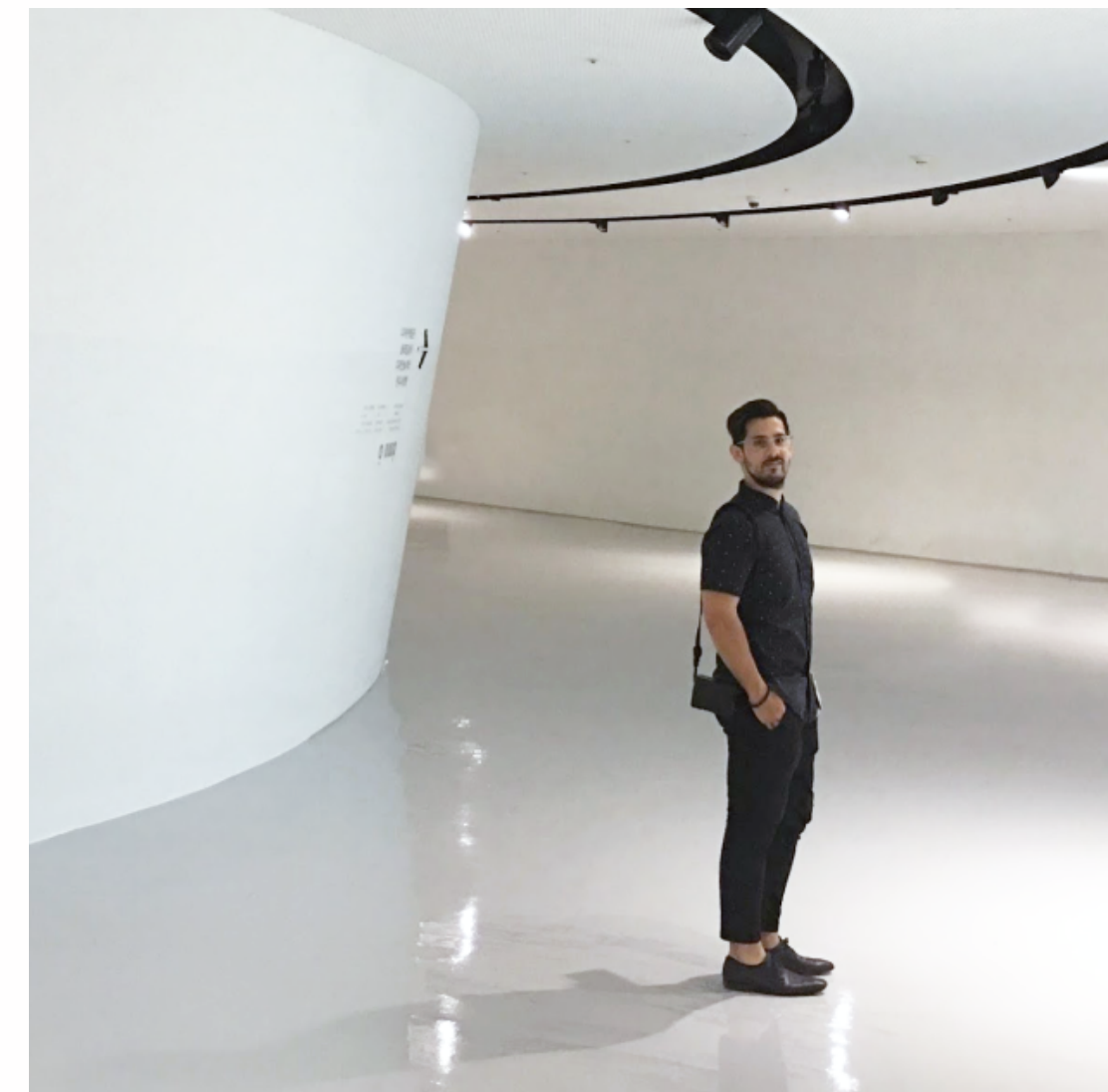
To summarise Julie's excellent article, a user guide for a person provides clear insights into your work style, values, approach to problem-solving, blind spots, areas for growth, and how to build trust with you. You can share this guide with your manager, close colleagues, or, if you are a manager, with every new team member.

