

SOM MATHUR  
EQUITECH  
TA: Laura

The user-centered design process has been a practice prevalent in various industries in the past decade. This process involves 5 crucial steps, namely, the 5D's – Discover, Define, Design, Develop and Deploy. Each step is critical in developing the optimal product for the consumer. This iterative design process provides the team developing a prototype an opportunity to improve on their design and eliminate the minutest of flaws before being launched.

The company should be in favor of user research as it is the catalyst that makes a great idea into a success. User research involves interacting with the target audience and discovering what best suits their needs. Once an idea has been thought of and defined, it is absolutely crucial to verify how well that product might appeal to the target audience, thereby determining whether it is even worth allocating the company's resources to it. As a result of the data collected from the research, the product development time can be lowered as there would be a clearer picture in mind of what we're building. Decision making would be far easier and tasks can be prioritized according to what the user requires in specific, thereby eliminating a majority of the differences of opinion amongst members developing the product.

UX design is concerned with every part of how the user interacts with the product and encompasses details such as how users navigate the interface to how the site/app is organized. A lot of the user research involves developing and constantly improving sketches/wireframes of what the final product might look like even before a single line of code is written, thereby emphasizing the iterative nature of the whole process.

User research avoids costly fixes of problems which might arise later in the product after it is deployed. The cost of changing UI and development needs increases as the product is closer to launch. A simple user-friendly UI based on user research involving interviews, questionnaires, creating typical scenarios and personas based on the target audience etc., can actually improve sales and customer retention and loyalty. The increase in revenue as a result of this groundwork more than compensates for the resources allocated on user research.

Companies have gone from being failures to billion-dollar ventures as a result of user testing. Airbnb is one such company. It is currently valued at over 10 billion US dollars and the reason of its success can be attributed to the user research and feedback from customers they received which enabled them to improve their product and goals significantly.

In conclusion, I would like to stress on the importance and implementation of the iterative design process in the company as it would hugely benefit the company in all avenues in terms of return on investment, enhance customer

retention and decision making and optimize the actual development process, thereby delivering a better user experience. User research, which might require a fair amount of resources allocated to it can be hugely rewarding when implemented in the right way and steer the company in the right direction to delivering the best possible product to our users.