Presenting & Defending Your Design Decisions

Nashville Software School

There's a reason I picked that button and put it there.

You, defending your design.

It's **not** about you

Test your presentations (i.e., run a usability test on your presentations). Practice in front of others that are NOT working on the project and be open to their opinions. Might wa

NICELY remind your team, manager, client it is NOT about them either

Neophilia

Love to use & learn about NEW things. Also known as Nerds & Geeks.

Neophobia

Like things to be the same, work the same. Also known as Regular People.

Seth Godin, *Akimbo* podcast, "The Regular Kind"

We are **all** Neophobia about some things. Seth Godin's example about himself was that he Neophobic about music; if you look at his music collection, you won't see anything cutting edge.

Build Your Case

- **Persona** - who us going to use this? who is going to pay for it?
- **Environment** - where is it going to be used and on what device?
- **Usability Test Results** - where did they get hung up? what was the feedback?
- **Goals** - what are the business goals?
- **Previous Application/Use** - was this approach used successfully elsewhere in the app?
- **Trends & Competitors** - what is going on beyond our window?
- **Experts** - they spend lots of time testing and thinking and writing and recording so you don't have to
- **Recognition vs. Recall** - consistency within applications and across public patterns
- **Style and Patterns** - are we following established rules?
- **ROI** - "customer retention was up x% when we made this change so we are applying that principal here"

5

Experts: Nielsen Norman Group, Successful relevant trends, GitHub, Brenda, A List Apart, …

Key Points

- Explain why this design is the best solution for the project, not what the design contains.
- Don't flood them with too many design choices.
- Set context: set clear objectives for the meeting, reiterate project goals, recap feedback and direction from last time
- Tell a story: Was the decor inspiration for the colors? What emotion does the typography suggest?
- Listen to the client; keep their feelings in mind. They often bring valuable insights and ideas that can make the final design stronger. **(You're not always right. You're FINDING the solution.)**
- CYA: If they won't listen, don't include their version in your portfolio

6

Always Good to Refer to:

- Readability— font size, contrast

- Colors — mood, trends

- Consistency —across the app, across their product line

- Design System — guiding principles! Include themes or metaphors

- Usability Test Results — not your opinion, it's the customer's opinion

- Experts — everyone trusts an expert

Digital Service Plays

1. Understand what people need
2. Address the whole experience, from start to finish
3. Make it simple and intuitive
4. Build the service using agile and iterative practices
5. Structure budgets and contracts to support delivery
6. Assign one leader and hold that person accountable
7. Bring in experienced teams
8. Choose a modern technology stack
9. Deploy in a flexible hosting environment
10. Automate testing and deployments
11. Manage security and privacy through reusable processes
12. Use data to drive decisions
13. Default to open

Use other experts as guiding principles: https://playbook.cio.gov/

Nielsen's Heuristics

Use other experts as guiding principles: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/

Slide 1

EXPERT

Apple's HIG

Human Interface Guidelines

Aesthetic Integrity

Consistency

Direct Manipulation

Feedback

Metaphors

User Control

10

Slide 2

Why?

- If the stakeholder disagrees, ask **Why?** Have them explain the reason for their opinion.

    "I'm curious about that idea. Is it something you came up with from research with customers or is it based on other tested data?"

    "Let's explore that together from <Persona's> point of view so we/I can understand better how to incorporate your suggestion."

- **Ask 3 questions:** gives you time to collect your thoughts, to really hear the stakeholder, and to increase the chance of the negative party to talk themselves out of their argument.

11

Slide 3

If the meeting is at 10am, you are **ready** at 9:55am.

Even if you are stuck standing in the hall or waiting in the lobby. Clients and managers remember early and they remember late. Allow yourself time to set up, have seats ready, copies and swag handed out.

Practice

If your presentation is weak, you undermine yourself as the expert.

- Practice. Practice. Practice.
- Don't get taken by surprise and start to improvise in the middle of the meeting.
- Divide your roles or pick on presenter.
- Get any disagreements OUT before you present to client (manager)

13

If you've practiced you will go into the meeting more confident.

Before the meeting, prepare a list of 10-20 objections that you think the client will have.
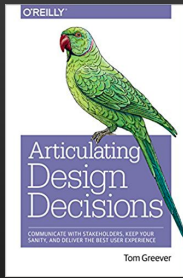
Concept

Care

Transparency

Trust

Control

14

Stock photo examples for mock-up placements.

Tom Greever's specialty is presenting and defending designs.

"How you communicate about your work with stakeholders, clients, and other non-designers is more critical than the designs themselves—simply because the most articulate person usually wins."

NourishWise

Test Validation
Key Findings - Round 1 v2

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