Best Practices in Critique

Retaining women in tech with through process excellence

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WIT·ops

Changing the Paradigm for Women in Tech

WITops: Creating solutions to retain WIT

Women leave tech
50% more often than men

The WIT Retention Project

Deep Dive field research
- Including multiple job roles and industries

Revealing key factors to retain WIT
- What women need to thrive in tech
- The @Work Experience Framework

Quantitative research for validation
- With over 900 people
- The @Work Experience Measure

Critical Intervention Points
- Practical interventions informed by research
- The Ops: Our initiatives

All work at WITops is accomplished by world-wide volunteers
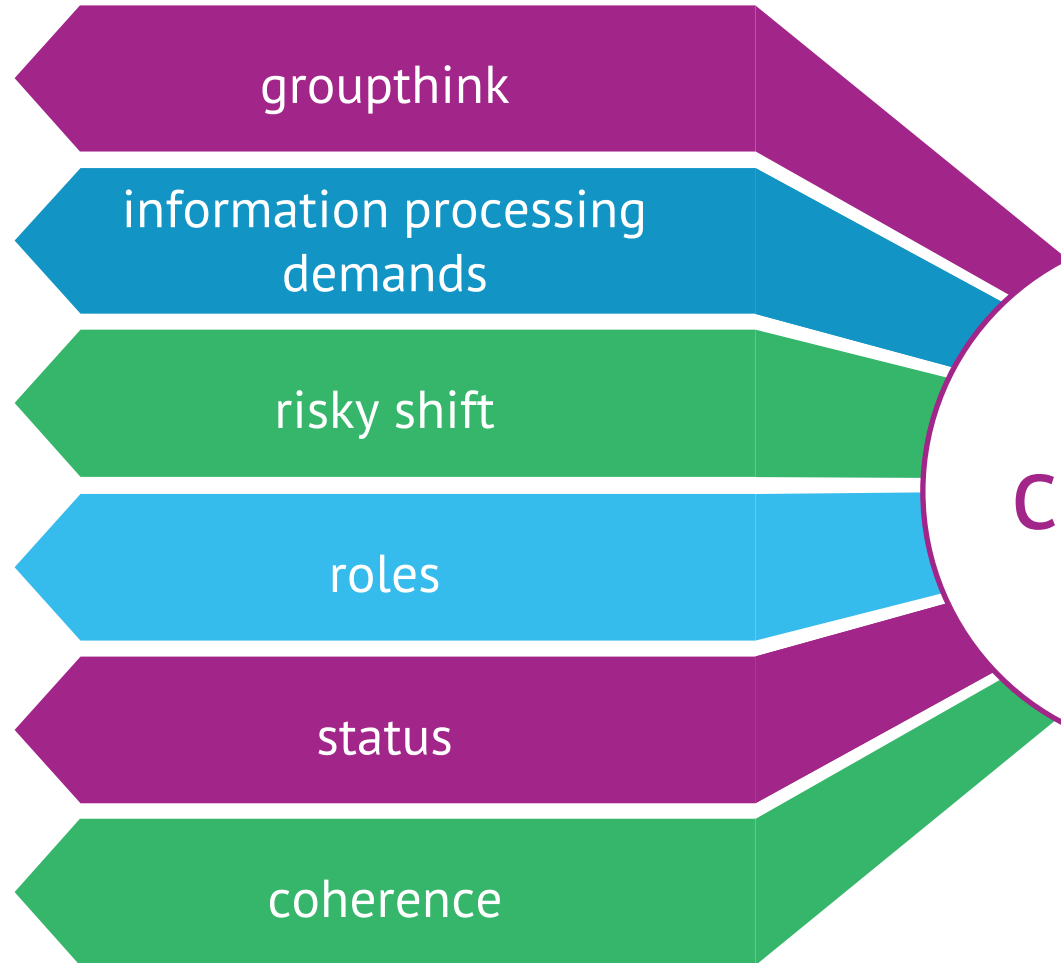
The Critique Problem

