## Web Application Form Design

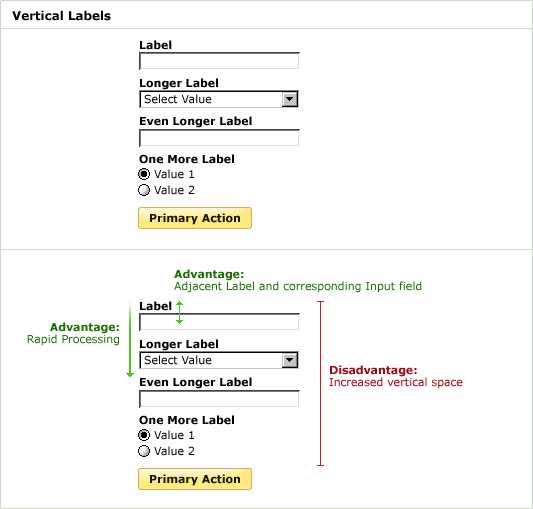
BY LUKE WROBLEWSKI Jun 26, 2007 http://www.uie.com/articles/web\_forms/

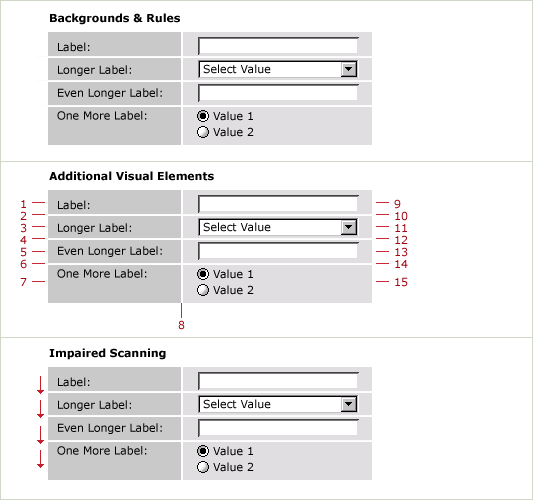
*“Input elements should be organized in logical groups so that your brain can process the form layout in chunks of related fields.” –HTML: the Definitive Guide*

Quite rare is the Web application that doesn’t make extensive use of forms for data input and configuration. But not all Web applications use forms consistently. Variations in the alignment of input fields, their respective labels, calls to action, and their surrounding visual elements can support or impair different aspects of user behavior.

**Form Layouts**

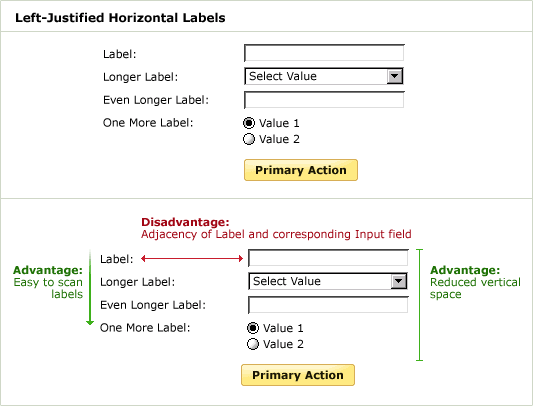
When the time to complete a form needs to be minimized and the data being collected is mostly familiar to users (for instance, entering a name, address, and payment information in a check-out flow), a vertical alignment of labels and input fields is likely to work best. Each label and input field is grouped by vertical proximity and the consistent alignment of both input fields and labels reduces eye movement and processing time. Users only need to move in one direction: down.



In this layout, it’s advisable to use bold fonts for input field labels. This increases their visual weight and brings them to the foreground of the layout. When they are not bold, labels may compete with input fields for a user’s attention as they have almost equal visual weight.

When the data being collected by a form is unfamiliar or does not fall into easy to process groups (such as the various parts of an address), left-justifying input field labels makes scanning the information required by the form easier. Users can just scan the left column of labels up and down without being interrupted by input fields. However, the distance between the labels and input fields is often elongated by long labels, and as a result, completion times may suffer. Users have to “jump” from column to column in order to find the right association of input field and label before inputting data.

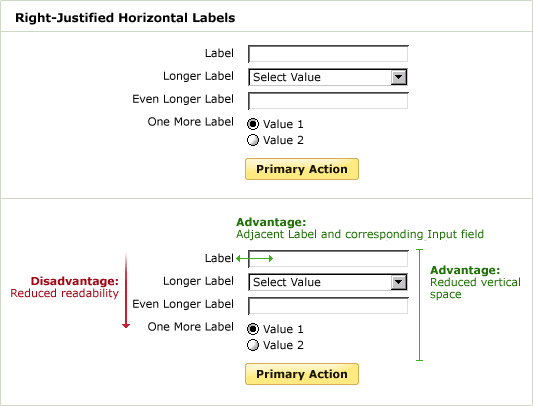
*[Left-Justified Horizontal Labels]*

An alternative layout, right aligns the input field labels so the association between input field and label is clear. However, the resulting left rag of the labels reduces the effectives of a quick scan to see what information the form requires. In the Western world, we read from left to right, so our eyes prefer a hard edge along the left side.

*[Right-Justified Horizontal Labels]*

**Using Visual Elements**

Due to the advantages of a “left-justified horizontal label” layout (easy scanning of input labels and reduced vertical screen space), it may be tempting to attempt to rectify its primary shortcoming: the separation of input fields and their respective labels.



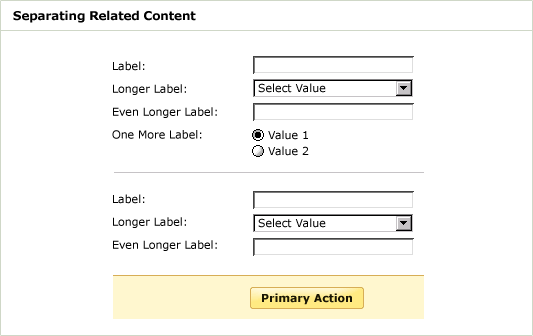
One such approach features the addition of background colors and rules: the different background colors create a vertical unit of labels and a vertical unit of inputs; the horizontal rules form a relationship between each label and input field pair. Though this approach may seem desirable, it actually creates a few problems.

Through gestalt (our innate rules of visual perception), an additional 15 visual elements are added to the layout: the centerline, each background box, and each horizontal line. These elements begin to distract our eye and make it more difficult to focus on the most important elements in the layout: the labels and input fields. As Edward Tufte points out: “Information consists of differences that make a difference.” In other words, any visual element that is not helping your layout ends up hurting it. This can be seen when you try to scan the left column of labels. Your eye repeatedly pauses to consider each horizontal line and the box created by each combination of line and background color.

**Background Rules**

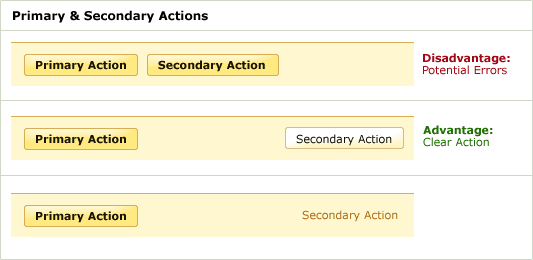
Of course this doesn’t mean that background colors and rules should never be used within form layouts. When there is value in pointing out related groupings of information to users, a thin horizontal rule or light background color can visually unite related data. Both of these elements (rules and background colors) can be especially useful for drawing attention to the primary call to action of a form.

**Vertical Labels**



**Primary & Secondary Actions**

The primary action associated with a form (most commonly “submit” or “save”) needs to carry a stronger visual weight (in the example above bright color, bold font, background color, etc.) than the other form elements and should vertically align with the input fields. This illuminates a path for users and guides them to completion of the form.



When a form has multiple actions such as “Continue” and “Go Back” it may be wise to reduce the visual weight of the secondary action. This minimizes the risk for potential errors and further directs users to completion.

**Vertical Labels**

Though these guidelines can help better position a form for your specific purpose, the combination of layout, visual elements, and content that’s right for you should still be verified through user testing or data analysis (completion rates, errors, etc.)

Luke originally published this article on his web site, LukeW Interface Designs[https://web.archive.org/web/20070628161317/http://www.lukew.com/]. You can read the original article here.

## Label Placement in Forms

By Matteo Penzo July 12, 2006 https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2006/07/label-placement-in-forms.php

*We were able to subject Luke’s theories to usability testing and enrich them through the power of numeric data.*

In using eyetracking to evaluate the usability of search forms for my previous article for UXmatters, “Evaluating the Usability of Search Forms Using Eyetracking: A Practical Approach,” we discovered much interesting data. I’ll provide an in-depth analysis of that data here.

Please note that our ad-hoc test setup didn’t resemble real-world conditions. Since I had to properly measure saccadic activity and saccades times, I had to eliminate all elements that would force users to visually browse through the pages we used during testing.

We based our test setup on Luke Wroblewski’s article “Web Application Form Design.” Luke provided valuable insights and feedback during both our test preparation and results analysis. Thank you, Luke! Thus, we were able to subject Luke’s theories to usability testing and enrich them through the power of numeric data.

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During the process of building the forms that we would test, we tried to respect Luke’s suggestions regarding the relationship between label placement and formatting and the type of form content—well-known data versus unfamiliar data that requires thought. Thus, you’ll find both types of data on each of the pages that we tested. To add some real-world flavor, we paired inputs fields for well-known data with other slightly more difficult form elements such as drop-down list boxes. Moreover, doing so helped us to confirm our previous findings about forms.

Our test subjects comprised both expert users—primarily designers and programmers, but also some usability experts—and novice users. We requested users to complete all of the forms that we presented to them. Our gaze-path recordings were complete once a user clicked the submit button.

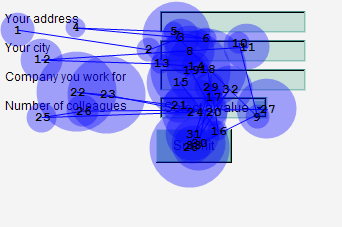
**Test 1: Left-Aligned Labels to the Left of Input Fields**

*Excessive distances between some labels and their input fields forced users unnecessarily to take more time to interact visually with the form.*

This was the first case we tested, because it’s the most popular format in use on the Web. Not surprisingly, both classes of users performed very well in associating the label with the proper input field.

For all users, we found that there was a single saccade between the label and the input field, which means that users easily perceived the connection between them. However, a medium saccade duration of 500ms (milliseconds) was typical, which is quite long, showing that users were experiencing heavy cognitive loading.

The whitespace between labels and their input fields worked well in visually guiding the users’ gaze path toward the input fields. In fact, there were no fixations over whitespace. However, excessive distances between some labels and their input fields forced users unnecessarily to take more time to interact visually with the form. Figure 1 shows the eyetracking data for this test.



*Figure 1—Testing left-aligned labels to the left of input fields*

Since we included a drop-down list box in the form, we also had the opportunity to confirm our previous findings about them: that they are the most eye-catching form elements. When facing a simple form on a white page, the first fixation of all users was on the drop-down list box. This form element clearly conveys its meaning and how a user must interact with it, giving it a higher importance in the user’s mind. Moreover, in our first test form, the item selected in the drop-down list showed just a number, with no reiteration of the meaning the label communicated. We found that most test subjects, including the expert users, were forced to recheck the label to remind themselves of the value of the numbers the drop-down list contained.

**Test 2: Right-Aligned Labels to the Left of Input Fields**

*The right alignment of the labels reduced the overall number of fixations by nearly half, showing that this layout greatly reduced the cognitive load required for users to complete the task.*

While the meaning of the labels and their placement to the left of the input fields was exactly as in the previous test, the right alignment of the labels reduced the overall number of fixations by nearly half, showing that this layout greatly reduced the cognitive load required for users to complete the task. Also, the form completion times were cut nearly in half.

There was almost no saccadic activity between the labels and their corresponding input fields, both because users very quickly understood the meaning of the input fields and because of the ease of the lateral eye movement.

While we had 500ms saccades with the left-aligned labels, with right-aligned labels, the saccade times between the labels and the input fields were only about 170ms for expert users and 240ms for novice users.

My initial concern with this particular form design was that it would be difficult for users to make the transition between typing their data into an input field and moving their eyes to the beginning of the next label, because its position was unpredictable. Well, I couldn’t have been more wrong. Their diagonal eye movements were very quick, and there was no need for them to reposition the fovea over the initial word, as the eyetracking data in Figure 2 shows.

*Figure 2—Testing right-aligned labels to the left of input fields*

Most users—both expert and novice—needed to recheck the input field’s corresponding label in this case, too—though the relative brevity of the saccades made this task slightly simpler than in the previous test.

**Test 3: Left-Aligned Labels Above Input Fields**

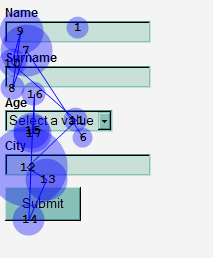
*Placing a label right over its input field permitted users to capture both elements with a single eye movement.*

From the results of our second test, we knew that the nearer a label is to its input field, the more quickly users could move from the label to the input field. So, we were not surprised when we noticed that most of the fixations were right on the input fields rather than on the labels, as the eyetracking data in Figure 3 shows.

*Figure 3—Testing left-aligned labels above input fields*

Placing a label right over its input field permitted users to capture both elements with a single eye movement. Also, if a label indicated data that was very familiar to users—for example, their first name or family name—users did not fixate on the label separately to read it. They were able to view both the label and the input field in the same foveal area; thus eliminating the need for additional fixations and saccades.

*Note—For a brief introduction to how human eyes work, take a look at my article “Introduction to Eyetracking.”*

Moreover, we measured shorter saccade times of just 50ms in cases where users did move from a label to its input field. Recall that, in the case of left-justified labels, the saccade times were nearly ten times as long. So, users were able to complete the form very quickly and with a reduced cognitive load.

After two test cases in which the drop-down list box proved to be the most prominent form element, I wanted to check whether its position would influence the results. Not at all. Independent of its position, it continued to attract users’ attention. In all cases, we found it to be, indeed, the most eye-catching form element. It’s more prominent than even the submit button.

I’d also like to point out that, in this case, none of the expert users needed to recheck the corresponding label; though some novice users did need to recheck the label.

**Test 4: Bold Labels Above Input Fields**

I thought this would be more a sub-case than a full-fledged test case, but the differences in the results we obtained led me to see this as a separate case. I had in mind what Luke had said in his article “Visible Narratives: Understanding Visual Organization.”

*“In this layout [with labels above the input fields], it’s advisable to use bold fonts for input field labels. This increases their visual weight and brings them to the foreground of the layout.”—Luke Wroblewski*

Bold labels resulted in an almost sixty-percent increase in saccade time to move from the label to the input field.

However, bold labels resulted in an almost sixty-percent increase in saccade time to move from the label to the input field—from 50ms without bold labels to 80ms with bold labels—with no apparent advantage from the more prominent labeling. Bold labels were more difficult for users to read and perceive—probably because there was more visual confusion between the bold text and the heavy adjacent borders of the input fields. Figure 4 shows the eyetracking data for this test.

*Figure 4—Testing bold labels above input fields*

I’ve reviewed these results with Luke, and we’ve agreed that the absence of any visual design on our test pages might have modified the impact of the bold labels. However, as I said at the beginning of this article, what we tested was performance in terms of time, or speed, which required the absence of any other visual noise, and the times we recorded for bold labels were fairly poor.

**Conclusions**

Some interesting guidelines arose from this brief analysis of our test results. Coupling the following guidelines with Luke Wroblewski’s form design guidelines will help you to build the best form possible in each different situation.

**Label position**—Placing a label above an input field works better in most cases, because users aren’t forced to look separately at the label and the input field. Be careful to visually separate the label for the next input field from the previous input field.

**Alignment of labels**—In most cases, when placing labels to the left of input fields, using left-aligned labels imposes a heavy cognitive workload on users. Placing labels above input fields is preferable, but if you choose to place them to the left of input fields, at least make them right aligned.

**Bold labels**—Reading bold labels is a little bit more difficult for users, so it’s preferable to use plain text labels. However, when using bold labels, you might want to style the input fields not to have heavy borders.

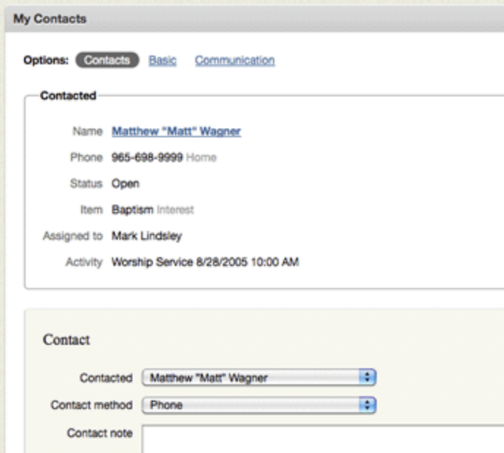
**Drop-down list boxes**—Use them with care, because they’re so eye-catching. Either use them for important data or, when using them for less important data, place them well below more important input fields.

**Label placement for drop-down list boxes**—To ensure users are immediately aware of what you’re asking for, instead of using a separate label, make the default value for a drop-down list box the label. This will work for very long lists of items, because a user already has the purpose of the input field in mind before the default value disappears.

## Design Patterns

http://developer.fellowshipone.com/patterns/

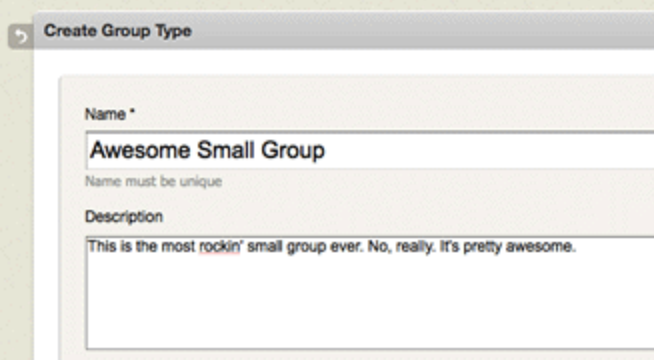
**Fieldset vs. Box**

**PROBLEM** Data needs to be grouped into logical sections, for easier visual scanning and reading.

**PATTERN** Small portions go in a <fieldset>. Larger groupings should be in <div class="box">.

**RESULT** This helps visually distinguish the size of data sets and importance of form elements.

**Simple Form**

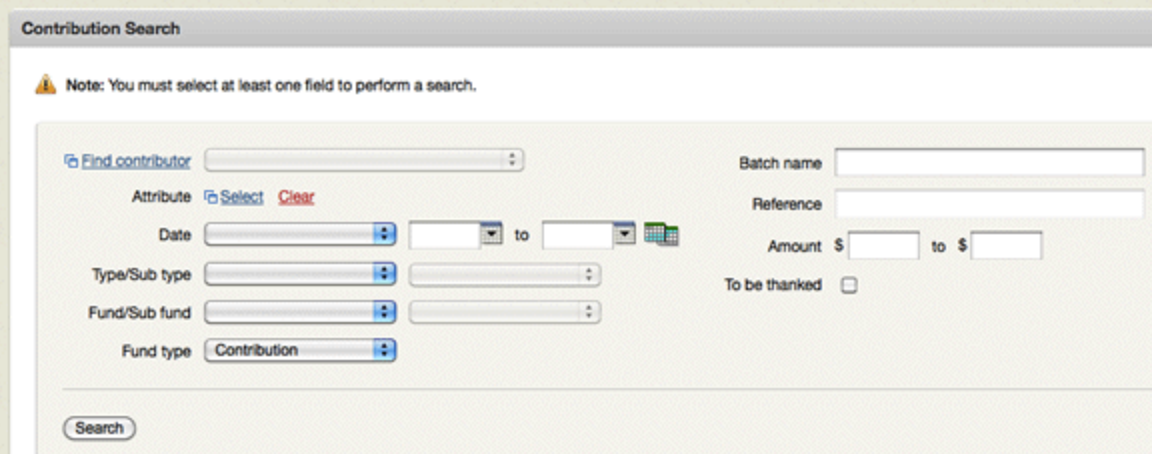


**PROBLEM** The user wants to enter a small amount of data, and needs an accommodating interface.

**PATTERN** When a form only requires limited information, labels and inputs belong on their own lines.

**RESULT** This allows the user to quickly fill out the form, because it is easy to scan visually.

**Complex Form**



**PROBLEM** The user wants to enter a large amount of data, and needs an accommodating interface.

**PATTERN** Form labels and inputs are arranged side-by-side to allow more inputs per vertical space.

**RESULT** This allows the user to enter more data, without having to scroll the page as much.

## Laws of UX (lawsofux.com)

1037 points by seesawtron on Aug 2, 2020 | 293 comments

***Waterluvian*** The site is beautiful and I couldn’t do it. But I’ll still be a bit judgemental. It breaks my first law of UX: don’t be self serving.

The first screen is a long scroll of 20 elegant looking blocks and titles none of which mean anything on their own. I have to click on each and sit through some superfluous animation before I can even get access to the explanation.

Because of the animation, t he natural flow of swiping back on my phone results in a really janky transition.

I have to say, I love the style of these graphics. Minimalism I guess? Reminds me of the University of Waterloo during my childhood.

***II2II*** Being judgmental about the UX is fair in this case since it is a site about UX.

Quite frankly, it has a terrible UX. It took me three visits to understand what you meant by access to the explanation. I could only find a bunch of uninformative slides and a blurb promoting a book on the first visit two visits. On visit number three, I found the explanations. Why?

I originally interpreted the scrolling indicator as an advance to next slide button. When I clicked on the button it presented the new slide and the advance button disappeared, so I further explored the site by clicking on the learn more button. That presented another uninformative slide so I ignored the advance button. After all, why would I want to repeat an action that failed to produce the desired result the last time I did it? Noticing the next link, I clicked on that in hopes that it would produce a more desirable result. Unfortunately, it produced the same sort of result as the advance button. At that point, I just gave up and clicked on the Info button and saw the blurb promoting the book. I tried clicking on the links to the left, saw the uninformative slides, and concluded that it was a gawd awful promotion for a book that included nothing but chapter headings.

Those were my first two visits. On visit three, convinced that there must be something more, I actually tried the advance button on the right slide and discovered that it was a scroll indicator. By that point, I was already so frustrated with the experience that I just gave up on the site without seeing what the creator had to say.

As for the graphics style, sure it's great. On the other hand, taking the minimalist presentation too far produced a site that was more difficult to interpret.

Edit: trying to keep terminology consistent as my understanding of the site evolved.

***networkimprov*** >> ... a long scroll of 20 ... blocks and titles none of which mean anything on their own

> frankly, it has a terrible UX

I don't follow these critiques. The content and navigation of the site is quite clear to me. The trackpad/wheel scrolling stutters very slightly in FireFox on Windows.

EDIT: And hey, it's in Dark Mode!

***epse*** I opened this site on mobile. The blocks are half as high as the titles, making them impossible to read. Clicking a block took me through soms slow animation, which always ended with some graphic growing into view, in the same colour as the text, overlapping with the first paragraph of text...

***networkimprov*** It seems the site omitted one...

#21: More people will visit your site with tiny/mobile screens than large/desktop ones.

***II2II*** The problem that I ran into was the lack of clear visual cues that you are supposed to scroll, which is why I was referring to everything as slides. I simply clicked on the things that it looked like you were supposed to click on. If you approach the site in that way, you miss out on virtually all of the content.

In a way, I should know better. I landed on a news article earlier in the day that started with one of those dynamic infographics that you interact with through scrolling. I was at the point of backing out of the page, concluding that the article was the infographic, when a hint of an actual article popped up on the screen. While it is a visually, I also find it a very annoying waste of time when I am trying to find information.

(Incidentally, I didn't run into the performance issues that others have been mentioning even though I was using an 8 year old computer.)

***ardy42*** > The first screen is a long scroll of 20 elegant looking blocks and titles none of which mean anything on their own. I have to click on each and sit through some superfluous animation before I can even get access to the explanation.

Bad user! You're not following the first law of UX:

> Users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as design that’s more usable.

> Aesthetically pleasing design can make users more tolerant of minor usability issues.

> Aesthetically pleasing design creates a positive response in people’s brains and leads them to believe the design actually works better.

> Aesthetically pleasing design can mask usability problems and prevent issues from being discovered during usability testing.

You're supposed to go "oh, pretty!" and forget how crappy it really is! /s

Seriously now: the first law of UX should be that aesthetics are secondary to usability. If your focus is on making something "eye catching" or "beautiful" then you're doing bad UX. If designers followed that, we wouldn't have so many UX trainwreaks.

***andrepd*** Oh my god, this is exactly how I feel about most modern software UI. It seems like it's optimised to look pretty on screenshots, rather than to actually be usable!

***userbinator*** ...and "pretty" is highly subjective. I find the current "sea of white/blackspace with almost no affordances" and "hide everything that could possibly be useful" trend rather repugnant --- but perhaps that's because it almost always comes with a lack of usability.

***CoryAlexMartin*** Yes, the "hide everything" trend is really annoying. An egregious example of this is how iTunes hides the track number and/or duration when you hover over or have a track selected: https://i.imgur.com/IhwHnfO.png

***tlow*** Hard no.

The first law of UX is that human resources are precious. Therefore design must seek to maximize the economy of user time, cognition, and effort.

***andialo*** I wish we lived in a world where this was true.

This is the biggest problem with tech today, making "eye catchy" software which is horrible to use and getting anything done (and I mean simple things as making a payment if it's just little bit different than the "designer" imagined, for example you want to add a note) is so frustrating because it takes so much time. Yet it was not like that few years ago. Thanks apple I guess ?

EDIT: And then to make the software "easier to use" security goes down the drain. There is a small fintech bank where all you need to know is email and 6 digit pin number to pair the account with a phone. That is, the 6 digit pin number is all you need to know to access the customer's funds. Now keep in mind attacker wouldn't care about a specific account, just get loads of customer emails and try the most common pin numbers and fish what you can - there is no notification when a new device is paired either, indeed.

Not really the best user experience and use of my time if I lose my money and need to fight with the fintech bank to get it back or when my account gets locked needlessly.

The same goes for the constant redesigns. How is that mindful to the user if you change everything (again) so they need to spend their time to learn again how to use your app just to get the same stuff done as before.

***hnlmorg*** The problem with many sites and free-to-use commercial products isn't that interfaces are designed around minimizing user interactions but instead that they're designed around minimizing the most profitable user interactions. This is what leads to email sign up forms and dark patterns taking precedence.

***p1necone*** I suspect in a lot of large organizations the first rule of UX isn't even make it aesthetically pleasing to users, it's make it aesthetically pleasing to PMs in product demos.

And they may or may not even interact with the software directly, or for very long.

Teams will build software aligned with the immediate incentives they have, never assume those incentives are even remotely close to those that might make the business succeed in the actual market.

***muzani*** Honestly, it looks like it was purposely designed to be poor UX to demonstrate the first rule.

The rule seems to imply UI > UX lol

***sgustard*** The 20 laws are presented alphabetically, not in any order of importance. (I'm not defending it, just observing.)

***Drdrdrq*** Let's comment: awful decision. The "laws" are not equally important and as a user I would expect that their order reflects that. It never even occurred to me it could be done differently.

To be honest, this site looks like some designer's playground, not something an UX expert put together.

***Shared404*** > [T]he first law of UX should be that aesthetics are secondary to usability.

I would argue that instead it should be aesthetics and functionality need to be balanced.

Your usability will suffer if lack of aesthetics obscure the usability of a tool. Conversely, your aesthetics need to be reigned in, so that they do not obscure the usability of your tool.

***Waterluvian*** Aesthetics should happen as a result of trying to make a tool highly usable.

Ever performed your craft and you just nail it and as a side effect the thing looks positively beautiful?

***Shared404*** > Aesthetics should happen as a result of trying to make a tool highly usable.

Once again someone on HN phrases something better then I could hope to.

> Ever performed your craft and you just nail it and as a side effect the thing looks positively beautiful?

Best feeling in the world, on the rare occasions I manage it.

***bananaface*** I dunno man, I don't think it's a tradeoff. Make a good UX, then slap on a nice color scheme, some shiny buttons, whatever. The hard part is making the UX good.

***mdoms*** It breaks my number one rule of UX for the web: don't fuck with scrolling. Native scrolling is one of the most natural interactions we have with our computers. Even a slight deviation is noticeable and annoying.

