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UX Design 2015 & 2016

Successful Trends for Digital Products

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Index

Destroying the Web Design Silo 8

Device-Consistent Experiences 34

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Follow me on Twitter @ziebak

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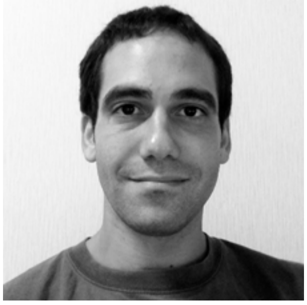
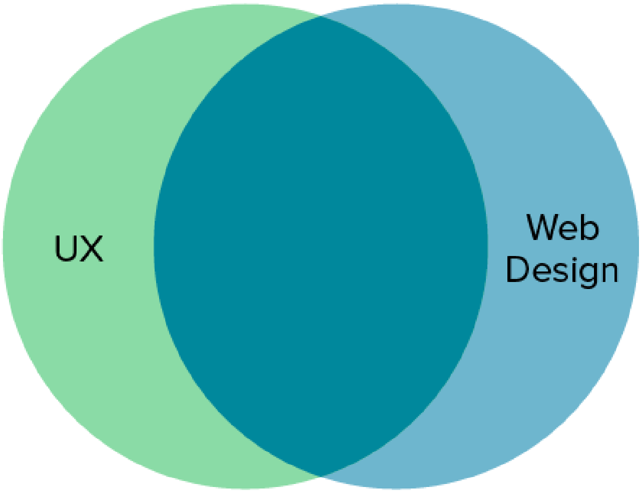


With a passion for writing and an interest in everything anything related to design or technology, Matt Ellis found freelance writing best suited his skills and allowed him to be paid for his curiosity. Having worked with various design and tech companies in the past, he feels quite at home at UXPin as the go-to writer, researcher, and editor. When he’s not writing, Matt loves to travel, another byproduct of curiosity.

Destroying the Web Design Silo

The first UX trend we discuss – and arguably the most important – is the rise of UX within web design.



Since the web was freed from the desktop, designers can no longer just build web pages.

All designers must know how to design a fluid experience to flow into any device. Web design has become an expression of UX design. Know your user's motivation and goals, then create an experience that empowers them while remaining true to the brand.

In this piece, we'll explore the evolution of web design, tactics to perfect your UX, and analyze examples of great web experience design from notable companies.

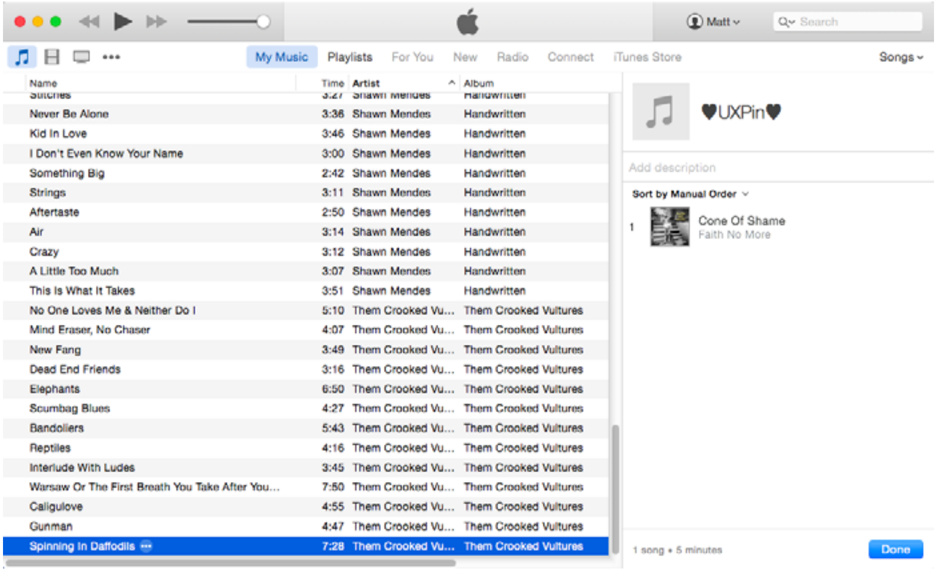
Understanding UI vs. UX

First, let's clear up some terminology. UI and UX are not in competition – they are two elements of a design that always work together.

- **UI is the user interface.** This comprises everything a user can see and touch, such as menu options, buttons, text, layouts, navigation elements, sharing options, etc. In short, if you choose to abandon text links for a slider navigation, that's a UI change.
- **UX is *why* you made that change to affect how the user feels and behaves**. The user experience is an umbrella term for the user's overall experience with the product: what they liked about it, how easily they accomplished their goals, moments of delight and frustration, etc.

The UI is the paint, the canvas, the types of strokes and colors. The UX is the wonder you feel when you see the girl in the pearl earring.

Let's break it down to an easy-to-understand example: iTunes – as well as many other music players – allows a drag-and-drop interface to create playlists and arrange the song in any order they like.



Name	Time	Artist	Album
Stitches	3:27	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Never Be Alone	3:36	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Kid In Love	3:46	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
I Don't Even Know Your Name	3:00	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Something Big	2:42	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Strings	3:11	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Aftertaste	2:50	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Air	3:14	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
Crazy	3:12	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
A Little Too Much	3:07	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
This Is What It Takes	3:51	Shawn Mendes	Handwritten
No One Loves Me & Neither Do I	5:10	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Mind Eraser, No Chaser	4:07	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
New Fang	3:49	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Dead End Friends	3:16	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Elephants	6:50	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Scumbag Blues	4:27	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Bandoliers	5:43	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Reptiles	4:16	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Interlude With Ludes	3:45	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Warsaw Or The First Breath You Take After You...	7:50	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Caligulove	4:55	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Gunman	4:47	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures
Spinning In Daffodils	7:28	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures

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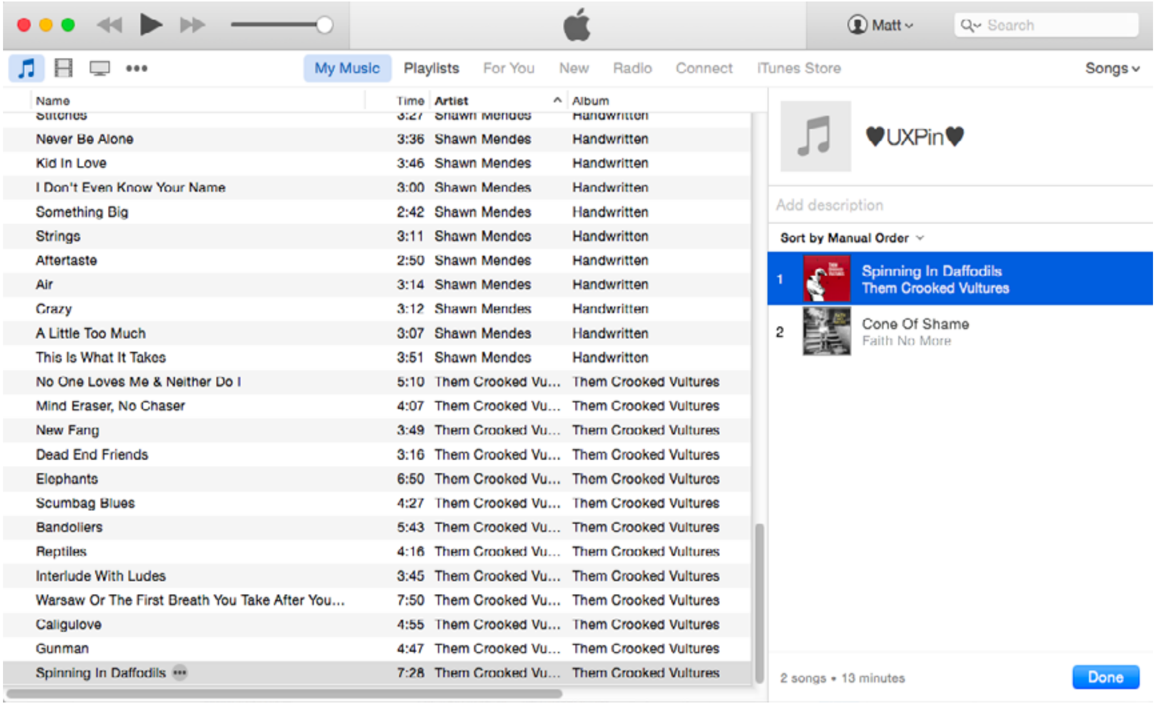
Add description

Sort by Manual Order

1 Cone Of Shame
Faith No More

1 song • 5 minutes

Choices like the drag-and-drop interface and the feature to customize the song order are UI decisions. However, they were made with the UX in mind: drag-and-drop gives immediacy, control, and above all conveniency, plus the feature to customize the playlist order makes the ultimate experience of listening to music more enjoyable – they can pick the order they want and then just sit back to enjoy it.



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Spinning In Daffodils	7:28	Them Crooked Vu...	Them Crooked Vultures

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Add description

Sort by Manual Order

1 Spinning In Daffodils
Them Crooked Vultures

2 Cone Of Shame
Faith No More

2 songs • 13 minutes

Photo credit: iTunes

UX concerns itself with abstract elements like emotions, storytelling, and understanding, while UI is the way in which a design handles these. UI is the vehicle, but UX should drive.

When it comes to web design, it's easy to focus purely on the UI. After all, that's what clients and stakeholders can see and touch, so that's where you'll probably hear the most feedback. But always remind them of the UX reasoning, otherwise everyone ends up worrying about the paint when the foundation might be cracked.

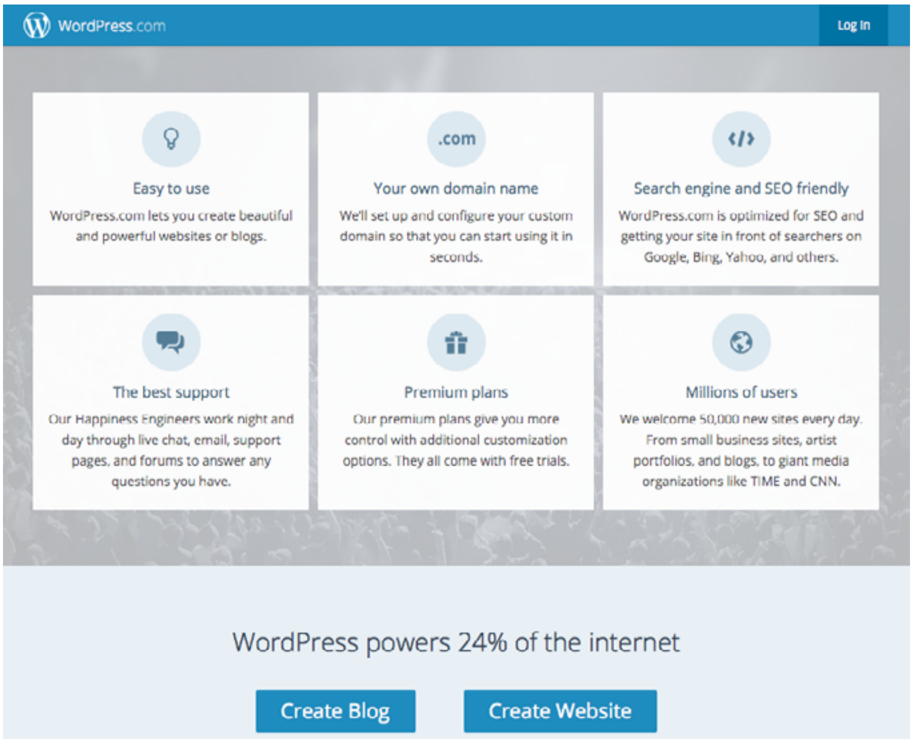
The Democratization of UI Design

Focusing on UX has always been the best way to design – the idea has existed since renowned designer Don Norman popularized the term in the early 90s. However, recent advancements have made this benefit a competitive advantage for designers in the wake of self-serve web design.

In his controversial piece Why Web Design is Dead, Sergio Nouvel explains the current reasons why the old ways of web design are on their way out. While his piece takes a more extreme view of web design, we certainly agree with his reasoning for why web designers must evolve:

1. **Commodification from templates** – Anyone can create their own site in a matter of hours using templates from a service like WordPress or Templatemonster, or design a shanty site on apps

like RapidWeaver. Businesses strapped for cash and time don't need to hire a web UI designer. In order to stay competitive, web designers must now know how to sell the power of experience design.



Easy to use

WordPress.com lets you create beautiful and powerful websites or blogs.

Your own domain name

We'll set up and configure your custom domain so that you can start using it in seconds.

Search engine and SEO friendly

WordPress.com is optimized for SEO and getting your site in front of searchers on Google, Bing, Yahoo, and others.

The best support

Our Happiness Engineers work night and day through live chat, email, support pages, and forums to answer any questions you have.

Premium plans

Our premium plans give you more control with additional customization options. They all come with free trials.

Millions of users

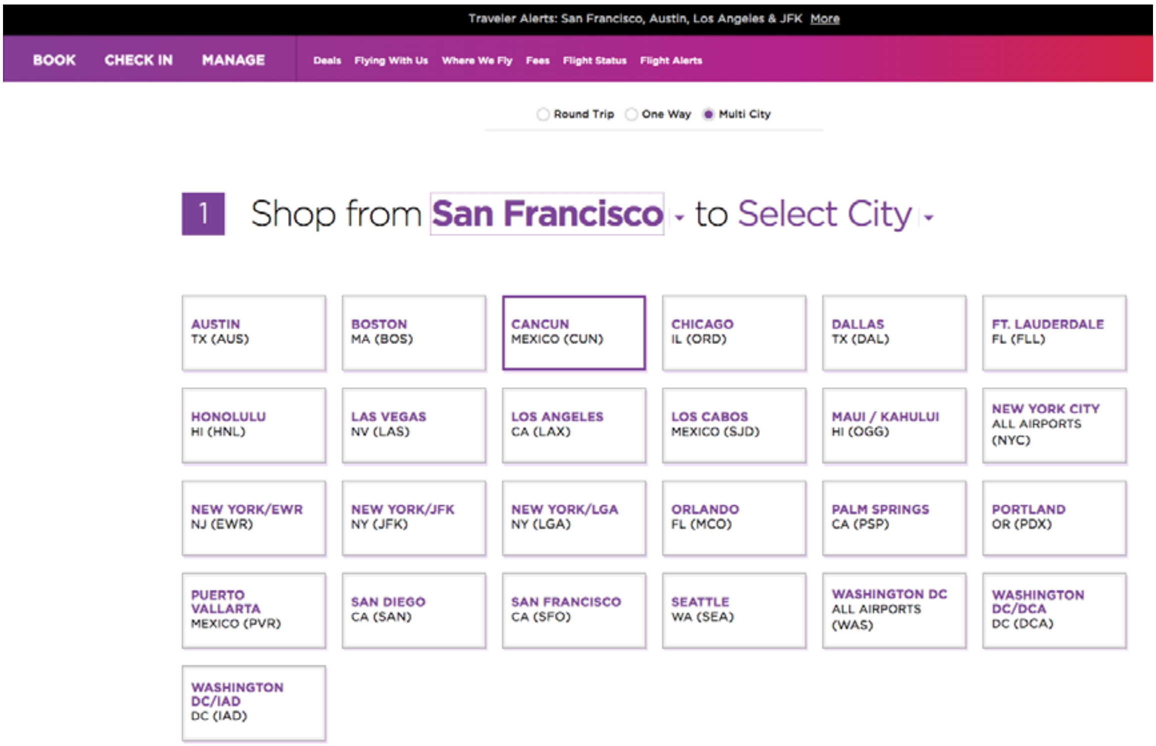
We welcome 50,000 new sites every day. From small business sites, artist portfolios, and blogs, to giant media organizations like TIME and CNN.

WordPress powers 24% of the internet

Photo credit: WordPress

2. **Advanced design patterns** – In the same vein, established design patterns take a degree of guesswork out of modern web design. For example, online shopping carts usually feature the same familiar format (i.e., page-by-page setup) so designers don't have to "reinvent the wheel" for each new site. Instead, the tricky part is choosing (and customizing) the patterns for different sites to create the appropriate experience.

   For example, the multi-step form pattern makes sense for Virgin America since the airline must collect more information to book the right flight for users. In that case, multiple steps "chunk out" the process for users who are already motivated to buy. However, that same multi-step form isn't so appropriate for a political campaign site where you want to collect money as quickly as possible. To make that type of judgment call, you must know UX design.


Traveler Alerts: San Francisco, Austin, Los Angeles & JFK More

○ Round Trip ○ One Way ● Multi City

1 Shop from San Francisco to Select City

Photo credit: Virgin America

3. **Automated design** – Sites like The Grid use artificial intelligence to construct basic (and not-so-basic) UIs. But while this service can generate beautiful UI designs, it can't determine if they're appropriate for the users and business. UX design isn't something a machine can learn (yet), so visual designers should embrace the skillset.

4. **Social media homepages** – Echoed by Athlon, traditional sites are sometimes overshadowed by social media pages, and small

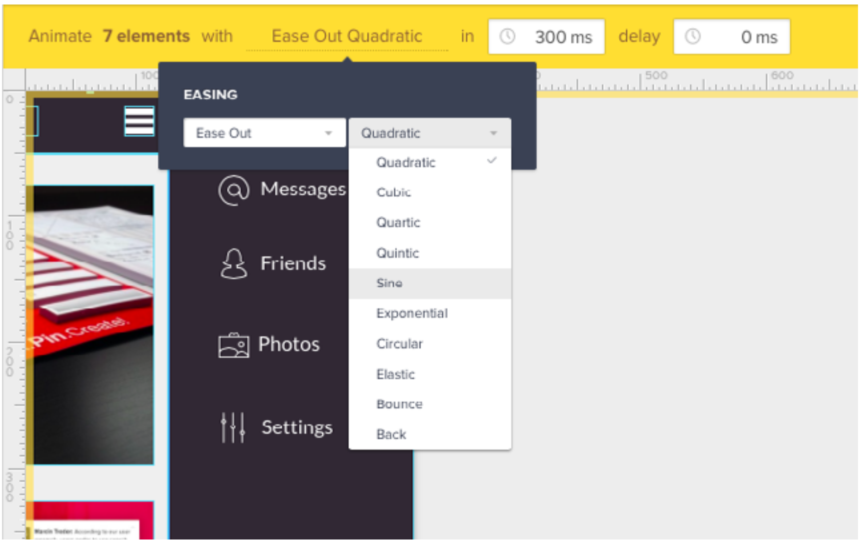
businesses can now get started with a Facebook page alone. Experience design, however, exists on a much higher plane. Designers who know UX are better able to convince companies that different channels deliver different experiences (and business benefits), which still makes websites mandatory.

5. **Mobile Browsing** – Mobile browsing is now the dominant form of web usage, and designers must know responsive and adaptive design. And in order to design responsively or adaptively, you should follow a mobile-first process. That requires a solid grasp of UX principles since you need to design a scalable experience from the smallest device first.

Notice that the first three reasons revolve around the same point: the visual design and back-end implementation of web design is becoming easier.

On a related note, a big part of the reason why we included so many UI element libraries and interaction libraries in UXPin is to free up designers to focus more on crafting the UX. When some of the burden is lifted from the UI process, designers are better able to hone their UX skillset (which is becoming more of a competitive advantage each day).

Designing for UX just makes sense – if you spend your time perfecting the UI design for one device, that success won't translate to the others. You product's UX is far more futureproof than its UI.



Animate 7 elements with Ease Out Quadratic in 300 ms delay 0 ms

The web design silo was good enough in the days of desktop browsing, but the prevalence of mobile forces us to evolve.

Designing Web Services, Not Web Pages

Perhaps because of mobile's ascent, the way in which people even use the internet has changed. The pull-based system of pages, where the user inputs where they want to go, is surrendering to the push-based system, where content either finds the user (notifications) or the search is drastically reduced.

Web design is now service-based. There's too much competition to put UI first: what's on your page matters most, not just how it's arranged. Content is king. And delivering that content in the appropriate context is a UX decision.

This makes service design more pertinent than ever before. Service design is the science of optimizing how a service is provided, start-to-finish, based on what the user wants. It is a specialization of UX design, since decisions are made to improve the user's experience with the service (and provider). For more information on service design, Cooper covers the basics well.

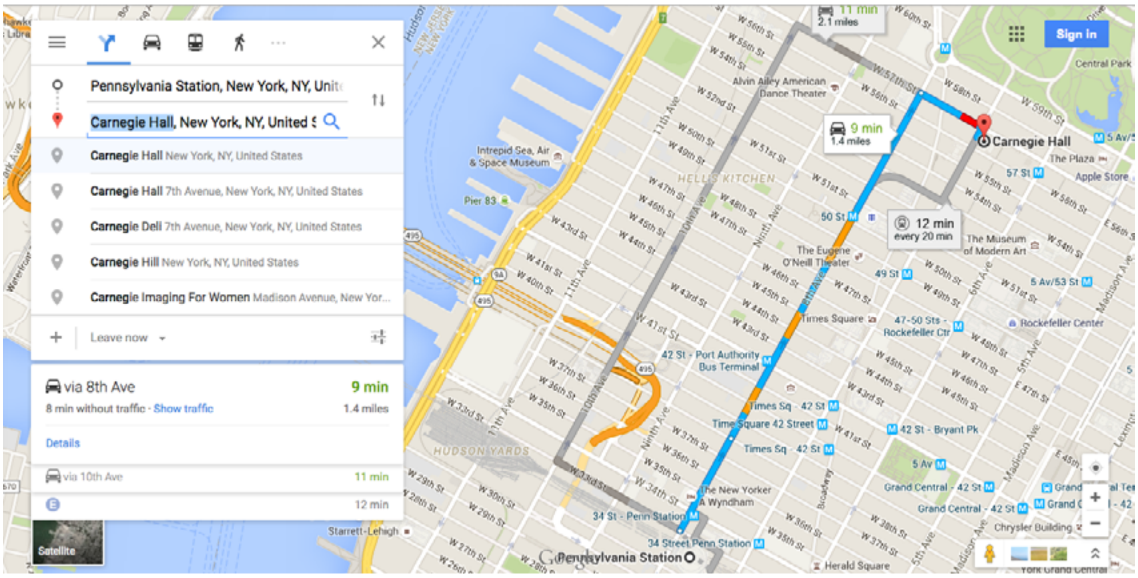

Pennsylvania Station, New York, NY, Unit
Carnegie Hall, New York, NY, United S
Carnegie Hall New York, NY, United States
Carnegie Hall 7th Avenue, New York, NY, United States
Carnegie Deli 7th Avenue, New York, NY, United States
Carnegie Hill New York, NY, United States
Carnegie Imaging For Women Madison Avenue, New Yor...
Leave now
via 8th Ave 9 min
8 min without traffic · Show traffic 1.4 miles
Details
via 10th Ave 11 min
12 min

Photo credit: *Google Maps*

Moreover, the services should be both self-contained and "bite-sized." A self-contained service means it only requires the necessary information to function. Google Maps, for example, is technically a website, but its popularity is due to its service design. It is completely self-contained. You input the relevant information, it shows your directions, and then your interaction with the site is over. You complete your goal and feel satisfied.

