

8:3- SmashingConf NYC 2025



Day 1, October 7th, 2025

<https://smashed.by/uptown>

Hello friends! :) Howdy!

Let's take notes together.

Please be cool and friendly.

Notes from Day 2: <https://smashed.by/downtown>

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Let's Get To Know Y'All!

- Where are you from? North Carolina, Netherlands, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Florida, Cincinnati, OH, Grafton, VT, SoCal, Missouri, Brazil, Nebraska, Chicago, Kansas
- What did you have for breakfast? Tea and granola, Fruits and Yoghurt, Rice cakes and peanut butter, redbull, coffee, smoothie, French toast, pancake, protein bar
- Who did you want to be when growing up? Wonder Woman! Myself, Eddie van Halen, Spider-Man(became a web developer), F-16 pilot, magical, horse trainer, marine biologist (I wanted to save the turtles), meteorologist, Walter Payton,
- What's your current desk plant situation? Orchids, Does a rubber duck count? Yes! I also have a rubber duck. 😊, fig tree, plastic 🙄(my house is where plants go to die), as many plants as I can fit!, spider plants
- What is your favorite ...?
 - Soft drink: ginger beer, iron beer, beer, orange juice, coke, cortado, Mt Dew, ginger ale
 - Movie: Coraline, Toy Story, While You Were Sleeping, hot fuzz, One Battle After Another
 - Fruit: blueberries x2, raspberries, mangoes, honeycrisp apples
 - Song: Square Hammer/Ghost, We've Only Just Begun, Prehistoric Dog-Red Fang, Control Machete,
 - Memory: Day my babies were born,
 - Cat: Nymphadora

- Do you like cats? Or dogs? Parrots?

All of the above! Dogs, 🐱

Dogs all day long,

Dogs, cats & ferrets!

Tortoise for life (and beyond)

Schedule

 **7:00 AM — Morning Run**

<https://smashingconf.com/ny-2025/schedule#day3>

 **8:45-9:15 AM — Morning Yoga at Broadway**

<https://smashingconf.com/ny-2025/schedule#day3>

8:30 AM — Doors Open

Our doors open at 8:30 AM. Pick up your badge, grab a coffee and get ready for the day!

9:30 AM — Welcome 

9:50 — Christine Vallaure on The Invisible Divide

Understanding Layout Between UI Design and Code

Designers and developers often approach layout with different mental models, especially around grids, spacing, and responsiveness. That disconnect leads to friction and broken expectations.

In this talk, we look at layout from both sides: CSS Grid, Flexbox, and Container Queries from the code side, and Figma and Penpot from the design side. This is not about handoff perfection, but about building shared understanding and better outcomes through clearer collaboration.

Notes & key takeaways:

Instead of handing off we do an “understand of”

Good design is hierarchy and patterns

Sharing with designers how flex/grid work helps them use it or account for it in their designs

- What kind of training does Figma or similar tools offer?
- How does Figma’s auto-layout connect with engineering?

Grid is more 2-dimensional control; flex is 1-dimensional

Keep in mind designers will hear grid and envision the 12-grid template

Figma launched a new grid in May 2025 - #todo explore this and play with it

Breakpoints!!

Jen Simmons’ Layout Land website

- She talks about how beautiful and intentional print design was and how can we bring that back to the web

How do we bring back magazine layout to the web? Is it about color and interesting shapes for text layouts? Everything is so templated and automated, how do we make space for unique content experiences?

moonlearning.io

moonlearning.io/layout

Figma Sites? Publish your own website. Includes a way to incorporate breakpoints. Clamp isn't available inside designs? How do we communicate its value and some use-cases?

Container queries – the container determines layout based on how much space it has

Links & slides:

- [Slides](#)
- [Link to slides, reading list, and references](#)
- <https://penpot.app/>
- <https://labs.jensimmons.com/>
- <https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/clamp>
- <https://www.moonblocks.io/>
- <https://cursor.com/>
- https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/CSS_containment/Container_queries
-

Questions:

- **With advancement in AI tools such as cursor, will tools like Figma will be obsolete in near future?**

And developers more empowered to design

- **[Vitaly]** At which point do you think would be **most effective for designers to switch** from Figma to Cursor for prototyping? When would it make sense for developers to switch to Figma?
- **[Vitaly]** If we look beyond layout, what would be **better ways to communicate accessibility** and animation decisions?
- [How does Cursor compare to VS Code with Github CoPilot? (sounds similar)]
-  What's the best way to build tables in Figma? I tried the new grid mode but it's not very flexible.
-  [Akhil] If our developers are using different framework like MUI, how can we create a common language for token naming since they may have different standards
-  [Chris] You had some good advice for designers to understand the development better, but any advice for developers to understand more about Figma and the design process?
- How is Cursor compared to Figma make when using it to show devs what you're thinking?
-
- [Keith] as a developer, what's the best way I can share this info you shared today with our designers who couldn't make it today?
How are you deciding when to use Figma or Penpot as you design?

