UX For Business

with Chris Nodder

Workbook: User Experience for Business Websites

Use this workbook as you watch the course. Answer the questions after you finish each chapter. The questions aren't a test—they're a way to help you think about how the course applies to your business and your customers.

You can use the answers that you write down to help you when you design your site. Or, if you're hiring someone to build your site for you, the ideas you create in the workbook will help you have a good conversation with the designer about what you want on the site. Any good designer will be happy that you've already thought through these key issues.

Homepage

Spend just a few minutes writing down the things that come to mind when you think about each of the following questions. If you have a business partner, you might want to involve them in this exercise as well.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

What do you do or sell?

> How do you describe your services, or the products you sell, when you're talking with customers?
> Try and find the most concise way to say this in only one or two sentences.

What makes you different from other companies like yours?

> What specialties do you have?
> Do you use specific equipment, manufacturers, or processes that set you apart?

Where are you based?

      What geographical area do you serve?

      Can customers visit your location?

      Do they need specific directions?

      Even if they can't visit, what's your mailing address?

When are you open?

      What are your work hours (and what time zone)?

How can you be contacted?

      What phone number should people contact you on?

      What email address should they use?

      Do you have a promise for how soon you'll respond to questions?

News

As a test to work out whether a news section is right for you, list three news items that you could put on your site right now. Now list another three events or activities that will be happening in the next three months.

If you find this hard to do, a news area probably isn't for you. If you find it easy, and in fact you have a whole list of items cued up, then your site might well be a good way of sharing that news with your customers.

Taking this a step further, what about a blog? If you can list five articles you could write right now, then a blog might work for you. Remember, you need at least that many articles upfront so you can keep some in reserve, and you're going to need more on a regular basis.

Terminology

For each product or service, write down what you call it, and then think for a minute what the more generic terms might be for that item.

What might somebody who was searching for that family of products or services call them?

What descriptive terms might they expect to find?

What comparison points would they want to make with other, competing products or services?

For a product this might be items such as dimensions, power, throughput, or performance. For a service, it might be timeliness, years of service, or expertise.

Product / Service	More Generic Terms

Once you have thought through this information, you'll be in a better place to describe your offerings in a way that people can search for, find, and understand.

Trust

Your About Us page should contain a short description of your business. Provide information that will help visitors trust you.

Describing your business

How long have you been in business?

> If it's not that long, how many combined years of experience do the company founders have?

What size is the company?

> If you're a smaller company and this might cause trust issues, explain why your small size is an advantage.

What images would be good to support this description?

Retail or customer-facing location:

> Exterior shot of location
>
> Interior shot of retail space showing variety of stock
>
> Interior shot of office space showing either staff at work or client reception area
>
> Something specific to your location: _____

Location not open to customers:

> Exterior shot (if it's likely to raise rather than lower trust)
>
> Interior, showing workspace
>
> Interior, showing production or warehouse space
>
> Interior, close-up of staff using equipment
>
> Something specific to your business: _____

No location (virtual company):

>> Trade show booth

>> Product in action with staff in picture

>> Outcome of your services (before and after pictures)

Qualifications and testimonials

What trade affiliations do you have?

>> Are you a member of trade or industry groups? Even Better Business Bureau membership can give visitors reason to trust you.

Do you offer a product warranty or service guarantee?

>> Spell that out in one sentence that visitors will easily understand.

What sources of testimonials can you think of?

>> Linking to reputable review sites and customer testimonials on other sites can carry more weight than ones you add directly to your own page.

Information about your key staff

What style of staff photos should you use?

It might be hard to strike the right balance between showing your human side and appearing too informal.

- Headshots are fine for most situations. Have staff wear what they'd normally wear to work rather than dressing up or down.

- If your business is more active or outdoor oriented, it might be appropriate to take photos that are less posed and more dynamic; for instance, a landscaping company's staff would look good in front of a landscape they maintain.

Once again, the photo on its own isn't enough.

- What is it about each individual that makes them qualified to help?

- Why should potential customers trust them?

- What relevant qualifications do the staff have?

- How many years have they been doing this type of work?

- What do other customers say about them?

- Is it easy to contact any one of these individuals right from this page?

All of these things can help visitors make a trust decision, and that, ultimately, is what the About Us page is for.

Products and Services

Assuming you're not running an ecommerce business, the products or services area of your site will need to talk about the types of products or services you offer.

Page layout

Do you sell one type of product, with different options available?

      Yes   No

If so, it might be wise to list all the variants on one page for easy comparison.

Do you sell products from multiple vendors?

      Yes   No

In this case, rather than listing the products themselves, which might take multiple pages and need constant updating, it might be worth providing information about the vendors whose lines you carry.

