UI/UX Design Portfolio Content(ARTICLE):

INTRODUCTION:

As a UX designer, it's crucial to understand the fundamentals of user experience design. This article is the first out of seven of learning UI/UX Design from beginning to advance. It will provide a solid introduction to the principles, techniques, and frameworks of UX design. In this article, I will share some of my personal notes and observations from my learnings; aimed to help make better user experiences.

The article is further divided into a four-week split. Each week covers a specific aspect of the Foundations of User Experience. In order to make my notes more digestible, I have followed the most user-friendly hierarchy as possible.

Explore all my complete article series for learning UI/UX Design:

1. Foundations of User Experience (UX) Design

2. Start the UX Design Process: Empathize, Define, and Ideate

3. Build Wireframes and Low-Fidelity Prototypes

4. Conduct UX Research and Test Early Concepts

5. Create High-Fidelity Designs and Prototypes in Figma

6. Responsive Web Design in Adobe XD

7. Design a User Experience for Social Good & Prepare for Jobs

Week 1: Introducing user experience design

The basics of user experience design

- User experience is how users feel about a product when interacting with it.

- A well-designed product, whether physical or technological — needs to be usable, equitable, enjoyable, and useful.

    A positive user experience creates a connection between users and the product, leading to increased usage and recommendations to others.

- A good user experience also positively impacts the company's reputation and bottom line.

Characteristics of a good user experience

- *Usability* refers to the clarity and ease of use of a product's design and functionality.

- *Equity* means a product's design caters to the needs of diverse users.

- *Enjoyability* refers to a product's ability to connect positively with users.

- *Usefulness* means a product intentionally solves user problems.

The product development life cycle
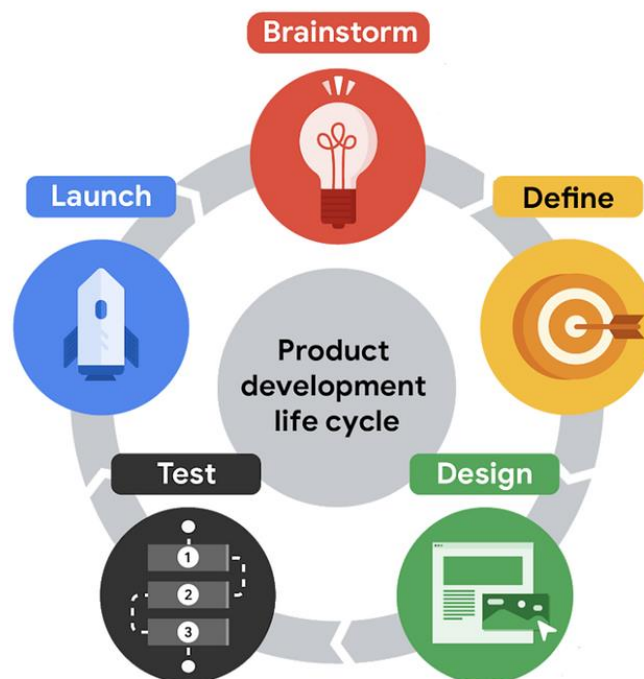
- The product development lifecycle takes an idea to reality and comprises of 5 stages.

- *Brainstorm stage* generates ideas and identifies audience needs. Diversity of the team during this stage is essential.

- *Define stage* focuses on concrete ways the product impacts the user and outlines goals; it involves specifying product features and potential users' problems.

- *Design stage* involves developing ideas and creating assets; it revolves around wireframes and prototypes and ensuring each part fits together intuitively.

- *Test stage* evaluates product design based on user feedback; it involves developing functional prototypes, writing code, and testing with users.

- *Launch stage* shares the finished product with the public and involves monitoring user feedback.

- Opportunity to improve on designs after launch makes the cycle recursive.

Jobs in the field of user experience

- UX design is a rapidly growing field with a projected 10-year growth rate of 15%. As a result, "UX designer" is just one of many job titles within the broader user experience field. Different career paths within user experience include:

- *Interaction designers* focus on designing the experience of a product and how it functions.

- *Visual designers* focus on how a product or technology looks.

- *Motion designers* think about what it feels like for a user to move through a product and how to create smooth transitions.

- *VR/AR designers* create products that provide users with immersive experiences.

- *UX researchers* conduct studies or interviews that examine how people use a product.

- *UX writers* focus on making the language within a product clearer for users.