Read more at <https://lg.substack.com/p/the-looking-glass-a-user-guide-to>

Nice to meet you.  
**I'm a hands-on  
pixel producer,  
product innovator  
and data-driven  
design leader.**

I lead design and research teams and together we create, build and scale user-centered and data-driven products and experiences for people all over the world.

To get in touch with me just say  
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01. **Honest, unfiltered things about me...**
02. **It drives me nuts when...**
03. **My quirks are...**
04. **Qualities in the people I work with...**
05. **Things people might misunderstand about me...**
06. **The best way to communicate with me...**
07. **Something else I'd like my team to know...**

## **Here are a few honest, unfiltered things about me...**

I prefer doing difficult tasks first so I can relax later with less worry. This means I'm highly motivated to automate repeatable tasks or just get them done and off my plate.

I have busy periods when I'm designing and more relaxed periods when starting or finishing projects. During busy times, I may seem distant, but when relaxed, I'm more sociable.

I tend to eat when stressed, so feel free to slap the chip bag out of my hands.

I like solving problems definitively to avoid them coming back as even harder challenges.

People often confide in me, and I value their honesty and keep their secrets. However, this can make decision-making hard as I consider everyone's needs.

I need to check email less often, as conversations tend to happen on Slack or in person. Please Schedule important discussions or bring them up on Slack.

## It drives me nuts when...

I don't have enough time to dive into complex topics without a clear viewpoint, which can cause contradictions and problems down the road.

People don't think ahead to anticipate and prevent problems that are knowable and avoidable.

People present work as finished without considering implications and edge cases.

People don't know to turn on "show everyone's calendar" in Outlook, leading to double bookings.

People set each other up for problems or lack awareness of office politics. Let's all try to be genuine, transparent, and honest to avoid unnecessary stress.

Designers or developers ignore guidance, causing problems later. Own the solution you're working on or seek input. Not doing so can create issues and inconveniences for the whole team.

## My quirks are...

I have my routines. You might see me doing the same things repeatedly, but this helps me reduce decision fatigue and move my effort to things that support the work and keep me balanced.

As reserved and quiet as I can be for most of the day (and in front of clients), I do allow myself to let go and chop it up at lunch or at work events. I tend to laugh loudly, and I love listening to and telling stories.

I have an instinct to over prepare, but I've often been in situations where being well-prepared has made a difference. I imagine that my team and my client will try to find the holes in my thinking, and I want to be able to give thorough answers. Being well-prepared also helps me present the work.

I am more of an extrovert, but I do value having time to be quiet and think deeply. I recharge by watching obscure films, reading sci-fi novels, and spending time with my kids and family.

Ask me about my [Antilibrary!](#)

## **I particularly value these qualities in the people I work with...**

Take responsibility and not avoid doing things because they are hard or personally inconvenient

Compartmentalize work and care deeply about it so that other people can focus on their work (and avoid shifting responsibility or emotional “spill over”)

Give respectful and meaningful guidance that you’ve thought through. Say when you know the answer or need help and guidance.

Be “real” when we need to be – drop the act and say what’s really going on.

Recognize the difference between a personal preference and what really matters for success.

Reflect on our own actions and how we come across to each other.

Give thanks, call out good work and effort, and recognize milestones and achievements.

## **A few things people might misunderstand about me are...**

Although discovery and UX work tends to happen first, I am open to a visual designers starting with concepts. I enjoy collaborating and building on others' ideas. I wish this would happen more often!

I'm not overly picky, but I do care about avoiding certain issues that can become big problems if ignored.

I focus on two things when discussing work and giving feedback:

1. The overall strategy, which we need to know and clearly articulate.
2. The surface-level details and decisions that stem from that strategy.

Balancing these two aspects ensures we produce good work and stay accountable.

I look for contradictions in order to eliminate them, not as a way to be right or dominate.

I urge my colleagues to be clear about their intentions and fully develop their decisions on their own before I give guidance or override promising thinking.

## **The best way to communicate with me is...**

I prefer to give and receive feedback in person, in a group, and on Slack.

I may be multitasking, but you are not inconveniencing me - I will tell you if that's the case, so don't assume you need to apologize for Slacking me.

It's best if you have already thought through what you want to discuss, say what you think is right to do, and be upfront with what is at stake. Have a point of view and don't be worried about bringing it to me – it's the right thing to do and t's called "Managing Up".

We can figure anything out, but we also need to agree that the way we do something is sometimes just as important as what we do. I will think about both and probably challenge you to do so as well.

