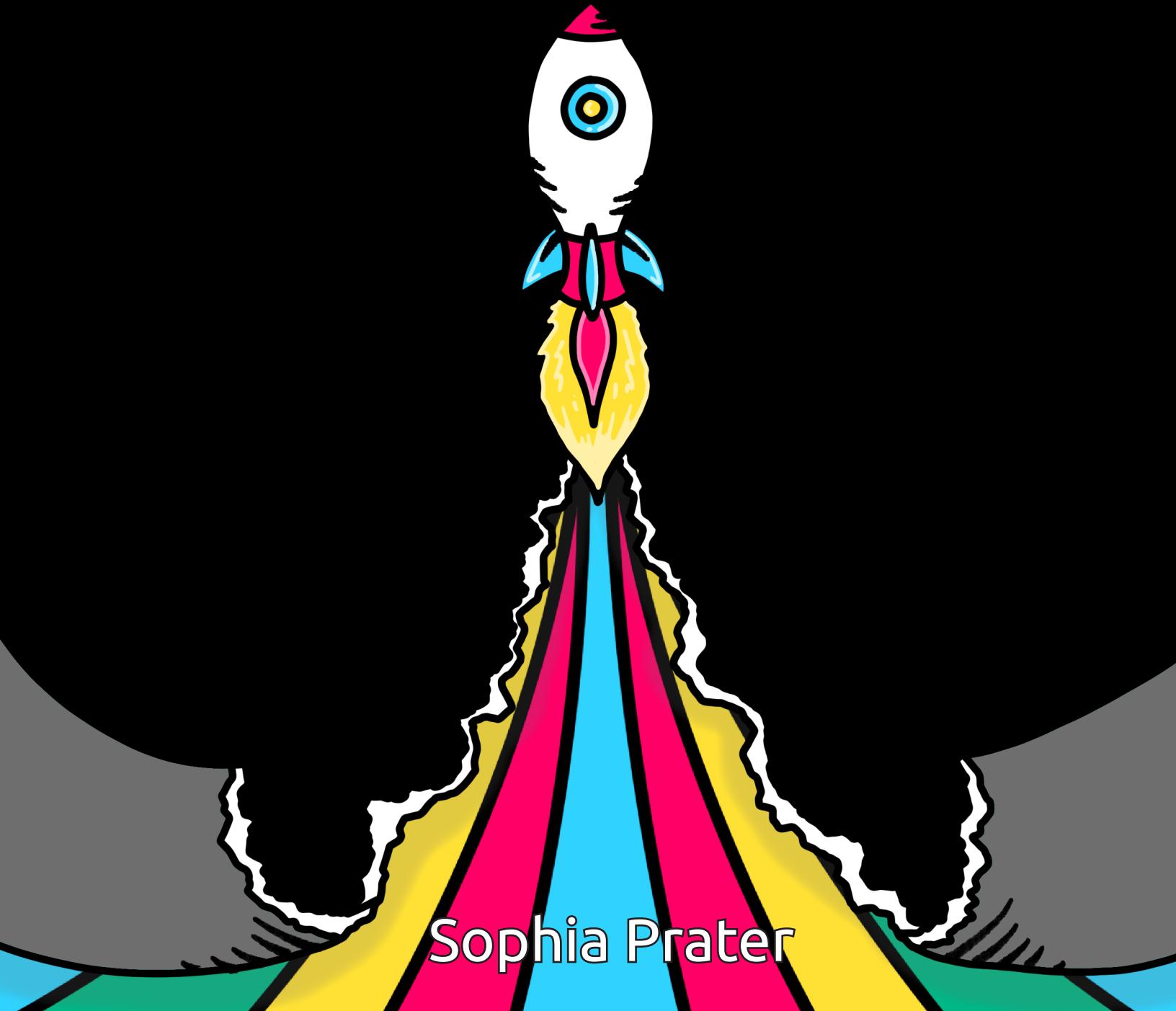


The OOUX LAUNCH GUIDE

A momentum-building orientation to the complexity-wrangling
magic of Object-Oriented UX and the ORCA Process



Sophia Prater

The OOUX LAUNCH GUIDE



Welcome to the wonderful world of OOUX!

The Object-Oriented UX movement (and yes, it's a movement now) emerged from a ton of frustration.

Frustration born from being put into a position where I had to design incredibly complex systems with little time, shoddy research, and fuzzy processes. I wasn't set up to understand what the hell I was actually designing before designing it. In other words, I often felt set up to fail.

OOUX can't give you more time, but it can make the time you have more effective.

It can help you sell more UX research and make better use of the resources you do have.

In this five-part miniseries, I'm going to tell you the story of how I completely transformed the way I practice UX and help you transform your UX, too!

-Sophia //

P.S. If you know someone who needs to be part of the world of Object-Oriented UX, please feel free to share this guide with them. Print it out, drop it in the break room. And if this was shared with you and you want more, [subscribe to the newsletter](#). Welcome!

ouux.com/newsletter



Let's jump in!

Part 1: Designing in the dark

My desperate journey toward OOUX and how I found (and grew!) the light at the end of the tunnel

5

Part 2: The engineering principle that changed everything about how I do UX 15

How I use the heaviest lifter of cognitive load I've found! (Warning: you won't be able to unsee what I'm about to show you.)

Part 3: My #1 hack to reduce rework and tackle complexity early 30

The birth of the ORCA process, plus an intro guide to ORCA's first activity, Noun Foraging!

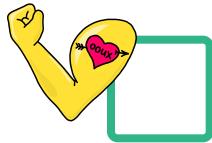
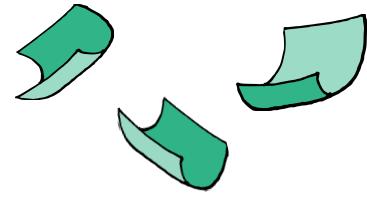
Part 4: Object Mapping FTW 40

Create a collaborative X-ray of your UX

Part 5: I made a floodlight. And I want to share it with you. 50

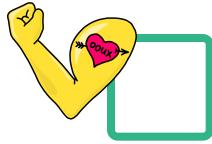
How OOUX changed my life and how it can change yours, too!

OOUX Launch Guide: Mission Checklist (The CTAs!)



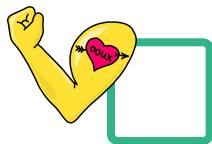
MISSION #1: Print this checklist (2 mins)

Post it on your fridge, mirror, or desk. No printer? Find one? Or...save it to your desktop or a tablet where you can mark your progress digitally.



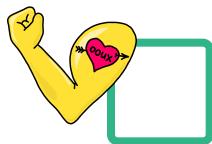
MISSION #2: Listen to Episode 001 of the OOUX Podcast (1 hour)

This is an updated take on my first introductory OOUX article from 2015.
ooux.com/resources/episode001



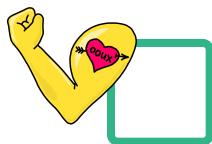
MISSION #3: Join OOUX Happy Hour Meetup group (1 min)

Let's meet in person! There are *real* people behind OOUX — come meet some!
meetup.com/objectorientedux/



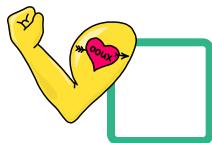
MISSION #4: Read the OOUXer Manifesto (5 mins)

Does this sound like what you are aspiring to? If so, you are in the right place.
ooux.com/manifesto



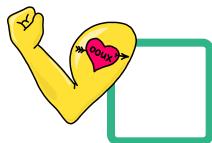
MISSION #5: Take the 4 Mistakes Mini-Workshop (2 hours)

Learn about all the other unintuitive objects
ooux.com/product/4mistakes



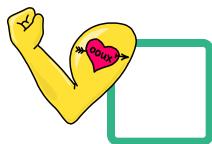
MISSION #6: Do a Shapeshifter Audit (1+ hours)

Do it on your current or one of your past projects. Can you find some examples of unneeded inconsistency? Bonus: tweet screenshots to [@sophiavux](https://twitter.com/@sophiavux)



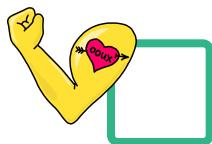
MISSION #7: Go deep on asking good questions (20 mins)

This is one of the most important UX skills — and OOUX helps.
alistapart.com/article/how-to-sell-ux-research/



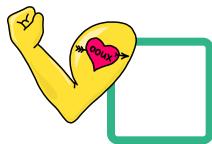
MISSION #8: Listen to Episode 002 of the OOUX Podcast (90 mins)

Listen *and* work along. You'll need a pen and paper for this audio workshop.
ooux.com/resources/episode002



MISSION #9: Try OOUX for yourself (2-3 hours)

Using the Object Mapping Quick start guide, try out the process on a simple project. ooux.com/objectmappingquickstart



MISSION #10: Consider investing in deeper training.

There is so much more to OOUX and the ORCA process. And you can learn it all. Visit ooux.com/testimonials and ooux.com/training

Part 1: Designing in the dark

My desperate journey toward OOUX and how I found (and grew!) the light at the end of the tunnel



In this five-part Launch Guide, I'm going to tell you the story of how I completely transformed the way I practice UX and help you transform *your* UX, too!

But don't worry. I'm not going to tell you to scrap everything you are already doing. OOUX is not a new process, but a new piece to add to your existing process — a new piece that will make everything else easier, more effective, and even more fun.

Hi, I'm Sophia! I'm the chief evangelist of Object-Oriented UX, a methodology I started popularizing in 2013. I've brought OOUX to Adobe, Atlassian, Google, Shopify, Hubspot, Delta Airlines, Autodesk, Macy's, Mastercard, Credit Karma, CNN.com, and more. My [Monday newsletter](#) will keep you updated on all the latest OOUX resources, musings, and developments to our methodologies. In the meantime, you're here to kickstart your OOUX knowledge and practice, right?

I didn't coin "object-oriented" or "user experience" (duh!), but as far as I know, I was the first to mash-up those exact two terms back in 2015 when I was a few years into my UX career.

So, what is OOUX? OOUX is a philosophy of digital product design that respects the fact that people think in objects and thus, makes sure the objects in the systems we design are super-clear, connected, and recognizable. (We'll get into more detail later on.)

Each part of this Launch Guide will charge you with a few missions: further reading, introductory podcasts, exercises, that kind of thing. Each part deserves about one or two hours of your time — so set a pace that works for your schedule.

Maybe you take on one part a week. Maybe you can do one part Monday-thru-Friday for a week of OOUX Launch Guide funtimes. Or, perhaps you binge the whole guide in a weekend. 🐈🐱

Whatever your cadence, try and keep up the momentum. If you read actively and actually *do* the missions, I promise you'll start experiencing the value of OOUX by the end of the guide. Probably even sooner.

Remember: just by being here, you are the breathing rarefied air of advanced UX — for every hour you put into learning OOUX, you'll get hundreds, if not thousands, of hours back in saved time (and headaches) over the course of your career.

Yeah, I say that confidently. Stick with it. Make it a priority. TIME BLOCK IT.



MISSION #1: Print Mission Checklist

2 mins

The first mission is easy! We all love a good checklist, so please feel free to print out this Launch Guide Checklist to keep you on track! No printer? Save it to your computer and check off these missions digitally.

Print the Launch Guide Mission Checklist

ooux.com/launchguidechecklist

Ok, now that you have your checklist ready to go, grab a coffee and a comfy spot — let's get started. It's time for some time travel. I need to take you waaaaay back, to a time before OOUX was even a glimmer in my eye.



How I got into UX during a recession — a LUCKY break

In 2008, as a recent high-honors graduate from Georgia Tech 🎓, I was unemployed and living in my parent's basement like a cliche of failure 😞. I was applying for industrial design jobs to match my degree and racking up rejections into the *triple* digits.

Months into my recession-era job hunt, I resigned myself to working at Outback Steakhouse for life, when my long-distance best friend Lucky (yup, that's her name) called me up.

"Hey, we are all going to Mike's graduation party this weekend and we have an extra seat in the car. We have to drive through Chattanooga, so if you're free, we can pick you up!"

