

MERCARI

Research Conference 2024

Starting a Research Function at Mercari US



Thea Lee



Tiffany Yang

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- II. **Maturity with scale**
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- IV. **Q&A**

I. Establishing a research practice

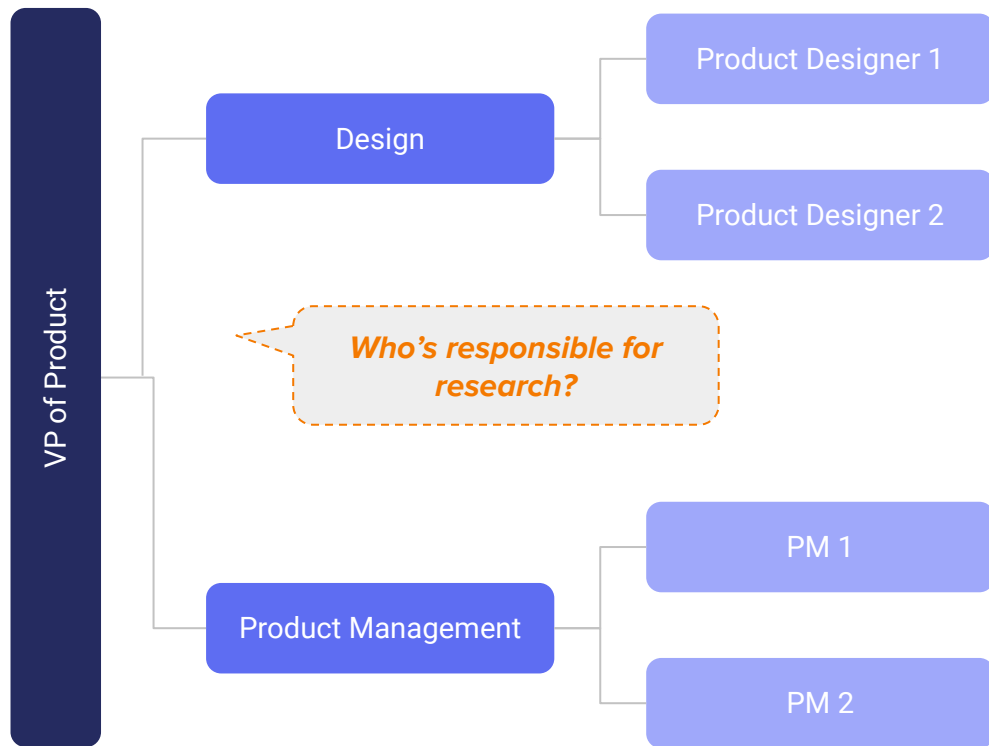
- Explain what you do
- Determine the biggest knowledge gaps
- Guide stakeholders to make meaning
- Create a research roadmap together

Product @ Mercari US in 2020

Where possible, product managers were conducting user interviews and designing surveys to get customer input.

Designers interrogated behavioral data and ran competitive analyses to iterate.

There was appetite, however, to see what would be possible if a full-time researcher came aboard.

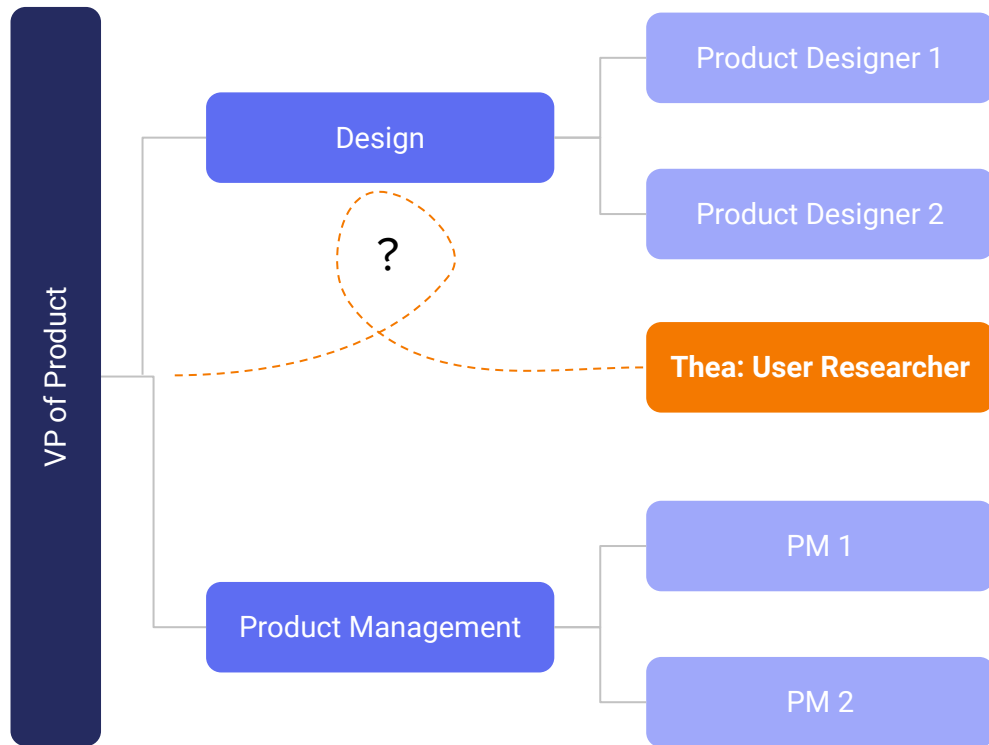


Product @ Mercari US in 2020

Most, if not all, of the product team had never worked with a dedicated researcher before.

As such, we had to figure out:

- Where does the researcher fit into the organization?
- What should a researcher own and what's it going to look like for us all to work together?

