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What is User Experience / UX Design?

These topics that are discussed in this example:

*Why Is UX
Important?*

*Things To
Know About UX
Design*

*User Experience
Honeycomb*

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What is User Experience?

User experience (abbreviated as UX) is how a person feels when interfacing with a system. The system could be a website, a web application, touch-screen display or desktop software and, in modern contexts, is generally denoted by some form of human-computer interaction (HCI).

Why Is UX Important?

With so much emphasis on user-centered design, describing and justifying the importance of designing and enhancing the user experience seems almost unnecessary. We could simply say, “It’s important because it deals with our users’ needs — enough said,” and everyone would probably be satisfied with that.

However, those of us who worked in the Web design industry prior to the formalizing of user-centered design, usability and Web accessibility would know that we used to make websites differently. Before our clients (and we) understood the value of user-centered design, we made design decisions based on just two things: what we thought was awesome and what the client wanted to see.

I had built interaction based on what I thought worked — or what my clients / employers wanted. The focus was on aesthetics and the brand, with little to no thought of how the people who would use the website would feel about it.

There was no science behind what I previously did. The end results looked good, and were creative (so I thought) and because that was what my clients / employers wanted. As long as it was “cool” it seemed to work.

This decade has witnessed a transformation of the Web. Websites have become so complex and feature-rich that, to be effective, they must have great user experience designs.

Today users access websites in an increasing number of ways: mobile devices, a vast landscape of browsers, different types of Internet connections, etc.

The importance of accessibility or universal access to the web — not only for those who with special requirements, such as for screen readers and non-traditional input devices, but for those who don’t have broadband connections or who have older mobile devices and are not using the latest and greatest technology.

Things to Know About UX Design

UX design is an amazing discipline, but it cannot, or will not, accomplish certain things.

UX Design Is Not One Size Fits All

User experience design won’t work in every situation for every user because, as human beings, we are all different. What works for one person might have the opposite effect on another. The best we can do is design for specific experiences and promote certain behaviors, but we can’t manufacture, impose or predict the actual experience itself.

And just as we can’t design a user experience, we can’t replicate the user experience for one website exactly on another website. User experiences will be different between websites. a design must be tailored to the goals, values, production process and products of its website.

Not the Same Thing as Usability

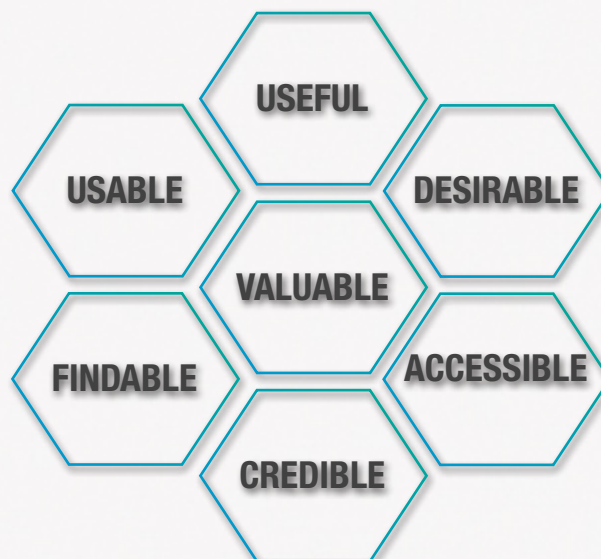
User experience and usability have become synonymous, but these two fields are clearly distinct. UX addresses how a user feels when using a system, while usability is about the user-friendliness and efficiency of the interface.

Usability is big part of the user experience and plays a major role in experiences that are effective and pleasant, but then human factors science, psychology, information architecture and user-centered design principles also play major roles.

Here's how I explain each facet or quality of the user experience:

- **Useful.** I have the courage and creativity to ask whether products and systems are useful, and to apply my deep knowledge of craft and medium to define innovative solutions that are more useful.
- **Usable.** Ease of use remains vital, and yet the interface-centered methods and perspectives of human-computer interaction do not address all dimensions of web design. In short, usability is necessary but not sufficient.
- **Desirable.** The quest for efficiency must be tempered by an appreciation for the power and value of image, identity, brand, and other elements of emotional design.
- **Findable.** I strive to design navigable web sites and locatable objects, so users can find what they need.
- **Accessible.** Just as our buildings have elevators and ramps, web sites should be accessible to people with disabilities (more than 10% of the population). Today, it's good business and the ethical thing to do. Eventually, it will become the law.
- **Credible.** Thanks to the Web Credibility Project, we're beginning to understand the design elements that influence whether users trust and believe what we tell them.
- **Valuable.** Our sites must deliver value to our sponsors. The user experience must advance the mission, it must contribute to the bottom line and improve customer satisfaction.

The honeycomb image serves several purposes at once. It's a great tool for advancing the conversation beyond usability and for helping people understand the need to define priorities. Is it more important for your web site or touchscreen to be desirable or accessible? How about usable or credible? The truth is, it depends on your unique balance of context, content and users, and the required tradeoffs are better made explicitly than unconsciously. Each facet of the user experience honeycomb can serve as a singular looking glass, transforming how we see what we do, and enabling us to explore beyond conventional boundaries.



“Insanity: Doing the same thing over
and over again and expecting different
results.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

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