4.3   User journeys

The design of moments of interaction is one aspect of providing a good UX, but it is also important to consider how the moments link together into meaningful strings of interactions (services) that will allow users to achieve their goals. This bigger picture of interaction design is concerned with the whole user journey, or customer journey.

The idea of a user journey is to map out all the various ways in which users will access a service, taking time to design these service touchpoints in order to provide a coherent and consistent UX. For example, someone wishing to rent a car will somehow become aware that there is a car hire service available (perhaps through TV advertising, or Googling 'car hire'), go online using their laptop computer to browse the options available, make a reservation through their phone, pick up the car from the depot and use a tablet device to provide feedback once they have finished with the car hire.

The design of the touchpoints – both the digital ones and the physical ones (such as the visit to the depot) – and how they come together into a consistent and engaging UX is a real challenge for UX designers. The design of touchpoints can be critical for UX. For example, a large online retailer found that many customers were dropping out of the online shopping journey when they reached the delivery request process. When they investigated they found that the 'Proceed with order' button would not work if the value of the order was less than £10. An error message was displayed, but it was in a small typeface near the bottom of the screen. To the users it appeared as if nothing was happening so they would give up. Once a wobble to the 'Proceed with order' button was introduced when it was clicked and the value of the order was less than £10, users understood that something was wrong and many more orders were converted into sales.

Advice for how to design these services comes from a variety of perspectives, including operations management, innovation management, service science, marketing, business studies and interaction design. Blomberg and Darrah (2015) provide an in-depth analysis. These different perspectives on service design produce interesting tensions in the subject. For sales people the emphasis tends to be on how to convert browsing into buying behaviour and for them a successful service design produces sales. From an interaction design perspective, the focus of design is on providing a good experience as measured in terms such as enjoyment, engagement and satisfaction. Dubberly and Evenson (2008) distinguish the sales cycle from the experience cycle. Whereas the sales cycle is intended to push people towards a purchase, the experience cycle considers products in the wider context and aims to deliver experiences that are compelling, and reverberating.

The advice for designers developing a customer journey is to draw up a list of the touchpoints and then lay them out as a service blueprint. This shows the user interactions, touchpoints for the service and how they are supported by backstage activities. Think about the performance of a rock band on tour. The audience see a great performance, but there is a lot of work going on backstage to provide that experience. The same is true in service design. Blomberg and Darrah (2015) use the representation in Figure 4.6 for a service blueprint.

The distinction between frontstage and backstage aspects of the touchpoint is important. The support processes in Figure 4.6 are vital if the cross-channel experience is to be delivered effectively. The system must somehow keep track of the interactions and the interaction history of a user. From the user's point of view, the technologies supporting the service are often irrelevant; they just want to get on with their activities. But from the perspective of the delivery of the service, maintaining relevant data about the interactions is critical. Hence so-called cloud-based services have the advantage that data is stored in the cloud so that it can be accessed by any device connected to the cloud.
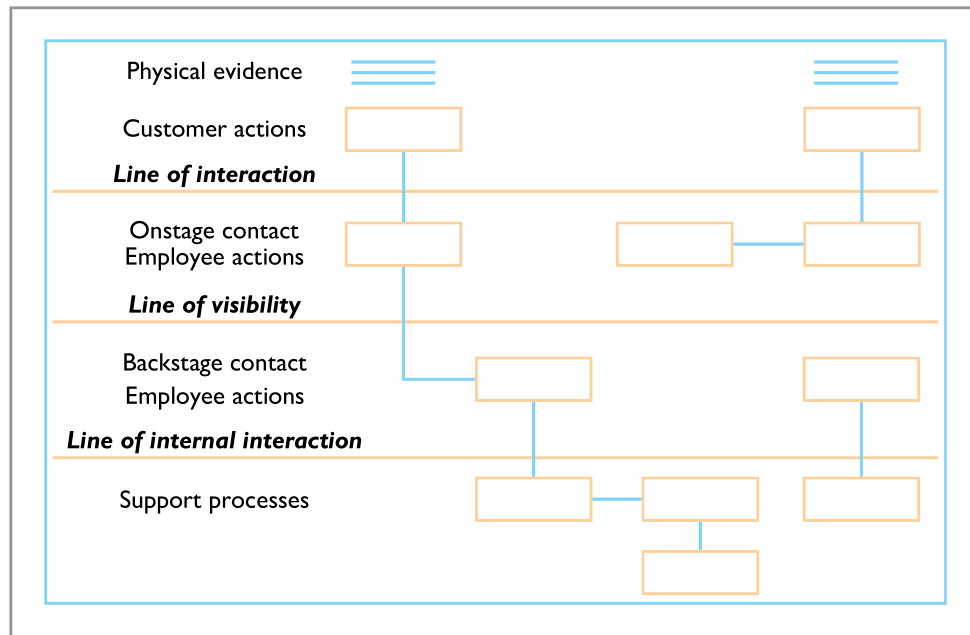
Figure 4.6 A service blueprint shows user actions and what has to happen 'backstage' in order to provide them

