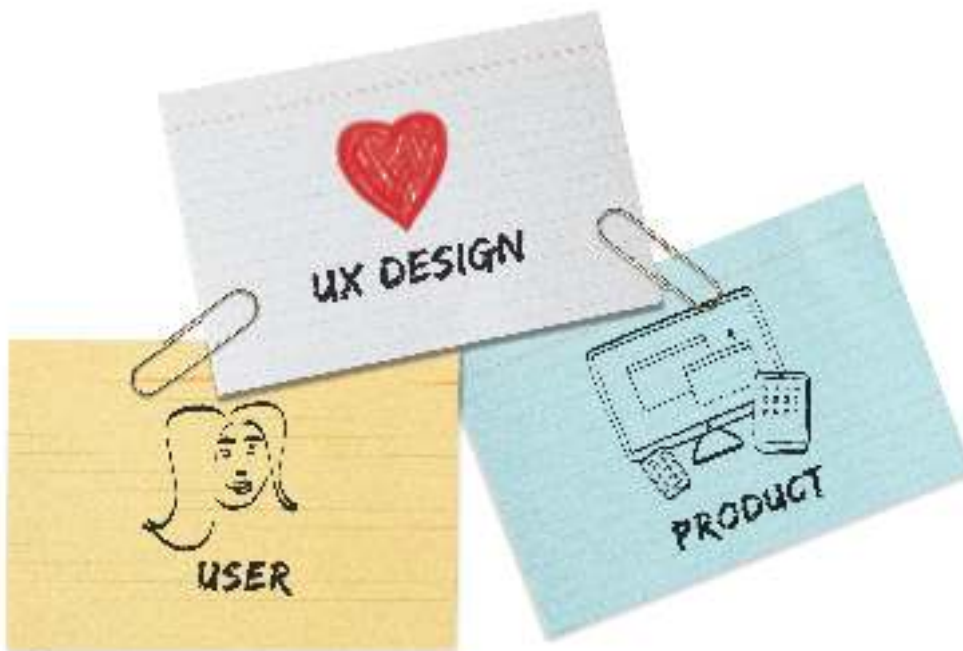


KILLER UX DESIGN

BY JODIE MOULE



CREATE USER EXPERIENCES TO WOW YOUR VISITORS

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Editor: Kelly Steele

Technical Editor: Diana MacDonald

Cover Designer: Alex Walker

Expert Reviewer: Matt Magain

Indexer: Fred Brown

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About Jodie Moule

Jodie Moule is co-founder and director of Symplicit, an experience design consultancy based in Australia that focuses on research, strategy, and design services. With a background in psychology, her understanding of human behavior is central to helping businesses see their brands through the eyes of customers, influencing the way they approach the design of their products, systems, and processes.

About SitePoint

SitePoint specializes in publishing practical, rewarding, and approachable content for web professionals. Visit <http://www.sitepoint.com/> to access our books, blogs, newsletters, videos, and community forums.

To my best friend, business partner, husband, and father of our wonderful children, Blake and Darci. This is for you Steve, because without you, it would not have been possible. Love you lots.

To Blake and Darci, I wonder what the future holds? Hold on tight and make the most of every moment. Love Mummy.

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Preface

When I embarked on my career as a psychologist, I never imagined I'd end up designing technology products and services. Funny where you end up in life, and lucky for me all those years at university weren't wasted: the business of understanding humans and the way they behave is critical to designing.

With the digital and physical worlds merging more than ever before, it is vital to understand how technology can enhance the human experience, and not cause frustration or angst at every touchpoint.

To create technology that seamlessly fits into our daily lives, there's a simple formula. First, consider the person attached to your technology solution and the context in which they'll be using your creation; then, design your solution and involve users in the process to refine your thinking.

Today, technology is used to change attitudes and behavior, creating amazing challenges for designers. And if we want to create products and services that have the power to educate people so that they may live better lives, or help to reduce the time people take to do certain tasks—or even attract them to our products instead of our competitors—we need to first understand what makes them tick.

User-friendliness is fast becoming a necessity in product design. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go to deliver on our users' (high) expectations, and this will only increase as technology and the real world continue to merge.

Understanding behavior allows us to change the customer experience, and that change happens through great design—your great designs.

What is this book about?

