

Product Design for Fileverse: A Decentralized Collaboration Platform

How a robust product design strategy and its flawless execution helped Fileverse impress users and investors with a feature-rich, decentralized collaboration platform, enabling it to confidently compete with market leaders like Google and Microsoft and secure \$1.5 million for further product evolution.

Business challenge

Centralized collaboration platforms are widely adopted for their ease of use. Still, alongside the perks, there're some inherent drawbacks tied to their architecture, including:

- Data lock-in**
 When a vendor updates their data usage or privacy policy, users' only practical opt-out is to leave the platform entirely, often at the cost of complex, incomplete, or disruptive data migration.

- Centralized server control**
 A vendor controls storage, access, and governance. Users do not truly own their data; instead, they are granted conditional access under the provider's policies, which can change unilaterally.

- Default-enabled AI integrations**
 User data may be processed for secondary purposes such as LLM training, pattern extraction, or automated analysis without explicit, informed opt-in. Even when raw data is deleted, derived data or model artifacts may persist.

These and other features create privacy trade-offs around data ownership and user autonomy.

Fileverse, a UK startup operating in the Web3 space, spotted this gap in a market dominated by a few established platforms, such as Google Workspace, Notion, and Microsoft 365, and set out to fill it with a **privacy-first alternative**. Their aim was to deliver a comparable user experience while fundamentally rethinking the underlying architecture by replacing centralized servers with local and decentralized storage.

However, the blockchain technology alone wasn't enough to win customer trust and encourage users to switch from the tools they'd been using for decades. Fileverse had to put a premium on product design to ensure the platform was easy to understand and more comfortable to use from the very first click. To achieve this, the client brought in our **product design squad** to lead the UX/UI strategy within their development team.

That's how they came up with the idea of the **Fileverse Portal** – a blockchain-backed space for peer-to-peer file sharing and storage, featuring tools like **dDocs** for collaborative document editing and **dSheets** for spreadsheets.

Solution

Designing the Web3 solution meant working in an environment where **no user data could be stored** due to the product's decentralized, end-to-end encrypted model. As the platform wasn't integrated with conventional analytics tools like Google Analytics or Hotjar, we relied solely on **user feedback** to refine the platform's interface and functionality.

01 Laying the foundation: a scalable design system

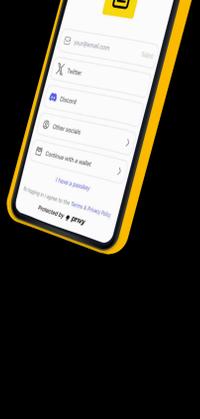
We began by establishing a robust design system, comprising a set of guidelines, reusable design elements, and tools that enable a **consistent, scalable, and user-friendly experience**. While time-intensive upfront, this investment significantly sped up all design-related tasks later in the process.

- Design principles** that defined the product's overarching design philosophy and goals, such as "Design with simplicity and clarity".
- Style guide** detailing the dDocs's visual identity, including typography, color palette, and spacing rules.
- Component library** of reusable UI elements built to maintain consistent styles and behaviors.
- Interaction patterns** to ensure a predictable and intuitive user experience.
- Iconography** to enhance visual communication.
- Motion and animation guidelines** to elevate UX where it matters without overwhelming the interface.
- Accessibility guidelines** to make dDocs available to the widest possible range of users.

02 Designing for blockchain-native workflows

By embracing Web3-native patterns, we introduced several blockchain-specific features that tackled user experience constraints and directly improved usability.

- ENS-based login option for Web3 users**
 Along with the standard log/sign-in options like email and socials, we allowed users to enter the system under their ENS (Ethereum Name Service) names linked to their blockchain wallet addresses. This lets users verify their identity without relying on centralized accounts.

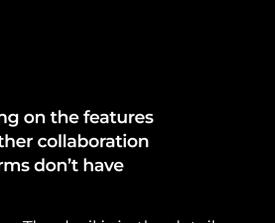


- Refined publishing logic**
 We added a dedicated "Draft" state for files not yet published on-chain, giving users the flexibility to edit content before committing it to the blockchain network.

- Real-time collaboration on top of blockchain infrastructure**
 Despite relying on the decentralized backend, the platform supports real-time editing. Up to 15 users can collaborate on a single document simultaneously, with suggestions and comments processed without delay.

03 Offering near-unlimited customizability and workspace control

Earning early user trust required more than strong privacy guarantees. We made customizability a core pillar of the product, giving users complete control over collaboration structure and access.



- Supporting multiple workspaces per user**
 The platform's architecture allows a single user to manage multiple workspaces. Within each workspace, users can create teams with custom access rights, while also maintaining a private space for individual work.