***harrisonjackson*** It is even Rule 5 - your site should work like every other site.

I didn't notice any scrolling differences myself ¯\\_(ツ)\_/¯

***KaoruAoiShiho*** Scrolling works fine here.

***dathinab*** For me to, maybe just (some) mobile browsers?

***craftinator*** Ouch, interface should be consistent across platforms

***p1necone*** I don't know about that. An interface for M+K on a 27 inch screen should be somewhat different from fat fingers on a 6 inch screen shouldn't it?

"Don't fuck with scrolling" applies to both scenarios equally though.

***mcbishop*** It seems the site is designed for someone that wants to take ample time to meditate on and memorize the "laws" (it's basically flash cards).

So it's not designed for me — a person on lunch break, hoping to read at least 5 articles via Hacker News before my burrito is gone.

While I was annoyed there, I still appreciate it. It's a free resource. It's pretty. I gleaned a few useful takeaways (especially the idea of putting more important things on the edges).

***sfifs*** The irony is this designer made an excellent demonstration of poor design :-)

i agree none of the graphics use actually seem to mean anything intuitively to me. Looks like just pretty placeholder pictures.

Also if one find oneself writing down 20 general rules for anything, it's an excellent indication one may not have actually grokked the topic because it's very very unlikely you'll apply 20 rules at the same time. It's likely in some situations, 3-4 are important and in other situations, some others are more important and this ability to classify and recognise what applies where is an indication of knowledge and pedagogical strength.

***dathinab*** It also brakes the rule that all text should be selectable (so that people can e.g. copy past it to an search engine).

(The laws titles are not selectable on desktop/linux/firefox.)

Furthermore the short description of the laws does sometimes subtle differ from the actual long descriptions in ways which make major differences about how "correct" that law is.

***fivre*** This is the worst goddamn thing about Spotify.

Oh, wanna search for a cool band outside our platform, but there name is in Chinese or something else you don't have an IME for? TOO BAD, GOTTA INSPECT ELEMENT.

***thomasahle*** They are selectable on desktop/mac/firefox. However they are links, so you have to start dragging the cursor from next to the link.

***dathinab*** Let me rephrase:

They are not easily selectable.

I mean who expects the whole card to act as a link and as such need special handling wrt. selecting text? Especially if there is an explicit "link button" to navigate to the "more details view" just besides the card.

The funny thing is that while for some users the whole card acting as a single hyperlink is intuitive (even through there is no indication that it does) for others it isn't intuitive at all and at most they would expect it to behave like a normal tile (it looks like a title) .

The logo on the card being clickable and being a hyperlink on the other hand is probably expected by much more people.

***anilakar*** Fitts's law taken to the extreme.

***finger*** On Windows you can select text in hyperlinks if you hold down the alt key before you click and drag to select the text.

***jack1243star*** Looks like I'm one of today's lucky 10000.

***renewiltord*** Good catch. I can verify this is also the behaviour on Linux.

***\_zg4q*** Un-selectable text on pages makes me so unreasonably angry.

***alangpierce*** In case others are also confused by:

> The first screen is a long scroll of 20 elegant looking blocks and titles none of which mean anything on their own.

The page behaves differently on mobile vs desktop, and that quote is a description of the mobile experience. On desktop, it also includes a one-sentence explanation of each law without needing to click through.

***romanows*** Just the first screen and then not the subsequent screens depending on where you click. I clicked around trying to figure out what to do and got to what looked like presentation slides with a prev/next links. I just saw text ("Doherty Threshold") and a meaningless graphic. Clicking on the screen does nothing. I didn't realize you were supposed to scroll down for more text, I just didn't see the scrollbar and I guess I wasn't looking for it because the page looked like slides.

***andai*** Yeah, the site breaks the fifth rule, Jakob’s Law:

> Users spend most of their time on other sites. This means that users prefer your site to work the same way as all the other sites they already know.

Side note, this text was hard to copy because the site changes the text highlight color to black, the same as the background.

***sjwright*** Though to be fair, on desktop at least, I don't think the site breaks modern web conventions in any egregious way which compromise UX. In most critical respects it works like any other website: it scrolls normally, it has headings and subheadings, it links off to pages located at different URLs, and those inner pages have reasonably conventional layouts.

I agree that the mobile experience is broken. They should rethink the layout to add the summaries back onto the main page.

If I was offering advice to the designers, I would suggest they abandon the obsession with 100vh layouts and always have a little bit of scrollable content peeking in from the bottom. 100vh layouts evokes the slideshow metaphor, which changes how people expect interaction to function.

I would also restyle the "LEARN MORE" buttons to make them clearer. My brain somehow completely ignored them on first viewing. I saw them on subsequent viewings but the low contrast makes them not seem very clickable, I think they could be easily misinterpreted as shortcuts to the next content "slide".

***galaxyLogic*** Ironically the first law says "Users perceive aesthetically pleasing design as design that's more usable".

So now you say "I love the style of these graphics". So if the 1st law is correct it means you perceive this design as usable.

Then here's the irony: Just because you PERCEIVE it as more usable does not necessarily mean it is more usable. Which seems to be the case as per your experience.

But so what is the point about trying to make users PERCEIVE a design as usable? Shouldn't the goal be to make it actually usable whether users perceive it as such or not?

***fintechie*** > I love the style of these graphics. Minimalism I guess?

It's a "Memphis style" variant. Pretty trendy these days. Now the industry is starting to move to "Neumorphism".

***ardy42*** > It's a "Memphis style" variant. Pretty trendy these days. Now the industry is starting to move to "Neumorphism".

Really? I thought Memphis style was this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memphis\_Group and this: https://www.megapixl.com/illustration-for-hipsters-memphis-s... (e.g. "80s style").

This website is not giving me that impression. If anything, it reminds me of a style I associate with the 60s or 70s (namely a sans serif font coupled with geometric graphics that use multiple shades of the same bright color).

Edit: I think it's closer to the "Swiss/International Style": https://www.google.com/search?q=Swiss/International+Style+Gr..., but I'm by no means an expert.

***limograf*** It's ITS derived but the nearer referent is Material via Penguin Book covers from around 1960 to 1975, like the classic Hare Sitting Up: https://www.flickr.com/photos/joekral/231480092/in/album-721...

***summarity*** It borrows from both Swiss style and constructivism.

***mortenjorck*** I wouldn't call these Memphis at all, although Memphis certainly grew out of the same milieu. More than anything, these are referencing the look of Swiss style and mid-century modern book cover design, such as those by Rudolf de Harak.

***xingyzt*** The same style, logo and all, is used on Google’s site for material design. http://material.io/

***staplers*** Lol this is not Memphis, which is an art movement from the 80s. "Corporate Memphis" is new term to describe the over-the-top illustrated landing pages which are very common in modern web design.

It seems you are conflating "Memphis" from modern web design. What we see on the Laws of UX cards is geometric abstraction.

***fintechie*** Hmm are you sure? google "memphis style symbols" and let me know if you see any similarities.

It's like saying Apple is not Bauhaus.

***tobr*** Googling “memphis style symbols” gives no useful results, just poorly made stock art. The design of the site is not at all akin to the Memphis Group, which is characterized by a sense of whimsy and lack of gravity, clashing colors and dazzling patterns.

Regarding neumorphism, I’d bet that will be much like the “long shadow” trend of yore; an interesting style that is hyped until, a short time after, the appeal of the newness and uniqueness wears off completely.

***ZephyrBlu*** > Now the industry is starting to move to "Neumorphism"

Really? Neumorphism is cool to look at occasionally, but I would hate it if everything started looking like that.

***mushbino*** Definitely not Memphis, but I'd say it's in the Brutalist category.

***Waterluvian*** Thanks. Two new terms to google.

***shrimpx*** I found the organization to be great, and there’s a “next” button at the bottom of every page so you can consume the whole thing linearly.

***valuearb*** Never saw it. But did see all the pretty images.

***cosmotic*** Haha, I didn't even realize you could click to get more info until you said something.

***keithnz*** There's also some "dark patterns" like in the info section, if you click the twitter link, it trys to make you tweet the link to the webpage.

***agumonkey*** rule 21: favorize balanced density of information rather than aesthetics ;)

***bensfrankl*** > The first screen is a long scroll of 20 elegant looking blocks and titles none of which mean anything on their own.

The index page is even worse. It sits under the burger/help menu. Non of the titles make sense, you'll have to click each and read to have a clue.

***paulie\_a*** The site is completely broken on my mobile.

Paulie law: make a website you would like to use

The other 25 are irrelevant

***renewiltord*** Found the short summaries sufficient for everything except Law of Prägnanz, which I can't see how to apply. Much preferred the name+blurb style over a bigger description.

***northwest65*** Wait, there's animation?

***Drdrdrq*** Just stuttering for me (ff mobile).

***hinkley*** Bit low on contrast and flirting with over-saturation.

***amelius*** > I have to say, I love the style of these graphics. Minimalism I guess?

I'd say if you practice Minimalism, then also make sure it applies to the total amount of space you're using for it ;)

***Waterluvian*** Yeah I’m probably using the entirely wrong term.

Whatever you call this style.

***smrk007*** It’s much better from desktop view, I found.

***pbreit*** First law quite ironic.

***muzani*** Here's the straightforward plaintext version:

1. UI > UX.

2. Respond in less than 400 ms.

3. Make buttons clickable.

4. Make it simpler.

5. Copy functionality and UX off other sites.

6. Draw borders around similar functionality.

7. Simpler imagery is better.

8. Users think objects next to each other do similar things.

9. Similar items close together look like one big thing.

10. Things that look the same (color, font, etc) will look like they do the same thing.

11. The average person can remember 5-9 things at once.

12. Remove all unnecessary elements.

13. Focus on the 20% that does 80% of things.

14. Any task will inflate until all of the available time is spent.

15. People judge the experience by its beginning and end.

16. Be tolerant to whatever actions the user may take.

17. People remember the first and last items in a series.

18. You can't reduce all the complexity.

19. When one thing stands out from others in a group, it will be remembered.

20. People remember incomplete tasks, i.e. use progress bars.

4 and 12 are identical. 14 has nothing to do with UX or UI. 15, 11, and 17 are the same. 18 is an excuse masquerading as a Law. From 11-18, it feels a lot of these are pulled in from some Tim Ferriss book or some generic self-help Seven Secrets of Highly Influential People. Perhaps it believes its 15th and 17th law so much that it thinks it can hide fluff in the middle of the list.

It establishes credibility with a lawsofux.com domain them then proceeds to wreck it by violating its 7th law. It does solidly prove its first law, that if you have a pretty enough site, everyone will believe it.

***read\_if\_gay***\_ Your critique is based on your interpretation of the laws which is in many cases clearly incorrect.

Take for example 15. It doesn’t say people judge by the beginning and the end, but by the peak and the end. Or 4 - representing Hick’s law as “make it simpler” misses so much nuance that the key point is completely missed.

It rather seems like you barely skimmed the page before deciding to shit on it for arbitrary reasons.

***muzani*** > It rather seems like you barely skimmed the page before deciding to shit on it for arbitrary reasons.

"People will perceive and interpret ambiguous or complex images as the simplest form possible, because it is the interpretation that requires the least cognitive effort of us."

If a website violates its own laws, that brings into question the credibility of the laws, or the credibility of the author of the website. Without credibility, it feels like a waste of time to do anything more than skim... perhaps this is a failure of UX?

Fair point about 15, but neither you nor the website managed to express Hick's Law any better than KISS.

***read\_if\_gay*** So an example of an application of Hick's Law is when you have a huge country list dropdown. Per Hick's Law we know that presenting users with many choices is bad because it'll take them forever to make their pick. But if there's going to be a small number of options that the vast majority of users will choose, such as with countries it might be the US and a few EU countries, you can improve this by putting those countries first and presenting an alphabetically sorted list of the rest after them.

You can see how this doesn't just boil down to "make it simpler". And many of your summaries similarly miss the point.

I do admit that the website doesn't elaborate on the concepts very much. For example, if I hadn't known about Hick's law beforehand, I might have arrived at the same conclusion as you. But they do link further reading which seems to do the job of explaining the laws in detail. So I think the website is a nice reference if you go the extra mile and look at the links.

***jimktrains2*** > But if there's going to be a small number of options that the vast majority of users will choose, such as with countries it might be the US and a few EU countries, you can improve this by putting those countries first and presenting an alphabetically sorted list of the rest after them.

I hate when people do this. It messes with selection by keystroke. It's frustrating and breaks the default means of using a drop-down box.

***playpause*** Agreed. I’d add there’s something perverse and elitist about ‘solving’ this problem by making it easier for one group of users and more difficult for the rest.

***read\_if\_gay*** Ranking common countries first only seems like an issue because of our sensitive political climate. Or do you still think it's "perverse and elitist" to put commonly bought bus tickets before more rarely bought options like season tickets in ticket machine menus?

***playpause*** I don't think that's a good analogy. But my comment reads way harsher than I intended it. I've probably done it myself in the past – sticking a handful of key countries at the top of the selector. My point is it isn't good design, it's a lazy hack. And I think if I was a user from one of the 2nd tier countries, I'd find it pretty elitist. The ticket machine analogy doesn't apply.

***read\_if\_gay*** Why not? It’s not even an analogy, it’s exactly the same hack applied to a different scenario.

***noahtallen*** You could also solve the problem a lot smarter by detecting the current locale and using that to determine the suggested option, or even better by using a combo box. It’s really annoying to scroll through more than 5 items in a drop down menu, no matter the content :)

***badhombres*** I can see how it can be perceived as potentially elitist if you put certain countries on top, but it can be more of the product understanding it's market. It knows that one country is going to use it's product more than others. If it decides to expand, I would hope that it would use other potential factors to sort a likely country the user is from to the top as well.

***read\_if\_gay*** It frustrates me too for the same reason, but for many apps the majority of users isn't advanced enough to use keyboard input to navigate dropdowns, so depending on your userbase it might make sense to do it. Especially because with this trick you're already trading the minority's UX for that of the majority anyway.

***mbesto*** > It's frustrating and breaks the default means of using a drop-down box.

Which equally gets broken by different ways to write countries:

United States of America (U), America (A)

United Kingdom (U), Great Britian (G), England (E)

***corobo*** Has this occurred at any time since the 90s and if so where

***mrmcht*** > It rather seems like you barely skimmed the page before deciding to shit on it for arbitrary reasons.

Hacker News in a nutshell.

***yoz-y*** Worst thing is, that taking 1, 4, 11, 12 and 13 as a gospel ends up with stuff like macOS Big Sur. Power users are left wanting because features that are useful, but a tiny bit niche are getting either removed or hidden in shelves.

***andialo*** Or gnome's hell.

***pasiaj*** People judge an experience by its peak and end, not beginning and end.

The best (or worst) part and the last part, that is.

***prox*** I highly recommend in the ux threads to read “about face : the essentials of interaction design”

It is a comprehensive look at ux and goes over the history, the context and how to incorporate in a project.

***jakear*** I cannot even begin to fathom how a ux website that literally touts "don't make your users wait more than 400ms" as it's #2 rule also has

- 400ms css transition

- network load of new page

- scrolling down to view content

- another 400ms transition to go back to main content

as its primary mechanism of interaction... is the irony totally lost on them? Or did they drink the #1 kool aid to the extent that they believe their "design" will outweigh their myriad UX failures?

***GuB-42*** The 400ms rule is that if the user does something, the UI must do something, anything.

It can mean "display the linked page within 400ms" or "start the animation within 400ms". You can't expect 1 TB of data to be transferred within 400ms but you can display a progress bar within 400ms.

Apple used that to great effect. iPhones, at least in the early days always felt more responsive than Android phones. That because they hid latency using smooth animation. And it worked. It was also apparent when I compared Chrome and Firefox a few years ago. Chrome felt faster but mostly because Chrome was faster at showing something on screen. They took about the same time to fully load the page.

***jakear*** Also, this is a Very different scenario to the listed. The html loads in < 10ms, But I have to wait 400ms (!!!) to see it. It’s actually the exact opposite of the cases you mentioned above, they take a fast operation and dramatically reduce the perceived performance by making you wait 400ms (!!!) for it to complete.

***jakear*** Discussing "waiting for an animation is okay" at https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=24031824

Side note, it would be very interesting if comments were a DAG rather than a Tree... that way one could respond to several comments with the same thread.

***pretty\_lorelei*** The button in the bottom left corner of individual rule pages is almost sadistic: "Do you want to scroll down a screen to view actual content you already clicked for - or find and click the button in the place your cursor spends the least time at?" Edit: also I will never click the social links on the right, because they are absolutely unreadable to me.

***dahart*** None of those things you listed are in conflict with rule #2.

The length of an animation is not the same as making your users wait for an initial response to your input. The rule is talking about how fast the computer appears to acknowledge and begin responding to a user input, it is not talking about how fast any given task is completed. The wait is the length of time between clicking the button and when the screen starts to animate.

Animation you have to wait for can sometimes be a bad design choice on a page, and I'm not a big fan of overuse of css transitions. But a navigation transition helps the user keep mental track of where they are, and it specifically signals that the computer is responding to your input. The animation itself here doesn't break the Doherty threshold, it does the opposite, it meets the Doherty threshold.

Network loading of a new page is unavoidable (out of the control of the page author), is absolutely standard practice for internet apps (see Jakob's law), and your browser (not the page) is what handles the interaction. The browsers adhere to the rules listed here to every extent possible, and they respond to page loads instantly by showing you a loading spinner, a blank page, and allowing interactions like cancelling the load while loading. Again, the interaction criteria here is that the computer acknowledges your input, not that it is required to finish something that can take time.

Scrolling is another interaction that meets rule #2, it doesn't break the rule. The rule is not about design or layout. When scrolling, if the page is moving in response to your input, then it's meeting the rule. And scrolling is one of the things browsers bend over backward to make as smooth and fast as possible.

***jakear*** Response to "making users wait for an animation is okay" here: https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=24031824

> Network loading of a new page is unavoidable (out of the control of the page author)

Nope, the author had complete control over how much information they wanted to show on the main page vs the details page. In desktop view they show the single-sentence descriptions on the main page, in mobile they don't. So they've forced mobile users to wait for the network load (potentially much more than 400ms) completely unnecessarily.

> Scrolling is another interaction that meets rule #2, it doesn't break the rule.

Sure, it doesn't break rule #2 specifically, but it does break #3. And, more importantly, it's shitty UX and has no place on a "Rules of UX" website, except maybe as a counterexample.

***dahart*** > I'd probably prefer 400ms of a static screen to 400ms of animation.

The alternative here is no visual response to a click at all. I'm not okay with that, and I seriously doubt you'd be okay with it in general. Most people aren't (this has been shown). A 400ms delay after button clicks and scrolling and other interactions is an indication that your input was not received, and it feels intolerable to people today. The 400ms standard here was set 40 years ago. Today software feels completely broken if it doesn't respond with something in under 100ms, and desktop browsers typically do something within 33ms.

> the author had complete control over how much information they wanted to show

That's irrelevant. The browser does respond to your page load request instantly, with a blank page and a spinner. It doesn't break the rule.

Again, you can criticize the choices with your own opinion at a subjective level, this doesn't mean the authors aren't following their own advice. It feels like you're looking for reasons to justify not liking the page. You're free to not like the page, I won't disagree with that. What I disagree with is the reason given.

> Sure, it doesn't break rule #2 specifically, but it does break #3.

It seems like you're moving on to misunderstanding rule #3. Scrolling and clicking does not apply to Fitts' Law.

EDIT: I said scrolling doesn't apply to Fitts' law, and I meant that specifically as a reponse to, and in the context of the suggestion being made here by the parent: scrolling to find a new unknown target plus acquiring a new target, plus moving to click on the new target.

Fitts' Law has been studied on scrolling alone, for example: https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/wp-content/uploads/...

Extending the law to include the number of interactions is going to be tautological in the sense that if number of manual interactions is your "distance" then of course more will take longer. Including targets that are unknown is just beyond the scope of what has been studied and shown, I'm saying it is not really in the spirit of Fitts' law. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitts%27s\_law

***jakear*** Are you honestly, and I mean honestly honestly, trying to argue that needing to scroll then move your mouse to reach a target can not be thought of as a target being further away when it comes to Fitts' law and the relationship between distance and time to acquire a target? It seems to me that you are choosing to focus on the specific text used in a rule as opposed to the concept that rule is trying to convey. I don't enjoy arguing over that sort of thing whatsoever, so I'll have to call it a day and go back to spreading mulch. Good day :)

***dahart*** Your question is a straw man. You can think of scrolling as something being further away if you want, and I don't disagree. That doesn't mean Fitts' law applies.

Fitts' law is referring to a single interaction ("movement") with visible targets, not a general abstract concept of "futher away" that you can extend in any way and to any topic you want across multiple interactions. It is precisely because you have to use two different movements, as you pointed out, to both scroll to see the target and then move your mouse or hand to reach the target, that Fitts' law does not apply here.

Speaking more generally, there is a big problem with your assumption here that you can take interaction studies (or any scientific results) out of context just because you can think of it as analogous. When researchers have studied human perception and motions under specific conditions, you cannot assume the findings apply to conditions that weren't tested.

***albedoa*** It is going to be difficult to beat this comment as the strangest I have ever read on here.

***albedoa*** There isn't anything to be argued. You said that the scrolling violates Rule #3, which is about Fitts's law specifically. Scrolling has nothing to do with Fitts's law.

***pbreit*** Scrolling absolutely has to do with Fitt's law. Not only is the target further away, it's constantly moving.

***albedoa*** You should read and take to heart this comment by dahart, especially the last paragraph: https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=24032182

You've been confidently wrong about the only two rules you've commented on.

***pbreit*** I either disagree with or do not understand either of your sentences.

***albedoa*** The trend is unflattering for you one way or another.

***wruza*** It also hits the uncertainty like in some games when a cutscene ends but you have yet to figure out that it's time to move. At the first time I tapped on a box I had to decide whether my action is required. And it was, I had to scroll anyway. It failed easy interaction before all else.

We can discuss form and composition forever, but we all know that a simple scrollable page with screen-high tiles and/or a floating "next" button would do the job a million times better than this. If that was a job-related tool and not a site that you can read once and close forever, I would consider an alternative immediately. Fun fact, I didn't even bother to go further than few "articles" and read 6-8 times more text here itt than on their site in the same amount of time.

Your points are probably correct for a ux that has such problems, but if you do not create a problem, you do not have to solve a problem, and you cannot fail at it (which is easy to do).

***dahart*** > We can discuss form and composition forever

FWIW, I'm not discussing form or composition at all, nor am I defending the site's high level design choices at all. I'm just trying to help clarify what the rules on this page actually mean, because rule #2 was misunderstood above. This page has been posted before, and other people have also misunderstood rule #2 to assume it means that interactions have to be complete in a certain amount of time. The rule is simpler than that, and lower level than page layout issues. I would guess that part of the reason this rule is misunderstood is because it's rarely broken these days in commercial apps and web pages. Unlike the 80's, it's not that common anymore for computers to not respond at all in any way to a user input in more than 400ms, and browsers take care of a lot of the cases where it might happen.

***joveian*** Here is a copy of the 1982 paper:

https://jlelliotton.blogspot.com/p/the-economic-value-of-rap...

"System Response Time. This is the time span between the moment the user enters a command and the moment a complete response is displayed on the terminal."

Note the phrase "complete response" and that the paper itself is titled "The Economic Value of Rapid Response Time".

***dahart*** Ah, thanks for the link!

Yes the phrase "complete response" does sound like a full task finished, but what, exactly, is a "complete response"? Isn't a popup or dialog box or a loading spinner a complete response from a UI perspective? If not, why not?

The definition of "complete response" in the paper is not specific. What were the tasks being studied? Can you have sub-tasks for which there are multiple complete responses? Note the interactions this paper is discussing are terminal commands on a terminal connected to a local mainframe. They didn't have web pages.

There are notes in the paper that give clues as to what kind of tasks & responses they are talking about: "In 1979 their installed system was designed to offer 300 simultaneous users word processing, programming, computing, and remote job entry capabilities, with the response to 80 percent of the transactions being processed in .5 seconds or less."

There are lots of other clues that the kinds of interactions they are talking about are so basic and tiny that we don't even think about them as individual tasks anymore. When you read the entire thing and study the charts, what the paper is really showing is that computers in 1982 were excruciatingly slow, so slow that they interfered with basic word processing and data entry, so slow that they could actually calculate the financial savings of being able to execute shell commands slightly faster.

Even though it says the subjective words "complete response", there are and always have been large tasks that take much longer than 400ms. Does that mean any task that takes longer than 400ms is automatically bad UX? I don't think so, I consider starting a 3GB video download, for example, to be a complete response when the browser acknowledges sending the request, and starts showing progress. I think the paper's definition would agree with that because I can submit other tasks to the computer immediately, I can read other pages, type other commands, save files, etc., etc.

***joveian*** A spinner is not a complete response because the system is still going to respond more without additional input.

Here is another quote that the paper quotes: "...each second of system response degradation leads to a similar degradation added to the user's time for the following [command]. This phenomenon seems to be related to an individual's attention span. The traditional model of a person thinking after each system response appears to be inaccurate. Instead, people seem to have a sequence of actions in mind, contained in a short-term mental memory buffer. Increases in SRT [system response time] seem to disrupt the thought processes, and this may result in having to rethink the sequence of actions to be continued."

A spinner still disrupts the thought process in the same way. I would personally say that yes, anything that takes longer (I'd say more like 100ms even, possibly less) is automatically bad. It might still be the best possible in a particular situation and pretending that something will necessarily be fast when it often isn't is also bad. It is easier to plan around tasks that take longer when a small and reliable set of tasks take longer and somewhat fits with the theme in that way, but I'd still say the core idea here is "everthing that happens should happen quickly" and have other guidelines to deal with the cases where that isn't possible. Don't try to trick yourself that the system is actually responding quickly when it really isn't.

You could say that the most extreme reading of this principle would imply that a computer should never play video or audio. Personally, I would say it shouldn't except when I ask it to. My top guideline for websites would be something like "your website is not an experience". You can put an experience on your website and some people will appreciate it, but let me accomplish what I wanted to do when I visited your site quickly. Breaking my thought process to insert marketing is not a good experience.

I disagree this is not relevent today; I didn't use a mainframe in 1982 but I wouldn't be surprised if the experience was more responsive than what is common today. Part of this is due to everything making network requests today but in general system response does not seem to be valued particularly highly. I regularly wait over two seconds for a particular text entry box in Windows 10 to work on a fast modern system with an SSD and no network connection that is interacting with a small local database. Windows 7 seemed more responsive to me, as did a lot of older software compared to modern versions.

***dahart*** > A spinner is not a complete response because the system is still going to respond more without additional input.

The paper talks about launching batch jobs. How does that fit into your interpretation of a "complete response"? What would the complete response to starting a batch job have been in 1982?

> I didn't use a mainframe in 1982 but I wouldn't be surprised if the experience was more responsive than what is common today.

I did use mainframe terminals in high school and college, and they were nowhere near the responsiveness that is common today. Not in the same ballpark, not even on the same planet. Our expectations for responsiveness have grown as fast as response times have shrunk, computing today is orders of magnitude more responsive across the board.

> Don't try to trick yourself that the system is actually responding quickly when it really isn't.

That sounds pretty catchy, but is completely subjective, it depends on what you mean by response, which is what we are trying to flesh out here. I'm trying to make the case that in the context of UI/UX best practices this is a red herring. The questions are about interaction and expectations, about acknowledging your input, not about whether computers can magically perform impossible feats of physics. Speed of light prevents some servers on earth from getting a response to you in under 100ms. I do tasks all the time that takes seconds or minutes, and I bet you do too. I disagree that long tasks are automatically bad UX. Bad UX is failing to notify you that you started a task, or failing to notify you that a task finished. Bad UX is giving no indication of how long a very long task will take. Bad UX does not automatically exist merely because a task takes time.

***joveian*** "At NIH there was an average of 90 transactions and two batch submissions per work session. This did not vary, even though work session length varied with the computer response time."

The paper is not talking about turning non-batch jobs into batch jobs (or batch jobs at all really), it is just an aside where they insert magic marketing numbers to sound good. Presumably for practical reasons they would consider the response "batch job started" to be the complete response. I think we can at least agree that it is unhelpful to call an unavoidably long task bad design just for being unavoidably long.

Nothing in the paper suggests that making tasks avoidably long is ok if the system gives an indication it is doing something.

***dahart*** Right. ‘Batch job started’ is the same “complete response” as a spinner. A progress bar is a better response and UI design than either because indicates time to completion.

> Nothing in the paper suggests that making tasks avoidably long is ok if the system gives an indication it is doing something.

