

2016

User centered Design

Info Booklet



User centered design means understanding what your users need, how they think, and how they behave - and incorporating that understanding into every aspect of your process.

- Jesse James Garrett

The value of UCD

Let us give you an example

It's called the \$300 million button.

It's hard to imagine an online form that could be simpler: two fields, two buttons, and one link. Email & Password. Login & Register. Forgot Password.

This simple form, however, caused one of the world's leading online sellers to turn over \$300 million a year less than they could. The problem wasn't the form's layout, but where the form lived. Users would encounter it after they had contentedly filled their shopping basket and pressed the checkout button, but before they could enter any payment information. It turns out, people don't like the commitment - it puts doubt in their mind. They're just there to buy a product. The consequence: customers repeatedly cop out of buying products at the last second.

The solution: change the word 'Register' to 'Continue', with the simple message "You do not need to create an account to make purchases on our site. Simply click Continue to proceed to checkout. To make your future purchases even faster, you can create an account during checkout." The result: a \$300,000,000 a year fix.

**User experience
encompasses all
aspects of the
end-user's interaction
with the company, its
services, and its
products.**

- Jakob Nielsen and Donald Norman

Common User Centred Design Practices

Contents

The following pages contain various User Centered Design techniques we feel are relevant to your company. Alongside each page, you will find the comparable costs and time taken of each process.

- + Card Sorting
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- + A/B Testing
- + Task Analysis
- + Participatory Design
- + Usability Benchmarking
- + Surveys

Card Sorting

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

Focussed on app and website projects. A quantitative or qualitative method that asks users to organize items into groups and assign categories to each group. This method helps create or refine information architecture by exposing users' mental models. Card sorting can be instrumental in the early stages of site design. Seeing how a user processes and accesses the information on your site will provide a more efficient, easy-to-use final product. There are 3 types of card sorting: Open, Closed and Reverse.

- + Similarly to techniques such as first click testing, card sorting reveals a lot about a site's linking structure. The 3 types of card sorting, however, give us the opportunity to tailor this research method to your specific project.
- + Open card sorting reveals not only how users mentally classify the cards, but also what terms they use for the categories. This reveals patterns in classification, which in turn, we use to help generate ideas for organising information.
- + Closed card sorting involves us providing cards with predetermined category names. This reveals the degree to which the participants agree/disagree on which cards belong under each category. We then have material to evaluate the effectiveness of a collection of content.
- + Reverse card sorting (tree testing) tests an existing structure. We give users tasks involving the navigation of a card collection. This ensures strict structure evaluation in isolation, nullifying the effects of navigational/visual aids.

User Interviews

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

User interviews involve us meeting users to discuss in depth what the user thinks about the topic in question. It is an effective research technique in gathering qualitative information from existing or potential users. Topic specific questions are asked alongside person specific background questions to help build a persona with which their opinions can be paired.

Why this

- + We carefully consider our questions and approach to ensure we extract as much thoughtful feedback as possible.
- + The 1-on-1 scenario allows for a strong understanding of that individual. As a result we're given the opportunity to engage and query in greater depth with that person. The result is in-depth feedback which can be paired to an exact type of user.
- + Face-to-face interviews mean we can evaluate a person's emotion, body language and general feedback with greater accuracy.
- + Online surveys, for example, are an excellent way to obtain bulk feedback, but providing feedback from behind a screen is less likely to reflect a user's thoughts and feelings as accurately.

First Click Testing

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

First click testing examines what a participant would click on first in the interface in order to complete their intended task. It can be performed on a functioning website, a prototype or a wireframe. It allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of the linking structure of the site, including navigation, to see if users know how to get around the site and complete their intended task. A user who clicks down the right path on the first click will complete their task successfully 87% of the time, whereas a user who clicks down the wrong path on the first click tends to only successfully complete their task 46% of the time.

Why this

- + First click testing can be deployed at multiple stages of a design process - from early wireframes to an existing, fully functioning site. Whether you're looking to create something new or in need of a redesign, first click testing will shed incredibly valuable light on how user and site interact.
- + This technique, once set up, is quick to execute. As a result a large number of target users can be assessed, ensuring accurate results reflecting the effectiveness of your site's linking structure.
- + First impressions are, quite simply, essential to any good design. First click testing won't just let us evaluate a site's linking structure. It can also be deployed to reveal users' first impressions of a design by, for example, asking them to simply click which areas of a page they are most drawn to, or that they simply like the most.

Focus Groups

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

Focus groups are a means of collecting qualitative data in which a group of people are questioned on their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, website, app etc. Questions are posed in an interactive group setting where participants are free (and encouraged) to discuss their thoughts with other group members. A focus group tends to consist of between 5 and 10 individuals. All responses and discussions are assessed and, if permitted, recorded to allow detailed study at a later time.'

