Working with Me: Sarah's User Guide

What's my role

Lead/senior product designer. Check out my [LinkedIn](#) / [resume](#) / [website](#).

My Typical Day

- I'm based out of St. Louis, so I'm running on CT and am fully WFH.
- My "in-office" hours are roughly 9 - 5 CT.
- I like to load up my meetings in the afternoon so that I can get heads down work done early.
- I typically have ~8:30ish - 11:30ish AM CT blocked as heads down time.
    - You may see this as my notifications being blocked during that period, but I'll respond if I catch them in a break.

The Best/Worst of Me

You get the **best** of me when…	I'm solving complex problems and I understand the why behind them (as it relates to the business, the user, and the team). I'm a top-down processor so always start with the why ([what does this mean?](#)). - Give me as much data as possible to absorb. I think best in user stories and real examples, but I also love metrics. - Send me any read-aheads, relevant docs, etc. to help set context. - Focus on user stories and the value we're delivering to the user, not the feature or the business ask (though this is also helpful context!). We're clear on deadlines, expectations, and goals. Deadlines help prioritize what we can accomplish and user goals help prioritize what needs to be built. Meetings are outcome / goal oriented. - Lay out the goals and context at the start so that we can make sure we went over what we needed to cover before we walk out. - Don't be afraid to call meetings short. I have uninterrupted working time. I prefer to sandwich meetings against each other so that I can string together heads down time in the morning.
You get the **worst** of me when…	I have **a lot** of medium - big projects on my plate – Design requires heads down time so it's hard to make progress if I'm constantly context-switching. Information is being obscured. Unclear reqs mean shifting reqs and shifting

is...	priorities. - When this happens (when, not if, bc we move fast), the next question in my mind is how will we avoid this in the future? - Err on the side of giving more context when decisions get overturned or when I'm joining a project late. **On Meetings** Meetings go wildly over the allotted time frame (5 minutes is fine; 20 minutes, let's call it). I'd much rather have a follow-up meeting and respect everyone's time. I'm part of a meeting that I can't contribute to or am not learning from. Feedback / comments are not productive. There is a time and place for complaining, but I find it difficult to tolerate disrespect, esp. when it is cutting into shared meeting time.
You can count on me to...	Grok things quickly. I pick up on new concepts easily (you may see me nodding along vigorously as I learn something) and will ask questions to clarify if I'm stuck on something. Be a sounding board and talk through ideas with you over Slack / in a meeting. Think about how this fits into the larger product strategy and the user journey. - Discuss tradeoffs. I'm very open to hearing about other approaches and how we can adjust designs as scope shifts. Healthy conflict leads to healthy teams and healthy products. I very much believe in the product / design / engineering product development stool. - Help derisk decisions with user feedback, whether it be through data metrics, past user interviews, competitive analysis, or new user research. Give my best stab and think through approaches from different angles. - I'd rather run down a hypothesis/idea and see what the feedback is than stay stagnant and indecisive. Chit-chat. I love to indulge in conversations about the weather and am always a fan of hearing about pets / children / the latest show you watched / book you read.
What I need from my team mates is...	Shared accountability: stick to the process and keep us honest on our decisions. Call me out if I'm getting sidetracked/going out of scope.

I think in visuals and wireframes, but that's not always the easiest for people to grasp. Let me know if you need more clarification and I'm happy to explain.

- Tell me what you want in the documentation (flowcharts, etc.) and I will work it in moving forward.

Explain what level we need to operate. Do you need gritty details or do you want to talk about high-level findings?

Slow me down if I'm talking too fast. Sometimes I assume that if we're in the same meeting, we're read into the same issues.

I have a habit of thinking best case scenario, so I'm not great at thinking through edge cases and might miss error scenarios.

Knowing who is the right person in the organization to talk to.

No Hard Feelings

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

It takes me a while to process thoughts during meetings. I'd rather sit, gather research, mull things over, so feel free to schedule a 15 minute kickoff and a longer follow-up meeting later.

I will spend the first couple minutes of our meeting catching up. Given our WFH-first culture, I miss that small talk before meetings started.