Mike took me to his senior prom years before...

I was single...

I canceled my shifts.

At the party, I met Mike's sister, a recruiter for Accenture. Recruiters can smell ambitious unemployed people from a mile away, and she pulled me in with her tractor beam. After a few minutes of chatting, she said, "I think I have the perfect role for you!"

I *hope* I hid my rolling eyes. Yeah, right. I'd already applied to *Every. Single. Job.*

When I returned to my basement lair in Chattanooga, I booted up my parents' ancient candy-blue iMac. Inside my email lay a job description for a "User Experience (UE) Analyst" at Accenture. (Yes, for a hot minute there, some companies were using the term *UE*).

As I read the role and responsibilities, excitement mounted. What I read had me sold! I loved industrial design, but during my internship with Electrolux (a home appliance manufacturer), I was more concerned with how pizza boxes would fit into the refrigerator than modeling sexy curves on the exterior. This "UE" stuff sounded *so* right for me.

So, I applied and... I scored the job!

Mike and I remained just-friends, but his sister changed the course of my life. That call from Lucky was a lucky twist that set me on a new career path.

Life as a UE Analyst in the Augths

After a few short weeks of “consultant training,” I hopped on a Pittsburgh-bound plane to meet up with my first client: Blue Cross Blue Shield.

The project? A redesign of insurance software used by account execs for configuring custom insurance packages for their large enterprise clients.

Whaaaaaaa??? It’s ok, I was confused, too. I barely understood my own health insurance, much less B2B enterprise insurance. 😅

To orient me to the project, the exiting UE designer handed off a stack of outdated Axure wireframes and a folder of requirements spreadsheets that I was supposed to “*anaaaaalyze*.“ The material spanned the spectrum from vague to comically precise. I read over high-level use cases (“user can submit edited insurance package for review”*) and super-detailed business requirements rife with foreign business jargon and UI specifications (“user must select approved AES codes from dropdown”*).

**Not exact quotes from the business requirements docs, but you get the idea.*

My job was to “clean up” the wireframes and add a few other pages to fill in some edge cases — edge cases with rules I didn’t fully understand. This design would serve a very specific business environment, and that business environment was still fuzzy to me.

I was being asked to design in the dark — and fast. The wireframe review of my new screens was set for *Friday*. Does this sound even slightly familiar? Having to design something you barely understand?

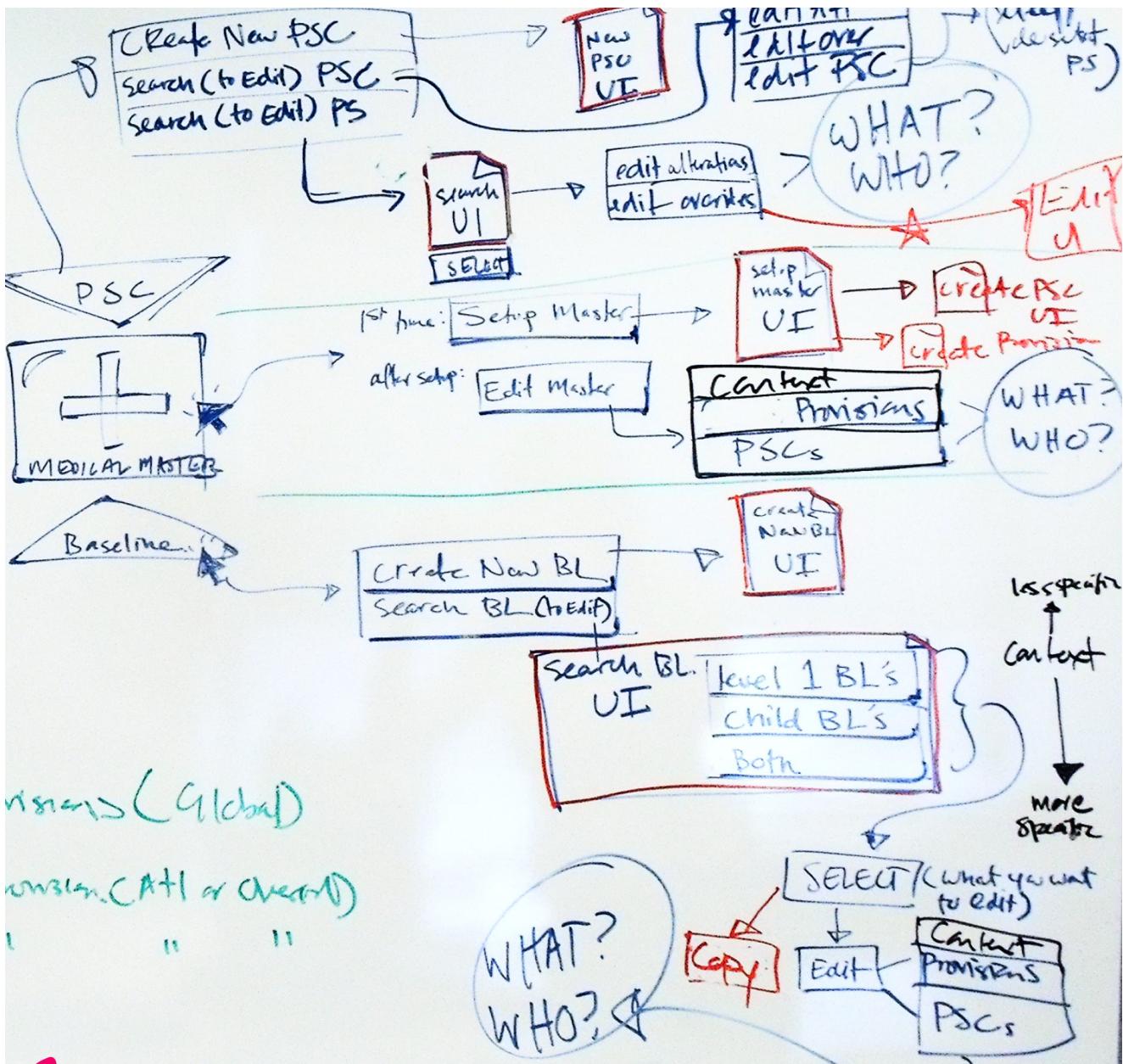
Despite having to design in the dark, there were some bright moments. During one meeting in particular, the cloud of frustration temporarily lifted. I saw a glimpse of what this kind of work *could* be...

I was in a small room, crowded with about five client-side team members, and I had the whiteboard marker. The team was discussing the product while I mostly listened and translated their perspectives into diagrams. I asked follow-up questions and gently exposed misalignments within the team.

As I reflected back to them what I was hearing, a shared understanding of the system's complexity coalesced, *and we all felt it*. A new energy and optimism filled the air. The clients were nodding their heads vigorously and taking pictures of the whiteboard. The pieces of a potential solution scooted into place.

I hadn't actually designed any *screens*, I had only organized everyone's thoughts and knowledge. Even so, at that moment, I felt like a star. 🎉





After significant flash-drive archeology, I uncovered that old whiteboard diagram from 2009. It's amazing to look back on that pivotal point in my career and reflect on the actual artifact! I can see so many seeds of OOUX in this sketch. Here, I am still sketching bits of UI, but I can see the nascent system designer struggling to find her way! Ah, if only I'd had OOUX back then!

Unfortunately, during my first four years (and first four jobs) as a UX designer, those moments of collaborative flow and clarity were few and far between.

In fact, I came home crying A LOT.

I was regularly thwarted with changes to scope and lack of alignment. I would often find myself moving UI around without a full understanding of business rules. Over and over I had to design in the dark. It felt like all I had was a dim, finicky flashlight that never seemed to give me the big picture.

I searched for a better way in books, articles, and in job after job. After about a year with any given employer, I'd get fed up and jump ship because it was always more of the same: rushing into wireframes without research, information architecture, or UX strategy. 😞

As the years rolled on, the frustration continued to build. I wasn't doing the kind of transformational work I knew I was capable of doing. And as much as I wanted to blame stakeholders, clients, executives, project managers, or even other designers, I was mostly mad at myself.

If I was going to be happy in this industry, I needed to have a reliable floodlight instead of that flickering flashlight.

I wanted a repeatable process to synthesize a chaotic pile of spotty research, jargon-y business requirements, and conflicting priorities.

I wanted a better way to collaborate with the business and developers to help us share a clear picture of the strategy, scope, and structure ([hat tip to Jesse James Garrett](#)).

As fellow OOUXer Andrea Neuhoff says, “I was trying to put the puzzle together with all the puzzle pieces face down. Or, worse, like each person on the team was putting together a different puzzle.”

I ached for better communication and understanding on the team.

I hated the avoidable rework caused by last minute changes and new requirements popping up out of nowhere.

I thought that UX was going to be fun. And, many days, it was decidedly not. 😞

Does this resonate with you?

I FEEL YOU.



If you are experiencing something similar, I promise...

There is a way out of the anxiety, stress, and exasperation. There's a way to flip the puzzle pieces right-side up.

In 2012, things *slowly* started to change for me when some impactful principles emerged:

- Content before layout
- Content organized into real-world things
- A simple system as a foundation for a complex system
- Reusable parts

I began to learn more about databases and human psychology — that not only developers, *but all humans* think in objects. I realized that many principles of Object-Oriented Programming (reuse, encapsulation, inheritance, relationships defined by cardinality, and abstraction) could help UX designers. I read books like *Content Everywhere*, *Understanding Context*, and *Designing Object-Oriented User Interfaces*.

As I started to apply these new things I was learning, I began to see the results I always wanted: less guesswork, more confidence. Less surface work, more structural work. Less headache, more flow.

In 2014, I invented a sticky-noting diagram method that I call an Object Map, and I've been refining the art of object mapping ever since. I invented a few companion artifacts like the Call-to-Action Matrix and the Navigation Flow (an OOUXy site map).. Once I pulled all these activities and principles together, I saw that I had constructed an interactive, object-oriented architecting process. I named it ORCA (referring to objects, relationships, calls-to-action, and attributes).

Long story short — I've become obsessed with creating tools and methods to help UX designers like you shed light on complexity and do more meaningful work.

No more designing in the dark. I'd made the floodlight I was so desperate for.

And you can have it, too.



MISSION #2: Listen to Podcast Episode 001

1 hour

Now that you have some background on where OOUX came from (and where I came from!), I want you to get the basics of OOUX under your belt. The best way to do this is to listen to episode 001 of the OOUX Podcast. That's your second mission.

This is actually a revisit of my original OOUX article published in [A List Apart in 2015](#) — the article that put OOUX on the map. Shout out to Sara Wachter-Boettcher who edited that original article, an article that echoed so much of what she wrote in 2012 in [Content Everywhere](#) (this is an affiliate link 🙏) — a book I still recommend today!

Listen to Episode 001 of The Object-Oriented UX Podcast

ooux.com/resources/episode001



MISSION #3: Join OOUX Happy Hour

1 min

Come brush shoulders with your OOUX community at OOUX Happy Hour, a monthly-ish virtual meetup where OOUXers (and OOUX-curious folks) get together to listen to a speaker, discuss OOUX-y topics, and get to know each other.

Join the OOUX Happy Hour Meetup

meetup.com/objectorientedux/

It's so great to have you as part of this community and movement — a movement toward more strategic UX, more *serious* UX — executed with collaborative, fun, and game-like techniques. Here's what other OOUXers say about how OOUX helps shed light on complexity.

"OOUX is like having a superpower for simplification. Before, when dealing with complex systems and problems, I felt like there was nowhere to start and no way to wrangle it all together. Now I have a plan."



Nat Sweeney

Sr. Director of Global Web UX and Certified OOUXer

"OOUX has given me a very valuable framework for making sense of any design project and the confidence to take others (engineers, product managers, designers, SEMs, Stakeholders) along on the journey. It truly feels like the cloud of confusion with any new projects has been lifted!"



Giuseppe Vittiglio

Director of Product Design @ Loeb.nyc and Certified OOUX Strategist

"When people around me were circling in confusion, this course [OOUX] gave me a great understanding of how to step through complexity and ask the right questions at the right time. This is the most valuable tool in my UX toolkit!"