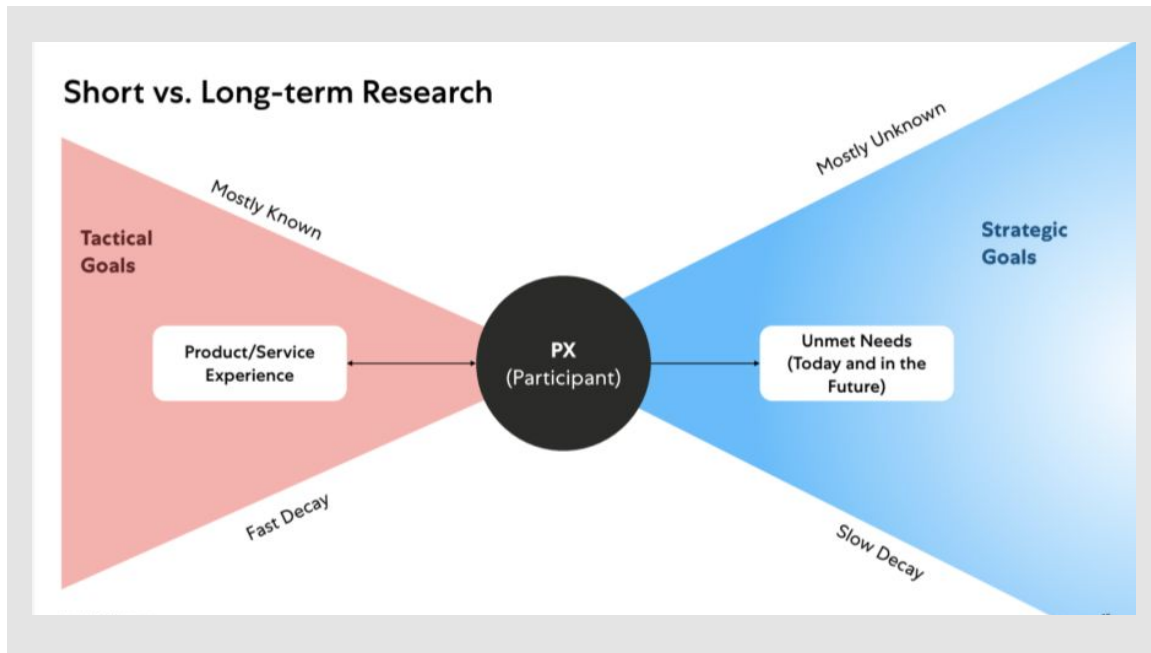


Explain what you do

For PM, Design and Engineering counterparts, it was important to provide an overview of how I work so they could imagine how we might work together.

The intro to user research (UR) included primers on:

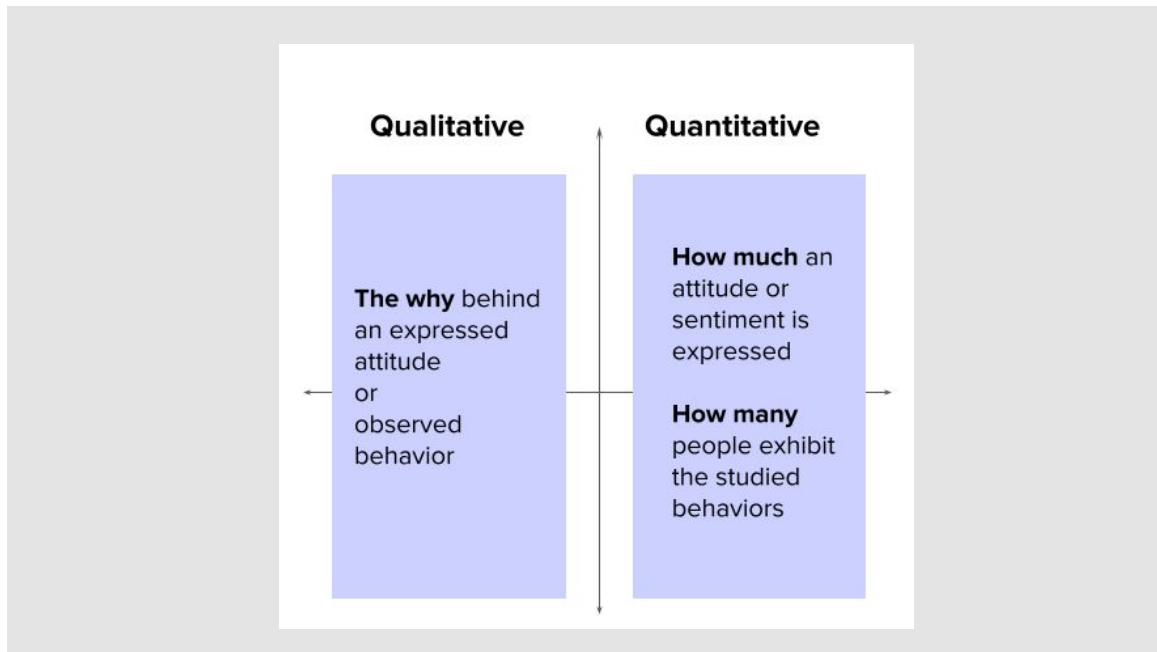
1. Strategic versus tactical research



Explain what you do

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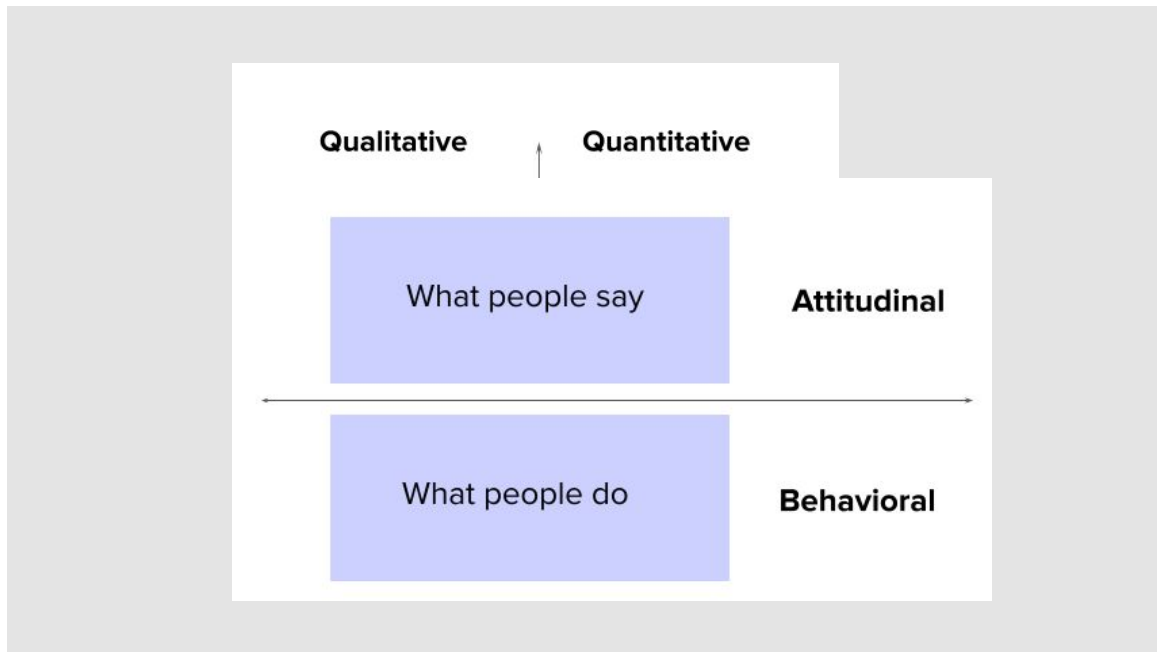
1. Strategic versus tactical research
2. **The types of questions answered by UR**



