

AI Made Us Faster and Four Times Worse at Working Together

The speed is real. It is being paid for in shared context.

by Shreyas Kalyanpad

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Shared context = the reasons behind the work, held by more than one person.

AI made design faster. It also made design quieter. In the AI in Design Report 2026, a survey of more than 900 designers in over 60 countries, 20% say collaboration has decreased. A year earlier that figure was 5%. Separately, 34% say roles and ownership are now less clearly defined than before.

The report asked designers what AI had improved. Speed and creative range came top. Collaboration with teammates came last. It is the one line moving the wrong way in an otherwise glowing report, and almost nobody is talking about it.

You did not get four times faster. You got four times more alone, and you shipped the difference.

Here is what is actually breaking, and what to do about it on Monday.



Four people, one table, four separate problems. This is what most of the new speed actually looks like.

1. The prototype arrives with no argument attached

What teams ship: A working prototype, built in an afternoon, dropped into a channel.

Why it fails: The old handoff was slow, and the slowness carried the thinking. Sketches, crits, half-built screens. Your team absorbed the reasoning while you worked. A finished artifact carries none of it.

Ship instead: Three lines above every link. What you tried. What you threw away. What you are still unsure about.

2. Everybody is building in a different room

What teams ship: One person in Figma Make, one in Cursor, both arriving at the same review.

Why it fails: These tools were built for one pair of hands. The version control and the comment threads that used to hold a team together are simply not there.

Ship instead: Pick the shared surface first, then the tool. If a teammate cannot open it and change it, it is a screenshot with extra steps.

3. Your speed is somebody else's bill

What teams ship: Bigger changes, faster. Half of the designers surveyed have now pushed AI-generated code to production.

Why it fails: DORA found the time saved writing gets spent again on checking. One engineer put it plainly: reviewing another person's code is much harder than writing it. Your afternoon became their week.

Ship instead: Small batches. Send the one screen you want a decision on, not the whole flow you generated.

4. AI does not fix a team, it amplifies one

What teams ship: New tools, on the theory that better output will settle old arguments.

Why it fails: DORA calls AI an amplifier. Clear workflows get better. Fragmented ones generate debt faster. Higher adoption tracks with more throughput and more instability at the same time.

Ship instead: Fix the unclear decision rights before you buy the next tool. AI will only make that fog denser.

5. Nobody owns it because anybody could have made it

What teams ship: Work with no clear author. Designers now do more product and engineering work, and 40% say their PMs and engineers are doing more design work.

Why it fails: Ownership used to come from being the only person who could make the thing. That is gone. Nothing replaced it.

Ship instead: Name a decider per surface, in writing, before the work starts. Not a reviewer. A decider.

What to do this week

IF THIS IS HAPPENING	CHANGE THIS
Reviews full of surprises	Shorter crits, more often, in smaller groups
Status meetings that fix nothing	Trade the standup for a working session on direction
Everyone using different tools	Run a session where people walk through their workflow
Prototypes landing cold	Three lines of reasoning above every link
Unclear ownership	One named decider per surface

The speed is real and I would not give it back. But it was never free. It was paid for out of the thing that made a team a team, which is a group of people who know why the work looks like this.

Run one audit. Take the last thing you shipped and ask who else could explain the reasoning behind it. If the answer is nobody, you did not go faster. You went alone.

Checked against

Read on 1 September 2026.

- [AI in Design Report 2026, Teams chapter \(Designer Fund and Foundation Capital\)](#): 20% say collaboration has decreased, up from 5% in 2025; 34% say roles and ownership are less clearly defined; 40% say PMs and engineers are doing more design work
- [AI in Design Report 2026, Craft chapter](#): 50% of respondents have pushed AI-generated code to production, and designers report rising isolation
- [AI in Design Report 2026 overview and methodology](#): over 900 designers surveyed in 60+ countries, plus 20+ interviews
- [DORA, Balancing AI tensions \(10 March 2026\)](#): AI acts as an amplifier, the time saved writing is re-spent auditing, and higher AI adoption is associated with more throughput and more instability