Bite-sized services are becoming more and more popular. Users today prefer their services to be linked together. Going to a concert might involve one site to find the venue, one site to buy the tickets, one site to plan with friends, and one site to find a ride there. In order for this to work, each service must be as quick and effortless as possible.

The services of these sites are the draw, not the sites themselves. And the only way to design a useful and desirable service (whether that's for web or mobile) is through old-fashioned UX design thinking.

Web Design Can't Survive in a Vacuum

UX is the culmination of every aspect of design – it is the user's impression of everything working together. UX is not something the on-staff UX professional can supply at some phase of the process: EVERYONE on the team must be familiar with UX.

Compartments are now being broken down in favor of collaboration.

To those used to the waterfall method, this may sound strange. But we'll explain the best practices of designing outside of the silo, beginning with the reasons why the alternative won't work anymore.

1. Waterfalls are Obsolete

You can't really "hand off" UX from one discipline to another. It needs a diverse perspective for team members to "think broad to get narrow".

This dethrones the waterfall method of each department working in isolation on their respective duty:

1. Product manager defines the product
2. Marketing checks product for viability

3. Developers check for feasibility and ship product
4. Web design creates the product pages

We know the above is an oversimplification, but you get a rough idea of how such a linear process works. Such a method may have been adequate for product design years ago, but now websites are becoming part of the overall service. Even offline products might be supported by a unique mobile app and website experience, combining into an entire UX ecosystem. In order to design that integrated experience, your team needs to integrate with each other.

Take the use of visuals, for example, as Dave Feldman points out in this Smashing Magazine article. If visuals are created outside the scope of UX – i.e., for the sake of looking good alone – the product will be ineffective. It doesn't matter how the visuals look on their own. What matters is how they work with the other aspects.

For this, your entire mode of thinking needs to shift.

2. T-Shaped Thinking

UX design becomes an exercise in collaboration as much as web design, and requires its own skills and mindset. Basically, everyone benefits from developing a T-shaped way of thinking.

While having a depth of expertise in a particular area (vertical stroke) is commonplace for any industry (e.g. web designers might be more familiar with UI nuances), it's the horizontal stroke that supports the collaborative environment of UX design. Empathize with other members of the team, and understand how your actions affect their decisions.

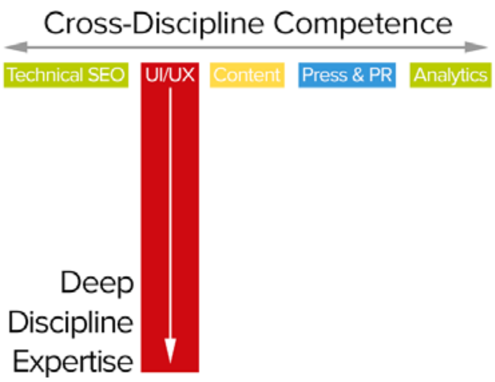


Photo credit: UXPin based on Distilled

For more advice on collaborating, our free design library offers the following ebooks:

- *The Designer's Guide to Collaborating with Developers*
- *Design Collaboration in the Enterprise*
- *Mastering Remote Collaboration*
- *Building UI Mockups Developers Won't Hate*

Best Practices for Web UX Design

To focus more on UX design, we provide these four best practices for breaking the silo:

1. **Obsess over the user**

   Remember that UX is about understanding your user: what they want, what they know, and what they don't know they want. Pinpoint their shared frustrations, behaviors, and modes of thinking.

   To design a successful cross-platform experience, you must research your users:

   - **Conduct user interviews** – What pains your user, and how are they currently trying to relieve that pain? Pay attention to how they describe when and where certain devices come into play.

   - **Develop personas** – Once you've finished your interviews (we recommend at least 5), plot out all the characteristics on a spectrum graph so you can see patterns emerge. You can combine people with similar characteristics into the same persona. Just like your user interviews, focus on their psychology, behavior, and current devices/tools used.

   - **Create user stories and scenarios** – For your product, develop common use cases and add context with backstories for each one (creating scenarios). Of course, the scenarios should account for devices. (e.g. "It's 9PM and Tom is checking his Domino's order on his phone 30 minutes after ordering on the site. He's hungry and tired from a full day, and wants to know when the food will arrive since he wants to see if he can finish the latest House of Cards episode beforehand.)

- **Map out the customer journey** – A customer journey map can be simple or complex, but it focuses on all the major touchpoints before, during, and after service. This gives you a stronger idea of user expectations (and emotions) as they engage with the company across multiple devices and scenarios. That informs you of the right experience to serve at the right time.

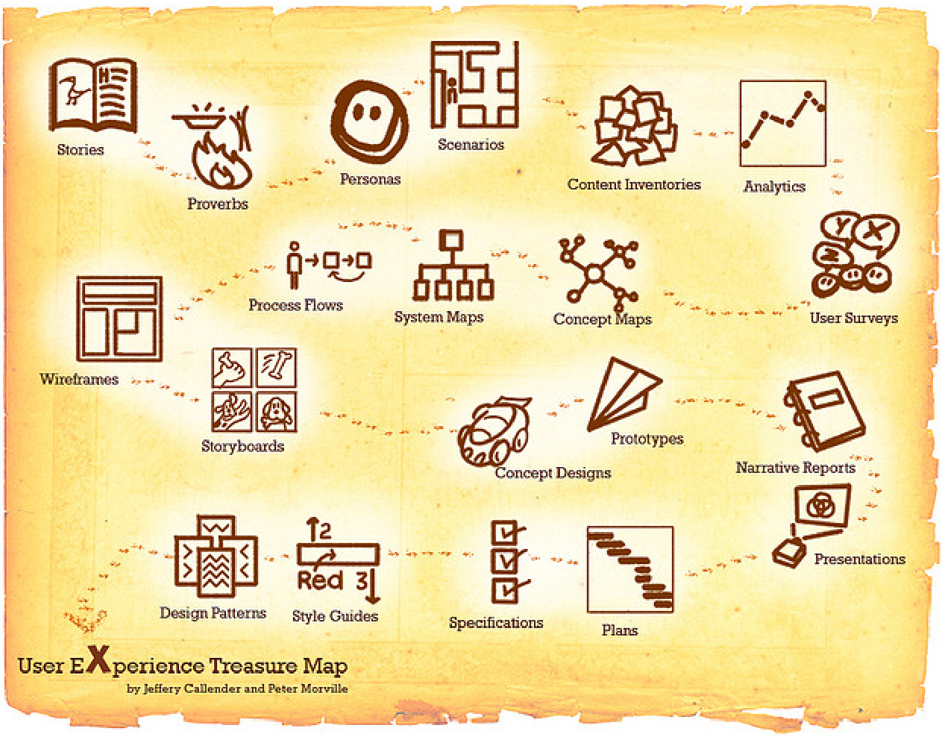


Photo credit: "User Experience Treasure Map." Peter Morville. Creative Commons.

2. See beyond the surface

Web design was never purely aesthetic, but it's requiring an even broader skillset as UX techniques mature. Here's just a few check-points for great web UX design:

- **Does the information architecture make sense?** For example, consistency is required in labeling for top-level and secondary navigation items.

- **Does the website elicit emotional response?** The colors, visuals, and interaction design all must add up to hook the user into exploring the site deeper.

- **Is accessibility addressed correctly?** Even though it might seem like a nice-to-have, accessible sites have real business value: they rank better in Google, access larger audiences, and require less maintenance cost. Check out this helpful accessibility resource center.

- **Is there harmony between text and visual content?** A site's design includes all content. If the tone of the copy doesn't match the visual style, the entire experience starts to dissolve.

Remember that everything is intertwined.

3. Understand that interactions are the root of all UX

Interactions don't just happen when a user clicks something on your site. From the moment a user sees your design, their brain processes visual interactions at the speed of thought.

Here's some tips for designing all the moments shared between the interface and the user:

- **Create flows before pages** – Flows refer to the different paths users take to accomplish their goals. Your interface might be beautiful and usable on a page level, but it doesn't matter unless the path created by pages is efficient. To optimize a site for flow, follow either the writing-first approach or Ryan Singer's shorthand approach.

- **Design an ongoing conversation** – Your interface needs to speak to users and react in a way that feels human. Visual feedback must be prompt (ideally within 0.1 seconds of user actions) and text feedback must be friendly, helpful, and even humorous (in the right context). Doing so adds a layer of delight to the experience, which makes the design much more memorable.

- **Sweat the details** – Even if you're not an interaction designer, know the power of microinteractions as a design tool. Microinteractions occur whenever a user interacts with a design to accomplish a single task, like how the heart button fills with color and bounces when someone favorites a post on Instagram. Well-crafted microinteractions don't just provide instant feedback, they also make a design feel more alive and enticing.

- **Minimize friction** – Friction weighs down interactions, making even the most beautiful interfaces a nightmare to use. Inconsistency, clutter, and confusing functionalities all create friction. Luckily, creating user flows helps you minimize friction since you're working on smoothing out each step of the experience (as well as minimizing the number of steps). On a visual level, chunk out content and use familiar UI patterns to make the design digestible.

- **Know persuasive design** – Tactics like salience (highlighting objects to appear more important than others), anchoring (placing higher price items first so others feel more affordable), and loss aversion (highlighting savings and time limits) all help improve the business value of web designs.

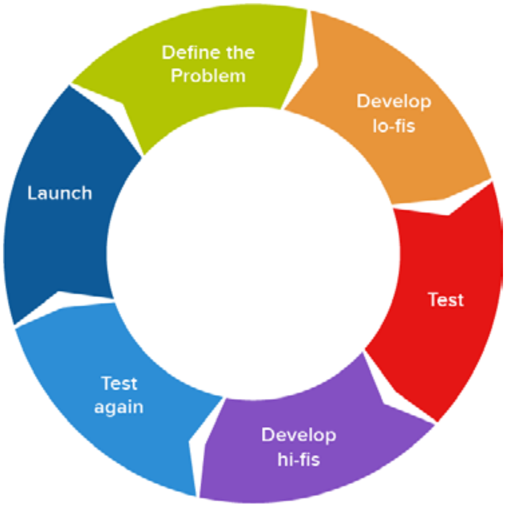
For more tips and tricks, check out these two free e-books:

- *Interaction Design Best Practices: Mastering the Tangibles*
- *Interaction Design Best Practices: Mastering the Intangibles*

4. Prototype early and often

UX is not an exact science, and you should understand that from the start.

Sometimes the users respond universally to certain elements with no rhyme or reason. This blind thinking of their being a "right" and "wrong" way to design lead to the dominance of UI-centric thinking; but in the end it fell. The true strength in web design is in knowing that you don't know.



That's why prototyping is essential – prototyping is the only sure way to gauge success. Usability tests at every iteration – at least – will let you know whether you're on the right track, and what you need to change.

Thanks to technological advancement, we are in our current state able to test and reiterate faster than ever. That's why we recommend rapid prototyping:

- Prototype your site design quickly and roughly, focusing on content structure and user flow more than visual details.
- Test your digital prototype with at least 5 users. Record the testing sessions and send to the team for shared understanding and analysis.
- Refine the visuals with a mid-fi or hi-fi mockup, then create a hi-fi prototype and repeat the test. It's worth mentioning that UXPin integrates with Photoshop and Sketch so you can import mockups for prototyping (no layers flattened).

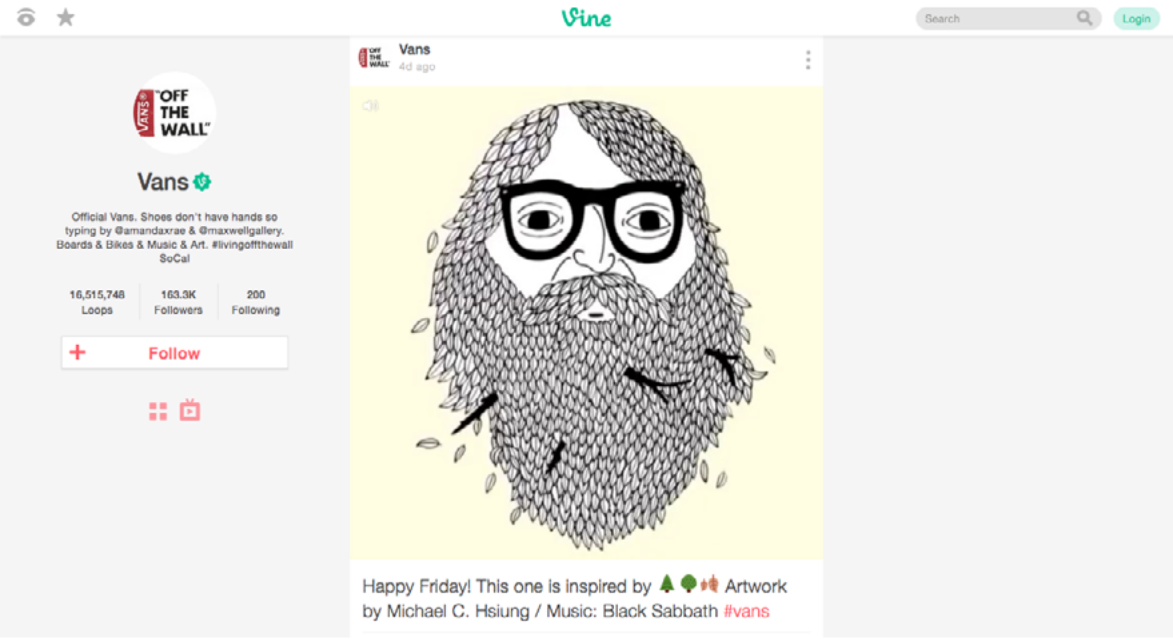
The above process prevents you from getting married to one design.

Examples: Websites That Break the Silo

Now that we've described helpful approaches to more holistic web design, let's examine a few companies who embody the principles.

1. **Vine**

   Our first example is one that not only epitomizes the points from this chapter, but also a model UX that any site can learn from.



Vans

Official Vans. Shoes don't have hands so typing by @amandaxrae & @maxwellgallery. Boards & Bikes & Music & Art. #livingoffthewall SoCal

16,515,748	163.3K	200
Loops	Followers	Following

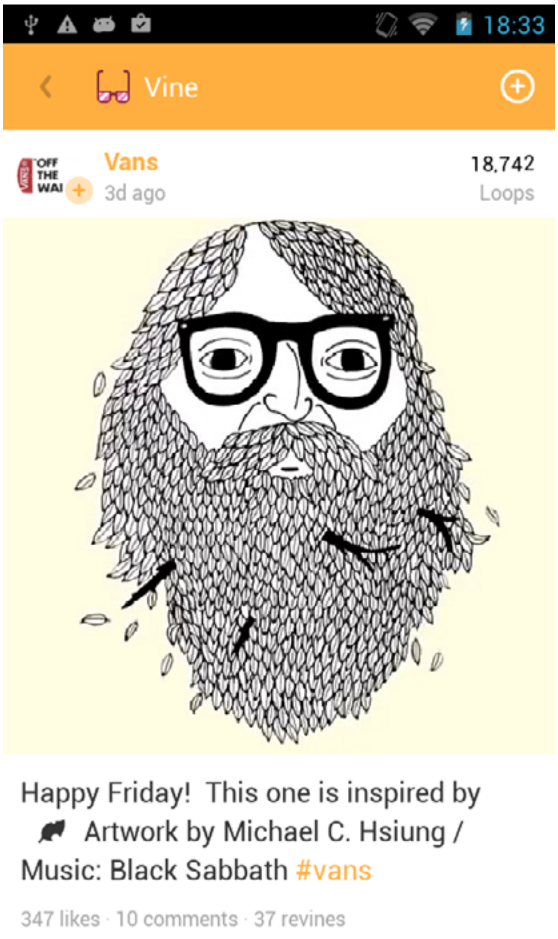
Happy Friday! This one is inspired by 🌲🌳🍂 Artwork by Michael C. Hsiung / Music: Black Sabbath #vans

Photo credit: Vine

Vine has reinvented the online video market. Where YouTube once had a monopoly, Vine created a new niche for itself by condensing the format into short loops of 7-second video snacks. The idea caught on because, let's face it, appealing to shorter attention spans is the direction the internet was already moving.

The service is both self-contained and bite-sized – users can spend as much or as little time on the site or app as they want.

But the service is just the ground floor. The site works equally well on desktop and mobile. While we talk about the significance of a consistent experience across devices in the next chapter (device agnosticism), it's worth mentioning that Vine's UX driving power is not slowed down by the changing UI.



Happy Friday! This one is inspired by Artwork by Michael C. Hsiung / Music: Black Sabbath #vans

Photo credit: *Vine (mobile)*

The Vine mobile app allows you connect with other users the same way as the desktop site. This seamless transition between app and site experience offers a complete package:

- As you browse the site, you're served more of the familiar Youtube experience. Search for content, find the channels you like, then subscribe.

- If you sign into your account, all subscriptions transfer over to the mobile app for viewing on the go.
- The opposite is also true.

Nothing is lost by switching devices – in fact, users are only given more maneuverability to use the service as they want.

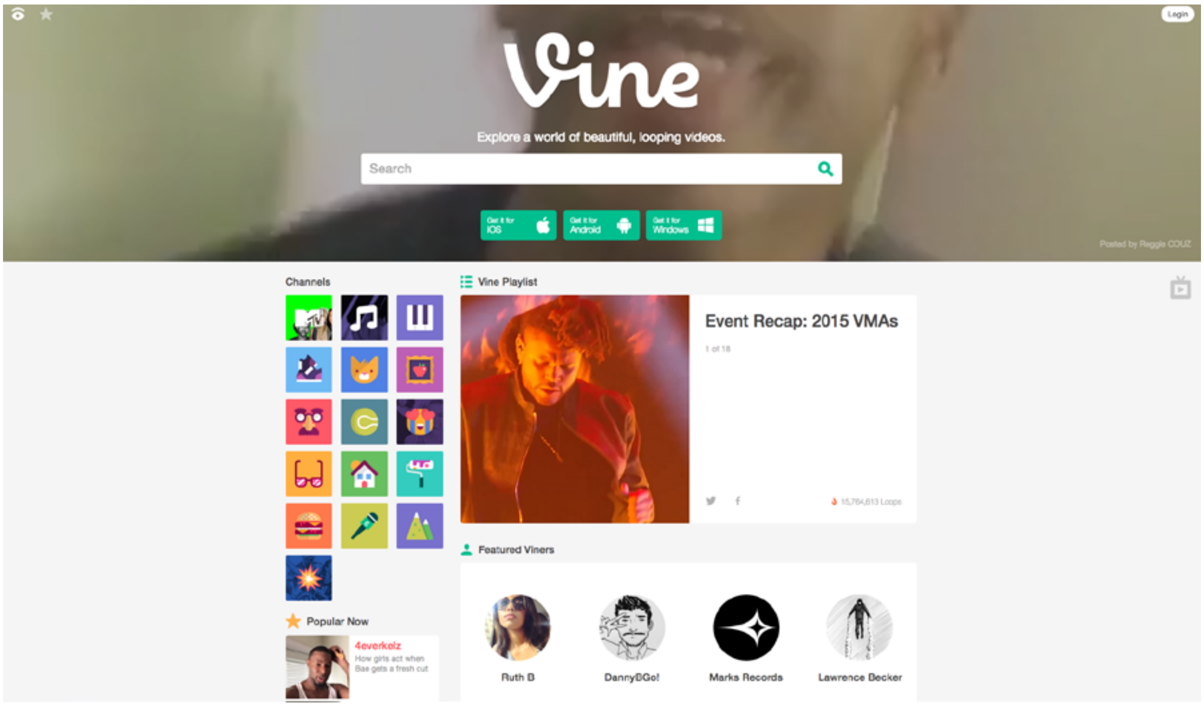


Photo credit: Vine (website)

And the UI itself isn't too shabby. The flat design and casual text set the tone, the long-scrolling format facilitates the appropriate multi-device experience, and the card UI pattern makes everything snackable.

Vine is a fun service, delivering the appropriate experience across web and mobile.

2. VW

Most car sites are nothing more than “glorified car brochures,” according to VW’s project description for the 2014 UX Awards, in which it took the Gold Prize. The new VW page, however, wanted to do something completely different.

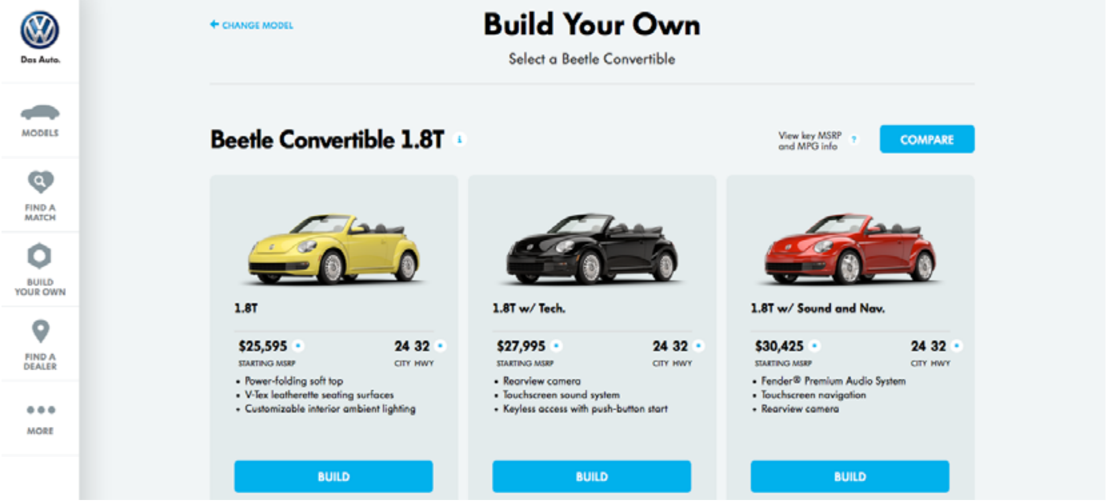


Photo credit: VW

VW allows people to customize their VW car, inside and out, and then find a dealership where the closest match exists – even a used car! This takes full advantage of what the internet offers, as no car brochures (and even competitor sites) can match it.

Again, a new, better service is the backbone of the site, not just sharp UI design. Service is, and always will be, the cornerstone to a good UX. They thought about user goals and designed a website around it, also accounting for offline touchpoints.

And, also like Vine, the UI is quite sleek. While other car sites features only flashy car configurator widgets, VW offers something just as fun, but with real practical value.

