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Going Beyond the Surface
Case Study: Facebook & Google Approaches

Importance of Effective Product Design

Design is a critical ingredient in delivering and creating value. For this reason, it is essential to dive into the exploration of what is successful design. Good and effective design can help generate positive responses and reactions by users, it can propose solutions and solve real needs, it can strengthen the identity of a brand, it can engage an audience to a greater level—the list is endless!

But something to bare in mind is to think what *exactly* makes product design effective. There are many little and big aspects that make a big difference when it comes to the quality and effectiveness of a product design. For instance, it could be the story behind the product and the way that the product is communicated to its users, it could be the unexpected microinteractions and patterns incorporated into a design itself, it could be the way it enhances daily activities in the life of a user. These are all factors to consider in the process of crafting a product.

Google

To dig deeper into the topic of what is effective product design. It is inspiring to look and analyze at what existing companies are doing in terms of product development and their strategies into delivering a product. For the purpose of this exploration, there will be a focus on Google and Facebook and taking a glance at some of the principles guiding design decisions in each respective company.

Peeking into Google, it is addressed that there are many layers that go into crafting an effective product design. At Google, design takes place in three main stages including: early conceptual work, mid-stage mockup and prototype creation, and late-stage build.

At google, an effective design comprehensively addresses the problem, the solution in expression of user interface (UI), and implementation of that solution (Google, 2016). In there guide there are a series of questions to think of at each given phase of a product. For example, in the mid-stage there is heavy consideration of User Experience (UX) and evaluation of prototypes and mockup builds.These are some questions for individuals to think to assure effectivity:

1. Is your design actually addressing the problem all stakeholders have agreed upon?
2. Is the architecture and organization of the app or feature intuitive?
3. Are you using predictable UI patterns that are recognizable and appropriate for the platform?

Through each stage, it is also important to keep in mind one essential question which is if design propositions are targeting the overall problem and if it is meeting defined goals. A compelling package should be on-brand, it should accommodate to users, and it should facilitate a compelling experience.

Facebook

Facebook has proven itself to be a leader at engaging and facilitating user experiences through its products and tools. There are a couple of principles that are enforced in order to help craft effective design within this tech company. Margaret Gould Stewart, Vice-President of Product Design in Facebook highlights that "Good design should solve a real problem. It should be easy to use. It should be well crafted" (Stewart, 2015).

For Facebook, the four guiding principles for designing effective products include: helping people learn and grow, balancing efficiency and effectiveness, bringing clarity to complexity, being accurate and predictable. Overall, there is that idea that when designing for people, designers have a tremendously huge role and responsibility to help people do better. This essentially means to design systems and user experiences that will make individuals succeed.

Like for any project creating a solid product design is a challenge. There are many iterations, modifications, and versions throughout the course of a product design cycle. But it is through these trials and errors, that product designers are able to identify areas of improvement.

Storytelling

Above all, background production and the cycle of a product is critical. Design language is important, but functionality, effectiveness, and clarity is equally important. A good technique to adapt to avoid potential confusion is to "create a series of narrative use-cases for your product that illustrates every step in the user's journey" (Kowitz). Creating a story-centered design becomes more relatable and engaging to potential users. This is because designers are encouraged to think beyond the surface visuals and think of how users may interact with a product. Overall, putting into focus what the user may go through throughout the whole process and placing designers to join that journey as well.

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