Empathy, Simplicity, Clarity, and Perspective

Keys to Designing a Positive User Experience
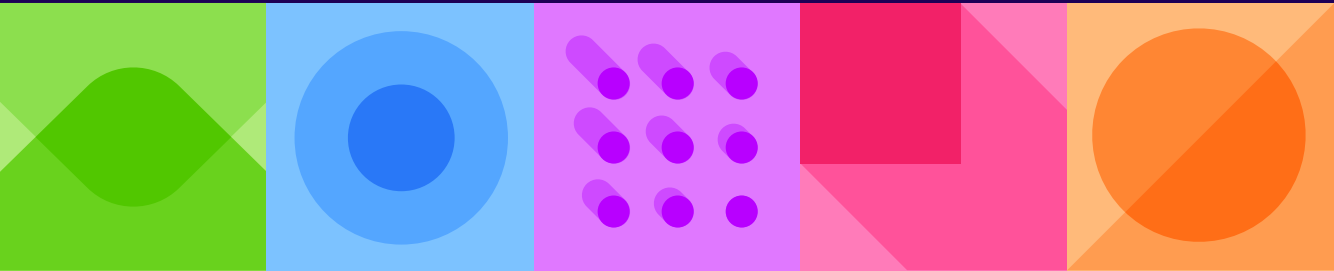
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Introduction

Innovation in healthcare lives at the intersection of business, policy, technology, and design. Delivering innovation that advances each of these areas appropriately, however, can be both challenging and frustrating – requiring a combination of patience and tenacity from product teams and, just as importantly, understanding by the entrepreneurs behind the ideas that initial efforts should **focus on delivering the "right" solution, rather than the "ideal" solution.**

While your ideal solution may support the optimal experience enabled by today's technologies, the right solution recognizes the present state of the healthcare system and seeks to progressively enhance and evolve it in thoughtful, incremental ways.

It's a long-run game that can be hugely successful, if you keep a few important things in mind as you're designing your product or platform.

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Know
Your User
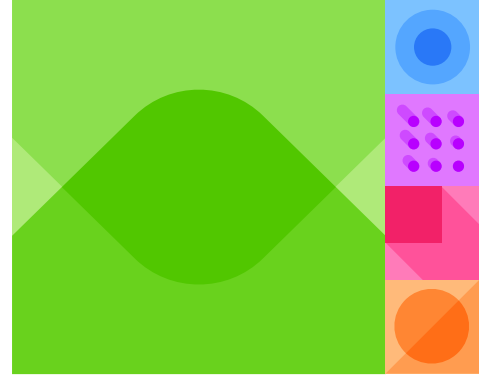
1 **Know your user better than they know themselves.** Building empathy is foundational to creating better user experiences, however, enabling a product development process that focuses on it can be difficult. To make empathy-based decision making a part of your process, remember:

Context is king. Understanding the full context of how your product will be used is critical to understanding its value to users, whether they be patients, providers, payers, or other partners.

Contextual inquiries and user interviews can help you identify the problems your users truly need help with. Journey maps provide a great means for cataloguing these needs / opportunities. Use them to guide strategy sessions and project planning discussions.

Embrace persona-based decision making. Personas are fictional characters created to represent the different user types, describing their goals, desires, pain points, and limitations within their current products or workflows. By bringing personas into your strategic planning process, you are better positioned to determine priorities, features, and needs at the "human level."

90%

will abandon an app if it performs poorly [1]

&

86%

**will delete an app** with design or functionality problems [1]

[1]AppDymanics, 2014

Listen to your users, but don't necessarily do what they say. Too often, product teams fail because they listen to what users say, rather than understanding what they mean. It's critical to engage in active and ongoing dialogue with your end-users. This said, designers and developers must also remember that they often don't know what they want...until they see and use it.

Start with the "Why?" Ask why the user is using your technology at a particular point in time, and then design your software and testing plans from that perspective.