Design Critique is central to Maker professions

80%
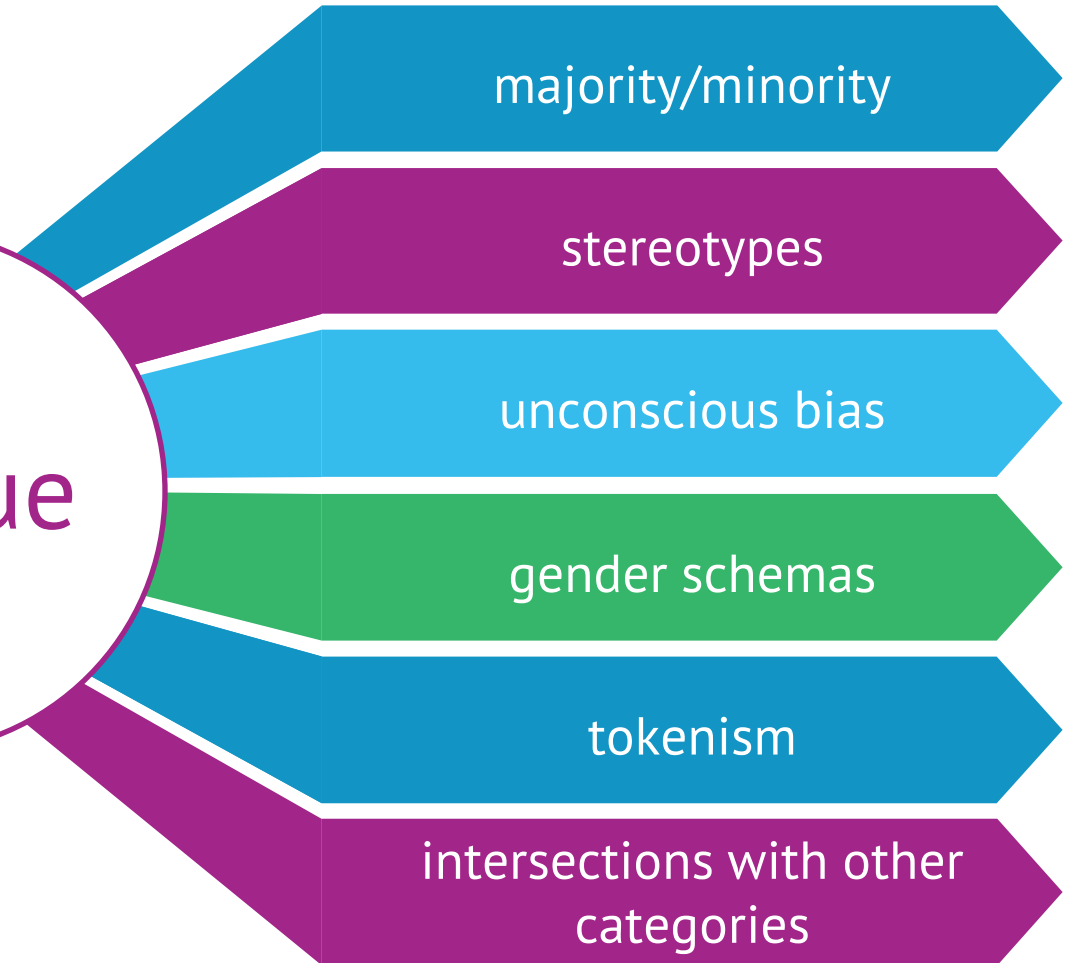
of women
lose self-esteem when
criticized

Diverse teams create better solutions

Group Dynamics

Gender Dynamics

groupthink

information processing demands

risky shift

roles

status

coherence

critique

majority/minority

stereotypes

unconscious bias

gender schemas

tokenism

intersections with other categories

Interpersonal dynamics get in the way

The Fundamental Design Error

Design from the "I"

Makes it worse

Depersonalizing Critique

Giving Critique

Make sure the recipient asked for your critique
- Or it's your job to give feedback

Be descriptive and concrete
- Focus on what you see
- Behavior instances
- Design or work elements