I can agree with that statement as written, but there are a couple of minor issues with your framing here. One, I didn’t suggest that making tasks avoidably long is okay. I can see why I might appear to have hinted in that direction, but your summary, especially inserting the word “avoidably”, is not a generous interpretation of my words, and I was explicit from the start about stating that I’m not a fan of CSS transitions and not defending the design choices of the Laws of UX site. Two, you already know the context of this paper is 1980, when the alternative to what they actually mean by “complete response” is a blinking terminal cursor that doesn’t move. They’re not talking about partial response of some kind, and they are considering “batch job started” to be a complete response. In that sense, and in the context of the time the paper was written, it is very much suggesting that more quickly giving an indication that it’s doing something is the goal.

Beyond this paper, the broad idea of fast response in the UI/UX and web world has adopted the idea that showing acknowledgement of input very quickly is important. There are multiple examples of this in the nearby threads, and many hundreds of papers beyond Doherty’s that discuss these topics and demonstrate the humans perceptually prefer to see fast reactions even when the final result takes a while.

It might also be worth pointing out that for the arrow buttons on the Laws of UX site, the animation itself literally is the “complete response”. The function of the button is to trigger the animation. Animations are really out of the scope of Doherty’s paper, their idea of a “complete response” in 1980 was a line of text that could display at once.

***joveian*** > It might also be worth pointing out that for the arrow buttons on the Laws of UX site, the animation itself literally is the “complete response”.

This is where we disagree. The animation is exactly what I mean by "avoidably long". It interrupts the user the same way the long response times mentioned in the paper do. If you quote this paper, expect people to say that it means what it clearly states since this is a source of real frustration for many of us. As I mentioned earlier, some people do appreciate a more paced "experience", but many of us never want such an experience from a website and just want rapid response.

***dahart*** It’s fine if you don’t want animations, your opinion is valid if you don’t like them, but you’re conflating a design choice with the idea of a “response”. You can’t disagree with the fact that the arrow buttons on the site are the complete response. It makes no sense to say that, because those buttons do nothing else; their single solitary function is to trigger an animated scroll, and once the animation is done playing, there is nothing else involved in the “response”.

Yes, the length of animation is a design choice, and is in that sense avoidable — precisely because the length of time the animation plays was a conscious intent. What you’re talking about is not related to what Doherty’s paper was talking about.

***hannib*** It absolutely does force you to wait though. If I click Learn More, then try pressing the PREV or NEXT buttons at the top, they do not respond to user input until the CSS animation is finished. I'm fairly certain this is exactly what rule #2 is talking about, trying to quickly go to the end or front of the list this way is extremely frustrating.

CSS transitions can be fine, but they shouldn't block user input or force the user to wait until they finish before moving on.

For this particular instance it might not matter a ton that they broke rule 2. But imagine if this was a table of paginated data, having to wait up to an extra second each time you go to the next or previous page just so the data could animate in would be rage inducing after a long period of time.

***dahart*** You are right. It took me a couple of tries to hit More and then move up to NEXT fast enough to repro the problem, you sort-of have to be in QA mode to catch this one. I'd say it's a problem with the NEXT button, and not a problem with scrolling. I'd also say the average reader is not very likely to bump into this.

I do agree that transitions shouldn't make you wait, and I mentioned above that I'm not the biggest fan of transitions. BUT the transitions here do not break rule #2, regardless of whether they are good design or not. Forcing you to wait as part of the interaction is not the same thing as not responding in the first place. The animation is the response to the input, and it acknowledges that the system is up and running.

A good way to understand rule #2. Here are two scenarios. A breaks rule #2 and B does not break rule #2.

A - You hit a button that makes an AJAX call. The response takes 10 seconds to arrive. The CSS has disabled button hover highlights, and button press state changes. There is no indication on screen that the request has been made.

B - You hit a button that makes an AJAX call. The response takes 10 seconds to arrive. Default CSS rules show the button press, and the page pops up a loading spinner.

***hannib*** Actually you can just click NEXT multiple times in a row. Imagine you are on item 1 but really want to see item 5. You would have to click next, wait for transition to finish, click next, wait, etc.

(I found this because I already read the first 2-3 laws and closed the page, reopened to see the "Details" and wanted to quickly navigate to the middle/end of the list. Instantly the site felt super sluggish and unresponsive)

I totally agree with you BTW, clicking a button and having a quick (<200ms in my eyes) visual response is completely fine, even if that response is just a CSS transition. I do this all the time.

The specific problem I had is the NEXT button stops responding during that CSS transition which might not technically break rule #2 but definitely makes the UI feel sluggish and non responsive.

***dahart*** Yeah I completely agree with all of that.

Note that scrolling in some browsers is a specific interaction that disables JavaScript and all other interactions while scrolling in order to maintain high frame rates and smooth scrolling. This might be an unintentional bug or side-effect of using scrolling at all, and some people consider it a browser bug. It does mean it's important to think before triggering a scroll, OTOH, the interaction here of jumping instantly to another item without scrolling could be disorienting to some people. Maybe the whole issue would be fixed by changing the transition time from 400ms to 200ms?

I'd also note that rule #2 serves a more specific purpose than avoiding any wait times. It's there to avoid confusion about what's happening in response to a click, not to eliminate all waiting, nor to eliminate all annoyances in UX delays. With a transition, it's annoying that you can't interact while the animation plays, but it's not (in this case) confusing about what's happening. I know why the button isn't working, and very quickly I know how long I have to wait before it works again, even though I'd rather that it did work instantly.

***pbreit*** How is setting a 400ms transition NOT breaking the "law" to not make users wait more than 400ms?

***dahart*** The rule is talking about whether the system acknowledges your input visually. The input is specifically acknowledged by the animation starting and then playing. That is the indicator that the click was received.

On a technicality, I'll mention that a 400ms transition technically isn't more than 400ms, it's equal to 400ms. That's just me being cheeky though, it's irrelevant, because rule #2 is met on my laptop within 17ms when the animation begins.

***jakear*** Let’s look at the rule itself instead of making baseless declarations about what the rule is talking about:

Productivity soars when a computer and its users interact at a pace (<400ms) that ensures that neither has to wait on the other.

Further, from the original study itself:

"When a human being’s command was executed and returned an answer In under 400 milliseconds, it was deemed to exceed the Doherty threshold, and use of such applications were deemed to be “addicting” to users."

My answer has not been returned within 400ms, and I had to wait for the computer, and the site was so un addicting that I exited out after suffering through those animations only 2 times. Thus not a single interpretation of Doherty threshold in its original form has been met. It’s really quite simple.

If acknowledging input rather than returning an answer was all that was needed, the rule would state as such and the old hat engineers making the original computers would have had wired “Enter” up to “bell” and called it a day. Luckily they weren’t nearly as lazy as many in this thread seem to be.

For cases such as the “downloading a 3gb file” that get brought up, I’d consider the “answer” to pressing the download link to be the dialog box saying that a download has started. I would not consider the “answer” to clicking a link to be an animation saying... I’m not sure what; rather, the “answer” to clicking a link is clearly my browser starting to navigate to that link

Side note: just for funzies, I patched vscode to show a loading animation for 400ms before opening new files. After playing around with it for a couple minutes, I can assure you that if I pushed that to master, insiders users would come screaming tomorrow morning and all the “well actually this is in compliance with XXX law because technically...” would not appease them. If you wouldn’t accept it in your editor, why accept it in your websites?

***petepete*** Contrast ratio of 1.19 on the numbers isn't a good start either.

***csours*** The point is, don't have a static screen for 400ms after an interaction. If I click on something, and nothing at all happens for half a second, I feel a disconnect. A 400ms animation is a choice that you may not make, but does not 'feel' the same as a page load, or other stall.

***jakear*** Feels the same to me... in fact, I'd probably prefer 400ms of a static screen to 400ms of animation. Withe the static screen I can blame my internet and not think much of of it, if I'm watching an animation I have to sit there and think about how the "designer" chose to force me to wait for them to twirl around and take a bow before I can move on.

Edit: Exact test of rule 2:

Productivity soars when a computer and its users interact at a pace (<400ms) that ensures that neither has to wait on the other.

Nowhere does it say that waiting is only bad if you don't see something happening. I am waiting on the computer to finish it's little jig. That is bad, and a violation of rule #2. Further, from the original study itself:

"When a human being’s command was executed and returned an answer In under 400 milliseconds, it was deemed to exceed the Doherty threshold, and use of such applications were deemed to be “addicting” to users."

My answer has not been returned within 400ms, this the Doherty threshold has not been met.

***mrob*** I've only ever seen one unintrusive animation in UI, which was the window minimization animation of the Metacity window manager. It minimized the window immediately, but then followed up with an animated outline showing where the window had gone. It was thin enough that you could easily ignore it, but still provided all the benefit that designers claim from their slow and disruptive animations.

***csours*** I hear you. I read this as: what if you can't meet the Doherty threshold? Do you try harder? More caching? Put a spinner on it? Animate? Try to tell some jokes?

***stefan*** Lies of UX web developers tell themselves, #1.

***|csours*** If git had a 400 ms animation I would be very upset.

If Amazon had a 400 ms animation for every purchase/page load I would be very upset.

If an art project had a 400 ms animation, that would be part of the art.

***askxnakjsn*** The big problem with this is that you expect the computer to respond to your clicks naturally and instantly and instead you are put on hold while an animation plays. It may not break the latency rule strictly, but theoretically feels like it should be added on there because it has the same effect for users who don't care about animations (aka most users).

***p\_l*** Add bad rendering to the mix:

https://usercontent.irccloud-cdn.com/file/9LX6jYDI/Screensho...

***quickthrower2*** Ahhh! You had to scroll down. I didn't realise that. Thanks!

***imvetri*** "Dont cut papers". Gets printed on papers, delivers a message. Look at the message not the paper.

***arcturus17*** > scrolling down to view content

Shouldn't this be normal?

***jakear*** No, I don’t think a link taking you to an empty page where the content only appears after you decipher what interaction you’re supposed to perform then perform it should be normal.

Instead, I think links taking you to pages where the content is immediately visible should be normal.

***spanhandler*** The only site my tech-challenged dad can kind-of use well is Craigslist. Plain text, accessible, good hierarchies, nothing buried or nested, fast, and, crucially, everything is in the same place every time he visits. Some of the best UX on the Web.

***FridgeSeal*** It feels like modern website design conflates “better UX” with “surface level attractiveness”

Craigslist is a great example, original reddit is another example: my UI/UX designer friend considers original reddit to be quote “ugly and horrible”, and while there definitely could be some improvements, the reddit redesign (which I know my friend would come up with something similar to) is quite literally orders of magnitude worse, but is aesthetically “nicer”.

Original reddit looks ugly, but everything you want from an interface is there once you get through a 3 minute learning curve: information dense, enough white space (but not too much), consistent behaviour, fast, respects scrolling, etc etc.

Where did we go “wrong” with web design that what we have now is seemingly worse? And what does a good balance of “actually functionally useful” and “aesthetically pleasing” look like?

***jakear*** I personally love the new reddit design: it’s so miserable to use that it has broken my reddit addiction almost entirely!

Now I just need HN to do something similar and maybe I’ll get back to being a productive member of society ;)

***DangitBobby*** The site looks and performs fine to me with the redesign. The problems I have with it are the obnoxious "open in app!" Pop-up and the subreddit preview that interrupts the comment section... Totally unacceptable.

***arp242*** It literally does not work on my laptop: it stutters all the time when scrolling, navigating, etc. It's unusable even with the greatest degree of patience. This happens in both Chrome and Firefox, both with the default settings (uBlock improves things slightly, but not by much). I genuinely thought there must be something wrong with my setup, but several of my friends have reported similar experiences across different platforms.

Granted, I have a cheap not very fast laptop, but it's less than a year old and almost everything else works just fine – certainly not as horrendously slow as Reddit. These problems seem to disappear if you gave a faster machine from what I've been told.

But, yeah; it's broken for millions of people who have low-end to medium hardware. I genuinely don't understand how they could ship something so dysfunctional for so many people.

***jakear*** Those two are the precise reasons I left actually.

***loco5niner*** > The site looks and performs fine to me with the redesign

Infinite scroll kills it after a while for me. You must spend less than 4 hours per session.

***tumetab1*** I dislike the Reddit design only because I disagree with its goals:

\* Make users use the app \* Make Reddit more like Instagram (browser visual content)

***jakear*** Not to mention you can use it without any sort of account. Truly fantastic website design.

***mekoka*** 1. Users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as design that’s more usable.

As a non-designer who's had to fight many designers on this, I'd like to draw your attention to the fact that this is about perception. It's about a user's first impression regarding usability prior to actually using the system. It's not an actual impression based on their experience after interacting with it. That impression can quickly evaporate the moment they try to do anything with the interface. If time and money have to be allocated to develop a product, use them wisely. The properties of this principle seem to be more relevant to marketing and advertising than actual UX.

I believe that the wrong take-away from reading this law would be that improved esthetics implies improved usability. Attempting to place esthetics and function on the same pedestal would be a mistake. When it comes to usability, function is superior to esthetics and should almost always be given priority, no matter how ugly.

I agree that esthetics can and should be used in a way that it supports function, but as you add to it, there will always be a point of negative return (functionally speaking). If you misunderstand what that law is saying you might be misled into thinking that esthetic climax and usability climax are on the same locus. I think we can agree that something can often still be made even more beautiful way past the point where it's almost completely unusable. Adversely, you might be called into making something uglier in order for it to become useful again. Better get comfortable with the idea.

***bobbles*** I feel like #1 is the reason that absolutely every useful web app is slowly becoming less useful to the people that use it every day by filling all the actual usable space with white to make their screenshots look better while all the power users get more and more irritated.

Even 'compact' views which seem to be a throwaway effort to alleviate these are becoming more and more spacious and forcing scrolling even on huge screens.

***peferron*** I find this principle useful when users come with negative preconceptions against the usability of your product, perhaps because of previous iterations that weren't very usable or because they tried other products in the same space that weren't very usable.

Putting additional effort on aesthetics can encourage these users to consider your product with fresh eyes, or give it a chance when they otherwise wouldn't. Of course, past that initial help you need "real" usability to keep them.

For example, I would pay a lot of attention to this principle if I was working on a product in the payment space (e.g. Stripe), taxes (e.g. TurboTax), etc.

***627467*** I'm a designer (maybe of the less designry sort) and I agree that I would have moved the 1st law further down and added more clarifying context here to avoid the misunderstandings you listed.

***myth2018*** I often see the second law being broken by the first (or a misinterpretation of it): in the eagerness to make the site look beautiful, the designer make it slow, either deliberately with animations, either inadvertently by increasing load times.

Also, I commonly see Miller's and Zeigarnik Effect being disregarded: although our working memories are not so great, we possess some and we can retain some basic information about our workflow. Then, IMHO there's more harm than good in putting a lot of visual clues, drawers, panes over panes etc. so that navigation is "improved".

Speaking particularly about form-based enterprise applications, I keep thinking that some important empirically learned lessons from the last 40 years are simply being thrown away. Simple, correct and, most important, FAST interfaces trumps everything else, even if it's a TUI.

Oh, and regular users also can and ENJOY using the keyboard -- a tool which is being deprecated in this mistake of trying to create a uniform experience between desktop and mobile.

***Akronymus*** One of the reasons I like HN for is the lack of ANY animation. It just does what you want it to do.

Also: At work I make internal software for managing basically everything. We do not use any animations, besides one for dropdowns. And those are only .1 second long.

So, I kinda tend to think that animations/trying to be clever in interactions are actively harmful.

Speaking of being clever, the new reddit layout seems to try to be a single page application. I hate those quite a bit, due to making it much harder to browse.

***JamesBarney*** I'm not entirely convinced simple is better for enterprise apps. I'm a consultant who has to jump around between a lot of project management tools like Asana, Jira, and Azure devops and the simpler the interfaces make me far more frustrated.

They all have pretty much the same functionality, but some hide functionality for UI's sake. Then anytime I need to do something new, instead of looking around a busy screen, I'm sifting through a bunch of websites I found on google.

***myth2018*** I think simplicity doesn't necessarily mean having less widgets on the screen.

If, by removing widgets, those interfaces are making you to perform more steps and to think more to find and execute the functionality you need, then I'd say those interfaces are getting more complex actually.

Besides, this is another common mistake in current UX trends, IMO. They seem to assume that interfaces can always be simpler, as if there weren't fundamental bottom limits to complexity; and, to make things even worse, they remove widgets, replace text with icons etc., seeming to believe in a positive correlation between complexity and amount of stuff in the screen

***tlow*** This is not new and is almost entirely covered in two reference resources I use as a designer.

1. Universal Principles of Design https://g.co/kgs/X19MeR

2. The Humane Interface by Jef Raskin https://g.co/kgs/JfdBkB

***jhardy54*** Please just post the URL instead of using a redirect link, especially if you're just doing a google search for the words you posted.

1. https://www.google.com/search?q=Universal+Principles+of+Desi...

2. https://www.google.com/search?q=The+Humane+Interface

***tlow*** I just used Google's built in "share" button, is that incorrect in some way?

***summitsummit*** less friendly as it obscures the destination to the user. it could have been a rickroll or something pertinent given the url

***bananaface*** I think this is bikeshedding.

Edit: bear in mind vanilla search URLs include personal info, which you need to know how to identify & strip.

***peferron*** I use Universal Principles of Design as an engineer as well. Before starting a new project, I'll flip through the pages and compile a list of principles that are particularly relevant for the project. Then as the project progresses I'll check that list from time to time to help me steer it in the right direction.

***Eugeleo*** Thanks for the links! Do you happen to have any resources specific to web-design as well? I was recently given the task to program a frontend and the design-part proved to be the most complicated one. The more the better; not only geneal guidelines, but also common design patterns etc — I can utilize them all.

Edit: Specifically, I think I can make the website easy to use, but I have no idea how to make it look good.

***tlow*** There are lots of resources available, but I think following a design process might really help you most at this point.[1] You're going to need to conform the the style and practices of of the larger piece to which your part will fit in. Good design has to be consistent so that the user can have a continuous understanding. From this perspective, might it be possible to generate "working art" and approach the final visual treatment later? Also, for "beautiful" design to shine, usually this involves the removal of all extraneous elements, since good design is really about distillation.

Rough Design Process [2]

1. Discover

- Have you identified your users and the need that you are hoping to solve with this "part/feature"?

- Usually users are broken into different segments, a persona is just like a rough representative sample of the different segments.

- It sounds like you work for a for-profit organization, therefore you must also understand who your stake holders are and what they think the business needs are (they can be wrong and you might have to help correct this).

- Are there already people doing something like what you're trying to do? Not only should you benchmark competitors, you can look for analogous situations in totally different domains and still use this to help inform you.

- Redefine the problem your own way.

- review research claims, scientific literature, external info

2. Ideate - explore insights

- design objectives

- develop user POV and need statement

3. Create

- low fidelity prototypes based on the perspective of your user needs and POV from (2), explore solutions to the problems

- you should be going for volume at this stage because this is a discovery oriented process for finding unknown unknowns

4. Test

- escalate the fidelity of prototypes enough that you can gain feedback from potential or actual target users

- end points for higher resolution prototypes should definite measurable analytics and success metrics so some prototypes can be selected for further refinement, ideation and testing

- you can conduct formal usability testing, but the point of a prototype is to create an object to fuel conversation and discovery

[1] "1 hour of research saves 10 hours of development time" http://bokardo.com/archives/1-hour-of-research-saves-10-hour...

[2]This is my derivative of Stanford's Design Thinking process taught at dschool.stanford.edu, for a worksheet example see: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57c6b79629687fde090a0... on dschool.stanford.edu)

***Eugeleo*** Thank you very much for the detailed description of the process behind design; I appreciate that you put it in concrete terms and actionable steps.

I'm specifically building an internal tool for service-requesting, thus the users will be from our own company and there is no competition to speak of. Most of the points you listed still apply, of course, but I'd still like to ask if you have any tips that could help me in this concrete situation.

And also, where would you recommend me to look for inspiration? (apart from "just look around on the web") Nowadays I often look at tailwindui.com to get an idea how some particular component could look like, but there must be something better. Awwwards and dribbble (at least at first sight) are too landing-page oriented — not something I could use in an internal service.

***strogonoff*** Usage of monospace font and questionable accessibility practices put into question the authority of this resource.

That aside, what most UI/UX rules fail to capture is that our experience of X exists over time and in larger context. Aside from things with near-zero intended lifespan (which this one may well be—I won’t pretend I know author’s intention), it is not only (and not so much) important how a product or resource is experienced right at this moment, but also how it will feel after a while, how it would evolve, how it interoperates with other software or resources (including search engines), what resources are required to maintain it, etc. True beauty arises from functionality and sustainability.

***falcrist*** What's with the oceans of empty space between everything? Who likes this?

Please put more than one thing on the screen at a time, especially when those things are links that lead to the actual content.

Also, when I click through to one of the laws, there's no indication that I have to scroll down, so I'm clicking around for a few seconds like an idiot trying to figure out what to do.

I feel like I'm crazy... Is this really considered good UX?

***ggcdn*** The 0th law of UX: Any website that attempts to describe good UX will itself be criticized for bad UX.

***hmmazoids*** Well yeah you better preach what you teach or look like an idiot

***Hasu*** HN users, on the whole, are terrible UX critics who have no idea what they're talking about on the subject.

The average HN user probably:

- knows their way around a terminal

- understands default browser behavior in depth

- has the programmer's mentality of 'everything should be governed by universal logical rules that apply equally everywhere'

The truth is, this is not how most users think. Good UX for a cli application is not the same as good UX for a website. If you think of websites in terms of what programmers think good UX is, you get... HN and Craigslist and all the other things that HN users typically think are fantastic user experiences, because they meet their expectations. These applications are also almost uniformly ugly. This actually makes perfect sense, and for these users, this is fantastic UX.

But what makes UX good is that the target audience can easily use the software. That's it. There's no such thing as an 'intuitive user interface'. Clicking on stuff in computers is not natively intuitive to humans. There are only familiar and unfamiliar interfaces. Every interface we haven't seen before is unfamiliar and 'terrible' at first glance. People will train themselves to use and love extremely bad interfaces, or refuse to use very good interfaces that are difficult to learn. The HN user is someone who has typically put a lot of effort into learning how computers work and how web browsers work by default, so they develop intuitions like, "If a website breaks the default browser behavior, it's bad UX." And for them, that's true, but what makes the default browser UX better than an alternative, other than that you already know it? Now maybe it actually is better, and I can think of many examples of websites that change default behavior in ways that are absolutely worse. But I've also seen websites do cool things with scrolljacking that aren't inherently wrong because they defied expectations for 3 seconds.

Every application has to be learned by the user. How easy it is to learn it depends on the background knowledge and experiences of the user, so it's very very hard, if not completely impossible, to develop a UX that will be good for every possible user. But if some UX isn't good FOR YOU, that doesn't mean that it's bad, it might just mean you aren't the target audience.

***boomlinde*** > If you think of websites in terms of what programmers think good UX is, you get... HN and Craigslist and all the other things that HN users typically think are fantastic user experiences, because they meet their expectations. These applications are also almost uniformly ugly. This actually makes perfect sense, and for these users, this is fantastic UX.

So would you argue that the Craigslist experience is only good for those with the "programmer's mentality"? "Ugly" is perhaps a smaller factor in UX than designers account for.

> And for them, that's true, but what makes the default browser UX better than an alternative, other than that you already know it?

Nothing, that's just it: you already know it. What you call "programmer's mentality" is actually fundamental to human cognition. In making sense of things we use what we've already made sense of. The more we can rely on our existing knowledge to figure something out, the less cognitive friction there will be.

The cost of surprise can certainly be outweighed by other factors, or surprise in itself can be exploited to usefully convey something, but in my experience it is not generally used to these effects. For every zooming interface or slideshow where scrolljacking might make perfect sense there are hundreds where those three seconds of defied expectations are wasted to implement something that is either useless or entirely detrimental to usability.

> But if some UX isn't good FOR YOU, that doesn't mean that it's bad, it might just mean you aren't the target audience.

Or I am the target audience and the designers have failed to design for the target audience. Or I am not the target audience only because the designer has failed to identify and characterize their target audience correctly. Or the designers primarily work with making business-required anti-features bearable. Or they're optimizing for first impressions and not long term usability. Or they're optimizing for generating more work opportunities ahead of themselves.

To decidedly say that you, our user, is not our intended target audience seems like a conclusion that must be backed with a lot of data, something which IME not a lot of organizations can muster. From that perspective these alternatives seem more likely.

***Hasu*** I don't think you're arguing against what I actually said.

> So would you argue that the Craigslist experience is only good for those with the "programmer's mentality"?

No, I think I was clear - I think the Craiglist experience is good for people who are familiar with simple sites like Craigslist, but not for all people. Craigslist has a very simple UX, so it would be hard to find someone who had trouble using it. It would be easy to find someone who finds the UX unpleasant, because I personally find it unpleasant because it's very ugly.

> Nothing, that's just it: you already know it. What you call "programmer's mentality" is actually fundamental to human cognition. In making sense of things we use what we've already made sense of. The more we can rely on our existing knowledge to figure something out, the less cognitive friction there will be.

Here, you're just agreeing with me, except that I didn't call the "programmer's mentality" the general rule of familiarity, it was the general rule that all things must behave according to the same rules.

> The cost of surprise can certainly be outweighed by other factors, or surprise in itself can be exploited to usefully convey something, but in my experience it is not generally used to these effects. For every zooming interface or slideshow where scrolljacking might make perfect sense there are hundreds where those three seconds of defied expectations are wasted to implement something that is either useless or entirely detrimental to usability.

I'm not claiming anywhere that it's impossible to make a bad UX, either by breaking previously known rules OR by following them, I'm claiming that good UX is context based and the rule of "scrolljacking is always bad" isn't true. You seem to agree with me here.

> Or I am the target audience and the designers have failed to design for the target audience. Or I am not the target audience only because the designer has failed to identify and characterize their target audience correctly. Or the designers primarily work with making business-required anti-features bearable. Or they're optimizing for first impressions and not long term usability. Or they're optimizing for generating more work opportunities ahead of themselves.

Sure, bad UX exists, and these are plausible reasons why it might happen. I never claimed that no UX ever was bad for any reason.

> To decidedly say that you, our user, is not our intended target audience seems like a conclusion that must be backed with a lot of data, something which IME not a lot of organizations can muster. From that perspective these alternatives seem more likely.

Here you're either misunderstanding me or knocking down a straw man. I didn't use the word 'decidedly', I said it 'might mean'. I also wasn't focused on the perspective of the organization or person creating a user experience, I was focusing on the person consuming it and criticizing it, without any regard for everyone else who also consumes it and whether they might agree that the UX is 'obviously' terrible.

To give a concrete example: Slack recently released a redesign, and I personally hate it and many of the interactions it created. Most people I know love it and had no issues adapting to the changes they made. Did Slack release a bad UX? I would argue no, even though I personally do not like the UX they created, because I think I am a rare case and for the majority of their userbase, they made the correct call and improved the experience. It seems to me that most arguments on HN about UX boil down to "I immediately closed the tab because it hijacked my scrolling, terrible UX." I'm saying that's a bad argument, and your personal enjoyment is not a complete picture of what makes an experience good or bad for the complete audience of users.

***rkagerer*** Aesthetically pleasing design can mask usability problems

I'm not sure that motivation deserves praise.

Provide system feedback within 400ms in order to keep users’ attention and increase productivity.

That's horrible lag. Try 30ms. I get frustrated whenever the responsiveness is slower than I can hit keyboard shortcuts or click. I even turn off Android animations as they slow me down.

Touch targets should be large enough for users to both discern what it is and to accurately select them... Touch targets should have ample spacing between each other

Sure thing hoss. But don't take it too far. The wasted screen real estate on your site is abominable.

...I had to stop after the first few...

***SilasX*** Great compilation! But 12-14 don't seem to have direct relevance to to UX. (Occam's Razor, 80/20 rule, and "work expands to fill available time".)

***csours*** Are you thinking of UI?

Some of these may be more pertinent while analyzing User Experience compared to composing User Experience.

Occam's Razor: What is this control meant to do?

Pareto: does this UX cover at least 80% of the user's needs? Are there critical cases in the remaining 20%?

Parkinson's Law is more of a bank shot, but think of it along with the Pareto Principle: Organize the UX so that the user can accomplish the most important tasks in the least time.

***SilasX*** > Are you thinking of UI?

No. I’m saying if you squint hard enough, then maybe you can think of how these apply to UX, but they don’t directly indicate some insight of UX, in any way like the others do.

