



User Research 101: Focus on Product Users

Charley Wilhite, MA, EDAC

UNM University Center

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www.shimoshinm.com

@Maggid





Hi, I'm Charley Wilhite
UX Researcher

Anthropology

BA - UNM | MA - UCLA | EDAC

Work highlights

Harvard Energy & Environmental Policy Center

Microsoft Innovation Lab

Google ATAP & Daydream

Splunk

Samsung Media Streaming & Mobile



The UX Research Advantage

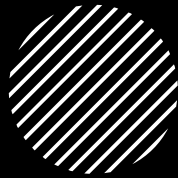
Every \$1 invested in UX
brings \$100 in return.

*"This is an average figure, but it's a
ROI of an impressive 9,900%"*





The UX Research Advantage



Visit-to-lead conversions
can be 400% higher on
websites with a *"superior
user experience"*.





The UX Research Advantage

When organizations invest in UX during a project's concept phase, they reduce product development cycles by 33 to 50%.



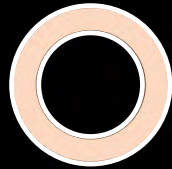
UX Basics

How the user's
experience reduces
business risk

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What is User Experience (UX)



How a person experiences...anything

- a product
- a service
- a place
- a system
- an event
- a combination of these



User Experience (UX)

Internal motivators influence how something is experienced

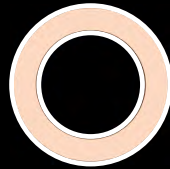
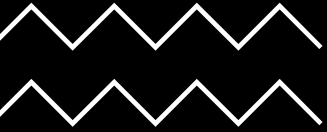
- learned experiences
- biases
- control needs
- desired outcome
- personal values
- emotions/mood



User Experience (UX)

How UX Research is done

- Qualitative and quantitative methodologies and tools
- Scientific method, systematic investigation + analysis
- In product teams, with cross-functional and vertical impact



Foundational UX

Exploration of a potential product/service
User needs, user values, opportunity discovery
What's really going on out there?

Proof of Concept

Demonstration of Technical Performance
Does the thing work under the specified conditions?

Business model feasibility

Where do people want to buy this thing?

Evaluative UX

Refinement of product/service usability
Performance expectations testing
Can this thing be used by users?

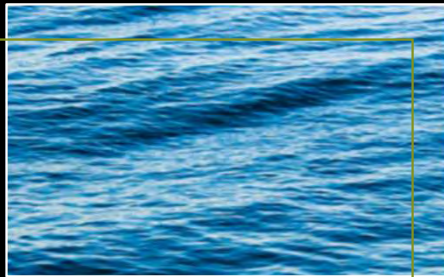


Large sample tests that product execution meets Product Requirement Document (PRD) specifications.
Is everything ready to go?

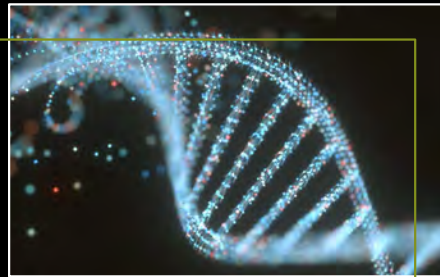




Stages of UX Research



Generative



Formative



Evaluative

Foundational UX Research

Usability Research

Lean UX Research

Includes the users



Generative: Scanning the Deep Blue Ocean

Purpose: Gain a deep understanding from **a few users** in the product/service space. Inform the Product Requirements Document (PRD)


Benefit: Provides a landscape of **current** practices and values

- Frustrations, joys, aspirations
- product/service selection, adoption, use, and abandonment

Goals

- Use cases
- Product/service experience principles
- "User will have the ability to..."
- Guidance on prototype features/behaviors





Formative: Inductive, then Deductive

Purpose: To understand the most value-laden combination of product features, how they are delivered, and how to optimize desirability.