Differentiate between:
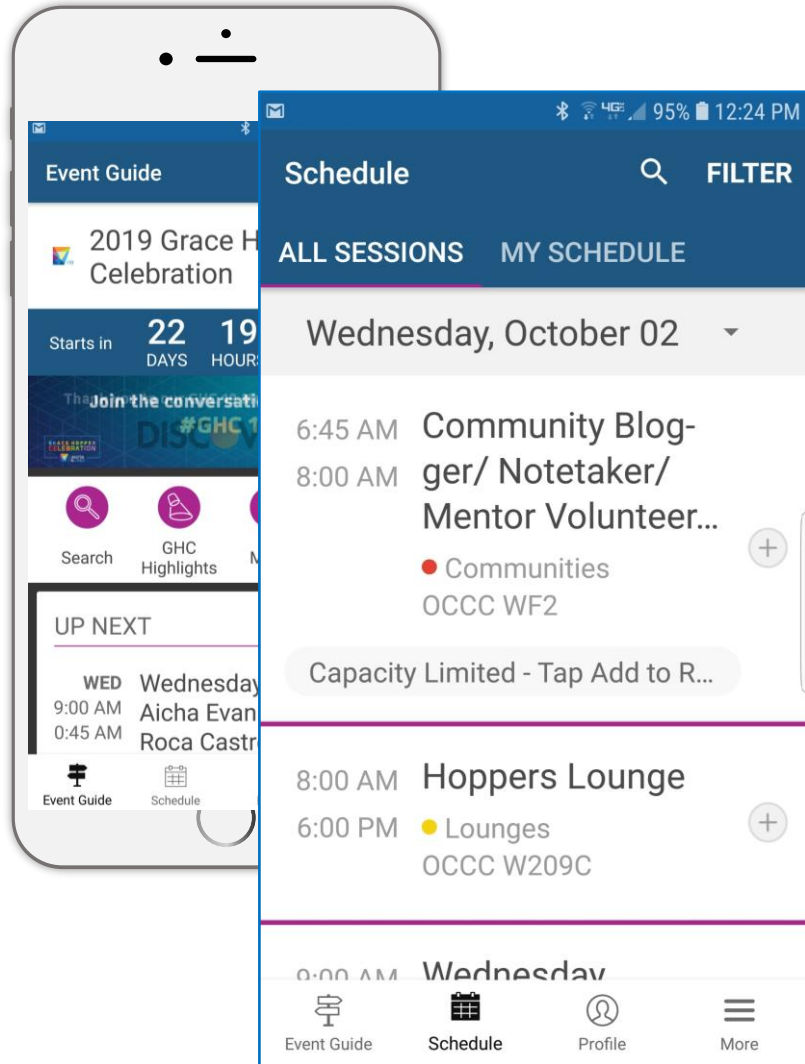- Observation
- Interpretation
- Your reaction or thought

For work, reference accepted considerations:
- Business impact
- User data
- Design principles

Filters

reaction based on principles or user data

interpretation

observation

Business Goals

Does the design support the business goals?

- Help attendees choose what to do and find where to go

- Excite people about the program

- Be technically possible with GHC resources

- Brand: Reflect our mission

For Profit Products include: Can be sold by our salesforce & channels

Does the design support the user data?

- Make a schedule without formally logging; Don't let it get lost!
- Select any interesting event even if times overlap
- Pick out articles to read later because it was interesting or was missed.
- Coordinate plans with others to go to sessions or social activities together or cover sessions to report back home.

- Get contact information for speakers.
- People must ask for help to find sessions because the maps aren't clear
- Avoid jumping between a personal calendar and conference schedule to make complete plan
- See the kind of food offered in the conference reception or breaks to see if it meets needs.

Field interviews define user needs and focus teams on designing for users

Does the design support UX design principles?

Choose what level you are evaluating?

User practice
- Do the functions support the users' intent?

System structure
- Does each place in the UI have a clear intent, and links to related areas?

UI structure
- Are the functions, information and navigation in each place clear and support the intent?

Visual Design
- Does the look of the application reflect the brand and modern visual design principles.

List principles for each level: UI Structure

Primacy: Everything needed & only what's needed is represented in the largest, central place.

