Find out who your users are

slide 1: Introduction

Hi guys! Welcome to [Fundamentals of User Experience Design ], a Tuts+ premium course. I’m [Sarah Kahn] and today we’re going to talk about how to find out who your users are.

slide 2

Here’s what we’re going to cover:

* + Getting data
  + Metrics Tools to try
  + Demographics
  + Technical capabilities
  + Assignment

slide 3

[getting data]

In our last lesson, ‘Getting Started’, we talked about the pluses and minuses of various types of user tests. I mentioned that an important piece is recruiting people who might use your website or application.

You can’t design a good user experience if you don’t know who your users are. Not only do you not know what they’re expecting from your website, you don’t know their technical or physical limitations, cultural biases, or even what sort of device they’re viewing it on!

slide 4

[people are using your site right now]

The first thing you need is a metrics tracking tool.

If you’re starting a brand new project, plan for how you’re going to install metrics reporting as soon as you get up and running. If you’re working on an existing project, get metrics, stat!

You have an amazing resource in the people who are currently or soon will be using your site or application every day. You can harvest a lot of information from them just by passively observing their actions. This information is known, it’s just a matter of organizing it in a way that’s meaningful and useful to you as a user experience researcher.

slide 5

[list of apps]

* + Google analytics
  + Piwik
  + Crazy Egg
  + Kiss Metrics
  + Loopfuse
  + Spring Metrics

There are hundreds and hundreds of metrics tracking tools out there. here are some of them that i’ve used and colleagues of mine have used. They each have different strengths and weaknesses and work in different ways.

slide 6

[chart]

Google analytics and Piwik are both free to use and require you to host them locally. They harvest all kinds of data, basically they just parse your server logs, and can tell you things like:

-what type of computer the user is on

-operating systems

-browsers

-countries

-where they came from

-where they went when they left

and more.

slide 7

[crazy egg]

crazy egg and kissmetrics are my current favorites. they are both hosted and charge a monthly fee, but I’ve found the levels of data they make available are more than worth it.

Crazy egg makes visual representations of data, making it as easy as looking at an image to determine who is clicking what.

Kiss metrics allows you to define variables and campaigns throughout your website so that you can associate goals and conversions with specific actions. It also allows you to follow each individual user on a path through your site from start to finish. Both are pretty highly customizable.

slide 8

[demographics]

while there’s a lot you can learn from your metrics, there are some things you will have to enlist some help for. Your metrics can tell you what countries users are browsing from, but not much about their ages, races, etc.

Part of the job as user experience designer is to get out and talk to people- whether you’re in a large organization and can talk with customer service representatives, or you’re a freelancer and need to interview your client to find this out. Take advantage of all the data resources that are available to you. Don’t be afraid to call meetings!

slide 9

[technical capabilities]

It’s important to know what sort of device your users are viewing your site on.

slide 10

[device]

In this day and age, you’re not designing for one or two screen widths, you’re designing for hundreds of possible configurations between tvs, smartphones, xboxes, laptops, ipads, kindles, and everything else. It’s important to design to the best of your ability for the device or the top few devices that users are viewing your content on. That does NOT mean just shrinking a webpage down to say, ereader screen size.

slide 11

[things to consider]

The experiences are fundamentally different, and the strengths and weaknesses of each should be taken into account. Smartphone apps are simpler and feature just a few big buttons that a user can click with her thumb while walking, for example. A user on a laptop will be able to negotiate a different experience with the benefit of a trackpad and two hands. Your metrics will let you know which types of users are the most common for you, and you can allocate resources accordingly.

The same goes for browsers. There are so many different browser versions in the ecosystem right now, most companies pick 4-5 of the most used among their users and support those.

Your assignment:

* Pick a project that you’re working on now or will be soon. Plan to install some metrics and figure out what information you’re going to look for in those reports.

There’s a lot you can do with this information is it stands right here, but we’re going to delve in a little deeper in our next lesson.

Next time on [Fundamentals of User Experience Design ], will be [Lesson 5: Creating Personas ]. This is [Sarah Kahn], and from all of us here at Tuts+, thanks for listening!