Benefit: The development phase is intimately informed by user needs and preferences

Goal: Arrive at one product definition and design for go-to-market



Step #1

Generate many ideas (some crazy non-viable)

Brainstorm assumptions and why they seem correct

Consider the user's needs & wants with combos of business models and features

Formative UX Research

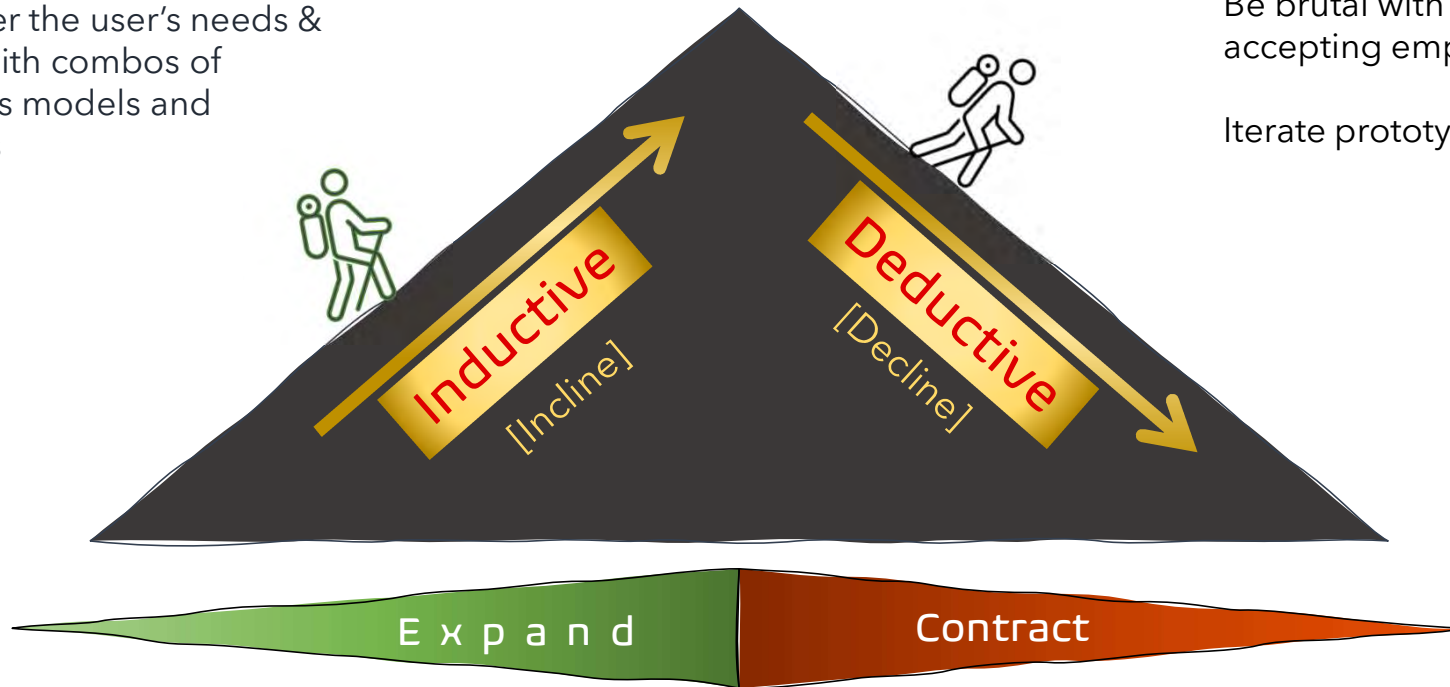
Step #2

Prototype hypothetical ideas.
Test them with potential users

Participatory design: your users contribute

Be brutal with analysis and accepting empirical evidence

Iterate prototypes until MVP





Evaluative: Refining the product

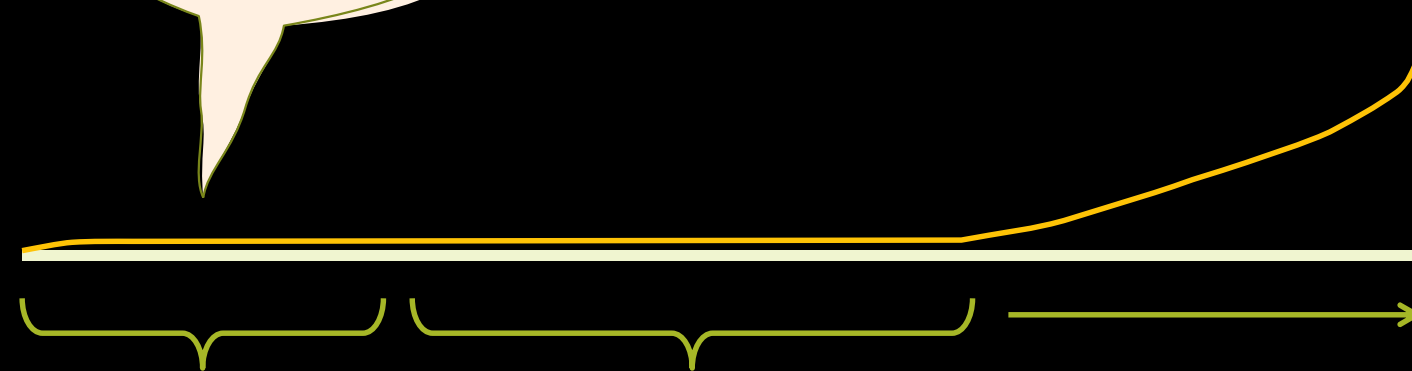
Purpose: Match the product design & execution to the PRD