Immediacy: The system "thinks" for the user providing options or information at the top. The user doesn't need to go looking for things.

Visual Flow: The user can scan the screen and information and immediately knows what is being communicated and what to do.

Complexity: The screen presents only information & function needed for the intent – nothing more.

Consistency: The UI mechanisms and page layouts are consistent across the system

Learning: The system builds on the way technologies, UI's and products currently work.

Modernity: The design uses interaction patterns considered "modern" or standard

Include all usability and accessibility principles as appropriate

Ground comments in Goals, principles & data

Not your opinion

Use a Structured Critique Process

The Critique: Feedback that works

Prepare

- Hold the critique with 4-10 people
  - They may be other team members or stakeholders
- Assign the team roles for running the critique
- Get a pack of stickies and a sharpie for reviewers
- Be clear on rules of engagement

Print and display

- The goal and type of feedback desired
- The physical design artifact to be evaluated
- Business goals and principles
- Key user data for the product
- Principles of excellence to guide evaluation

Focus reviewers on what they are evaluating

Design Artifacts to be reviewed

Basic rules of engagement

Attitude: Improving the design not evaluating the people

Thank the design sub-team

- For their work on behalf of the larger team before and after the session

Start with positives – if you have negative feedback you must first state a positive feedback

- Don't through the baby out with the bathwater: Positives are important!

Reference the reason for your response

- Us user data, best-practice principles, technical doability, brand support…
- For any feedback, positive or negative
- Don't respond from the "I"

Remember a critique is not the "Mom Response" it's "Rip & Shred"

Rule of engagement: No Discussion!

Discussion stimulates group dynamics and stereotyping that work against diverse team members

Remember the goal: Provide feedback only
- Don't try to redesign or agree in a critique meeting

Get a facilitator; Enforce the no discussion rule
- Critique team provides feedback to the sub-team so they can improve the design.
- Capture design ideas and issues –Don't discuss them
- Mediate all discussion: The facilitator stops discussion of any design ideas, arguments, or any talk that suggests the group is trying to decide on the best direction (Avoid group think)

Manage conversation to remove bias

The Critique Procedure

Roles

- From the design team
  - Presenter from design team describes the level of evaluation and the design
  - Notetaker captures issues on stickies
- Facilitator ensures rules of engagement
- Reviewers raises issues & capturing their own design ideas on stickies

Run the critique

1. Everyone thanks the design sub-team who made the artifact
2. Presenter states the goal of the critique and walks through the design artifact piece by piece
3. Reviewers consider and respond to each section of the design
4. Note taker captures issues as they arise and post them on the artifact
5. Answer clarifying questions –
   - If the team doesn't know record an issue – don't discuss it.
6. Reviewers write their design ideas (DI) on stickies to solve issues raised
   - Post them on the design artifact
7. Facilitator makes sure that the meeting is focused on feedback

Working meetings work when everyone knows the rules and roles

Structure for Freedom

Use A Defined Process
- Depersonalize feedback
- Defuse conflict & group think
- Avoid design from the "I"