> Occam's Razor: What is this control meant to do?

If that’s how they mean to apply it, they should phrase it as “users make the inference about the control that requires the fewest assumptions about how to model the UI”. There’s a big difference between saying how users actually act, vs how you as an engineer should infer, or what you should optimize for.

And yes, if the latter is meant, then it’s applicable on some level, it’s just not specific to UX (just making inferences about data in general), and even then didn't make clear how it would apply in a UX scenario.

>Pareto: does this UX cover at least 80% of the user's needs? Are there critical cases in the remaining 20%?

That wouldn’t be the Pareto principle, that would be “check the 20% for if you’re missing something critical.”

Again, a tangential application, if you stretch, just not direct like the others.

>Parkinson's Law is more of a bank shot, but think of it along with the Pareto Principle: Organize the UX so that the user can accomplish the most important tasks in the least time.

That's orthogonal to Parkinson’s law, which says that time spent will bloat to its bounds. What you’ve described is a different principle, something like “minimize the time average spent to do tasks, thus giving more weight to the more frequent ones”.

LATE EDIT: With that said, those three should definitely be part of any UX engineer's mental toolkit ... but only in the sense that they should be part of any engineer's toolkit. The specific applicability to UX isn't obvious the way the others are, at least.

***csours*** > "With that said, those three should definitely be part of any UX engineer's mental toolkit ... but only in the sense that they should be part of any engineer's toolkit. The specific applicability to UX isn't obvious the way the others are, at least."

I think that's fair. I will say that I appreciate this site, but I do think the author had to stretch a bit to get to 20 rules. For instance, I would have had a section just on the Gestalt Principles because they don't make much sense by themselves.

***avodonosov*** Yes, I also don't see how to apply the #14 "Any task will inflate until all of the available time is spent." to UX. It's more form the area of management.

***ourmandave*** LAWS OF UX

Aesthetic Usability Effect 01 Users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as design that’s more usable.

Doherty Threshold 02 Productivity soars when a computer and its users interact at a pace (<400ms) that ensures that neither has to wait on the other.

Fitts’s Law 03 The time to acquire a target is a function of the distance to and size of the target.

Hick’s Law 04 The time it takes to make a decision increases with the number and complexity of choices.

Jakob’s Law 05 Users spend most of their time on other sites. This means that users prefer your site to work the same way as all the other sites they already know.

Law of Common Region 06 Elements tend to be perceived into groups if they are sharing an area with a clearly defined boundary.

Law of Prägnanz 07 People will perceive and interpret ambiguous or complex images as the simplest form possible, because it is the interpretation that requires the least cognitive effort of us.

Law of Proximity 08 Objects that are near, or proximate to each other, tend to be grouped together.

Law of Similarity 09 The human eye tends to perceive similar elements in a design as a complete picture, shape, or group, even if those elements are separated.

Law of Uniform Connectedness 10 Elements that are visually connected are perceived as more related than elements with no connection.

Miller’s Law 11 The average person can only keep 7 (plus or minus 2) items in their working memory.

Occam’s Razor 12 Among competing hypotheses that predict equally well, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected.

Pareto Principle 13 The Pareto principle states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes.

Parkinson’s Law 14 Any task will inflate until all of the available time is spent.

Peak-End Rule 15 People judge an experience largely based on how they felt at its peak and at its end, rather than the total sum or average of every moment of the experience.

Postel’s Law 16 Be liberal in what you accept, and conservative in what you send.

Serial Position Effect 17 Users have a propensity to best remember the first and last items in a series.

Tesler’s Law 18 Tesler's Law, also known as The Law of Conservation of Complexity, states that for any system there is a certain amount of complexity which cannot be reduced.

Von Restorff Effect 19 The Von Restorff effect, also known as The Isolation Effect, predicts that when multiple similar objects are present, the one that differs from the rest is most likely to be remembered.

Zeigarnik Effect 20 People remember uncompleted or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks.

***isatty*** Thank you so much.

Rule 21 should be: don’t make the user click 20 times.

***slezyr*** Or scroll 20 minutes to reach the bottom of the page.

***m463*** Maybe we all read the site name wrong.

***TeMPOraL*** And this is indeed the optimal form of listing these "laws". Because that's what that site really is. A list of 20 sentences.

***abvdasker*** This transcription of the website into a single quickly and easily readable comment is the best criticism possible of the source.

***ggrrhh\_ta*** You improved my UX experience by a factor of infinite.

***romanows*** Let me give it a try:

<h1>Laws for good User Experience (UX)</h1>

<dl>

<dt><a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetic%E2%80%93usability\_effect">Aesthetic Usability Effect</a></dt>

<dd>Users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as more usable.</dd>

</dl>

HTML-ified, tweaked the text, expanded the initialism :P

***mrob*** Postel's Law ("Be liberal in what you accept, and conservative in what you send") is a bad idea. You should be conservative in both, which will result in broken software, but broken software gets fixed. Postel's Law adds avoidable complexity, and complexity is a major source of security vulnerabilities. Unlike broken software, insecure software often stays insecure until it's being actively exploited.

***david422*** It's good when dealing with humans, it's bad when dealing with machines.

Allow humans a fudge factor for ease of use, but not at the cost of integrity.

For instance, allow phone numbers with separators, or spacing, or shortened versions etc. It's aggravating when a form asks for a cc number and allows a user to type spaces but the field has a max length so you have to backtrack and delete all the spaces.

Make apis conservative in what they accept. This reduces complexity and the likelihood of bugs.

***freehunter*** As someone who has spent their entire career in infosec, one of my most important rules is “security should break your company”. The alternative is, someone else will break your company for you. If you can’t produce a document that explains what this server does and every external interaction it could possibly have, you’re failing. Be extremely conservative in what you accept.

If you’re allowing basically anything in, eventually the wrong person with the wrong code will get in. And that might very well be the last day you have a business.

***miguelmota*** I agree that in general Postel's law is bad practice but I think that it also makes sense under certain contexts. For example, if you have an email input field, it's better to trim spaces from the user input before sending it to the server instead of showing an error that there's spaces needing to be trimmed. In this example the input field is liberal in what it accepts and conservative in what it sends to the server.

***noobermin*** That might be the issue, what is "liberal" and "conservative" needs to be quantified. Taking Postel's law or any law/adage to an extreme is a bad idea.

***noobermin*** It seems better to try to ship software that works than ship software that will intentionally break. I get "everything will break" but ensuring it will break sooner and more spectacularly seems like a headache for users.

***MaxBarraclough*** Depends on context. Web browsers are required to cope with old malformed HTML.

***spaetzleesser*** "Jakob’s Law

Users spend most of their time on other sites. This means that users prefer your site to work the same way as all the other sites they already know."

A lot of designers should write this down 100 times before they start working. An extension should be

"users prefer your site to work the same way as it did yesterday since that's what they already know."

***FridgeSeal*** looks pointedly at Spotify

Can we also have some rule about the maximum frequency of changes? Alternatively can I go one further and suggest that for UI/UX changes, agile style sprints are absolutely not the way they should be done? Rushing out change after change in the UX won’t let you actually see what works and, and let you iterate, it just disrupts users. These changes should be thoroughly thought through, distilled, tested properly - not wildly deployed onto a subset of users, and if necessary, grouped up and deployed altogether so that there is only one UI change to adapt to, not 30.

***spaetzleesser*** "grouped up and deployed altogether so that there is only one UI change to adapt to, not 30."

that's what I am disliking more and more about rapid releases. If there is a big change once a year, I can take time to read the release notes and learn what changed. But if there is a change once a month I can't keep up.

***physicles*** Another related aphorism, I believe from Joel Spolsky:

“Users don’t want to use your software, they want to \_have used\_ your software.”

Users come in with a task they want to perform, not so they can bask in the glory of your wonderful UI.

***steinuil*** > Users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as design that’s more usable.

Is that right? Personally I feel like the opposite is true; I'll take an ugly looking but very usable UI over one that has all the bells and whistles but is actually a nightmare to use. Surely when the UI is bad and the UX is also bad the effect is compounded, and first time users might very well perceive the combination of bad UI/good UX as much worse than good UI/bad UX, but I really don't think this should be given out as good advice.

***thiht*** That's not what the "law" says at all.

If you have two websites with very similar UX, both very usable with the same quirks, one beautiful and one ugly, users will be more forgiving towards the beautiful one.

***lordfoom*** I think "UI>UX" is very clearly saying that user interface is more important than user experience.

***thiht*** Where do you see "UI>UX"?

***npunt*** This site feels like the product of a graphic designer trying to formally learn UX, and a classic case of theory & book smarts not translating to practice.

***dathinab*** > Jakob’s Law

I have a problem with that law.

EDIT: TL;DR/Clarification: What matters is what users believe as "intuitive and easily usable" which is not implied by something being familiar nor by what most other sites or apps do.

People don't want your site to work like other sites at all.

They want your site to work "intuitive and easily usable" for them.

As such they only want your site to behave like other sites if what they perceive as "intuitive and easily usable" was coined bye such "other" sites.

But in reality what user perceive as "intuitive and easily usable" is often largely coined bey the UX patterns around which they "learned" to use tech initially.

Which means what is "intuitive and easily usable" is often displaced in time and depending on your audience might MAJORLY differ from what most other sites you can find today in the internet do!!

A good example is sourcehut (e.g. look at `https://git.sr.ht/~sircmpwn/scdoc`).

It's visually completely different from what most other github like sites do and probably for some people it might look bad.

But for their target audience it's supper appealing as it appeals to what that audience originally learned to be "intuitive and easily usable".

So I would strongly argue that Jakob’s Law is a harmful over simplification of the actual effect which might be ok for some target audiences but literally might brake your business if applied blindly.

***Izkata*** > (e.g. look at `https://git.sr.ht/~sircmpwn/scdoc`).

HN doesn't have backticks syntax, so the trailing one is getting inculded as part of the link and 404ing. Fixed link: https://git.sr.ht/~sircmpwn/scdoc

***dathinab*** Thanks for the reminder, total leap of judgement in on my part. I really shouldn't write comments after/just before midnight ;-).

***TwoBit*** Postel's Law is bad - "be liberal in what you accept and conservative in what you send". It has a history of destroying technical standards. Remember how so much HTML was broken on conforming browsers ten years ago? That's because Microsoft wrote their browser to accept any broken crap you gave it, so that's just what everybody did.

***karaterobot*** Many people in this thread are criticizing the website's design, as though to criticize the content itself. In case it's not clear from the website: they did not make any of these observations themselves, they just curated and presented a list of observations other people made, usually decades ago. It doesn't follow that any ineffective design or unclear wording on the presenting website reflects on the validity of the source content.

A stronger criticism, at least in my opinion, is that presenting observations about user behavior as "laws" is misleading, since humans aren't particles. You can have laws in physical science, but not in design. If you thought of these as laws rather than wise words to bear in mind, you'd be an ineffective designer.

***JamesSwift*** To be fair to the critics, there is a difference between posting a blog post about laws of UX and creating a site with a domain of 'lawsofux.com' dedicated to the practice. In this case, I would assume that the site I am interacting with is trying to adhere to its rules how it interprets them.

***eagsalazar2*** This is a great example of my own first law of UX: Almost everyone is terrible at UX, including people who think they are experts at it.

***deft*** Rule 21: your text and content should be readable. The very low contrast between the numbering and the grey background is distracting and looks like a video game "make the second image barely visible" configuration.

***627467*** Only skimmed the content for now and can already appreciate the quality of the thinking and how it is presented. Thank you.

I also love how the site looks and behaves exactly the same with or without javascript (ublock origin user here) EXCEPT for the menu which relies on js.

I wonder if site creator can be persuaded to replace that js dependency with the "checkbox hack"[0] at least for the basic navigation.

[0] https://css-tricks.com/the-checkbox-hack/

***marcianx*** Some (hopefully) constructive feedback based on my experience on this site:

- At first, the site looked like a slideshow with prominent prev/next at the top and a title content that takes the entirely of my desktop monitor. So, naturally, I hit the keyboard right arrow (like most slideshow web pages) to get to the next slide for content, and nothing happened.

- Then at the bottom left, there's a down button. So I scrolled down to find the content there. I read it, and still subconsciously hit keyboard right for the next slide...oops, I mean, page...because of the prev/next at the top (sure, pebkac and all that; but it's also expectations-setting).

- Then I clicked on "next" to get another page that again takes the full monitor for the title, requiring scrolling down to get to the content, all of which can easily fit on a single screen. It seems unnecessarily "distracting", in a sense, since the expectation is that the user would actually go through the content and not just the titles which themselves are not very informative.

- One way I tried to improve ergonomics was to hitting page-down to read the content and then tab a couple times to get to the next button (almost automatic). However...the focus indicator for the "next button" has been removed in CSS, which is another usability nono.

Of at least tangential relevance here are Doherty Threshold (slide 2) and Jakob's law (slide 5). Just my 2c.

***kazinator*** > Users often perceive aesthetically pleasing design as design that’s more usable.

Figures that would be rule number one. Everywhere you go there are pretty UI's that are garbage, functionally.

Animation, transparent fading, no distracting scroll-bars or borders, wrapped around a 1-2-3 menu selection.

> Productivity soars when a computer and its users interact at a pace (<400ms) that ensures that neither has to wait on the other.

That is just nonsense. Productivity soars the faster the computer is. Ideally, the user should never waits for the computer; everything should be instant.

Whether the user waits for the computer is neither here nor there.

The ultimate computer-does-not-wait-for-the-user is to have the users prepare job specifications entirely outside of the computer and then submit them to a clerk at a job window. The computer never waits for a user because the job queue is busy from numerous users. It is not very good UI.

In an actual interactive UI, a needless delay could be caused by, for instance, collecting the necessary parameters for an operation through a cascade of multiple dialogs instead of batching them together. Though the computer waits more, too, that's irrelevant; the user's time is what was wasted.

I'm amazed anyone pretending to be a UI person would even feign being interested in how much time the machine spends waiting for the user.

***wtracy*** The 400 ms threshold cited for the Doherty threshold is from a 1982 research paper. I imagine that in 1982, 400 ms response times felt pretty darn good.

Also, the nature of the tasks that users performed in 1982 may have meant that there was no benefit to <400ms response times. (If it takes twenty seconds to read and understand the output, and another ten to key in your next command, then a 400 ms delay is not a meaningful productivity drag.)

Today, I would guess that the threshold is closer to 50 ms.

(Also, "time spent by the computer waiting for the user" makes sense in the context of a 1982 research paper. That has changed in the last 28 years, to say the least.)

All of this is a long way off saying that if you are making UX decisions based on 28 year old research, you are on shaky ground!

***kazinator*** 1982 was 38 years ago, not 28.

The microcomputers I used in 1982 had instantaneous response time.

Most of the software was developed by assembly language die-hards.

400 ms is more acceptable if there is no jitter in it, in comparison to unpredictable response time.

***FridgeSeal*** I agree, 400ms is a long time.

I’d be over the moon if most websites did things within 50ms, even 100ms would be a significant and welcome improvement.

Anecdotally, when I’m working on the database at work, the olap database (Clickhouse) feels amazingly snappy because it’ll respond in around 30-60ms, but SQL server feels like molasses, even when doing queries each dB is designed for.

***neop1x*** This is what I would like to suggest:

1. make it respond fast to input (it is super annoying that some textboxes are not pure native textboxes anymore and have deep javascript logic behind that sometimes I see characters popping up slowly as I type!)

2. avoid low contrast between text and background (it's hard to read your light gray text on white background)

3. make it clear what a button is and what a label is (a blue label being a button on iOS)

4. avoid wasting screen space, stop making fonts huge unnecessarily (if you wasted half the screen size by couple of words or there are big empty spaces where is your content really, what are bigger screens good for then)

5. stop designing desktop UIs like it was a smarphone (scrollbar should really be big enough to move by mouse and handle should have contrast to the slider; I am not touching my desktop screen or scrolling by swiping and hopefully never be)

6. for text content (descriptions, articles, comments, etc) stop preventing right click, copying text or messing up with clipboard (like appending some garbage at the end of copied text)

7. stop inventing original design widgets no one asked for and it is not immediately obvious how they work and easy to use / just an additional option (I have seen many toggles where it was unclear whether they are in On or Off state; or widgets lost ability to be controlled by the keyboard; or date fields which I could fill in in 2 seconds by keyboard but they forced me to spend minutes by selecting year first, listing months, finding the day in some unnecessary calendar popups)

Thank you.

***scraft*** This is how it looks for me in the Materialistic Hackernews app

<https://ibb.co/ZJr2MXG> Certainly some fine UI laws in action.

***mimsee*** maybe update android webview?

***wgx*** <ad> Shameless plug: If you want 81 more: https://uxbook.io </ad>

***50*** Added to cart! But in similar vein, do you know if UX writing is a viable career? If so, how would one get into it? What should be on one's portfolio?

***wgx*** I think writing in tech for a publisher is probably not a viable career. I’m a full time UX person, and the book was a side-gig. If it had been my only income for the last couple of years; I’d be broke. It’s a great exercise for any expert in their field, but it’s hard to make a living writing. In my experience, YMMV.

***crawsome*** I'm not cruising for irony here, but trying to use this site is a huge pain.

***Animats*** This is on user interfaces for sites that are selling something. It's not for user interfaces that are for doing something.

***csours*** My basic definition of UX is providing users data and decisions in a certain context.

In some contexts (selling), certain things are more important, like having a beautiful appearance and no data overload. Your first time user may be your most common user, because they may only make one purchase per [lifetime, year, etc]

In other contexts, for instance industrial controls, data density is more important, and the user may be expected to take more time to learn the interface. There is still some need to accommodate new users, because everyone is a new user at some point.

In any case, there is a decision to be made, aided by some data presentation.

***noobermin*** I think the first law gives ux people too much of a license. Who decides what is "aesthetic?" When it's designers to begin with they can use to justify all sorts of pretty but user-unfriendly designs. One of the best examples in my mind was that spate of poor contrast color schemes from the mid 2010s that was fairly common and still persists on some sites.

***pilif*** To be snarky: A page titled "Laws of UX" probably shouldn't have black text on a dark grey background (the law numbers)

***ivan\_gammel*** #13, the Pareto Principle, is the main source of digital inequality nowadays. Lots of modern UIs do not perform well in terms of accessibility, because backlog is never prioritized for minority groups of users. The art of inclusive communications will never exist if we continue applying this as a law, instead of focusing on reducing the costs of accessibility.

***realtalk\_sp*** Accessibility is the sort of thing that has to be regulated into existence because the economic cost-benefit often cannot be justified. Similar to handicap parking, ramps, etc.

***enriquto*** Cannot take this article seriously. The best UX for this content is clearly a single page of text with 20 sections.

***nwallin*** This is, without a doubt, one of the worst UXs I've ever used.

This cobbler's children have no shoes. Not because he doesn't care about his children, or can't be bothered after a long day. No; this cobbler simply doesn't know how to make shoes.

edit: is the site satire? Poe's law is strong with this one.

***layoutIfNeeded*** Can’t really trust UX advice from a site with such annoying UX.

***eurasiantiger*** I don't buy the first one about apparent usability.

The claim that better aesthetics are perceived as better usability is based on a 1995 study by Kurosu and Kashimura. The study was done on 156 students of a Japanese design school and 96 students of a Japanese university psychology course.

That's already an over 160% sample bias towards very likely extremely aesthetically-minded people, not to mention that the Japanese have an ancient culture of aesthetics (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\_aesthetics) which in itself renders the study and its conclusions culturally irrelevant to global audiences.

***anonytrary*** I find it ironic that the number heading contrast with the background is almost non-existent.

***Andrew\_nenakhov*** UX of this website is horrible. It is rather stylish but makes it incredibly hard to understand what the author wanted to say. This [1] commenter here did a better job in simple plaintext.

Thus, for the breach of the Laws ot UX, by the authority granted to me by myself, I sentence the author of the website to 2 months of studying GNOME HIG. [2]

[1]: https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=24034941

[2]: https://developer.gnome.org/hig/stable/

***alvarlagerlof*** This is exactly like those UX Instagram accounts that for example say "make sure to have a high enough text contrast" then procedes to completely brake that rule in the next post.

***jeremydw*** Noticed that keyboard navigation (tabbing, focus order, focus rings, etc.) didn't work on this site. Maybe I'm being pedantic but a baseline for good UX should be accessibility.

***fold\_left*** Some of you might also be interested in The Laws Of Simplicity by John Maeda

http://lawsofsimplicity.com/

***1MachineElf*** People here have a lot of nit-picks about the design of this site. Throwing mine in: I dislike that it's logo is a triangle containing a circle and a square. Reminds me too much of a Witch House album cover, or some other "dark" aesthetic appropriating that look. Kind of hard to put into words, but that symbol carries a smugness that seems just a little more pronounced outside of a 2020 goth context. I'm not trying to be persuasive, just honest.

***Jaruzel*** When I was first getting in web design (mainly for fun, but also a bit of profit), I read 'Don't Make Me Think'[1] it really helped me understand the difference between good and bad web usability design.

***flr03*** After reading all the comments of the UX experts here I almost feel that I need to apologise to have enjoyed this list of nice cards over a list of bullet points.

***seesawtron*** Discussion from 2018:

https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=16185118

***rawoke083600*** Side Note: I'm not an UX Expert and won't comment, my sites usually looks like Xmass trees !

What IS interesting is how many times this site(https://lawsofux.com/) has been submitted and not received ANY comments and now about the 10th time it got submitted, it has 226 comments :) ? lol HackerNews can be so weird at times.

***taphangum*** This is great. But IMO, the real fundamental aspect of UX, from which all others emerge, is the law of having a great information architecture.

I wrote more about this here: https://simpleprogrammer.com/information-architecture-develo....

***jhardy54*** > Want To Earn More... And Receive Extra Recognition? Take this self assement and see how you can boost your software development career today! Yes, Show Me How!

I wanted to read your thoughts but your pop-up modal prevented me from reading your article and also decreased the probability that I'll ever visit your website again.

***taphangum*** It's not actually my site. I just guest posted there. But try refreshing and see if it helps.

***buddyp450*** For a UX page about the laws of UX I'm very happy I am a law breaker. This site is terrible for communicating it's point.

***test7777*** oh my fridging gawd, i am so triggered by this. the site linked to is supposed to advertise a book on ux with some example content and yet literally every comment here is suggesting a way to improve on the UX of that with some even just downright reformatting the content as a comment.

i hope they don't sell a single book as this serves as an example of how to not do UX.

***yoz-y*** Oh. The last time this came around I remember writing a digest because the site was hard to read. https://yozy.net/2018/01/10-laws-of-ux-digested/

It seems that it got updated with double the rules since then.

***SPBS*** No one mentioning that the site being SPA makes it laggy? If this were a static webpage - and it should - the scrolling would be 100% responsive. Instead on my 2015 macbook the animation stutters when loading the page in and scrolling down too fast incurs a delay while the content loads.

***mleonhard*** It's missing a warning about modes. That is a serious omission.

If you want to learn about UX, Nielsen Norman Group's website is a good place to start:

https://www.nngroup.com

***ryeguy\_24*** > "Users spend most of their time on other sites. This means that users prefer your site to work the same way as all the other sites they already know."

While likely accurate, this thinking is likely not conducive to UX innovation.

***kabacha*** It's missing by far the most important law: if the user uses the program the same way after a year of usage it's a failed program - in other words good program design needs to allow the user to grow.

***enjeyw*** I've got serious doubts about a list of 'UX laws' that doesn't include any references to affordances (or anything else from 'The Design of Everyday Things').

Also, this site is impossible to read?

## Why I'm losing faith in UX

By Mark Hurst • Jan, 2021 https://creativegood.com/blog/21/losing-faith-in-ux.html

For many years I believed in UX. The so-called "user experience" of a website, app, or other digital product could spell the difference between success and failure. After all, an easy, intuitive, or convenient UX would make the customer's life better, while simultaneously achieving the team's goals - usually, higher profit or lower service costs.

In 1997 I started Creative Good with this belief in UX. And for a number of years, the belief proved to be right. Companies saw a material benefit from making their products better - really, actually, better - for their customers. I'll call that Decade 1, from 1997 to 2007: the golden era of online UX, when companies were willing to invest in listening to customers in order to serve them better. Retail, finance, healthcare, travel, and other sectors all had some interest in improvement.

Things changed in 2008, during the financial crisis, kicking off Decade 2, what I'll call "the slide." Lasting from 2008 to 2018, it was a time of UX teams seeing diminished influence in the organization. There were many factors at play, but a major one was the exodus of financialization experts from Wall Street to Silicon Valley. Suddenly the "get rich quick" mentality that had caused the 2008 crash was being adopted by senior leadership at Big Tech firms. Now it was data and algorithms, not UX, that mattered most. UX was, at best, a superficial sop for users.

I remember a moment in 2014, right in the middle of Decade 2. I was giving a talk on my book Customers Included to a large company in the travel industry. The UX team, charged with managing the digital presence of this travel giant, pulled me aside afterward for a private Q&A. They were not satisfied with my talk: sure, they said, we can do the research, listen to customers, and make recommendations for improvement. But what if leadership not only ignores our recommendations but tells us to do something different? I'll never forget one comment. "We're lying to our users," one anguished UX designer told me, explaining that leadership regularly ordered the UX team to create designs that were intentionally misleading. Apparently it helped boost profits.

I think I responded to the frustrated designer that my book explained the importance of internal politics, as "The Organization" is the last section of the book. But the designer, and the whole UX team, were right to be skeptical. Now in UX's Decade 2, this team was living through the slide: the decline of UX influence in digital organizations. No book, or team workshop, was going to change the power dynamic inside the corporation. UX served, at best, to mitigate the visible harms of data-backed engineering running the show.

I had no idea it was going to get even worse.

Decade 3, starting a few years ago and still very much in force today, is "the redefinition." If the slide in Decade 2 caused the diminishment of UX, Decade 3 transformed UX into an entirely new discipline. I'm speaking generally, with the caveat that of course there are exceptional teams out there still practicing "good UX." But the larger trend in the tech industry today - led more strongly than ever by the Big Tech monstrosities - is an entirely new way of relating to users.

Increasingly, I think UX doesn't live up to its original meaning of "user experience." Instead, much of the discpline today, as it's practiced in Big Tech firms, is better described by a new name.

UX is now "user exploitation."

A perfect example is the Amazon Prime cancellation process. I learned about this from Isabella Kwai's New York Times story two weeks ago: a consumer-rights group in Norway has filed a complaint about Amazon's absurdly difficult, inconvenient process for turning off a Prime subscription. Here's the original complaint, which includes this (emphasis mine):

*The cancellation procedure is long, and consists of six separate pages. On each separate page, the consumer is nudged toward keeping their Prime membership, even though they have began a procedure to end the agreement. . . . This uncertainty is further strengthened by having to scroll through the page, which is full of text and graphics to show how cancelling the membership will mean the loss of many benefits.*

(There's a video showing the process, too.)

This example may not seem like much: cancellation processes are often a hassle, even in Internet companies. (As far back as 2006, AOL made national news for insolently refusing a customer's cancellation request.) But this is different.

Amazon, we must remember, used to be the leader in UX online. For years - certainly throughout the first decade of online UX - Jeff Bezos made a point in every interview, every press story, of hammering his strategy: customer experience, customer experience, customer experience. Here was a company, Bezos asserted again and again, maniacally dedicated to serving the customer. And it worked: without that singleminded focus early on, there would be no Amazon behemoth today.

But now Amazon has embraced a new kind of UX, as shown by the Amazon Prime cancellation process. What should be a single page with a "Cancel my subscription" link is now a six-page process filled with "dark patterns" - deceptive design tricks known to mislead users - and unnecessary distractions. This isn't an accident. Instead, and this is the point of Decade 3, there's a highly-trained, highly-paid UX organization at Amazon that is actively working to deceive, exploit, and harm their users. UX has completely flipped now, from advocating for the user to actively working against users' interests. To boost profits, UX has turned into user exploitation.

And Amazon is hardly unique. I've written plenty about Facebook, Google, and other tech giants - for example, Calling the culprits by name from last month. But where Amazon leads in UX, the rest of the tech industry generally follows.

And it's not just the Big Tech firms. The academy, led by Stanford University, has provided a philosophical basis for the shift in UX. My column Juul and the corruption of design thinking (Oct 24, 2019) describes how "design thinking," as promoted by Stanford's d.school, has provided crucial rationalization for Silicon Valley's exploitation of human beings. In Juul's case, fraudulent proclamations of "empathy" served as a smokescreen for the true aim of the company, which was to use d.school-inflected product design to addict, capture, and monetize an entire generation of young nicotine users. (Fortunately, the company's star has fallen recently - see my mediadiet syllabus on Juul.)

