01

The company

Who we are

We're a small group of people that loves gaming and loves building great products.

We're a distributed company. That means that everyone has the freedom to work from wherever they want, whenever they feel the most productive. It turns out that this not only makes people happier, it actually makes us move faster, too.

People

A company is equivalent to its people. To that end, as a company, we have one overarching goal: *to build a company that great people love working at*. Everything else comes second.

If you're reading this, you're probably a *great person* already🥰. We hope you love working here.

Things we do

We value these things because they help us build great products, because they help us attract great people, or because they're just the right things to do.

01

We love our users

Our products and our communications reflect a high level of empathy and care for our users.

We see our users as peers, and we treat them accordingly. We reject practices that show a low level of care for our users, like selling user information.
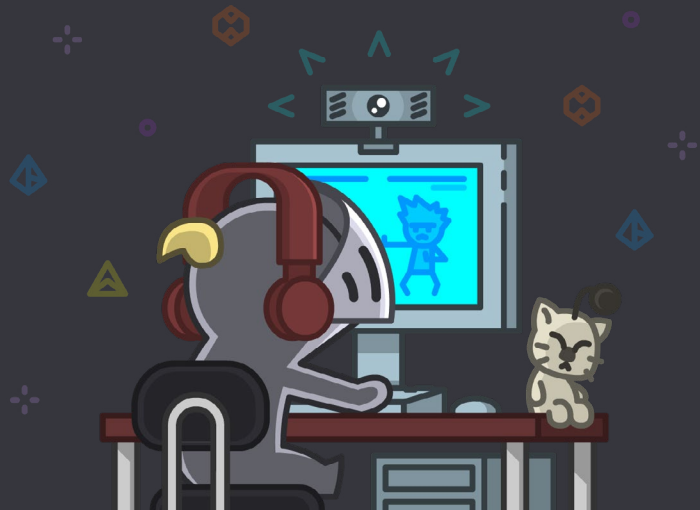
02

We love our products

Our products exude dedication and craftsmanship. Building functional products isn't enough; we ship polished experiences that are fun and make our users happy.

We use our own products every day.

We make money to build better products, not vice versa.

03

We hire exceptional people

We believe that small teams of exceptional people out-execute much larger teams. We expect a very high level of execution from every member of the team, and we compensate accordingly.

Many companies take pride in hiring a lot of people. We take pride in moving faster with fewer.

04

We trust and support each other

THE BEST FRIENDS GANG

Exceptional people do their best work when they have freedom: to work on their own schedule, to make their own decisions, and to make mistakes. This level of freedom requires a high degree of trust and support.

We're always eager to help each other however we can. We encourage everyone to ask for help frequently and without hesitation.

We believe that effective communication is delivered in a way that demonstrates care and understanding.

We reject low-trust behaviors like micromanaging and tracking work hours.

05

We move fast

The default response to every situation is to take action. All work is executed with a sense of urgency and focus.

Every piece of work has exactly one owner, who has the agency and the capability to deliver that work autonomously.

We reject process creep and management hierarchy that hinders our ability to move quickly.

06

We do fun stuff

(besides building products)

We play games together, hang out and chat about random stuff, and meet up somewhere new a few times a year.

If we build a company that we don't enjoy working at, we'll have failed — no matter how much money we make.

How we work

Distributed work

Note: this is a high-level overview. For more in-depth information and tips for working remotely, see our remote work handbook.

We're building a new kind of distributed company, designed to amplify the strengths of remote work.

This kind of distributed company is based on three foundational beliefs.

01 Most people are happier when given the freedom to work from where they want, on their own schedule.

02 Exceptional people are most effective when they are empowered to work autonomously.

03 Our products get better the more we use them ourselves (dogfooding).

These beliefs lead us to do some things differently than many other companies:

- We track impact, not hours. We trust everyone to work in whatever way makes them the happiest and the most effective, and have no restrictions on work hours or location.

- We eschew process in favor of individual autonomy, allowing us to build a truly asynchronous distributed team.

- We use our products for all of our work communication.

These are all practices that can only be fully actualized by a distributed company. The end result is that people are happier and more effective, and our whole team moves faster as a result.

How we work
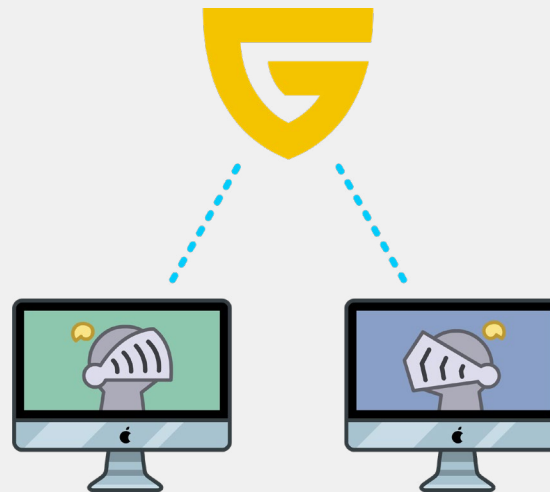
Distributed engineering

Note: this is a high-level overview. For more in-depth information on our engineering values and processes, see our engineering handbook.