Why this

- + Discussions in a group setting mean a range of ideas and opinions are in the air. For some individuals, being in this setting promotes new ideas, and encourages creative ideas and thoughts. Ultimately, this often results in invaluable feedback.
- + The group setting provides a technique for quickly gaining insights into a range of user perceptions. Multiple points of view can be assessed in a short period of time.
- + Focus groups are an easy, clear measure of customer reaction. In a group situation, true feelings are often revealed - one person providing feedback often sparks others to reveal similar/contradictory thoughts. We can carefully gauge overall reactions.
- + This technique often provides immediate ideas for improvement and identifies product requirements and other needs.

A/B Testing

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

A/B testing is comparing two versions of a web page to see which one performs better. Two web pages are compared by showing the two variants (A and B) to similar visitors at the same time. The one that gives a better conversion rate, wins! By 'better conversion rate', we mean the design which has the most success in obtaining the desired goal for the page. For example: ASOS wants customers to buy clothes. As a result the web design which induces more sales (conversions) is better suited for that site.

Why this

- + A/B testing is a highly effective strategy for establishing a good piece of design or improving a website's conversion rate. This is primarily because it gives black and white results as to the popularity of designs. As designers, we create a range of subjective designs we believe to be ideal for the target market. This technique provides direct, objective feedback.
- + This can be deployed for totally different page designs, but frequently reveals the often surprising impact of even small variations in a website's page design.
- + The human psychology behind why people purchase one product or service over another is complex; with A/B testing, determining the consumer impact of different designs and formats is wonderfully simple.
- + It is easy to find numerous participants for A/B testing. Giving users very few options and asking them to 'pick their favourite' is something, as humans, we enjoy doing. The result is numerous pieces of black and white feedback - ideal!

Task Analysis

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

Task analysis is the process of learning about ordinary users by observing them in action to understand, in detail, how they perform their tasks and achieve their intended goals. Task analysis helps identify the tasks that your website, applications or product must support and can also help you refine or re-define your site's navigation or search by determining the appropriate content scope.

Why this

- + Task analysis allows us to put ourselves in the shoes of users in their working environment, embedding ourselves in their working life (user shadowing). In doing so we can obtain a detailed understanding of their situation and task around which to design.
- + Information we gather ensures we can build a product/app/site that matches the users' goals and tasks.
- + Additionally this means we can determine the appropriate scope of content for interfaces, and decide what applications interfaces should include.
- + It also gives us the chance to analyse and streamline navigations and tasks. The result is efficiency, effectiveness and a superior user experience.

Participatory Design

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

Participatory design is a process that involves everyone. Designers, business representatives, users etc. all working together to design a solution. It actively involves users in the design process to help ensure that the product designed meets their needs and is usable in the process.

Why this

- + This gives users in particular a real voice in the design process, enabling them to present their ideas and thoughts but then explore them in different ways. As a result it can provide valuable design information.
- + It enables technical and non-technical participants to contribute equally, shifting the focus from purely technical requirements to the real needs of the business and users.

Usability Benchmarking

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

Benchmarking establishes baseline usability standards for your product, setting the bar against which to compare and measure. It can be testing progress through different iterations of a prototype, across different versions of a product and even different products entirely: yours and your competitors.

Why this

- + Benchmarking a product or website against competitors is useful for identifying features that enhance usability and, when used to compare one version of a product/website with a later one, can provide proof of usability improvement. If our benchmark study shows that your product is superior, your organization's product marketing can use that information in marketing campaigns.
- + Benchmark studies are similar to summative usability studies in that they test usability of a functioning product, application, or website. The goal is to collect data along specific measures such as error rate, number of clicks, success/failure, and satisfaction ratings.
- + Alongside this data, usability benchmarking gives us the opportunity to analyse market leaders purely from a designer's perspective. We will pick up on important features, visual designs and pieces of branding which must be considered in any design process.

Surveys

time: + + + + + cost: + + + + +

In Brief

A survey is a simple tool for gathering information. Surveys typically consist of a set of questions used to assess a participant's preferences, attitudes, characteristics and opinions. As a research method, surveys allow us to count or quantify concepts - a sample or subset of the broader audience is used, then the learnings can be applied to a broader population. Doing so informs and enhances the quality of a design process.

Why this

- + Surveys provide quick, digestible information that enables us to better understand end-users to design superior products, websites, services etc. We carefully consider what we include in our surveys to ensure the most useful feedback. Once produced, the survey can be sent to large numbers of users. As a result it is a good source of bulk feedback for a useful overview of a market's users.
- + This technique is particularly efficient at mitigating risk of designing the wrong solutions for users.

Designers shooting for usable is like a chef shooting for edible.

- Aaron Walter, MailChimp

Questions?

Hopefully this document has provided an introduction to some of the main User Centred Design techniques relevant to your project. If you have any further questions, please feel free to get in touch to discuss in more depth, and tailor a package for you.

Kind regards,

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