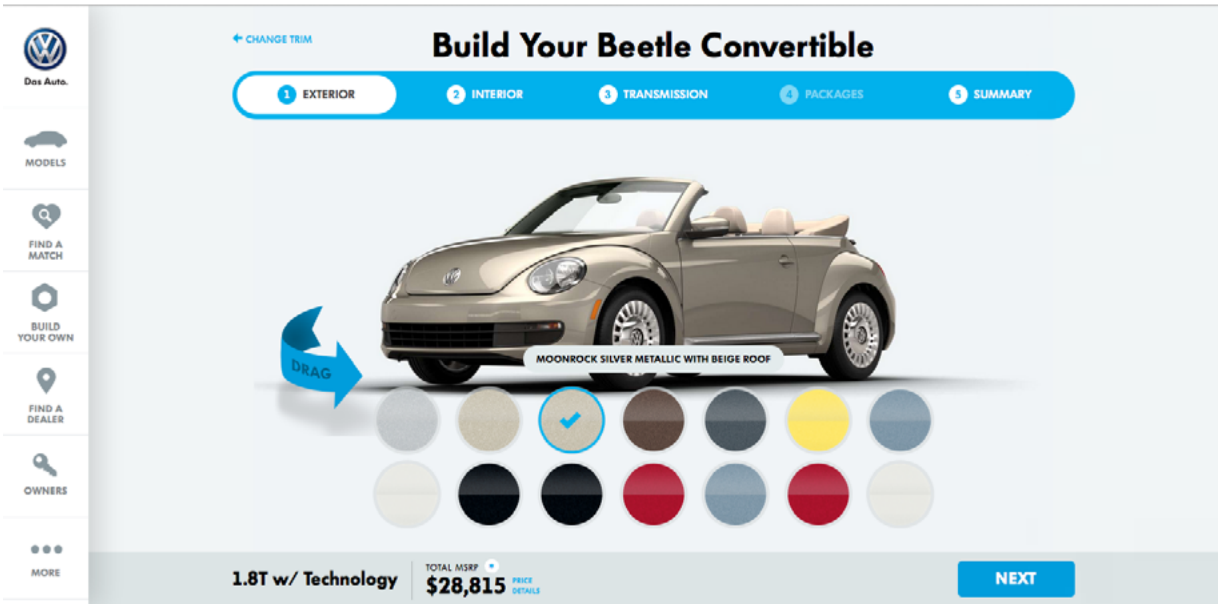
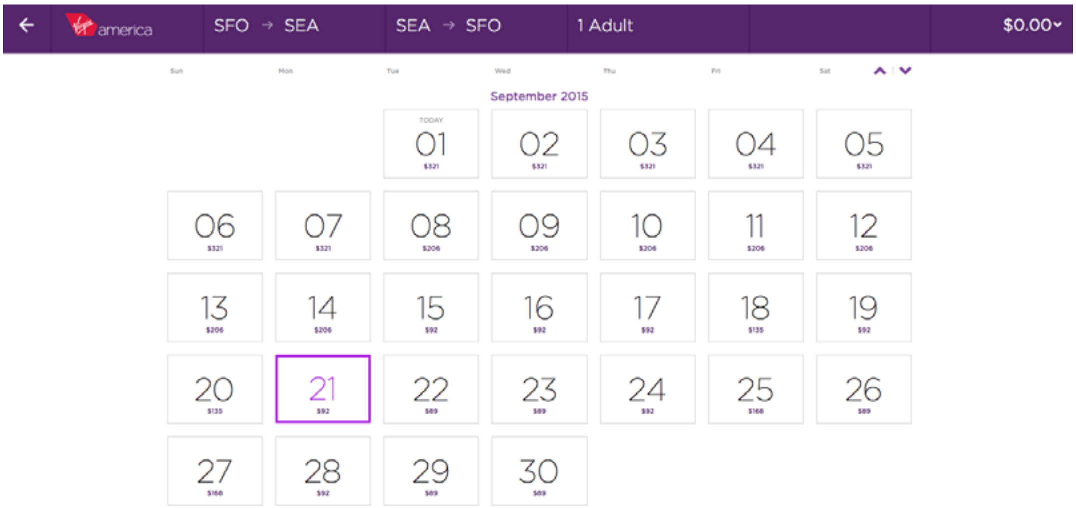


Photo credit: VW

3. Virgin America

Virgin America, too, improved the service they offered in relation to their competitors, and the notable difference was well-received.



← | SFO → SEA | SEA → SFO | 1 Adult

September 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		TODAY 01 $321	02 $321	03 $321	04 $321	05 $321
06 $321	07 $321	08 $206	09 $206	10 $206	11 $206	12 $206
13 $206	14 $206	15 $92	16 $92	17 $92	18 $135	19 $92
20 $135	21 $92	22 $89	23 $89	24 $92	25 $168	26 $89
27 $168	28 $92	29 $89	30 $89			

Photo credit: Virgin America

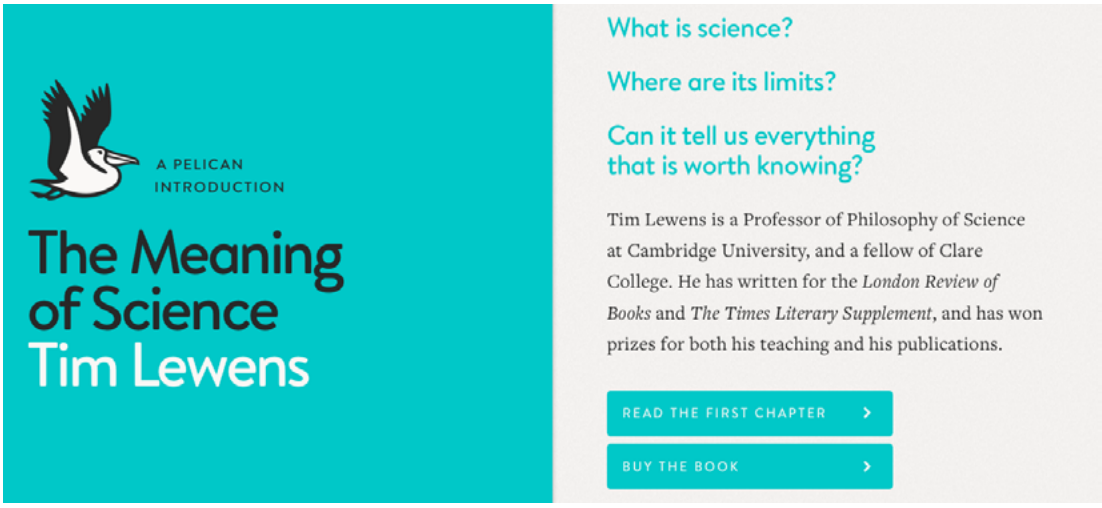
The site – which actually won the Grand Prize at the 2014 UX Awards – was the first fully responsive major airline website, giving users the correct UX regardless of device when ordering plane tickets (an already stressful ordeal).

The CMO of Virgin America Luanne Calvert says that “the goal of the redesign was to better reflect their needs and how people book and manage travel today,” and that the changes were made based on “listening to what travelers liked and didn’t like.”

This shows that the first step in creating a good UX is in understanding users.

4. Pelican Books

When Pelican Books redesigned their site, they followed a lot of the techniques described in *Web UI Design Trends 2015 & 2016* like bright colors, flat design, and minimalism.



The Meaning of Science
Tim Lewens

What is science?

Where are its limits?

Can it tell us everything that is worth knowing?

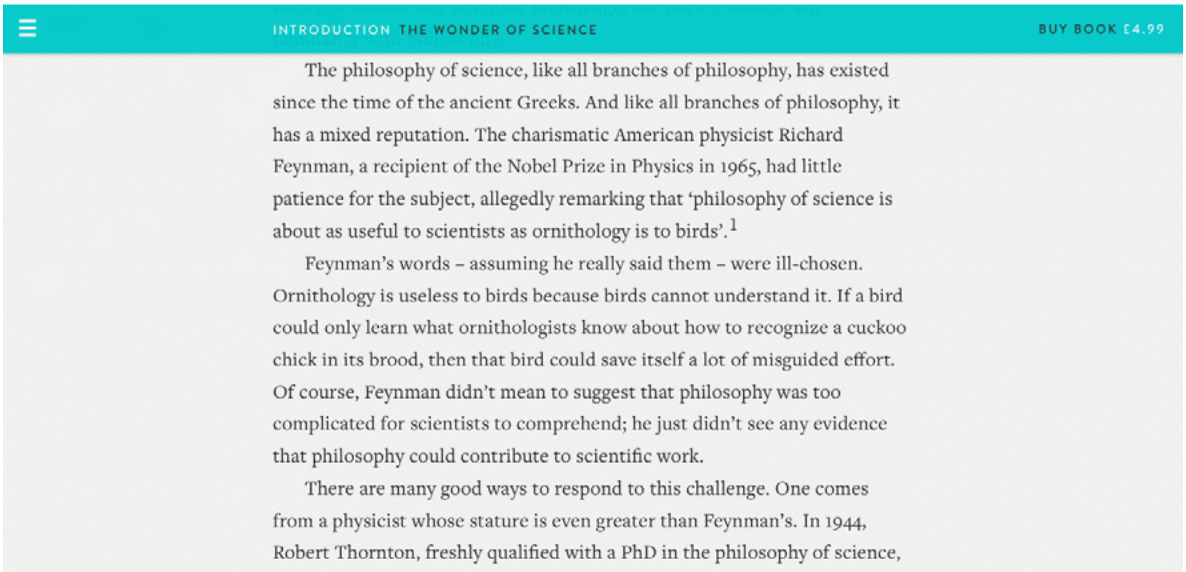
Tim Lewens is a Professor of Philosophy of Science at Cambridge University, and a fellow of Clare College. He has written for the *London Review of Books* and *The Times Literary Supplement*, and has won prizes for both his teaching and his publications.

Photo credit: Pelican Books

This made the site look and feel better. But the changes to the UX are what made the redesign the real success.

The new site allows users to preview entire chapters of books, though this is not a new technique. What’s new is how they do it – by transcribing the chapters directly into the site, in an immersive blog format reminiscent of Medium. This makes readability a thousand times easier than, say, the print scans of Amazon's "Look Inside" feature.

Entire books are written in this format, though you'll have to pay to get the whole text. Still, the site is reimagining the world of online reading. Instead of just "previewing a book", you're experiencing the content in a format that feels personal.



The philosophy of science, like all branches of philosophy, has existed since the time of the ancient Greeks. And like all branches of philosophy, it has a mixed reputation. The charismatic American physicist Richard Feynman, a recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965, had little patience for the subject, allegedly remarking that 'philosophy of science is about as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds'.[1]

Feynman's words – assuming he really said them – were ill-chosen. Ornithology is useless to birds because birds cannot understand it. If a bird could only learn what ornithologists know about how to recognize a cuckoo chick in its brood, then that bird could save itself a lot of misguided effort. Of course, Feynman didn't mean to suggest that philosophy was too complicated for scientists to comprehend; he just didn't see any evidence that philosophy could contribute to scientific work.

There are many good ways to respond to this challenge. One comes from a physicist whose stature is even greater than Feynman's. In 1944, Robert Thornton, freshly qualified with a PhD in the philosophy of science,

Photo credit: *Pelican Books*

Moreover, users can access the preview chapter just as easily on mobile devices. This is a UX decision that not only improves service, but also sales – users get a feel for how to read on their device of choice, further encouraging them to buy.

Conclusion: Design the Ecosystem

Websites are not machines, and so can’t be built with the same compartmentalizing of individual parts. Sure, designers can try, and that’s where the silo method came from in the first place. But there is a better way.

Think of websites as an ecosystem, in which the mightiest tiger and the tiniest insect play equally important roles. Harming or neglecting one element will damage the entirety of the experience. But since this is a lot for one single person to handle, the best approach is teamwork.

Design outside the silo, where everyone is together on solid ground.

Device-Consistent Experiences

New devices come and go every day. The only futureproof strategy is designing fluid experiences that adapt to any device.

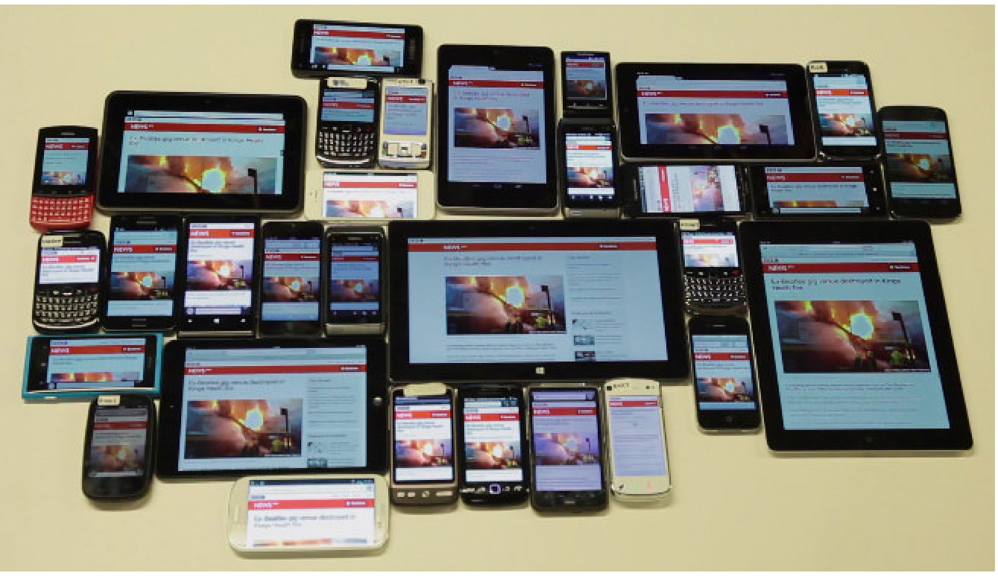


Photo credit: "Prioritizing Devices: Testing and Responsive Web Design." Tom Maslen. Smashing Magazine.

Device consistency is a philosophy that covers principles including creating the correct UX across devices, adopting responsive or adaptive design, and designing around content. We'll explain each of those ideas, but first we'll explain why 2015 signals the decline of M-dot sites.

M-Dot Sites are Dead

Back when mobile browsing was new, M-dot sites made a lot of sense. Their faults could have been chalked up to inexperience – we were scrambling to keep up with users and didn't know any better.

Some years later, though, we certainly know better. Many more effective strategies exist, not to mention that mobile devices became more complex, thanks to tablets and varying screen sizes.

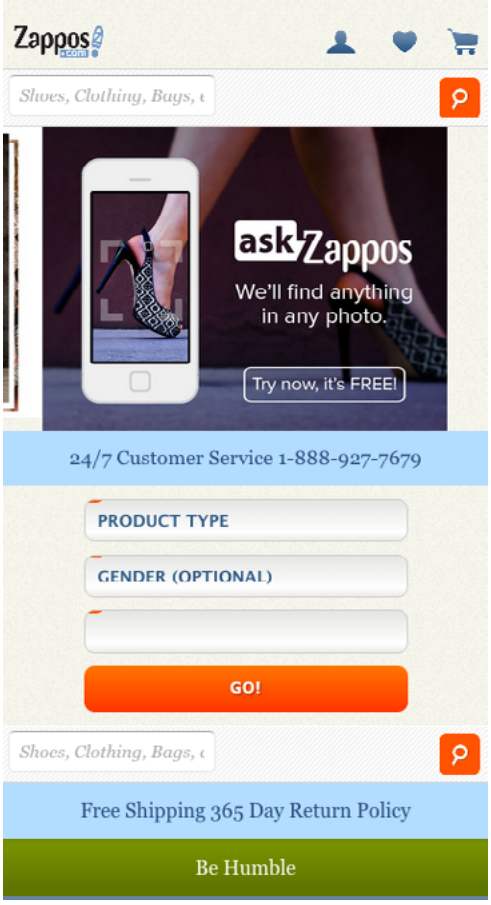


Photo credit: Zappos

This isn't just our speculation, either. Pure Oxygen Labs reports that last year M-dot sites fell 20%, from 79% in 2013 to 59% in 2014, while responsive and adaptive (dynamic serving) sites rose 37% collectively.

At the current rate, M-dot sites are sure to be the minority by the end of 2015, and nothing but a fossil by the end of 2016.

And good riddance, frankly. There's plenty of reasons to abandon M-dot sites:

1. **Users visit the full site anyway** – Web Performance Today's research showed that about a third (35%) of users choose to go to the full site if given the option.

2. **Users spend more time on the full site** – The same research states 5.5 times longer. They also calculated that 79% of revenue from mobile sales came from users on the full site.

3. **SEO/Google trouble** – According to Google's own guidelines, responsive and adaptive sites will likely rank better. Not using an M-dot is a automatic boost in SEO.

4. **Redirect time** – While M-dot sites load faster in theory, the extra time of redirecting from your full site to the M-dot (unless the user types the M-dot's URL) is unnecessary. Alongside the other drawbacks, is it worth it?

5. **Expensive maintenance** – When you add an extra codebase, you also add more maintenance cost in the long-run. You'll either need to deal with twice the work or use a server-side solution, both of which are more expensive than a responsive or adaptive site.

6. **Mobile devices aren't a single screen size** – It's ironic that what was once the greatest strength of mdot sites is now its greatest

weakness. Mdot sites are designed for a specific screen size, but mobile devices range from 320×240 for some smartphones up to 768×1024 (and beyond) for tablets. It just doesn’t make sense to serve the same layout to all those screens.

Bottom line: M-dot sites are a bad idea because they cost more and create inconsistent experiences.

Consistent Experience Across Devices

Providing a consistent experience is the heart and soul of device agnosticism. As we mentioned in the last chapter, the UX is what appeals to people – while UI must adapt to different devices, the UX can, and should, remain rock solid.

1. **Why?**

   Most people’s perception of “mobile users” is a bit off, perhaps because of the word “mobile.” But, according to Anna Dahlström’s GeekGirl presentation (which sourced Think with Google), 77% of mobile browsing occurs at home. This suggests that mobile browsing isn’t out of necessity, but convenience.

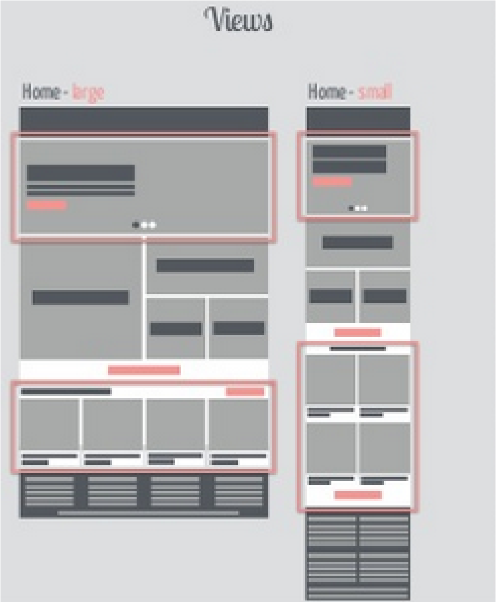
   It also suggests that most mobile browsing isn’t down in place of desktop browsing, but in conjunction with it. In fact, the same presentation cited that 90% of users started a task on one device and completed it on another. For example, a person might idly wonder about buying a product, check what’s available on their smartphone because it's convenient, and then when they get serious switch to desktop to complete the transaction.

From these statistics, it’s easy to understand the importance of a consistent experience, not just as an extra consideration, but for completing a conversion or sale.

2. **How?**

Let’s examine some strategies to achieve more consistent designs across devices.

- **Visual Consistency.** On the surface level, visual consistency ensures that your site maintains its personality and tone regardless of device. The same colors and graphics, coupled with the same tone of voice, helps create a familiar experience wherever users log in.

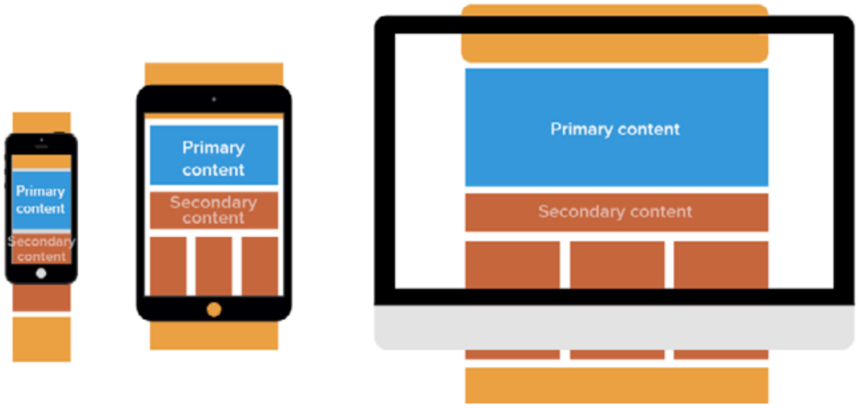


- **Flexible Layout.** When working on web designs, ensure that the layout scales appropriately. Obviously, the same site doesn’t (and absolutely shouldn't) look the same on every device. But the relative placement of menus, search functions, and key calls-to-action (like logins) should match across devices.

Users become accustomed to location quickly, and don't want to relearn or switch their mental mapping.

For practical advice, try sketching out the ideal layouts for the different devices and comparing them for similarities. Dahlström's slideshow (mentioned above) gives a thorough explanation of a modular approach to device-agnostic design.

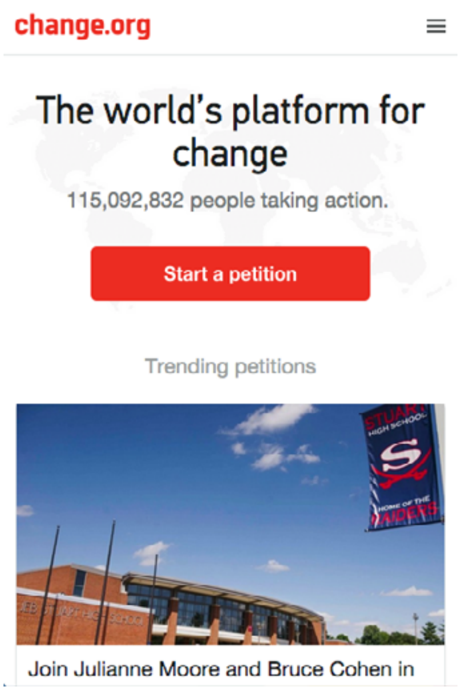
- **Focus on context.** Content suitable on the desktop is not always suitable for mobile. For instance, navigation can be stripped down in a mobile view to simple labels (or even shelved away in a navigation drawer), but they should certainly be fleshed out as you scale up to a tablet or desktop (e.g. horizontal or vertical menus).



When you keep context in mind, you ensure that the design isn't just consistent but also *appropriate*.

Take a look at the progressive view of Change.org (below).