In order to enable truly asynchronous work, we entrust all engineers to build and ship features autonomously. We do a few things to make this possible:

- We hire full-stack engineers with the ability to develop features end-to-end and deliver them independently.

- We give engineers ownership of "vertical" features, as opposed to horizontal responsibilities (e.g. "frontend"), which empowers each engineer to ship code without becoming blocked by organizational dependencies.

- We've built advanced real-time analytics, tools to dynamically enable/disable ("gate") features, and experimentation infrastructure, allowing engineers to safely test and rollout features without being tied to deployment cadences.

- We give engineers agency to ship features autonomously and responsibility over end-to-end testing, quality, and rollout.

As an engineering team, these things allow us to move faster and ship better product.

02

Guilded

The product

The Origin Story

Years ago, I was looking for a simple place for our Rift guild to share some information concerning upcoming raids, rules, and strategy. I also wanted a place to send people that were interested in joining the guild, so that they could fill out some information and submit an application to join.

We ended up having to create an entire website with a calendar, a phpbb forum, and a bunch of other stuff to do this. Our other options were to try to manage links to Google Docs, Google Sheets, Google Calendar, and Google Forms, or to use a clunky website builder. All of these options took a lot of work, and none of them worked very well.

Years later, I hacked together a simple product to solve this, and called it Guilded — a play on the traditional gaming "guild" and "gilded", which means "to cover with gold." The first version was simple: create a team and get everything your team needs — calendar, forums, documents, and applications — in 30 seconds.

I launched it on the World of Warcraft subreddit in 2017, to which we got an extremely warm reception — and our very first users. That summer, we applied and were accepted into Y Combinator. We ended up raising a great seed round, allowing us to build an amazing team that has been heads-down making Guilded better for our teams ever since.

Connecting gaming communities

Why?

We connect gaming communities because gaming is about community, competition, and collaboration.

Gaming is the largest and fastest-growing entertainment industry worldwide. The gaming landscape has grown increasingly social, with experiences like Roblox, Fortnite, and Minecraft serving hundreds of millions of users, many of whom gather outside these virtual spaces to collaborate and communicate.

Who?

Over 800 million people play online games. Our mission is to connect players and fans, communities and teams, of all skill levels and interests for all games, on all platforms.

How?

There are two fundamental entities on Guilded: people and communities.

- Communities connect by **talking with each other**

- Communities connect to people by **recruiting and serving them**

- Communities connect to other communities by **collaborating and competing with each other**

We connect communities by helping them **communicate, recruit, collaborate, and compete.**

03

How we build product
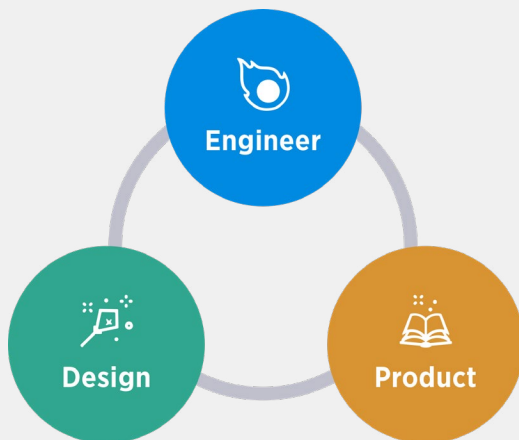
Low process
High autonomy

Our product development process is intended to maximize autonomy of every member of the team. This enables truly asynchronous work, which allows us to move faster and gives everyone the freedom to work on whatever schedule works best for them.

Autonomous work is only possible when team members have the information they need and are unencumbered by excessive process. Team members should frequently ask for advice, and rarely ask for permission.

Because engineering is an integral part of every stage of the development and launch process, any process that maximizes autonomy must first give engineers maximum autonomy. To that end, we operate in "teams of one" that make this possible.

Teams of one

A "team" at Guilded consists of: one engineer, one designer (if necessary), and one product manager.

A team contains everything needed to take a feature from design to launch.

Engineering

Engineering "owns" the feature, and is ultimately responsible for taking it from design to launch. Engineering *pulls* from design and product to ensure that they are unblocked and have everything needed to launch a feature autonomously.

Engineering *pulls* from design for...

- Designs
- A design review prior to launch
- Questions & clarification on UX behavior

Engineering *pulls* from product for...

- Advice on triaging bugs, when necessary
- Advice & guidance for any critical issues that arise
- Rollout strategy
- Questions & clarification on feature behavior

Engineering is responsible for prioritizing and organizing their work in a way that gives design and product enough time to minimize the chance of them getting blocked during development.

Design

Design is responsible for providing designs and guidance to engineering, and for working with product to iron out implementation details. Design is also encouraged to iteratively test during development and provide proactive feedback to engineering when possible.