10:40 — Nick Desbarats on Why Aren't People Using My Dashboard?

You built a shiny new dashboard to help colleagues make data-driven decisions. You listened to their needs, studied dashboards designed by experts, and launched your baby into the world to... crickets.

Everyone logged in immediately after launch but usage then fell off a cliff. When you ask why, you get vague answers like "I'm too busy" (code for "It's not giving me enough value") or "It's missing what I need" (despite the fact you built exactly what they asked for).

What's going on? Most dashboards fail to answer basic questions like, "Are these numbers good or bad?" No or "Do any of these numbers require action?" Often, important problems don't appear on the dashboard at all.

Designing dashboards that meet these fundamental needs isn't easy, but it is doable. How? Find out in this engaging talk by dashboard design expert and best-selling author Nick Desbarats.

Notes & key takeaways:

- Taxonomy of 9 Dashboard Types

	Live Data	Static Data
Tactical Monitoring Dashboards	1. Entity/Table	
	2. Area/Department	
	3. Role	

	4. Overview	7. Persuasion
	5. Strategic Performance	8. Explanation
	6. Canned Analysis	9. Engagement

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-

Links & slides:

- <https://www.practicalreporting.com/practical-dashboards-detailed-course-description>
-

Questions:

- ☐ ☒ **[Kristin]** Power BI – how to integrate action dots there?
- ☐ ☒ **[Viktor Koves]** With AI or even basic algorithms, we can add automated storytelling elements to dashboards (think a budgeting app warning if you're over budget), and with AI you can do even more. What do you think of options like that?
- ☐ ☒ **[Vitaly] Common mistakes you often see?** What do you think are some of the most common low-hanging fruits for improving dashboards? Is it sparklines, plain-language summaries, or something else? And what are some of the frequent mistakes you see?
- ☐ ☒ **[Vitaly] One dashboard vs. many dashboards:** Often, a dashboard serves both executives who need a high-level overview and analysts who need to deep-dive. This can lead to a cluttered UI that serves neither well. When would you create one dashboard vs. many dashboards, without compromising the experience for each?

- Colorblindness issues with dashboards? How to address it? (+1)
- **Dashboard on desktop vs. mobile:** What would you recommend to designers who need to make a dashboard work on both mobile and desktop? What are important considerations to keep in mind, along with do's and don'ts?
- **[Igor]** What is the interaction between dashboards and reports? Do you think they belong together, or are they separate concepts?
- **Scott** – How do you get in the room to truly understand the business needs to help created the roll up key elements the org needs for next level growth/success – lots of time the info is “passed through the mail slot”
- **Sarah** – How do you determine where the dot is on the scale from red to green? Would the exact value be calculated differently for different variables?
- why not use checks and Xs or similar instead of dots for accessibility? Also, highlighting, adding borders or underlines, etc. +2
- How do you determine where the action dot breakpoints belong on the scale? Is this data driven only (via benchmarks) or is it more subjective (team input)?
- **Frank** – why show all the charts, why not just dots (or an empty screen) at first view?
- **Dave** – Do you know the next number in this sequence? (**joke**) 0118 999 88199 9119 725 999
- **Lizette H:** What do you think of user customization? Allowing the user to arrange the dashboard according to their personal interests, creating a visual hierarchy to meet their needs. Chaos or genius?

- ☐ When the user looks at a red or green dot, is there the ability to drill down into the metric? What type of information should the user be able to drill down into?
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 **11:30 AM — Coffee Break**

12:00 — Calvin Robertson on Overflowing Leadership

Becoming the Leader They've Been Waiting For

What would your leadership look like if influence and integrity were not just aspirations but daily practices?

This talk invites you to rethink leadership. Let's move beyond titles and embrace leadership as a transformative force that begins with you and extends to those in your care.

Drawing on this expertise, Calvin explores what it means to overflow with leadership — a mindset where influence, insight, and integrity are not merely reserved for those with prestigious titles but instead define leaders who inspire action and uplift others through intentional practice.

Through this session, you'll discover how to unlock your leadership potential while empowering those around you to rise to theirs.