This book aims to be an introduction to user experience design. UX design is an approach that starts by understanding the behavior of the eventual users of a product, service, or system. It then seeks to explore the optimal interaction of these elements, in order to design experiences that are memorable, enjoyable, and a little bit “wow.”

The premise of this book is the need to understand how people behave (their habits, motivators, and drivers) to make well-informed design decisions that produce a great customer experience for your users.

Case Study to Bring It All to Life

Depending on the type of business problem you are solving and the product you are designing, there are several ways to approach a design problem. To bring the theory to life, I'll be presenting a case study so you can see the theory discussed in each chapter applied to a real-life example. It's my intention that through this example, you'll see the benefits a UX process can bring to your projects.

I encourage you to think about what you would have done if this project was thrust upon you at work, or if a client approached you to deliver an app as a way to help enhance your learning as you read along.

Who Should Read This Book

This book was written for people who have heard of UX and want to learn more about the basics, or expand their knowledge on distinct aspects of the UX process. If you are charged with understanding how to apply a UX process to your projects, but are unsure quite where to start—this book is for you.

My aim was to present UX design in a fun, practical, and non-academic way, so that the concepts are accessible and can be tried out immediately. In this regard, this book is for newcomers to the UX space rather than seasoned professionals. However, those with a UX background and some experience might be interested to see how we approached design problems.

What's in This Book

The book contains the following eight chapters:

Chapter 1: *You Are Not Your User*

This chapter defines UX design and considers what makes a great experience. You'll learn why this should matter to you when designing.

Chapter 2: *Understand the Business Problem*

If you're unable to understand the problem, you can't solve it. This chapter explores the problem that your client or company aims to solve with the UX process, and explains some useful ways to ensure your success.

Chapter 3: *Understand the User Context*

In order to produce great usable designs, you need to gain empathy and understanding for your users. We'll address all the research methods available to you and look at how to recruit users for testing.

Chapter 4: *Making Sense of What You've Found*

In this chapter, we discuss how to analyze the data you've collected from your user testing. Then we'll delve into behavior design and reveal why understanding behavior and habits is intrinsic to your design work.

Chapter 5: *Sketching to Explore the Design Concept*

Once we've conducted an analysis, we move towards using sketching as a tool. Sketching is cost-effective and easy to do, and helps to generate lots of ideas quickly so that you can select a few really great ones to take to the next stage.

Chapter 6: *Prototype the Solution*

Forming working models of your design is the best way to assess whether your solution—once imagined beyond paper—is going to work or not. Creating rapid prototypes to refine your thought process and ensure you're on the right track is a critical step in your UX process.

Chapter 7: *Test, Learn, Tweak. Iterate*

The whole reason for creating prototypes is to test them with your users, in order to validate whether your design is worth pursuing. This process allows you to ascertain whether users understand your design, and allows for further refining. Final tweaks now will give you confidence that the decisions you've made along the way are the right ones.

Chapter 8: *Launch to Learn About Behavior*

This final chapter focuses on testing and evaluating your solution as you prepare to launch—and beyond. Once you've let it loose on the market, you'll continue to learn from users' habits and behaviors as they use your product, bringing your UX process full circle.

Where to Find Help

Design is an evolving area, so chances are good that by the time you read this, some minor detail or other of these technologies will have changed from what's described in this book. Thankfully, SitePoint has a thriving community of designers ready and waiting to help you out if you run into trouble. We also maintain a list of known errata for this book that you can consult for the latest updates.

The SitePoint Forums

The SitePoint Forums¹ are discussion forums where you can ask questions about anything related to web design and development. You may, of course, answer questions, too. A lot of fun and experienced web designers and developers hang out there, and it's a good way to learn new stuff, have questions answered in a hurry, and just have fun. In particular, check out the design thread.

The Book's Website

Located at <http://www.sitepoint.com/books/ux1/>, the website that supports this book will give you access to the following facilities:

Tools

As you progress through this book, you'll note that we've performed a number of user testing sessions. See the book's website to access the documents and templates we've made available to support you in your own user sessions.

Updates and Errata

No book is perfect, and we expect that alert readers will be able to spot at least one or two mistakes before the end of this one. The Errata page on the book's website will always have the latest information about known typographical and code errors.