**The cost of exploitation**

The unholy rebirth of UX has had a staggering cost. It's well beyond the stupid hassle of Prime cancellations, and even beyond the Big Tech criminality I've written about. In the end, turning UX into an actively harmful discipline has drained talent and expertise away from projects that could, and should, have had more help.

An enraging example comes from right here in New York City: our vaccine websites are impossible to use. From the New York Times: The Maddening Red Tape Facing Older People Who Want the Vaccine (Jan 14). And on Twitter, Hee Jin Kang described a personal experience: "I've been trying to make appts for my parents (both 65+) & the lack of a centralized website is beyond frustrating." (Read Kang's whole thread for a blood-boiling description of the process.) As I posted in response:

*In the single biggest public health crisis in the world, New York can't build a usable vaccine website. The telephone - 1950s technology - is our best option, after 25 years of web development. Shameful.*

We're headed into a dangerous time, when our society is run on digital platforms, and UX isn't leading the way to ensure that those tools are usable. While the best-trained (and highest-paid) UX professionals are put to work optimizing the exploitation and deception of online users, New Yorkers continue to die from Covid, because there's no easy way to schedule a vaccine visit.

For the few teams that still do want to help their users, and don't have a toxic business model, contact me. I'm still here, and Creative Good is still here, ready to help. I've posted my own worldview, both in A simple tech ethic (July 23, 2020) and in my book Customers Included, but I'm not in the majority. Thanks to Big Tech's corrupting influence, UX is all too often devoted to exploitation.

sriku on Jan 29, 2021 | next [–]

Dark patterns are everywhere and I'm afraid not enough people are raising a ruckus about them. For example, the "Google Pay" app in India, which works via the UPI system, shows its own "scanner code" in the app as opposed to the standard UPI QR code. Furthermore, you can't discover where the UPI QR code is, if you want to pay using BHIM - an app that works directly with UPI payments. If you're using GPay too, then you can access the scanner code. If not, you used to be able to select the UPI QR code from a menu and scan that. However, later updates have hidden that - not eliminated it, mind you, deliberately hidden that. You have to "swipe left" when you see the GPay scanner code to get to the QR code - not at all a discoverble act. My wife discovered it by accident after we were puzzled a few times about where the QR code that used to be accessible went (both of us use BHIM). As a consequence, folks who use GPay do not know about UPI. This is, in my books, malicious design. Hanlon's razor would ask me to try "stupidity" first. But no. This isn't stupidity. It is downright malicious (the benign term being "dark pattern") to do this .. at least at Google's level.

***harry8*** We need a better term than "dark pattern." Dark pattern sounds like a colorscheme. It really minimises what is going on.

I like your use of "malicious" there. "Malicious design" It really captures the sense of what dark pattern was supposed to mean.

But can we make it catch on?

***notagoodidea*** When I want to really convey my point in a discussion, I call it "manipulative pattern". People feel more implicated when you point them their behviour or actions have been manipulated actively.

***sizzle*** "Human exploitative pattern" or "human manipulative pattern" makes me instantly pay attention and on edge. They are proactively exploiting/manipulating our brain's cognitive processing/award system/neural addiction pathways on a subconscious level and massive scale, which needs to be identified and categorized for all to see... cause we didn't evolve any cognitive firewalls to stop bad actors from intentionally nudging us to make bad choices that they profit from while pulling our levers that they gathered from data signals to dial up the deception and trickery to a science that predicts our probable actions to a degree of accuracy that is terrifyingly accurate.

This is just like the marketing and advertising industries playing emotional music and showing humans doing things that pull on our "heart strings" to get us to buy their crap they are peddling. We need protections from tech company dark patterns and cognitive processing manipulation/trickery.

Thoughts?

***SAI\_Peregrinus*** I prefer "deceptive pattern". They try to trick you into thinking some option doesn't exist, that some default is the only way to do things, that you'll benefit from some harmful thing, etc.

***amelius*** We need an objective way to tell which things are manipulative. And to whom. Also, ads are manipulative too (for many people), but do they belong to the same category?

***pferde*** The "manipulative" here refers to the UI actively or passively lying to you, and slightly nudging you towards doing something you do not want.

Ads, or the way ads are presented can be manipulative too - e.g. articles which pose as informative, but in fact are written just to push a certain product. But if the ads are presented overtly, they are not manipulative in the sense that is discussed here.

***intended*** Anti user design?

Pro business design?

***oblio*** It needs to be negative.

The same way I'd never call my opponents "pro-life supporters", I'd call them "anti-abortionists".

You need to control the narrative.

***kiawe\_fire*** I would favor “anti-user”, “user-exploitative”, or just “deceptive”.

There’s nothing inherently wrong with something that’s “pro-business”, and in fact I see “user-centric” or “user-driven” as being good business. “Pro-business” is bad when it comes at the cost of the user/customer/employee/etc.

***jhanschoo*** Hostile pattern, à la hostile architecture. Though note that in the sense of hostile architecture, "hostile pattern" would refer to a superset of dark pattern, that can also refer to patterns that beneficially manipulates the user by making it difficult to do things they don't want to do anyway (e.g. turning Wi-Fi back on in phones some time after a user turns it off due to a poor connection)

***rapnie*** You can propose to https://github.com/ietf/terminology There's already one for "deception pattern"

***josefrichter*** The point of the term "dark pattern" is to stop short of calling it malicious, deceptive or downright fraudulent. That's thin ice.

If this article was released with the term "malicious", the Amazon lawyers would come knocking. And the author would be in big trouble, because it's very difficult to prove malicious intent.

***bryanrasmussen*** ok, malignant. Are the Amazon lawyers going to argue that Amazon is not actually inimical to human existence and an invention of the devil so malignancy cannot be proven?

***austincheney*** > We need a better term than "dark pattern."

\* Lying pattern \* Soft fraud \* Deception pattern

\* Theft pattern \* Misdirection \* Illusion fraud \* Bait and switch

***TeMPOraL*** Let's call it Racket UI, and the practice UI Racketeering.

I mean, they get to say that infringing on intellectual property is piracy.

From Wikipedia[0]:

> However, according to the original and more specific definition, a racket or racketeering generally involves extortion or criminal coercion. Originally and often still specifically, a "racket" in this sense refers to an organized criminal act in which the perpetrators fraudulently offer a service that will not be put into effect, offer a service to solve a nonexistent problem, or offer a service that solves a problem that would not exist without the racket. Particularly, the potential problem may be caused by the same party that offers to solve it, but that fact may be concealed, with the specific intent to engender continual patronage for this party.

It fits what they're doing with "dark patterns" much better than torrenting a movie fits armed robbery on high seas.

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[0] - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racketeering

***synthc*** There is a programming language called Racket, let's not associate it with bad UI practices.

***TeMPOraL*** The whole Lisp family is already associated with a speech impairment, so that PR ship has already sailed...

(Not to mention, the name "Racket" is already self-associating.)

***sizzle*** I think they need to clamp down on these sorts of things. We need to advocate for the common user who are susceptible to these exploits optimized for human brain trickery.

***swiley*** How about "manipulation via bad UI?" Because that's what it is: manipulation.

***GoblinSlayer*** Abuse.

***hinkley*** Abusive UX, or for some of them, codependent UX.

***hda2*** Google did the same with Google maps and GPS coordinates: at first you could easily get the coordinates but now I have no clue how to get them.

I've given and started using google maps. I hope antitrust action destroys them.

***roopeshv*** https://support.google.com/maps/answer/18539?co=GENIE.Platfo...

Get the coordinates of a place

On your Android phone or tablet, open the Google Maps app .

Touch and hold an area of the map that isn't labeled. You'll see a red pin appear.

You'll see the coordinates in the search box at the top.

***zootboy*** Wow, that's in the official docs? I do this all the time, but I always thought of it as a janky workaround.

***simiones*** If you want to be amazed on what can make it into official docs, I present to you the One Note doc page for Find and Replace [0]:

In OneNote, you can use instant search to find specific text, and then replace it with different text using a keyboard shortcut.

On a blank page, type the replacement text that you want to use. For example, if you’re trying to update a project name in your notes, type the new project name.

Select the text you just typed, and then press Ctrl+C to copy it to the clipboard.

Press Ctrl+E to expand the search box in the top right corner of the OneNote window.

In the search box, type the text you want to find.

At the bottom of the results list, click Pin Search Results, or press Alt+O.

In the Search Results pane on the right side of your window, click the first search result (a text link next to a white page icon) to jump to the page where OneNote has highlighted the text it has found.

On the page, double-click each highlighted occurrence of the text, and then press Ctrl+V to paste your replacement text over it.

Repeat steps 6-7 for each additional page in the search results list.

[0] https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/find-and-replace-...

***oblio*** Couldn't the Notepad devs visit the One Note ones and tell them about Ctrl-H? :-))

***hulitu*** You see, Microsoft makes secure products, that's why they are not allowed to see each other.

***soal*** Ahaha, it could be a good premise for retelling «Romeo and Juliet» for modern IT crowd)

***simiones*** Hey, OneNote is supposed to be a stable product, you can't expect them to just go and import some random feature from a bleeding-edge experiment like Notepad!

***hulitu*** Almost all new legitimate uses of a GUI those days look like a workaround. Why is Edge and Chrome and Word and... stealing my windows titlebar ? Why can i not access the favorites menu with one click as it used to be ? Why do i need a big label which uses 30 % of the screen and does nothing ? Why everything looks like a label ?

***retSava*** What's interesting to me, is that those that shape the platform guidelines (Google/Android, MS/Win, don't have apple so can't say) often are the worst offenders to completely disregard them.

Just as an example, I've turned off auto updates on my phone and inspect each app update individually, but the google apps often just say "bug fixes and performance improvements".

When that's the case, such general guidelines become useless. "If they don't follow them, then why should we?"

***m\_eiman*** Apple's HIGs are here: https://developer.apple.com/design/human-interface-guideline...

***whywhywhywhy*** They don't really mean anything on desktop anymore seen as only a small minority of MacOS apps are built using those frameworks. Everything else is either Electron or custom cross platform UI frameworks like Adobe Suite, Alberton, Cinema4D etc.

***m\_eiman*** The HIG is just as applicable if you use Electron, even it might take more work to follow the guidelines if you don't use the system-provided widgets.

That some choose to ignore the HIG and use the same GUI on multiple platforms is a problem, but it's not a problem that any guidelines can solve.

***jfim*** > Why can i not access the favorites menu with one click as it used to be ?

The search company makes money when you search to find things, not when you find things in your bookmarks.

***varajelle*** How do I copy them in the clipboard?

***retSava*** long-touch it, "copy". Was looking for a "copy to clipboard button" but saw none.

***weeboid*** The irony is if OP had only used Google Map's parent product …

***taneq*** I went the opposite way. When Google started deliberately making Maps harder to use without following their preferred usage pattern (removing 90% of street names etc. so you have to use search and directions for everything) I stopped using Maps. I'm now almost 100% degoogled and while it's less convenient sometimes, I feel so much less icky.

***FpUser*** >"When Google started deliberately making Maps harder"

I do not use Google Maps on my phone so I would not know but on my PC they seem to show street names just fine.

***taneq*** I think it depends on how it's linked/embedded. The street names showed up fine for me on the main site just now, but embedded versions on company websites etc. often only show 1-2 street names and leave the rest blank. Same with the mobile version iirc.

***toastal*** This is one of many reasons I moved to and started contributing to OpenStreetMap

***resonantjacket5*** You right click or hold on the map if on mobile to get the coordinates.

***sriku*** One could argue that removing the UPI QR code from the app would be the truly malicious act .. and at least they're keeping it in. If they could do that, they would. NPCI regulations require these payment services to interoperate via UPI. If they hadn't required that (I love NPCI and their work), you can be guaranteed that the UPI code will not feature in the app.

***867-5309*** swiping became popular as smartphones matured. more than one monitor on a PC became popular around the same time. suddenly some cool genius transvented the concept of accessing a useless second desktop on a teeny tiny screen. his golf buddy thought it would be useful to hide ugly, pesky clutter there. hey presto! your grandma is using snapchat gestures to accidentally delete bridge club emails

the three bar menu button is more intuitive than this hidden-yet-integral functionality swiping bullshit, and you can hide an infinite amount of submenus behind such a recognisable icon. why are we still swiping?

don't get me started on phone gestures on laptop trackpads. they should come with CTRL-0 laser-etched on to their flimsy scratchplates

***matsemann*** On Gmail swiping from left to right can either open the sidebar or delete the email you hit, depending on how far from the edge you started. Fantastic.

***TeMPOraL*** Also: swipe one way is "archive", swipe the other way is "delete". I never know which is which, because it varies between apps.

***pontifier*** Yeah, I had to turn off swipe actions in gmail because of this.

***k\_sze*** Same thing when viewing your downloads in Firefox for iOS.

***mrjin*** Google has gone rogue for a long time. But for UX, it's not necessarily dark pattern. IMO, there is a bad smell, started by Google, particularly Chrome if I remembered correctly, which tends to hide menus/actions by moving them under the burger/3 dots menu. Such behavior saves a little bit screen estates but adds one extra click to finish one particular operation and the bigger problem is that it hides the available options from the user and in turn makes applications less intuitive.

***sriku*** Nope. The presence of the burger icon still affords discoverability even if a little less convenient. I can still see it and go "oh here is an icon and let me see what comes up if I tap it". In the GPay case, you see nothing and so assume there is nothing beyond what you're seeing. The thing is, a menu that you can tap to get at the QR code used to be there to help get to it. It was removed.

***IggleSniggle*** Same story in a lot of iOS design. There used to be a button where you could see all the options: now there’s some magic gesture for everything. Wtf, just show me a list, show me options I don’t yet know that I need or would know what to call, show me what you can do.

***hombre\_fatal*** A simple example is how you can slide some list items to expose a delete button. Yet only some lists support that. So you’re apparently expected to slide every list to see if it supports that paradigm. Instead of doing something like normalizing a small arrow on list items that support such a thing. Everything is hidden.

Burger menus are great. You’d never be able to fit all those options on screen at once, nor would it make sense for rare actions. But the burger menu gives people a place to put actions on mobile UI where others, like Apple, would just remove them and gimp the mobile experience.

It’s why all of Apple’s first party applications are so bad, like the podcast and news app. There are like zero options. Just add and remove and consume.

***jspash*** A similar recent trend that really bugs me is apps on OSX that run in the background, with a presence in the toolbar at the top of the screen used to be closable with a single click on the icon, move the mouse to the last item in the menu, which always used to be "Quit".

Now it's hidden under layers of menus on purpose.

The worst experience I've encountered is Adobe Creative Cloud. They force you to open the app with the icon, then use the main menu of the app on the other side of the screen to choose "Quit Creative Cloud" to then be presented with the following choices: (Cancel) (Quit) (Hide) "Hide" is highlighted and "Quit" is the one you just asked for. Perviously that step would pop up a nag screen begging you not to quit the app, but that no longer happens.

They are obviously testing various ways to become "stickier". And with each iteration it gets more and more difficult to close. I just want my RAM back please!

***iamflimflam1*** That seems to be a very common pattern now - for some reason everyone wants to be in your menu bar and they making it increasingly difficult to close.

***sriku*** I won't call this particularly malicious .. but even Chrome is in this game - it asks to "hold cmd-Q" on macOS to quit chrome .. whereas every other app close when you type cmd-Q. My respect scales are tilting way away from Google and Microsoft is looking pretty good relatively.

***johns*** This is configurable from the main app menu though. It’s nice not to lose all your tabs if you slip and hit Cmd-Q instead of Cmd-W

***pontifier*** My least favorite google UX is in youtube. It's almost impossible to swipe backwards, and videos (ads) keep playing after back swiping multiple times. Even after swiping back to the home screen. It plays the ad over the home screen, and you have to click a tiny x to actually stop the ad.

***rvba*** Since they introduced AMP it is also so much harder to edit the address in the adress bar.

***nandhinianand*** https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=13703054 ---- or this .. https://twitter.com/backus/status/993286393936805888?lang=en

***myth2018*** It's also worth mentioning that the misconception of thinking UX as being solely related to aesthetics is getting dangerously more and more common, even among professionals referring to themselves as UX designers.

Aesthetics is important, but, in some sorts of systems, it has much lower priority than other non-functional requirements, like overall speed, maintainability, testability and so on.

I don't know if my experience is the same of most of you, but I've seen more and more systems getting aesthetic pleasant but painfully slow and/or buggy these days. It's easy when you can simply quit using the software, but when your bank, your broker, your airline, your accountant, the company that operates the subway ticket machines, when those sorts of businesses start to embrace such vision, things start to get complicated.

And, unfortunately, all those examples I mention here are real and this is not an exhaustive list.

Besides, I'm not sure those companies (at least the ones in my examples) do that as an attempt to exploit users. I believe they do that due to plain lack of competence.

***loceng*** The biggest issue to me is the dumbing down of an experience and design, treating your users as incompetent vs. treating them as intelligent and being able to figure out things; there's still bad design that can occur when complex, but good UX of presenting information appropriately and contextually can create a rich but easy, intuitive flow.

The slowness of certain platforms is also an equally big issue, Reddit for example who seems to purposefully ignore and allow their website via browser experience to suffer - in an attempt to drive people to their app for ad tracking purposes - which I think is shooting themselves in the foot with the trend towards eliminating shallow-manipulative advertising from existence.

***myth2018*** Indeed.

I'd also mention a small experiment I often do.

If you have the opportunity of visiting a company still using COBOL, Clipper or some other text mode software, ask their users for an opinion on those old systems compared to the current ones.

Most of them prefer the acient ones. When asked why, they simply say "I don't know. It works, it feels right".

Even the younger users (who already had experience with web applications, big tech's stuff etc when they joined the company) prefer the text based ones.

I'm not at all implying that every software should be text based. But I think there are some very important lessons to be learned here. Things we developers used to know, intuitively.

I think UX designers should listen more to those users and less to theories and to Google and its MDC trying to make the internet look like their own products

***danybittel*** I don't think the issue is text based or non text based. In my opinion, the problem is TOOL versus ASSISTANT. A tool is easy to understand and does one thing, an Assistant is more hand waving, tries to guess what you "really" want, steers you away from error and lures you into something.

***alpaca128*** Can confirm. Started out writing code in IDEs, now I'm using Vim and CLI utilities. It's a polished, stable ecosystem that doesn't hide anything from the user and isn't incentivised to do anything other than its purpose, and that becomes very noticeable once you're familiar with it.

It doesn't come with file sync, plugin management or flashy animations. But I also don't get loading screens, don't need to look at SaaS pricing tiers and don't get overwhelmed by UI dark patterns. That's a trade-off I'll take any day.

***ryandrake*** One of the great things about command-line interfaces of old are that you could often enter your keyboard input faster than the system could respond to it, and it was OK because the system buffered them up for you and executed them as it caught up.

So if you know on this screen you need to hit F1, and that on the next screen you will have to hit X, then on the following screen, you need to type in the SKU number, you could simply issue as fast as you wanted: F1-X-4112295[ENTER], and take your mind off it while the system would just go through the whole experience successfully at its own pace.

With "better" GUI/mouse based systems, you have to click here, wait... wait... wait..., now click there, wait... wait... wait..., then click there and type in your SKU. Your attention needs to be on the screen at all times in order to wait for the UI and aim the mouse.

Next time you go to your bank web site to pay a bill, think to yourself: Wouldn't it be nice if, rather than navigating their cumbersome UX, you could just hit a known string of keystrokes that you memorized, hit enter, then walk away to get coffee while all the Javascript and page reloading chugged along and paid your bill?

***SilasX*** So much this! I've noticed how common it is that interfaces can't keep up with me when, by all rights, they should be able to! I'm a limited, slow human, while their instructions execute billions of times per second. And yet I'm constantly running into scenarios were the next screen comes up and I try to give it an input, but it's not ready. Or when I hit the next-preset button for my car radio, and yet it has to pause to load that station before I can use the button again.

***ryandrake*** Yea. I have 48 cores on my workstation at work, dozens of gigabeans of RAM and an ultra-mega-terra-gigabit ethernet connection, and still I sit there watching spinners as websites composed primarily of text and images struggle to load.

It's like we're regressing year after year.

***jcelerier*** Right, any desktop app where you have to wait for a non-stupid operation (like a Gaussian blur on a 50mpix image) makes me want to throw my computer through the window. It's 100% unacceptable, every interaction should have its result in the very next frame, and we have all the tools for that.

***pmontra*** That would be nice but it is impossible because to actually commit some money I have to go through 2FA involving the bank app on my phone and enter one or two other secrets on the bank website. This is Italy and probably most of EU since the last year.

I understand this is for the safety of my money, probably also for the safety of the bank itself (if something goes wrong it's more and more my fault) but sending money to someone is becoming a PITA.

***rbinv*** Even checking your balance from your non-mobile device is quite a pain now. It's much more likely for me to miss a fraudulent transaction now since I no longer login on a daily basis.

***loceng*** "So if you know on this screen you need to hit F1, and that on the next screen you will have to hit X, then on the following screen, you need to type in the SKU number, you could simply issue as fast as you wanted: F1-X-4112295[ENTER], and take your mind off it while the system would just go through the whole experience successfully at its own pace."

This gave me goosebumps.

***myth2018*** Indeed. I'd never realized the power of keyboard strokes buffering

***zdragnar*** There actually are a few plugin managers for Vim. I think i used Vundle once upon a time, but honestly don't recall.

My biggest pet peeve with vim and emacs is that (a) discovery sucks as with most all text mode tools, and (b) emacs in particular is slow and difficult to configure to get some mainstream languages working. Doom was the closest I ever got to being happy with my setup, but the tooltips and autocomplete were still objectively inferior even to vscode (for typescript and react, at least).

Lisps are a different story, but not by much. I'm actually fairly happy with using vscode to write common lisp, though I don't do much of it these days.

***yw3410*** What? Discovery in Emacs is amazing; all the API is a keystroke away.

Do you mean something else?

***gegtik*** \*discovery for laymen

***otabdeveloper4*** Emacs tells you to hit "Ctrl-h" when you start it. The documentation for Emacs is about as good as you can get for a software product.

(Now let's talk about Excel if you want to discuss discoverability issues.)

***gegtik*** Sorry to come at this late but there's discoverability-by-doing and I think it's clear from general user feedback that emacs doesn't have it.

I agree it's very well documented, and I assume your impulse upon reading the previous paragraph is to tell me there's a REPL. it's simply not casually approachable. sorry. ask someone who isn't drowning in koolaid!

***vulcan01*** Note that the GP said

> It doesn't come with... plugin management

Also, for Vim, `:<tab>` gives you all available commands in the current buffer and `:h command` gives you the vim help page for that command (which is usually at least a few sentences long, and pretty thorough).

***yosamino*** > Also, for Vim, `:<tab>` gives you all available commands in the current buffer

Don't misunderstand me, I love vim and use it almost exclusively and everyday, but tab-ing in the way you describe yields 2-3 screenfulls of commands that I have to manually (well, with my eyes anyhow) scan to find what I want and it includes gems such as: "spellrare" and "{{{{{{{{"

The latter of which I do not know how to open a help page for.

To me "discoverable" would mean that I would be able to use this interface to learn more commands, but this is only as discoverable as having to read man-pages. Sure - that is a great way to learn, but it's not discoverable.

Now, what would probably get a little closer is if `:<tab>` opened a list if commands in an fzf-style list also listing their descriptions and maybe grouping them by some other way than just alphabet sort order.

(If anyone can tell me what is up with those '{' I would greatly appreciate it)

***loceng*** For a network of sites I am developing I am planning a command prompt where users can type /command for basically every function: /msg username, /logout, /search phrase, etc.

***jimktrains2*** I did something similar for a web app at work and the people on the floor really liked it. It was mich faster than trying to mouse to things, especially when half of their task is scanning barcodes anyway.

***ehnto*** Interesting! I had a similar idea but as a library to drop into existing sites, perhaps even be a browser extension. Vimium does a great job of enabling keyboard control over a website but I think a generic web CLI could take the experience even further.

***drewzero1*** When I started at my current employer we were running our retail management software on DOS terminals connected to a SCO Unix box. My experience with the system was that it wasn't intuitive or easy to learn, but was pretty bulletproof for the veteran users who had been working with it for ~30 years. I learned as much of it as I needed to know, and got to the point where I could do some tasks without even thinking about which keys I was pressing.

I helped set up the replacement system and received a lot of complaints from those same users - some resistance to change, but also some legitimate failings of the new software. Tradeoffs in the network structure made it run more slowly at satellite locations, Windows 10 on all of the terminals caused network issues until we got updates and bandwidth moderation dialed in, and some employees needed additional practice using a mouse.

I see trade-offs between the old and the new here. The new software is easier to train new users (less arcane) and able to securely handle things like chip credit cards (which had previously needed a separate card terminal system) and charge accounts. At the same time, the old system was faster (for the limited features it provided) and was able to run more smoothly on older equipment (very little OS overhead, text only network transmissions).

***stainforth*** >text only network transmissions

As opposed to what, base64 images or something?

***drewzero1*** Text-only as opposed to encrypted text and images.

As far as I've been able to make out, document images are generated on the server and sent to the terminals as PostScript files. I've noticed at satellite locations the receipt printers hesitate for a few seconds before printing the barcode at the bottom, which tells me that either 1) it's taking some time to transmit the barcode image over the internet or 2) the server is taking its sweet time cataloguing the transaction in the document archive. Either way, I've gotten complaints about it from the users.

***barbarbar*** Having used 3270 terminal for time registration many years ago. And it was 1000 times better and faster than all the web apps that followed. So I can confirm this.

***spyke112*** I'm working freelance and built my own cli for this exact purpose. I've been wanting to redo it as a web app, but i honestly like my cli tool better. It lives in git, and Gitlab CI handles generation of pdf/excel reports and uploading to Dropbox. Inputting new data is just so damn fast compared to opening any web app!

***jdhendrickson*** I would love to see that app.

***spyke112*** Hi, it's not really documented all that well, but if you don't mind diving into code, then give it a go: https://www.npmjs.com/package/@lvqconsult/spatium-cli

***alpaca128*** Some of the worst offenders in this area were the preinstalled apps on Windows 8. Their official OneDrive app had I think 1-2 options to toggle and didn't even show how much of the cloud storage was used/free. It was basically a picture viewer but without properly working right click.

And in terms of performance I fear slow, ad-filled websites slowly trained users to accept bad performance in applications outside the browser as well. At least I don't know how to otherwise explain the widespread indifference toward those things, often even among developers.

***myth2018*** > And in terms of performance I fear slow, ad-filled websites slowly trained users to accept bad performance in applications outside the browser as well. At least I don't know how to otherwise explain the widespread indifference toward those things, often even among developers.

Yeah, I don't know either, and I think yours is a very good hypothesis.

I'm currently working on a windows project after spending four years exclusively on Linux, using mostly vim and Eclipse. Visual Studio feels now way worse than it used to. You get more conscious about the time you're wasting.

And, most interestingly, the same happens to users. It's not a matter of being text based, it's a matter of getting useful stuff done, and fast.

Users can and actually enjoy using the keyboard. Users don't want to be delighted with our stuff (speaking of the enterprise here), they just want a system that helps them to get their job done and, after that, get out of their way.

Designers and more and more developers seem to forget that animations, complex colorful screens, all this stuff has to be built, tested, processed by user's hardware which is already having a bad time supporting windows. So, instead of shipping something fast, something we are able to build and fix and test quickly, we deliver something detrimental, in many ways, to user experience.

***flukus*** > Visual Studio feels now way worse than it used to. You get more conscious about the time you're wasting.

Visual Studio is the perfect example to me. I begged dad to upgrade the computer to 64/128MB of RAM to get VC++6 to run. It was feature complete then and maybe a bit earlier. Sure supported languages and syntax of come and gone but the core product feature set (editor + intellisense) has not changed in over 20 years, yet the current version takes an order of magnitude more memory and is slower despite having a desktop more powerful than anything I could have imagined back then.

> It's not a matter of being text based, it's a matter of getting useful stuff done, and fast.

Sometimes this is about being composable and scriptable, text based generally helps here.