Roles of various UX designer experiences

- Responsibilities of an Entry-Level UX Designer include: User research, Information Architecture, Wireframing, Prototyping, Visual Design, and Effective communication.

Specialist and Generalist Designers:

Types of companies for UX designers

- *Startups and small businesses:* generalist roles, involvement in multiple parts of the business, tight budgets and few employees, opportunity to learn quickly. They offer close-knit teams, creativity, and impact but fewer mentors and more responsibility.

- *Freelance:* self-employed, marketing services to businesses, picking projects, working with different brands. They offer flexibility, autonomy, experience, and portfolio-building but lack stability and readily available mentors.

- *Advertising agencies:* responsible for developing wireframes and designs for digital products for marketing campaigns, may also do graphic design or writing, part of a team. They offer autonomy, learning, variety, and networking but may not focus on UX design.

- *Design agencies and design studios:* one-stop-shop for design and branding, generalist roles, work with multiple clients, exposure to different industries and unique problems. They offer impact, exposure, networking, and the potential to work with large brands but may lack mentorship and ownership.

- *Big companies:* specialized roles, focus on one project from beginning to end, a great way to learn about specialization within UX design, and an opportunity to learn from other experts. They offer mentorship, growth, specialization, and more precise guidelines but may feel less impactful.

Week 2: Getting to know common terms, tools, and frameworks in UX design

Define the user, end user, and user experience

- The user is any person who uses a product, while the end user is the specific audience a UX designer creates something for.

- UX designers aim to design experiences from the end user's perspective to meet their needs.

  UX designers focus on the end user as the main priority and act as the user's advocate while balancing business needs. Designing a product to appeal to the end user is essential, even if other stakeholders focus on sales or marketing.

User-centred design
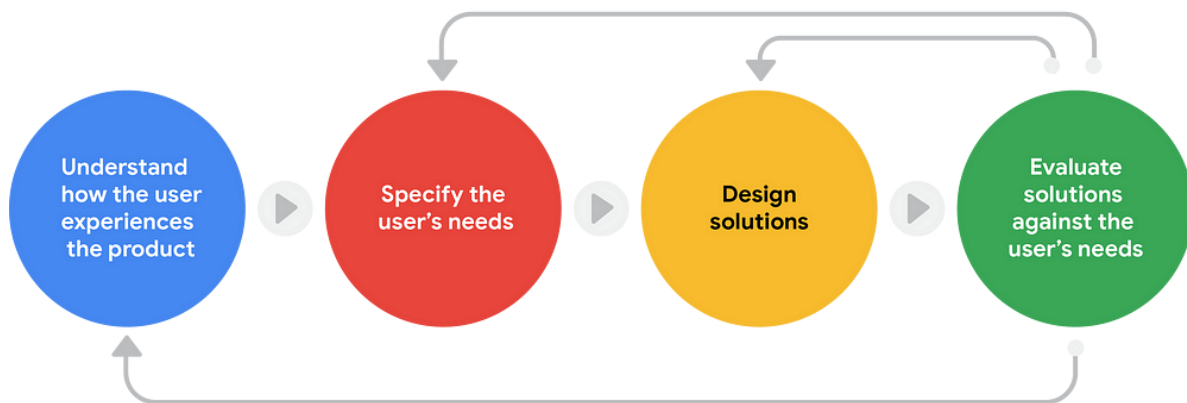
- User-centred design is an essential framework because it puts the user front and centre, ensuring that designs solve real user problems and reduce designer bias.

- The user-centred design process has four steps: understand, specify, design, and evaluate.

- Iteration is critical in user-centred design, i.e. repeating the same processes by building on previous versions and making tweaks.

Key frameworks in UX design

A framework creates the basic structure that focuses on and supports the problem you're trying to solve.