The SitePoint Newsletters

In addition to books like this one, SitePoint publishes free email newsletters such as the *SitePoint* newsletter, *PHPMaster*, *CloudSpring*, *RubySource*, *DesignFestival*, and *BuildMobile*. In them you'll read about the latest news, product releases, trends,

¹ <http://www.sitepoint.com/forums/>

tips, and techniques for all aspects of web development. Sign up to one or more of these newsletters at <http://www.sitepoint.com/newsletter/>.

Your Feedback

If you've downloaded the app, we'd love to hear your thoughts on it and any ideas that we may not have considered. Get in touch at hello@symplicit.com.au, or on Twitter: @jodiemoule and @thecookapp.

For SitePoint, if you're unable to find an answer through the forums or wish to contact us for any other reason, the best place to write is books@sitepoint.com. We have an email support system set up to track inquiries, and if our support crew are unable to answer your question, they'll send it straight to us. Suggestions for improvements, as well as notices of any mistakes you may find, are welcome.

Acknowledgments

Writing this book has been one of the most rewarding—and challenging—things I have ever bitten off in my career. I'd like to thank the SitePoint team who I got to know over the course of nearly a year, namely Simon, Matt, and Tom during the writing process, with Di and Kelly during the edits. Thanks guys for being there as I agonized about chapters and made false starts, all while gently reminding me to meet deadlines (ugh!).

I really want to thank the app team that made it possible to deliver the case-study app we created: Cook. I think we can safely say that the app has turned into something bigger than we imagined. A special note goes to my fellow Cook business partners and directors: Stephen Moule, Alex Johnston, and Jeff Tan-Ang. Thanks for believing in the idea, guys. I couldn't have done it without you, and have had (and am still having) a ball in the process. The sleepless nights and lack of weekends are all worth it ... honest!

To our team members Jamie Chin, Ekaterina Vasilenko, Chris Michelle-Wells, and Jonathan Sagorin—the Cook app team who were involved at each stage of the UX process, and who worked tirelessly on the app. An extra special thanks goes to Stephen, Jamie, and Ekat for working back late and on weekends to design all the amazing images and posters for this book; and to Chris and Ekat for finalizing and perfecting the videos—you guys rock! I can't thank you enough.

Thanks, too, goes to the Symplicit team for tolerating my absence from day-to-day business for nearly a year, and stepping in to keep things running smoothly. Guys, as a group, I owe you all a great big thanks for your support during this time.

Thanks to my dearly departed Grandmother and parents for seeding a love of cooking, and therefore being the source of what we thought was a great design idea for the case study. Cook is for foodies like you, Mum and Dad; now I just need to get you both onto an iPad so that you can use it!

Most of all, the biggest thanks goes to my beloved husband, Stephen, who managed our business in my absence, and looked after our kids weekends, early mornings, and late at night for close to a year, as I worked to get this book completed. And still managed to smile and be a wonderful husband and father despite it all. Thanks honey. Without you, Blake, and Darci, there is nothing. You are my world.

Conventions Used in This Book

You'll notice that we've used certain typographic and layout styles throughout this book to signify different types of information. Look out for the following items.

Tips, Notes, and Warnings



Hey, You!

Tips will give you helpful little pointers.



Ahem, Excuse Me ...

Notes are useful asides that are related—but not critical—to the topic at hand. Think of them as extra tidbits of information.



Make Sure You Always ...

... pay attention to these important points.



Watch Out!

Warnings will highlight any gotchas that are likely to trip you up along the way.

Chapter 1

You Are Not Your User

So what is user experience (UX) anyway?

You might think it would be a relatively easy term to define; however, when I reflected on the evolution of UX, it was quite a difficult task. Why?

UX covers a broad range of interactions a person can have with a business, and in an increasingly connected world, the lines are blurring between the digital and nondigital spheres. What might begin as an online experience can extend into a physical interaction (say, in a bricks-and-mortar store) and then be further influenced with an instore representative—all shaped by a particular business process.

A Broad Perspective

So, let's attempt a simple explanation. **User experience (UX)** is the sum of a series of interactions a person has with a product, service, or organization. A general example of all these elements interacting can be seen in Figure 1.1.