***alpaca128*** > Sometimes this is about being composable and scriptable, text based generally helps here.

Absolutely. This is one of the main reasons I'm using Vim - not only because of the program itself but how I can just combine it with the multiplexer I want, in my preferred terminal emulator, interfacing with other text-based tools. Many things I do regularly would require me to write custom plugins in VS Code. In Vim I can just bind keys to an arbitrary sequence of inputs - something modern applications sorely lack.

It's limited, but that limitation severely reduced the complexity of the interface - it's all just a string and bash is, despite all its weirdness, an extremely productive string processing language.

***ehnto*** I think this is why the spreadsheet is the killer productivity app. It's just a keyboard enabled information management tool, power users can take a spreadsheet really, really far. Entire businesses rest upon spreadsheets.

That is coming from someone who considers the need to use a spreadsheet as a marker that my job scope had gone awry. Love spreadsheets, hate managing information.

***pmontra*** Imagine if Excel had 1 inch padding around any cell, a gray large font on a light gray background, no cell borders and autohiding row and column labels because "cleaner and modern UI" :-)

Wouldn't we use Lotus 1 2 3 in some emulator?

***matheusmoreira*** I really wish spreadsheets had a way to loop over rows and columns. Currently I have to create a huge mess of ARRAYFORMULAs whenever I need to apply some computation to all rows. I use my spreadsheets as databases and I want them to calculate new information as soon as I input new data. This use case should not be so hard...

***ako*** vba?

***matheusmoreira*** Yeah, using an actual programming language would probably solve all this complexity. I'm using Google Sheets though and I absolutely need everything to be fully functional in the mobile app so I'm not sure how far I can take it with the javascripting. The app doesn't even support editing pivot tables.

***selimthegrim*** http://www.blockpad.net might fit your use case

***loceng*** Makes me think of a system/application getting attention, reach, that it doesn't deserve - hasn't earned - a negative of the advertising industry as well, one reason I love Tesla is that they don't advertise, any attention they get has been earned.

***undergrowth54*** Part of the issue is inter-team communication and part of the problem comes from that very phrase "dumbing down". I often hear people argue for "dumbing things down" when there is an overwhelming amount of information, but that phrase:

1. Treats people's intelligence as 1-dimensional, which it is not.

2. Gives no clear direction to an engineer who is passionate about UX, recognises that humans are multidimensional, and is trying to ask about what their users really need.

You might say I'm arguing semantics, but communication matters!

Without it, you can write code at high speed, but you won't learn what direction to go in order to present information appropriately and contextually to create a rich but easy, intuitive flow.

***teraku*** In order to get my reddit addiction in check I uninstalled the app and started using it in the browser. After 1 week I quit reddit forever. Never looking back.

***laurent92*** Reddit is an example of a good dark pattern for me: The popup reminds me that I need to leave the side. Unfortunately, like the Nigerian Prince Paradox, an upfront obnoxiousness is often designed to filter people out early, if they risk not being gullible enough during the rest of the path.

***jonathanstrange*** May I ask what you think is wrong with Reddit's UI? In my opinion, it's one of the best out there and I've never had problems with it. HN is better, but mainly because it offers far less functionality.

Facebook is for me the prototypical example of a bad UI with lots of dark patterns, confusing navigation, different settings scattered all over the place, and frequent technical glitches.

***retox*** Here are my annoyances as someone without an account that dips in from time to time via links or news stories.

The large "this experience is better in the app" on mobile visits

Only having one or two levels of responses visible without completely reloading the page, seemingly all the way down the reply chain

Sides of the page taking you back to the index on clicking (why?)

Having to expand a discussion thread that you clicked into (just to tell me how many replies there are, why?)

Not scrolling correctly when clicking threads, meaning I end up somewhere in the infinite 'other threads' list at the bottom of the page

The updating and flashing number of upvotes constantly drawing my attention while trying to read

As an outsider reddit is a disgusting mess, and every minute I spend reading it is mental harassment.

***ryanbrunner*** Have you used Reddit on a phone without using the app? It constantly berates you to use the app, even when you've clearly stated your preference for using the site before.

There's also the problem that the new UI is clearly more buggy than the old one, and requires manually refreshing to fix glitches far too often, but that's more of a technical problem and not a UX issue.

***Thorrez*** When I click on a post it only shows 4 comments by default, and I have to click again to see more.

To be honest, they actually seem to have improved new reddit a lot since I last looked (a few months ago). Now once you do that second click it shows a decent number of comments, whereas previously even then it would still not show many.

***handoflixue*** > May I ask what you think is wrong with Reddit's UI?

Worth noting that the mobile experience is VERY different from the desktop website, and the desktop website is very different if you're using the Reddit Enhancement Suite plugin (and if you haven't used the site in a while, that difference is even starker now that RES uses "old.reddit.com" while everyone else is stuck on the new redesign)

I love the RES / old.Reddit experience, but the new desktop redesign and the mobile experience are both pretty annoying.

***kitsune***\_ This offers an interesting tangent to me: is the dumbing down of the user experience what ultimately opens the door for dark patterns?

***jariel*** "treating your users as incompetent"

Actually, this is good practice.

We are all busy and distracted. Dumbing down an experience to it's essential aspects is a great way to make something easier to use.

If a 'fool could use it while trying to juggle' then that's good.

Making it dumb means speaking to intuition, not thought.

I should add, there are some good comments here about 'command line' etc. - I suggest that that makes sense but in an entirely different realm of usability.

Designing for something that's going to be used by competent people all day for their jobs, is different than designing for the proles standing in line at the bank, looking for 3 minutes of respite from whatever, or even trying to squeeze in that little update.

***majewsky*** I somewhat agree. A UI that works well for inexperienced users is better than one that isn't. But the real measure of a good UI is if it works well for inexperienced users and actively allows for them to gain experience while using the software.

A good example is how, in classic application menus, each entry would have its keyboard shortcut printed next to it. A fresh user can navigate the menu to find an action, and the same option is open to anyone how forgot about how to invoke the action, but whenever they land on the action, they can see the keyboard shortcut and eventually they'll remember it and learn to invoke the action faster without having to make an active effort.

This is good UX.

Then designers or product owners or someone decided that the shortcuts made their menus look cluttered (or maybe they really took that "treating your users as incompetent" mantra to heart and thought the shortcuts looked too technical or intimidating), thus condeming inexperienced users to stay inexperienced forever.

This is bad UX.

***jariel*** Those are good points - often we're in different headspaces as well on the matter.

Physical product design, mobile app, command line, common entry (like the software the waiter uses), pro software (i.e. Photoshop) are all very different aspects of usability representing colliding viewpoints.

***montagg*** I've run into this while interviewing people for UX positions. They'll walk me through a portfolio and point out a lot of the aesthetics, whereas I'm asking about their decision-making process: how did you identify the problem? What other solutions did you consider and why didn't you go with them? How did you determine the organization of X? Why did you choose this flow? Why are you framing the task this way? Why did you make this more important than that? Why are you grouping this and that together? Why not these other things? Why expose this information at a glance and hide that information behind an interaction? etc.

***valand*** Disconnect between UX department and engineering department can cause this too.

Business object can grow out of nothing.

UX designers might feel creative and introduce some unintended features, dynamic colors, even complex structure data. If the design is not validated regularly, these non essential items get worked on by the engineers not knowing that these are not in anybody's interest other than the UX designer.

This is not solely UX designer's fault. This is also the team workflow's fault to not accommodate time for validating design.

At the other spectrum, from engineering side it can be from the underlying mechanism, such as request of huge data should be made stateful because one http call can't handle it, multiple points of hardware failures in a seemingly single operation, etc.

These can sometimes change the game and UX design need to be changed so that user information.

If these are not well communicated, the initial UX design may not suffice to honestly picture the actual underlying process of the product, causing the users to miss one or two options they should have, e.g. missing retry button where user is supposed to be able to retry an action.

Again there should be a period where UX design is validated again and again in the middle of development. A department or a role in the development team that takes care of the big picture of UX design (information architect and interaction design), the big picture of system architecture, and the big picture of project management (to determine which developer works when) might be ideal for it.

***emilsedgh*** > This is not solely UX designer's fault. This is also the team workflow's fault to not accommodate time for validating design.

We suffer from this greatly. Our app is complicated by nature. The designs that come from our product team turn a blind eye on the complexity and try to "make it simple". As a result, the product doesn't really work (in some aspects).

Every time we try to "validate" those designs, we're shut down "because simplicity".

Honestly I think product designers should go through a database course or something to understand that if there's a one-to-many relationship between to entities in real life, you cannot force it into a one-to-one relationship and ignore all potential corner cases. Suddenly 40% of cases are "corner cases" and the app doesn't work.

***myth2018*** > "because simplicity"

And a very flawed interpretation of "simplicity" btw.

What is the point of creating an interface containing the bare minimum of buttons if that will lead users to spend more time to perform what they need? Just like that Apple's "one-button" remote?

What is the point of employing fancy graphical diagraming technics to layout widgets if the resulting layout impairs users?

I'm ok about sb designing an interface without talking to users if and only if the designer is being assisted by/responds to sb who has already been on the future users shoes, or have previous similar experience.

The prevalence of this theoretical, taste and opinion-based ideas about how interfaces should be designed must stop.

***myth2018*** Indeed. And they should listen to the actual users and product managers as well (assuming product managers know the use cases very well). Instead, so many UX designers behave like "they knew better".

That perfectly describes what happened to the software provided by my stock broker. They changed the interface so that tools stay on fixed positions, with fixed sizes.

Now the interface looks nice but it also makes some sorts of operations simply impossible.

They completely fail to realize that the "mess" of the old platform was actually obeying to customers ongoing needs for monitoring a specific set of assets, and we didn't f.. care about how the interface looked like, we just cared about numbers and that was all.

It's so depressing how fast even conservative sectors like finance are forgetting some decades-old stuff which could just be taken for granted until some years ago.

***valand*** Then, the said UX designer is not a true UX designer.

User experience involves stuffs other than visual appearances. They must also take care of interaction, information architecture, usability. Decreased usability is a symptom of failure of misdesign.

***emilsedgh*** I'm pretty much sure a good chunk of people being hired as UX designers are clueless about this whole topic, which to me, is the most important one.

***valand*** People learn about these topics at different period of their life.

The most important thing, to me at least, is to work with people open to learning and exploring something new. People who, when realizing they lack of a certain competence, goes curious about the topic rather than denying it.

A good UX designer might not know these topics before they are hired, but they will be happy to explore when they heard of the terms.

***myth2018*** Those are good points.

And that's why I'm such a big fan of simple, as-much-text-based-as-possible interfaces. By self-imposing a decrease in her degrees of freedom, one gets fewer things compounding the probably already high project burdens.

***valand*** Yeah,

and the so-called abstraction, either in the UX world or engineering world,

should be a mere default of how the underlying mechanism works, but everybody should still have access to the nitty gritty details.

***rhn\_mk1*** What does "validate" mean in this context?

It doesn't mean "compare using testers", because that requires engineering work, which was rejected in the next sentence. So what is it?

***valand*** In this context, validating the design means ensuring it is portraying the business object as correct as possible to relative to the business requirement.

Like, "validating implementation against specification", but replace implementation with design and specification with business requirement

***benrbray*** For me, the most frustrating example of this is the control panel on Windows. The new mobile-friendly menus exclude many important "advanced" (emphasis on the quotes) settings, especially related to audio and networking.

The old menu is still available, but over the years they've made it progressively harder to find. But when apps get confused about my bluetooth headset the only way to fix it is to pull up the old menu.

***astura*** I actually like it better because I just type whatever I'm looking for in the search bar and it brings up the appropriate item, I don't have to go searching. In fact, for something like bluetooth settings I wouldn't even pull up the control panel, just click start and type "bluetooth" then enter (when you see it's brought up the correct item).

I remember in the old versions of windows changing environment variables was something that was a bit of a pain paint because it was hidden behind multiple "advanced" dialogs. Now it's real easy, click start type "envi" and hit enter. That actually brings up "System properties" advanced tab and you have to click "environment variables."

***laurent92*** Don’t you remember in Windows XP how you had to click on 6 « advanced » dialogs to set the machine IP? And DHCP wasn’t the default on many, many routers at the time. Windows has always been bad at UX, probably because each dialog was the job of a different team.

***hansvm*** Off-topic, one of the things that surprised me the most when I finally made the jump to Linux (I don't remember anymore which dark pattern finally turned me off of Windows, but it was one too goddamned many) -- the bluetooth support was light-years ahead of anything I'd previously encountered. I was expecting hardware incompatibilities to be way more problematic than they actually were.

***benrbray*** It infuriates me to no end that bluetooth headsets have two modes -- one for listening only, and one for listening+voice, where the latter has absurdly low audio quality.

This has been a major source of problems for me, especially on Windows, where I often have to manually switch between the two.

I have two Linux laptops. On one, Bluetooth devices endlessly disconnect/reconnect and I gave up entirely. On the other, Bluetooth works flawlessly, better than Windows! So it's really hit and miss in my experience.

***dccoolgai*** Came here to say that. UX should, by and large, be staffed with deep experience in User Psychology, with some tech and design experience to know how to apply that knowledge. Instead it's mostly discount designers who occasionally conduct a user interview.

***myth2018*** My stock broker have recently redesigned their systems to provide us "an improved experience".

Except that, besides removing some functionality existent in the previous platform, the new one doesn't allow you any longer to lay out your tools the way you think it's more convenient.

They asked for a feedback and I said it feels like the artist conceptual design has priority over the damn user needs. It's evident that the people involved on that project have never performed something beyond trivial operations at the stock market.

Financial industry usually values stability and it's a bit disconcerting to see a stock broker embarking on such trend now.

***fakedang*** >Financial industry usually values stability and it's a bit disconcerting to see a stock broker embarking on such trend now.

It's because of Robinhood. Mobile friendly (Material?) UX is very "welcoming" to users, compared to the multitudes of tables and charts that are typically part of a trading platform. Since RH was able to onboard a lot of users, especially amateurs, the others have been paying attention and doing every thing to become similar to RH, to capture that huge amateur market.

***myth2018*** I know, but here I'm talking about a decades-old broker which targeted intermediate and professional investors since forever.

Besides, nothing prevented them from offering an alternate, more amateur-friendly platform, without turning the traditional one off

***fakedang*** > nothing prevented them from offering an alternate, more amateur-friendly platform, without turning the traditional one off

This is exactly the gripe I have with my broker too right now, so we might be using the same broker.

They try to squeeze the entire platform onto a mobile app, when I'm sure 95% of their user base trades from a PC. In the end, it results in botched functionality, a shitty UX of hiding things away, the works.

***myth2018*** Lol sounds so familiar.

I use Rico, in Brazil.

***flukus*** > Came here to say that. UX should, by and large, be staffed with deep experience in User Psychology

Maybe if you're trying to convince people to part with money. Most applications just need UX designers that understand the users workflows and what they're trying to accomplish. When a person comes to this screen of the app why are they there? What data to they need? What are their next steps? Are the doing it for 1 item or 15?

Programmers want to create generic, do everything CRUD interfaces with 15 layers. "UX" people just want to make it pretty. No one is left to understand what they users are actually doing with the software.

***ulrikrasmussen*** Slack is a prime example of this. Simple things like switching a chat room, which was instantaneous in mIRC on my old 166mhz PC, can take seconds in Slack. But at least there are round corners everywhere, plenty of padding around elements, and animated gifs /s

***deanCommie*** Real talk though...if you polled slack users and said "You could have instantaneous room switching, but you have to give up animated gifs", what percentage of users would actually take that trade?

***ulrikrasmussen*** Absolutely, you're probably right if you meant to imply that the percentage of such users is low. But on the other hand, if Slack became as fast as desktop apps from the 1990s tomorrow, how many users do you think would raise their arms in joy and exclaim that their computers suddenly became much faster? Latency is less directly visible to users - which is probably why it receives less attention - but silently adds to the users frustrations when working with the system.

***kreco*** Th worst part is that if say "You could have both, speed and gifs" no one would "believe" it could happen.

***deanCommie*** While I hear you that this isn't a technical limitation, every organization has choices and tradeoffs to make with regards to their priorities.

It's not that latency isn't important to Slack, but it's not AS important as everything else.

***asoneth*** I think it can be a challenge on both the supply and demand sides.

On the supply side the profession has ballooned and subjectively it feels like a disproportionate amount of the growth has been folks who tend towards the "aesthetic" side and/or who lack stat/psych/research/engineering experience. Not that aesthetics isn't valuable, mind you, just that the balance feels off.

On the demand side more product teams are considering UX but many of them seem to have the impression that UX is there to "make it look better". In my experience most teams are receptive to doing user research to identify and solve the underlying problems, but occasionally I'll get someone who insists that the solution is to use the latest UI fad.

Combined and I can see why UX is being perceived as more shallow.

***hnick*** The UX sin that bothers me the most lately is when I can enter data faster than the device can handle and it doesn't buffer. The example I gave last time is running calc.exe, then hitting enter and typing a formula. On Win10 you'll lose keypresses and half the formula, but not on the older versions. It used to be a very convenient way to do some quick maths without even interrupting my workflow, now I have to wait for it.

It's even in some games I've played recently, where I'm in a menu and hitting down twice then a button will sometimes ignore the second press because it's still playing a 'move the cursor' animation.

I was pleasantly surprised last time I snuck a look at the screen in my local post office where I saw an ASCII terminal UI full of text with hotkeys. There is a mistaken belief that complicated is bad, but in a job where you spend your whole day all week long it can be very beneficial because everyone can be a power user.

***amenod*** > ...even among professionals referring to themselves as UX designers.

I believe this is a part of the problem. Because there is a word "designers" in "UX designers", a lot of designers expanded their credentials to include UX. In my experience, they invariably suck at it (at least the ~5 I had the pleasure to work with).

The proliferation of high-fidelity wireframes (and tools like Adobe XD, Figma) is another testament to that; impressive looking designs that hide basic UX mistakes. Low fidelity wireframes would make them obvious, but who wants to look at the "wires" when you can have colors?

I think the designers simply prioritize aesthetics over content / usability and it is difficult for them to get past that. The best UX designers I have worked with in the past were either engineers or coming from completely unrelated fields.

***snarfy*** > other non-functional requirements, like overall speed, maintainability, testability and so on

If your title is UX designer, and the UX problem is 'overall speed', how do you solve that given your skills and responsibilities?

As software engineering has grown from someone hacking in their basement to large corporate teams practicing SAFe agile, the responsibilities of the individual software engineer have been reduced. The lone basement hacker is responsible for everything, but the corporate engineer is a cog in the machine with requirements handed down from project managers and ux designers.

Overall speed is a systems quality encompassing the whole system. It's something a lone engineer responsible for the whole system can tackle and be diligent about, but the corporate engineer must rehash the design over and over with ux designers and project managers until an efficient design, not just an aesthetically pleasing design, is what is used.

Another systems quality besides speed is security, and you'll notice more and more systems are less secure than they used to be.

***reader\_x*** I agree with your conclusion that it’s more likely lack of competence.

I appreciate the article ending with the impossible NY website for COVID-19 vaccine registration. The situation is the same in Maryland, except that one must register for three so as to be on a waiting list with the county health department and the private pharmacy and the local hospital (as there is no telling which might get supply first). Not to mention the larger problem: the target group is people age 75 and up! No one seems to have thought that maybe an optional system of registration by phone, or through a call center representative authorized by the caller to register them on their behalf, is plausible. Somehow, three bad websites is considered fine. And one can’t blame this on ‘government’- the private pharmacies are as bad.

So is it incompetence, laziness, or sheer lack of concern whether the most vulnerable elderly get vaccinated? Incompetence might be the most comforting interpretation.

***mns*** This is happening everywhere. It took me around 2 hours to sign up my parents for the vaccine (in an EU country) on a website that was impossible to figure out. Add details here, then you have a list of details, but those are not the actual people that you can sign up, then you need to go somewhere else to actually be able to schedule someone. It's as if they made the scheduling website so complicated that only the people that really want the vaccine will spend 1+ hour to try and register. For a 65+ person, it is almost impossible to navigate through that. And for the icing on the cake, it's all a react SPA that they build in a hurry, probably, that when you got a server error back for one of the requests, the whole multi-step process crashed and you had to start over. After all the frustration I ended up completing the process with Postman.

***medium\_burrito*** At a social networking company once I brought up the fact that the post message to feed workflow required 3x more steps than any of our competitors, and that perhaps we should focus on making it easy to post. Design of course ignored it, as they wanted something "measureable" to iterate on.

***chromanoid*** Wouldn't be new posts per day a good measure in this case?

***medium\_burrito*** One would think so, but apparently no.

***chromanoid*** I totally agree. It begins with using monochrome icons and ends with something that is pleasant to look at but where nothing that is useful is standing out. As if they try to make screenshots to look good to hang them on their walls. Form over function....

***brailsafe*** I disagree, it was always as common as it is and never broke past the barrier of getting people to understand it's value, beyond designers themselves. This was true before UX was called UX (before 2014 maybe and as far back as designers of any kind have been around) and it's true now.

***throwaway5752*** At what point is UX meaningless or indistinguishable from "best practices" though? I agree it's a shame it's conflated with cosmetic/UI work.

***jjcm*** I'd actually argue otherwise - UX has gotten tremendously better in the last decade. Online products have been moulded perfectly towards improving the use case for their customers.

The main issue though is that you aren't the customer anymore.

Look at Facebook - they've done an absolutely incredible job becoming a dream experience for advertisers. Youtube has catered to these advertisers as well and blocked controversial content that wouldn't look good next to their brand. It's a golden age to be at the head of a marketing team with a large ad budget. These companies have made golden escalators for getting sponsored content in front of the productized consumers.

If you want UX to succeed and become something that benefits you as a user, then you should focus on platforms where you truly are the customer. Look at Square or Patreon - in both platforms you are truly the customer, and their UX is incredible.

***Aerroon*** >Look at Square or Patreon - in both platforms you are truly the customer, and their UX is incredible.

I'm sorry, are we talking about the same Patreon? Because patreon.com has a bunch of seemingly pointless clicks for posting content.

Here's the step-by-step for posting a video from the creator page:

1. Click on Posts in the sidebar. An animation creates a dropdown - this frequently stutters even on a reasonable desktop and creates a small delay.

2. Click on New. This loads a new page where you can select a post type.

3. Click on Video. This loads another new page where I can select Vimeo or Add URL.

4. Click on Add URL. This immediately creates a textbox under the button that I can paste a URL into. I can set a title, tags, additional content and post it.

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Compare this to uploading a video to Youtube:

1. Click on Create. This immediately opens a dropdown.

2. Click on Upload video. This opens an upload video box that you can click on to open a file upload dialog or you can drag a file onto it. If you're on the Youtube frontpage then there's a page load in this step, but if you're on the Creator Page, then there's no page load.

3. While the file is uploading you can fill in the title etc and even press Publish immediately (while it's still uploading).

I understand that the two cases aren't equivalent, but the experience of posting content feels better on Youtube. I think in terms of UX something like imgur or streamable are great examples.

Edit: I was overly harsh at first. It's just a part of UX that has consistently annoyed me with Patreon. Overall it's decent, but these small things make it feel worse than it is.

***Closi*** If we are following what OP was inferring, arguably the customer in Patreons sense are the ones forking over money, in which case the UI is pretty damn easy.

The creators are an important part of the platform, but arguably will put up with more because they are getting paid.

***jjcm*** As Closi mentions in the sibling comment, the customers are the ones paying the money.

What you've described is exactly what I'm talking about - the UX is optimized for whoever is paying. Your example is a perfect showing of this. A creator's experience is secondary for Patreon - a patron's experience comes first (hell, it's even in their name). Patreon improved the UX of funding creatives.

***gfxgirl*** Pateron? What? Pateron has the worst UX of any platform I regularly use.

Sign up to be a pateron of some artist to download their works. Your only way to do this is to scroll through the list of all their posts one at a time in an endless scroll. And to add insult to injury the page will crash and you have to start over from the top of the scroll, there is no way to start 50 or 100 posts in.

For artists offering media via pateron a good UX might be something like Mega.

***speeder*** I advertise on google.

1. It is slow. 2. It is buggy. 3. They often introduce new features (instead of fixing old ones), call me on phone, and convince me to use them, only for them to not work right. 4. The UI seemly tries it hard to obscure useful stuff and make easy to waste money, sometimes it is blatant, for example when I was getting a ton of click fraud coming from mobile apps, I found a hidden option to disable ads on mobile apps, 2 weeks later they removed the option entirely, restoring the fraud, when I went to research how to fix that, the answer was that I had to either let the fraud happen, or stop advertising on mobile (even in sites) entirely. I took the second option (and the SEO and ad-ranking hit, since google hates when you ignore mobile)

***dleslie*** Indeed; consumer-oriented software previously focused on user productivity as its primary concern, and at present this class of software is focused on user engagement as its primary concern.

Engagement is often at odds with productivity.

***Mindwipe*** > Look at Square or Patreon - in both platforms you are truly the customer, and their UX is incredible.

You're kidding, right?

They're both disasters. Patreon's UX feels like it was designed by someone deliberately trying to tank the company.

***m463*** I would imagine the signup process is a dream :)

For example, when you create a calendar appointment in office, it's one click to make it a teams meeting.

figuring out privacy settings... not as easy (basically send an email)

***stkdump*** Who is the true customer in case of amazon prime?

***m463*** Who is the true customer with "sponsored ads" while you are shopping.

It's literally getting in the way when I'm trying to buy something!

***ChrisMarshallNY*** Well, he's right. I feel sorry for the students that studied psych, hoping to help people in need, and, instead, are working for companies to produce dark patterns.

That must suck; but at least they probably make more money than they would, helping people. Unfortunately, in the US, at least, we value the reaper, more than the servant. Teachers and social workers are paid badly, treated with immense disrespect, and sidelined.

People who make money by treating their users like chattel are lionized and held up as national models.

Ah...well. That's the USofA.

For me, I decided that I love UX -the original kind, and I write software that implements it. I don't particularly care if I ever make a dime off it. I love to write high-quality, non-manipulative, useful software. It's a rare luxury, and I'm grateful to be in that position.

It does make me sad to know that the kind of work that I do is scorned, but that won't stop me from doing it.

I like the anglerfish metaphor. Perfect.

***prox*** Well said. A redefinition in design not driven by big tech would be a great initiative. Maybe even an open source data bank of non dark patterned practices.

Another shout out for “About Face : the essentials of interaction design” which everyone should read, especially programmers.

***apitman*** For basically everyone of an age to being reading HN, we've essentially never known anything other than technology (and life in general) improving over time, often exponentially.

If you've never seen this talk by Jonathan Blow, he's makes a rather compelling argument that we don't necessarily have any reason to believe this will continue:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSRHeXYDLko

***dave\_sid*** How about this. Tonight, when I want to watch a program on BBC Iplayer, I need to switch on the kindle fire stick, wait for it to load, find the iplayer app and wait for 30 seconds until it loads, search for a channel, with each character I type taking 0.5 seconds to show up on the screen (no kidding), select the channel and wait 10 seconds for it to buffer.

When I was a kid, I just used to press one button on the front of the tv and it was on in less than a second.

Not sure what my point is really but there’s something not quite right with this situation. Technology has improved choice but made the experience awful.

***ryandrake*** I have to wait many seconds for the "entertainment system" computer in my car to boot in order to simply hear the radio. And when I tune to a different station, it's a touchscreen with UP and DN buttons that I have to tap on to tune ±0.2 MHz, and it takes takes maybe 750ms to lock on to the station. Think about how absurd this is! Compared to my first car made in the early 80s where the radio started as soon as you turned the key, and you had an analog dial that panned through the spectrum instantly with the sound continuously playing.

***gerdesj*** The first telly I remember was b/w and had three channels and belonged to a neighbour. Provided the dog hadn't recently wazzed on the rubber plant that supported the aerial, in which case ITV was optional and then we only had BBC One and Two.

However, old school CRT screens could handle pans and zooms that my modern LG thing can only dream of. Then again the thing I'm watching now is comparatively huge and "waffer theeeen". A ~50" CRT would stick out from the wall about four feet and weigh enough that I'd be using some of the more robust Civil Engineering things I learned at college to fix it to the wall.

When I was a child it took a while to tune a TV by hand, channel by channel. Remember portables with the little aerials on the end of a wire? Then finding out that to watch the rugby today involved perching the TV on a chair near a window and the aerial held by long suffering (someone) holding it at a strange angle near the ceiling. You missed half the match faffing around.

My laptop runs Arch - that's far more friendly than anything I used in the '70s-'00s. I recall getting an Epsom FX80 dot matrix printer connected to our C-64 was quite traumatic and involved getting a Centronics (parallel) interface card made up and stuff. I still have the C-64 and it now has a USB interface.