Benefit: The product produces the intended outcomes

Goal: A successful product launch - users adopt quickly, keep using it, buy more!



We are
here



Product-Solution Fit

*"does this product
create value for the
user/customer"*

Product-Market Fit

Scale...



UX Research for Entrepreneurs

Get out of your own head

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Key Data Collection Methods for Entrepreneurs

Stage	Methodology types	
1/ Exploration	Self-reporting	Interviews with exercises
2/ Value Prop	Self-reporting	Prototype Iteration
3/ Usability	IRL or “lab” refinement tests	



Exploration

Self-reporting

: a **diary study** in which users track certain behaviors 1+ times per day over a period of days.

Cheap & easy way to do it

- Give each person their own copy of a Google Form to fill out for each incident. Results land in a Google Sheet
- Google Forms allow attachments of videos or photos
- Note: participants must use a Gmail account

Interviews

: one-on-one **friendly interrogation** to surface thoughts and feelings about a topic, get examples/stories

Main activities

- Semi-structured interview
- Card exercises (digital whiteboards!)
- Diagrams & sketches



Value Prop

Self-reporting

: a **diary study** in which users track certain behaviors 1+ times per day over a period of days.

- o Google Docs/Forms, Survey Monkey, Qualtrics

Prototype Iteration

: feature variations & interaction tests

Standard session structure

- 1) Review value of current items used for a task
 - o They get deep into the topic
 - o You get elements to refer to
- 2) Feature walkthru (storyboard, process, WoOz, interface mockup)
- 3) Evaluation scales



Usability

Functional and accessible

: In-person, moderated/unmoderated remote, or lab studies that measure users' abilities to complete key tasks.

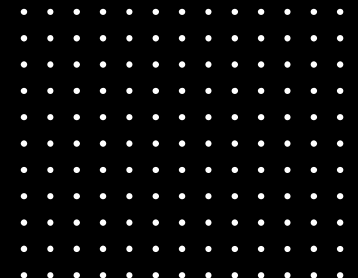
Cheap & easy ways to do it

- IP not very confidential? Consider Mechanical Turk (MTurk) for unmoderated tests
- Digital product?
 - Remote: Screen share - give them control, screen recording
 - In-person: Set up screens in browsers or in your design tools
- Material product?
 - Remote: Design Fiction, video conference/body cam sessions
 - In-person: task completion studies, body cam
- Service? Fishfood, Dogfood, Beta test

- What do you need/want to know?
- What do you think you already know about that?
- How strongly do you feel that you really know it? When/how did you learn it?
- What do you assume is true? Where did that assumption come from? (e.g., If/then “logic”, bias)



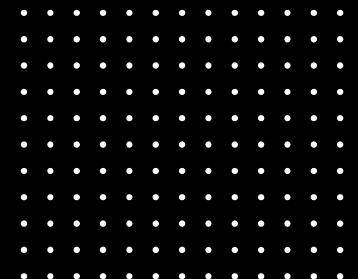
You're Learning



- What answers might you expect to your questions
- Test each question: why do you need to know this? What does asking this question accomplish?
- What would be a surprise?
- What kinds of customers might give certain answers?



Think ahead





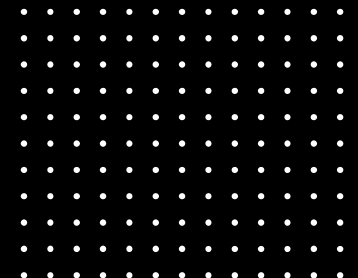
Start with broad questions: current state of things & background

- Immerses them in themselves
- Gives you a landscape to refer to in probes for examples & reasons

Train of Thought: cover topics in sets.