Instead of asking a physician, "From this screen, can you tell what's wrong with this patient?" ask, "Is this patient going home today?" The latter question gets to the heart of the "why" and helps identify information gaps.

Confidence as King
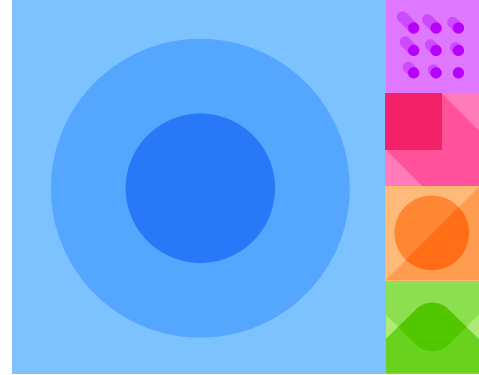
2 **Increase your users' confidence with every interaction**. Simplicity is not an end state, but rather a mindset, and a continuous process of refinement that requires discipline and focus.

Practicing simplicity in your organization ensures that product teams remain focused on the strategic critical path of the product. It also forces early dialogue around trade-off decisions and drives a standard of quality in your product.

To create and sustain a simplicity mindset:

Be ruthless about information hierarchy and your content strategy. Understand your users' primary needs and how those needs evolve as they navigate your software. Your content strategy should appropriately identify and balance the use of content that alerts, simplifies tasks, and enriches.

Leverage visualizations to simplify the complex. Invest in and use visualizations to display complex healthcare data in insightful and actionable ways. Doing so will increase the perceived simplicity of your application, while encouraging aligned decision-making and thought processes.

Assume users won't be trained. Your goal should be to make your solution intuitive enough for users to do the basics from day one. Beyond that, be prepared to teach. Have your product team catalogue and define the help and training materials required for each screen as your solution is being created.

By categorizing and cataloging how the various content types are structured on each screen within your solution, you can effectively guide the user every step of the way and remove noise.

Make Every Pixel Count
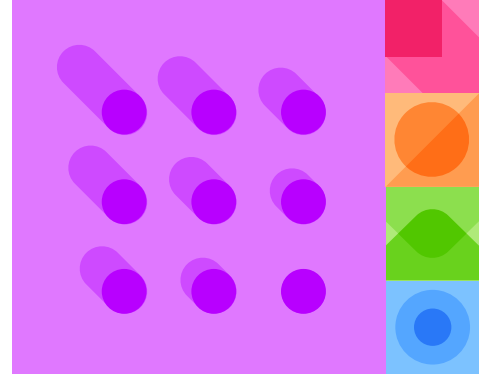
3   **Don't over design. Make every pixel count.** A pre-curser to simplicity is ensuring that your product is not overdesigned. To achieve this:

Design as a team. By involving all stakeholders in the design process, you assure a holistic view of the project and that you're designing to address issues that may exist across business, policy, technology, and design. It also aligns the team with the "right solution," rather than a particular "ideal" or need.

Remember: Design is done when there is nothing more to take away. Have a reason for every pixel on the screen, from buttons and shadows to lines and labels. Great design is not about needlessly adding effects and attributes, but rather about eliminating anything that doesn't actively support end-user needs.

Help people make decisions. Once you've achieved simplicity in your solution, intelligently predict what users need to do "next," so that they don't have to think about it. For example, you can proactively prompt a user to complete an online form, read more on a subject, or watch a video.

According to Forrester Research, businesses that invest in UX see a lower cost of customer acquisition, lower support costs, increased customer retention, and increased market share.