Jennifer Keller

Senior Product Designer at Kroger and Certified OOUXer

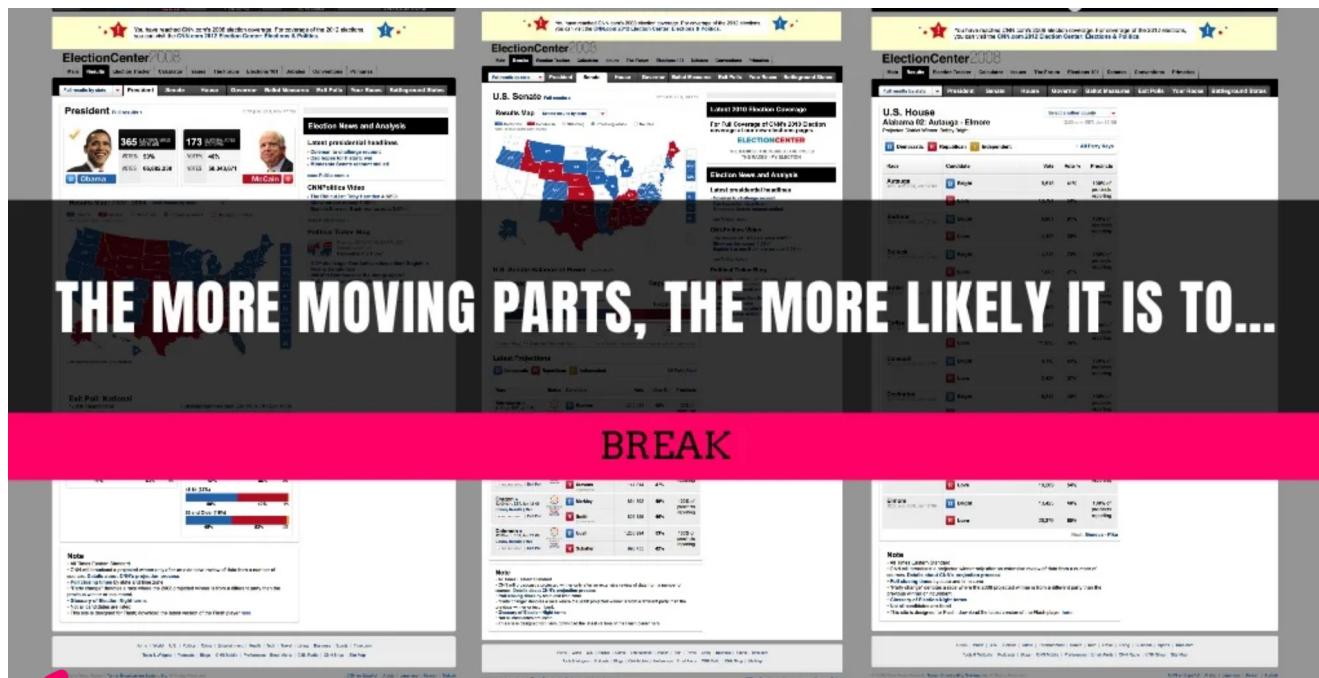
In the next part of this guide, I'm going to dig deep into the number one UX mistake that OOUX will help you fix — fast. See you there!

Part 2: The engineering principle that changed everything about how I do UX

How I use the heaviest lifter of cognitive load I've found! (Warning: you won't be able to unsee what I'm about to show you.)

My granddad graduated from college in the 1950s with the first class of Georgia Tech Chemical-Nuclear Engineers. A razor-smart guy and a systems-thinker (thermodynamics was his specialty), he often called up a popular engineering maxim:

"The more moving parts, the more likely it is to break."



⟳ A slide from an early OOUX presentation. I've been repeating this mantra to myself and audiences for a hot minute.

I probably heard “The more moving parts, the more likely it is to break” 100s of times as a kid, so this truth wedged deep in my brain. And there it lay dormant for over a decade, until intense job pressure dislodged this pearl of wisdom right when I needed it most.

That hot Atlanta summer of 2012, I was working on the responsive election results experience for CNN.com, and I was *stressed out*. I was new to responsive design (along with everyone else on the team). A fast-approaching and non-negotiable November 6th deadline loomed large. To top it off, presidential election nights historically generated the *most* page views (and ad dollars) for CNN.com in any four-year cycle. I did *not* want to mess this up. 😬 I sensed this project was the opportunity of a lifetime — and hindsight has proven that instinct right.

I’ve written extensively about this formative experience — in my first [A List Apart article](#) and in a detailed [case study](#) — but right now I want to focus on the most important lesson I learned back when President Obama geared up for a second term. Because even though it materialized in 2012, it took me 3 years to fully incorporate this lesson into my work.

For the election results project, my managers tasked me with the UX design of a complex data visualization that would squeeze and stretch to fit smartphones, tablets, and desktop monitors. I knew I *had* to design the most simple system possible. This system could not have any more moving parts than was absolutely necessary. These parts needed to be reusable. *They needed to be interchangeable.*

Before this project, I would design one screen, then the next screen, linking those screens together into user flows. Often one screen would go into development as I worked on other screens in the system. Before responsive design, I’d been able to get away with some pretty myopic thinking within a disjointed “feature factory” process. *But if I wanted an elegant system free of extraneous complexity, I could no longer think page-by-page.*

Why not, you ask?

Imagine you design Component A to represent Thing A within Screen X.

Now you move onto Screen Y. Thing A also shows up on Screen Y, but Component A doesn’t quite work for Screen Y. In fact, you aren’t even thinking about Component A.

You just go forward and design Component B to represent Thing A in this new context.

You now have two components that represent Thing A, that both need visual design, responsifying, development, quality assurance, testing, and maintenance. And because the user will have to deal with two visual representations of the Thing A, they have to work a little harder. Everybody does.

Maybe you can go back to Screen X to rectify the inconsistency, but perhaps it's already in development. So you make a note to go back and align these two components later, introducing design debt.

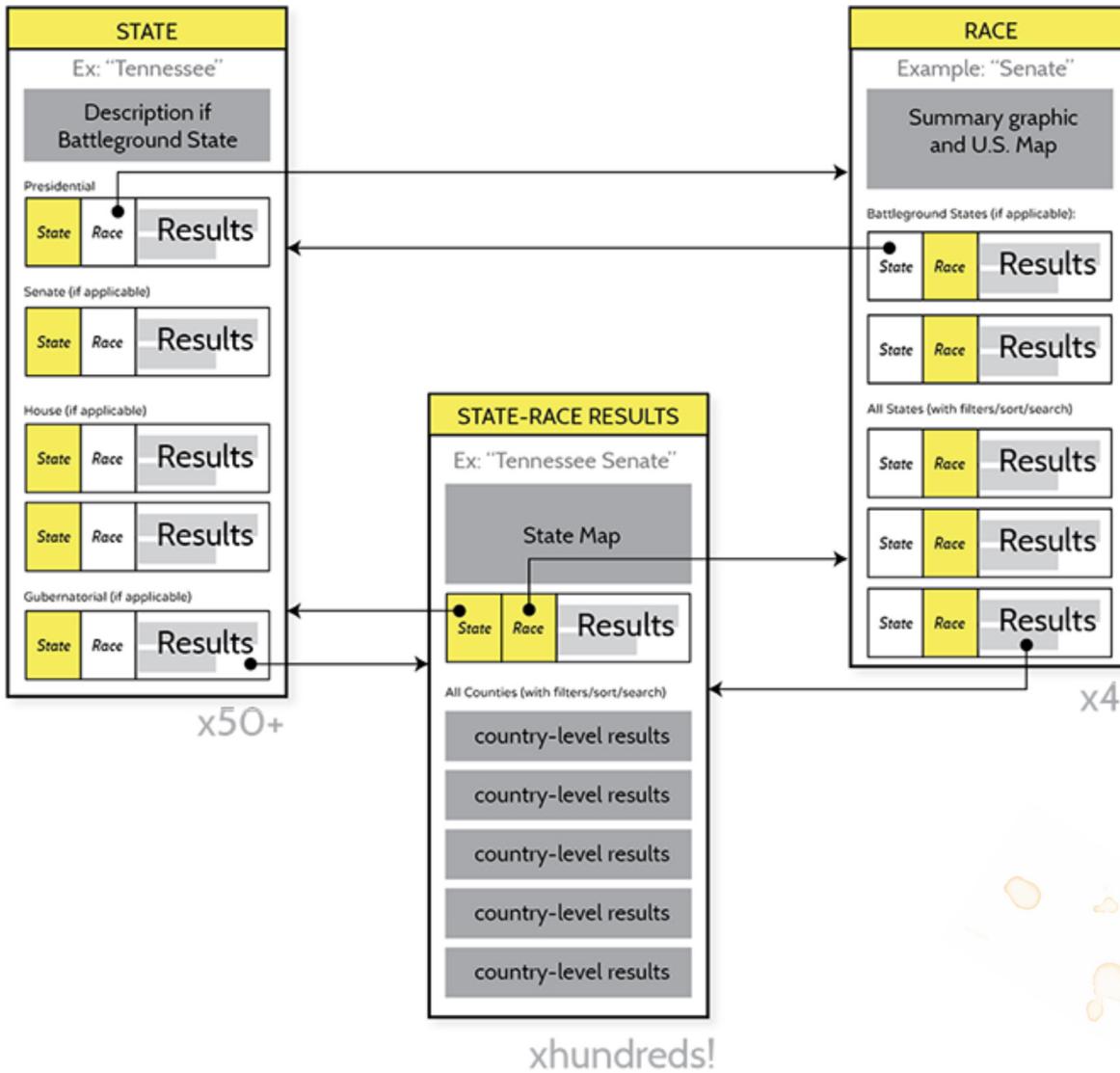
The crucible of this high-stakes project at CNN forced me to think differently, to think *holistically*. What if I designed a single Component A for Thing A that works beautifully in both Screen X and Screen Y? Surely that would at least avoid that snowball of extra effort and frustration, right?

With my granddad's voice in my head, I set out to design my first Object-Oriented UX (although at the time I was calling it "modular design"). I started by identifying the main things I needed to represent in this system:

- STATES (California, Georgia, Ohio, etc)
- RACE TYPES (Presidential, Governor, Senate, House of Representatives)
- STATE-RACE RESULTS (Georgia's Governor results, California Presidential results)

Then I designed really rough cards and detail pages for those things. The detail pages included the cards (interchangeable parts!) of the other objects.





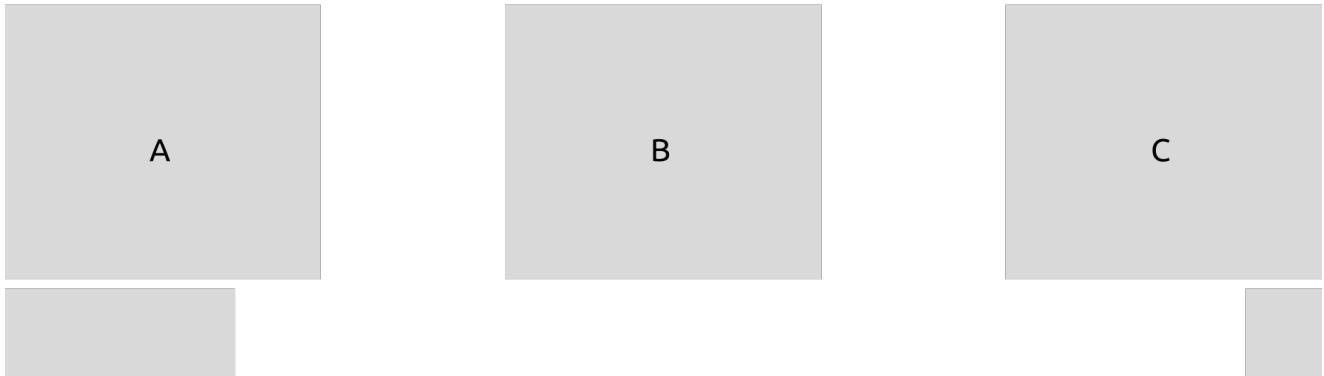
From a bird's eye view, the overall system looked like this. Can you see how the cards are repeated over and over?