Explain what you do

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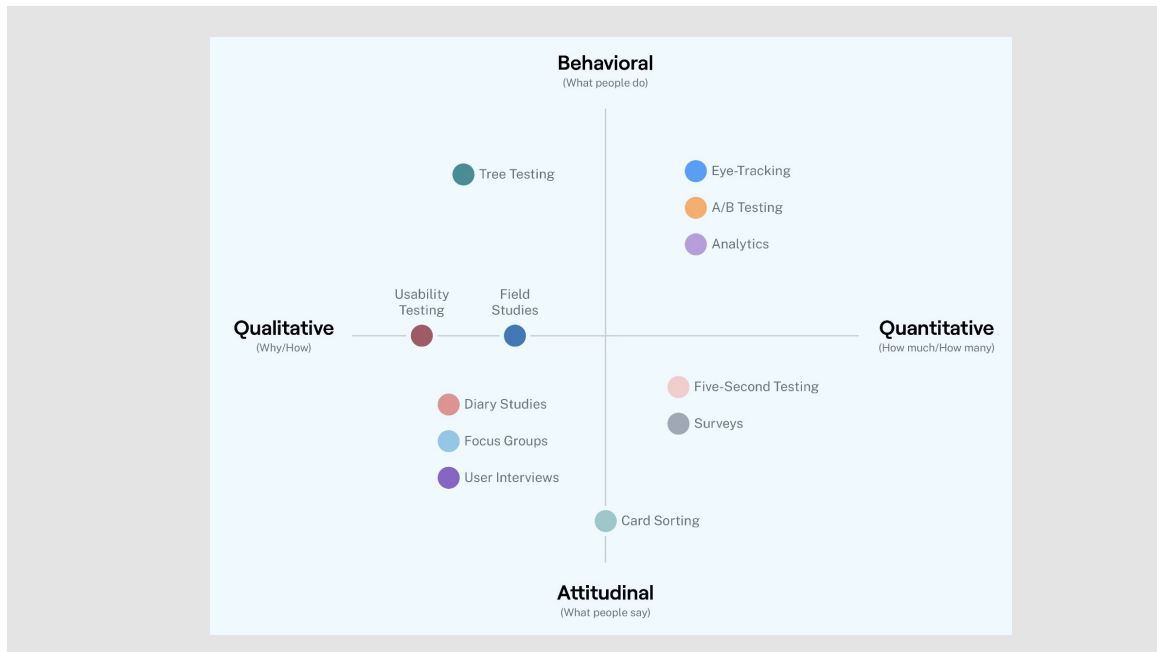
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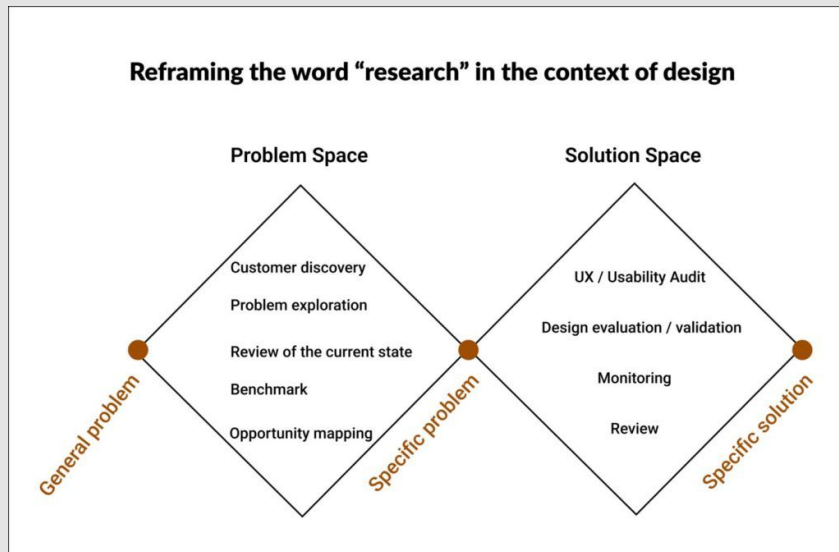
1. Strategic versus tactical research
2. The types of questions answered by UR
3. **The types of methods used**



Explain what you do

The intro to user research (UR) included primers on:

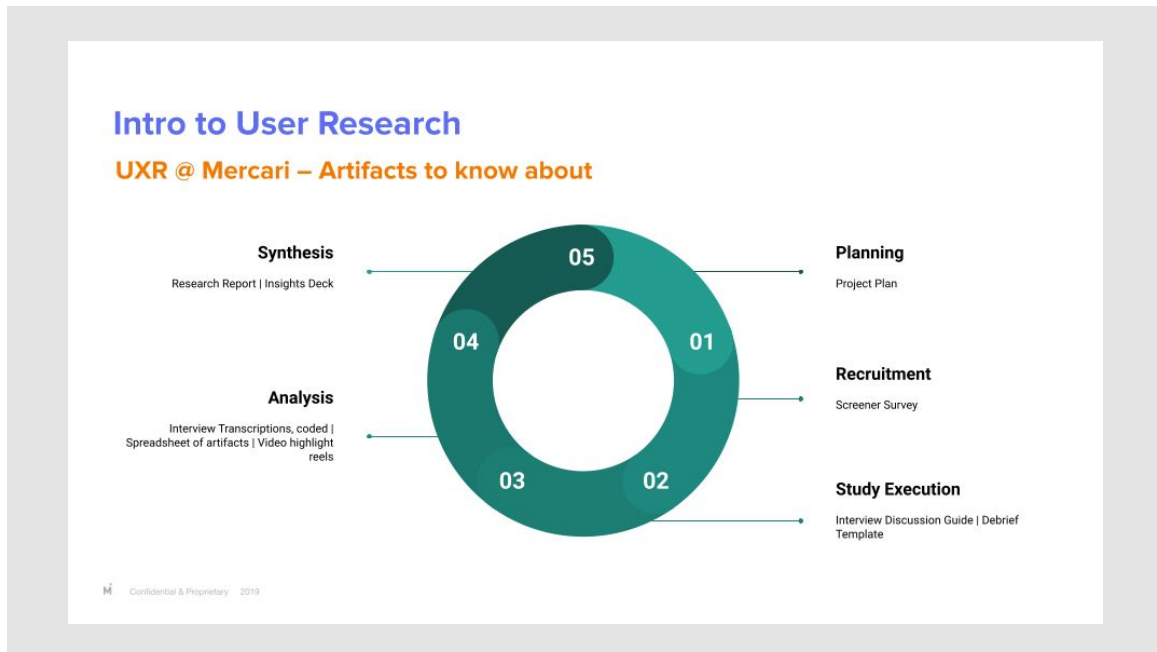
1. Strategic versus tactical research
2. The types of questions answered by UR
3. The types of methods used
4. **How it fits into the design process**



