

Digital communication and 'user experience'

Neil Simpson of sixeightdigital writes that Australian businesses are finding return on investment by utilising "user experience" (UX) design processes for creating or improving their digital products and services.

These days it is hard to keep up with all the buzzwords flying around in the 'digital space'. Surrounded by web, mobile and many other digital products and services, we are continuously incorporating new words and phrases like 'tweeting' and 'web 2.0' into our vocabulary. In particular, 'user experience' is one term that is gaining enormous currency. So what is it and why is it increasingly important to business?

Enhancing positive experiences

Most of us have good and bad user experiences every day, whether we are opening a door, locating a car's petrol cap release button or collapsing a pram. Having a positive user experience, whether it is practical or emotional, not only changes our mood (without us necessarily being aware of it) but also enhances our perception of a particular brand.

Not being able to find the 'on' switch or volume control on a mobile phone for instance, can harm a brand relationship and leave the user with a negative impression. Similarly, we may not want to shop online if the purchasing process is slow and tedious,

with lengthy forms and error messages. The long-term risk is that a brand may lose future business if it fails to engage the user emotionally.

When we find things hard to use, it is often because the design process did not take into account the psychological and behavioural factors of the end user. Specialist 'user experience' designers immerse themselves in what it is like to be a user, in a similar way to actors falling into character.

What does user experience design involve?

In the digital context, UX designers explore ways to weave and blend together functional, technological and design interaction principles with the needs of the user, and the strategic objectives of the business. This can be achieved through various techniques and processes.

An aesthetically striking website is only a small part of communicating digitally with an audience. Successful websites such as seek.com.au and realestate.com.au have been taken through multiple iterations, research, interaction design and user testing.

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In researching a product, company, or organisation, UX practitioners gain first-hand insights by spending time on the shop floor and conducting interviews with real customers. Ethnographic case studies and close examination of the competition can enrich these insights. Information architecture and interaction design help to solve problems, articulate processes and create blueprints. In the same way that an architect supplies floor plans to the builder before any bricks are laid, a UX designer supplies functional requirements to visual designers and developers. Working like this, projects are a lot more relevant to the target audience, they cost less and in turn, they benefit from a measurable return on investment.

UX at work

Having worked with a number of leading UK-based digital agencies consulting for brands including Nokia, Nike, Fiat, British Airways and British government departments, Neil has seen first hand the impact and success of UX processes. With the benefits of the UX process evident in these types of projects, businesses are now more willing to undertake research, interaction design and testing to define and refine details in order to get an accurate quote before proceeding with a digital project. In doing so, many of their previous problems and frustrations are addressed. The process allows clients to identify long-term functionality that goes hand in hand with a phased digital strategy.

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Google's user experience principles

Google's success has been built on the back of ten simple user experience principles:

1. Focus on people - their lives, their work, their dreams.
2. Every millisecond counts.
3. Simplicity is powerful.
4. Engage beginners and attract experts.
5. Dare to innovate.
6. Design for the world.
7. Plan for today's and tomorrow's business.
8. Delight the eye without distracting the mind.
9. Be worthy of people's trust.
10. Add a human touch.

So easy

.... sometimes too easy!

So goes the slogan of electrical goods retailer Clive Peeters, who recently discovered a \$20m fraud by its payroll manager

She "easily" helped herself to this incredible amount of money over an 18 month period, by falsifying accounting records.

Trust placed in senior staff

As a senior member of the finance team, the fraudster had authority to transfer funds from the employer's bank account. This she did - transferring money to her own bank accounts and covering her trail by changing financial records.

The money was allegedly used to buy a substantial property portfolio, motor vehicles and a large parcel of Clive Peeters shares. Clive Peeters are hopeful that once all the assets are realised and the money repaid, the loss may not be substantial.

Internal controls & separation of duties

To prevent this kind of fraud, businesses must have a strong regime of internal controls and ensure separation of duties between staff.

Once implemented, these systems and processes must be regularly reviewed and tested to make sure they are operating to prevent acts of collusion and/or sabotage.

How HMH can assist

Our audit and assurance team are qualified and experienced in conducting internal control reviews and recommending systems and procedures to minimise the opportunity for fraud to go undetected.