- Each set layers on the previous one.

Structure your Sessions





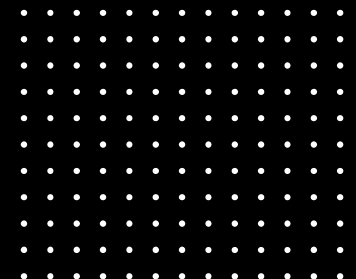
Pro Tip

When customers say in interviews that they trust authoritative figures more than social media, don't expect them to like your online community idea in a survey.

- Tell them the purpose is product development (not advertising)
 - **Confidential** within your company
 - Keep your word
- Customers are free to decline a question
 - You are free to ask a different way to get the data you need
- Customers are free to take a break or drop out



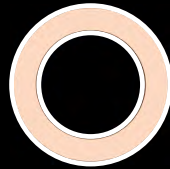
Technical Tips





The Learning Session

Inhabit their world for a while



Team member participation

Avoid introducing mental noise



Remote sessions

- This is a 1:1 session from the customer's POV. Do not introduce team members.
- DO say that team members are listening.

In-person

- First name and role, no active participation during the session

Fieldnotes

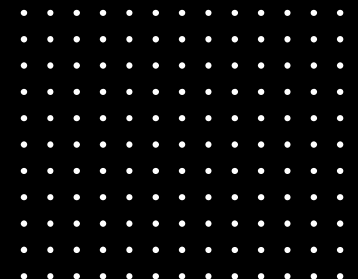
- Fieldnotes are impressions and early reactions. What was it like to talk to this person? What stood out?





- Full answers to your questions may not come at the time you ask
- Do not explain why you are asking a certain question
- You may get a tight quote, but that's not the goal
- Allow silences – let 'em think

Handling Interviews

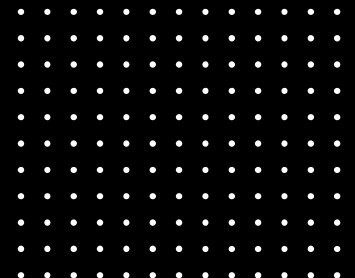




No judgment

- If everything they say is true, they can say nothing wrong
- Not everyone has the same story to tell
- Be objective -- be interested in whatever they say or do

Be a Friendly
Interrogator

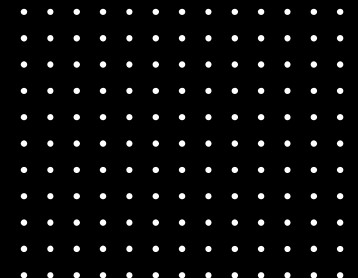




Be less visible

- Let them talk -- you do <15% of the talking
- Do not say you agree or that you have had a similar thought or experience.
- Deflect everything to them

Be a Friendly
Interrogator

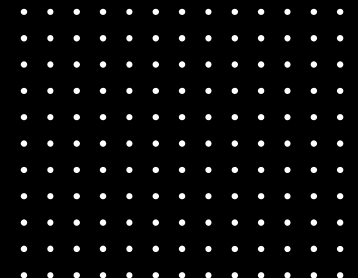




Willing ignorance

- Understand their points **during** the session. Ask for examples, clarification.
- Offer metaphors (e.g., is it more like this or that)
- Press them to express themselves specifically

Be a Friendly
Interrogator





Pro Tip

If you or your belongings
are in a photo or on video,
it's not data



Sticking the Landing



- Finish by asking if there's anything else they'd like to tell/ask you.
- Ask if you can follow-up with them if you have other questions.
- Thank them profusely.
- Consider offering a small gift if they are not government-affiliated.

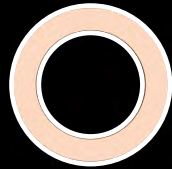
When it's over, you and your team debrief.





The Making Sense Part

- What are the key learnings from *this* customer?
- Research questions & hypotheses: what can be said about what you set out to learn?
- Resist the urge to make a person and their context a model. Create archetypes from abstract concepts.
 - *"As someone who Values X, I want the Ability to Y so that I can Achieve Z."*



Thank you!



Charley Wilhite, MA EDAC



shimoshi.nm@outlook.com



www.shimoshinm.com

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