Design *pulls* from product for...

- Brainstorming and iterating on design explorations

- Clarification on intended UX

- Sign-off on designs before sending to engineering

Product

Product's principal role is to keep engineering and design unblocked. This is done by answering questions to resolve any ambiguity that prevents engineering and design from focusing on execution. Product scopes the feature, makes decisions about implementation details when needed, and signs off on designs before sending to engineering. In contrast to how product roles operate at some companies, product does not "drive" the feature, triage bugs, or organize engineering's work.
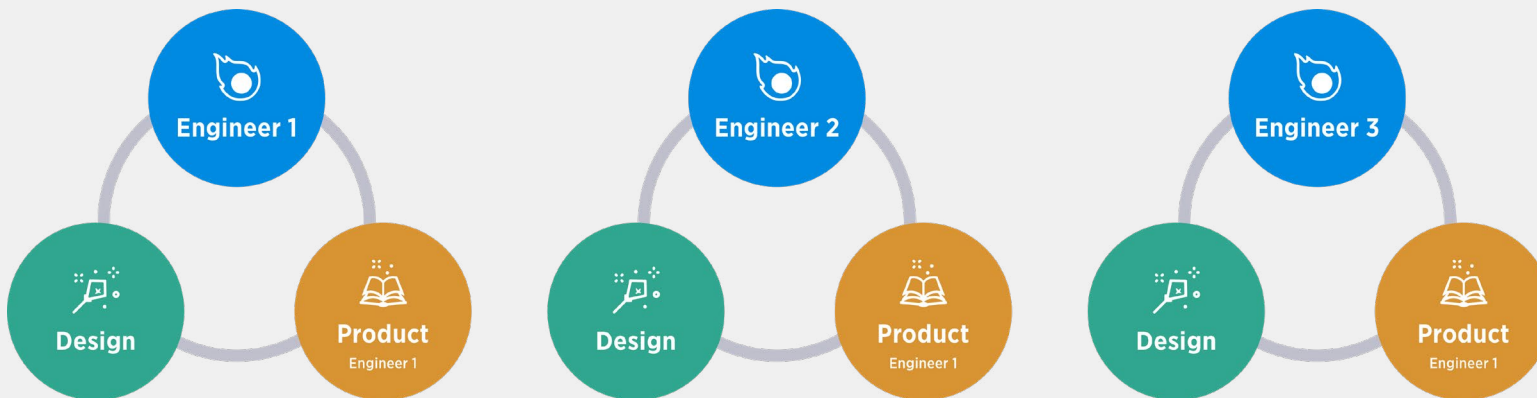
Some notes

- This isn't a highly formalized process. We often don't assign "teams" explicitly, but you should think about your responsibilities in this context. Know who your design/engineer/ product team members are, and ask if you're unsure.

- Anyone – in the team or not – can assign items/bugs to engineering. Engineering is responsible for triaging and prioritizing those items, and asking PM for help when unsure.

- "Product" is always an engineer by trade – but in this context, they are operating as a product manager.

Leads

When multiple teams need to work towards a single goal, we assign a "lead" to coordinate them.

Leads "own" the goal, and are ultimately responsible for delivering it. Leads assign features to engineers to direct everyone towards one goal. Leads then operate as the PM for each team that they are leading.

Some notes

- Lead is a temporary, necessity-based role, not a job title. Engineers of any level of experience or seniority can operate as a lead, depending on practical factors like expected capacity.

- Leads are not "managers". Leads are individual contributors whose principal responsibility is ensuring that all teams are working as efficiently as possible towards the same goal.

- Leads are engineers, and are part of their own team that is driving towards their goal. They should still be writing code: in almost all cases, they should retain over 50% of their capacity for engineering work

04

Performance & compensation

Compensation

We provide salaries competitive to top Silicon Valley companies with generous equity, regardless of where you live.

We review and update compensation at least twice a year, but we will adjust compensation on an ad-hoc basis for exceptional performance.

Titles

We don't have level-based titles. Every software engineer is a Software Engineer, and every designer is a UX Designer. We want ideas to be evaluated on their own merits, not on the merits of the person sharing them.

This has a side effect of making our offers less attractive to candidates that are highly invested in title progression. We consider this a feature, not a bug.

Vacation & sick policy

We offer unlimited vacation and sick days.

At some companies, "unlimited vacation" means that nobody takes vacation. Everyone here should (and does) take several weeks of vacation per year. We invest in people for the long term, and know that time off is necessary to prevent burnout.

If you're taking a longer break (more than a couple days), please give whoever you report to a heads-up a couple weeks in advance, if you can.

Miscellaneous

Referral credit: if you refer someone that ends up joining the team, we'll give you a cool $5,000.

Finale

We view our culture as an evolving construct that is meant to be continually challenged and improved.

Everyone at Guilded is responsible for making sure that we're building a company that great people love working at and a product that people love.