Five Elements process: five layers of creating a user experience: strategy, scope, structure, skeleton, and surface.
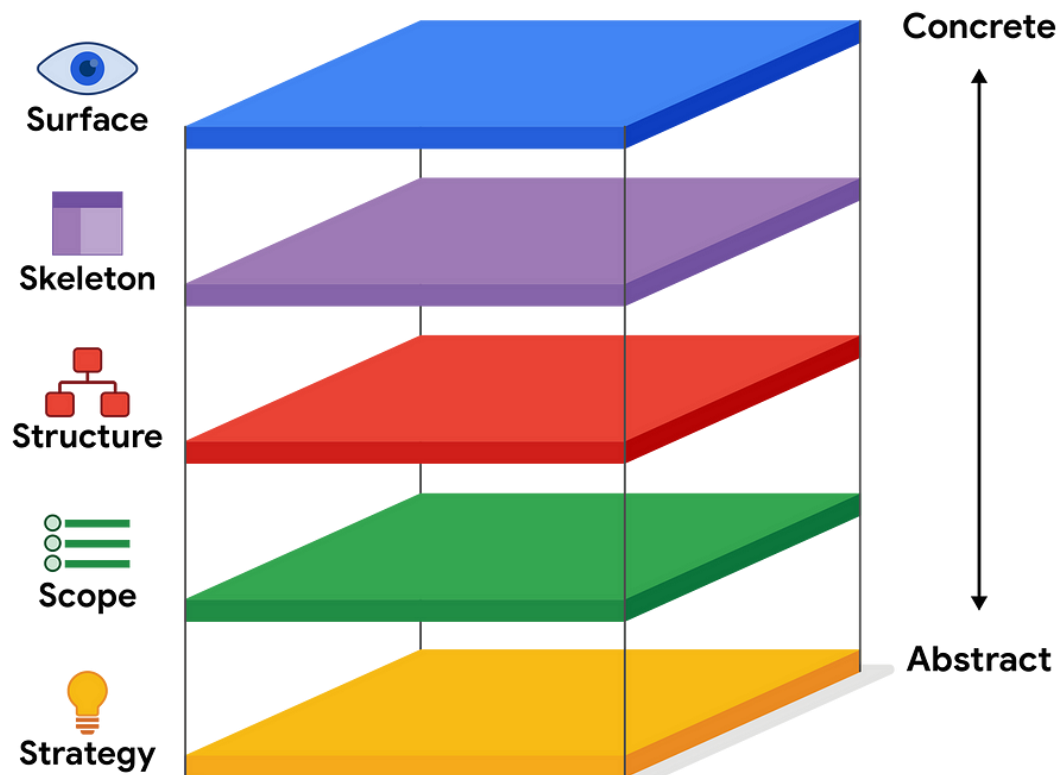
- *Strategy:* Lay a foundation for your design goals. These goals are based on user needs and the business objectives for the product.

- *Scope:* Determine the type of product you're building. At this point, you will consider the kind of features and content you want to include in the product.

- *Structure:* Determine how to organize your design and how you want users to interact with the product.

- *Skeleton:* Just like the layout of our bones shapes our skin, the skeleton layer details your design layout — and like a skeleton, users won't directly see its inner workings.
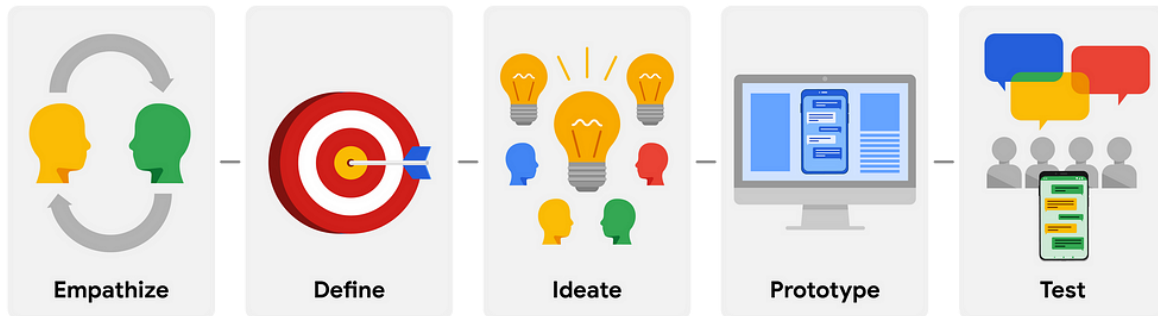
- **Surface:** Represent how the product looks to the user, i.e., the interface that users view and interact with.

**Design   Thinking   process**

It compromises of five actionable steps: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test.

