What is User Research?

User research is the methodic study of target users—including their needs and pain points—so designers have the sharpest possible insights to work with to make the best designs. It is also referred to as <u>design research.</u>

User research is done at all levels of product development. We use research to :

- <u>Inspire design</u> : before you start designing so as to get an understanding of what your target group needs

- <u>Evaluate solutions</u> : carry out iterative tests during development to ensure that the user experience is on track

- <u>Measure impact:</u> measure the effect of your design after your product is released

Before deciding when to do user research, you have to first understand <u>why</u> you're doing research.

Research to ensure that your design is relevant to your users

– Will mostly be contextual interviews and observations

– Usually done at the beginning of product development

– Can be done concurrently with ideation or before any concept is done

– Once concepts have been done, you can do research to validate the design direction

– Also, to understand how customers are using your product, to explore if they need other features or offer opportunity scoping for your next project

Research to ensure that your designs are easy to use

– Will mostly be usability tests

– Usually done in the early design and development stages of product development to ensure changes can be swiftly and cheaply made

– User testing works well in an iterative process where you continually do user tests to ensure that your design is easy and pleasurable to use.

Research to measure the impact of your design

– Mostly done after the product has already been released to the public

– Should be done on a consistent basis to evaluate the user experience

How do you approach research if you don't work in a user centered design environment?

– Try to do research at the beginning or early stages of product development

– Start from where you are. Eg do iterative usability tests on your low-fi or high-fi wireframes

– Stick to research where you also have influence on any design changes that your research brings about

– Schedule research into the work plan

– Focus on the research that will have the biggest impact on the project

– The most important thing is the "Validity" of your research

Involving Stakeholders in user research

Who are the stakeholders?

"An individual, group, or organization, who may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project."

- Business : informs you if you have the time and resources needed for your research and if they will invest in changes to be made. Must be on track with business goals.

- Engineering : give you information about technological limitations and possibilities.

- UX people : provide you with more knowledge about your project and with different angles on the user experience. Directly use your research. Must agree on design direction.

Why must we involve stakeholders?

– To ensure you have all the information you need before you start a project

– To ensure you are doing the user research most relevant to your project in order for it to have proper impact. *If you know what you can't change, you might as well focus your research efforts elsewhere.*

– To have your stakeholders engage in the user research and care about the outcomes since they will need to support any design changes that need to be made as a result

– So that you don't end up doing user research that has already been done in the organization by someone else

How to involve stakeholders?

– <u>Informational interviews</u>

What is the project about?

The stakeholder's role and interests in relation to the project

What has already been decided about the project

Who the users are