Notes & key takeaways:

- Recommended book: “The Other Side of Innovation”

Links & slides:

- Link to Google Drive for Overflowing Leadership: Becoming The Leader They've Been Waiting For (Format: Apple Keynote and PDF)
 - 📺 Overflowing Leadership @ Smashing Conference 2025

Questions:

- ☐ ☒ What if you have the knowledge but not the **confidence** to enter into a leadership role?
- ☐ Do you think that we need to be invited into leadership or acquire or fight for leadership?
- ☐ ☒ Many of us might be in a position where we would love to **rise to leadership**, but we are permanently being **blocked** by powerplays and internal politics?
- ☐ ☒ [Vitaly] What are the most **critical skills** you think designers and developers here need to grow into a leadership position?
- ☐ ☒ [Vitaly] Eventually senior designers and developers **reach a ceiling of their career**: there might be no staff or principal position. What would you recommend to people who mostly want to design or build but feel stuck at their workplace?
- ☐ What's the best advice you've been given as a manager/leader?
- ☒ ~~Lizette H: Have you found any effective ways to build trust within your team, especially with new hires? I'm thinking about natural methods that fit smoothly into your 1:1 check-ins or team meetings—nothing that feels forced, but genuinely helps strengthen your connection.~~

- ☒ ~~As a leader, how do you handle power imbalances within an existing leadership team, especially when some members overstep or underperform in their leadership roles?~~
- ☐ What advice might you give a leader who feels they aren't performing at their best? What can they do within their team and their organization to build trust and establish their authority after they've been in a role for some time?
- ☐ **James R:** What advice would you give to someone who has been an independent design/dev consultant for 25 years to assume leadership roles with clients and their teams on a short term basis? (As opposed to being seen as just another "freelancer")
- ☐ **Stephanie W:** Did you find it hard to let go of designing while moving into leadership? How did you handle that change from doing design work to moving to strategy and planning for the team?
- ☐ How do you effectively manage and improve team morale when your team feels resentful and frustrated with the company?

12:50 — Tim Kadlec on One Step Ahead

Slides: <https://noti.st/tkadlec/gIzxEG/one-step-ahead>

As the web grows more powerful, so do user expectations. What feels fast today will be slow tomorrow, and meeting current performance standards will soon be the bare minimum. The real winners will be the apps that push beyond "fast enough" and strive for near-instantaneous performance.

Fortunately, a wave of new web standards is emerging, allowing us to inch closer and closer to making instantaneous performance a reality. In this talk, Tim will explore some of the exciting new tools available right now, and how you can start using them to stay one step ahead of your users and provide performance that feels instantaneous.

Notes & key takeaways:

- Jevons Paradox – The more we have of a resource, the more we consume.
- Hedonistic Treadmill – As resources become more powerful, our expectations increase, diminishing our satisfaction.

Links & slides:

- <https://chrome.dev/inp-demo/>

- [https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/CSS view transitions](https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/CSS_view_transitions)
- [https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/API/Speculation Rules API](https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/API/Speculation_Rules_API)
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Questions:

- ☐ **James R:** Not a question, but thanks for writing Implementing Responsive Design! Was one of my favs.
- ☐ Oleg: Which tools (except chrome dev tools) are YOU personally using day-to-day to test the apps you are working on?
- ☐ What do you think of iframes/ webviews?
- ☒ ~~Viktor: Prefetching can improve performance, but can eat up data in constrained environments (e.g. on a mobile hotspot). Do browsers account for data saver settings, or should you give users settings around this? +1~~
- ☒ ~~Vitaly: Third party scripts?~~
- ☐ Tyler P: Do you have any examples of websites using progressive enhancement or other methods to help prevent them from landing in the awkward middle you referenced of being not quite fast enough for those with low powered / slowly connected devices and not quite delivering the expectation of high powered / fastly connected devices?
- ☒ ~~Adam Weber: Is there any hope for the Chicago Bulls in 2026? +1~~
- ☐ Scott - Do we need to think about browser prefetching with users who have 100,000,000 tabs open? Thanks for answering this already!

- ☑ ~~[Chris]: These are some amazing APIs and features, but what advice do you have for incompatible browsers if there is no polyfill?~~
 - ☑ ~~Bruce B: How does prefetch/precache compare to, or work with, service workers? Will the prefetch pull from the application cache?~~
 - ☑ ~~Dave J: If the browsers don't support this fully yet, what does the fallback position look like?~~
 - ☑ ~~Can we get a gru / minions collab at the after-party tonight?~~
-

 **1:40 PM — Lunch Break**

3:00 — Andy Welfle on Writing is Designing

Imagine trying to use a website with no labels, buttons, or messages: just shapes and vibes. In this talk, we'll look at how language quietly carries the UX, from tiny tooltips to big brand moments.