Please don't send me long emails – not because I don't appreciate your thinking, but because I don't want your words to go unnoticed for long periods of time. I want you to express yourself through the channel that will get you the response you deserve.

## **Something else I'd like my team to know is...**

My motto is: Be Valued. Be Valuable.

I've spent about a decade living and working overseas in Southeast Asia. Talk to me about my time there.

I taught myself to play the guitar during lockdown just well enough to finally enjoy it – and I'm still learning!

...and I've been keeping up a pretty awesome [Favorites playlist on Spotify](#).

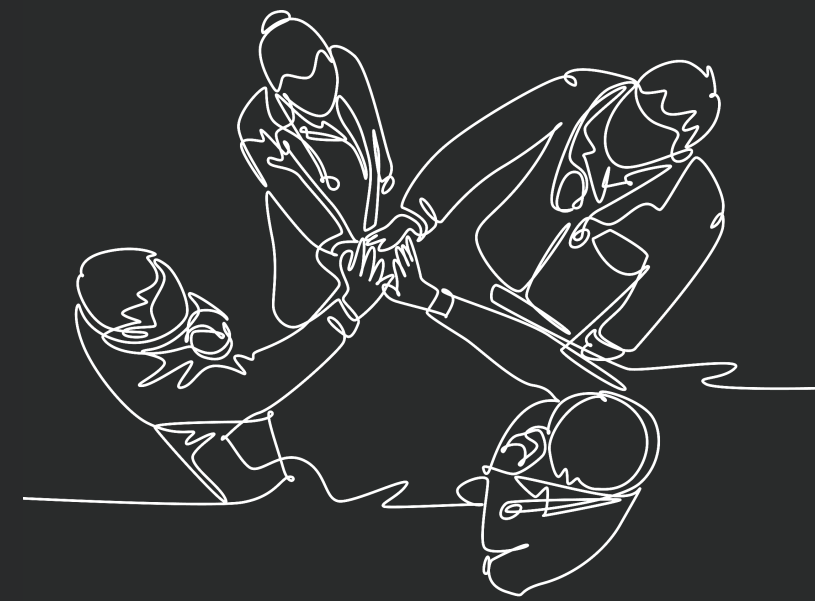
More about me: <https://bschmittling.com/about>

See my skills in action by exploring my case studies located at [bschmittling.com/casestudies](https://bschmittling.com/casestudies)



## Product Design & Management

5 short stories



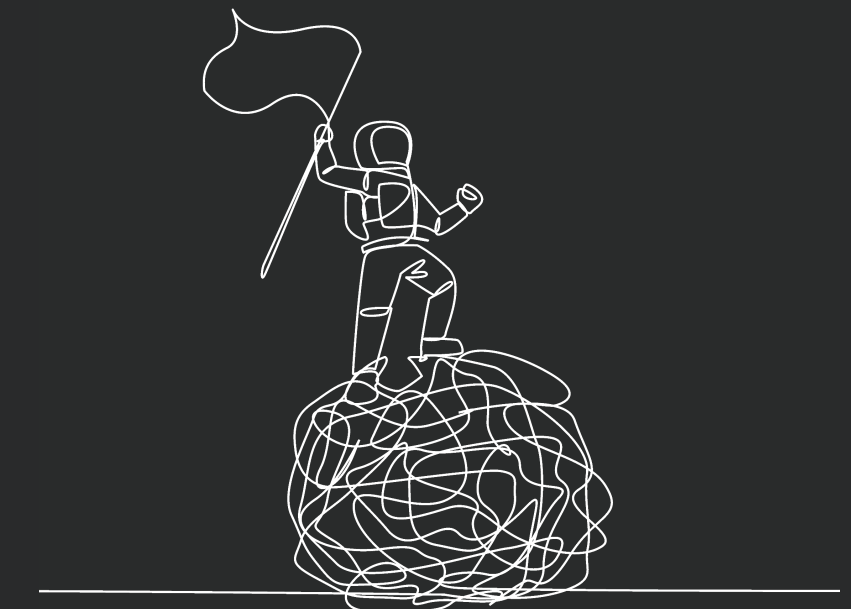
## Leadership & Initiatives

5 short stories



## Growth & Business Development

5 short stories



## Reoccurring Challenges

9 short stories