Smartphone View



The world's platform for change

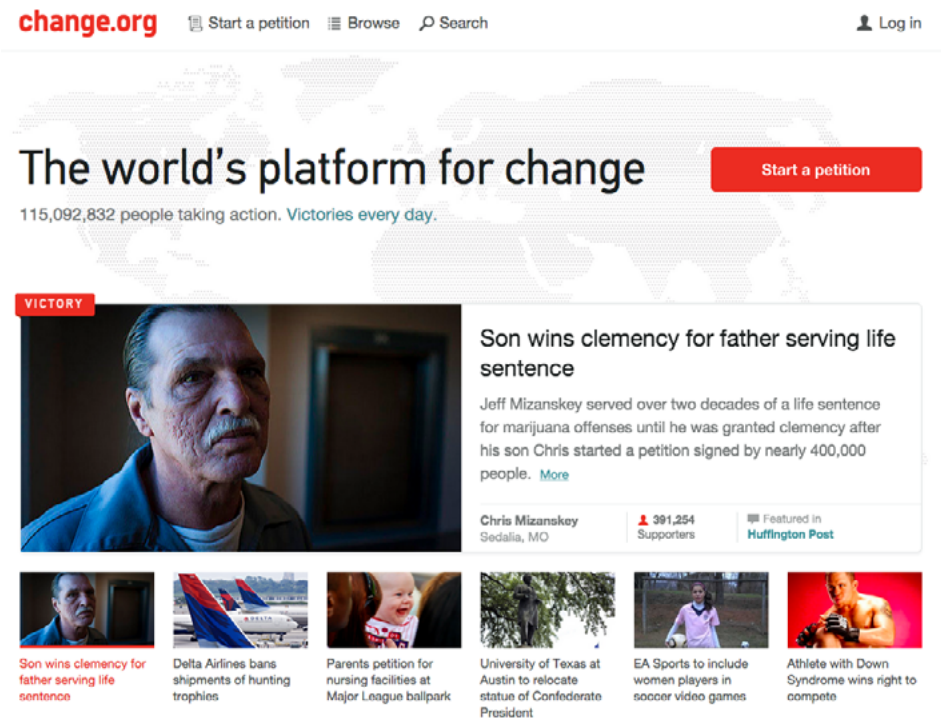
115,092,832 people taking action.

Join Julianne Moore and Bruce Cohen in

As a service dedicated to helping people sign and create petitions, it makes sense that the mobile view focuses almost entirely on that goal. The navigation is neatly tucked away and the call-to-action and content stream take priority for people to either browse relevant petitions or create one right away.

The layout matches how users will likely interact with the site. Either tap to create a petition, or scroll down to find one that matches your interests. Even if you tap the hamburger menu, you can only "Log In" or "Start a Petition". Simple design for simple user flows.

Tablet View



change.org Start a petition Browse Search Log in

The world's platform for change

115,092,832 people taking action. Victories every day.

Start a petition

VICTORY

Son wins clemency for father serving life sentence

Jeff Mizanskey served over two decades of a life sentence for marijuana offenses until he was granted clemency after his son Chris started a petition signed by nearly 400,000 people. More

Chris Mizanskey
Sedalia, MO

391,254
Supporters

Featured in
Huffington Post

Son wins clemency for father serving life sentence

Delta Airlines bans shipments of hunting trophies

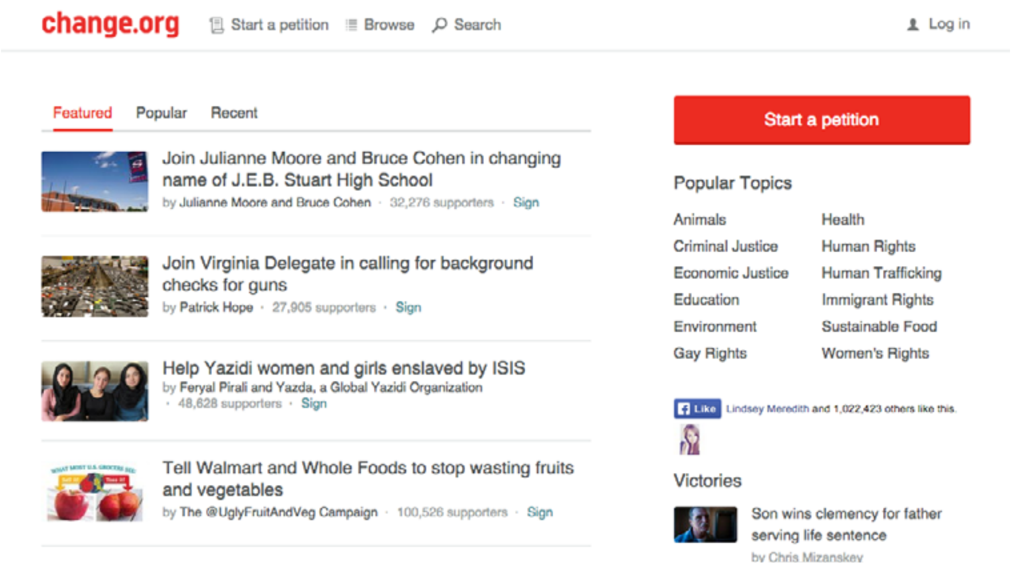
Parents petition for nursing facilities at Major League ballpark

University of Texas at Austin to relocate statue of Confederate President

EA Sports to include women players in soccer video games

Athlete with Down Syndrome wins right to compete

As we move to the tablet view, the navigation expands and the layout shifts to draw attention to featured petitions. Notice how the "Browse" function is now available. The option makes sense for tablet since the mobile screen can't support such a large list of content.



change.org Start a petition Browse Search Log in

Featured Popular Recent

Join Julianne Moore and Bruce Cohen in changing name of J.E.B. Stuart High School
by Julianne Moore and Bruce Cohen · 32,276 supporters · Sign

Join Virginia Delegate in calling for background checks for guns
by Patrick Hope · 27,905 supporters · Sign

Help Yazidi women and girls enslaved by ISIS
by Feryal Pirali and Yazda, a Global Yazidi Organization · 48,628 supporters · Sign

Tell Walmart and Whole Foods to stop wasting fruits and vegetables
by The @UglyFruitAndVeg Campaign · 100,526 supporters · Sign

Start a petition

Popular Topics

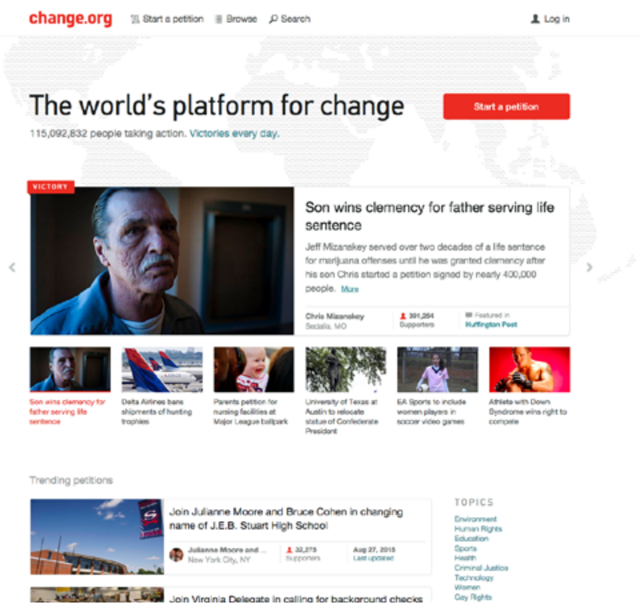
Animals
Criminal Justice
Economic Justice
Education
Environment
Gay Rights
Health
Human Rights
Human Trafficking
Immigrant Rights
Sustainable Food
Women's Rights

Like Lindsey Meredith and 1,022,423 others like this.

Victories

Son wins clemency for father serving life sentence
by Chris Mizanskey

Desktop View



change.org Start a petition Browse Search Log in

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EA Sports to include women players in soccer video games

Athlete with Down Syndrome wins right to compete

Trending petitions

Join Julianne Moore and Bruce Cohen in changing name of J.E.B. Stuart High School

Julianne Moore and ...
New York City, NY

32,275
Supporters

Aug 27, 2015
Last updated

Join Virginia Delegate in calling for background checks

TOPICS

Environment
Human Rights
Education
Sports
Health
Criminal Justice
Technology
Women
Gay Rights

Finally, you see how the desktop view adds a list of Topics, which makes sense since people would likely click them with a mouse. Add that list to a tablet view (or even worse, a smartphone view) and it would be a nightmare from an interaction design standpoint. Imagine trying to tap each of the tiny links.

Across all 3 views, the core content remains the same and the user goals are always within reach. The differences lie in how supplementary options are incorporated for device contexts.

Responsive and Adaptive Design

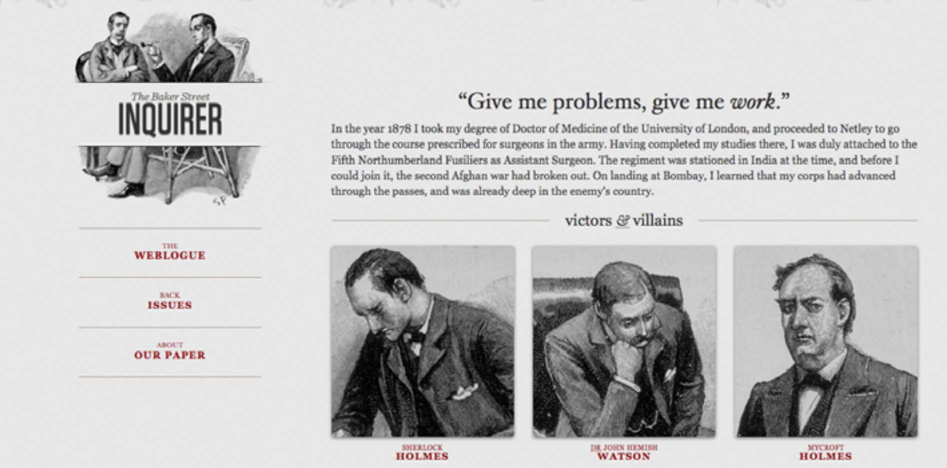
When designing sites for device agnosticism, you need to alter to your approach. In recent years, two methods have emerged to address the problem:

- **Responsive Design (RWD)** – Designing a site or app with certain properties (i.e., fluid grid layouts) that allow it to work on all devices.
- **Adaptive Design (AWD, or Dynamic Serving)** – Designing a site with conditions that change depending on the device (i.e., multiple fixed width layouts).

Not only do these two methods safeguard against your product falling flat on certain devices, they also fit perfectly with the mobile-first approach, which we'll discuss below.

1. Responsive Design

Flexibility is the name of the game for responsive design. Everything must be flexible: layouts, image sizes, text blocks – everything. This malleability, combined with smart use of CSS media queries, gives your site the fluidity it needs to fit inside any container.

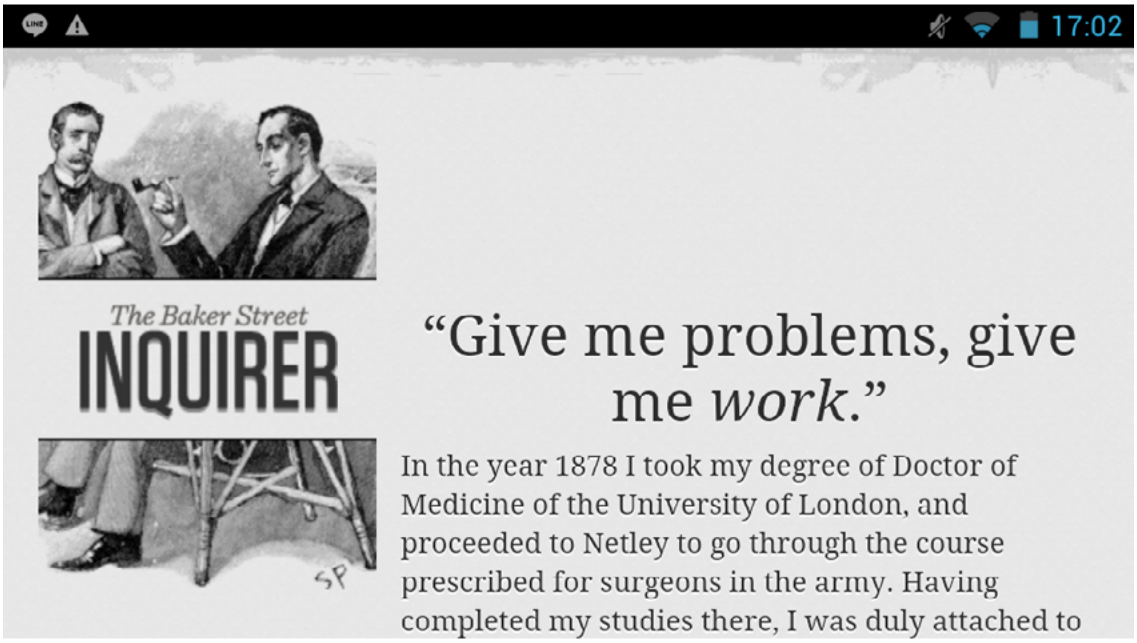


"Give me problems, give me *work*."

In the year 1878 I took my degree of Doctor of Medicine of the University of London, and proceeded to Netley to go through the course prescribed for surgeons in the army. Having completed my studies there, I was duly attached to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers as Assistant Surgeon. The regiment was stationed in India at the time, and before I could join it, the second Afghan war had broken out. On landing at Bombay, I learned that my corps had advanced through the passes, and was already deep in the enemy's country.

Photo credit: A List Apart: A Flexible Grid

A List Apart provides a sample responsive design page, The Baker Street Inquirer. You can play around with the site on different devices to see how it changes.



"Give me problems, give me *work*."

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Photo credit: A List Apart: A Flexible Grid (mobile)

RWD gets its name because it responds to the device. Whatever size or system it uses – or even the same device's landscape or portrait view – the site shifts the layout appropriately. Building a site in this way, too, consolidates your work into just one project to manage.

2. RWD Best Practices

- **Flexible images** – Both integral and tricky, fluid images are non-negotiable for responsive design – not only for size, but for cropping (notice how the logo for The Baker Street Inquirer is slightly cropped for the mobile version). For help on the finer points, Ethan Marcotte gives a thorough tutorial.

- **Scalar Vector Graphics** – When you can, use SVGs for the best clarity no matter the device. Unlike raster graphics, SVGs alter their resolution based on image paths, not pixels, so they remain the same at any size.

- **Pay attention to breakpoints** – Knowing breakpoints are the technical requirements for a successful responsive design. For a quick reference guide, read Media Queries for Common Device Breakpoints.

- **Card Interfaces** – The card UI pattern can save a lot of headaches since the rectangular shapes act as "content containers" that are easier to shift around.

- **Keep only what is necessary** – A helpful best practice for any site, but especially in RWD. Think of it like trying to fit the same amount of luggage into different sized suitcases – the less luggage you have, the easier it will be. Responsive-friendliness (and performance) is actually part of the reason why minimalist interfaces are so popular nowadays.

- **Prioritize and hide content appropriately** – Desktop screen sizes offer breathing room that smartphone screens do not. Take advantage of hidden controls. For example, to reduce the number of elements that require restructuring, try progressive disclosure.

- **Large clickable area for buttons** – Fitts's Law (explained in *Interaction Design Best Practices: Book I*) states that the larger clickable area in a button, the easier the user can interact with it. This hold extra weight when the button size fluctuates.

- **Account for gesture and hover features** – Gesture and hover features are unique to their respective devices, but users love them because they enhance the experience. Factor both into your design, for example, a hover animation on desktop can become a touch animation for mobile.

For more information, including advice and help with the coding, read Kayla Knight's guidelines for responsive design. Or, if you want to jump right in but need help with CSS, check out these CSS media query guides below:

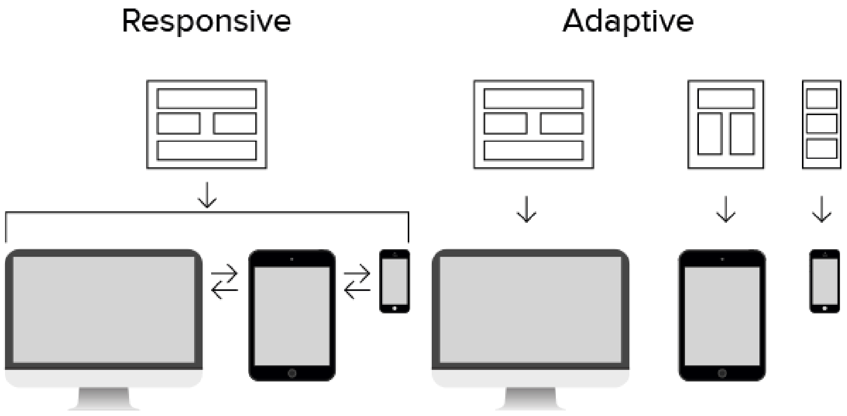
- Use CSS media queries for responsiveness – Pete LePage
- Media Query-less Design, Content-based Breakpoints & Tweakpoints – Dave Olsen

3. Adaptive Design

For more control than RWD sites, some designers prefer adaptive design, where they essentially design different sites for different categories of devices. Typically AWD sites have up to six variations, based on screen width:

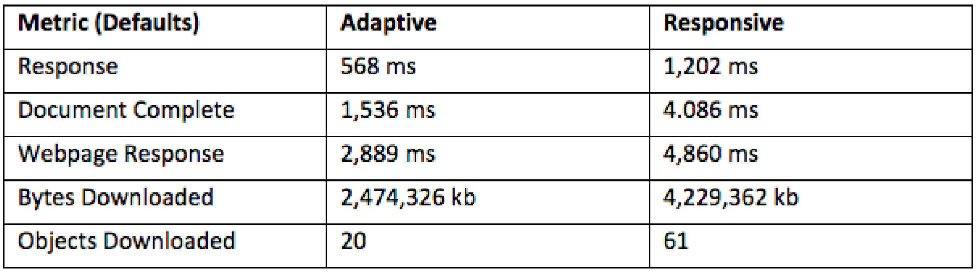
- 320
- 480
- 760
- 960
- 1200
- 1600

With AWD, functionality plays a bigger role. Designers can create entirely new interfaces around a device's attributes, such as emphasizing touch controls, or the large canvas for desktop backgrounds.



AWD sites also reduce loading time.

Think about it: if you design a mobile site without any of the elements a desktop site requires, there's just less to load. In fact, Catchpoint tested loading times in WordPress for a responsive theme and an adaptive one (using Wiziapp). The results favor AWD:



Metric (Defaults)	Adaptive	Responsive
Response	568 ms	1,202 ms
Document Complete	1,536 ms	4.086 ms
Webpage Response	2,889 ms	4,860 ms
Bytes Downloaded	2,474,326 kb	4,229,362 kb
Objects Downloaded	20	61

Photo credit: UXPin Blog

4. AWD Best Practices

- **Maintain consistency** – Don't let the freedom go to your head. Remember that a consistent UX across devices is crucial, so maintain a common thread between devices, such as the general relationship between elements.

- **Use a grid** – A 12-column framework is preferred with consistent margin and gutter widths that align to a baseline grid. Grids can be full-width or centered.

Responsive web design is better for the user since the experience is tailored specifically for their view, but adaptive web design isn't a bad compromise at all if you're on a time crunch and still want a mobile-friendly experience. For example, designing for 3 device breakpoints is better than a desktop/mdot site approach and requires less work than responsive. It won't create as fluid of an experience, however.

Mobile-First Design

The mobile-first approach is exactly as it sounds: designing for the smallest screen and working your way up. It is one of the best strategies to create a responsive or adaptive design.

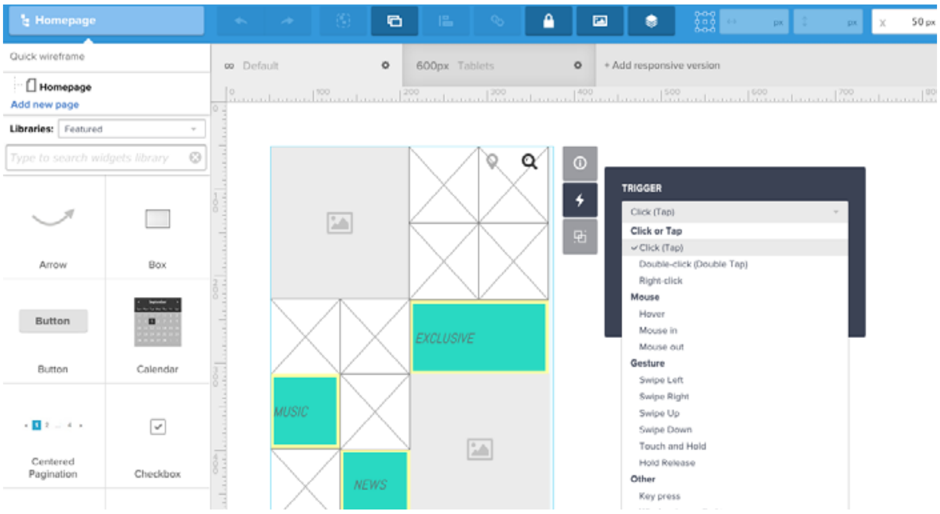


Photo credit: UXPin

- **The mobile-first approach is a tenet of progressive enhancement.** It is the ideology that mobile design, as the hardest, should be done first. Once the mobile design questions are answered, designing for other devices will be easier. What it boils down to is that, the smallest of the designs will have only the essential features, so right away you have designed the heart of your UX.

- **The opposite approach is graceful degradation.** This incorporates all of the complexities right from the start, then strips them away later for smaller devices. The problem with graceful degradation is that when you build the all-inclusive design right from the start, the core and supplementary elements merge and become harder to distinguish and separate. The entire philosophy also treats mobile design as more of an afterthought since you're "cutting down" the experience.

We, along with many others, strongly recommend progressive enhancement with a mobile-first approach.

1. Mobile-First = Content-First

If your site is good on a mobile device, it translates better to all devices. More important, though, is that the mobile-first approach is also a content-first approach. Mobile has the most limitations, screen size and bandwidth to name a few, and so designing within these parameters force you to prioritize content ruthlessly.

The mobile-first approach organically leads to a design that's more content-focused, and therefore user-focused. The heart of the site is content – that's what the users are there for.

One caveat, though, is that mobile users sometimes require different content than desktop users. Device-specific content can be gauged by considering context – what, in a given situation and a given environment, will your user appreciate more. The best way to plan ahead for these is creating user scenarios.

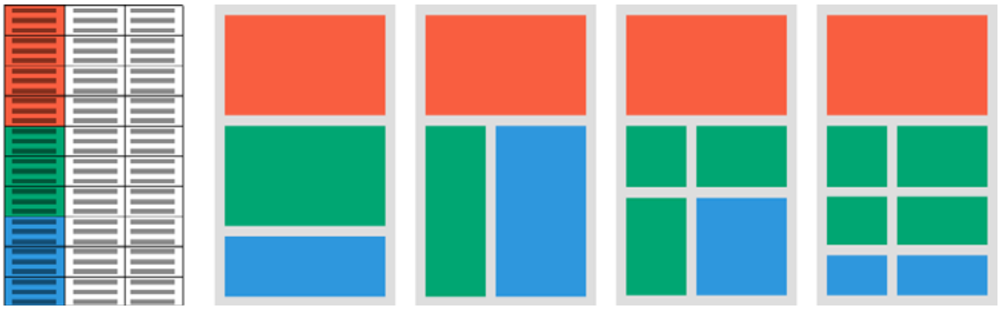


Photo credit: UXPin

Another advantage to mobile-first approach is that the small-screen breakpoints can better fit around the content. Again, the alternative is worse: having to squeeze an already plump design into a tiny framework. But with the mobile-first approach, the breakpoints develop naturally around content, so you don't need any awkward edits.

2. The Mobile-First Process

We'll describe a process that helps our designers at UXPin.

