

The Design Crit



Image from Doidge, C., Sara, R., Parnell, R. and Parsons M. The Crit: An Architecture Student's Handbook. Architectural Press. 2000.

The crit

The Issue

- as a design unfolds, teams need a way to understand and explore the current design direction

The Challenge

- create the openness needed for good ideas to surface
- cultivate feedback & criticism necessary to resolve open issues
- focus on evaluating, changing and/or extending existing ideas

Modified from How to run a design crit, by Scott Berkun

The Crit

Goals

- decide on focus, e.g.,
 - overall concept
 - idea evolution
 - innovative aspects
 - higher level user, customer and business goals
 - usefulness and usability,
 - cost, engineering constraints (later on)
 - red light/green light



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The Crit

Constraints

- limited time
- mixed audience (peers, senior people, lay people, outsiders)
- small audience (informal atmosphere)
- equipment setup

The Crit

What you do

- be prepared (practice!)
- present your work
- visually and verbally explain your work
- demonstrate your work
- illustrate the flow (maybe a step by step walkthrough)
- listen to responses
- learn from responses
- note down responses / ideas (sketchbook)
- don't defend

The Crit

What the audience does

- listen
- question
- probe
- critique
 - positive feedback
 - constructive feedback
 - improvements
 - design variations
 - design suggestions
 - compare (with competing designs)
- challenge the design,
 - provoke new ways of thinking about it
- different perspectives
 - different stakeholders give different feedback)

Game rules

Respectful

- all listen
- all contribute
- all engage
- all discuss

Game rules

General rules of order

- start with clarifying questions
 - assumptions, goals, expected experiences, operation...
- listen before speaking
 - understand, reflect, then voice an opinion...
- explore alternatives
 - questions that surface other possible design choices
 - postpone judgments unless there are obvious gaps
- point out problems
 - given what you know of customers, scenario of use, etc.
 - provide solutions if possible
- avoid absolutes (that sucks!)
 - make points that refer back to the design goal

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Forms of a Crit



Walk-by serendipitous discussions

- your work should always be public - invite critiques
- elevator pitch, any time
- what / how / invite feedback

Round-table discussions

- in-depth discussions with peers / experts

Client / user / domain expert discussions

- in-depth discussions with stake-holders

Formal presentations

- multiple presentations with feedback in a limited time span

Sources

- How to run a design crit. Scott Berkun.
www.scottberkun.com/essays/23-how-to-run-a-design-critique/
- Doidge, C., Sara, R., Parnell, R. and Parsons M.
The Crit: An Architecture Student's Handbook.
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