I was doing my best, with the little experience I had, to create a system of the fewest moving parts possible. And overall, it *worked!*

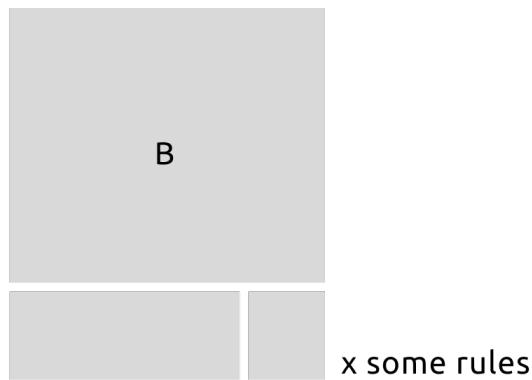
We hit our deadline and all of our success metrics. My colleagues and bosses congratulated me and the team, and I was asked to speak about the work at local meetups and soon at conferences. 🌟

Through those public storytellings and reflections, I taught what I needed to learn.

During [my first conference talk](#), I (very nervously) clicked to this slide showing 3 different visualizations of the same thing:



Followed by this slide:



This was my first diatribe against what I would come to call *Shapeshifters*. I was teaching — and learning — that when we put on blinders and design screen-by-screen, we run the risk of creating three (or 20!) different components that all represent the same exact concept.

Design Systems have done wonders to help us be more consistent with our buttons and UI elements, but UXers are still unintentionally breaking consistency at the conceptual-level — the object-level. This arbitrary shifting is not only a waste of time for design and development, it is a waste of our users' cognitive resources! Shapeshifting confuses our pattern-recognizing brains and makes identifying and tracking objects more difficult than it needs to be.

In the physical world, when an object changes shape, that *means* something. In the digital world, if an object changes shape, our brains (often subconsciously) try to find meaning. Therefore, if there is no meaning to those changes, if the shapeshifting is just a result of piecemeal process or siloed teams, our users are left wondering if they are missing something.

Soon, I found myself seeing Shapeshifters *everywhere*. And, sorry-not-sorry, you'll start to see them everywhere, too.

One of my favorite examples of egregious Shapeshifters is Meetup.com. On Meetup.com, the EVENT object is arguably the most critical. But the way an EVENT was represented across the experience varied wildly and arbitrarily from screen to screen. Here's some screenshots of the EVENT object on Meetup.com circa 2017ish.

The image contains three separate screenshots of Meetup.com, each showing a different view of the same event:

- Top Left:** A blue button labeled "EVENT" is highlighted. Below it, the text "...in the Calendar List" is displayed next to a screenshot of a calendar entry. The entry shows the event details: "8:30 AM AMUX The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up your UX Process Switchyards Downtown Club 117 UX-ers going". There is a green "Yes" button with a checkmark.
- Middle:** A screenshot of the homepage featuring a large red banner titled "YOUR NEXT MEETUP" with the event details: "The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up your UX Process". Below the banner, it says "amUX • 117 UX-ers". To the right, there is a summary card with the date "Wed Feb 6 at 8:30 AM", the location "Switchyards Downtown Club 151 Ted Turner Drive", and a green "Going" button.
- Bottom Right:** A screenshot of the "GROUP Detail Page" for "amUX". It shows the event details again: "WED, FEB 6, 8:30 AM The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up your UX Process". It includes a photo of Sophia V Prater, the location "Switchyards Downtown Club", a brief bio about her, and a thumbnail showing 117 attendees with a green "Going" button.

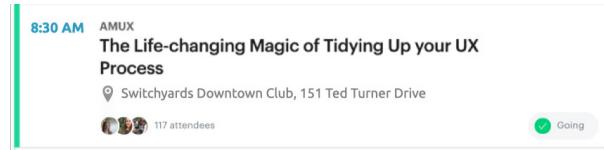
Take a close look at how the date and time of the event are represented. Also, look at how these three cards communicate that I am going to the event. Can you spot any more differences?

Not only do these three EVENT-cards visually present themselves in three different outfits, they communicate to the user with different language. Color and form shifts, but so does data structure and labeling.

Here's my fix...

EVENT

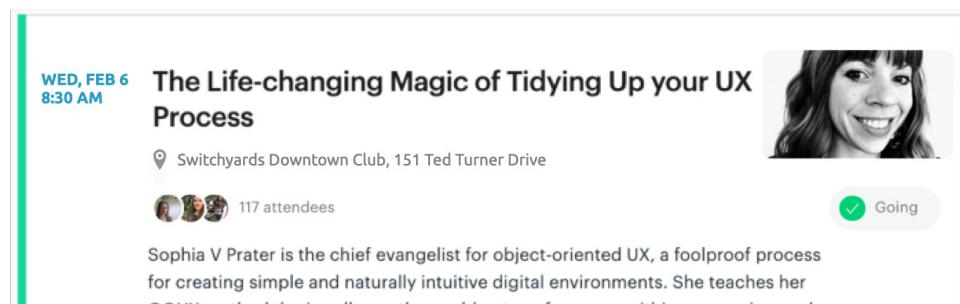
...in the
Calendar List



...at the top of the
Homepage



...on the GROUP
Detail Page



I've fixed the shifting date and time style and positioning, kept the attribute order the same across the board, and aligned the language that communicates the user's status and the number of attendees.

There is some intentional shapeshifting based on context. For example, in the Calendar List, we already have "date" headers outside of the card, so we only need the time and not the full date. On the GROUP detail page, we don't need to mention the name of the group ("AMUX") and we want to include a preview of the description.

Even when you are consciously trying to stick to a consistent system of interchangeable parts, it's easy to introduce shapeshifting if you are not careful. When I look back on the STATE-RACE RESULTS cards I designed in 2012, I recognize shapeshifting in my own work.



STATE-RACE RESULTS

...on “map view” (as a flyout)



...in “list view”, as a card

Ohio (18 Electoral Votes)
11:06 a.m. ET, Dec 10 [Details »](#)

BATTLEGROUNDS ✓ PROJECTED WINNER

CANDIDATES	VOTES	VOTES %	Est. 100% in
D Obama (Incumbent)	2,827,621	51%	
R Romney	2,661,407	48%	

Map view and list view of a STATE-RACE RESULTS card on CNN.com during the 2012 Election.

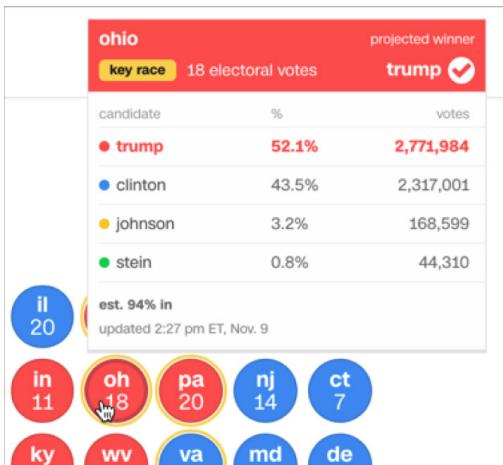
Can you see all the small differences? The placement of the timestamp? The placement of the battleground state flag? The fact that the electoral votes are not shown in map view? And the completely different treatment of the estimated “votes in” percentage?

These inconsistencies were *all* unintentional. I had no good reasons. I created more work for myself, for the developers, and for the stressed-out voters watching the results trickle in.

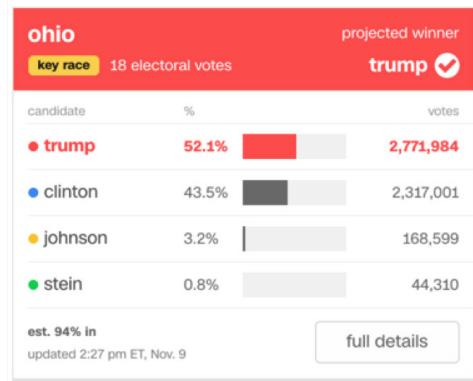
When I returned to CNN four years later as a consultant to lead the election results UX for 2016, I didn’t make the same mistake.

STATE-RACE RESULTS

...on “map view” (as a flyout)



...in “list view”, as a card



Map view and list view of a results card on CNN.com during the 2016 Election.

Now the cards are *nearly* identical. They are not *completely* identical, but the differences were *intentional* this time. For example, in the list view card on the right, we included bar graphs because we had a little more space (practicing [progressive enhancement](#)).

Let's revisit Meetup.com. Even after recent redesign work circa 2021, they are still introducing arbitrary inconsistencies in how they represent their most important object, the EVENT.

EVENT

..at the top of the Homepage

...on the GROUP Detail Page

...in the Calendar List

 Notice the changes between how an event is represented on the homepage, on a group page, and on the event detail page itself.

Just look at the color changes of the date! We humans recognize the various objects in our environment by color, shape, and position relative to other stuff. If we learn from the homepage (even subconsciously) that the date and time is in brown and is below the image, we will carry that knowledge with us. So, when we come to the group page or the event detail page and a design has changed the color, placement, and visual treatment of the date and time, we will have a slightly harder time finding it.

These are small changes but they add up. And why increase cognitive load or development costs if you can avoid it?

Shapeshifting can also happen from cards to detail pages. An object's detail page should basically look like a bigger, more detailed card!

EVENT

Detail page

You're going to this event!

Thursday, July 7, 2022

OOUX Methods Beyond the Object Map with Lauren Stone
 Hosted By
Sophia V P. and Lauren S.


Organizer tools ▾



Object-Oriented UX Happy Hour

Public group

 Thursday, July 7, 2022 at 5:00 PM to
Thursday, July 7, 2022 at 6:00 PM EDT

[Add to calendar](#)
 Online event
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8646385932?pwd=U3FqeHJuRtJWljlZ0VLMExtRmUrUT09>
[Report this event](#)

Group page card

THU, JUL 7, 2022, 5:00 PM EDT

OOUX Methods Beyond the Object Map with Lauren Stone Online event \$5.00

OOUX is a thoughtful, robust methodology for reducing complexity and creating intuitive user experiences, but the skills and insights gained through this course go beyond stickies and maps. OOUX isn't just a process; it teaches you a new, more...

 24 attendees

[Manage](#) ▾



See how the date continues to shift around? In addition, the host is newly prioritized on the detail page. From an organizer's perspective, the label for the menu of calls-to-actions changes from "manage" to "organizer tools." WHHHHHY????

Intentional Shapeshifting

Shapeshifting is OK, as long as it's done on purpose and weighed against the consistency trade-off. Decide if shapeshifting is worth the extra cognitive load (and design and development effort) on a case-by-case basis. Imagine that you have a budget for shapeshifting and every time you shift the representation of an object you are deducting from that budget.

As a basic rule of thumb, the lower a system's learning curve needs to be, the lower your shapeshifting budget. If you are designing a complex enterprise business tool for heavy power-use of trained professionals, you'll probably need to incorporate shapeshifting as you design different states and permutations of an object. When objects are inherently complex and need to display in various forms based on context, avoiding *unintentional* shapeshifting becomes even more important.

And if you are designing an experience that will be used for ONE NIGHT by an anxious population from all walks of life (*ahem*, election results), or a pick-up-and-use consumer app, consider an almost-zero shapeshifting budget.

Consistency in UI versus Consistency in UX

Design systems help us save time and money by keeping our UI components consistent. With a great design system, we can reduce 17 button styles to three. We can replace the four different calendar pickers with one. This UI consistency is a win for the business *and* a win for the users.

OOUX and its crusade against Shapeshifters help us in the same way. When we clearly identify our objects and prioritize their attributes, we can then represent those objects as consistently as possible across screens, devices, and even apps.

Design Systems give us more simple and elegant systems for our UI, branding, and voice. OOUX gives us more simple and elegant systems for our UX. ✨





MISSION #4: Read the OOUXer Manifesto

5 mins

After all of this, you might be thinking that OOUX is all about consistent icon positioning and font colors! Oh no no no. Avoiding shapeshifters is just one of the most visual manifestations of good OOUX work.