Explain what you do

The intro to user research (UR) included primers on:

1. Strategic versus tactical research
2. The types of questions answered by UR
3. The types of methods used
4. How it fits into the design process
5. **How a researcher executes a study**



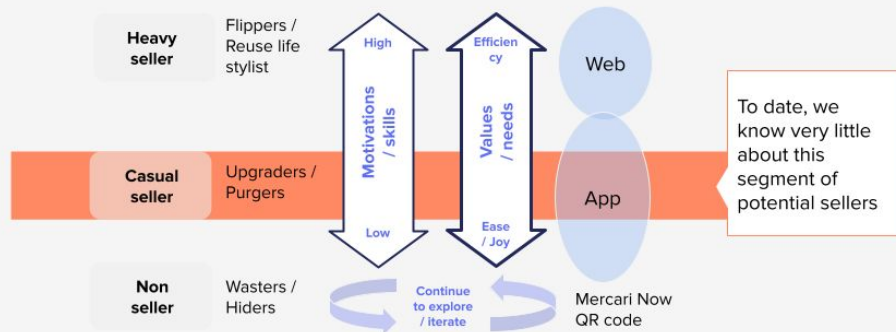
Determine the biggest knowledge gaps

Stakeholder interviews were crucial in the effort to map the Mercari landscape and understand opportunity areas.

From these conversations I understood how each function worked together, what folks felt they did and did not know about the product experience, and identified where the most business context was missing.

Background

The priority for the product team is to democratize selling. To do so, we need to understand the needs and motivations of potential sellers.

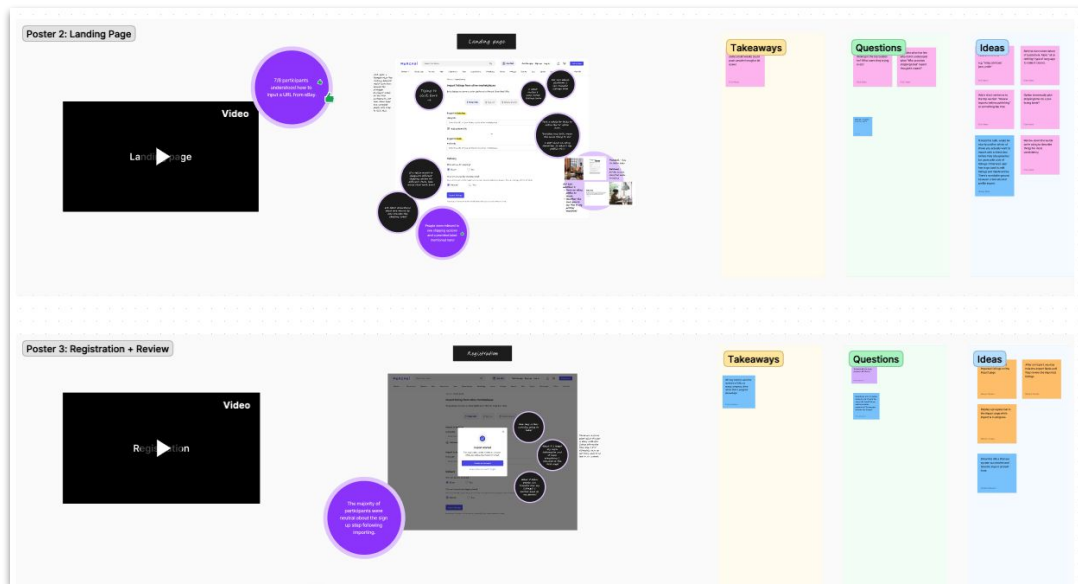


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Guide stakeholders to make meaning

Presenting the findings, in and of itself, does not lead to product actions.

To help the product managers and designers translate user stories into product opportunities, we ran a post-report workshop where stakeholders wrote out their takeaways, remaining questions, and ideas to consider.




Create a research roadmap together

We gathered strategic research questions from the full product org.

We asked them to anchor their question to one of the three company OKRs.

Thea and Tiffany cleaned and grouped the questions from the team, then guided them through a workshop to align on prioritization.



Collaborative UXR Roadmapping

Prior to calling the PM org together to give input to the UXR roadmap for FY Q3/Q4, we'd like to give you the time and space to reflect on the gaps in our customer understanding at present that could hinder our progress toward the company-level objectives. Take as much time as you need with this and we really appreciate your attention to this activity.

thea.lee@mercari.com [Switch account](#)

Your email will be recorded when you submit this form

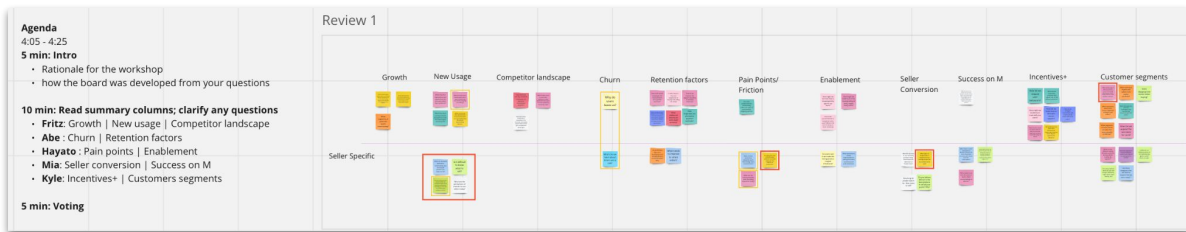
Objective 1: How might we acquire and activate more customers?

On a note pad, please take some time to jot down all the research questions you have related to this objective. For the list you've generated, tease out the 3 that are most important to you. In our subsequent workshop we'll ask you to describe why these 3 questions are important to you, so please bear that in mind.

Objective 1: How might we acquire and activate more customers?

Ways to think about this:

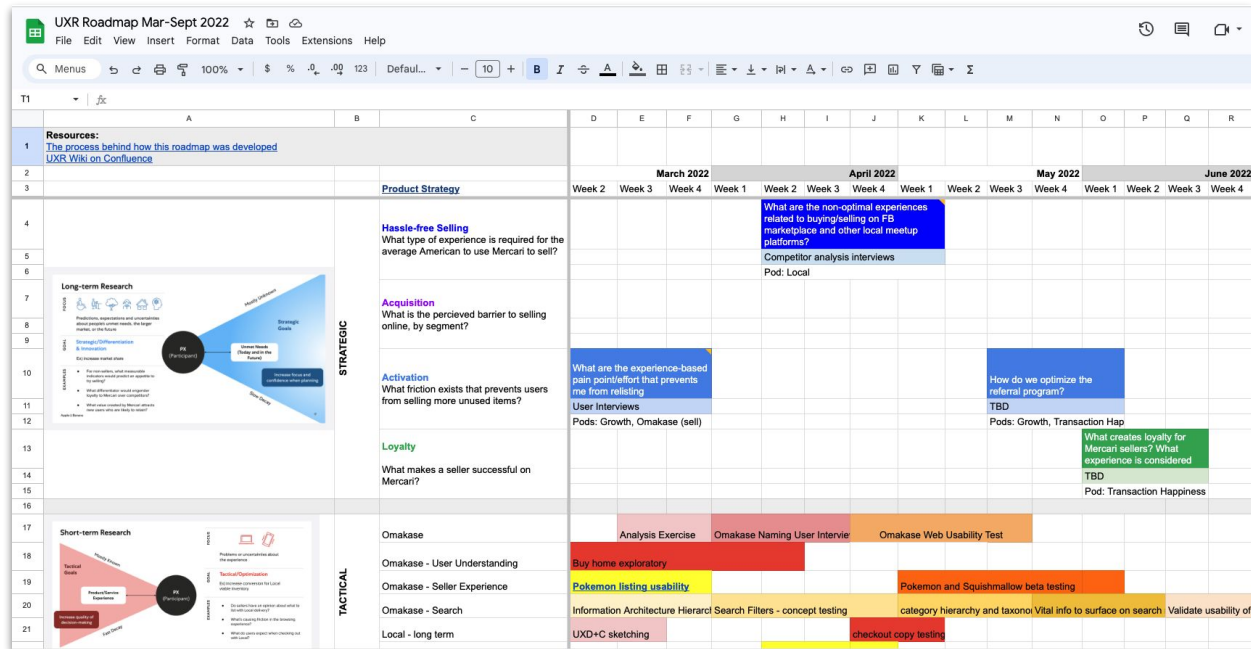
- What don't we understand about customers today that's hindering our *growth*?
- What don't we understand about customers today that's hindering our *retention*?



Create a research roadmap together

**Collaborative
roadmapping instilled
excitement and buy-in for
the research work ahead.**

Stakeholders had
co-created the direction
and, as a result, knew
what to expect and were
motivated to follow along
as studies came to fruition.



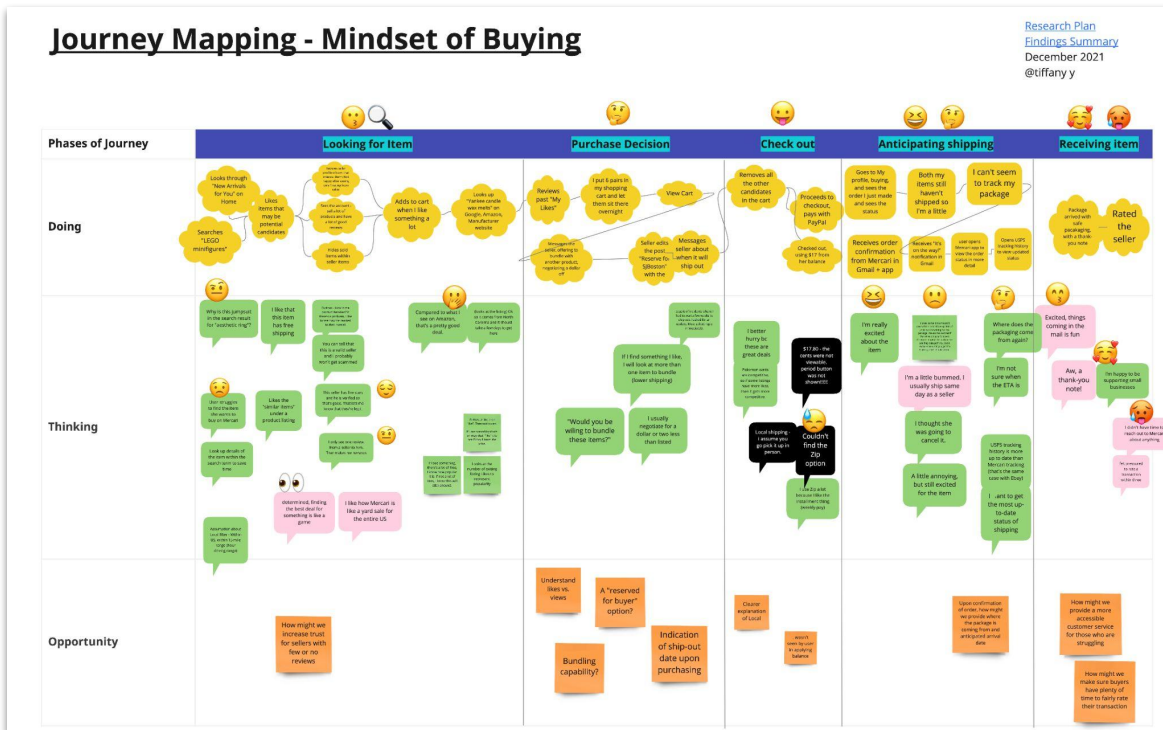
II. Maturity with scale

- Document foundational customer information
- Build a culture around operational excellence
- Develop holistic measurement capabilities
- Advance UX through specialized studies

Document foundational customer information

Tiffany identified soon after she joined that we didn't have any artifacts that captured the core user experience.

She ran a diary study, segmenting the participants by buying and selling, and developed journey maps for the end-to-end experience on the platform.




Growing the team led to greater coverage


The PM and design teams embraced research and became voracious for more customer touch points.

We were able to double the UX Research team! And with that new capacity, we could now embed a researcher on each strategic product swimlane.





Aug -Dec 2022 Roadmap

Owned by Thea Lee ...

Last updated: Jul 18, 2023 by [Megan McMahon](#) • 1 min read • 21 people viewed

-  [Configure translations](#)

UXR Team

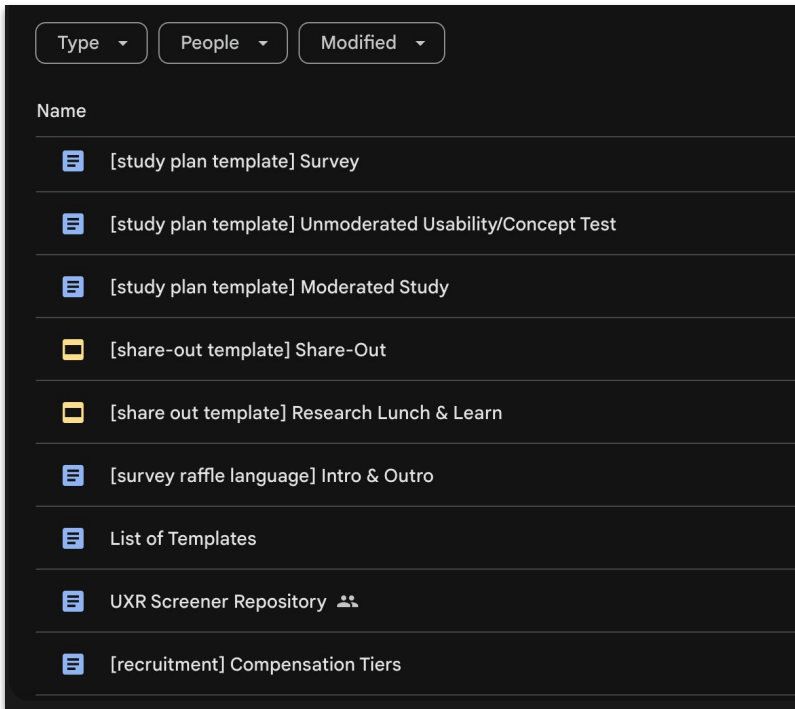
Delivery	Growth	Omakase	PRO
			
@Lena Chang	@Megan McMahon	@Tiffany Yang	@Thea Lee

Build a culture around operational excellence

Each researcher noticed ways our processes could improve and took initiative to design improvements.