If you offer services rather than products, the same concept applies. Make it easy for potential customers to compare similar services by placing them on the same page.

If you find you do need several pages, the pages will need a navigation structure to help visitors move between them. Look back to the section on terminology in the Homepage section, and use descriptive words that your visitors will be familiar with rather than trade terms when you build this navigation menu.

Information to display

Customers are trying to research different vendors' products, and the more information you provide, the more likely it is that customers will be ready to buy.

Take a couple of minutes to write down every single attribute of the products you sell: size, color, weight, power consumption, construction materials, throughput, and so on.

Attributes		

For services, instead think about all the different variables that are important about your operation: timeliness, cleanliness, response time, thoroughness, and so on.

Service Variables		

Once you have this list, prioritize it by the pieces of information it's most important to share with customers.

Priorities

Think now about the information that will be important to returning customers. What data can you provide on parts and accessories, manuals, downloads, updates, and other service-related items?

The most important pieces of information should be placed on the product or service page. Secondary information can be shown in data sheets or other linked content.

Images

Relevant pictures will really help sell your products and services. Think about what images you could show on the page that meet the following criteria.

For products:

    Product in use, highlighting size, intended usage, etc.

    Output of product

    Detail of construction or product finish

    Steps involved in using product

For services:

    Results of using service

    Output of service

    Attention to detail

    Before and after pictures of using service

Pricing

How will you show your prices?

- If possible, show actual prices or suggested retail prices.

- If you can't do that (prices vary based on options, client need, etc.), then show price ranges, or the price for an example or case study.

Showing Your Expertise

Showing Your Expertise

What type of content should you write?

Look back to the Homepage section in this workbook. Did you manage to think of a good number of news articles? Did you manage to list at least five blog topics?

Yes   No

If you did, and if your business is in a fast-moving market, then you might consider creating a blog-style area on your site. Article headlines on the homepage should link to this separate section, where visitors can read the full content of each article and also check through your archives. Doing this will quickly build up a set of content that demonstrates your knowledge.

If you found it hard to think of a series of suitable articles, or if you realize you won't have the time to keep writing new content, consider instead a tips and tricks or how-to section with a small but well-written set of static content, living on its own page on your site.

Where should you host your expertise-based content?

Should you host your content on your own site, or on a social media site?

Hosting on your own site gives you the most control, but it's possible that hosting this type of content on a social media site will give you more reach. It's also possible to combine the two, by hosting on your own site but using social media to publicize each post.

If you decide to write or publicize content on a social media site, you must choose which one.

- Where do your visitors hang out? Are they likely to have Facebook accounts? LinkedIn profiles? Twitter feeds? Instagram accounts?

- What type of content will you be producing? Primarily long-form articles? Quick snippets of insight? Image-based posts? Different social media sites are better for different types of content.

- Will your content be aimed at professionals or consumers? Different social media sites have different markets and a different feel.

- Does the social media site let you set up a business account? If not, will you look sufficiently professional using it from a consumer account?

- Is it possible to duplicate this content on your own site by adding a "window" into the social media site, so that visitors to your site see the same information?

How frequently should you update content?

How dynamic is your area of business? Do things change annually, seasonally, or as frequently as every day?

The faster things change in your industry, the more frequently you'll need to update your content to appear current.

If you don't feel you can devote the time to this, consider creating some general expertise articles that will not go out of date quickly. For instance, in the clothing world, fashions change but sizing information doesn't.

Being Customer-Centric

Preparing for a quick, informal usability test

First, answer the following questions:

1. Who is your target audience?

2. What are their key tasks on the site?

3. How long should it take them to find what they're looking for?

Now, go find some people who meet the description you gave for question 1, give them access to your site, ask them to do the tasks from question 2, and watch without saying anything. See if they can do it within the time you specified for question 3.

Gathering longer-term metrics

What questions would you like to be able to answer about your site over time? Knowing this upfront will help you choose and implement a suitable analytics service.

Here are some suggested metrics that you might want to collect:

- Overall number of visits: How popular is your site?

- Average time on site: How long do visitors hang around checking out your content?

- Most popular pages: What pages are people visiting most frequently?

- Most popular news items or blog posts: What content is showing your expertise best?

- Referring search terms: What searches lead people to your site?

- Search terms used on your site: What are people looking for that they can't easily find?

Who in the organization will be responsible for compiling the statistics and understanding what they mean? If you can't answer this question, there's no point in capturing metrics because you won't be able to use them to improve in the future.

Similarly, who in the business will capture customer questions and other support issues and analyze these in order to improve the site? Unless it's someone's explicit job, this work won't happen.