In fact, OOUXers usually don't specialize in UI or visual design. We are system-thinkers, strategists. We are UXers that lean toward information architecture, content strategy, and business analysis. **Our medium is more sticky notes than pixels.**

So, because we've been talking so much about screen design, I want to pull us out of the weeds for just a moment. For this mission, take a few minutes to check out our OOUXer Manifesto. If more than a few of these get you pumped up, you are in the right place! And if you are also excited to start slaying extraneous Shapeshifters, even better.

[Read the OOUXer Manifesto](#)

ooux.com/manifesto





MISSION #5: Take the 4 Mistakes Mini-Workshop

2 hours

Ok, back into the weeds we go. Shapeshifters happen to be only one of four “unintuitive objects” that OOUX helps you avoid. Shapeshifters often team up with Masked Objects, Broken Objects, and Isolated Objects to wreak havoc on otherwise solid and well-intended UX. Ready to meet the whole gang? If so, I’ve got a two-hour mini-workshop waiting on you.

In this two-hour workshop, you’ll get:

- Deep explanations of Masked Objects, Isolated Objects, Broken Objects, and Shapeshifters
- Tons of examples of each
- The four laws of OOUX
- Some handy worksheets and exercises to help you practice applying these principles

This workshop is the only item on the Launch Guide Checklist that is not free, but in just two hours, you’ll be making more intentional, structured, and elegant UX.

Get the 4 Mistakes Mini-Workshop

ouux.com/product/4mistakes



MISSION #6: Do a Shapeshifter Audit

1+ hours

It can be tough to convince your managers and team to consider new ideas and processes like OOUX. I've found one of the best tools to "show rather than tell" is to present a Shapeshifter Audit.

If your business folks are asking: *How can OOUX help us save time and money and actually build better products?*

If your fellow UXers are asking: *How does all of this object-thinking result in more intuitive screens?*

Conduct a Shapeshifter audit!

Go through a recent project and take screenshots of all the ways objects are represented across the system. I once found over 16 representations of an object for a client when one would have worked just fine! Placing all these screenshots side by side is a visceral way to show time and money down the drain. Keep track of where you find each shapeshifter. As a bonus, present your redesign suggestion, simply by cutting and pasting your screenshots, like I did with Meetup.

If you find a good Shapeshifter that you can share, please [tweet some screenshots to me!](#)

Share your Shapeshifter Audit! (optional)

twitter.com/sophiavux

Next up, we will get into my *most valuable* OOUX hack for asking super-intelligent questions to your stakeholders, SMEs, developers, and users. If you take the [mini-workshop on four mistakes](#), you'll have a bit of a head start!

Part 3: My #1 hack to reduce rework and tackle complexity early

The birth of the ORCA process, plus an intro guide to ORCA's first activity, Noun Foraging!

Imagine this: you're a UX designer working on a complex app for a medical testing lab. While presenting wireframes that you've been working on for days, stakeholders start to give feedback and ask questions...

"I think we are missing historical antibodies on the patient..."

"It looks like a patient is showing just one compatibility test, but most patients will have three or four... and compatibility tests definitely need to show status. Status is on the test, not really the patient."

"Where does the lab tech confirm the sample for testing? I'm not seeing that... Yeah, sample needs status too. And we need to trace the sample to the test."

Why did no one mention this? 😡

We've all been there, deep in screen design and approaching a deadline, when new requirements crop up. In fact, this is one of the most frustrating (and common) situations UX designers find themselves in. It's enough to make you want to scream, "WHY DID NO ONE BRING THIS UP THREE WEEKS AGO?" 😢

I dealt with this on *every* project in the first 5 or 6 years of my career:

"They should have figured out the requirements before we started designing — I've never even heard of historical antibodies!"

"She saw my rough whiteboard sketches of the patient testing flow and said nothing about this! Why did this not come up while we were low-fidelity?"

"When I interviewed him about the existing sample integration screens, he didn't say a *thing* about confirming sample integrity!"

I was tired of late-in-the-game changes that made me want to murder my generally likable coworkers. And, blame wasn't going to change my reality.

The development of the OOUX methods that I've now taught to 1000s of digital product people reflects a gradual transition:

I slowly moved from blaming others for these frustrations to taking responsibility where I could. And instead of allowing my well-meaning clients and coworkers to blindside me (which they took no joy in), I found ways to ask better questions — and sooner. I designed every activity in the ORCA process to work together to untangle complexity collaboratively and *early*.

Now that 100% of my clients go through the rigor of the [ORCA process](#), late-in-the-game surprises happen much less. And any unknowns that *do* emerge are usually small details that don't require a reworking of any major aspects of the design.



How do you eat an ORCA? One bite at a time.

In the [OOUX Masterclass](#), you'll learn ~38 interlocking activities that I specifically designed to improve cross-functional collaboration and reduce demoralizing rework. With these skills, you'll experience gloriously boring design reviews with stakeholders ("Yup, looks like what we workshopped. Awesome...where are we going for lunch?").

Wait, thirty-eight activities?! Yes, ORCA is massive and meaty. Complexity wrangling can be... complicated. But this process with its 38ish (on my last count) activities is not as ridiculous as it sounds. The activities are flexible, remixable, and customizable. And at the end of the day, this arsenal of tools works together to help answer just four main questions.

We the OOUXers, answer these questions before designing a single screen:

O What are the **OBJECTS** in the users' mental model?

R What are the objects' **RELATIONSHIPS** to each other?

C What **CALLS-TO-ACTION** do objects offer users?

A What are the **ATTRIBUTES** that make up the objects?

What are the **objects** in the users' mental model? What core concepts make up the problem domain and the business model?

What are the objects' **relationships** to each other? How do objects connect in the users' minds, in the current backend structure, and in the current and future business processes?

What **calls-to-action** do objects offer up users? What are the affordances of the objects? How do users want to manipulate objects to get stuff done in the system and meet their goals?

What are the **attributes** that make up the objects? What is the structure of these important concepts and how do users want to group, sort, and filter lists of these objects?

And if you really want to get to the heart of OOUX and start experiencing the benefits right away, just start with that first question.

So here it is, my #1 complexity-wrangling hack:

get to know your **objects**, before you start designing screens. And to do that, find the nouns that are used over and over again.

A tasty first bite: Noun Foraging

In the OOUX world, we call this first activity *Noun Foraging*. If hacking is all about cutting through a bunch of blockers to get to the most vital information, Noun Foraging is complexity-hacking at its best.

Noun Foraging is fun and simple detective work that will help you uncover potential objects... and so many questions. It's how I start every UX project.

In fact, it's how I start understanding anything complicated. Side note: If you find yourself confused over a political issue or a board game: identify the things, define the things, and figure out how they relate to each other.

Here's how Noun Foraging works.

Go looking for nouns across as many relevant sources as possible. Go wide and go for diversity! Here are just a few great places to look:

- The existing product (look at labels!)
- The product's marketing site
- Competitor products
- Competitors' marketing sites
- Training videos
- User interview transcripts
- Stakeholder interviews
- Stakeholders/leadership vision decks
- Business requirements docs
- User stories
- Customer service chat logs

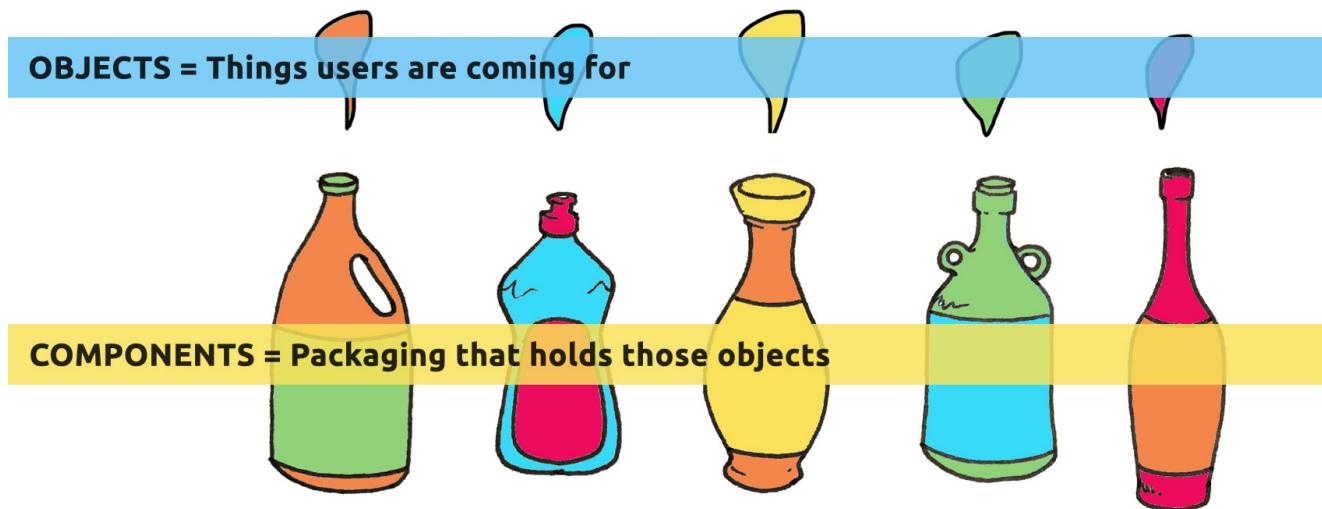


I loooooooooove printing out a thick stack of user interviews, customer service chat logs, and case studies. I'll find a cozy spot with my trusty blue highlighter and dive in. I'm not highlighting all the nouns, though — I'm on the prowl for potential objects which will become the backbone of the UX system.

I mark nouns that meet **SIP** 🎉 :

- Nouns that show up repeatedly (and their synonyms)
- Nouns that have **structure** (MOVIE has attributes like title, runtime, year released, etc.)
- Nouns that have **instances** (MOVIE has instances like “The Princess Bride” and “Black Panther”)
- Nouns that have **purpose** (If I am designing a site for movie reviews, MOVIE definitely has a purpose! I’m looking for nouns that have real meaning outside the system, the stuff users are actually coming for.)

On that last point, I am decidedly *not* cataloging UI components. Buttons, calendar pickers, and toggles are not what the user is coming for! No one is coming to the system to click buttons or engage with your slider. When Noun Foraging, we are looking for the meaningful things that the components will end up *representing*.



To drive this point home, it’s as if we *first* need to figure out if users want dish soap, wine, motor oil, or almond milk. *Then* we can figure out the most ergonomic, beautiful, on-brand, and accessible packaging.

If you are having trouble determining if a noun might be object-worthy, check out this [flow chart](#) to learn more about the acronym SIP. 🎉

OK, so let’s say we are working on a new app for Meetup.com organizers. Here’s some quotes from user interviews:

"I really want to be able to see a member's history, all of my group's events that they have been to. I can see "first-timer" but I also want to know — did this person come last month? Did they come to the social meetup in July?"

"I'd love to be able to see my most profitable meetups. Right now, I can't see how much money each event brought in. And I can't see which group is actually doing the best. Where should I be investing my time?"

"It would be great to easily issue refunds from the app."

"I'd love to be able to check messages from my members and send them back a custom message or a canned response that I've saved."

"I might want to add private notes about members. Or tags even..."

"My events usually get a ton of comments and I'd love to be able to respond on the go."

What nouns did you find? Take a moment and give Noun Foraging a try. Then scroll down to see what I came up with.



Ok, I've put the objects in bold ALL CAPS.

"I really want to be able to see a **MEMBER**'s history, all of my **GROUP**'s **EVENTS** that they have been to. I can see "first timer" but I also want to know — did this **PERSON** come last month? Did they come to the social **MEETUP** in July?"

"I'd love to be able to see my most profitable **MEETUPS**. Right now, I can't see how much money each **EVENT** brought in. And I can't see which **GROUP** is actually doing the best. Where should I be investing my time?"

"It would be great to easily issue **REFUNDS** from the app."

"I'd love to be able to check **MESSAGES** from my **MEMBERS** and send them back a custom **MESSAGE** or a **CANNED RESPONSE** that I've saved."