Internal control reviews can be conducted without the need to proceed to a full audit. Such reviews provide business owners/managers with considerable "comfort" in regard to fraud prevention.

Talk to Philip Hill or Brooke Calder to discuss how we may be able to assist you.

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David Gregory from the Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS), a not-for-profit organisation that supports Victorian Small Business operators says: "User experience is an invaluable element in website design. Why would a business not consider those who will be buying their product and thus seek to create the easiest pathway for them to do so? We saw UX as a critical element in designing our website. Many of our clients have limited experience with the internet and want to have an easy journey in the selection of a mentor. It is a difficult enough decision to say, 'I need some help or guidance', without then being confronted with a convoluted approach to finding a mentor who can help. SBMS is delighted with the results and believes it is simply the only way to go when developing your website."

Onwards and upwards

Right now, the global economy is still recovering from what has been described

"Having a positive user experience, whether it is practical or emotional, not only changes our moods (without us necessarily being aware of it) but also enhances our perception of a particular brand."

as "a very big hangover after a very big party". Businesses are looking for ways to save money and this is where UX design comes in: it helps an organisation identify ways to leverage 'quick wins' as well as longer-term returns on its digital investment. Above all, UX design provides fascinating and rewarding insights into what we need and want when we interact with the digital world around us.

Neil Simpson is the owner of sixeightedigital, a consultancy offering digital strategy, research, design, development and user testing services. Email neil@sixeightedigital.com, call 0410 685 568 or visit www.sixeightedigital.com.

ATO audit activity increases

Over recent months we have noticed an increase in the Australian Taxation Office's (ATO) audit activity.

The Government's coffers are running low as a result of reduced inflows due to the global financial crisis and increased outflows due to the Government's fiscal stimulus packages - a double "Whammy" for the budget!

Consequently, the ATO is on the lookout for extra revenue and is increasing its level of review of tax returns and is looking at corporate and group structures, and individuals with high incomes.

We therefore stress the need for clients to maintain accurate financial and tax records and to comply with all tax requirements.

Insurance to cover the costs of complying with an ATO audit is available (at very reasonable rates) through HMH.

Contact Jessica Cossart or your usual HMH contact.





The Australian Multicultural Foundation was established in 1988 to promote a strong commitment to Australia as one people drawn from many cultures.

The Foundation is committed to promoting awareness among the people of Australia of the diversity of cultures and the contribution of all people to the development of Australia's social, cultural and economic wellbeing by: adopting issues of national significance and initiating projects in any worthwhile field or activity, to the benefit of the community.

AMF is governed by a distinguished board of Directors chaired by The Hon Sir James Gobbo AC CVO. The other directors include Major General Peter Arnison AC CVO, Ms Carla Zampatti AC, Professor Kwong Lee Dow AM and Professor John Nieuwenhuysen AM (special member). Dr Hass Dellal OAM is the Executive Director of AMF.

Some of the Foundation's activities and projects include:

- Publishing - A series of 20 children's books 'Our Community, Journeys to Australia'. This series tells the stories of people, their families and belongings as they journey from all parts of the world to Australia. This series encourage young readers to appreciate the cultures that make up Australia and promote understanding.
- Leadership Australia - A New Generation. Designed to train a group of confident and well connected young Australian Muslims to present/represent the views of young Australian Muslims to the wider community.
- The Australian Human Rights Commission and AMF are managing the Community Police Partnership Project, whereby 19 police and community groups were funded to improve relationships and increase trust between Muslim communities, police and support services.
- The Australian Human Rights Commission's Freedom of Religion and

Belief in the 21st Century project, where consultations were conducted in all states and territories and 2000 online submissions were received. Over the coming year the body of the report will be drafted, based on analysis of the submissions and findings from the consultations. The report is expected to be completed in March 2010.