Example 1) Project templates

To introduce consistency and standards to our project execution, Lena designed a series of templates not only for researchers to follow, but for stakeholders to easily read across product areas.

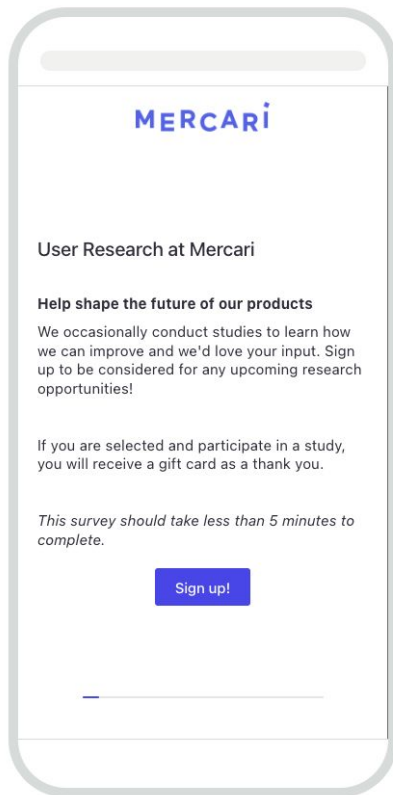


Build a culture around operational excellence

Each researcher noticed ways our processes could improve and took initiative to design improvements.

Example 2) Participant panel

We realized the need for a mechanism to pre-qualify Mercari users for the high volume of ongoing research studies. Lena stood up an in-app survey that gathered background information on users and be a pool we could draw from and annotate over time.



Links

Research Panel

[UX Research Panel](#)

Note: only UXR team m
access to this.

Project Plan

[\[project plan\] UXR P](#)

Email Templates

[\[email template\] Par](#)

[\[email template\] Par](#)

Instructions & How-To's

Recruiting New Panelists: Mercari Users

Within in-app Sprig surveys or other studies with Mercari users, include the fo
questions at the end of your study.

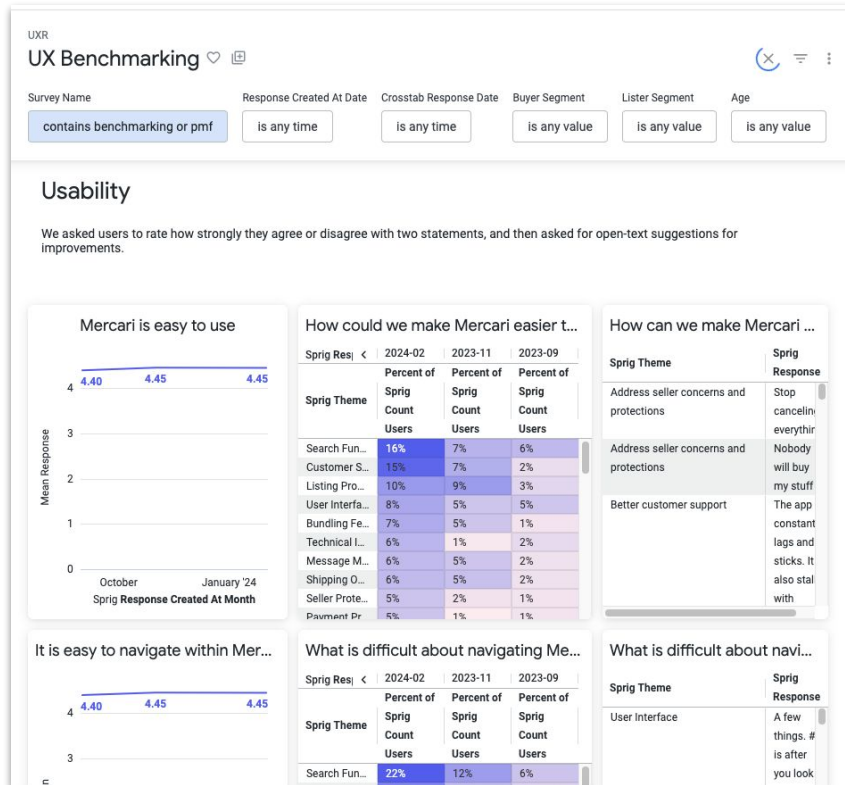
- 1 Would you like to participate in future Mercari research studies?
*The Mercari Research team is always looking for research participants
help shape the future of Mercari.*

Develop holistic measurement capabilities

Research support within product areas was strong, but when we took a step back, we saw the need to assess core UX metrics over time.

Megan led the design of the UX benchmarking program and launched the first survey in Sept 2023.

Longitudinal tracking of UX values like usability, navigation, satisfaction and product-market fit has proven invaluable to product planning and prioritization.

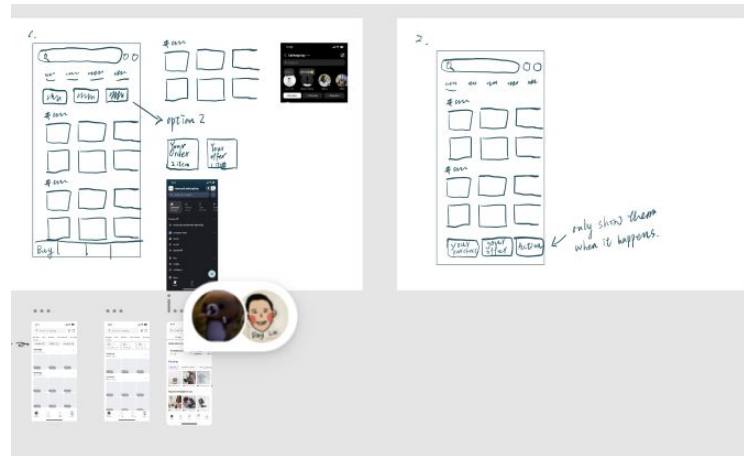
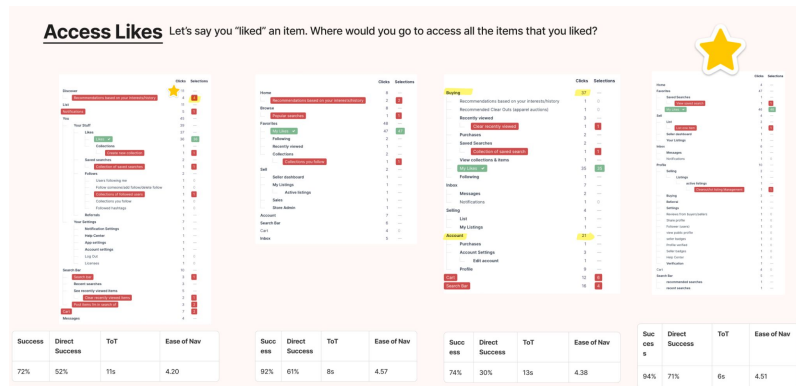