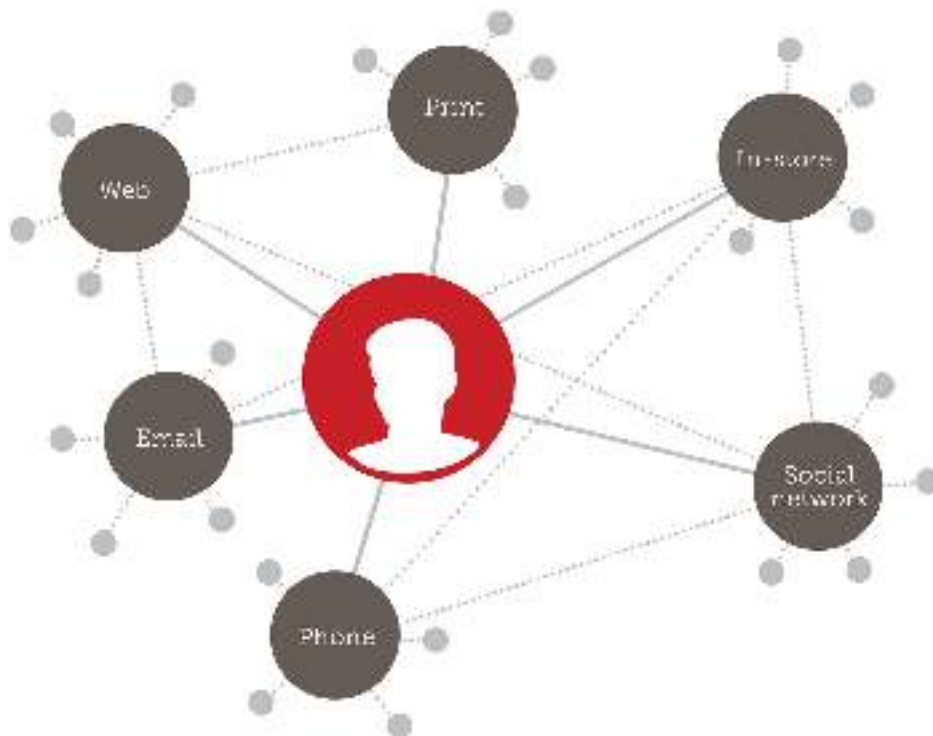


Figure 1.1. The sum of a series of interactions

Broadly considering a user's lifestyle and the overall context of how a product or service is used is necessary if you want to improve on the experience you deliver. This is especially true of digital experiences, and, nowadays, they are closely linked to other channels. To the end-user (or customer), the UX you provide will reflect their perceived experience with your brand, whether dealing with your company online, via a mobile app, or talking to your call center.

The term “user experience” was coined by Don Norman while he was vice president of the Advanced Technology Group at Apple in the 1990s. Upon coming up with the term, Norman said: “I thought human interface and usability were too narrow. I wanted to cover all aspects of the person's experience with the system, including industrial design graphics, the interface, the physical interaction, and the manual. Since then the term has spread widely, so much so that it is starting to lose its meaning.”¹

¹ You can read an excerpt of this interview, or listen to the full hour-long conversation [<http://www.adaptivepath.com/ideas/e000862>] with Don Norman, a luminary in the field of UX.

As Don implies, it's easy enough to let the term "UX" roll off the tongue, but many people lack an appreciation of what it means to deliver the broader aspects of UX, instead taking a narrow approach and considering only one or two elements.

Embracing Multidisciplinary Teams

UX embraces a multidisciplinary approach: the method of using multiple perspectives when tackling a design issue to lead to the best outcomes.

UX incorporates contributions from many disciplines, including:

- interaction design
- human factors engineering (HFE)
- industrial design
- psychology
- anthropology
- sociology
- computer science
- graphic design
- cognitive science

Generally speaking, UX combines all these elements, and covers both digital and nondigital experiences. Designing for user-product experiences that occur nondigitally is often referred to as **experience design**, with the term **customer experience** sometimes used to refer to the sum total of interactions a person has with a brand. Even defining what a customer is can cause confusion among industries; for example, marketing departments might view a customer experience differently from how an industrial designer does.

In this book, we'll focus on a process that can be used across your projects, helping you to create a seamless interaction between your user and your product (whether it's software or hardware). I will assume that your projects are digitally based, though the UX process we'll be examining can also be applied to designing offline products and services just as effectively.

As UX has become more of a buzzword, I've noticed that many people believe "user experience" only applies to interface design. More than assessing a product's ease of use, UX as a philosophy puts the end-user's needs at the center of the design and development process. It's about understanding and prioritizing those needs before,

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