You'll learn how interface copy shapes interaction, why tone matters more than you think, and how a few well-chosen words can rescue even the clunkiest flow. We'll also touch on how AI tools can help scale your content work, and what to watch out for if you care about quality and accuracy.

Notes & key takeaways:

- Writing for UX: usable, useful, and responsible
 - Triple em dash: ——— (U+2E3B)
 - If anyone took away anything from my talk, let it be this!
- 😏-Andy

Links & slides:

- [PDF of slide deck](#)
- [Shopify Polaris Design System - Content](#)
- [Adobe Spectrum - In-Product Word List.](#)
- [Adobe Spectrum - Error Writing](#)
- [Pinterest Terms of Service \(a demo of useful text summaries\)](#)

- Books mentioned:
 - [Writing is Designing](#), by Andy Welble
 - [Just Enough Research](#), by Erika Hall
 - [Mismatch](#), by Kat Holmes

Questions:

- Do you think navigation labels always need to match destination titles..?
 - Andy: I don't want to say *always*, because there's always an exception to the rule, but generally I think it's really useful. At least it should match conceptually (like, if your blog is titled "Write On" but you're linking to it from your website homepage, it's fine if the nav label is "Blog")
- ☐ [Vitaly] What **books and resources** would you recommend to people who are infinitely curious on writing better words?
 - ☐ Andy: I love Scott Kubie's book [Writing for Designers](#), Torrey Podmajersky's book [Strategic Writing for UX](#), Sarah Winters' book [Content design](#), and check out the UX Content Collective's [blog](#) and [newsletter](#), which are excellent resources. There are lots of other great ones, but these are a few that really stick out!
- ☐ **Voice design**: what should I keep in mind when designing an audio assistant, especially in times of AI chatbots?
 - ☐ Andy: I think having a strong point of view of the voice principles you want it to achieve is important, as is a really clear idea of the main use cases for it — what are the common queries you think

you'll get? Erika Hall wrote a great book about conversational design that's now free to read: [here's the link](#).

☐ What are your **favorite apps or websites** that do a great job aligning design with copywriting?

☐ Andy: It's an obvious choice, but Apple does an incredible job. I think the Lyft rideshare app also carries their voice and visual branding through really well, too, as does Slack.

☒ ~~Arielle: How do you see the role of UX writers evolving as AI is leveraged more and more in UX writing?~~

☒ ~~In my company, teams still design with "lorem ipsum" and treat writing as a final step. What's the most effective way to integrate a content designer or more attention to content into the workflow from?~~

☐ Taste

☒ ~~James: Do you have suggestions on how to improve writing abilities for someone who took only the one required English course in college? If you needed to write short paragraphs to use on a website, would you trust AI tools to do it?~~

☒ ~~Do you think Content Designers and UX Designers will eventually morph into one role?~~

3:50 — Miriam Suzanne on When Variables Cascade

There are a number of surprises developers run into when working with custom properties (aka CSS variables) – all coming from the way CSS handles typed values and syntax validation. New features like style queries, `if()`, and custom functions/mixins will make these surprises even more common. So let's talk about CSS types, syntax validation, and value resolution!

Notes & key takeaways:

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Links & slides:

- <https://slides.oddbird.net/variables/smashing25/>
- <https://codepen.io/miriamsuzanne>
- <https://oddbird.dev/authors/miriam/>
-

Questions:

- ☒ ~~Do we need SASS anymore?~~
- ☒ ~~What are some of the common problems and mistakes you see developers doing over and over again in production?~~
- ☒ ~~Many products and systems out there have been written years ago, and now need to be rewritten from legacy code into a new modern CSS architecture. How would you go around it?~~

- ☒ ~~Why do we still need to normalize CSS styles across browsers? What would be a perfect cascade style setup you'd start with?~~
 - ☐ [Vitaly] **Tailwind. What are some good/best practices?** Some people want to achieve some sort of scoping to avoid repetitive classes in HTML, others are allergic to using @apply or CVA (Class Variance Authority (CVA). What's your take on it?
 - ☐ [Chris] Awesome presentation! Any good **references for learning** more of the deeper workings of CSS, beyond MDN and CssWG?
 - ☒ ~~**Viktor:** How can you incorporate accessibility into CSS architecture, like making sure a high contrast mode or dark mode works cleanly? Can you use inheritance to help with that?~~
 - ☐
-

4:40 PM — Closing remarks

Awww, already the end of Day 1! But don't be too sad, we've got more great talks coming tomorrow. For now, let's wrap things up together, and then... see you at the Smashing Party!

8:00 PM — After Party!

<https://smashingconf.com/ny-2025/schedule#day3>

This party is only for Smashing attendees, please don't forget to bring your badge.

Notes from Day 2: <https://smashed.by/downtown>