



APRIL 3, 2017

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT - MIRABEAU

In this, our first edition of Sponsor Spotlight, we sit down with returning sponsor Mirabeau. To many of you, Mirabeau will be a familiar name. Not only did they sponsor us last year, but they are big supporters of UX community events in the Netherlands, such as UXcampNL 2016, AmsterdamUX and UX Cocktail Hours.

MIRABEAU | ✱ A Cognizant Digital Business

We caught up with Paul Versteeg from Mirabeau to talk about what is currently keeping him busy, plans for 2017 and his thoughts on UXcampAMS17.

Paul, good to get some time with you ahead of UXcampAMS17. Can you give our readers a short introduction of yourself?

I'm Principal Interaction Designer at Mirabeau, which means I'm partly a designer, working for clients such as FrieslandCampina, China Southern Airlines and Hogeschool Rotterdam. A very diverse set of clients. And the other part of my role is the Principal role, so I organise Meetups and I'm the head of the Interaction Design department. I'm stating what Mirabeau's take on Interaction Design is and I'm coaching all of the Interaction designers to go in that same direction. Also, I sometimes write blogs and give external presentations.



Paul Versteeg speaking at Dutch Design Week 2016

How long have you been with Mirabeau?

Roughly 5 years or so. Before this I worked with a couple of smaller companies and I noticed that, as the UX'er, when you are in a small company, you have a lot of responsibilities and can do everything a little bit. When you join bigger companies, the level is increased. You deal with experts. The focus is all about how it works, why things work the way they do, for who you are specifically designing and why and how you should test. These are all the main topics within Mirabeau that fall under my responsibility.

Can you give more insight into the role of an Interaction Designer at Mirabeau?

2 years ago, we stepped away a bit from doing the visual part as well. We do have a responsibility in the micro-interaction part, more on how the interface feels, but our main responsibility is how the interface works. That part is so big and becoming bigger with things like AI, Dynamic Design or Contextual Design. There are so many more variables that you can include in your design. You need experts in the team that truly understand these variables. I think that an Interaction Designer should be THE person to explain to visual designers, developers, stakeholders and clients, how this actually works. As we become bigger, and since we recently became a Cognizant Digital Business, this is important to always keep in mind.

Can you give some examples of the projects that you've been involved with?

What I find interesting about Mirabeau is that we are problem solvers. We really focus on a specific process that is now maybe analogue, or can be digital, but is not truly optimized or maybe isn't using the right channels. It's fun to work with these kinds of challenges.

I'm working on an assignment for farmers to enable them to see the quality of the milk that they deliver to FrieslandCampina, so this involves all kinds of lab data. Every three days they get an update on the lactose and fat percentages, which gives FrieslandCampina an overview of the quality. It also enables them to communicate this with the farmers and educate them to help maintain quality levels. It's a really interesting assignment with many different aspects. We have been visiting lots of farms to see how they work and to really get insight into the industry.

We've also done a lot of work with KLM where we are not just working on the booking engine, but also working with the cabin crew, providing them with a tool to get to know the passengers and allowing them to service them better. We're also working with the maintenance crews to assist them with processes and activities that are typically very analogue. We really have to dive into the problem and find out what the mechanics are up to day to day.

As you mentioned, Mirabeau has recently become part of Cognizant (November 2016). What kind of impact is this having?

By joining forces we are better positioned to help our clients succeed in this fast-changing, highly competitive marketplace. As a Cognizant Digital Business we can offer an even better and broader service. I think we are a really good match: Cognizant's knowledge on IT and technology and our expertise on digital and User Experience.

At the same time we increase our impact in the international field. It's really exciting that new international opportunities are coming our way!



Mirabeau's Amsterdam Office

How many people do you have working in the Interaction Design department?

The Interaction Design crew is growing very rapidly. The Concept & Design team is a very valuable asset within the Cognizant organisation, so we are focusing on growth within that team. In my team, I currently work with 22 Interaction Designers and we're still looking for some new fresh talent, so it's pretty big.

In total, we have around 270 people working for Mirabeau with a growing Interaction Design department.

Were you at UXcampAMS last year?

No, unfortunately not, but I heard great stories about it and we have some employees that joined Mirabeau after making initial contact at the event last year. The tickets are in demand here at Mirabeau so we'll be bringing a number of colleagues!

These kinds of events really help to move the profession of UX forward, giving more in depth knowledge on it. The community is growing and growing and often, the attendees of these events are not just Interaction Designers, Service Designers or UX Designers. They are also Visual Designers or Front-End Developers, because they have interest in this area and it's very valuable for them to learn more about the process and get a feel for co-operation within a multi-discipline team.

Do you plan on pitching any talks at this year's event?

Yes, we are planning on pitching at least two talks. Still work in progress. We'll see how it goes. I like the concept of pitching your idea and seeing what happens, it's very democratic. I like that.

Last year Nick (van der Linde) told us a little bit about Mirabeau Labs during his presentation where he was talking about experiments with conversational UI, like Alexa or Chat bots. How is that initiative going and do you have any further use cases that have come out of your Labs?

The good thing about our Labs initiative is that we not only get to try things out and learn a lot, but we can turn them into something real. Now we've just launched the Transavia chatbot this month. The idea behind this was supported by our Labs initiative, so it's very beneficial to keep pushing on the labs projects and research, as this will give us so much more knowledge and opens new opportunities for clients.

What are the key UX topics and themes on your mind for 2017?

One of my colleagues was at Interaction 17 and he gave us a roundup of some of the key topics. One of the key ones for this year is the responsibility that we as designers must take with all these new types of technology. AI looks promising and so does VR and AR. We're at the experimentation phase, trying things out, but at the same time we should realise that it's up to the designers to make ethical decisions on "Is this something I should work on?" - We need to keep the balance between what helps our clients and what helps or hinders the end user or customer in mind.

I truly feel that this is something that we as designers should put on the agenda, not to slow it down, but to keep it in mind. If any of your attendees have any insight or thoughts on this, I'd be very keen to hear them.

We're grateful to Paul and to Mirabeau for giving up time to spend with us ahead of the event. It's always great to get these candid insights into a company and hear the thoughts, plans and opinions of leaders in the UX field. We're sure that Mirabeau will be pitching some inspiring talks and we can't wait to hear more of their insight on April 22nd. Be sure to drop by and say hello to the people from Mirabeau on the day.

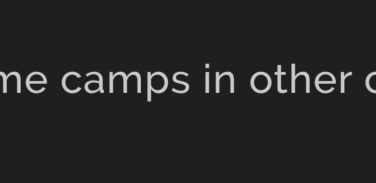
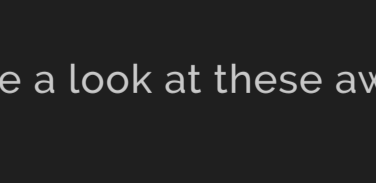
♥ 5 LIKES ♥ SHARE

♥ Sponsor Spotlight - Exact

Sponsor # 5! ♥

Other UX Camps

Have a look at these awesome camps in other cities!



WANT TO KNOW MORE OR HAVE QUESTIONS? GET IN TOUCH!

Name *

First Name Last Name
Email Address *

Message *

Send to UXCamp AMS Team



[Back to top](#)