- Preliminary discussion in early 2008 between North Melbourne Football Club (NMFC), Scanlon Foundation and AMF led to the establishment of a partnership with a view to developing a 'Learning and Life Centre', an innovative community facility in the proposed Arden Street redevelopment. The aim of the project is to create a unique and rewarding community/sports club relationship which will include access to meeting rooms, a theatre, an indoor sports stadium and a modern, open educational facility.
- The Taste of Harmony - In its second year is about recognising and celebrating the rich cultural diversity

that exists in Australian workplaces. Workplaces from every industry, big or small, are encouraged to participate by gathering colleagues together over a delicious lunch made up of foods from different lands.

- Managing Cultural Diversity training - Aims to enable small and medium enterprises to better understand cultural diversity and how to manage it effectively to improve workplace relationships, teamwork, productivity, market knowledge, community relationships, customer service and competitiveness. The objectives of the training program are to learn about cultural diversity in the workforce and the business case for managing cultural diversity.

AMF is excited about its partnership with Sports Without Borders (SWB). SWB provide young people from new and emerging communities a way to make a valuable contribution to this nation's growth through sports as well as encourage personal growth, confidence and a sense of belonging. SWB provides funding pathways and direct financial assistance for young people and sporting groups, to purchase the necessary equipment to participate in all sporting codes along with training and mentorship.

HMH have been working with the AMF board for in excess of 10 years, providing statutory accounts preparation and audit services. We also audit individual funding grants in accordance with their relevant deeds and assist with tax compliance services.



L-R: Raja Nazrin Shah, Crown Prince of Perak, Sir James Gobbo and Dr Hass Dellal

Personal risk insurance

If..... it is one the most powerful words in the English language; it conjures up a range of possibilities that are both within and outside our control.

With the benefit of hindsight, think back and ask yourself how often you've said "if only I had.....".

In an insurance context, the importance of 'if' can mean the difference between financial and personal anguish, or security and peace of mind.

Take some time to honestly consider the following:

If you were injured and couldn't work for an extended period of time, could you continue to pay your bills indefinitely?

If you were diagnosed with an illness that required you to stop work and undergo treatment, could you afford to pay for this along with all your other expenses?

If you are the primary income earner and were to suddenly pass away, would your spouse or family be able to cope financially?

Sadly, for many Australians the answer to the above questions is "no".

Whilst fate can strike at any time, we have the ability to at least safeguard our own destiny and that of our loved ones against the financial burdens of injury, trauma and death.

Insurance has evolved with our changing lifestyles to become more user friendly, with many types of cover being able to be added through your superannuation fund.

Did you know.....

Many Australians simply don't have enough insurance, and some have none at all. It's a worrying thought when you consider the following statistics:

- 6 out of 10 Australians with dependent children don't have sufficient life insurance cover to care for their families for more than a year.
- 96% of families lack enough insurance to provide protection for 10 years or more.
- It is expected that 1 in 3 men and 1 in 4 women will be diagnosed with a malignant cancer in the first 75 years of life.
- Every working Australian has a 1 in 3 chance of becoming disabled for more than 3 months before turning age 65.
- Around 10,000 new cases of prostate cancer are diagnosed in Australian men every year and around 2600 die from it.
- More than 4 in 10 Australians who have a heart attack will die within a year. More than half of these deaths occur before the person reaches hospital.
- Around 48,000 Australians have a stroke each year, which equates to a stroke occurring every 11 minutes. Stroke is one of the leading causes of long term disability in adults.
- Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability in Australia, accounting for 38% of all deaths.

Don't think "it won't happen to me".

HMH can assist you in determining what cover is appropriate and how to structure your insurance to provide maximum benefits. Speak to Elliot Staub or your usual HMH contact.

"CARE" Guarantee Champion



Our quarterly "CARE" Guarantee Champion is David Caskey.

David is the backbone of our IT department. He is willing to work late nights, extremely early mornings and sometimes overnight stints to keep us all online and functioning. David's years of dedicated service and outstanding accomplishments are greatly appreciated by the Directors and Staff at HMH. Congratulations David.



Special Recognition

Special mention also goes to our Para Planner Sarah Walker.

Sarah is the "Go to Girl" in the Financial Planning department, knowing all the ins and outs.

She is a great person to have in the team when you need help. She takes on responsibilities with little fuss, whilst also helping others when needed. Sarah is a great asset to the firm!



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