Now I press the home button and pick a service on my TV. OK on my TV that isn't one of my RPi driven monsters that uses the MythTV backend. I have an Octo-LNB on my sat dish ...

(Sorry about this (twitch) but it's iPlayer and you were a child, not a kid)

***bscphil*** > My laptop runs Arch - that's far more friendly than anything I used in the '70s-'00s.

Not to be too much of a Linux-using stereotype, but it really does seem like the things that have been getting better are those things that are made (usually for free) for users for the benefit of themselves and other users, and not by profit-seeking corporations as closed-source software.

The few exceptions to that rule are those areas that are heavily dependent on technological improvements, e.g. music production, gaming, media editing. But that's just because there are still huge profit-wins to be had just by improving the quality of what the user receives. There's no reason to think wins like that won't dry up.

***dave\_sid*** Nah I was a kid and we had a colour tv. Your setup sounds very impressive but you’re not the average viewer, and it’s the average viewer that has an old fire stick like mine that takes 30s to load the iplayer app.

***iainmerrick*** I assume you’re in the UK if you’re using iPlayer.

Why not just use Freeview? It’s not quite as fast as analogue TV because it has to acquire and decode the digital signal, but apart from that it’s just as convenient, the quality is better and there are many more channels.

***wvenable*** I can walk over to my TV, it takes a second or two to start up. Maybe another second or two to open an app. And then I can watch any one of tens of thousands of shows.

Yes, when I was kid the TV turned on almost instantly but then I was stuck watching whatever minimal content was broadcasted. Can't even pause it!

I have the same argument with Jonathan Blow's talk -- he talks about how complex things are now compared to the past but the past was so much less capable. Yes, you can write an OS in 3 weeks as long as it doesn't do very much.

***andredz*** It might be helpful to consider the paradox of choice; although I'm not completely sure that it is correct or what its real implications are.

Also, this topic made me think a bit of this letter: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Moral\_letters\_to\_Lucilius/Let...

***jodrellblank*** Prof. Dan Gilbert's studies on Happiness seems to support the paradox of choice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q1dgn\_C0AU

If we don't have choice, we manufacture happiness. Something we predict will be somehow worse than "real" happiness, but studies show it's not worse. If we have choice, we predict we will be more happy, but studies show we aren't.

***kenjackson*** You can't just turn on the TV?

It seems like all of those other steps allow you more flexibility to do a bunch of stuff you probably couldn't do as a kid, such as watch BBC from any country in the world, or watch something from the BBC that came on earlier, or to pause the BBC so you can get some chips from the pantry.

Every once in a while, Netflix will take like 15s to load. But before I cuss out my XBox One, I do try to remember that as a kid I was happy downloading one picture off a 300BPS modem in like 10 minutes from a BBS (which sometimes took 30 minutes to finally get into) back when I was kid.

***cortesoft*** > When I was a kid, I just used to press one button on the front of the tv and it was on in less than a second.

Yeah, but if you turned it on late at night there was nothing being broadcast

***dave\_sid*** There’s something nice about that idea.

***bigiain*** > When I was a kid, I just used to press one button on the front of the tv and it was on ...

... in a little while, after all the vacuum tubes had heated up.

(Yeah, 'm old...)

***apitman*** The cool thing is that while it's not easy, there's probably never been an easier time to make good stuff. There's a lot of opportunity out there to make better experiences.

***dmix*** My android box running pirated streaming and torrent services (or even IPTV occasionally when I want to watch “TV”) seems to work 100x better than your proprietary tech. Plus it runs Prime and Netflix just fine...

My $50 Chromecast is still the best thing around for watching movies or streams off my computer. Kodi works but it takes set up times which I don’t like investing.

Sounds like you either just have low end tech or bad gov run software services.

And I’m not running anything fancy just your typical Android SoC with a decent remote with a keyboard on the back, which I bought for <$100 max off Amazon.

***dave\_sid*** Think your missing the point. Your average person doesn’t have your setup. They have mine.

***fallous*** I'm not sure I'd use the term "improving" but would instead say "changing." The perception of those changes has certainly been weighted towards "improvement" but some of that perception is a hangover from the popular mid-century views that most people held regarding science and technology (others held such views prior to that time but I wouldn't say they were the majority).

***hntrader*** Read Steven Pinker's works. Things have been improving according to any meaningful definition of that word.

***fallous*** By "things" it seems you ignore the key bit of the parent I was replying to... namely "technology," especially within the confines of the main article which focused on UX.

Specifically I used the word "changing" rather than "improving" because within the tech world (and to a degree the larger world of product) there is a long history of new and novel equating to better, hence the tired ad slogan "new and improved!" That emphasis on newness as desirable is a result of the many measurable improvements that did result from the rapid pace of innovation that occurred in the 19th and 20th century, improvements that were obviously perceptible in that they resulted in large leaps forward vs incrementally over long time periods.

Also, to claim that there has been improvements for large-scale populations via some new thing is nowhere close to being sufficient to explain how that new thing is an improvement for the individual customer.

***hollandheese*** And then read his critics who blow his whiggish history out of the water.

***hntrader*** Which one should I read first? I read Taleb's critique, who comes off as a raving lunatic in this context, and Gladwell who must have some axe to grind since he doesn't actually address the concrete metrics that Pinker brings up.

Lower childhood mortality, less poverty, longer life expectancy, less violent crime, less disease, more equality, less war. Things are getting better, along almost every metric we can think of. It's not just "different". It's also not just Pinker's work confirming that, OurWorldInData is good on this topic too.

The only sensible argument I've heard to the contrary is that our systemic tail risks have gotten bigger. Which is accurate but doesn't change the fact that things are much better for almost everyone presuming that such risks can be mitigated.

***andredz*** I liked this critique of the history in one of his books (Better angels …): https://talesoftimesforgotten.com/2020/07/24/steven-pinkers-...

Here are other links that concern another one of his books (Enlightenment …): https://historyforatheists.com/2016/11/the-dark-ages-popery-... (I haven't read any of these reviews though).

***hollandheese*** Honestly just google "Steven Pinker critique" and you'll find lots of good ones.

Jason Hinkel's are especially good: https://twitter.com/jasonhickel/status/1334072469091708929?l...

***hntrader*** Jason Hinkel's article raises some good points but is hardly a valid rebuttal. It's extremely weak. I'm still firmly on the side of Pinker's narrative, which clearly fits the data far better.

(1) Hinkel falsely concludes that "The poverty rate has worsened dramatically since 1981", using a graph of the number of people in poverty (which increases by ~31% between 1981 to 2013) as justification. The rate did not increase. The rate decreased according to his own graph! The population increased by 59% over that same time period, so the correct conclusion from his own data is that the poverty rate actually reduced over that same time period.

(2) Not only is poverty better, but almost every other meaningful metric (disease/mortality/war deaths/crime deaths) is also better, which he hand-waves away in a single paragraph after falsely asserting that the poverty rate has gone up!

It is borderline dishonest, or perhaps at best he is innumerate. If this is the best rebuttal then I am even more confident in the conclusion that things are getting better - MUCH better - aside from a number of existential tail risks that we need to mitigate.

***neolog*** Excluding China, the graph in [1] shows ~3pp decrease in poverty over 30 years, and a good portion of that time was above the starting point so it might just be random fluctuation.

Also,

> only 5% of new income from global growth goes to the poorest 60% of humanity – people living on less than $7.40/day.

https://www.jasonhickel.org/blog/2019/2/3/pinker-and-global-...

***hntrader*** Excluding China is motivated reasoning - and even doing so still shows the opposite conclusion to the one he's clearly desperate to validate. What if I excluded Venezuela or North Korea in order to boost the conclusion that I've decided on a priori?

***neolog*** He explains why it makes sense to handle China differently -- basically because China hasn't applied the policies that Pinker advocates, so it shouldn't be used as evidence for them. China's policies have been very different. He should treat other countries the same way, as you suggest, though China's impact is likely larger than the others.

***hntrader*** This is motivated reasoning on his part. If the question at hand is "is the world getting better?", then excluding China makes no sense in the pursuit of answering that question.

It's also ridiculous for him to say that China doesn't use policies that Pinker advocates for. That's absolutist and binary thinking. Pinker would advocate for the open market liberalising policies of Deng Xiaoping relative to Maoist economic authoritarianism, which helped to lift millions out of poverty in China, even though there's still a lot that he doesn't agree with China's system.

If Pinker doesn't like Putin's strongman behavior in the region should he exclude Russia from his statistics on improving world peace? If Pinker doesn't like the US healthcare system should he exclude the US from his statistics on childhood mortality?

This is a dishonest rhetorical strategy that Hinkel is employing. It's clear to me now that Hinkel is a bad faith salesman who has set out to demonstrate his hypothesis at all costs.

***neolog*** If the question is "is the world getting better?" then yes, treat everything the same. But that question isn't as useful as others that could be asked, such as "which policies make the world get better?"

Hinkel's argument is that Pinker uses "is the world getting better?" as a proxy for "are my preferred policies making the world better?". If policy evaluation is their goal, the ad-hoc exclusion of China is overly simplistic, but so is drawing policy conclusions from overall trends without examining what's driving the trends. Both Pinker and Hinkel should be measuring the degree to which various policies were applied and evaluate poverty-reduction against that quantity.

***hntrader*** But policy evaluation isn't the goal. Hinkel has dishonestly shifted the goalposts.

***neolog*** I'm sure you can think of other dimensions in which things are worse than they used to be. (Not being snarky, I just think things are usually more complicated.)

***prox*** In decade 1 as the author describes it, there was still patience of investors that there ROI would come, and AI/data wasn’t feasible enough, so good UX was the name of the game. Think of carts that needed to be 1 click affairs.

When I did my training in advertising, the first line uttered by my teacher was “We are learning you to lie here” , and indeed the rest of the course was about how to deceive the customer by pushing the right buttons.

That’s the state of affairs of most of the commercial web. And I think you are right it won’t change.

***kstenerud*** There's another somewhat related problem: UI fatigue.

Many companies have now gotten into the habit of changing their UI with every release, moving things around and changing the depth at which functions lie. Apple is particularly guilty of this. Try following a tutorial for adding a button to a view in Xcode - the UI to open the assistant panel isn't where their documentation says it should be.

And this happens with every single release of Xcode. There isn't a single Xcode tutorial on the web that is accurate anymore (not even Apple's own docs).

***jbreckmckye*** I suspect that orgs perform arbitrary UI redesigns for the same reasons supermarkets occasionally reorganise their product layout. It stops customers getting too efficient at extracting only the value they think they want.

***majewsky*** I can see that argument for apps that want to sell products or show ads, but what about GP's example? What value is there in getting in the way of a software developer trying to create apps for your platform?

My personal guess is that most UI redesigns are busywork explicitly created to justify the existence of the UI design department. (And I don't say this to throw shade on UI designers in general. This could just as well be the new manager trying to keep his headcount, or the new lead designer removing all traces of the previous designer's work over personal quarrels.)

***jbreckmckye*** Part of it may be the same reason that developers love to rewrite code: all creative works over a certain age accumulate compromises, and newcomers don't understand the reason for those compromises. So a new set of designers, like a new set of developers, feel compelled to "rationalise" what they've inherited.

Sometimes they succeed, and build a much more logical information architecture... but many times the new design succumbs to the same entropy that that the original one did.

***fastball*** This is a weird way to couch this.

UX is the "user experience". An experience can be good or an experience can be bad. An experience can reduce friction, or it can intentionally create it. UX as a term on its own is neither positive nor negative.

The title should just be "I dislike UX anti-patterns", because good UX, i.e. low-friction/high-reward (for your customer) UX is still the nice thing it's always been.

***TheAceOfHearts*** I find it a bit ironic that the author of this post references a New York Times article on how difficult it is to cancel your Amazon Prime subscription without any mention of how difficult the New York Times makes it so cancel a subscription to their own service. If you have a New York Times subscription you can only cancel it by calling them on the phone during working hours or using their support chat which is only available during working hours (for everyone except Californians, kinda odd how they won't make that available to the whole country, huh?). Why not just have a simple cancel subscription button on your account page?

***bscphil*** > a New York Times article on how difficult it is to cancel your Amazon Prime subscription without any mention of how difficult the New York Times makes it so cancel a subscription to their own service

Well, not only that, but things have gotten so bad that Amazon Prime is really not the best example. I actually just went through this process: I accepted a 30 day Amazon Prime free trial just before Christmas because I was going to be doing a lot of ordering. Of course I forgot to cancel it until a few days after the trial was up. So I went to go cancel it and try to get any money they had charged me back.

And... it wasn't really that bad? From the main page, you click one link to manage your account / Prime subscription. Another one link takes you to cancel the subscription. There are like three or so pages that explain the benefits you'll be losing and allow you to back out, or choose options like "cancel my subscription at the end of the month", or "cancel it now and refund the money". I wouldn't describe any of this as dark-patterns because even if it's manipulative it was at least very clear how to do what I wanted to do.

That the other thing, too. I was able to get $14 of the $15 monthly fee back when canceling - they didn't try to pull any bullshit with that.

A couple of qualifiers: (a) yes, it could (and should) be better, and (b) I'm a California resident, so it's possible they presented a different flow to me than to most other people.

***tryptophan*** Same, the amazon cancel experience is not bad. They even offer a check-box to remind you 7 days before renewal.

***Leherenn*** Well at least you can cancel by phone. I was moving out and wanted to cancel my internet subscription last year. Months in advance, I went to their website and located (with difficulty!) their cancellation page. There was either a form online you could fill where they would call you back, or you could call them. I did the former, waited for a couple of weeks, never had an answer. So I called them, got someone who told me it would be cancelled in 3 months as requested and forgot about it. I even received a survey about how my cancellation process went.

4 months later, I received a bill for the first month after it was supposed to be cancelled. So I called support, which told me that cancellations could only be processed by registered letter, and that they had sent me a mail regarding this (which I never received). She then told me that the service would be cancelled in 2 months since it's the minimum delay, but it would be shortened to 1 month since I was moving to a place which already had a subscription with them, provided I gave the name/address/customer number of the place I was moving to. I asked if she was sure about the details and she said yes.

Now, 2 months later, of course I still received a bill. Called them again, turns out you actually need the signature of the person holding the other contract for the 1 month thing to be valid... Apparently, they sent me another mail, which again I did not receive. (I did, however, receive a late payment notice with massive fees to my new address...) I sent a letter complaining about the whole situation, and just got told to "read the contract attentively next time".

Fuck you UPC Cablecom.

***hansvm*** Piling onto your post because of recent bad experiences:

Did you know that literally anyone can email Comcast and complain about alleged DMCA violations on your residential internet? Comcast has no mechanism for submitting a counter-notice, and if you get too many such complaints they will ban you for up to 6 months. It's shocking that an ISP can be so bad that they're the impetus for moving all by themselves.

In your case though, if you're interested you might be able to get a lawyer involved? Lying is generally legal, but they might have some civil liability for fraud or something. It probably wouldn't be profitable for you, but if you won it might make you feel better.

***Leherenn*** I thought about it, but honestly it took a lot of time and energy out of me already, I just don't want to deal with them again.

I just won't ever do business with them again, and I tell my story from time to time to people that ask my opinion about ISPs.

I'm not even sure I have a case, I looked a bit online and as you said, lying is not illegal even if in cases like this that doesn't sit very well with me.

In your case, isn't having a counter notice mechanism a requirement? I guess you could have sued them as well for that? But I understand, I don't want to have to sue every company I do business with, that's not a healthy environment even though it probably would be better for everyone in the long run.

***jessaustin*** Maybe the best way to cancel service is to spam them with a bunch of DMCA complaints about yourself?

***nonameiguess*** My Internet suddenly stopped working in the middle of a work day a few weeks back (I work from home) and I tried to call Spectrum to diagnose the problem and all they could tell me was the account holder canceled the account, which was clearly not true as I tried to tell them since I am the account holder and I did no such thing. Unfortunately, my wife (who they would actually talk to) works in a SCIF, so I had no way to get a hold of her and had to just leave her a message and wait.

It turns out someone had called and claimed to be moving into my house, so they canceled my account in order to enable setting up a new account for the person who claimed to be moving into my house.

I am still amazed that this is possible. You can get any customer's Internet turned off and they can't stop you just by signing up to get a new account at their address.

***voodootrucker*** I had such a hard time cancelling The Economist last time, I joined their web chat to ask them if cancelling was as easy as signing up and if it was I would subscribe. Unfortunately my place in the queue kept \_incrementing\_, so I ended up buying myself a gift subscription so I knew I wouldn't have to go through that again.

Didn't California pass a law saying you got to cancel as easily as you signed up?

***LordAtlas*** Yes, which is why a hack at some of these websites is to set your address as being in California, at which point one-click cancellation buttons magically seem to appear.

***voodootrucker*** Wow, having different pages based on state seems to be such an amount of effort that it's basically an admission of fraud to have the other version: you must make enough money of not-cancelling to justify having two.

***remir*** The worst I've seen is cancelling a subscription to the French newspaper Le Monde. You have to print and fill a form and send it to them by snail mail. Totally unbelievable.

***svachalek*** It's very annoying. They want to be able to negotiate if you are leaving because of price, and you can get it for quite cheap. But I wish they just had a more attractive list price and a cancel button.

***justaguy88*** I've had to use apple's subscription to nytimes as an indirection so that it's easy to cancel

***allenu*** I don't normally subscribe or unsubscribe to services and so the NYTimes unsubscribe process really surprised me at the time. In the end, having to go through a chat system wasn't as bad as I thought, but it did annoy me at the time that I couldn't just hit a button to cancel.

Since then, I've been wary of signing up for anything new, knowing that there is likely a painful process on the other end to cancel my account.

***m463*** What's funny, is that I cancelled amazon prime back in april or so.

I had to contact them. I said "look, I have amazon prime for the shipping speed, and ALL shipping is taking 1-2 weeks."

The support folks couldn't figure out how to cancel prime for a partial year, so they gave me a full refund.

***stakkur*** I noticed a change--philosophically and in perspective--when 'usability' was slowly replaced by 'user experience'.

With the advent of the Web, this idea of 'the experience' has mostly supplanted much of the research and test-driven usability I participated in.

***RickS*** Agreed. Much as there's a difference between "free as in speech and free as in beer" there's a distinction between "usable like hammer and usable like cocaine". For as long as engagement is allowed to pay better than utility, thats what's on the menu.

***revel*** The dark patterns described here are part of a broader pattern for big tech. The firms mentioned, Amazon, Google, etc, have made the strategic decision to debase their products to further monetize them. This is similar to the way in which high-end fashion brands are often tempted to cash in on their brand name by marketing to mass market. Just as with high-end retail, this is journey goes one way. Now these companies have embraced the lowest common denominator version of themselves it will be difficult to reverse these decisions.

The one big tech exception to all this is Facebook which basically zoomed straight towards the lowest common denominator version of itself yes continues to plough ever deeper trenches each year

***m463*** I'm reminded of the story of the new Nike CEO who called up Steve Jobs asking for advice. Jobs told him "Get rid of the crappy stuff".

***nbzso*** Recently I had a problem explaining to a recruiter why I am designing only UI, Visual language and care only for visual parts of the product. She didn't react at all when I started talking about "Dark Patterns":) It is requirement nowadays, it is not optional. If you as a designer don't think about new ways to exploit the user base, you are not worth your salt. I moved only to visual stuff for two reasons: 1. Designers used to think about the user, functionally and aesthetically. Nowadays designers who cannot draw a straight line move templates around and comply with the management without any form of critical thinking. 2. There is no way for me to be a "writer" and do the dishes. Yep, nowadays designers must not only code but and write compelling stories to be hired. Utter nonsense.

***nmg*** Thanks for this insight, can you expand/give examples about the compelling stories you've been asked to write?

***nbzso*** This is not a secret. Here is a regular article for UX designer requirements, and under number 4 we have: UX writing Writing is the unsung hero of UX. People speak highly of coding, which is a skill that shouldn’t be dismissed, but writing is a talent that can be nurtured over less time to create brilliant user experiences. Pick up your phone and look at any of your apps and it will be filled with perfectly crafted words. https://bit.ly/3cnEkuo

In this point in my 20 year career as a designer I simply refuse to comply. You cannot create long term value for your customers by shifting the focus of design from the user to the product managers and shareholders.

|||\_ktx2||| > In Juul's case, fraudulent proclamations of "empathy" served as a smokescreen for the true aim of the company, which was to use d.school-inflected product design to addict, capture, and monetize an entire generation of young nicotine users.

People try to make everything about "empathy" these days. The term has been on the rise since September 2008 [0] and I've seen it routinely used and abused. Who can refute empathy or a lack thereof? I recently took a corporate training about personalities. The whole seminar was supposed to show you strengths of the various personality type, what their opposites are, and how to interface with them better. Make better teams through understanding; nothing new. One measurement went from what's basically Extremely Empathetic => Data Driven (neither being bad, explicitly stated.) Routinely people that I worked with recategorized people in "data driven" to "non-empathetic" in casual conversation. Reading this article made me realize the real deceiving UX isn't unique to code or processes, it's just human inclination for things they don't like; whether that be the "cancel" button or personality traits.

[0] https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&geo=US&q=e...

***stretchcat*** Quibble over the word 'empathy' if you like, but those peddling addictive substances to teenagers are still scum.

***valuearb*** Game developers? Smartphone manufacturers? Social media developers? Chocolate makers?

***stretchcat*** Did I stutter?

Leave the kids alone. Adults who market harmful products to kids are predatory assholes. I'd hope there is a special place in hell for whoever dreamed up count chocola and all the other bullshit used to sell candied cereal to kids. Just because it's legal doesn't mean it was ethical. And in the case of Juul, going into highschools with their marketting material, I doubt it was even legal.

***valuearb*** Mmmm, Count Chocula...

***int\_19h*** They're all fine, so long as they advertise to children's parents - but not to the kids themselves.

***valuearb*** I’m a parent and whatever is advertised to my kids is meaningless because I’m an adult who controls the purse strings.

***morlockabove*** Yes!

***specialist*** Appropriate concepts, repackage them for the cargo cult of the day, profit.

The whole self-help industry in a nutshell.

***willswire*** One of my big time complaints about UX is the lack of reflexivity for end-users and support technicians.

As a college student, I worked part-time for the campus IT department. My job mostly consisted of responding to support tickets that came into our system. Around 90% of these requests required me to initiate a remote desktop connection with the client. Never in a million years could I simply understand the problem that the user was experiencing by their explanation.

So why on earth are there so many systems in place that don't offer a user-perspective view of the data? I'm not just scoping this problem to the world of IT - I've experienced this problem from both the support technician and end-user standpoint in sales, support, and education.

***visarga*** Three things I would change - UX, filtering and ranking - to be made user customizable, or allow alternative front ends and rankings provided by third parties. That would solve many problems. I would apply this rule to all large internet companies - Google's UX and ranking, Twitter's UX and ranking, etc. They all sin by tricking users (UX), hiding stuff (filtering) and selectively showing stuff in "the one true way" (ranking).

Why are they doing this? To milk the web for user data, ad money and extract more money from customers directly. Our eyeballs are their most prized product. But the end result is this mono-culture / single take on UX and ranking for all.

Practically it would mean to force them to open up their backends to competitors, or be split into front and back, with open competition. I would also spin off the user data part of backend to allow portability of user pods.

There should be more rights to users on the internet. Deplatforming, manipulation and exploitation can't continue like this.

***msencenb*** In defense of the d.school, what they teach are techniques and tools - not ethics.

UX broadly is in the same boat. UX is a tool. We can use it for good or for evil.

At the end of the day UX is only as valuable as how well individuals (or companies) can align their personal definition of 'good' with 'good' that the underlying company cares for.

***frenchy*** > In defense of the d.school, what they teach are techniques and tools - not ethics.

Is that a defence? That sounds like trying to explain your friend's rudeness away by saying "In Bob's defence, he's an asshole".

I guess this is partly a philisophical question about whether the job of schools is to raise effective citizens, or effective market manipulators.

***msencenb*** I put it poorly in my first comment.

I think it would be correct to say that receiving an education should teach you about ethics. Whether that should be strategic from the top down (you take specific classes about ethics) or embedded in each class is a question I don’t know the answer to.

In an individual class the amount of ethics varies. When I took d.school classes there certainly wasn’t a “market mover” mentality. We were genuinely interested in understanding people better so we could improve lives. But ethics certainly wasn’t explicitly on the agenda. We just didn’t have any assholes taking the course at that time.

This is part of the argument within the university for loosening credit requirements. When I was there, I took the HCI track. That track had the smallest credit requirement and also let you take a broader base of classes that counted towards the major, such as philosophy. That was a more rounded experience than some of my peers who took harder cs tracks like networking and systems.

***asoneth*** At least when I was teaching intro HCI courses at Carnegie Mellon we did have lectures and discussions on dark patterns and the ethics of UX. Taking advantage of human psychology to manipulate people has been a problem in the field for a long time (e.g. gambling machines, advertising, dark patterns, screen addiction) so IMO it's a bit irresponsible not to at least warn students that they're likely going to be asked to do some morally questionable things.

***specialist*** Was Donald Norman's Design of Everyday Things in your syllabus?

Although tangental, I can't imagine the cognitive psychology stuff one must learn managed to completely omit ethics.

***TeMPOraL*** > sure, they said, we can do the research, listen to customers, and make recommendations for improvement. But what if leadership not only ignores our recommendations but tells us to do something different?

Do the research? Listen to customers? These are so 1990s.

I'm surprised the author didn't cover that one explicitly: how much of the problem with UX comes with it being "data-driven" these days? In lieu of acquiring direct feedback from the users, everyone these days just overloads their products with telemetry, runs countless A/B tests, gaze tracking experiments... just about everything imaginable except talking to the users.

It's nice to be data-driven - good, quantifiable data is easy to gradient-descent on. But somehow, the metrics tend to be selected in context of what profits the business the most, and not what maximizes the value of a product to the user...

***tenebrisalietum*** > But somehow, the metrics tend to be selected in context of what profits the business the most, and not what maximizes the value of a product to the user...

The divergence happens when the user isn't the one paying for the product; e.g. when the user's company is paying for it or when advertisers pay for it instead.

***Spivak*** It’s not all sunshine and rainbows on the paid side of the house. All the disconnected out of touch decision making still happens but the metrics are ARR and churn. The game is making it as easy as possible for people to pay us and inconvenient as possible for people to stop.

***dbtc*** Whenever I encounter the word "user" in the context of software products, I think of "Bubbles" from The Wire.

***dmix*** This theory quickly breaks down when the same applies to B2B SaaS as it does to ad driven businesses.

***lmm*** B2B SaaS companies offer a great UX to the people who pay for their software - long golfing trips, fancy dinners, powerpoints full of feature checklists. The users aren't the customers.

***paulryanrogers*** "users don't know what they want" is one factor. Nevermind that Macs lacked more than one mouse button, or iPhones more than one physical button for many years.

***int\_19h*** The single-button approach is valid, IMO - for the right audience. I hated it myself... and then I had to help my parents and grandparents learn the ropes with mobile devices. Turned out that iOS made them more comfortable for one simple reason: no matter where they ended up, if they felt like they were lost or overwhelmed, there was always that physical button, looking the same, and in the same exact place, that they knew would backtrack them back to "the beginning" - i.e. to a known state from which they could try again to do whatever they wanted.

So, in some ways, it is genius, and I really hated it when Apple killed it off. The problem wasn't the concept itself - it was trying to sell it as UX for everyone. I think that's one of the big problems with UX today - the things that are done under the guise of "simplification" aren't actually simple.

***contextfree*** The problems posed by multiple mouse buttons are very similar to the "hidden swipe gestures" people are complaining about elsewhere in the comments for this article. There's nothing inherently wrong with either - any more than there is with e.g., English being a language with thousands of "hidden" words that people have to learn and remember instead of limiting you to only the words visible in an autotext menu - but you have to think about how people learn them, how consistently they're available, how to accommodate people not knowing them or learning them at different rates, etc.

HN commenters tend to be power users of desktop-style UI more than touch or mobile-style UI which can make it hard to see similarities between them (right click conventions really aren't much more consistent or obvious than swipe conventions)

***int\_19h*** I will disagree on that last bit, again, based on personal experience. Right-clicking to produce a context menu in Windows was easy to explain to my mom, and she very quickly started to use it everywhere to discover the available actions - and it worked. In mobile UIs, on the other hand, to this day, she is struggling to figure out where you're supposed to press-and-hold, where you're supposed to swipe etc. Quite often, she'll do press-and-hold to do something that worked in one app, and it doesn't work in another. Desktop apps are much more consistent in that regard.