"I might want to add **PRIVATE NOTES** about members. Or tags even..."

"My **EVENTS** usually get a ton of **COMMENTS** and I'd love to be able to respond on the go."

Ok, I've got some potential objects that will make up the skeletal structure of this new app — and I've got *questions*.

Spark debates

One of our jobs as UX designers is to shake the confidence of our business stakeholders.

It's common for them to gloss over the complexity of the system — not because they are short-sighted, inexpert people — but because (let's flex our empathy muscles here) they are dealing with a ton of stuff on behalf of the team and company. They have budgets, the C-suite, investors, the board, hitting quarterly numbers, and so many other emails and spreadsheets that we are *glad* they deal with.

They *will* push us to wireframes. They *will* want to cut corners when it comes to research and synthesis. And we need to push back, but strategically. **The best way to do this is to ask amazing questions and help *them* uncover the unknown unknowns.** Cultivate their curiosity. The goal is to let them think it's their idea to bake in extra time for research, analysis, and deliberate system design. 🤔 This way, we can avoid screaming into our *live laugh love* pillows.

As you are foraging, keep these questions at the top of your mind:

- Are these two objects the same thing?
- If not, how are they different?
- What are some examples of this thing?
- What's a good definition of this thing?

As much as possible, see if you can answer these questions on your own with the material you have at your disposal. Be resourceful! Start a draft glossary, highlighting your guesswork that needs confirming. And collect questions that you couldn't find answers to. Then, present your

glossary and questions to the powers that be. Simply frame it as an attempt to get terminology right so that we can all communicate better. It's hard to argue with that!

Here are some questions that came up from our Noun Foraging for the Meetup app. (I'll continue to put objects in ALL CAPS.)

"Let's talk about EVENT, GROUP, and MEETUP. Our users tend to use these terms interchangeably. What is a "meetup" to you?"

"What exactly is a PRIVATE NOTE? Who should it be private to? Could other ORGANIZERS see it? Do we know what this might be used for?"

"How often are REFUNDS issued? Should we prioritize this? And if so, how often do ORGANIZERS batch-issue REFUNDS for everyone that came to an EVENT?"

"As for a CANNED RESPONSE, would those work for MESSAGES and COMMENTS? Would they be specific to a GROUP or the USER? In other words, should a CANNED RESPONSE be able to be shared across GROUPS that an organizer organizes?"

And then, I'd make the stakeholders, researchers, and entire team prioritize the objects to determine scope. Are we doing PRIVATE NOTES? What about CANNED RESPONSES? Do we need more research to confirm what's most important?

In my entire career, not one client stakeholder has looked at an Object Guide (an OOUXy souped-up glossary) and called it a waste of time. No one has ever grumbled about defining the important things and discussing these kinds of clarifying questions. Why not? Because, *guaranteed*, your glossary and your questions will surface misalignments and misunderstandings across the whole team. There will be arguments and debates. This is a feature not a bug. This is a sign that you're time-traveling — your tackling fundamental questions that will inevitably bubble up in the future and tackling them before hours of designing screens in the dark!

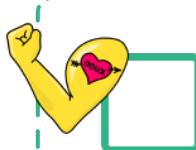


To recap:

- Find the nouns that come up over and over.
- Create a first draft glossary.
- Identify weak spots and questions.
- Share your glossary and ask questions.
- Start debates. Expose the complex stuff.
- Bring clarity to the team.

Collaboratively, shape a gaggle of messy nouns into well-defined objects that will become the backbone of a strong system.

Seriously, do not skip this activity. Try it out and see what kinds of valuable conversations it sparks!



MISSION #7: Go deep on asking good questions

20 mins

To go deeper into this question-asking, I want you to read my article on how to sell UX research. You'll learn more about how to ask great questions and get stakeholders scratching their heads and debating amongst themselves. Then, go give Noun Foraging a try on your current project. No matter what stage of design you are in, it's never too late to create a glossary and confirm it with the team.

Remember, if you ask a question and it sparks three more questions, this is a reason for celebration not frustration! This means the process is working and you are exposing misalignment or gaps in understanding. It's always better to do that now rather than later.

Read the How to Sell UX Research article

alistapart.com/article/how-to-sell-ux-research/

Bonus: if you are really into asking stellar questions, you might also want to check out my article [Five Signs You're Practicing Advanced UX](#) (a 7 minute read).

OOUX and the ORCA process have leveled-up the practice of so many designers. Here are a few of their words on how the UX game changes when you know what to ask:



"This approach really prepares you to become a better designer by asking the right questions to help the team gain a common understanding of the complexities we are facing through building a solid foundation on which to build a system."



Karen McArthur

User Experience Designer III and Certified OOUX Strategist



"The OOUX Certification course has given me the confidence to take on complex design challenges. The value of a framework and methodology for asking the right questions and doing "upfront" thinking about systems BEFORE designing them is immeasurable."



Gillian Rosheuvel

Senior Content Strategist at EPAM Systems and Certified OOUX Strategist

In the upcoming Part 4 of this guide, it will be time to really get your hands dirty. I'll share my Object Mapping Quick Start guide and an audio workshop that will help you practice the main activities of the ORCA process.

ouux.com/launchguide

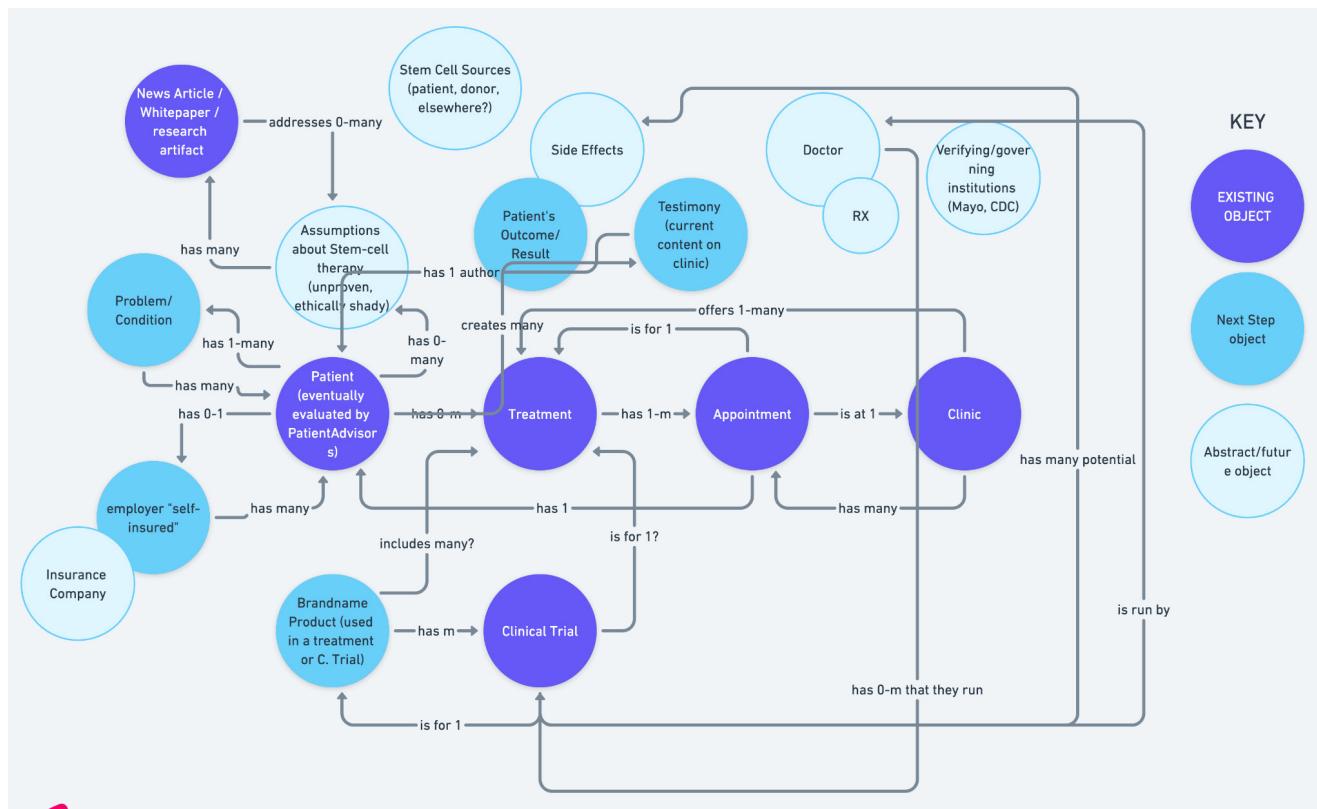
Psst... If you're loving this launch guide, please feel [free to share it](#) with anyone who needs to be part of the world of Object-Oriented UX. And if this was shared with you and you like what you're reading, [subscribe to the newsletter](#). Welcome!

ouux.com/newsletter

Part 4: Object Mapping FTW

Create a collaborative X-ray of your UX

The Object Map is the darling of OOUX, the juicy center, the workhorse. It's like an entity relationship diagram or a content model diagram that scales without turning into a bowl of spaghetti. Like this cluster below:

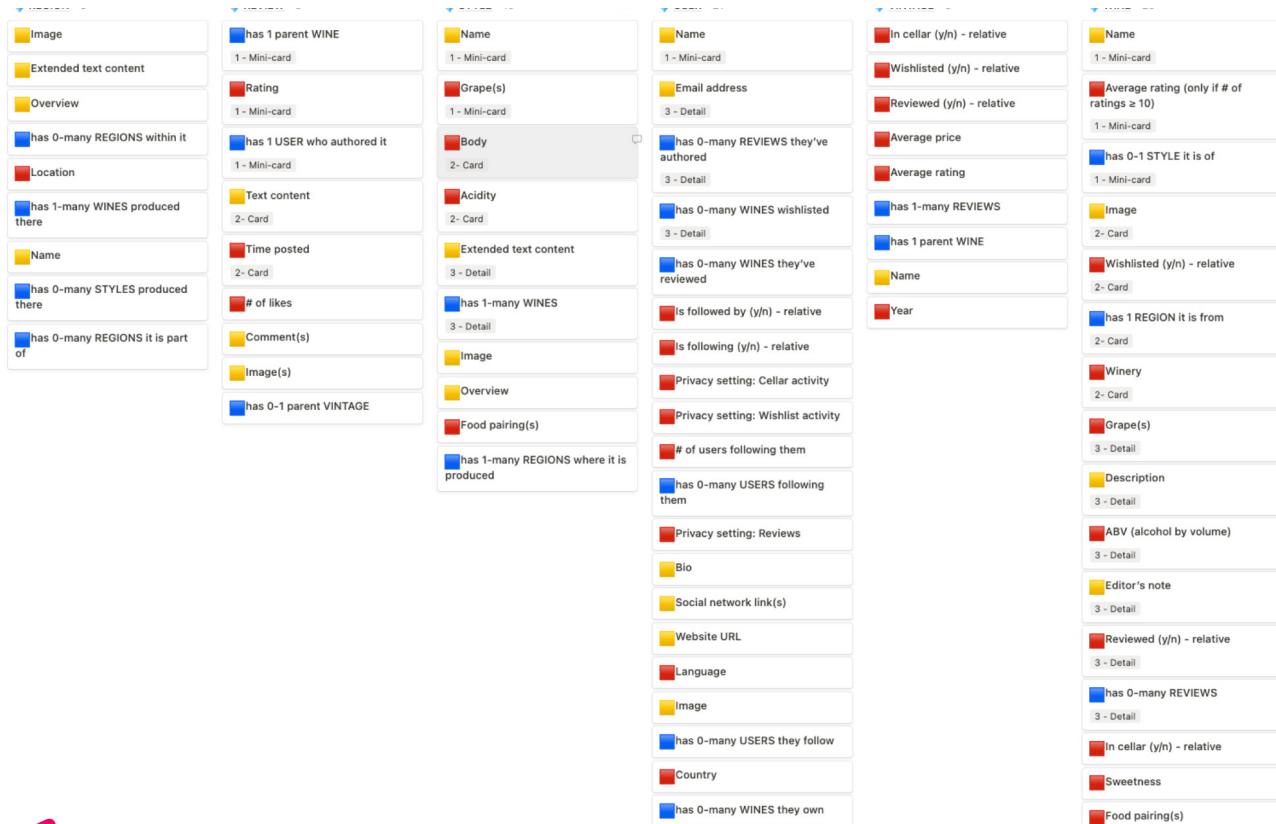


Here's a system model that served its purpose as a tool for a bird's eye view discussion. We soon ran out of room to document all of our thinking. At that point, it was time to move into an Object Map.