Advance UX through specialized studies

As the perceived value of research has grown, there's been more latitude for UXers to take the lead in identifying product improvement areas for PM consideration.

Over the past year Tiffany, alongside our colleague Mike from UX Content, have led the assessment of the navigational information architecture for Mercari's core experience.

They've identified where hierarchy and grouping don't make sense to users and have proposed changes that are scheduled on the product roadmap.



III. Continuous learning

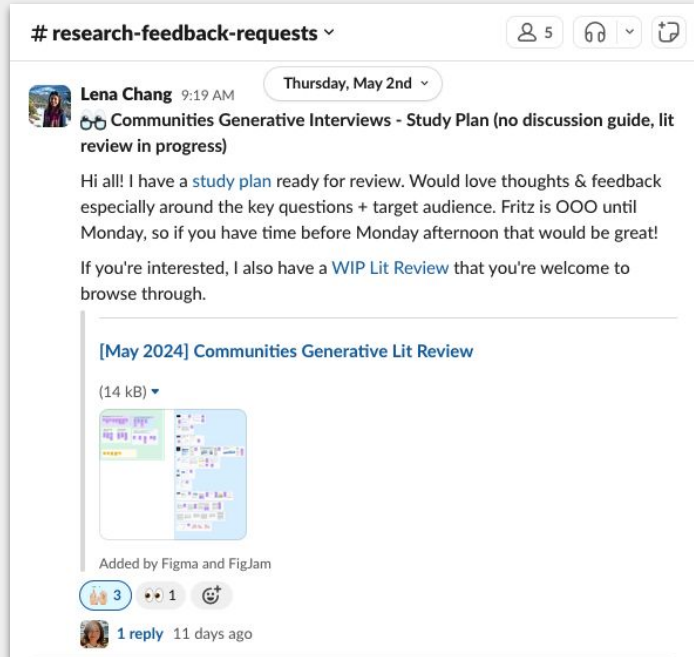
- Peer review is our team super power
- Learning while working full-time

Peer review is our team superpower

Within the research team, we make a point to have multiple reviewers at multiple checkpoints in a study.

We each have different backgrounds in research as well as complementary areas of expertise we are honing. As a result, the feedback we receive on work is thorough, constructive and a learning experience in and of itself.

We've maintain a high bar of excellence by investing in both peer review and revision.



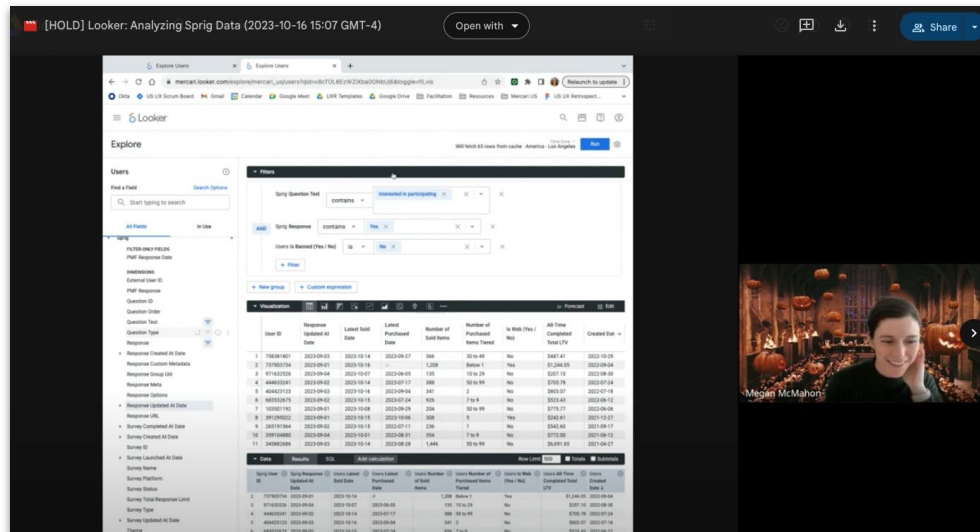
Learning while working full-time

As a team, it's really important to us to stay up-to-date on industry trends and to sharpen our skills over time.

To foster this, we've developed a few systems that make space for group learning and development.

Example 1) Data analytics lessons

Across the board, we want to be more fluent in user behavioral analytics and be able to ask questions of our existing data without much assistance from cross functional teammates. When we learn something new in Looker, we teach it to our research teammates.



