I, User

Initial Notes and Subject Clusters

Prologue

*We are the music makers,*

*And we are the dreamers of dreams,*

*Wandering by lone sea-breakers,*

*And sitting by desolate streams;—*

*World-losers and world-foresakers,*

*On whom the pale moon gleams:*

*Yet we are the movers and shakers*

*Of the world for ever, it seems.*

**We are all human, and we are all seekers of pleasure. Whether we find that pleasure socializing with friends, enjoying a fine meal, meticulously assembling model trains, or any infinite number of alternative means, in today’s infinitely complex technological landscape, chances these activities involve at least some degree of technological mediation. For instance, the social butterfly hops on his or her smartphone to log in to facebook or send out a group message; the gourmand goes to Open Table to make reservations online, even the model train engineer finds himself using Google to search for a video tutorial to assist in his assembly process.**

**Obviously, there is no shortage instances wherein technology plays a critical role in our lives, from the most mundane daily activities to the most highly specialized and personal. Hence, it is of utmost importance that technology “behave” appropriately across this vast spectrum of potential uses, and is in line with our expectations as users. A toaster, for example, should not require the user to enter complicated numerical data via an embedded touchscreen in order toast a piece of bread. Similarly, I’d be quite puzzled if my new top of the line smart phone consisted of two rectangular slots and one giant lever on the side. This rule applies to all technologically mediated products, and services (which I will now generally refer to as “systems” interchangeably) : The number and complexity of features associated with a system should align with users’ innate expectations and perceptions of that product, and it’s intended behavior and purpose.**

**In general, the systems we choose to interact with every day abide by this rule, or at least to an “acceptable” degree. The danger, however, is lurking in the weeds – namely, in that one little word “acceptable”. What each user deems as an “acceptable” experience, “acceptable” degree of complexity, “acceptable” level of functionality, etc., is totally subjective, and is dependent on a number of external factors. Convenience, price, availability, ease of use, establishment of identity, individual user habits, and personality traits are just a few determinants of what we choose to use and what we choose to lose.**

**Unfortunately, in today’s chaotic world of rapid technological production, whether intentionally or unintentionally, designers can end up operating in a kind of vacuum. Designers often lose focus on the end-to-end user experience, in favor of their own opinions and visions of the product. Worse, the resulting lack of communication with departments like Research or Analytics can result in a failure to address key needs of users, resulting in an inferior end product.**

**Alas, there is a silver lining to this cloud! As it turns out, negative /poorly designed experiences are perfect opportunities for both designers and users to learn how to better communicate with one another. With improved communication will come improved interaction, better experiences, and superior products and services.**

**User, Designer, Developer, CEO, we all possess innate knowledge and expectations of how the world works. As Humans, as users, and as professionals, we have an obligation to share that knowledge freely amongst one another, regardless of rank or status.**

**This is an essay about human nature, and the power we wield in shaping the future of technology.**

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Techno-logic: Befriending the 8th Grade Bully

**Abundance (more 8th graders == better chance for multiple bullies… can “gang up, etc.)**

**Similarly, More tech == more room for mistakes**

**Pervasiveness (The bully is in the classroom, on the playground, at lunch…).**

**Ubiquitous tech is a given.**

**Addressing “complexity” ( How scary could this guy really be?)**

**Added features – good or bad?**

**Measuring user experience( approaching the Bully and having an open conversation)**

**User Testing**

**Market Research**

**R&D, etc.**

**Conquering “complexity” (Bonding with the Bully)**

**Breaking down tech/services into smallest parts/modules**

Subjective Psychological/Experiential Determinants

**Emotions**

Dominate our impressions of experience

Are contagious

Drastically alter our impressions of overall experience

Negative Experiences

Uncertainty 🡪 Negative emotions, anxiety, etc.

These negative emotions how severely we interpret

Something as a negative event.

**Personal Experience**

**Conscious vs. Unconscious**

To gain true understanding of human user experience, must

Measure both conscious and unconscious thoughts/behaviors,

And how the two interact.

People have a basic desire to feel good about themselves, therefore we have a tendency to be unconsciously biased in favor of traits similar to our own.

Must understand science of the unconscious mind

We all have implicit frames of reference that produce habitual thinking and behavior.

**Memory**

Unique Experiences

“Serial Position Effect”

(remember the end, then beginning then middle)

Always end on a positive note

Memory of the even often more important than the event itself

Recollections subject to our own memory distortion.

Memory of the whole more important than memory of parts.

**Expectations**

Cognitive Dissonance

Failure to meet, lack of 🡪 tension, frustration, etc

**Alignment/Loyalty**

Consumer impulse to “punish” bad services is stronger than desire

To “reward” an overly delightful service.

Consumers are most satisfied when basic needs are met.

Bas more to do with how well companies/services deliver on basic promises, meet “expected level” of pleasant experience.

Building loyalty has more to do with reducing consumer effort -

The work needed to be done to effectively solve their problem – than by “delighting” htem.

Acting on this idea has proven to improve customer

Service, reduce customer service costs, decrease overall

Customer “churn”/overturn

“Over the top efforts” often make little difference.

Instead:

Provide simple, quick solutions

Address consumers’ emotional states

Elicit/use user feedback (especially from struggling/confused instances)

Focus on problem solving

Remove Obstacles

Repeat actions

Redundant information submission

Cumbersome menus, etc.

External Product Properties

**Complexity**

Both necessary and manageable

Is here to stay

Divide and conquer 🡪 break down whole 🡪 small parts/modules

In order to cope, need:

Communication (feedback)

Avoid error messages, explain in problem in plain language.

Aid human comprehension and memory

Provide tools for learning

Handle unexpected events.

Good conceptual models

Signifiers/Affordances

Behavior determined by observing others’ behavior

**Necessary Features:**  
 “Forcing Functions” 🡪 features designed to prevent erroneous actions

**Design Challenges (esp. for Complexity)**

Provide well structured, cohesive experience

Don’t “Over Design”

Design end-to-end experiences that meet all user needs

Differentiate design for individual vs. designing for groups.

Security issues

Automation

Advantages

Disadvantages

**Media inclusion**:

Video – good for a learning aid, 10-30 secs max

Videos should be real, brief, to the point, no “selling”.

Challenges Going Forward

**Competing for tomorrow’s user**

To compete in this aggressively interactive environment, companies must shift their focus from driving transactions to maximizing customer lifetime value. That means making products and brands subservient to long-term customer relationships. And that means changing strategy and structure across the organization—and reinventing on Reinventing Your Marketing department all together.

**Consumer Relationships**

view their customer relationships as evolving over time, and they may hand off customers to different parts of the organization selling different brands as their needs change.

**Future of Research**

Market Research

The emphasis of market research changes in a customer-centric company. First, the internal users of market research extend beyond the marketing department to all areas of the organization that touch customers—including finance (the source of customer payment options) and distribution (the source of delivery timing and service). Second, the scope of analysis shifts from an aggregate view to an individual view of customer activities and value. Third, market research shifts its attention to acquiring the customer input that will drive improvements in customer- focused metrics such as CLV and customer equity.

“R&D”

To make sure that product decisions reflect real-world needs, the customer must be brought into the design process. Integrating R&D and marketing is a good way to do that.

**New/Evolving Roles in business**

Chief Customer Officer: A successful CCO promotes a customer-centric culture and removes obstacles to the flow of customer information throughout the organization.

**“Taming Technology”**

Requires partnership between designers and users.

Users must be willing to take the time to learn underlying

Structure, master necessary skills

Designers must provide a structure that

Communicates effectively

Is learnable

Provides social interaction.

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