Structure for Freedom
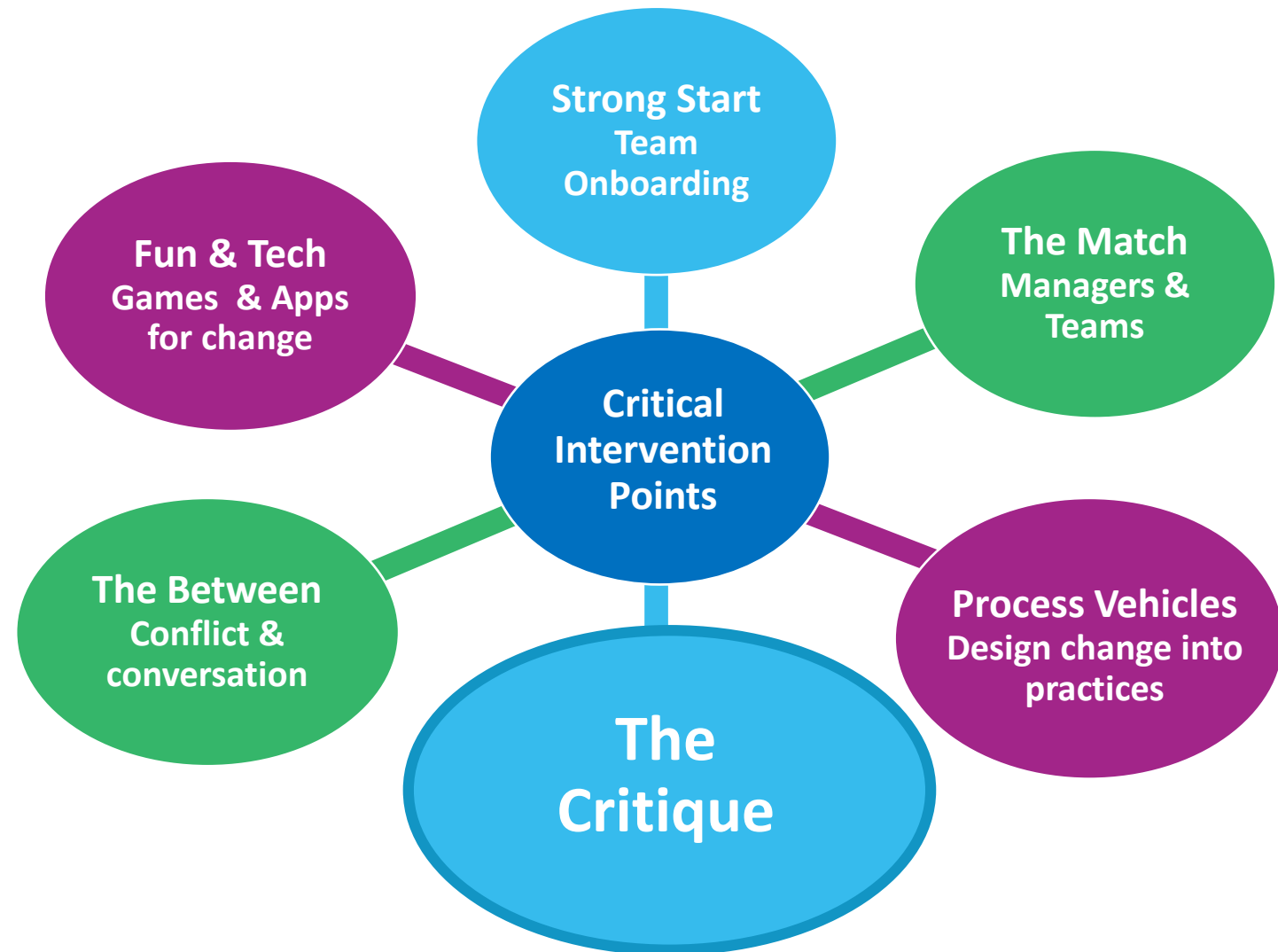
Try it with 1-1 feedback too!

Cultural Change by Design

WITops: Creating Practical Solutions

Key Processes

Managing the Interpersonal

Sneak Attacks

Strong Start
Team
Onboarding

Fun & Tech
Games & Apps
for change

The Match
Managers &
Teams

Critical
Intervention
Points

The Between
Conflict &
conversation

Process Vehicles
Design change into
practices

The
Critique

Deliberately redesign processes to change the culture

Fall Research: Understanding Feedback

Extending our critique work

Field Research across all key job types

- Focusing on informal critique and performance review experiences
- Guided by @Work Experience Framework and The Valuing vs. Jerk Project
- What feedback works to improve the product and grow people's skill

Join us

- Be interviewed – UX, development, product management, managers...
- Trained in Contextual Inquiry? Help interview and interpret
- Local? Help build the affinity and take away insights
- Look for our call for help

All work at WITops is done by worldwide volunteers!

Join Us!

WITops
Tax-exempt non-profit

www.witops.org

See our Livestreams

- **January: The Valuing & Jerk Project**
- **February: Team Onboarding**
- **March : The Critique Process**
- **April 16: Success at Work: Exploring issues through Career Power cases**
- **May 14: The @Work Experience Framework**

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