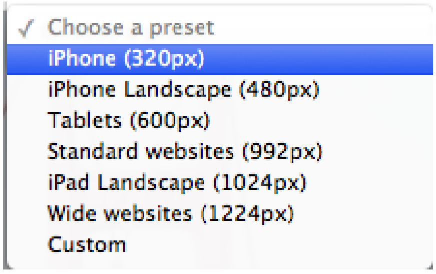


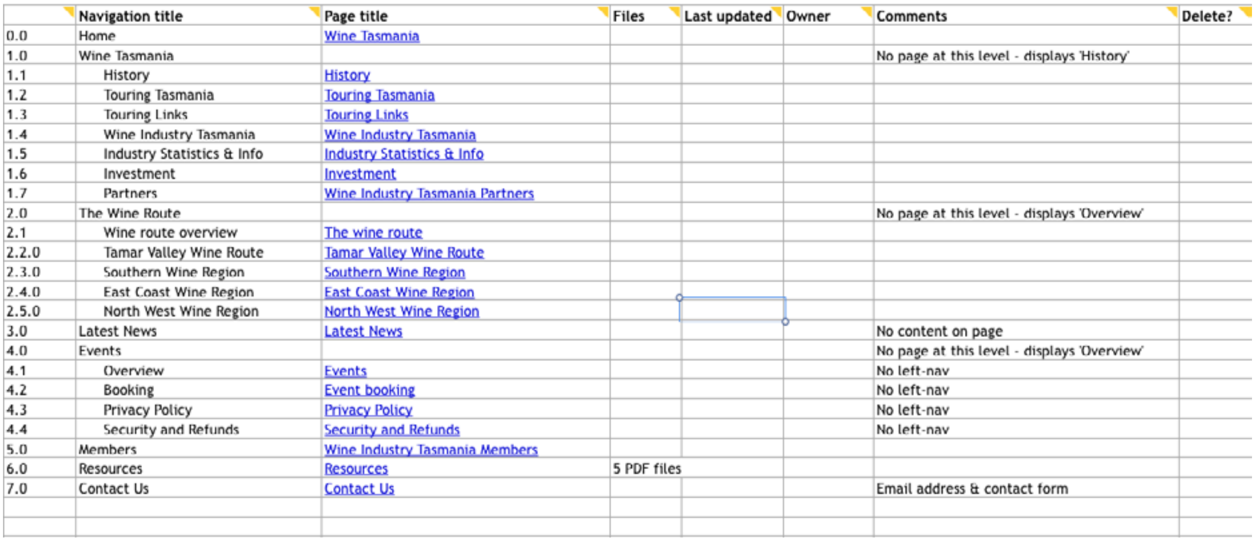
Photo credit: UXPin

As usual, wireframing is a recommended early step to most efficiently structure your layout. When wireframing or prototyping, we use the responsive breakpoint menu streamlines the process of moving to different screen sizes, starting with the smallest.

These presets layout the proper screen size for you, so you can wireframe keeping only the content in mind.

Our procedure follows these steps:

1. **Content Inventory** – This is a spreadsheet or equivalent document containing all the elements you want to include.



	Navigation title	Page title	Files	Last updated	Owner	Comments	Delete?
0.0	Home	Wine Tasmania					
1.0	Wine Tasmania					No page at this level - displays 'History'	
1.1	History	History					
1.2	Touring Tasmania	Touring Tasmania					
1.3	Touring Links	Touring Links					
1.4	Wine Industry Tasmania	Wine Industry Tasmania					
1.5	Industry Statistics & Info	Industry Statistics & Info					
1.6	Investment	Investment					
1.7	Partners	Wine Industry Tasmania Partners					
2.0	The Wine Route					No page at this level - displays 'Overview'	
2.1	Wine route overview	The wine route					
2.2.0	Tamar Valley Wine Route	Tamar Valley Wine Route					
2.3.0	Southern Wine Region	Southern Wine Region					
2.4.0	East Coast Wine Region	East Coast Wine Region					
2.5.0	North West Wine Region	North West Wine Region					
3.0	Latest News	Latest News				No content on page	
4.0	Events					No page at this level - displays 'Overview'	
4.1	Overview	Events				No left-nav	
4.2	Booking	Event booking				No left-nav	
4.3	Privacy Policy	Privacy Policy				No left-nav	
4.4	Security and Refunds	Security and Refunds				No left-nav	
5.0	Members	Wine Industry Tasmania Members					
6.0	Resources	Resources	5 PDF files				
7.0	Contact Us	Contact Us				Email address & contact form	

Photo credit: Maadmob

2. **Visual Hierarchy** – Prioritize the elements in the content inventory and determine how to display the most important elements prominently.

3. **Design with the smallest breakpoints and then scale up** – Build the mobile wireframe first, then use that as the model for larger breakpoints. Expand the screen until there's too much white space.

4. **Enlarge touch targets** – Fingers are much wider than pixel-precise mouse cursors, and so need larger elements on which to tap. At the time of this writing, Apple recommends 44 x 44 points square for touch targets. Give hyperlinks plenty of space and slightly enlarge buttons to ensure that users don't need to tap twice.

5. **Don't count on hovers** – It almost goes without saying, but designers often rely on hover and mouseover effects in their interactive work. If you're thinking mobile-friendly, don't. There is no hover control for fingertips yet.

6. **Think "app"** – Mobile users are accustomed to motion and a modicum of control in their experience. Think about off-canvas navigation, expandible widgets, AJAX calls, or other elements on the screen with which users can interact without refreshing the page.

7. **Avoid large graphics** – Landscape photos and complex graphics don't display well when your screen is only a few inches across. Cater to mobile users with images that are readable on handheld screens.

8. **Test it in a real device** – Nothing beats discovering for yourself how usable a website is (or isn't). Step away from your desktop/laptop computer and load up your product on a real phone or tablet. Tap through pages. Is the site easy to navigate? Does it load in a timely fashion? Are the text and graphics easy to read?

This is just a basic outline. For the complete guide to our process, download the free *Content Wireframing for Responsive Design*.

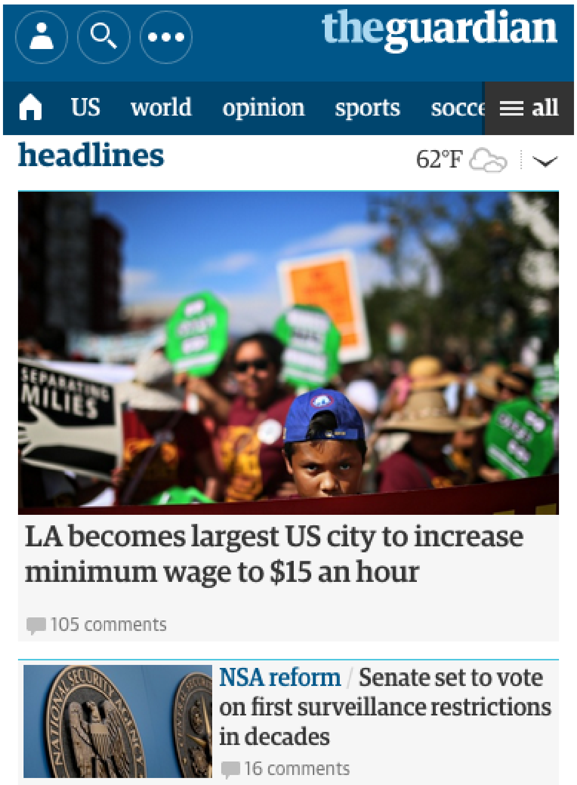
Examples: Consistent UX Across Devices

1. The Guardian

The site for the famous British newspaper The Guardian is a great example of mobile-first device consistency.

In keeping with our own advice, let's start the analysis with the smallest screen.

Smartphone View



theguardian

US world opinion sports socce ≡ all

headlines 62°F

LA becomes largest US city to increase minimum wage to $15 an hour

105 comments

NSA reform / Senate set to vote on first surveillance restrictions in decades

16 comments

Photo credit: The Guardian

The smartphone view is cohesive and inviting, with all the essential elements presented in a clear visual hierarchy.

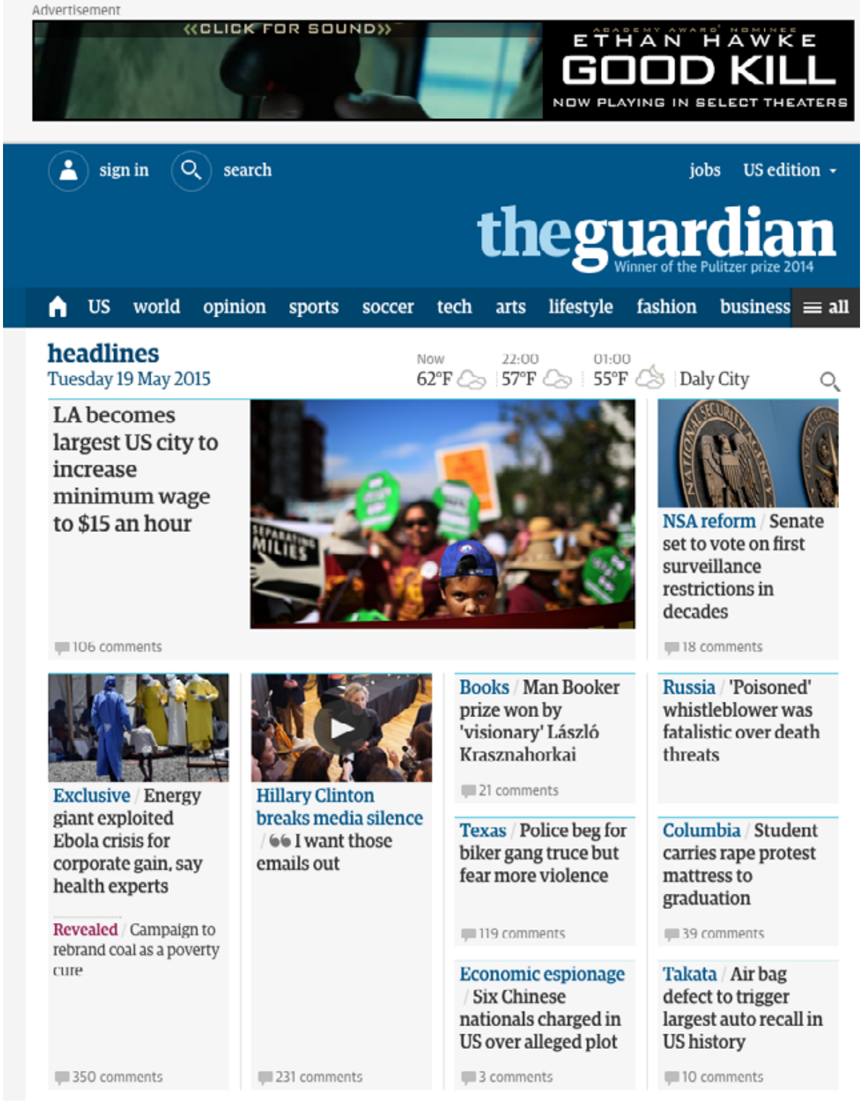
- Right at the top, the necessities are in the banner, with login, search, and the site's title.
- Directly below are the most popular navigation categories (home, "US," "world," etc.) for easy access. Additional categories are hidden in the hamburger menu (following the principle of progressive disclosure). It's a fine balance because placing all categories into the hamburger menu limits searchability for the whole interface.
- The features story, with its enticing image, takes up most of the room, showing that it's the most important element. And yet, with a quick scroll, the user can access any number of secondary stories. This facilitates browsing, but leaves some control in the hands of the designer.

No space is wasted on the mobile version, too – even the white space opposite the "headlines" title features weather information, a little extra something that's a nice touch.

Let's see how this compares to the tablet version below.

Tablet View

- At the top, the banner remains the same, but the tablet offers more room for additional elements ("jobs" and the country edition), text titles for the icons, and a subheading to the guardian's logo/brand name to give it extra social proof. The hamburger menu remains, although there are more categories listed than only the most popular.



LA becomes largest US city to increase minimum wage to $15 an hour

106 comments

NSA reform / Senate set to vote on first surveillance restrictions in decades

18 comments

Exclusive / Energy giant exploited Ebola crisis for corporate gain, say health experts

Revealed / Campaign to rebrand coal as a poverty cure

350 comments

Hillary Clinton breaks media silence / " I want those emails out

231 comments

Books / Man Booker prize won by 'visionary' László Krasznahorkai

21 comments

Texas / Police beg for biker gang truce but fear more violence

119 comments

Economic espionage / Six Chinese nationals charged in US over alleged plot

3 comments

Russia / 'Poisoned' whistleblower was fatalistic over death threats

Columbia / Student carries rape protest mattress to graduation

39 comments

Takata / Air bag defect to trigger largest auto recall in US history

10 comments

Photo credit: The Guardian

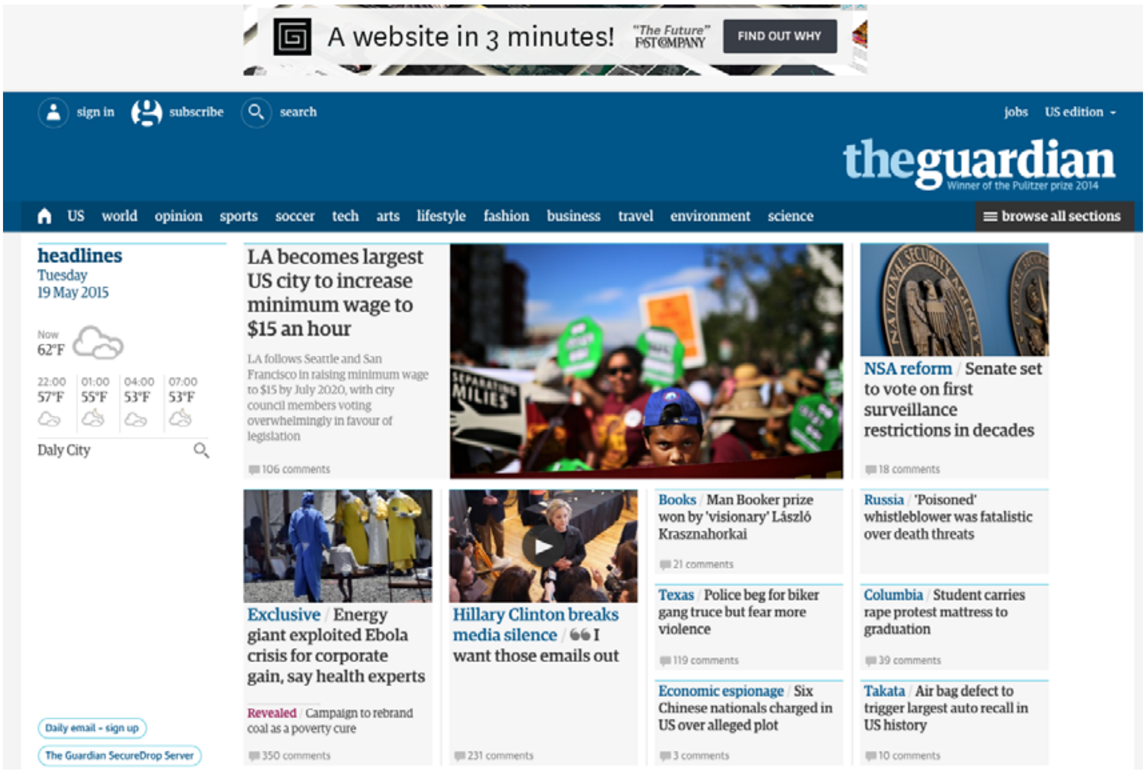
- The biggest difference is that the tablet offers a lot more stories to choose from, and breaks the single column organization. This creative use of the card UI pattern allows the designers to assign more priority to certain stories ("L.A. becomes...") using size, while still keeping the site tidy.

- The tablet version can even afford an ad at the top. Moreover, the weather data is elaborated, and there's even room for the full date, a newspaper staple.

All in all, the tablet version feels like a roomier, more luxurious version of the smartphone screen. How does that look next to the desktop version?

Desktop View

Let's take a look:



headlines
Tuesday
19 May 2015

Now 62°F

22:00	01:00	04:00	07:00
57°F	55°F	53°F	53°F

Daly City

LA becomes largest US city to increase minimum wage to $15 an hour

LA follows Seattle and San Francisco in raising minimum wage to $15 by July 2020, with city council members voting overwhelmingly in favour of legislation

106 comments

NSA reform / Senate set to vote on first surveillance restrictions in decades

18 comments

Exclusive / Energy giant exploited Ebola crisis for corporate gain, say health experts

Revealed / Campaign to rebrand coal as a poverty cure

350 comments

Hillary Clinton breaks media silence / ❝ I want those emails out

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3 comments

Russia / 'Poisoned' whistleblower was fatalistic over death threats

Columbia / Student carries rape protest mattress to graduation

39 comments

Takata / Air bag defect to trigger largest auto recall in US history

10 comments

Photo credit: The Guardian

The full desktop view reveals the true mastery of the site. What the Guardian does right across all devices is consistency – all three sites deliver the same overall experience. All the versions are scroll-based, all use the same style of cards, all have the same brand banner at the top and the key navigation elements in the same places.

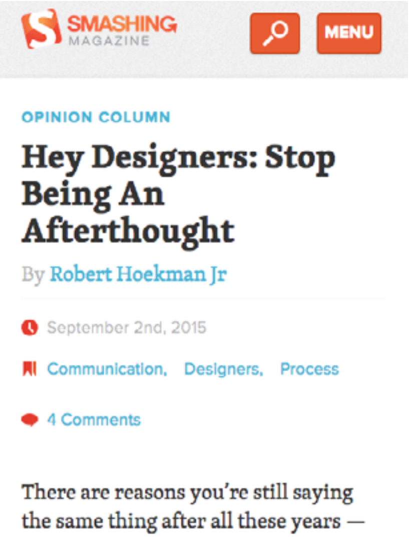
The biggest difference is that the larger screens feature more information, from more available story cards to more complete weather details. The core content, however, is accessible on any device.

The site doesn't look the same across each device, but it definitely feels the same. Users familiar with only one version will still feel comfortable using another.

2. Smashing Magazine

With articles advising designers on how to create better mobile experiences, naturally Smashing Magazine follows their own advice.

Smartphone View



OPINION COLUMN

Hey Designers: Stop Being An Afterthought

By Robert Hoekman Jr

September 2nd, 2015

Communication, Designers, Process

4 Comments

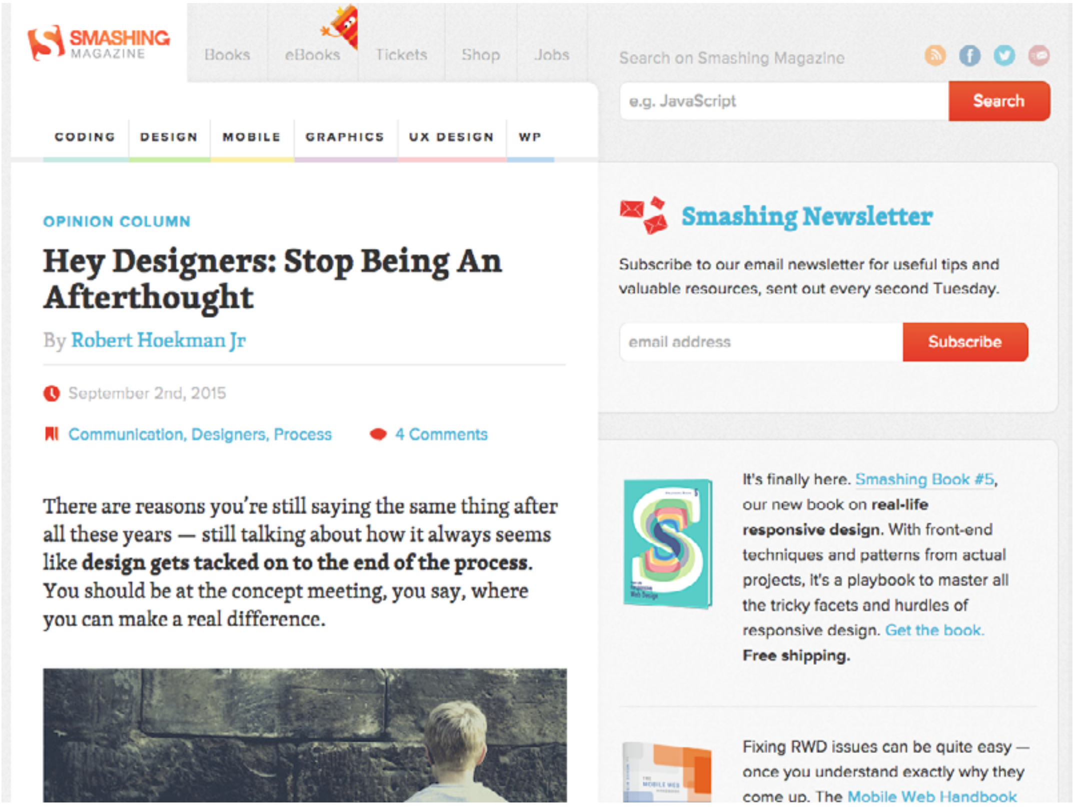
There are reasons you're still saying the same thing after all these years —

Photo credit: Smashing Magazine

Smashing Magazine's content is still readable despite the smaller screens, remaining useful to their readers on the go. They know full well that the users will scroll, so they don't "rush" with the content. They space out the full title over four lines, plus byline, date, category, and a link to the comments. Notice how they clearly labeled the navigation menu, instead of just making it a hamburger icon.

Smashing Magazine smartly puts faith in their users and designs for usability, which in this case adds to their UX.

Tablet View



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There are reasons you're still saying the same thing after all these years — still talking about how it always seems like **design gets tacked on to the end of the process**. You should be at the concept meeting, you say, where you can make a real difference.