Lean UX

A user-centred design process that embraces Lean and Agile development methodology to reduce waste and build products centred around the users. It focuses on the experience under design and is less focused on deliverables than traditional UX.
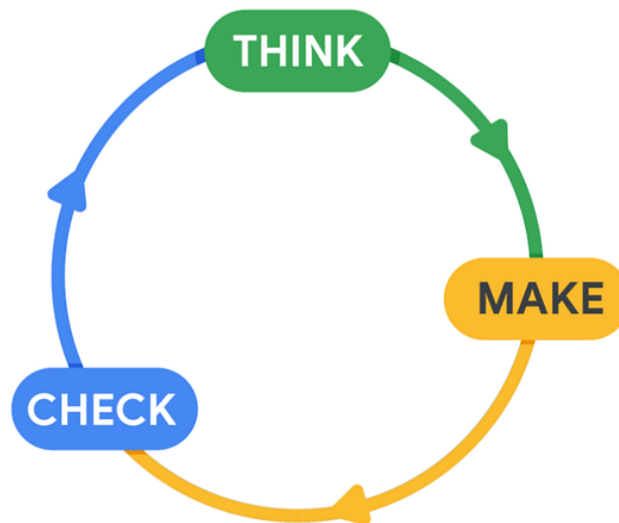

There are six principles you should keep in mind when using the Lean UX process:

1. **Move forward:** Focus only on design elements and features that move the design process toward a particular goal. Don't get distracted by "nice-to-haves."

2. **Stay curious:** Continuously seek feedback to understand why specific design choices work or don't work.

3. ***Test ideas in the real world:*** Lean UX encourages designers to test their ideas — using prototypes, for example — outside of the conference room and with potential users.

4. ***Externalize your ideas:*** Instead of internally debating and analyzing whether or not an idea will work, turn your ideas into something physical, viewable, and testable while they're still fresh in your mind. This way, you'll get feedback on your designs early, when diverse perspectives and feedback are most helpful.

5. ***Reframe deliverables as outcomes:*** Focus on creating usable, enjoyable products that users actually want and need. Always remember that you're designing for your users first and foremost, not for the project stakeholders.

6. ***Embrace radical transparency:*** Feel comfortable being honest with everyone on the team (and expect the same in return) since you will depend on each other's insights. This way, everyone can make informed decisions about how to move forward and avoid wasting time and energy.

Double Diamond process

A process of exploring an issue more widely or deeply (divergent thinking) and then taking focused action (convergent thinking).
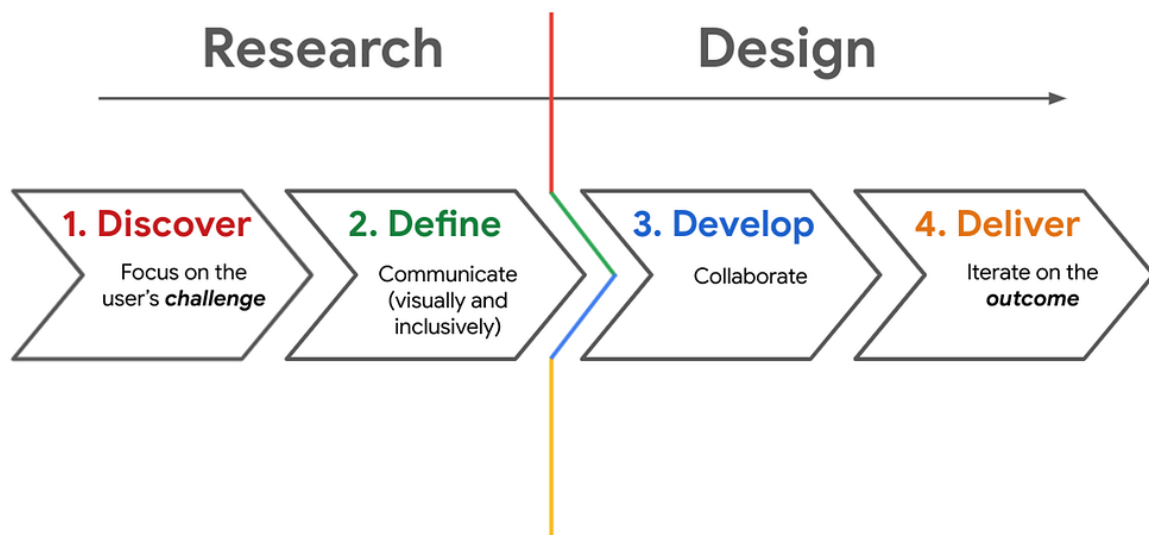
There are four principles that inform the Double Diamond process:

1. ***Focus on the user:*** As is always the case in UX design, the user is the top priority.

2. ***Communicate:*** Communicate visually through imagery and design choices that supplement the text. Ensure that the communication of your design is equitable and accessible.

3. ***Collaborate:*** Encourage creative collaboration and co-creation with your fellow team members.

4. ***Iterate:*** Accept that the design is a work in progress and isn't going to be complete right away. The magic is in the revision. With every iteration, you give the user a new experience.