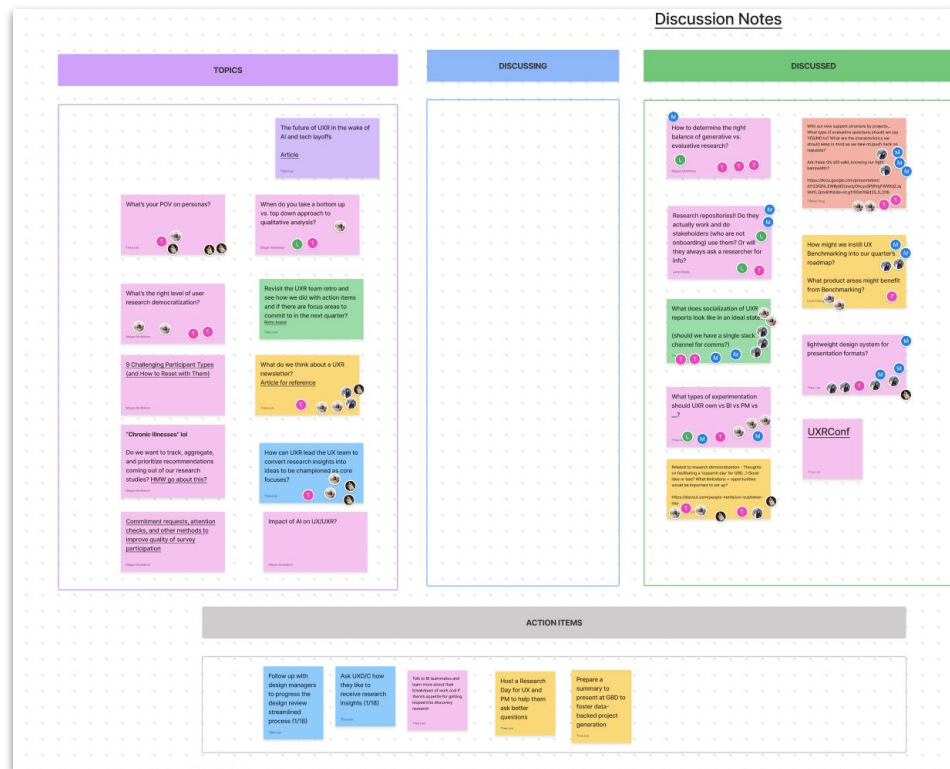
Learning while working full-time

As a team, it's really important to us to stay up-to-date on industry trends and to keep sharpening our skills over time.

To foster this, we've developed a few systems that make space for group learning and development.

Example 2) Research office hours

We've carved an hour every Friday for an optional meeting, where we bring topics related to learning and development to discuss as a group.



Learning while working full-time

As a team, it's really important to us to stay up-to-date on industry trends and to keep sharpening our skills over time.

To foster this, we've developed a few systems that make space for group learning and development.

Example 3) Remote conferences we prioritize

Virtual attendance of conferences has dramatically increased access to professional development content. The conferences on the right are the ones we've made a point to attend. We take notes and share our takeaways and ideas in research team office hours thereafter.



IV. Q&A

Thanks!



Thea Lee

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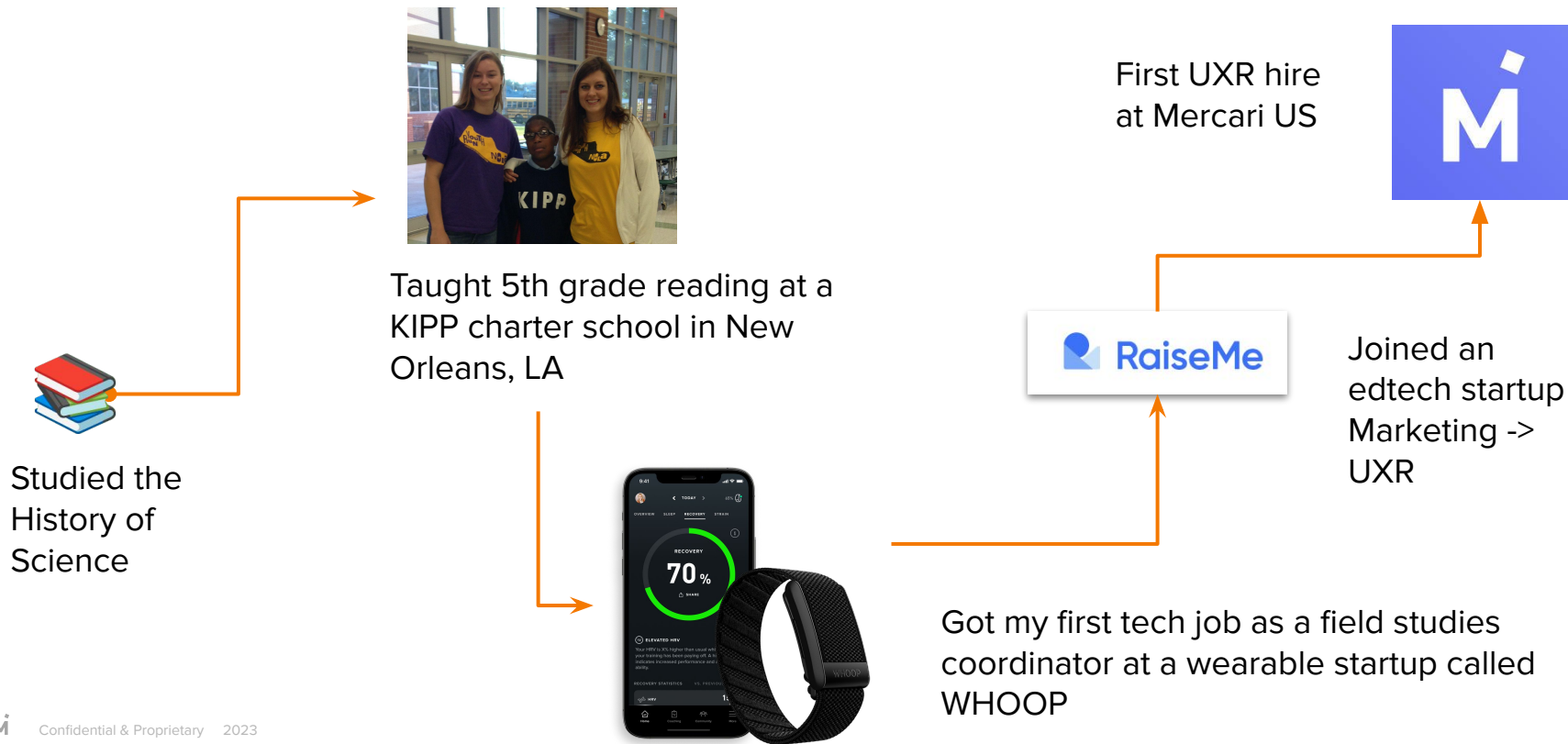
Tiffany Yang

[linkedin.com/in/hatiffanyyang](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hatiffanyyang)

Appendix

I. Our paths into UX Research

Thea's non-traditional path to UX research

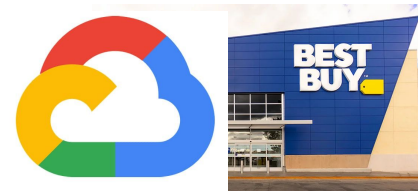


Tiffany's Journey to UXR

Studied Marketing
and worked in
eComm social media
advertising



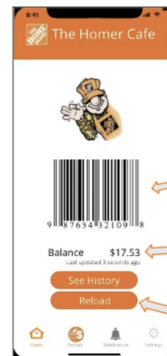
While I was still
working in advertising,
I did my own “stretch
project” with UX
mentors that I
networked with



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Loved web analytics, but
was frustrated how
limiting it was in
understanding reason for
behavior... then learned
about UXR combining
qual + quant!



Digitalized barcode
allows for convenience

Ability to view balance
so users don't have to
“guess” or “risk” it when
walking into the cafe

Ability to reload directly
from bank account into the
digitalized homer card

Transitioned to
UXR in eComm
retail industry,
where my previous
expertise would be
most valuable



Tiffster

2.65K subscribers