Figure 4.6 also illustrates how the interactions in the digital space spill over into physical space. For example, it is common to get a paper receipt following the completion of a service, particularly one that involves the exchange of money. Restaurant bills, till receipts, cinema tickets, airplane boarding passes are all channels of interaction (see Figure 4.7). They need to be designed to provide a consistent and engaging UX. Stepping back further into physical space, the design of the restaurant itself contributes to the UX of a restaurant, in-store layout is important in retail experiences, labelling on clothes is a service touchpoint, lighting design in cinema foyers contributes to the cinema UX and airport security contributes to the UX of a flight.

Figure 4.7 Paying the bill

These touchpoints or service moments need to be designed to encourage and engage users. UX designers should consider how the user encounters a touchpoint and the channel they are using. They need to consider the elements of the UX and the multi-layered nature of the whole UX. They need to consider how to hold on to the users and keep them engaged so that they do not walk away during the execution of the touchpoint. UX designers need to think about how to finish the service, what users will take away from the service and how to complete the transaction.

As with other artefacts of design, touchpoints, services and user journeys can all be described at different levels of abstraction. One of the skills UX designers learn is how to find an appropriate level of description that suits the users and their needs but also suits the people developing the backstage of the interaction design. Being human-centred in the design approach will help the designer to master this.

Service moments come together into user journeys, and just like a touchpoint, a user journey will often consist of before, during and after experiences. Before you go on holiday, you check out different options for where to go. Before you buy a TV you look at adverts and read review magazines. After your holiday you look at photos and remember your trip.

Before the user gets to engage with the actual system or service they need to know it exists. Hence the design of the before stage should consider the user's anticipation, advertising and how the service appears on search engines or comparison websites. This in turn will require designers to consider how it is described through the metadata that is used. The before section also includes the design of social media and how information is shared about the services that exist.

During the experience the focus of the UX design is on enabling the user to complete whatever it is they want to do as smoothly and enjoyably as possible. Even if the service is a physical activity such as having a meal in a restaurant, there will still often be technological infrastructure running behind the scenes that enables the experience to happen. Other services might be entirely online, such as watching a video or engaging with social media. In these circumstances users may not just consume content, they may also generate content through their own posts or photo uploads.

Business models

Although in this book we do not talk much about business models (as our focus on services is the UX), getting the business model right is essential for new services and products to be successful. For example, should a service provider charge a monthly fee, or should they lock their customers into longer-term contracts? Netflix and other broadcasters charge a monthly fee whereas Sky TV requires people to sign up for two years. Many phone providers also like to sign customers up to long-term plans. If customers agree they get bonus features such as free data usage and free text messages not available to those who use a pay as you go business model.

Some smartphone apps have to be purchased up front; others are free, but then charge for additional features; others might be free for six months and then charge customers to continue using the service. Some apps charge for extras when the user needs them (called in-app purchases). Besides the model adopted, service providers have to decide on what a suitable charge is. Getting the balance right between the functions of the service, the amount charged for the service and the additional revenues from extra functions or longer-term usage is critical to the success of the service.

FURTHER THOUGHTS

After the user has achieved their primary goal they will reflect on the experience. They may want to take away a memento, particularly if it was a tourist moment or a special event such as visiting a theme park. They may want to provide feedback to the experience provider and share the experience with others. By sharing with others, whether through word of mouth or through social media, they become part of the before experience for others.