Design for the Next Billion Users

- User experience also focuses on a critical audience, new internet users, called the Next Billion Users (NBU).

- The goal is to make every user feel like the experience was designed just for them, regardless of their background in technology or circumstances.

- There are four significant issues facing the NBU: cost, connectivity, digital literacy, and literacy in general.

Design for different platforms

- Users behave differently on mobile phones and desktop computers, e.g. mobile users tend to be goal-oriented and focused on completing a single task.

- Designers should consider different platforms (e.g. desktop, mobile) when designing a product.

- Screen size, interaction, content layout, and functionality are key considerations when designing for multiple platforms.

  The four Cs of designing for multiple platforms: consistency, continuity, context, and complimentary.

- ***Consistency*** means following the company's design guidelines across all platforms to maintain brand identity and improve user experience.

- ***Continuity*** ensures users can maintain progress as they move between platforms.

- ***Context*** refers to considering when and how users interact with features on different platforms.

- ***Complimentary*** means each platform adds something new for the user.

The importance of accessibility

- Accessibility (a11Y) is about making things accessible to all people, not just those with an obvious disability.

- More than 1 billion people globally have a disability, representing 13% of the global population.

  Inclusive product features designed for people with disabilities can reach a wider audience and make a better experience for everyone; as a result, designing for accessibility is not an obstacle but a way to reach as many users as possible.

Design for accessibility

- The three user-focused design approaches are universal, inclusive, and equity-focused.

- *Universal design:* one-size-fits-all approach, but not practical for everyone.

- *Inclusive design:* solving for one user type, but benefits can extend to other users, including traditionally excluded populations in the process.

- *Equity-focused design:* focuses on designing for historically underrepresented or ignored groups and aims to achieve fair outcomes by providing different levels of opportunity and support. The goal is to uplift excluded groups and make design accessible to all users.

The importance of equity-focused design

- Equity-focused design involves ensuring a product is accessible and fair to all genders, races, and abilities and considering underrepresented and excluded groups.

- Examples include carefully considering content wording to avoid bias, testing with diverse users, and representing diverse people through icons, illustrations, and photographs.

Week 3: Joining design sprints

Introduction to design sprints

- Design sprints are a time-bound process with five phases: understand, ideate, decide, prototype, and test. They are used to combat design challenges collaboratively.

- Design sprints save time, prioritize the user, and allow for testing and customer feedback before making expensive decisions.

- Before launching into a design sprint, review the design challenge and ask if there are many potential solutions, if cross-functional teams need to weigh in, and if the scope is broad enough for a sprint.

Five phases of design sprints

- *Understand phase:* involves learning about the design challenge and putting the user first.

- *Ideate phase:* generating ideas, planning for user testing and sketching potential solutions.

- *Decide phase:* the team discusses and chooses the most viable solution.

- *Prototype phase:* involves building a realistic prototype of the chosen solution.

- *Test phase:* the prototype is tested with actual users to gain critical feedback.

Benefits of design sprints

- Design sprints allow for distraction-free collaboration, aimed to focus solely on a design challenge for five work days.

- They lower the risk of an unsuccessful market debut by getting feedback from real users and making critical adjustments before launch.

- Design sprints are versatile and can be scheduled anytime during a project.

How to plan design sprint meetings

- User research is the first step in any sprint planning process to solve user problems.

- Schedule short talks with colleagues or industry experts to clarify the problem the sprint is trying to solve.

- Find a space and gather the necessary supplies to host a meeting.

- Establish rules of the sprint in advance to set the tone, get everyone on the same page, and help the team stay focused.

- Plan introductions, including icebreakers that are relevant to the sprint.

- Document the design sprint by taking pictures, collecting sticky notes, and jotting down ideas for post-sprint planning.

Creating a design sprint brief

- A design sprint brief is a document that outlines the objectives, deliverables, logistics, resources, project overview, and schedule of a sprint.

- The design challenge introduces the team to the sprint objectives.

- Key deliverables are identified, such as creating a complete prototype with the feature update.

- Logistics include the location, date, attendees, sprint leader, approvers, and resources needed for the sprint.

- The project overview explains the current status of the project, any roadblocks, early wins, and the estimated launch plan.

- The sprint schedule outlines the hour-by-hour activities of the five-day sprint, including break times.

Design sprint retrospectives

- Retrospective meetings are a collaborative critique of a team's design sprint and should be done immediately after the sprint ends.

- The goal of a retrospective is to answer "What went well?" and "What can be improved?"