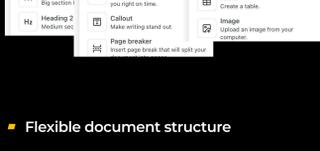
- Introducing internal and public spaces within workspaces**
 Users can control the visibility and access of files and folders. When sharing materials publicly, they can customize the public space's banners and descriptions, reorder sections, adjust card sizes, and more.

04 Banking on the features that other collaboration platforms don't have

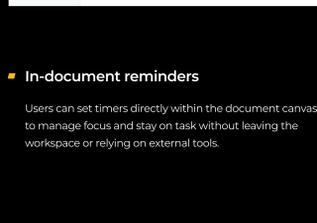
The devil is in the details

So we analyzed user reviews of competing collaboration tools to identify small but persistent friction points and addressed them directly in the dDocs and dSheets product experience.

- Slash menu**
 To improve workflow efficiency, our team introduced a slash menu that enables users to quickly format the document or add new elements.



- Flexible document structure**
 We also added foldable headings, allowing users to collapse all content under a heading, simplifying the navigation of large documents.



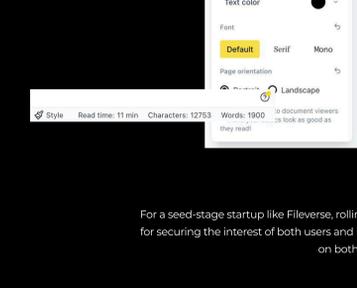
- In-document reminders**
 Users can set timers directly on the document canvas to manage focus and stay on task without leaving the workspace or relying on external tools.



- Support for local LLM integrations**
 Thanks to a "bring your own model" feature, users can connect local LLM providers like Ollama and delegate document writing and editing tasks to the LLMs they have installed on their hardware. That way, users reap the productivity benefits of GenAI keeping their data off external servers and avoiding the costs of third-party subscriptions.



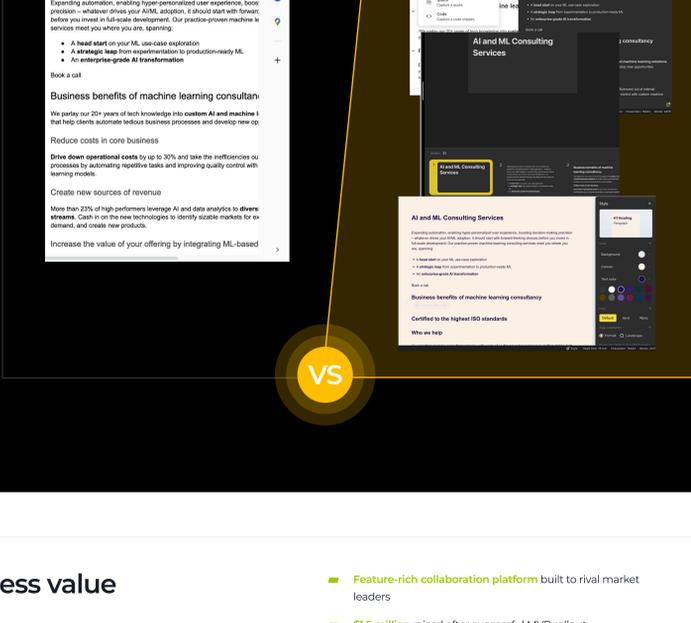
- One-click presentation generation**
 We empowered users to instantly convert a document into a presentation based on common formatting rules (e.g., H1 becomes an intro slide), making it easy to create event-ready materials from full-notes. These presentations can be viewed in full-screen mode, commented on, or exported as PDF or Markdown files.



- Interface visual customization**
 Our designers added dark mode alongside document-level customization options, such as adjustable colors, fonts, and backgrounds. We also surfaced word count, character count, and estimated reading time directly in the UI to provide immediate utility instead of navigating through sub-menus.

For a seed-stage startup like Fileverse, rolling out such a feature-rich MVP was crucial for securing the interest of both users and investors. With our support, they delivered on both fronts.

See for yourself how diverse **dDocs'** functionality is compared to widely adopted **Google Docs**.



Business value

- Feature-rich collaboration platform** built to rival market leaders.
- \$1.5 million** raised after successful MVP rollout.
- Proactive user community** contributing feedback for further product evolution.

Multiplier effect

When aiming for a place in a market dominated by several big players, matching the competition is rarely enough. A killer feature can spark interest, but it won't carry the product on its own. User-centered design is the second card that convinces people to stay. If both are played well, the **adoption rate stops being a gamble**. This is the kind of impact strong product design delivers.

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