There are any number of different ways of representing user journeys and there is no standard, so designers need to pick a favourite. Some examples user journeys are shown in Figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10.
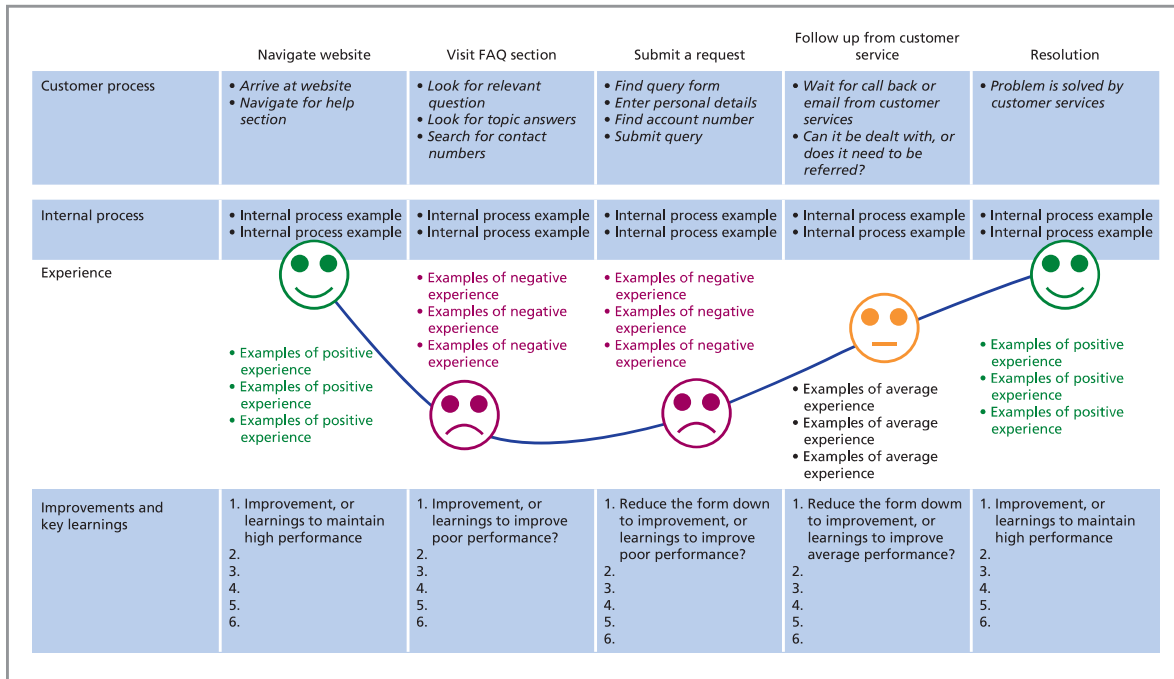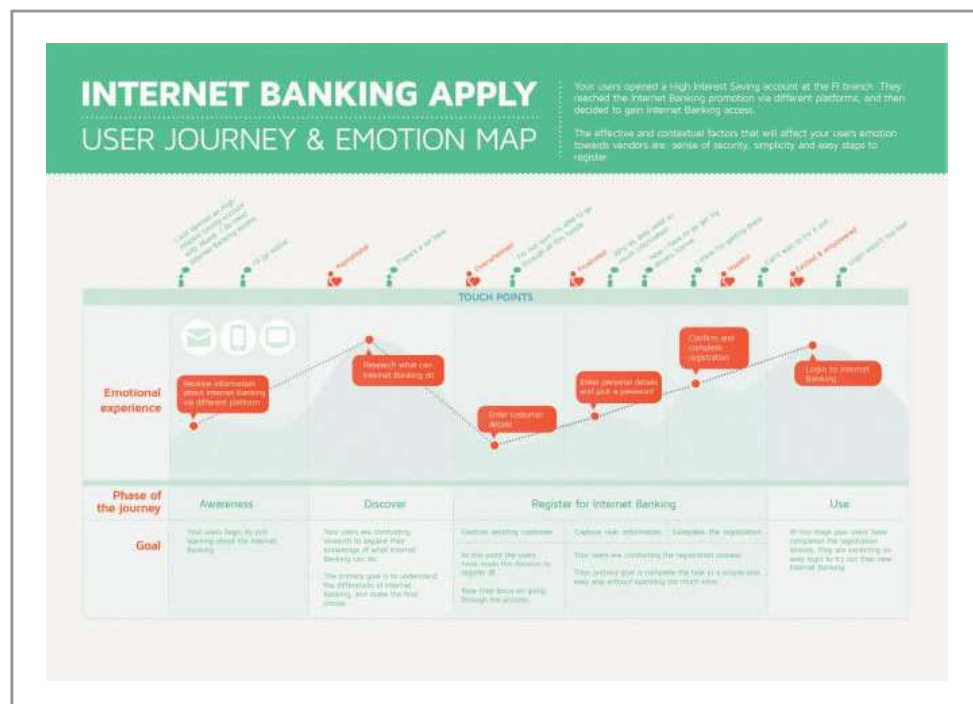

Figure 4.8 User journey mapping

Figure 4.9 User journey mapping

David's Journey Map
Browse information or learn more on a general topic

Stage of journey	⭐ **Identifies Information Need**	🔍 **Looks for Information**			🔍 **Find Information**			💡 **Seeks Help**		
Activities	David's friend, Dottie, tells him to look for grants	Turns on computer and **Googles** "Government Grants"	Clicks on **Grants.gov** and then Search Grants	Doesn't understand Search Grants information and goes back to **Grands.gov** Homepage	Clicks on USA. gov link on **Grants.gov** home page under Financial Assistance	Reads **USA. gov** Benefits, Grants, and Loans page and realizes he is not eligible for a grant	Clicks on link to **Benefits. gov**	Begins **Benefits.gov Benefit Finder,** but it takes too long and he clicks "Contact Us" to find a real person	Fills out **Benefits.gov** webform and types a message to ask how he can get financial help	Checks his e-mail later and sees response from **Benefits. gov**
Feelings and Needs	Thankful Dottie is such a good friend	Feels a little nervous and unsure, and hopeful his search will work	Feels confused and decides to try again in case he missed it	Thinks this seems easy	I hope this link has what I need	Encouraged but needs clarity, comfort, and reassurance	Feels optimistic	Overwhelmed by the questions. Needs to know this is the right step.	Hopeless and discouraged, not sure this is going to help	Disappointed there is more to do and needs support and hope