My mind tends to jump around a lot which can dip its toe into scatterbrained. Call me on this if you can't follow my train of thought or if I'm getting too sidetracked during a meeting.

- Because of this, I tend to take lots of notes so don't mind if I'm typing or staring off into the distance during a meeting – I'm trying to connect some disparate thoughts in my head.
- Fiddling keeps my mind focused. Excuse the pen twirling, walking, and general twitchiness.

I'm constantly toying with different avenues for presenting designs and reqs to allow for more async communication. As such, my approach to annotating and displaying designs is ever-evolving and varies from file to file.

I'm not one to take charge in a room. I've been told that I hold my ideas close to my chest – I tend to share better in a smaller setting than a larger group context.

As someone who tends to wear their heart on their sleeve, the idea of putting on

	a brave face and pretending like nothing is the matter is foreign to me. Please speak up if there's anything frustrating you that I can change. Things I'm working on: - I have a habit of not sharing things when they aren't fully baked yet (perfectionist tendencies). As such, I'll likely schedule 15 minute check-ins / send video walkthroughs to get gut checks on work before everything is fully baked. - I forget to schedule follow-up meetings or send follow-up links unless I tackle it in the next 10 minutes (meaning when I'm jumping from meeting to meeting, it will stay on my to-do list for longer than it should). - I tend to have these small tasks on my to-do list but get distracted whenever I open up Gmail bc email. - Giving background when presenting. I tend to jump into the topic and forget to take a step back and check that everyone has the same level of understanding. - Clearer communication. I think faster than I talk and stumble over words a lot. A common phrase out of my mouth is "sorry, words…" so that I can take a step back and rephrase.
It bothers me when…	Tradeoffs are discussed on a timing (output) rather than an outcome level. Everything we deliver should be of value to a user and meet table stakes before it is considered MVP. - Table stakes refers to the minimum offering on any product before it is considered complete by a customer. Think of these as the cost of entry, points of parity, building trust with our users, etc. - We should aim to meet or exceed table stakes on most things, but excel in what people care most about. I find that I'm repeating myself over and over again. People are competitive. I feel a strong responsibility that we should all work towards the same goal for the betterment of our company. People don't assume good intent and put down past decisions (design, dev, product or otherwise). I'd rather learn and take lessons from what we've done to keep moving forward than be stuck complaining about past decisions.

I am more of an introvert /extrovert and I recharge by...	Introvert. I recharge with reading/learning whether it be blogs, books or articles. Book clubs are my ideal form of socializing.
I particularly value these qualities in the people I work with...	Directness / clarity. People who are able to summarize their thoughts and condense what we're talking about to something simple and easy to understand (even if it takes some talking out loud to get there). Balance of strategic and tactical thinking. Able to focus on both the high-level strategy and understand how it translates to what the solution should look like. User-focused. Constantly asking, how does this impact the user? Does it make their experience better? Work-life balance. Overworking means you're overtaxing your brain and can't bring your best to the table! (Highly recommend this book.) People who share the load. It pains me to hear when people are spending long hours or working on the weekends when others can step in to help. Authenticity.
A few things people might misunderstand about me are...	I have the tendency to forget to book meetings. Please know that this isn't an intentional slight – rather I get easily distracted once I open up Gmail and forget what I intended to do. I may recommend books or articles that I feel are relevant. This isn't a blanket opinion about how we should approach things, but to give more insight into possible options. Often when presented with work, I'll start running through what else will be impacted by this solution. I'm not trying to blow up scope – rather, it's crucial from the design mindset to think through what other parts of the customer journey are affected. This is where talking through work as user stories instead of features becomes very helpful.

Communication

Urgency	Most→ least urgent: Call → Text → Slack → Email
On slack	If I need to ask you something, I tend to get straight to the point which may feel abrupt. - If you need to ask me something, feel free to dispense with the Hi, How are you, Was wondering if I could ask you a question, etc. I tend to respond to slacks within 4 hours. If it's urgent and I still haven't responded, feel free to @ me and ping me again.
On email	If something is getting to be paragraphs long in Slack, see if I can jump in a Slack call. If you are requesting long-form feedback, send it in email with a Slack as a heads up. Opening email is a time-sink for me since there's a lot to sort through, so I tend to check email 1-2x per day, and will typically not respond the same day.
On feedback	I prefer to give and receive feedback one-on-one. Giving direct examples of what you're talking about in the feedback will help me understand how I can approach things moving forward. I tend towards being casual and informal, so no need to structure your feedback in a formal manner.