- The person who led the sprint guides the conversation, and someone takes notes.

- Retrospectives empower the team to improve and are not meant to shame anyone. They can help teams work better together, communicate better with clients, and identify areas for growth.

Common retrospective questions

- Hold a retrospective after every design sprint to learn from the experience and improve for the next sprint.

- Start the retrospective by discussing what went well and analyzing team successes. Acknowledge strong team member performances and celebrate successes to increase cohesion.

- Shift to discussing areas for improvement and encourage everyone to participate, possibly using anonymous sticky notes to eliminate concerns about causing offence.

- Consider each phase of the design sprint to structure feedback and examine the final product to identify ways to end up with a better solution.

  Speak up and share suggestions for improvement; the only bad suggestion is the one not shared.

Week 4: Integrating research into the design process

UX design portfolios

- Portfolios are a collection of work demonstrating skills in a particular field, such as UX design. They help showcase examples of work to hiring managers.

- Creating a well-designed website to display a portfolio is essential, as it demonstrates an understanding of UX design principles and helps grab the user's attention.

- A good portfolio should tell a story and help the user understand the designer's skills and capabilities.

Best practices for UX design portfolios

- A personal brand is essential to establish.

- Storytelling is vital to engage the audience.

- Minimal text should be used to describe work.

- Navigation should be simple and intuitive.

- Customize the website to align with your brand.

- Feature case studies in the portfolio.

- Make sure the website is responsive and tested.

  Always remmebere that there is no right way to build a portfolio.

Explore personal brands

- A personal brand is a way in which your personality, skills, and values intersect with your public persona as a designer.

- A solid and consistent personal brand can help you stand out from the crowd and match with companies that share your values.

- Personal branding helps to communicate authenticity and build trust among people in the design community.

Best practices to develop an online presence

- A personal statement is a one- or two-sentence phrase that describes what you do and what you stand for, and should highlight what makes your work unique, memorable, and catchy.

- Repeat words that you use to describe yourself to reinforce the key elements of your brand.

- Keep colour scheme, logo, font, and other design elements consistent across platforms.

- Adding your resume, social media links, and contact information to your portfolio website can make it easier for recruiters to find you and view your work.

Get involved in UX design communities

- LinkedIn is an excellent platform for networking and job searching, and Twitter is useful for showcasing your personality and interests.

- Dribbble is a community for designers to share work, get feedback, and find jobs. It's a great place to follow popular designers and teams, start conversations with other designers, and find job opportunities.

- Behance is similar to Dribbble and also has a job board with full-time jobs, freelance roles, and internships, and designers can live stream their work.

- Medium has a vibrant UX design community, specifically at UX Collective. It focuses on long-form writing about UX design, where designers can read articles from industry leaders and learn about industry trends.

Practice Networking and find a mentor

- Networking is vital for developing professional contacts and learning more about the UX design industry.

- Joining a professional organization can help expand your network and provide opportunities to connect with others in a more relaxed setting.

- Networking can help you find a mentor who can provide advice and guidance on your career, such as finding your first UX design job or getting feedback on your portfolio.

- Tips for reaching out to professionals online include having a complete profile, introducing yourself with a personalized message, keeping it short, not asking for a job immediately, being clear about what you want, and saying thank you.

- Networking is about learning, not being perfect.

  It's important to not just focus on what you can get from networking, but what you can give back to the community.

Overcome impostor syndrome

- Impostor syndrome is the belief that you're unskilled or inadequate at your job, despite your successes.

- Symptoms of impostor syndrome might include a lack of self-confidence, feeling like a fraud, constant comparison to other people, self-doubt, negative self-talk, and irrational fears of the future.

- To manage imposter syndrome, acknowledge your thoughts, own your accomplishments, do a realistic evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses, ask for advice, wear something that makes you feel confident, help someone else, act confidently, go with a friend, get to know people, and remember that you're not alone.

Conclusion

This article is an excellent starting point for anyone interested in pursuing a career in UX design and learning the foundations of User Experience (UX) Design. This article covers a diverse list of topics, including popular UX frameworks, job opportunities in UX, and designing for accessibility and inclusivity. From understanding user needs and behaviors to designing intuitive interfaces, the article provides a solid foundation for anyone looking to develop their skills in this ever-changing field. By following the enlisted strategies, UX designers can create user experiences that are both functional and enjoyable.

USER EXPERIECE   **UX DESIGN**   **DESIGN SPRINT**   **UX FRAMEWORK**

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