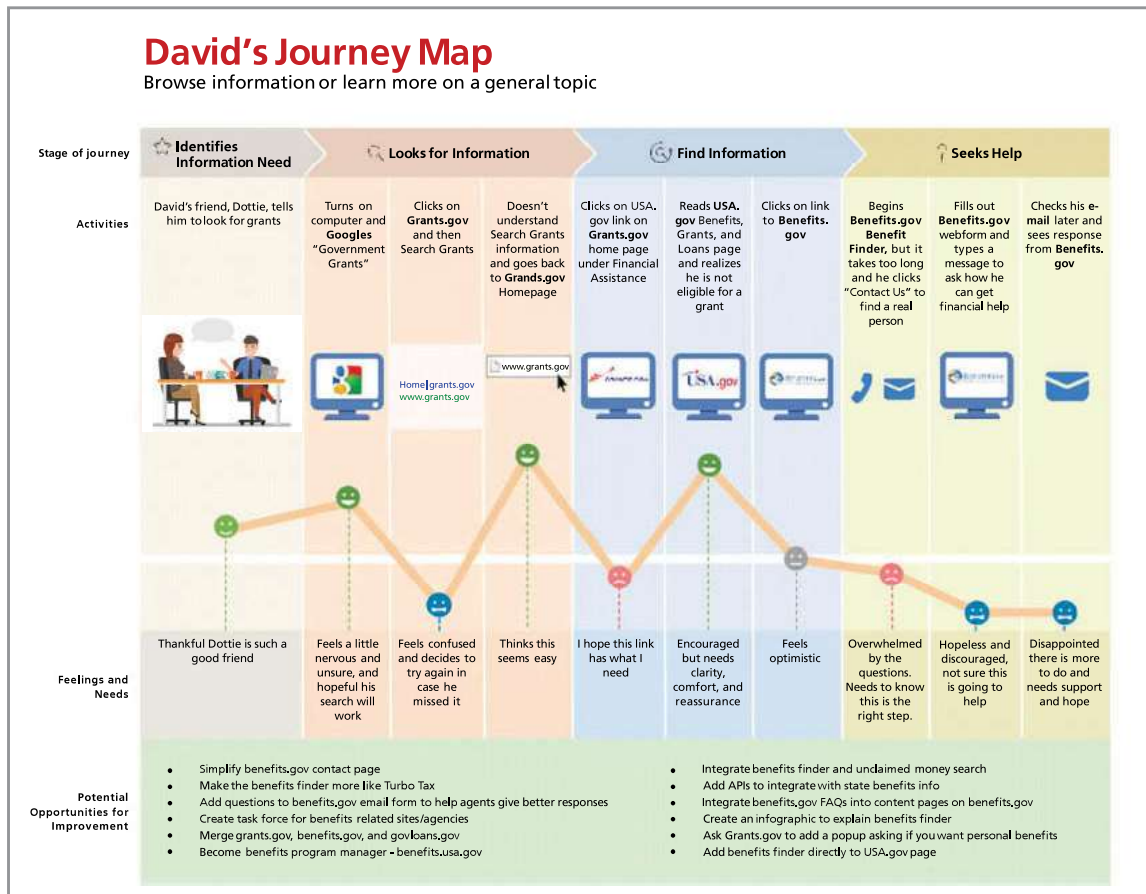| Potential Opportunities for Improvement	• Simplify benefits.gov contact page	• Integrate benefits finder and unclaimed money search
	• Make the benefits finder more like Turbo Tax	• Add APIs to integrate with state benefits info
	• Add questions to benefits.gov email form to help agents give better responses	• Integrate benefits.gov FAQs into content pages on benefits.gov
	• Create task force for benefits related sites/agencies	• Create an infographic to explain benefits finder
	• Merge grants.gov, benefits.gov, and govloans.gov	• Ask Grants.gov to add a popup asking if you want personal benefits
	• Become benefits program manager - benefits.usa.gov	• Add benefits finder directly to USA.gov page

Figure 4.10 User journey mapping

Challenge 4.2

Look at the weather app below (Figure 4.11). Describe it in terms of Garrett's elements of UX framework.

Figure 4.11 Weather app