Boxes-and-arrows diagrams are great for initial exploration, and we do create them in the OOUX world, **but they don't scale very well**. Once you have more than a handful of objects with dozens of interconnected relationships, your diagram starts to break down and become unreadable. And good luck documenting attributes, especially if an object has over 100 attributes that make up its structure.

There's a better way.

Today, OOUXers create massive multi-faceted Object Maps in Notion, Airtable, and Trello. These Object Maps might have dozens of objects that house hundreds of data requirements for their enterprise products. They provide a hub for collaboration, innovation, scoping, and a blueprint for design and development. They are light, dynamic, and robust. And hanging out in an Object Map is way more fun than toiling away in a spreadsheet, imho.



↗ An Object Map by Sabrina Li, created in Notion



An Object Map by Maria Garcia for just one product within athenahealth's electronic medical record offering, built in Airtable

As fancy as they look now, the Object Map had humble beginnings. Very humble. This practice has matured significantly over the years.

Let's take another trip down memory lane.

Before OOUX had a name, I'd gathered a loose set of principles that emerged during my formative months leading the UX design for [CNN's 2012 election results](#):

1. The more moving parts, the more likely it is to break. Create a system of reusable parts with the least effective dose of complexity.
2. Cross-functional team communication is key.
3. Prioritize prioritization.
4. Iterate on big-picture fidelity, not one-by-one slices of functionality.
5. Make time for #1-4, or you will waste time in the long run.

These principles turned into my [first conference talk](#), which I delivered in 2013 at Adaptive Path's UX Week.

A few months later, Jesse James Garrett emailed all the speakers and asked us for recommendations on speakers for the 2014 event. I replied,

ME! ME! MEEEE!!!! Pick me!!...I'd love to turn my 2013 talk into a workshop." 🤖

Don't believe that I could be so unabashedly bold? Here's the actual email exchange.

 Jesse James Garrett [REDACTED]

Tue, Feb 4, 2014, 6:27 PM ⌂ ⌂ ⌂

to Jesse, bcc: me ▾
Hope your new year is off to a great start! (What do you mean, it's February already?!?) I'd like to thank you again for helping to make UX Week 2013 a resounding success. In case you missed it, we've posted videos of (most of) the main stage talks online:

<<http://vimeo.com/channels/uxweek/videos>>

Lastly, one very quick request:

If you could nominate one person to speak at UX Week this year, who would it be? Don't think too hard about it -- just shoot me a quick reply with the first name to pop into your head.

Thanks again!

 Sophia Voychehovski [REDACTED]

Wed, Feb 5, 2014, 5:24 PM ⌂ ⌂ ⌂

to Jesse ▾
Me! Me! Me!!!! Pick ME!

:)

I had too much fun out there with all of you. I'd love to do a workshop! *Modular Design for Complex Responsive Systems?* Eh?

I know you are probably avoiding consecutive repeat speakers, but keep me in mind for a workshop version of my points 1, 3 and 4 from my talk:

- 1) Simplify your design (make it modular)
- 3) Prioritize prioritization (mobile/content first)
- 4) Iterate on fidelity, not functionality (agile done right: system design first, then sprints)

I could turn this into a bang up workshop for anyone that is trying to do cross platform design for a complex system.

Quick advice-for-life interlude:

Trust your instincts. If you know you are onto something, grab all opportunities to further develop that idea.

Forced functions, deadlines, and external commitments are key to making things happen. Selling" a workshop to JJG before I had any idea what that workshop would be – forced function.

Send scary emails. I was mortified to send this email. But here I am, years later, looking back at it, recognizing it as a pivotal decision in my career. I am so proud of past-Sophia for sending this.

Ok, life lessons out of the way, let's all give JJG a big round of applause for saying YES and taking a big risk on my half-baked idea.

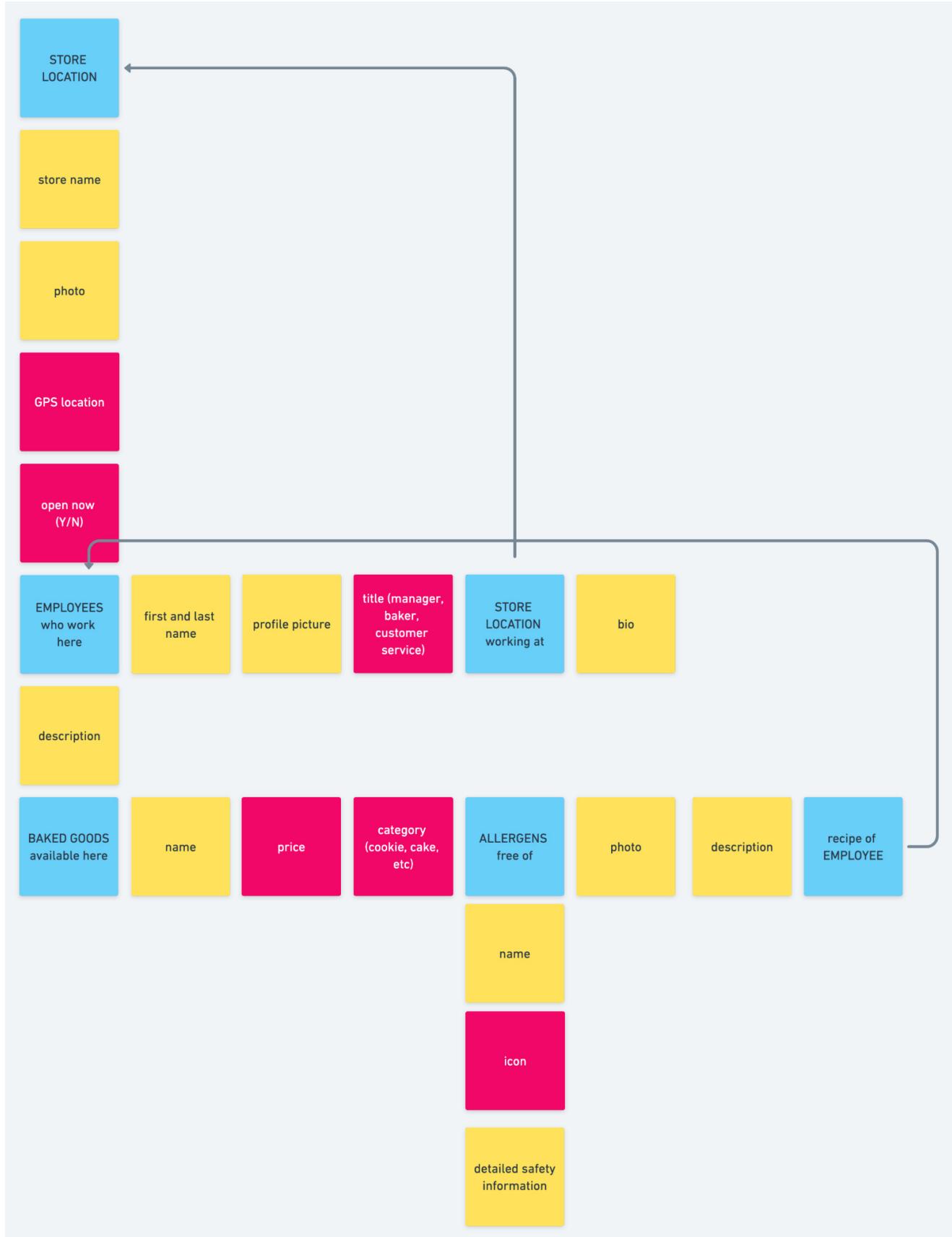


I had the gig, now I had to figure out how to *teach* all of these abstract principles.

Oh wait, another life lesson: *Teach what you need to learn.*

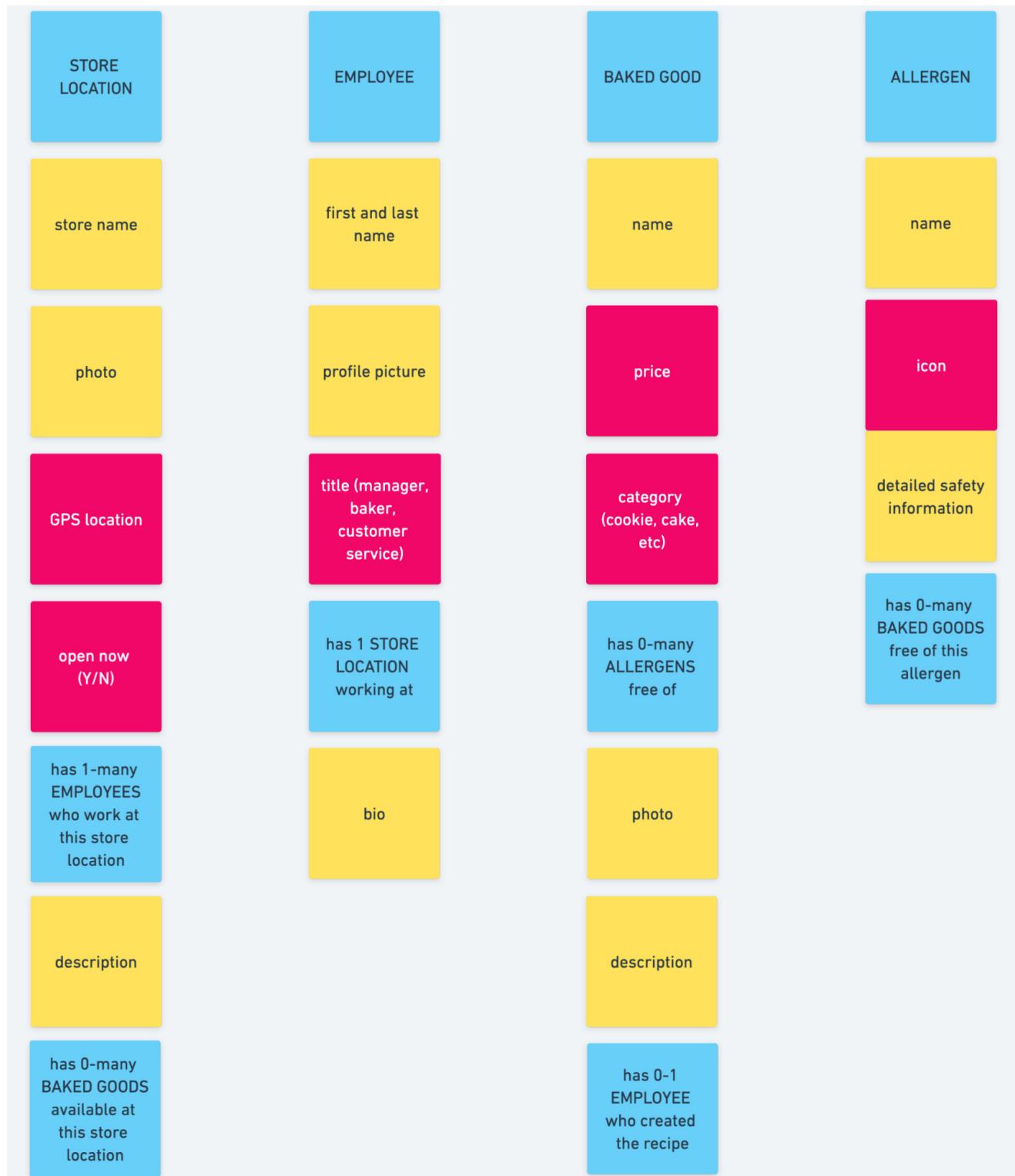
Over the next few months, through the process of figuring out how to teach people my data-first "modular design" ideas, I invented the Object Map.