Strengths Assessments / Personality Tests

CliftonStrengths ([Link](#))

1. **Intellection:** People who are especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

2. **Input:** People who are especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

3. **Responsibility:** People who are especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

4. **Relator:** People who are especially talented in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

5. **Restorative:** People who are especially talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

High5 Test ([Link](#))

1. **Empathizer:** Empathizers are great at understanding how people feel and use this sensibility to do good for others. They become frustrated when asked to disregard feelings and focus solely on logic instead.

2. **Philomath:** Philomaths love learning. They explore many interests, follow new paths and acquire as much knowledge as possible. They don't enjoy the company of so-called 'know-it-alls', people with little curiosity and no desire to explore new ideas.

3. **Coach:** Coaches love discovering the potential in people and supporting others' personal growth. It's hard for them to accept when this potential is being wasted.

4. **Thinker:** Thinkers enjoy mental activity, intellectual discussions and time alone in reflection. They find it difficult to work in teams that tend to act before thinking.

5. **Strategist:** Strategists look at the big picture, which enables them to easily find the best way out of the clutter. Because connecting the dots comes naturally to them, they may get impatient with people who make slower decisions.

Enneagram: Type 6

https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-6/

Predictive Index ([Link](#))

Self Awareness

Your motivating drives tell us that you tend to be:

Moderately	**Very**	**Moderately**	**Moderately**
Cooperative	Outgoing	Agreeable and Intense	Informal
Accepting of company policies	People oriented	Patient and Restless	Tolerant of uncertainty
Accommodating	Persuasive	Stable and Driving	Flexible
May need some	**May need lots of**	**May need some**	**May need some**
Encouragement	Opportunities to interact	Balance of: Long-term affiliation and Variety	Freedom from rigid structure
Reassurance	Social acceptance	Ability to work at a steady pace and Opportunities to work at a faster than average pace	Freedom of expression
Harmony	Opportunities to influence	Familiar surroundings and Mobility	Opportunities to delegate details

At Work

Your colleagues may perceive you as someone who is naturally:

People-oriented

Socially-focused, naturally empathizes with people, easily seeing their point of view or understanding their emotions. Positive, non-threatening communication.

Teaches and shares; often working collaboratively with others to help in any capacity.

Informal

Socially informal, extroverted, and outgoing; gets familiar quickly. Communicates in an uninhibited, lively, and adaptable manner, drawing others into the conversation.

Interested in people, building relationships, and teamwork rather than technical matters. Affable, optimistic, and easily trusting.

StandoutReport ([Link](#))

Role 1: Provider - You sense other people's feelings, and you feel compelled to recognize these feelings, give them a voice and act on them.

Role 2: Teacher - You are thrilled by the potential you see in each person. Your power comes from learning how to unleash it.
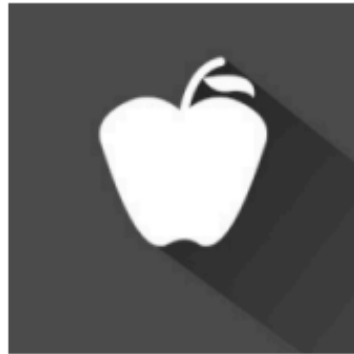
Sarah Sher

Greatest Value to the team:

You challenge us with the question "What did you learn?" You help us make the most of our experiences.

You're an investor. Your currency is people. You believe in the amazing potential of those you meet. You never stop considering what more you can do to support their growth and development. You care so much about your impact on those you serve that you constantly find ways to hone your craft, increase your knowledge, advance your qualifications. You take your professional development very seriously because you know that you have tremendous influence on other people. Sensitive and thoughtful, you always consider how people will be impacted by your message. You often follow up with people to ensure that "everything is OK." You protect your investment.