User Interfaces of Mobile Apps

Development of user interfaces for mobile apps is a painstaking process that consists of much trial and error. User interface (UI) is everything that is designed into any mobile device with which a human may interact; which includes display screen, keyboard, mouse, light pen, the appearance of its surface or "real estate", character display, help messages, and how an application program or a website evokes interaction and responds to it. In early computers, there was very little UI except for a few buttons at a users' console. User interface, which may include the aesthetic appearance of the device, response time, and the content that is presented to the user within the context of the user interaction or total user experience; this overall concept was a bit confusing for me at first, Lynda.com has helped me to understand it a bit more. Though the overall topic seemed to be to be painted with a broad-brush stroke. When configuring a user interface, it makes sense to consider logo design, were less is more. Focus only on the elements necessary to aid of communicating the overall outcome.

I needed to keep in mind that a mobile device is nothing like a computer, as it has become an extension of us, throughout our daily lives. Loaded with powerful sensors that can detect location, movement, acceleration, orientation, proximity, environmental conditions and so much more. Fingerprint scanners to add a level of protection can vary from devices-to-device, a swipe or a simple reader that you might place your finger on to determine your identity. Mobile devices are becoming more in tuned with their end user to the best of its ability. These are now our own butler or personal assistant; waking us up, keeping us on task, helping us to find our way, research and development (R&D), health and recreation, as well as lulling us to sleep.

Workings out the bugs are a horse of a different color, as I remember my own experience with one that was suppose to be a waterproof device. Moisture was not its friend, all I could think of was "Danger Will Robinson – Warning, Warning" and it drove me bonkers. Though this is not always done as seamlessly as one would hope, much of this is dependent on the end-user as much as the creator. With the advent of touchscreen interfaces, unless the user is interacting with their smartphone with two hands, it's difficult for many to type without error or speed. Only the tip of your thumb is generally even used for the most part. To increase the size of keyboard often compromises screen real estate as a whole. Touch interface allows us to work directly with our context without the use of mouse or trackpad. If an app invites lots of typing, you should support landscape orientation rather than portrait so that people can access the larger keyboard.

Touch interface inspires gestures. This could be invisible or via multitouch, think of it as if they were keyboard shortcuts. Invisible gestures may be visible at a kiosk or a store demo, which might reverse scroll into a default position. While multitouch might be consider a pinch gesture to zoom in and out to view photos or maps close up. I find myself attempting this gesture with multiple applications and become disheartened when it has been done in vain.

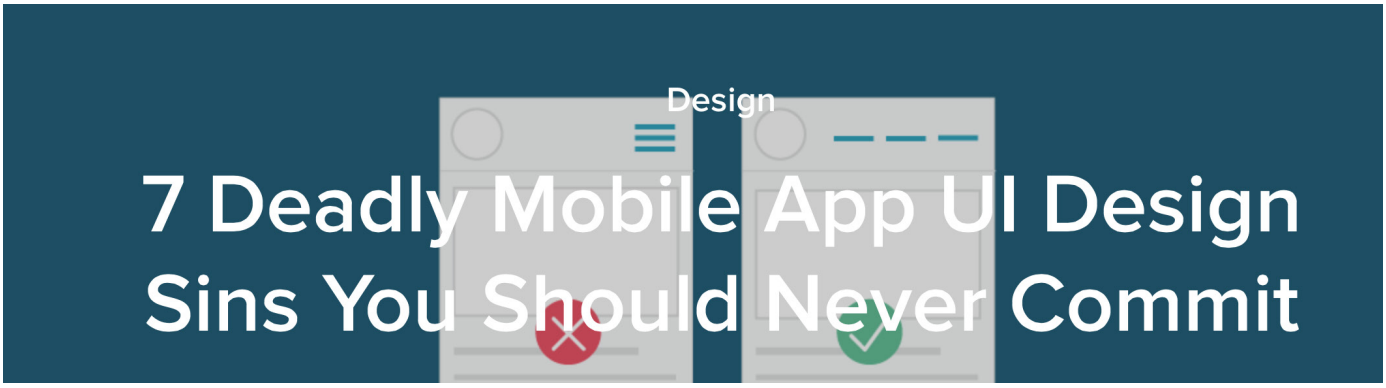
Starting with an initial idea, in navigating a mobile device, the platform is so pervasive that those of us who use it see where the platform is lacking when we experience deficits through its usage. Functionality is a key component, and we need to understand the direction, developing the core functionality of the app itself and programming it to the satisfaction of the end-user. Mobile apps are generally broken down into what may be considered common screens such as a login screen, a settings screen, or a form to collect information or batches of data. Defining these screens to make sure everyone has a comparable understanding of the ideas interpretation. Often mobile designers and programmers might have a different path to a project, so coming to a meeting of the minds to a outcome can save a lot of time by inhibiting someone from going down the wrong avenue. We are generally more apt to changing our approach to a solution before any real work is done, rather than "throwing the baby out with the bath water" or scrapping the whole project as it were.

There are a few things to note. Shrinking down a website to look like an app defeats the purpose and hinders the users experience. Poorly placed ads with a tiny "x" becomes more of an annoyance. Overloading the end-user with push notifications needs to be minimized.

After we understand the functionality of app itself, next we would go through the design process itself; Adobe Creative Cloud has many of the tools necessary to streamline much this process. Creating vector art within Adobe Illustrator CC and moving into Adobe Photoshop CC to aid in adding vibrant and engaging graphics. Photoshop speeds up much of the development process, enabling a designer the ability to further define the design and layout of the screens to match the requirements for the user interface. Using Photoshop to design the mobile experience can provide a way to breakdown the screen elements and define the code.

Screenshots are a perfect way to provide a mock-up of each screen in the application and help show the application's work-flow. The screenshots also show any potential gaps in its functionality. If that is the case, modifications can be made at this time, and the designer/ programmers can then create the appropriate mock-ups. Screenshots can also be used as style guides by showing details in a dimension by which design elements, color schemes or fonts can be easily visible, in essence, act as a mood board. While coders can use these very same guidelines as their requirements document. And, once defined it can be translated into code. Since all of my current devices are IOS, Xcode would be an intergraded development environment used to develop a storyboard. The storyboard will provide the views of the application to which we then bind code and properties. It seems that much like anything else, once you break down mobile app development into manageable steps, creating a repetitive or repeatable process is much more achievable. A mobile app, no matter how complex, can be broken down into these simple steps: idea/concept, layout/design, and code/ language.

I can only hope that my transitation from Graphic Design to Mobile Development will help me to obtain a better grasp on this subject and help me to avoid many of this mistakes.



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