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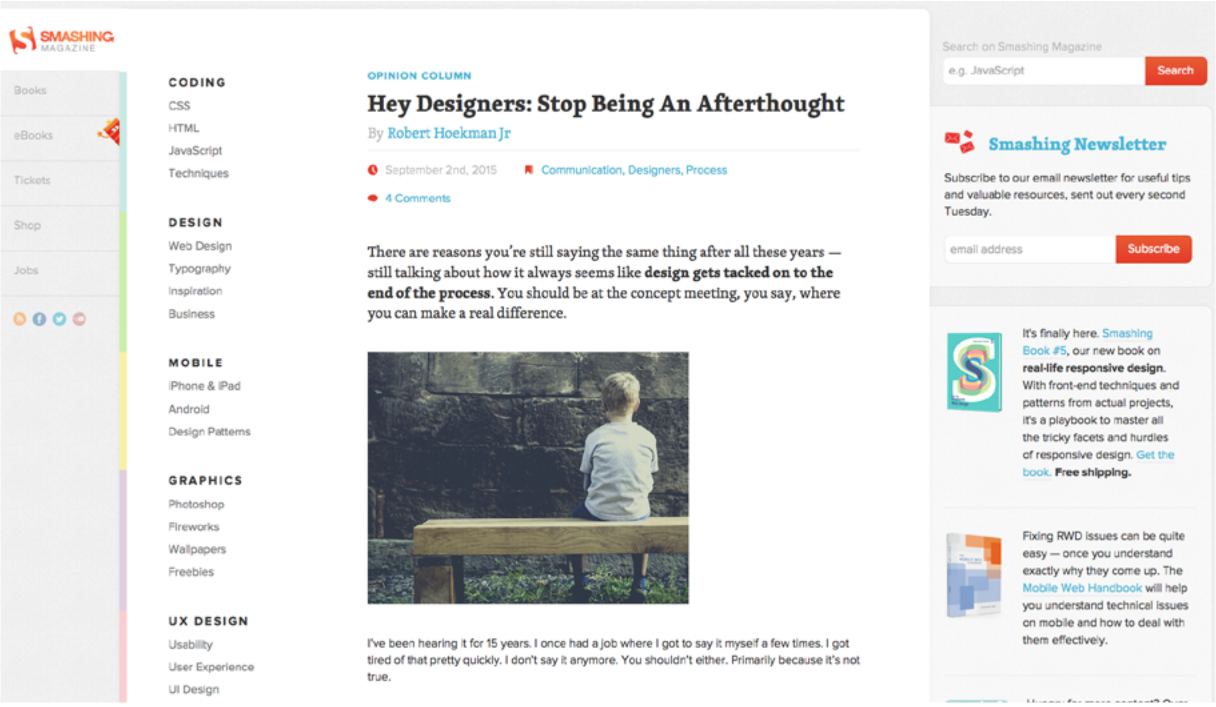
It's finally here. Smashing Book #5, our new book on **real-life responsive design**. With front-end techniques and patterns from actual projects, it's a playbook to master all the tricky facets and hurdles of responsive design. Get the book. **Free shipping.**

Fixing RWD issues can be quite easy — once you understand exactly why they come up. The Mobile Web Handbook

Photo credit: Smashing Magazine

Content remains the focus of the page, but the wider view allows for the "Menu" button to expand into a full navigation.

Desktop View



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September 2nd, 2015 Communication, Designers, Process

4 Comments

There are reasons you're still saying the same thing after all these years — still talking about how it always seems like **design gets tacked on to the end of the process.** You should be at the concept meeting, you say, where you can make a real difference.

I've been hearing it for 15 years. I once had a job where I got to say it myself a few times. I got tired of that pretty quickly. I don't say it anymore. You shouldn't either. Primarily because it's not true.

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Fixing RWD issues can be quite easy — once you understand exactly why they come up. The Mobile Web Handbook will help you understand technical issues on mobile and how to deal with them effectively.

Photo credit: Smashing Magazine

Last, the desktop view has room to put its feet up. Even using the right quarter for ads and burning the left eighth for white space under its navigation, the site still has room to legibly display the article and images therein.

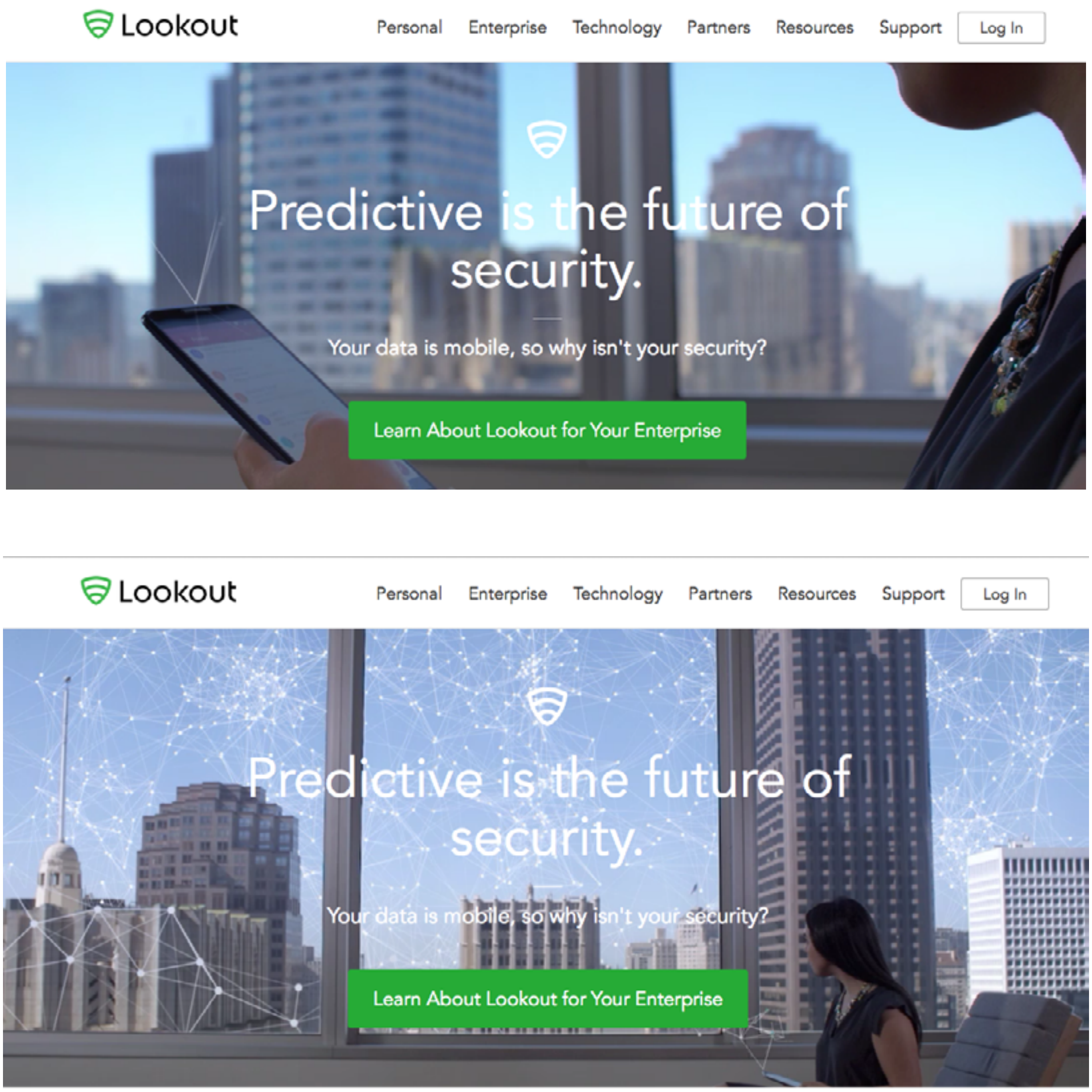
The promo of their categories – crowning the tablet view – now has its own column to the left.

Notice how the crucial information, such as byline and article information, remain more-or-less the same across all three devices. This creates a familiar orientation for regular readers on all devices.

3. Lookout

The mobile security site Lookout knows the limitations of mobile, and doesn't try to force their desktop UI on it.

Desktop View



Predictive is the future of security.

Your data is mobile, so why isn't your security?

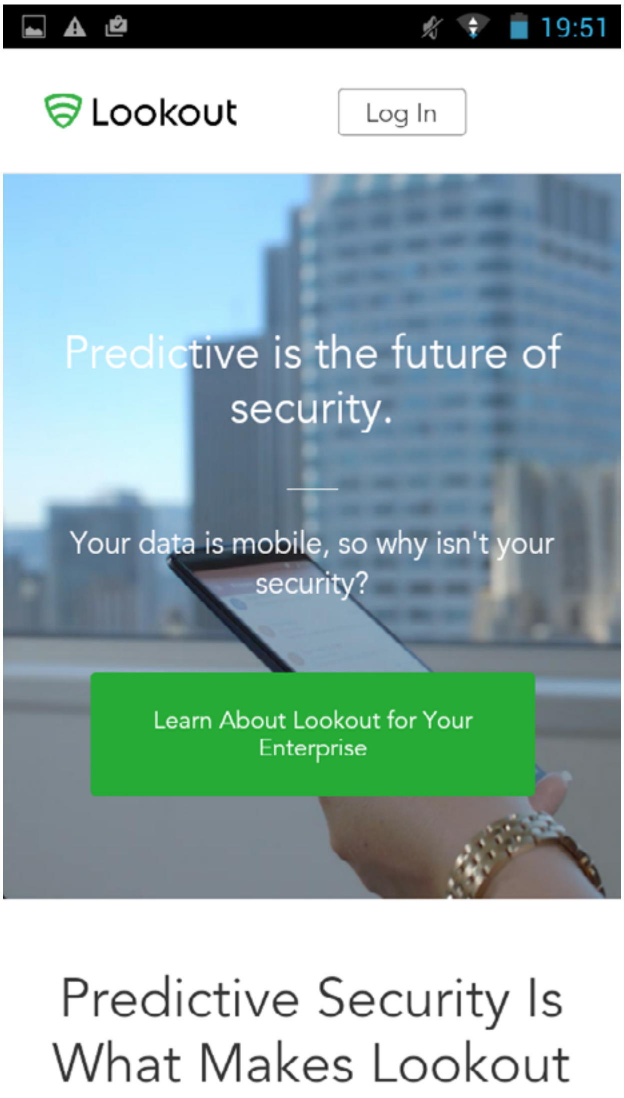
Predictive is the future of security.

Your data is mobile, so why isn't your security?

Photo credit: Lookout

For example, their home page features a beautiful hero animation background, that unfortunately would not translate into mobile. Instead, they used a meaningful screenshot – cropped – for their mobile background.

Mobile View



Predictive is the future of security.

Your data is mobile, so why isn't your security?

Predictive Security Is What Makes Lookout

Photo credit: Lookout (mobile)

Notice that the other elements remain similar – same text, same layout, same green call-to-action. The mobile header, however, has been reduced to the two essentials: logo and login.

4. Hulu Plus

Last, Hulu Plus shows us that maintaining consistency isn't about mirroring the site on all devices.

Native Mobile App

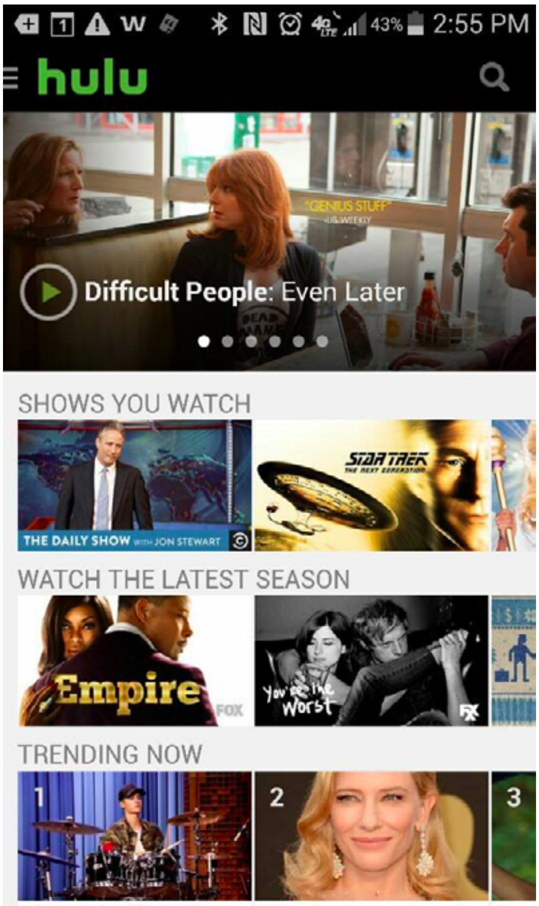


Photo credit: Hulu

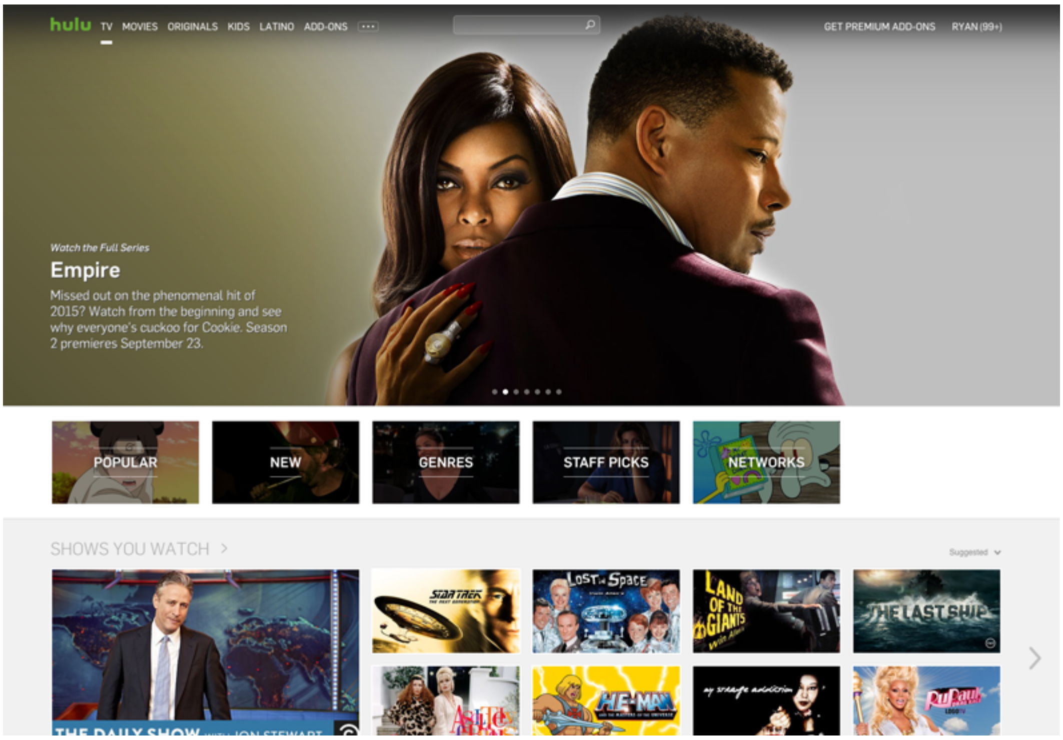
It makes sense for a video streaming service like Hulu to deliver its mobile experience primarily through an app rather than in the browser:

- **Faster load times** – Instead of loading a page from scratch, mobile apps like Hulu's come with pre-loaded components. Every bit of speed helps when you're streaming video on mobile devices

- **Slicker UX** – You don't need to deal with a browser interface, which reduces clutter and opens up more creative options. The experience also feels more self-contained since you're not clicking through pages, waiting for the load screen to fill up, and dealing with permissions requests.

Of course, a mobile app is not always better than a responsive site. For example, small businesses and restaurants don't need mobile apps because they wouldn't deliver any additional value. On the other hand, businesses definitely benefit from native apps if the service requires computational power, advanced account management, and/or relies heavily on streaming media.

Tablet

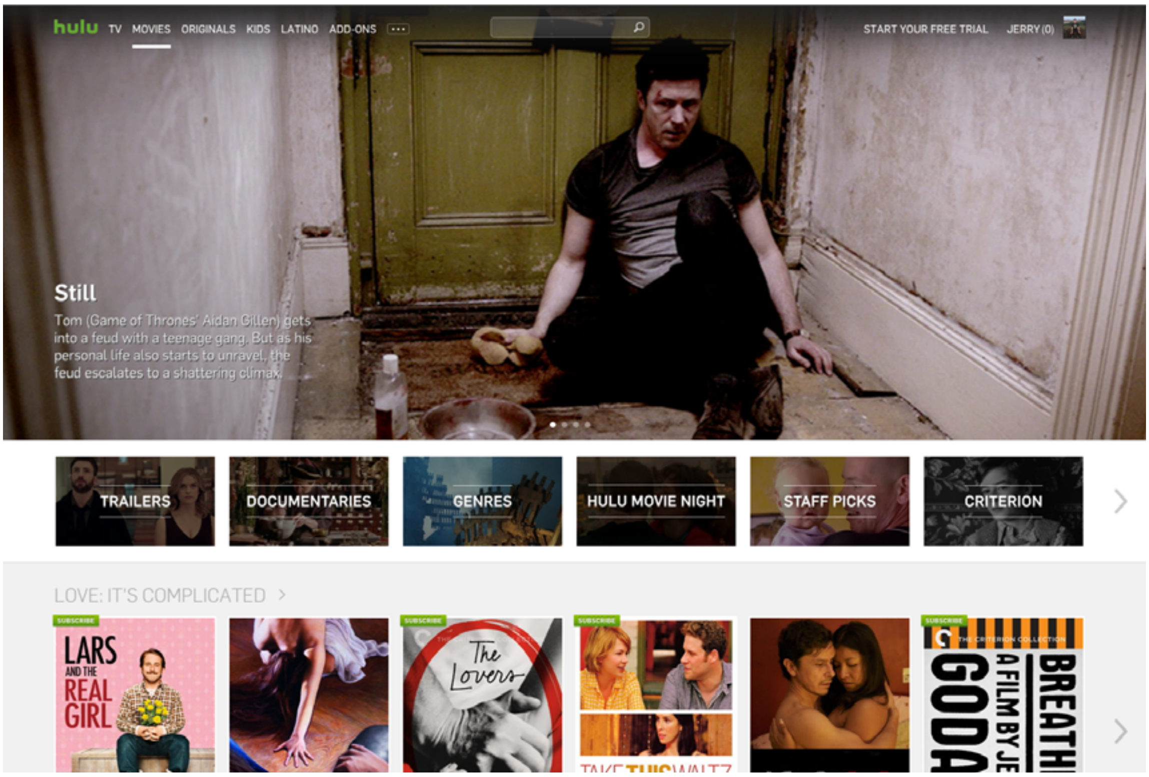


Missed out on the phenomenal hit of 2015? Watch from the beginning and see why everyone's cuckoo for Cookie. Season 2 premieres September 23.

Photo credit: Hulu

As we expand to a tablet view, additional shows appear near the bottom of the screen. The layout remains largely unchanged. You can see how the cards-based UI scales well to different sizes.

Desktop View



Still

Tom (Game of Thrones' Aidan Gillen) gets into a feud with a teenage gang. But as his personal life also starts to unravel, the feud escalates to a shattering climax.

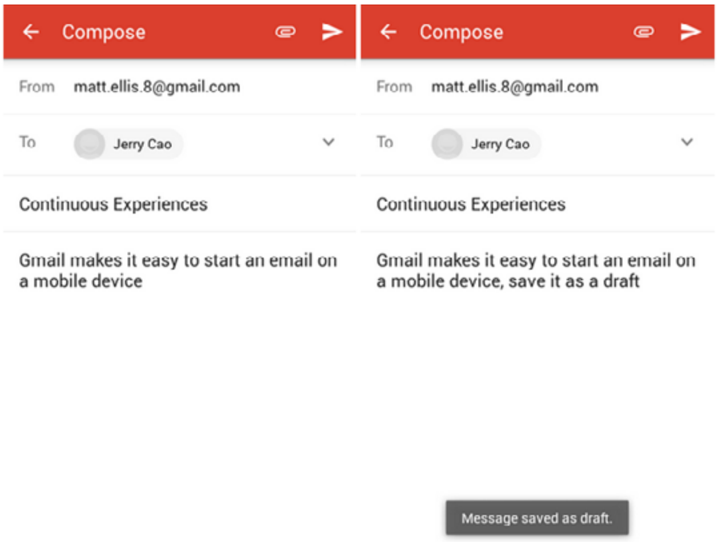
Notice how the layout doesn't change so much as expand. The important features remain with featured content in clear view with suggestions at the bottom.

The site doesn't conform to the same format on different devices, but remains consistent enough that it's still familiar and understandable.

Related Concepts: Continuous & Complementary UX

Now that we've provided an overview of consistent design, let's zoom out for a moment so you can see the whole multi-device landscape. While we're discussing consistent design here, we've also seen the rise of two related strategies thanks to the work of Michal Levin in her excellent book *Designing Multi-Device Experiences* (a highly recommended read).

1. **Continuous Experiences**
   Since users often conduct the same task on different devices, it's important to make the transitions as seamless as possible. For example, you might check your Gmail on a mobile device, start writing a response, get distracted, and later resume the draft on desktop.



From matt.ellis.8@gmail.com
To Jerry Cao
Continuous Experiences
Gmail makes it easy to start an email on a mobile device

From matt.ellis.8@gmail.com
To Jerry Cao
Continuous Experiences
Gmail makes it easy to start an email on a mobile device, save it as a draft

Message saved as draft.

Photo credit: Gmail (App)

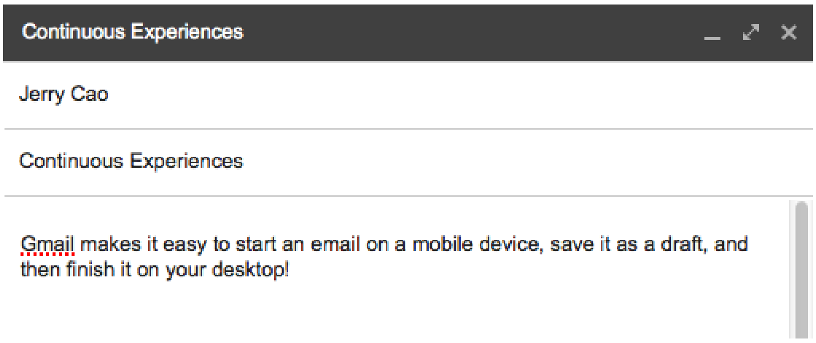

Continuous Experiences
Jerry Cao
Continuous Experiences
Gmail makes it easy to start an email on a mobile device, save it as a draft, and then finish it on your desktop!

Photo credit: Gmail

You can understand the frustration of a user if they were 90% done with an email written on their mobile device only to have it disappear on the desktop.

This doesn't just mean continuous between devices, either – it can also refer to going from the digital world to the real one. For example, the Home Depot site tells you if a product is available in the store nearest you.

Any way you can make your user's experience easier on them, they will repay you with loyalty.

2. Complementary Experiences

While currently most multi-device tasks are sequential, i.e., one after another, we're starting to see a rise in devices that work simultaneously.

For example, Cybeer Bar below is a game site in which users control the mug with the motion controls on their smartphone, with the aim of learning how to pour the perfect cup of beer.

Photo credit: Cybeer Bar

According to UX designer Michal Levin, these complementary relationships in general fall into one of two categories:

- **Control** – One device controls the other, such as using a mobile device to control Netflix on a TV.
- **Collaboration** – Both devices work together with specific roles, such as controls for Cybeer Bar.

Aside from novelty games, companies like Netflix are also creating complementary experiences by allowing the mobile app to communicate directly with Chromecast. Users are then able to browse content on their phone and watch it on the the TV in front of them.

While this type of device relationship is still fairly new, expect it to become a more popular trend over the next year.