I wish I had pictures of the first Object Maps. They were these weird, branching, crossword-puzzle-like arrays of sticky notes. Since I don't have pictures, I've recreated the original format of Object Mapping for you here — just for funsies.



This is literally what I taught during my first two workshops 😊: Just start with an object, start listing attributes, aaaand BOOP! One of those attributes has its own attributes? Ding ding! You found another object! Create an off-shoot... and so on.

Here's the same content, jiggled into the more sensible format we use today.



The first workshops were rough, I admit, but I could tell people saw value in what I was sharing, and I knew I was onto something. So, I taught it again. And again.

Meanwhile, I used what I was teaching at conferences with my own clients.

I'd teach it...

learn even more from teaching...

practice it in my own work...

learn a bit more from the practice...

and then teach an updated version.

And that's been what I've been doing since 2014.



One of the first pictures of an Object Map, circa 2015! I'd untangled the crossword format but was weirdly arranging objects in rows instead of columns. It took me almost another year to flip the Object Map so that objects are represented as columns (more closely mimicking a mobile-first webpage).

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"I have been a Designer for over 10 years and in only 10 short weeks Sophia has caused a cataclysmic shift in how I think about big problems. This program gives you a framework to break down huge problems and a systematic and logical way that is beneficial to everyone on your team. I have no way to truly explain how much I would want to recommend this certification to anyone in the UX industry."



John Drogalis

UX Manager at ConstructConnect™ and Certified OOUX Strategist

In my work, I continuously improved my OOUX methodologies by stress-testing them across dozens of complex domains (real estate, B2B marketing, B2B ecommerce, ed tech, healthcare, to name a few). Through these projects, I got better at recognizing object patterns (junction objects, tree systems, object bases, oh my!) and figured out new and better ways to document requirements and collaborate with my teams.

Alongside the client work and the conference workshops, I also stress-tested OOUX by [delivering workshops at companies](#) like Facebook, Hubspot, Adobe, Mastercard, Google, Delta Airlines, Atlassian, and many more. And with each new scenario and new group of people, I further refined the methodologies.

Today, with dust settled, the Object Map is a tried-and-true powertool, used by thousands of UXers all over the world. When you bring OOUX into your practice, you're *not* incorporating some untested newfangled trend. We've been kicking the tires for more than a hot minute. Take object mapping for a spin and I think you'll never want to design without one again.

66

"Not just a process. ORCA is *THE* design language for true cross-disciplinary collaboration. It aligns silos to the user's mental model. And above all, it's an indispensable tool for understanding anything with moving parts."



Marisa Montaldi

UX Designer, Systems Consultant and Certified OOUX Strategist



MISSION #8: Listen to Episode 002 of the OOUX Podcast

90 mins

This episode is an audio workshop that helps you get your hands dirty with the first few steps of the ORCA process, including Object Mapping.

Take a Quick Beginner OOUX Workshop

ooux.com/resources/episode002



MISSION #9: Try OOUX for yourself

2-3 hours

Ready to start Object Mapping one of your existing projects? With this Object Mapping Quick Start Guide, we've baked the amazing framework into a 2-page overview. If you've never done this before, I recommend starting with 3-4 objects to keep things simple. (Maybe from your Noun Foraging mission?) Feel free to take a picture of your Object Map and @mention me on Twitter [@SophiaVUX](#) with any questions!

Download the Object Mapping Quick Start Guide

ooux.com/objectmappingquickstart

Before I let you go, I want to make something really clear.

Yes, there's a ton to learn in the world of OOUX (I do teach a [22-hour masterclass](#), after all), but rest assured: after you finish this Launch Guide and the associated missions, **you'll be more of an OOUX-expert than I was when I first started teaching this stuff at fancy conferences**. Please do not be intimidated by all there is to know! You've got this! It's not too early to start practicing, sharing, and reaping the rewards of OOUX and Object Mapping.

Part 5: I made a floodlight. And I want to share it with you.

How OOUX changed my life and how it can change yours, too!

Good news.

You can create resilient systems with fewer moving parts.

You can reduce rework by asking better questions, earlier.

You can create a color-coded X-ray of your system's structure with an Object Map.

You can kiss goodbye to designing in the dark.

I have. And thousands of OOUXers around the world are doing the same.

After *lots* of iterating (and tons of feedback and encouragement!), I've got a pretty amazing floodlight for illuminating unknown unknowns.



⌚ Round 1: Discovery (ask amazing questions)

Object Discovery

Relationship Discovery

CTA Discovery

Attribute Discovery

✓ Round 2: Requirements (practice UX at high-resolution)

Object Requirements

Relationship Requirements

CTA Requirements

Attribute Requirements

↔ Round 3: Prioritization (iterate strategically)

Object Prioritization

Relationship Prioritization

CTA Prioritization

Attribute Prioritization

❑ Round 4: Representation (design naturally intuitive screens and components)



Sketching



Prototyping



Testing

This floodlight, the ORCA Process, exposes the most gnarly knots of system architecture so that you can demystify them and properly untangle them. Complexity just can't hide from it!

Given good tools and good light, organizing a mess of complexity into an elegant structure is one of the *best* feelings in the world. (At least for nerds like us.) 😳😊

Here's a little more on how this unfolded for me.

OOUX or bust

In 2014, I finally left the corporate world to go out on my own as an independent UX consultant (right around the time I sent JJG that fateful email). During those first few years of "what the hell am I doing," I was taking whatever gigs I could get, sneaking in my rough-and-early OOUX process where I could. (In the beginning you might be sneaking around with your OOUX, too. Here's [a story of an undercover OOUX project](#) that might help.)

Most of my early clients were cash-conscious Atlanta startups. Since so many of these start-up clients were run by software engineers, OOUX made sense to them. They quickly got the value and were happy to pay for it (developers tend to love OOUX).

Even though OOUX is user-centered at its core, Object Mapping felt efficient, direct, and no-nonsense to these technical professionals — unlike some of the more squishy design discovery sessions they'd experienced. So they told their friends. Word spread fast, and soon I had more clients than I could handle, all thanks to OOUX. Soon a couple design agencies in Atlanta got wise to OOUX and started bringing me onto their projects, allowing me to test OOUX with massive Fortune 500 companies.

But by 2017, OOUX was a **required** part of my process. I wouldn't take on clients unless they'd agree to (and pay for) a week of OOUX-style discovery that included a ton of collaborative Object Mapping and an inventory of calls-to-action around objects. I just didn't want to practice UX without it anymore. I'd gotten to the point where I could start saying *no*.

This is how I got a ton of practice *and fast*. OOUX solidified, matured, and grew up even more as it was tested within startups, agencies, enterprise companies, and dozens of industries. In 2019, I formalized and crystalized everything into the ORCA process, which I now share with the world full-time!

To see the fog lift and passions reignite for weary seasoned designers, to see careers change for the better, and to see newer designers make leaps and bounds early in their careers.

Once the pieces start to click into place, your confidence soars. Even though you are just moving stickies around, you know you are doing deeply strategic work. You know that your design will make more sense to users, because it's making more sense to everyone on the team. The team is feeling productive together, because of *your* facilitation. It's all very "Eye of the Tiger."

And feeling like a problem-solving badass makes your job way more fun. especially if/when others on your team recognize you for it. I get stories all the time of people crediting a recent promotion or a stellar performance review to their OOUX skills. 

Let's recap. Here's my UX story in a nutshell:

2008–2012: Dying of frustration and crying a lot.

2012–2016: The OOUX lights start coming on. More frustration because I see a better way, but still don't have the power to *fully* implement it.

2017–2020: Exciting, broad-scale OOUX practice, iteration, and development.

2020–present day: Continuous improvement and packaging OOUX into a masterpiece of an online course for you, if I do say so myself (we'll get to that in sec). It's been a decade+ journey, and it's exciting to think about what OOUX will be and look like 10 years from now!

What has *your* UX journey looked like so far? Have you had any major turning points? Are you *ready* for a turning point? Whatever your professional path in this industry, OOUX can provide rocket fuel if you invest in learning it.

And there's more great news...

Becoming "good at" OOUX isn't going to take you *years* like it did for me! I'm so passionate about spreading the joy and magic of OOUX that I've neatly packaged *everything* I've learned into a comprehensive training for you. My opus, if you will: The OOUX Masterclass.

The OOUX Masterclass consists of over 22 hours of video content and about a dozen templates and guides. Joining the course will get you life-time access to the material along with the latest updates.

There are three ways to go through the material, depending on what works best for your schedule.



Get Certified

Twice a year, we run our [10-week Certification Program](#). About 40 UXers, IAs, content strategists, and product people go through the Masterclass material in sync. As a participant, you'll post your assignments to the OOUX Forum and get detailed feedback from myself and your mentor. You'll have 1-on-1s with me and your mentor and come to weekly office hours. And, at the end of it, you'll take a test to get certified. Once certified, you'll get badges to add to your LinkedIn profile as well as a [profile on OOUX.com](#). Um, and of course, you'll learn how to wrangle complexity while making deep professional connections with your cohortians, who are generally all-stars.

[**Learn more about certification**](#)

ooux.com/certification



SELF-PACED

Go Self-Paced

Depending on the time of year you decide to take the plunge, enrollment for a Certification Cohort might not be open. In that case, start by signing up for the [Self-Paced option](#). You'll get access to all the material, just without the hands-on certification perks. You might be totally fine doing it alone, and getting certified might not fit into your career goals. Plus you won't actually be alone — you'll have access to a Slack channel where you can discuss assignments and OOUX with other folks you are taking the Self-Paced Masterclass. (I also pop in 2x a month to answer questions. Here's a [sample of some Q and A](#)). And if/when you decide to get certified, you'll just pay the cost difference to upgrade. That's right — starting with the SPMC is sort of like a down payment on the Certification. You can get a headstart on the material and when enrollment opens up, you'll be the first to know.

[**Get immediate access!**](#)

ooux.com/masterclass



Create a Team Cohort

Maybe there are a few folks at your company who want to take the OOUX Masterclass? If you have more than three people on board, we offer group discounts and other perks to those signing up as a group. I also give you guidance on setting up your internal cohort for maximum success.

Are you ready to make a massive change? Are you ready to invest in your career and your ability to wrangle complexity? Let's *do this!*

Start a Team Cohort

ooux.com/teamcohort





MISSION #10: Hear what others say about the training

If you are still not sure if this program is right for you, my mission for you today is simple. Stop listening to me try and convince you and read what REAL PEOPLE have said about the program. Scroll through the list of testimonials and ask, "If I could experience what these folks have, what would that be worth to me?"

Here are a few snippets.

"I was looking for a framework that could help with understanding and structuring complexity, and this course hit the nail on the head!"

"My mind has been blown over this course. I have a completely different perspective on digital based design than I did a couple months ago."

"I am so excited it's difficult to contain."

"OOUX is a pure power tool of a design methodology, and we've truly not found a single downside to it in our application of it thus far."

"an excellent bridge between UX Research and UX Design, providing a framework to make design decisions"

"OOUX is fundamental training for Product Designers architecting complex digital spaces... Divert those conference dollars wisely"

Read the Masterclass testimonials

ooux.com/testimonials

And if you are ready to go for it...

Enroll in the Self-Paced OOUX Masterclass

ooux.com/masterclass

Check out enrolment dates for the Next OOUX Certification Cohort

ooux.com/certification

Or email us at hello@rewiredux.com with your questions about the program!

Ok, if you scrolled past those CTAs... two more testimonial snippets for you:

“Easily one of the best training investments you could make”

“This is a game-changing methodology. I suspect your only regret will be that you didn’t learn this sooner — I know I do.”

I hope to get to know you in a future cohort or in the Self-Paced Slack channel!

Cheers, and happy OOUXing!

-Sophia

Special thanks to the team at Rewired for helping bring this Launch Guide together. Thank you to Lindsay Sutton for the spot-on editing. Big kudos to Marisa Montaldi for bringing this document to life with magical formatting and design. And finally, all my love to Luke Prater for creating the playful illustrations and hooking up the internet magic that delivered this Launch Guide to your inbox. This was a true team effort!