MVP
vs. MMP

(and Why You Need to Know the Difference)
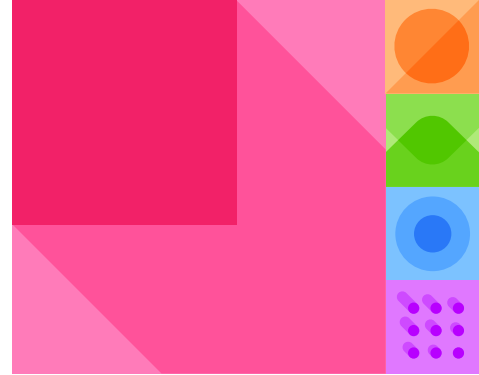
4   **Know the difference between MVP and MMP.** Understanding the difference and interplay between your minimum viable product (MVP) and your minimum marketable product (MMP) is critical to a successful product strategy.

When there's clarity around your approach to both MVP and MMP, your team can make critical decisions about the product, allowing "delight and polish" features to make their way off the backlog and into your system.

MVP represents the functional state of your product, which will allow your product to operate successfully in the marketplace.

MMP is the more refined state of your product that defines your quality around the most strategic aspects of your system. (It is the version you are willing to invest in a Super Bowl ad for.)

Understand that your MMP represents your quality standards and strategic position. You will earn your customers' trust with reliable software. By creating a definition for MVP vs MMP, you can separate strategic and tactical decisions at the feature level. This helps create a common understanding of a "definition of done" and where each feature lives in its life-cycle.

Define MVP by user flows, not features. Features are often just one step along a user's decision path. When you define your MVP by key task flows instead of features, you ensure your users can always reach a decision – even if it's restricted to only a "single path" in the beginning. This approach makes sure core functionality is achieved, but not over-designed too early in the process. Once the MVP state has been achieved, the MMP decisions and refinements can be made.

Macro Matters, Too
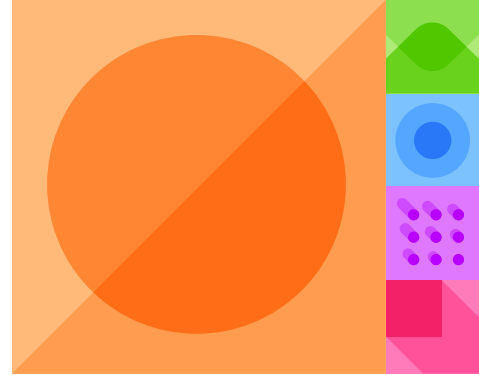
5   **Be aware of the macro in addition to the micro.** The healthcare ecosystem is complex and has many stakeholders seeking to address many challenges. In designing solutions, it is easy to become either:

a.) So laser focused on your vertical that you forget your solution cannot exist in a silo, or

b.) So broad in your reach that you're trying to solve problems that don't support your strategy.

Finding the happy medium requires mindfulness as to how your solution fits within the ecosystem, and the direct and in-direct impacts it will have across an organization. It is critical to understand and document what exists at arms-length from your solution, so that you can have honest, educated conversations early on about the impact of your project.

Conclusion

Delivering innovation that advances business, policy, technology, and design can, without a doubt, be challenging. But by creating understanding and alignment across your product team and leadership – and focusing on delivering the right solution, rather than the ideal solution – you'll be positioned for success.

Remember, it's a long-run game. And if you need support, our team of award-winning digital strategists, designers, and developers is here to assist.

About Our Authors

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David Issa brings more than 15 years of design, technology and business experience to his position with PointClear Solutions. He honed his skills during the first decade of his career as an entrepreneur and co-founder of an enterprise software company, where his clients included Bloomberg, the CDC Foundation, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. David attended Keio University's Graduate School of Media Design in Tokyo, Japan.

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About PointClear Solutions

PointClear Solutions is a leading digital health consulting company, with offices in **New York, Nashville, Atlanta** and **Birmingham**. We have **10 years'** experience providing **enterprise software and mobile and web-based application strategy, design, development, and management** services for clients worldwide, including healthcare industry powerhouses like **McKesson / Change Healthcare, Walgreens, Philips, Nuance, and the CDC.** To date, the PointClear Solutions team has successfully completed **more than 500 projects** of various sizes and complexities, helping our clients improve clinical outcomes, encourage population health, expand market share, and drive revenue.

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