Conclusion: Content Remains King

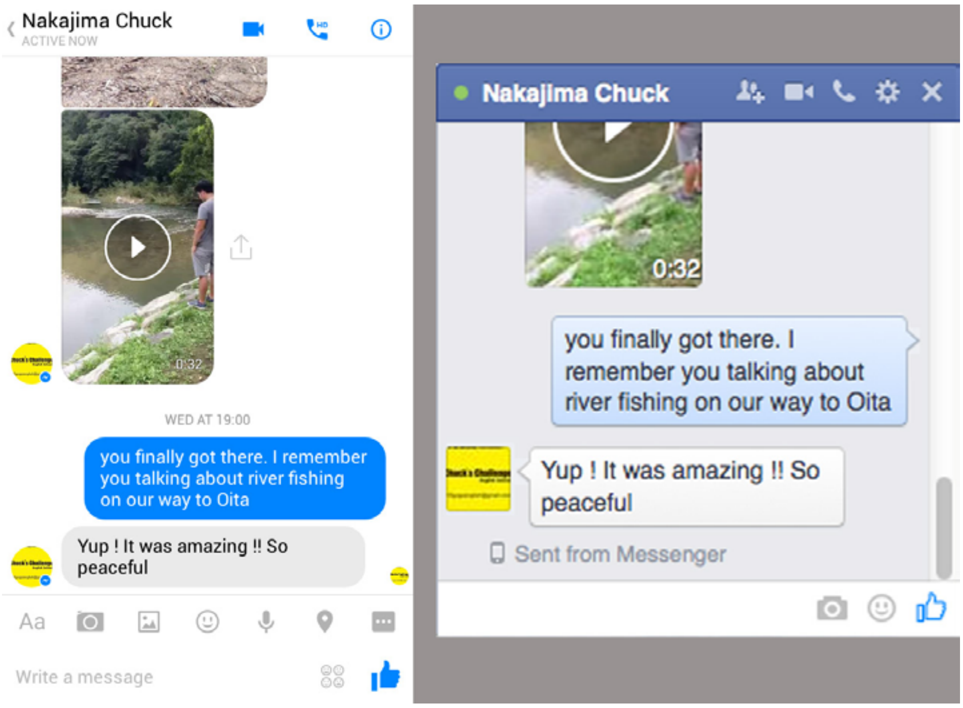
The main point we hope to convey is that content is king. A phrase coined by Bill Gates, it still rings just as true today as it did almost two decades ago when he said it. Your users are coming to the site for the content – the UX – so this should lead the UI.

Device consistency is a content-first approach: it recognizes that the technical aspects of the device come second to the content that is being displayed. The relationship between device agnosticism and content is a two-way street, though – users value versatility so that they have the option of using your site on whichever device they choose.

For that reason, device consistency and content-first are one-in-the-same: both put the user's best interests first.

1. Scraps

The first step to a consistent, multi-device experience is allowing it in the first place. This requires that the user can switch from one device to another without hassle.



you finally got there. I remember you talking about river fishing on our way to Oita

Yup ! It was amazing !! So peaceful

you finally got there. I remember you talking about river fishing on our way to Oita

Yup ! It was amazing !! So peaceful

Photo credit: Facebook

For Facebook, not offering interconnectivity would be a killer, since users prefer different devices at different points in the day. Friends, posts, and feeds are the same regardless of device, and users can post pictures from their phone then edit them later with a different device.

Even the Messenger service is 100% interconnected: users can read or respond to the same message and the window reacts appropriately on all devices.

Personalized UX

There's a thin line between getting to know your user, and stalking them. But if you can find that sweet spot of using enough user data to help them, they'll love you for it.

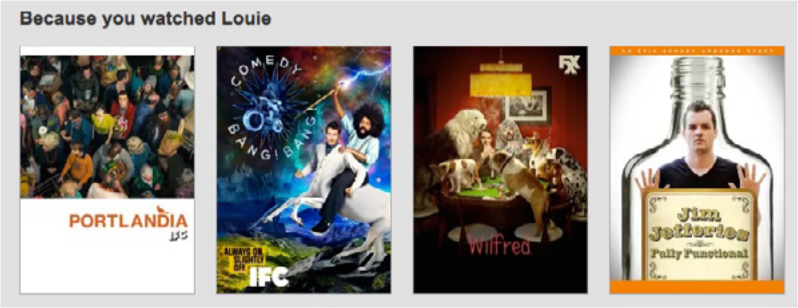


Photo credit: Netflix

Personalization is a shortcut to building a bond with your user, all thanks to special privileges through cookies and technologies like geotracking. In fact, not taking advantage of personalization can harm your site, as shown by a 2013 Janrain study.

Personalized UX makes your design feel intelligently alive. In this piece, we'll explain the difference between personalization and customization, helpful tactics for personalizing the UX without feeling creepy, and analyze a few helpful examples.

The Peril of Being Too Personal

First, a word of warning: too much personalization makes users uncomfortable.

Much like in-person interactions, there is a limit to the intimacy people are comfortable with when first meeting. And, also like in-person interactions, over time these limits relax more and more. User testing helps determine the proper amount your target users prefer, as will this helpful research pulled from an Accenture customer survey on personalization.

Photo credit: David Blackwell. Creative Commons.

Moderation in all things is a good rule of thumb for personalization.

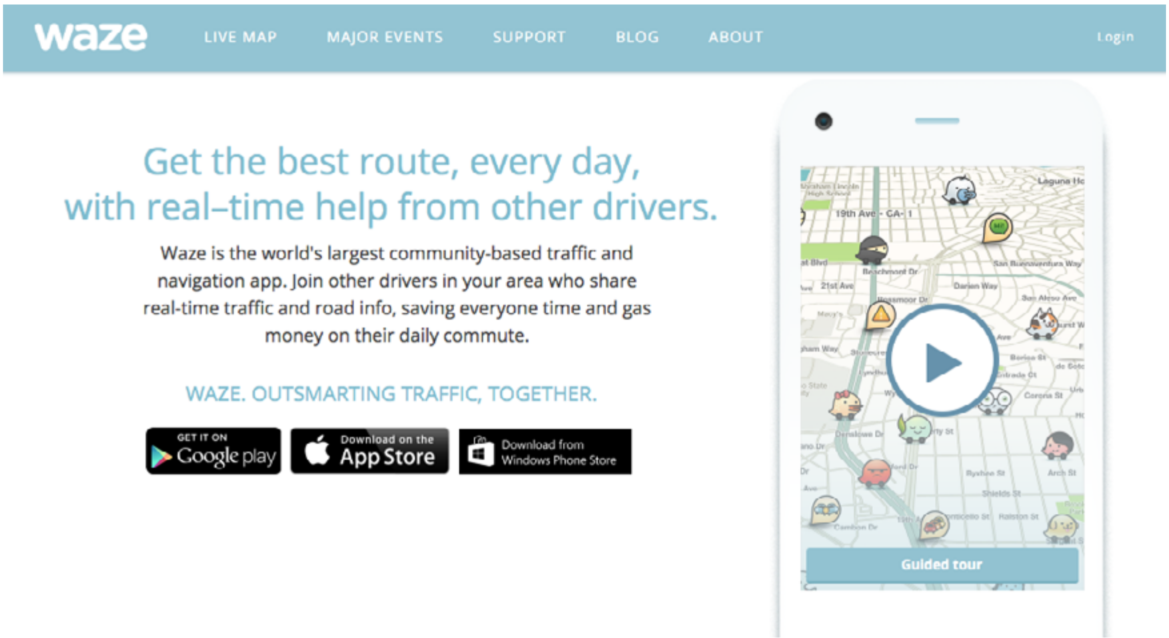
Abusing the availability of user data, especially intimate information like true age, will likely just creep people out when used in the wrong context. Don't serve up a personalized experience just because you can – make sure it actually benefits the user.

Understanding Personalization vs. Customization

Before we get into personalization tactics, it's helpful to know the difference between personalization and customization. Both serve different, but equally important roles in UX.

1. Personalization

Personalization refers to giving the users what they need **without them having to ask for it**. It is an intelligent UX that learns and adapts to the user based on behavior.



Get the best route, every day,
with real–time help from other drivers.

Waze is the world's largest community-based traffic and navigation app. Join other drivers in your area who share real-time traffic and road info, saving everyone time and gas money on their daily commute.

WAZE. OUTSMARTING TRAFFIC, TOGETHER.

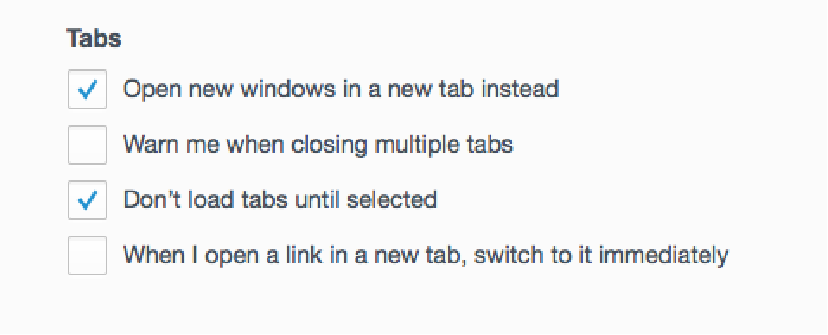
Photo credit: Waze

A great example of personalization is the traffic and navigation app Waze, which pays close attention to usage patterns. If you leave work every day at 6pm, then at 6pm the app will ask you if you're heading home. Personalization is perfect for this context when you consider that users are tired and want to get home to relax as quickly as possible.

The user doesn't have to repeatedly input the same data, the app just knows. By shaving off a few steps, Waze makes life easier for their users. Even if it's just for a moment, those seconds of delight will add up quickly.

2. Customization

On the other hand, customization is when the user **sets their preferences among existing choices**. Privacy, security, notifications, theme templates – these all fall under customization. The system is not thinking on its own, the user must first do all the work.



Tabs

☑ Open new windows in a new tab instead

□ Warn me when closing multiple tabs

☑ Don't load tabs until selected

□ When I open a link in a new tab, switch to it immediately

Photo credit: Firefox (Preferences)

Customization is still an important part to the UX:

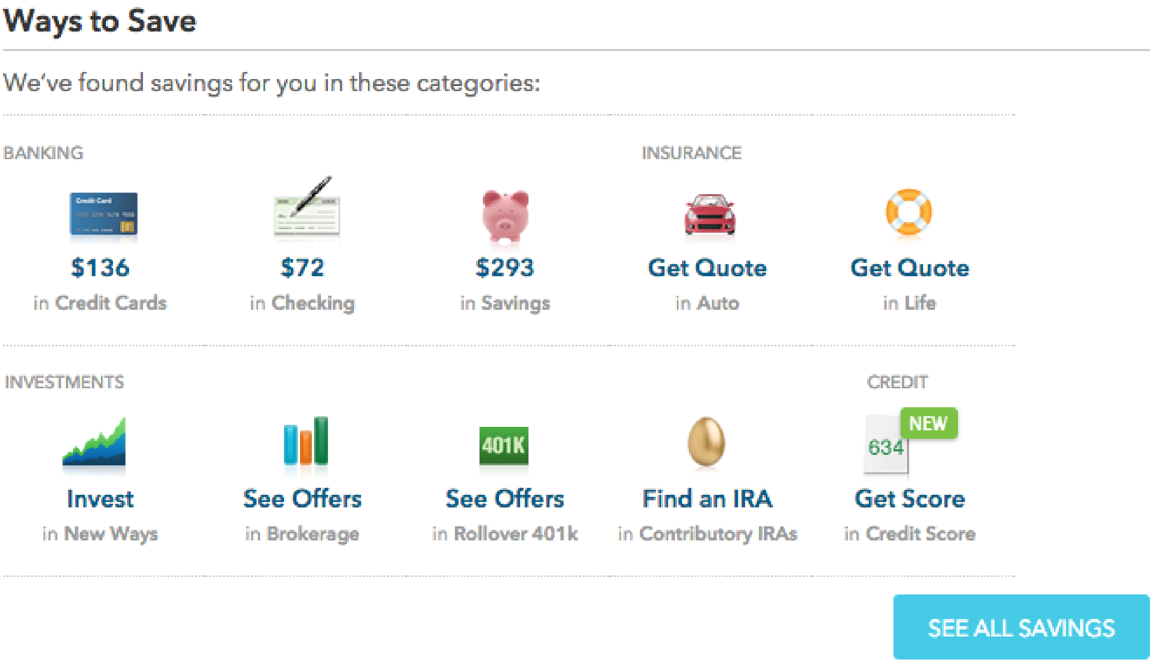
- It offers greater control by allowing user to mold the UX to their liking

- It trims the fat by only loading what's necessary/useful

However, it doesn't produce that special connection of personalization because outside thought is involved. That illusion of design intelligence makes all the difference.

3. The Main Difference

The defining factor between personalization and customization is whether your user asks for it or not. Customization is standard and expected, but personalization is still somewhat new and surprising – and so creates a kind of "passive magic".



Ways to Save

We've found savings for you in these categories:

BANKING

$136 in Credit Cards

$72 in Checking

$293 in Savings

INSURANCE

Get Quote in Auto

Get Quote in Life

INVESTMENTS

Invest in New Ways

See Offers in Brokerage

See Offers in Rollover 401k

Find an IRA in Contributory IRAs

CREDIT

Get Score in Credit Score

Photo credit: Mint

For example, the money-management site Mint requires the user to input financial information in order to track their budget. This is *customization*. But when the app makes suggestions on areas to save money and tailors budgeting strategies based on spending habits, this is *personalization*.

When an app or site knows you so well that it makes suggestions or shortcuts, it accomplishes two things:

- the user's task is accomplished easier and faster
- the user feels an intuitive connection with the site or app

There's a feeling of "magic" and appreciation (like with the previous Waze example above) that's invaluable for user loyalty.

The Power of Contextualization

Personalization is all about contextualization. It's a simple concept: designs are more effective if they serve up the right content at the right time for the right person.

Creating a contextualized, and therefore personalized, experience consists of these core steps:

1. **Know why personalization helps users** – Aside from the quantitative data required for the "design machine" to learn and adapt to users, you need to know *why* that's important in the first place. Conduct interviews, create user scenarios, and review any existing analytics to determine the most appropriate personalized experience based on user goals.
2. **Gather contextual data** – Collect the user's available data (see our Sourcing User Data section below for more details). This is primarily a technical endeavor that tries to capture information

about devices, search histories, browsing/clicking behavior, IP address, etc.

3. **Create advanced user segments** – As you gather the data, you'll see natural patterns and clusters. You can combine what you know about the user's psychology (motivations/fears/goals/etc.) with behavioral data to create robust segments. To identify friction points to be smoothed over by personalization, try creating user scenarios and customer journeys for each segment.

4. **Combine a rules-based & algorithm-based approach** – Rules-based processes serve up content based on strict criteria, e.g. "Serve up X content in Y module if user is part of segment Z". They require advanced user segmentation to function correctly. Algorithmic learning, on the other hand, happens dynamically as the user interacts. For example, if you watched 7 car videos in a row, the interface will recommend car videos. As Accenture suggests based on interviews with Dell, Adobe, Razorfish, and 13 other top companies, you want to combine both tactics.

Let's examine Colin Eagan's excellent article on personalization to see how this process might play out. In Eagan's piece, he explains how he might create a personalized experience for a hypothetical airline travel app:

- First, he examines stress levels for men and women across a trip timeline from pre-flight to post-flight. Afterwards, he examines stress levels for different roles (from support to senior executive) on the same timeline.

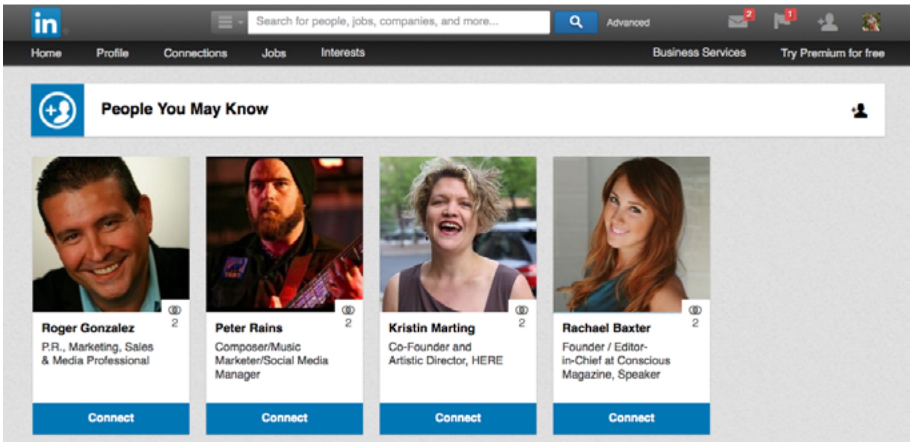
- For the sake of time, he skips the “Why” phase (e.g. user interviews) and dives straight into creating user segments based on gender, role, and stress levels.
- Once the segments are created, he divides the site layout into different modules that will serve up content dynamically based on rules and algorithmic learning.

Contextualization is all about applying user empathy to data analysis. Rules-based processes are a good starting point, then mix in algorithmic learning to help create that feeling of magic.

Common Personalization Tactics

Personalization spans a wide range depending on how much "personal" information it draws on. We've described the below tactics with the least personal listed first:

- **Related Content** – The most basic personalization suggests related content based on the current content being viewed. ("You like red designer high heels? Here are some more.") This is simple and can be done based on categories or keywords in the title, thus can be applied even to first-time visitors.
- **Social Connections** – No less than essential for social media sites, this tactic analyzes the user's current friends to make suggestions for people the user knows but isn't connected with yet on the site. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn use this to help new and experienced users expand their connection base, thus their interactivity.



People You May Know

Roger Gonzalez 2
P.R., Marketing, Sales & Media Professional

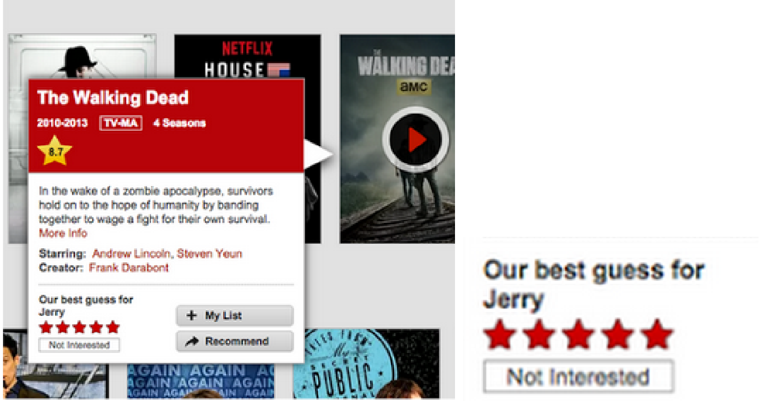
Peter Rains 2
Composer/Music Marketer/Social Media Manager

Kristin Marting 2
Co-Founder and Artistic Director, HERE

Rachael Baxter 2
Founder / Editor-in-Chief at Conscious Magazine, Speaker

Photo credit: LinkedIn

- **Recommendations** – A safe middle ground for personalization. It's no surprise this is a common feature for nearly all ecommerce sites, especially sites like Amazon that analyze both pages views and past purchases. Netflix, however, turns it into a science (literally: there's a lot of math involved). They use a mutually beneficial system where users's ratings of previously viewed shows improve the accuracy of subsequent recommendations, and also adds more data to help Netflix improve recommendations to others.



The Walking Dead

2010-2013 TV-MA 4 Seasons

In the wake of a zombie apocalypse, survivors hold on to the hope of humanity by banding together to wage a fight for their own survival.

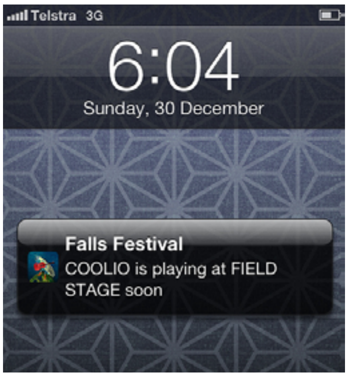
Starring: Andrew Lincoln, Steven Yeun

Creator: Frank Darabont

Our best guess for Jerry ★★★★★

Photo credit: Netflix

- **Push Notifications** – Combining personalization and customization, push notifications open up new interactive options. A text from your dentist's office wishing you a happy birthday is a personal touch, as is alerting a user of an upcoming performance of their favorite 90s-era rapper in their area. Just be wary of overdoing it and make sure users opt-in beforehand. (For advice on boosting opt-ins, read this article by Stanislas Cavalie.)

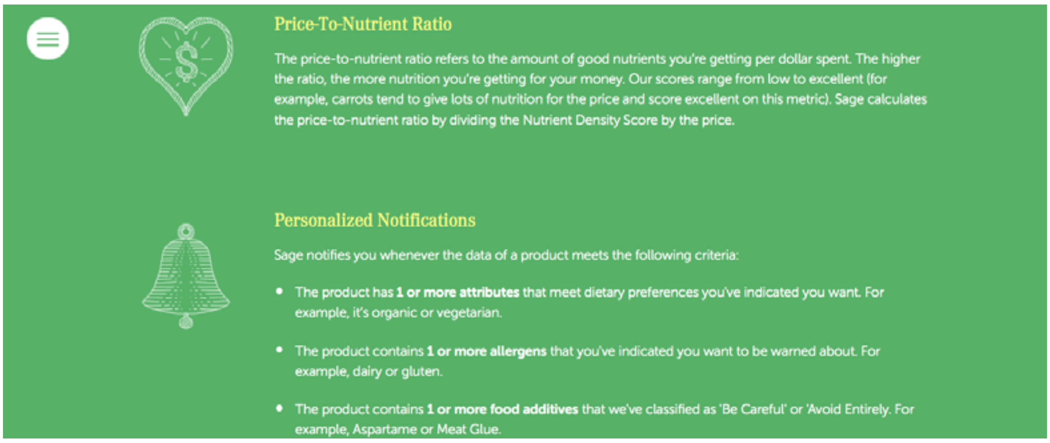


Falls Festival

COOLIO is playing at FIELD STAGE soon

Photo credit: "COOLIO." (cropped). Tim Lucas. Creative Commons.

- **Active Personalization** – The highest level of personalization is reserved for specialty apps or service sites that require it to function. The nutrition-advisory site Sage, for example, is explicitly personal with its recommendations. Users input details like their age, weight, and height, and also their dietary preferences like allergies and tastes. The site then maps out what, where, and how much they should eat.



Price-To-Nutrient Ratio

The price-to-nutrient ratio refers to the amount of good nutrients you're getting per dollar spent. The higher the ratio, the more nutrition you're getting for your money. Our scores range from low to excellent (for example, carrots tend to give lots of nutrition for the price and score excellent on this metric). Sage calculates the price-to-nutrient ratio by dividing the Nutrient Density Score by the price.

Personalized Notifications

Sage notifies you whenever the data of a product meets the following criteria:

- The product has **1 or more attributes** that meet dietary preferences you've indicated you want. For example, it's organic or vegetarian.
- The product contains **1 or more allergens** that you've indicated you want to be warned about. For example, dairy or gluten.
- The product contains **1 or more food additives** that we've classified as 'Be Careful' or 'Avoid Entirely. For example, Aspartame or Meat Glue.

Photo credit: Sage

Keep in mind that personalization is a highly fluid field, with great potential for innovation and creativity. These listed above are just a few common patterns we've noticed.

User Research & Testing

In order to put the "person" into "personalization," you need to understand your user inside and out. While empathy and predictions are a good start, to successfully conduct personalization – and all user-based design, for that matter – you must draw on the hard, indisputable data from user research.

While there are any number of creative methods to get to know your users, we'll describe two tactics that are fast, affordable, and yield good results.

1. User Interviews

Photo credit: "2014-04-30 17.09.22." Nicholas Wang. Creative Commons.

