Week 8 Reflective report

This week I found a useful lecture about UI design rules.

It’s pretty easy to find a designer willing to work on any project nowadays. Finding a professional in the area of UI design who is also familiar with best practices, however, is still an uphill battle. If you want to place yourself in contention for these kinds of positions, you’ll need to remain up to date with the latest developments in the field.

Knowing the best practices to follow on every interface design project will put you far ahead of most candidates who simply fire off designs without taking into consideration the variety of details that go into the creation of an interface.

Today, we’ve compiled a list of ten such best practices applicable for UI design in web projects, and to get things started we’re going to talk about the one of UI’s biggest misconceptions.

First things first – sometimes these terms are used incorrectly, and while it’s important to understand that while UI does play an important role in UX, the second discipline has a much larger scope.

This is not to say that UI isn’t important, since as we all know, it can make or break a website or app. However, UX designers (or ‘architects’) need to take into consideration such [diverse factors](http://www.helloerik.com/ux-is-not-ui) as interaction design and architecture, the creation of clear taxonomies, copywriting, coordination with designers and programmers, and so on. It’s the overall design of an entire experience (as the acronym implies), from top to bottom.

In order to create a great interface, UI designers need to rely on information from the user experience angle, such as identifying which problems need to be solved, how the user flow will play out, and determining key product areas and hierarchies. Ideally, serious work on the interface will begin after gaining access to all of this information, then mockups will be made, tested and approved by UX designers and a product will be launched without (too many) hiccups.

It should come as no surprise that the most important insights into how to design a fantastic interface should be taken from your users. If you’re in the planning process of launching a website, you must already have an idea of what your future audience will want but laying out the minutiae is a whole different ballgame.

You need to have a clear picture of what needs will bring people to your website, and exactly how it will go about providing a design that will draw them in further. If you’re a bit lost at this juncture, looking at the competition can be a great way to kickstart the creative process. Which websites are at the top in your project’s field? Are they using similar layouts or colors? Do they adhere to similar styles or seem to cater visually to the same demographics?

Using design patterns that users are comfortable with can help ease them into your website, which you can then differentiate with your own take on their needs.

Once you’ve identified your audience, you can test how your design plays out among them and take their feedback into consideration. Actionable feedback from your desired target audience is incredibly valuable, so get it and use it!

In order to do this, you can make use of several elements such as colors, typography, feedback messages, and visual hierarchies, all of which we will cover point-by-point later on.

Interfaces must also be kept consistent throughout a design. This means not re-inventing the wheel on each part of your project and reinforcing the most important facets of your design at each turn. As they navigate through your designs, users should be made to feel at ease with them progressively, and their immersion shouldn’t be broken due to jarring stylistic choices.

The most important elements of an interface should be highlighted in order to make users focus on them, and design provides an almost endless array of methods through which to achieve this effect.

The simplest example of this technique that comes to mind would be to make an element bigger in order to turn it into a focal point (which is, incidentally, the same reason no one ignores Godzilla). Take Netflix for example – when opening up its main page you will be hit right away with a few highlighted recommendations which draw your attention by being almost impossible to ignore:

Alternatively, simply introducing an unexpected element into your design in a tasteful fashion can work wonders. As we’ve said before, consistency in an interface is crucial, to the point where it can border on repetition. When something breaks that visual pattern, your users will sit back and take notice.