***agd*** The article writer spends a lot of time blaming 'leadership' however it is up to all of us to act within our own moral framework.

> While the best-trained (and highest-paid) UX professionals are put to work optimizing the exploitation and deception of online users

UX workers at Amazon are not 'put to work' like some automotons, they have agency and the ability to find highly paid work elsewhere.

***almostdeadguy*** The "you can always go work somewhere else" argument will never stop being a cop out. Your employer controls access to your salary, healthcare benefits, and potentially more. Leaving your job is never a completely safe move and there's an abundance of reasons why it's simply not an option to most people, and it doesn't matter what tier of middle class occupation you have for that to be true.

Moreso this argument isn't one to be taken seriously because it assumes every collective failure is a failure of millions of individual choices rather than any of the cultural inertia or environmental influences that steer our choices.

***agd*** We're talking about UX designers, and in particular UX designers at large tech companies (FAMAG). UX designers at e.g. Amazon, do have huge optionality to go elsewhere and still get paid good salaries. They are not e.g. clothing workers in Bangladesh.

> Moreso this argument isn't one to be taken seriously because it assumes every collective failure is a failure of millions of individual choices rather than any of the cultural inertia or environmental influences that steer our choices.

That's a strawman - I'm not saying this applies for 'every collective failure'. Systemic factors are important, however we shouldn't absolve individuals at large tech firms of their own responsibility.

***simplemen*** Where are they going to go? Every company is using dark patterns. Maybe there are a few small ethical companies but that is very small number.

***agd*** There are plenty of tech companies not using dark patterns (I used to work for one). Granted Amazon employees might not be able to get paid as much elsewhere, but that's the choice you make.

***simplemen*** I have worked for 5 companies in my 15 years career. One of that company was ecommerce consulting firm which dealt with a lot of mom-n-pop ecommerce stores. Let me tell you not a single one of them was willing to give up any dark patterns if that meant losing revenues. Unless you are working on non-revenue generating product like internal dashboard, it is all about get sales anyway possible.

I am sure there are ethical companies, I see many of them mentioned here, started by readers of this forum, but what percentage are those. Imo, they are less than 1%.

***specialist*** Examples?

***kevin\_thibedeau*** I recently needed a plumber because of an emergency clog. I don't use Angie's List but I gave it a shot. Their plumber search runs you through a ridiculous multi-page questionnaire process rather than just showing relevant results. Some genius was paid highly to come up with this crap. It can't be helping their their future prospects as an operating concern.

***rpdillon*** I worked at a company that did this. The data showed that the longer we made the questionnaire, the more people felt invested in the process, leading to fewer abandoning when we finally asked for email address.

***exoque*** Things were better when the Operating System decided how a gui should look and work. I just cannot comprehend how anybody could come up with something like the redesign of https://www.tagesschau.de/ which was launched this week.

Yes, it's supposed to be a news site.

***stephentmcm*** Sarcasm? While I don't read German, this is actually a pretty good design for a news site. It's clean, consistent and uncluttered. It loads quickly and doesn't have any obnoxious animations or advertising. The font choice is clean and well spaced, but let down by poor definition of link vs title/theme colour.

It's clearly a massive improvment on the last design: https://web.archive.org/web/20210101011826/https://www.tages...

***exoque*** I agree that the new style looks a lot better, however I'm not comparing their new site to the old one but to actually usable news sites. Maybe I used the wrong word, what's awful is the layout. I want information not one row of pictures which take up half my screen.

***masswerk*** It's definitely a new site, in the dystopian sense.

Usage hint: Reducing the browser window to what is approximate smartphone width in portrait orientation somewhat helps with the experience. Clearly, using anything other than a mobile device is deviant.

On the other hand, in terms of UX, I felt somewhat neglected as there wasn't a "Use our App!" popup. Also, the lack of welcoming "Subscribe!" popups (options "I can't wait!" and "Later, but for sure!") is a bit reminiscent of past decades of public services and their arrogant attitude towards customers needs. I was even left to my own on any attempts to scroll without any reassuring popups gratifying my engagement by another opportunity to click a button. I could just scroll and scroll without noticing, accompanied by a growing feel of loneliness and solitude in this digital void. If this isn't pure negligence… ;-)

***jazzyjackson*** I cliked your link and opened my devtools out of curisority, and every headline is under the class name "teaser", so it would seem the main intent of the site is to tease you!

Besides that, it looks like no one did any design at all, like what you'd get on the default template of wordpress or other CMS

***achillean*** They must've looked at their traffic stats, seen that most users are mobile and decided to focus on that version instead of having substantially different layouts for mobile vs desktop.

***spideymans*** Looks like they imported a cheap React theme and called it a day

***ddevault*** Cached version:

https://web.archive.org/web/20210128223057/https://creativeg...

***recursivedoubts*** The bean counters are to blame for a lot of stuff.

But they didn't give us flat UI.

***sktrdie*** I fail to see anybody mention this but isn’t UX entirely subjective? Also big corps have AB tested the hell out of everything leading to a UX that converts the most and hence is probably the best.

Complaining about bad UX and then not showing many examples but merely a few outliers also is a bit misleading.

To me it seems a possible way forward with UX is adaptivity. We need to make users reach their goals in the way they want it (hence subjectivity). Any static UX in the way of that is by definition bad. Good UX should adapt, evolve and morph for the user at hand. And it should do this dynamically and not compiled before hand by a few UX think lords that know how it should be done.

Just my 2 cents.

***specialist*** "You can't test your way to quality."

Counterintuitive wisdom from my QA/Test days. Maybe it's a koan.

Other's have already dismantled the A/B testing sham. From my own experience, noobs do this to show management they're doing something. Justifying their continued employment.

***ehnto*** There haven't been that many innovations in UX on the web for a while. It's all essentially buttons, toggles and drop downs. I was expecting a lot more boutique interfaces, tightly crafted to the specific use case.

My guess is we are actually not very good at developing that kind of thing as an industry.

Product configurators are a good example of what I mean, they are super rare and considered monumental undertakings by most agencies. Prized monoliths of culminated talent, that break in two years and get replaced by a series of drop downs because as an industry we avoid risk like the plague yet cycle agencies annually.

***RickS*** It's not that we aren't very good at it, it's that nobody wants to do it.

I'd liken it to building codes: given the advances in materials science, one would expect us to be building wildly more diverse styles of homes, with ornate forms and functions that were unimaginable 40 years ago. Why don't we?

It turns out that consumers are cheap and unsophisticated. As hardwood becomes plywood+edging becomes MDF+veneer, people are willing to boil the quality frog to grease economies of scale, and by the time we wonder why the hell nothing in our house lasts longer than 2 years, a very heavy pendulum is in motion and that's about the end of it.

There are real gains here for templatization, repeatability, speed, and maintenance. When everything is built the same way, it's easy to find someone to work on it for a low price, and the people who use it know how it works before they walk in the door.

Just as every house looks like home depot, every app looks like bootstrap.

Breaking these cycles requires that the masses have taste, funds, bargaining power, and lasting resolve. On average, we don't.

I don't know if it's possible to separate the good from the bad. Things that used to be metal and last 30 years are now plastic that might not make it 30 days. But those same forces are the only reason it's economical to produce eg a flagship phone, which are downright miracles of manufacturing.

***specialist*** The universe of implemented use cases, solutions to people's real world problems, has exploded.

But just considering the widgets (ignoring voice, touch, haptics, need I go on?), just the actual visual language and interaction models, there's never been a better time to be a designer (UX/UI).

I used to create custom (owner draw) widgets for Windows. At the time I thought they were super complex.

Today, the simplest web widget dwarves anything I did. Just the typeahead combo dropbox add-on for Bootstrap has more code and subtly and capability than anything I did.

> I was expecting a lot more boutique interfaces

Then make them.

***ehnto*** I don't disagree that we've got a lot of solutions, but they all use pretty much the same inputs. I'm not sure if that's a bad thing, I'm just surprised is all.

> Just the typeahead combo dropbox add-on for Bootstrap has more code and subtly and capability

I know there wasn't much in my comment but really what I'm thinking of is akin to a steering wheel in a car. Where you move a lever and it effects the system in a novel way. Where most of what we have is variations on text entry and boolean flipping. If we step away from web applications you do have a whole plethora of UX innovation inside video games, apps, and products in general. I am enamored with the elegance of simple portable battery packs for example.

> Then make them.

I think the world will remain a better place if I just stick to code, but I like the enthusiasm.

***masswerk*** You mean, like in the age of Flash integration? Design awards used to have a "Navigation" category…

***mouzogu*** The worst dark pattern I've noticed lately is in the cookie acceptance pop-ups where you take 30s to uncheck all the cookies and then press the "Accept All" button, so evil and annoying!!

***deathanatos*** > This example may not seem like much: cancellation processes are often a hassle, even in Internet companies. (As far back as 2006, AOL made national news for insolently refusing a customer's cancellation request.)

> When Vincent Ferrari, 30, of the Bronx, called AOL to cancel his membership last month, it took him a total of 21 minutes

Wait… that's … that's it? I just cancelled my Comcast account. The call is here in my history: 28m 35s. That only counts the time on the call, mind you; you still have to return their hardware. Including that, it took me well over an hour (driving, waiting in line at the UPS store, driving home), particularly since it had to go to a UPS store. If we count the time that I also spent going to a Comcast store, trying to return their equipment there, which the store and phone representatives later informed me that I "can't" do, because they don't accept "business" class equipment there despite their website directly contradicting that[1], then it took well over two hours to cancel.

We've come so far.

[1]: https://business.comcast.com/help-and-support/repairs-instal...

(There was a separate call to disconnect service, that was 10m 37s. We moved, and thought we might have Comcast on the other end, so we did that part separately. When we shopped for an ISP on the other end, nobody picked up the phone for Comcast, so we went with their (only) competitor in our area. So, whether you want to count that against the time it took to cancel, IDK.)

***LockAndLol*** I remember reading or hearing somewhere: we have some of our smartest people working on the best way to sell ads to people.

On an unrelated note, I like the style of the blog: no 3 column bullshit. I can resize the screen however I want to and the text flows all the way from the left edge of the screen to the right edge. Barely any wasted space.

Beautiful.

***npteljes*** I think there's a difference in objectives and motivations of the providers and its users. It is this difference is what poisons their relationship, UX included. Why would service providers not play underhandedly (like with dark patterns) when there's immediate value for them in it, and no real negative consequence? Their goodwill would cost them money directly. Sometimes they even \_have to\_ play like that, otherwise competitors will squeeze them out of the game altogether. And it's not like users in general are any better morally.

I think what needs to change is the idealistic view on UX. That service providers manage UX to make the user experience better for the users. I think what happens is that they do just that, but not in a way that will hurt the health of the business. And in the meantime, they will do everything that they can get away with.

***nexthash*** It all depends on what the tech company putting out the service is trying to achieve. While there may have been an era of increased hype in 'good UX' prior to 2008, UX as user exploitation has always been around. Both serve distinct roles for the tech company in pursuit of the ultimate goal: making money. One attracts users away from the competition, the other prevents them from leaving. The users themselves are secondary in this equation, because cash and profit come first to ensure the business survives and expands.

I looked at the some of the author's services like Good Todo and the law I have described above also applies to them. They are merely coming at it from a different angle, emphasizing user privacy and convenience as a competitive edge to get users to stay.

***wonnage*** At BigCo I've found that senior UX designers are primarily engaged in grift. The daily grind of polishing the ubiquitous rough edges in the existing UI is beneath them, so they feel like they need to go redesign the entire product every two years. The sole clients of this redesign are the execs, who want to see something shiny.

The massive redesigns aren't really amenable to A/B testing; after launching, they generally are deeply flawed and engineers spend a quarter clawing back to the usability of the original design. Eventually it becomes the new baseline, which means it's boring, which means it's time to redesign again. Repeat until you leave, collect your accolades for all the redesigns you presided over, and depart to go do the same at BigCo2.

***polote*** I bet this guy started his career in a small companies and is now working with big companies. Why it is important?

1. The bigger the company, means also the older the company means also a lot of design and tech debt and results in bad UX

2. The smaller the company the more you work on your UX to attract customers, the bigger the more you care about your profitability

3. The bigger the companies the more your customers are also bigger companies and then UX is not important in their choice [1]

4. In my opinion we are at a rare time in which UI will you raise a lot of money (Stripe, Notion,...)

[1] https://blog.luap.info/product-management-in-saas-b2b-enterp...

***meerita*** The problems I see with UX being UX lead for several years and, switched to PO: UX was valuable when most people who produces websites didn't have much idea and team composition was totally different. Plus, market maturity increased and the amount of good practices patterns made UX totally secondary. Most of the businesses are started from frameworks who include a huge amount of good UX but, that is not enough. In order to be sure you have two options: go full qualitative tests, or go quantitative tests, for the second ones you don't need UX, you need a good PO with tons of answers and a data team who crunches the data for you. This way you can move faster, as the article says.

***ignacio65*** So true. I think the UX of websites is still better that before, but now there is also reverse-UX / anti-UX (difficult cancelling of subscription, leading to purchase).

I don't think it's bad per se, just not very moral.

***kgin*** Governments are notorious for contracting websites to the lowest bidder that claims they can check all the requirements boxes. Websites run through the same procurement process as buying toilet paper for the offices.

And the result is websites that do technically check all the boxes in the document thought up by someone charged with "getting a website built for this", but rarely anything that would be considered a good experience.

The federal government has gotten a lot better at this since the founding of 18f, but state and local still has the problem of checklistware

***jhunter1016*** It has likely become not just unprofitable to focus on UX, but downright detrimental to the company’s bottom line. I say this without the evidence to back it up, but the anecdotal evidence is everywhere. I see it all the time as I preach UX improvements.

If my theory here is right, then the problem can’t be solved by preaching UX to businesses. I think it can only be solved by reminder end users that they deserve better.

***patrickmcnamara*** I think Apple focus a lot on UX compared to competitors to their advantage and they are mindbogglingly profitable.

***weeboid*** Easy, incentivized signup with difficult off-ramping has been a business model since … forever. This is not new to digital, it is much more nefarious as the possibility domain with ability to quickly iterate patterns is much higher.

OP is focused on retail/consumer space, UX is still a huge diff in enterprise and will continue to reside at or near the C suite

***ceilingcorner*** When I happen to come across an old site from the 90s or early 2000s, it’s such a breath of fresh air. No complicated UX, no “get my newsletter!!” pop ups, and content focused on text instead of hideously huge images that serve no purpose.

While it might have been ugly, the Internet was so much more fun before the finance and marketing people got involved.

***Mindwipe*** Well designers, now you know what it's like for users who have had to suffer with you sticking bigger fonts and more whitespace padding in every design for the last ten years despite users wanting the opposite.

***munawwar*** lol similar to the blog, I just got tricked into a prime membership. I'd swear that I didn't click the button in their full screen "upsell" page in the middle of the checkout process.. but yet money gone and only half refund. Their customer contact details is hidden so deep, that it took me 10 minutes to find out. Finally contacted them and got the remaining amount as store credit. Experiences like these puts me further of amazon. Now think about the definition of good UX.

***babesh*** Replace UX with programming and it is the same exact story: “Losing faith in Programming”. You go in hoping that you are creating code that helps your user and end up optimizing for ARR.

***mastrsushi*** Companies have deliberately made cancelation processes more difficult for a long time. That's not some byproduct of the "UX dark ages" you're having nightmares about.

***aristofun*** Ux was never a thing business wise. Tons of popular products with shitty ux proves it.

Unfortunately for end users, but this is the line where business and customer interests goes different directions.

***cosmotic*** In addition to use exploitation, there's a lot of shallow visual-appeal hooks but no interest in making things useful or better for accomplishing tasks/goals.

***damirkotoric*** UX was never about the user to begin with.

It was about giving companies competitive advantage. That is essentially the ROI of UX, and it was since the term was first coined.

***goertzen*** Of course you’re losing faith.

UX is a misunderstood religion.

It’s practitioners believe that they work for the “users”, but really these “users” they imagine don’t exist.

Which is hard for them to accept, after carving their user personas and praying to them for answers.

The owners don’t mind having the UX priesthood at the table. Especially once they realized that they just needed to adopt the language of user experience cult without giving up any real power.

Years later practitioners are noticing the trick and realizing they’re fooling themselves.

1) Users are customers.

2) You work for your boss/company.

3) It’s good to advocate customers, but don’t turn your preferences into a religious crusade.

***Bvalmont1*** It's a young field. We need UX/ advocates with a seat at the table defending the users. Better yet, we need UX advocates across the board.

But it'll take time, most companies are just getting into it. But making better UX a company wide effort is a good start.

As for the bigCorps, obviously this is a wider discussion than UX alone, as having these dark patterns fall through the process indicates a certain problem in company culture and/or decisionmaking.

It's a bit early to start losing faith, we're just getting started.

***hulitu*** > It's a young field and we need UX advocates with a seat at the table actually defending the users. It's not easy and it will take some time, but as the knowledge of UX is increasing across decision-makers and people building products, we will get to a better place.

With all due respect: you are new here. The level of UX is at Windows 1.0 or Xt widgets. I hate to say that but windows 3.1 looks like a revolution compared with Windows 10, OSX (current) or Material "design". There was a time when things worked. Now the dark ages of UX have come i it will be a long time until the new industrial revolution will come.

> It's a bit early to start losing faith, we haven't even properly started yet.

This is true for Win 10 and Google's brain dead interface. Some not so long time ago things were much, much better. The worst thing is that there is budget allocated for such things.

***Bvalmont1*** With all due respect, I'm talking about the practice of aligning user needs to product. If we're talking about UI elements inside a design system (such as material design), that is a different discussion alltogether. That's not even where the OP is about.

"The worst thing that there's budget allocated for such things" is just offensive and invalidates all the progress that was made in the past decades in the field of HCI.

Frankly it's dissapointing to see in HN how little understanding there is in what is happening in this field and to see all these passive-aggressiveness towards UX design is frankly demotivating. UX is something that in my opinion is carried by every person that touches the product in some way, it's about more than just putting some flows together as a designer and harrassing developers.

***shuringai*** sorry OP but this just means that since '97, UX evolved faster than a human can follow (as usual in tech) and you are just out of touch with current trends. UX is still of the same, if not better importance as a decade ago (remember that uber is just taxi with better ux, airbnb is just accomodation with better ux, and revolut is just banking with better ux)

***indymike*** UX is a tool. Like all tools, UX can be used for good or evil. Good and evil are hard to define sometimes.

***lenitabinol*** I have to cancel my credit cards when a vendor makes it that difficult to unsubscribe

***dev\_tty01*** Well, at least there is a cancellation page. Seems like the exception on the web.

***jazzyjackson*** Thanks for introducing "user exploitation" to my vocabulary, it certainly describes the overwhelming focus on giving ad networks as much screen real estate as possible so we can be surveilled by marketers and governments alike.

As an additional correlation to the timeline, Taboola took off from 2007 to 2013 especially, when all the online journalism sites were trying to figure out how to stay afloat and suddenly they were all handed a guaranteed monthly income, all they have to do is mix scams and health-scare and "Tommy Chong CBD" fraud in with your news, your readers will love having relevant recommendations for what to read next!

(It's my conspiracy theory that the only reason these ad networks pay out so well is to keep the surveillance dragnet wide, track what information every person sees -- for the price of a little click fraud)

But back to the topic, these design changes (even editorial changes to what headlines are on your front page) are certainly not done with the user in mind.

Another design trend that has completely taken over of course is algorithmic timelines. Both Twitter and Instagram started pushing non-chronological sorting on previously chronological feeds in 2016. This is a transparent effort to take advantage of the slot-machine-addiction of reward and disappointment brought about by a refresh of content -- requiring you to refresh the page and load more ad impressions. I can't tell you how many times I tried to use facebook's search feature, but eneded up scrolling down the timeline trying to find a post I saw earlier, how many dozens of ad impressions were bought and sold while I scrolled, all because facebook couldn't be bothered to write a useful timeline search?

The places where people spend most of their time online (social media, youtube) are designed to act like quicksand, information is re-arranged every time you hit the back button, just because they need to mix some payola in and keep you on the site.

/rant

I think there is still a log of creativity to be had with computers, for my part I'm building a WYSIWYG CMS that frames all of its data into polygon 'tiles' that fit together into a mosaic in 2 or 3 or more dimensions, just something to get away from the rectangles and single column timelines that make everything look the same. I can't even remember what website I saw something on because I can't tell one from the other. So, see also another great piece on web design from 2016 [1] relating to design trends in physical spaces, the trend of cafes and airbnbs to ignore any of its local context in favor of a bland Le Corbusier-meets-Edison-Bulbs style, a full on mcdonaldization of service so that you never have to try anything new (except even mcdonalds adapts the menu to local taste)

[1] https://www.theverge.com/2016/8/3/12325104/airbnb-aesthetic-...

***carlreid*** What are some good resources for learning friendly UX?

***janaagaard*** > UX is now "user exploitation."

Pretty well said.

***hizxy*** UX lost to sales, product and engineering.

***zubairq*** Loved this article, well done!

***andrenotgiant*** >[Big Tech] is turning UX into an actively harmful discipline has drained talent and expertise away from projects that could, and should, have had more help. An enraging example comes from right here in New York City: our vaccine websites are impossible to use

So how is Facebook to blame for bad vaccine sites? Should they fire their user-experience teams to stop the "drain"?

Not sure I follow the logic here.

***RickS*** It's the "drained talent" aspect, which IMO is correct. If I remember correctly, government salaries typically max out around G14, which was lower than most starting SFBA bigco salaries.

The world is pretty ripe with people who can make a stable, usable vaccine website. But on the whole, they don't want the job for 50k in a dingy building from the 1950s when they could make 250k to work on a shiny app that psychologically manipulates their peers in perverse but increasingly effective ways.

Imagine soda companies buying up basically all of the water in america and canada to make some highly addictive line of drinks, such that when a hurricane hits and people need rations, the government can't get water at a price and quantity sufficient to provide relief. Big tech is so profitable compared to every other sector that they can outbid the rest of the nation for engineering resources, leaving every other sector to be staffed by the dregs.

This is an oversimplification of course. Some people really want to stay in not-san-francisco. Some people really want to serve their country. But in aggregate, engineering talent is disproportionately hoarded by SV tech cos because they're willing to buy as much as the world can make for more than anyone else can pay.

edit: I say "engineering" a lot here but it's similarly true for UX design. The concentration effects are weaker, but the price deltas are bigger.

***tenebrisalietum*** > In the single biggest public health crisis in the world, New York can't build a usable vaccine website. The telephone - 1950s technology - is our best option, after 25 years of web development.

I think the latest thing in the 1950's was Touch-Tone. The telephone itself is actually 1870s technology.

***jariel*** It's a good post but:

" but a major one was the exodus of financialization experts from Wall Street to Silicon Valley. Suddenly the "get rich quick" mentality that had caused the 2008 crash was being adopted by senior leadership at Big Tech firms. "

Stop with these 'blame wall street' populist fantasies.

The 'fault' of 'whatever' is happening is 100% tech and it has nothing to do with bankers.

In reality, young people coming into the industry with a different set of values than those that came before them are driving this. A generation that simultaneously declares to be more 'socially conscious' is literally driving these activities, which is quite hypocritical.

The shift is easy to see: people having grown up more separated from their communities, with culturally secular values (not bad one's just more intellectual than rooted in relationships with those around them) can simultaneously detach themselves from the consequences of their outcomes at work, while at the same time participating in a 'protest' about something or the other in order to validate their self-identity as 'socially conscious'.

We're going to need a broad set of basic regulations, hopefully not too harsh, probably led by the EU as the only institution that seems to have enough power and wherewithal to care enough.

While note making any statement about politics - Biden's 'side' would be the most likely group to be concerned about privacy, and yet we haven't heard a peep about them on the issue. The other 'side' is deeply concerned about 'freedom of expression' which is good, perhaps they can find a way to make some legislation about it.

***hizxy*** Who cares anymore.

***genezeta*** tl;dr: I wanted UX to be a principle, to have a noble moral standing and be used only for "good". But it turns out UX is just a tool and as just a tool it is now being used for "evil".

***specialist*** I eschewed clicking this link when this hit front page. I thought it'd just be more whining. I was wrong. I'm sorry for the delay.

That angelfish metaphor is just perfect. The WFMU graphic is terrific. The criticism is spot on.

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Yes, and: Why I also left UI.

TLDR:

No one at any time has ever cared about mental models, metaphors.

The serious aspects of UI, QA/Test, methodologies have all been swept aside. I don't know why.

Even in the 90s, other geeks were hostile towards UI.

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In the 90s, I considered myself a UI designer. Before the kids started saying "UX". Which is like my kid telling me that "emo" wasn't anything like "goth", because "goth" is what old people listen to. Um, ok. Sorry, kid: Same smell, new slogan.

I mostly did direct manipulation graphical user interfaces, similar to AutoCAD and Illustrator. I had been programming since grade school. Slinging code was just what one did.

I fucking loved working on UI. During a time when most geeks hated it. Except game devs.

At some point, I got tired of trying to persuade the priests working at Autodesk and MicroStation to stop abusing their users. I'll just make my own UIs, dammit.

My one contribution to the art of UI was somehow divining new mental models. Transmuting complex stuff into "well, duh" simple. You know you've nailed a solution when you can delete the related pages and chapters from the docs. Good UI explains itself. h/t Donald Norman (Just like good code.)

Example 1: For a game, I created navigation controls which unified walking on the ground and flying in the air (like a bird), while avoiding getting "hyperlost". (We never shipped. For comparison, the 3D RTS game Myth's UI was kinda the same, but not really.)

Example 2: For our production printing software apps, I "fixed" the color mapping UI. Mapping named colors w/ RGB values to CMYK is straightforward. But lithography has a bunch of colorants which cannot be represented in RGB, like double black and metallics. I made it stupid easy to control.

Example 3: Also for printing, I created a parametric image positioning (imposition) app which generated the production plan from a simple specification. The Holy Grail. Just in time for the print industry to crash.

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To implement my UIs, I had to dive deeper and deeper into programming. I can't really explain why. Something always got lost in the translation. I've always had to show vs tell. There was always some legacy technical reason why I couldn't get the UIs I wanted.

So I'd have to fix the next layer down. So instead of engaging directly with end users, working on their real problems, I'm coding OpenGL bindings and web services and persistence layers.

I think this is called yak shaving.

It's a terrible, terrible trap. Over the years, the harder I worked, the further away I got from my objectives.

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My criteria for a successful idea, back when we geeks still cared about learning organizations, was if the idea outlives one's own participation.

By my own standards, I've had very few successes. Regardless of the domain. Project management, testing, writing, UI design, etc. I did a lot of cool shit. Most of it now lost.

I also never figured out how to monetize, profit from my ideas and creations. My guess is doing stuff and getting paid are two different domains and very few people have both.

I think both of these failures are related.

Or along the lines of this Hurst article, maybe being a working artist is just hard. I know a lot of struggling artists. I respect any creative who figures out how to get paid.

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Geeks remain hostile to stuff they don't understand.

Yes, there's now better visual arts and visual communication, it's still pretty rare. I attribute this to having fewer gatekeepers. Anyone can throw their work up on the web.

And just like visual design, geeks (and non-geeks) don't understand mental models and metaphors.

They'll see the work. Acknowledge that it's good. But since they can't figure how it came to be, the work is somehow invalid. Or due to luck. Or somehow otherwise illegitimate.

You can't A/B test yourself to greatness. (Riffing on wisdom from my time doing QA/Test.)

But I've never been able to explain my intuition and non-linear thinking to other geeks. There is no "show your work", like all the steps of long division to satisfy the math teacher.

I'm still grateful to the one geek boss I had who was at least honest about his rejection. He was a math whiz and had previously made a lot of money selling software to Wall St. He demanded that I walk him thru my solutions. I'd demo, show him my notebooks (eg storyboards), the results from usability testing, etc. But he just couldn't accept the end results because he couldn't understand how I logically got there.

OMG we had such fights.

Years later he apologized. He had tried to do his own UI for some of the same problems. He admitted mine were better. And that he should have been more accepting of my style of thinking. Which he called "abduction" (vs deduction or induction), but I don't think that's right either.

There are certainly other reasons why creative work is diminished, rejected. This is just the brick wall that I noticed.

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So. To wrap up this rant.

Being a creative is hard.

Everything Hurst wrote is spot on.

I just wanted to add my own personal history (color) to compliment his thesis.