Simply sit down with your user and ask them questions. User interviews can be conducted in various methods and styles, but in general the following best practices universally apply:

- **Ask open-ended questions** – Avoid "yes-or-no" questions to allow your users to elaborate. Given the freedom to speak, they will offer additional insights closed questions can't reach. Launchbit offers a helpful article describing types of interview questions to ask.

- **Use silence** – Silence is a social cue that encourages further talking. Pausing after listening to the user's answer subtly urges them to continue, deepening their answers.

- **Casual atmosphere** – Try to make the user comfortable, even by conducting the interview in the location of their choice. A relaxed participant will yield more honest answers than a nervous one.
- **Aim for under an hour** – Generally, 45–60 minutes is ideal. If you need more time, schedule a follow-up meeting instead of dragging the same interview out.

To learn more about user interviews, check out the *Guide to Usability Testing*.

2. User Surveys

Surveys are easier to conduct, but don't yield such personal and in-depth results as interviews.

Nevertheless, they work great if you're under time or budget constraints, and can reach a far larger amount of people in less time. The quantitative format makes surveys great for compiling statistics, and because they don't need moderators so they can be conducted remotely at scale.

When writing your survey, keep these tips in mind:

- **Shorter is better** – Ask only the essential questions to assure the users answer them to the fullest. We recommend 5-8 thorough, well-worded questions.

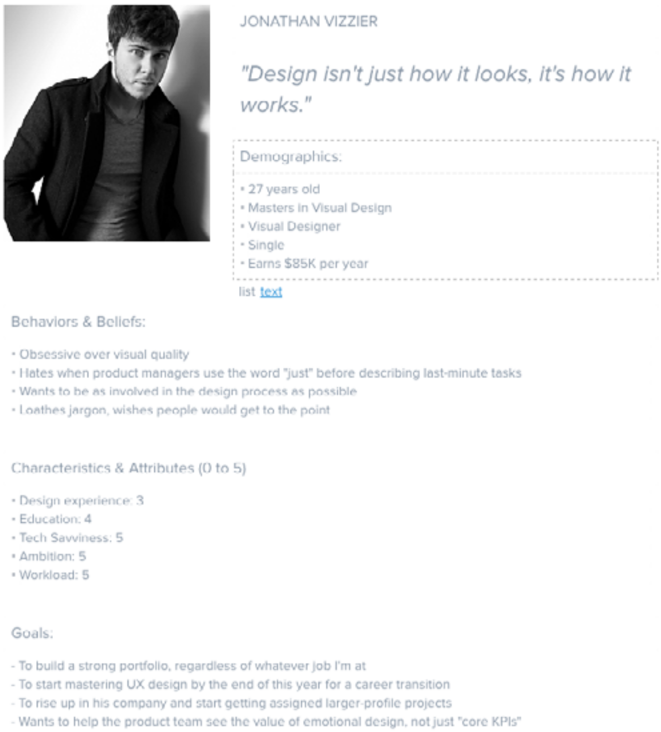
- **Put the most important question first** – Your opener will receive the most attention, so make it your best.

- **Pay attention to phrasing** – Be direct and unambiguous, as well as succinct.

3. User Documentation

Once you have your user data, you need to put into a format that's helpful for personalizing the UX of your product – and all other aspects of design. The following documents are the recommended best practices for UX design in general, but their personal link to the user makes them especially helpful for personalization:

- **Personas** – These fictional characters represent the actual data collected during the testing. When designing, ask yourself what value they would provide the personas.



JONATHAN VIZZIER

"Design isn't just how it looks, it's how it works."

Demographics:

- 27 years old
- Masters in Visual Design
- Visual Designer
- Single
- Earns $85K per year

list text

Behaviors & Beliefs:

- Obsessive over visual quality
- Hates when product managers use the word "just" before describing last-minute tasks
- Wants to be as involved in the design process as possible
- Loathes jargon, wishes people would get to the point

Characteristics & Attributes (0 to 5)

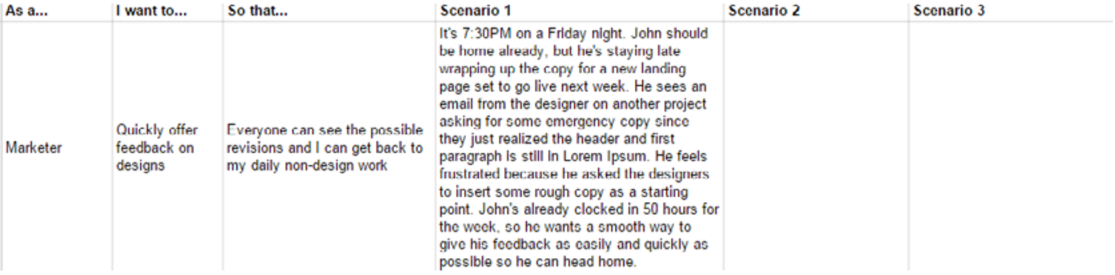
- Design experience: 3
- Education: 4
- Tech Savviness: 5
- Ambition: 5
- Workload: 5

Goals:

- To build a strong portfolio, regardless of whatever job I'm at
- To start mastering UX design by the end of this year for a career transition
- To rise up in his company and start getting assigned larger-profile projects
- Wants to help the product team see the value of emotional design, not just "core KPIs"

Photo credit: UXPin

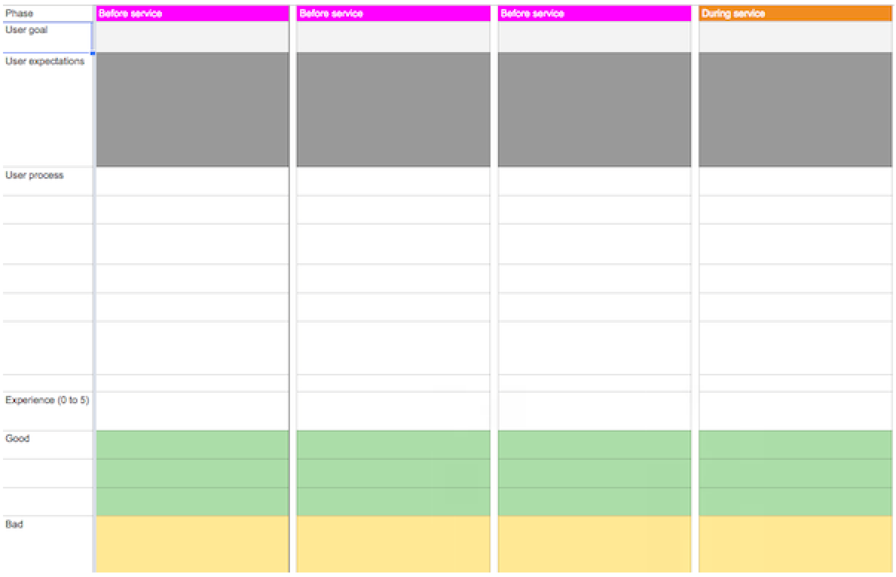
- **User stories and scenarios** – For personalization in particular, user stories and scenarios are useful. These mental exercises plot out step-by-step how users will likely interact with your product to accomplish a goal. Analyze their movements for areas where personalization could streamline their task completion or at least shave off a step or two.



As a...	I want to...	So that...	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Marketer	Quickly offer feedback on designs	Everyone can see the possible revisions and I can get back to my daily non-design work	It's 7:30PM on a Friday night. John should be home already, but he's staying late wrapping up the copy for a new landing page set to go live next week. He sees an email from the designer on another project asking for some emergency copy since they just realized the header and first paragraph is still in Lorem Ipsum. He feels frustrated because he asked the designers to insert some rough copy as a starting point. John's already clocked in 50 hours for the week, so he wants a smooth way to give his feedback as easily and quickly as possible so he can head home.		

Photo credit: UXPin

- **Customer journey map** – A customer journey map is like a user story/scenario with extra information; in addition to the steps, this document also accounts for the user's feelings and opinions. Maya Nix explains how to use a journey map to plan out more personalized experiences.



Phase	Before service	Before service	Before service	During service
User goal				
User expectations				
User process				
Experience (0 to 5)				
Good				
Bad				

Photo credit: UXPin

Gathering User Data

Personalization is made possible only if you gather the right data.

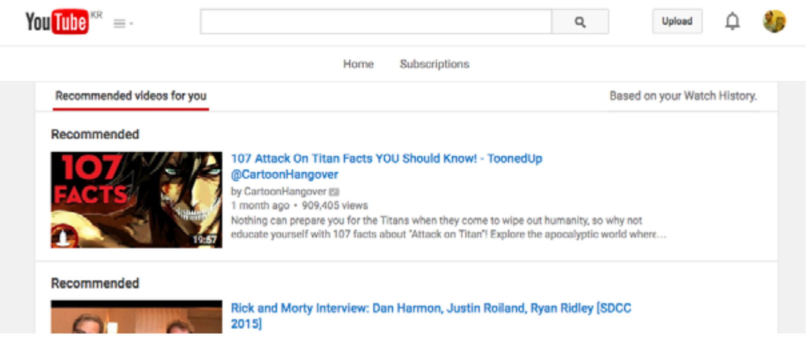
We can break down that data into three categories: passive, active, and usage data.

1. Passive Data

- **Location** – Whether through an IP address or a geolocation tracker, where the user is – at least a broad view – is easy to track. This is a useful personalization tool for area-specific recommendations, and for tailoring content to regional tastes.

- **Device** – Basic analytics can determine which devices your users choose. If you notice trends, this can lead to more potent adaptive design templates to take advantage of popular devices' strengths.

- **Previously viewed pages & past purchases** – Another personalization cornerstone, seeing what pages/products your users preferred is a nearly foolproof way of noting their personal preferences.



Based on your Watch History.

Recommended

107 Attack On Titan Facts YOU Should Know! - ToonedUp @CartoonHangover
by CartoonHangover
1 month ago • 909,405 views
Nothing can prepare you for the Titans when they come to wipe out humanity, so why not educate yourself with 107 facts about "Attack on Titan"! Explore the apocalyptic world where…

Recommended

Rick and Morty Interview: Dan Harmon, Justin Roiland, Ryan Ridley [SDCC 2015]

Photo credit: YouTube Recommended

2. **Active Data**

    - **Sign-up questions** – If you'd like to know something in particular about your user, ask them during the sign-up survey. Typically this goes no further than demographic information (gender, age, etc.) but there is room for experimenting. For example, a site for a music player might ask the user's favorite band or style of music.

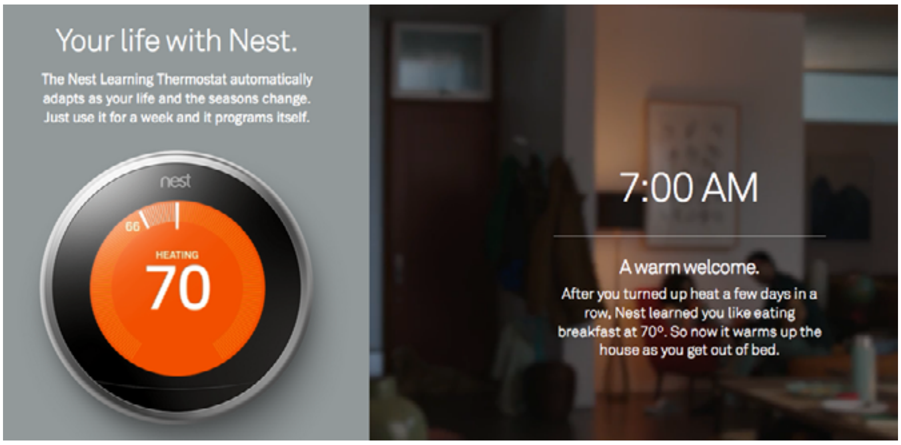
    - **Personalization questionnaires** – For sites that offer a specific service based on the user's personal information (like Sage above) a personalization questionnaire is necessary. These ask direct questions that the site needs to perform the service.

    - **Ratings** – Ratings go a step further than previously viewed pages and past purchases by providing more details on the user's emotional connection. People often view pages (and sometimes make purchases) that do not reflect their true likes and preferences – ratings clarifies which of these are genuine interests, and by how much. When applied correctly, these lead to useful recommendations (like Amazon or Netflix).

3. **Usage Data**

    Adapting the experience based on past usage is another method that's quite effective for personalization. In this sense, the product "learns" about the user over time, increasing its accuracy with more usage (which, if effective, will increase usage even more).

    For example, Nest is a self-programming thermostat that learns its users habits after the first week, then works automatically. The appeal, aside from the convenience, is that it saves energy by adjusting when you're not home. This level of personalization can even exceed the user inputting their own preferences – chances are, Nest knows their habits better than they do. To achieve this level of intelligence, you must use a hybrid rules-based and algorithm-based learning model.



Your life with Nest.

The Nest Learning Thermostat automatically adapts as your life and the seasons change. Just use it for a week and it programs itself.

7:00 AM

A warm welcome.

After you turned up heat a few days in a row, Nest learned you like eating breakfast at 70°. So now it warms up the house as you get out of bed.

Photo credit: Nest

Examples of Perfect Personalization

1. Netflix

As we mentioned above, Netflix are masters of personalization.

Their service demands it: with a vast selection of movie and TV choices, users certainly appreciate a tip in the right direction.

According to Netflix, 75% of their views come from personalized recommendations. Their entire system encourages users to give their ratings on previously viewed movies and shows (whether watched on Netflix or not) and even rewards this behavior by revealing new recommendations.

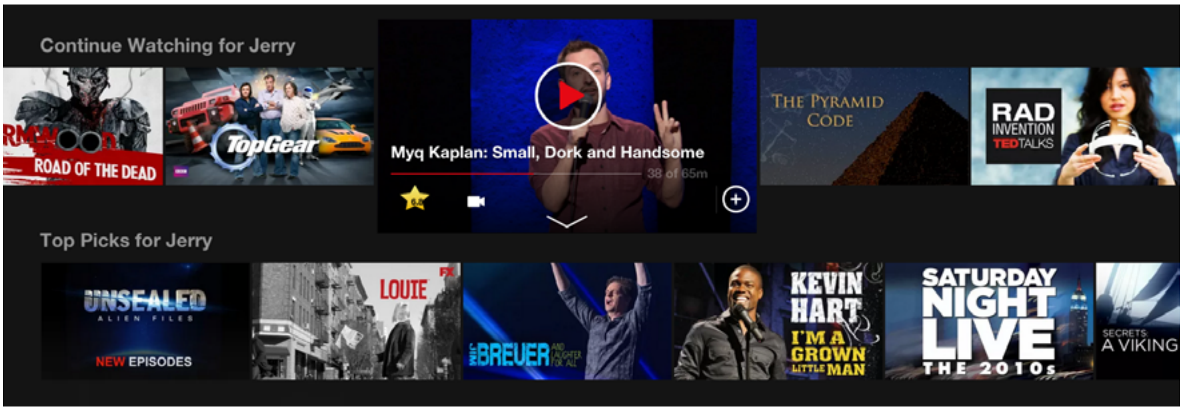


Photo credit: Netflix

In fact, the interface even generates personalized content by default when you browse categories (see the "Sort by SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU" in the top right corner).

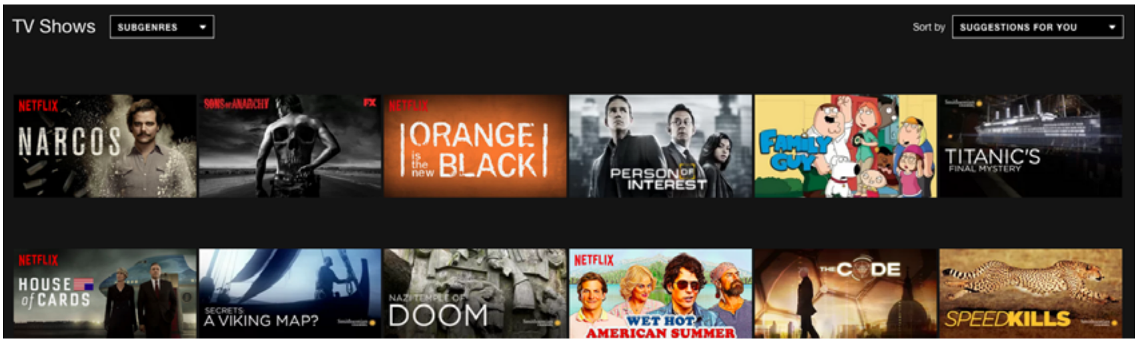


Photo credit: Netflix

Netflix also builds trust through transparency: wording like "Because you watched..." and "Because you loved..." lets the user know how their system works.

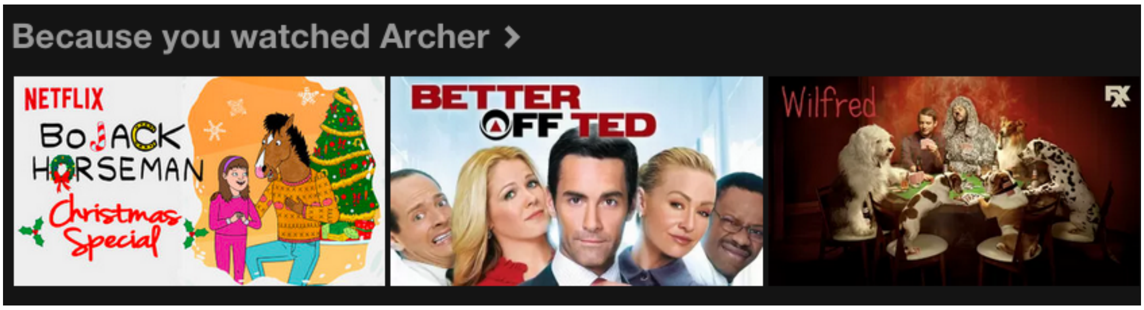
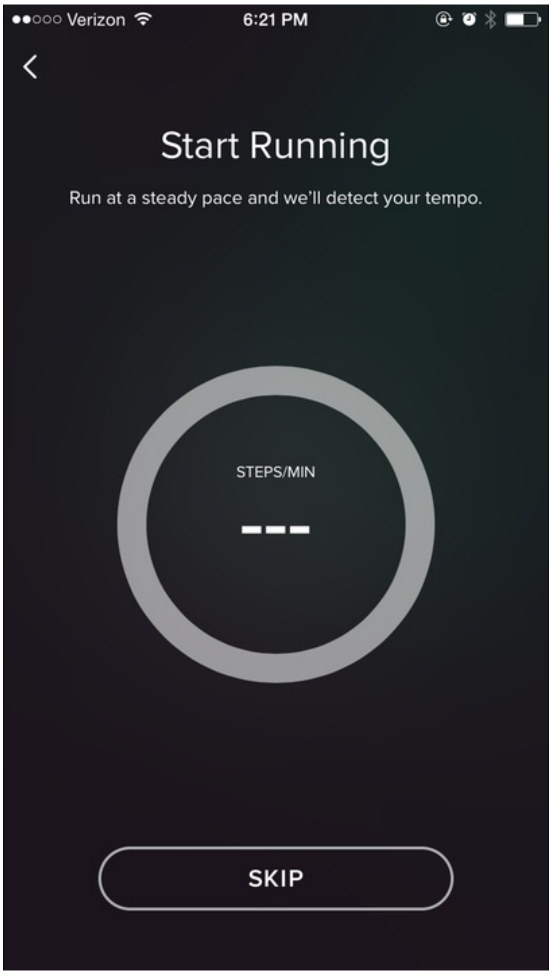

Because you watched Archer >
NETFLIX
BoJack Horseman Christmas Special
Better Off Ted
Wilfred
FX

Photo credit: Netflix

For a more technical analysis, check out Pancrazio Auteri's of presentation on lessons we can learn from Netflix UX.

2. Spotify

For runners, Spotify offers a personalized features that's incredibly useful and delightfully innovative. It's probably one of the best examples of personalization you can find.



Start Running

Run at a steady pace and we'll detect your tempo.

Photo credit: Spotify (app)

The rate and cadence of running is not something users could pinpoint if asked randomly. In fact, users would probably be confused about the value if the app asked for the data. Spotify, however, uses advanced technology to first discover this rhythm...

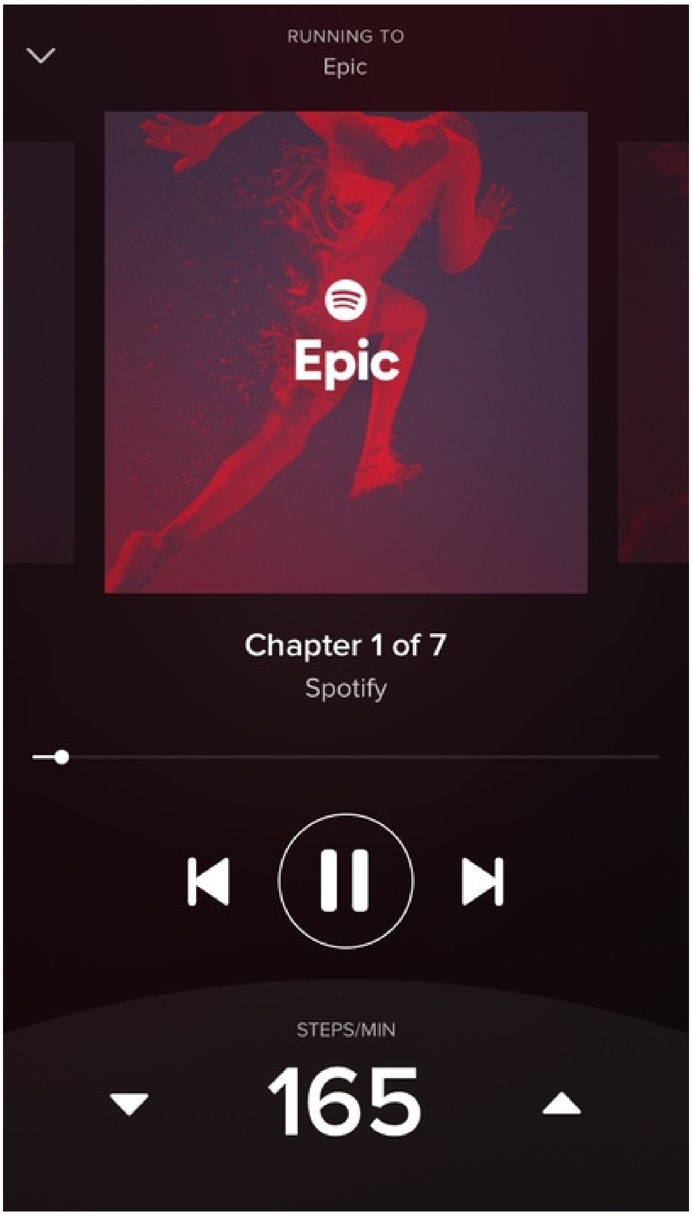


Photo credit: Spotify (app)

… and then suggests a playlist of songs that match the tempo.

This satisfies all the criteria of excellent personalization:

- It provides a useful service with no or minimal user input
- The effort is handled by the design “behind the scenes”. Since the results are instantly visible, users get that “passive magic” feeling that creates emotional connection.

- It is a truly innovative style of personalization that its competitors don't offer

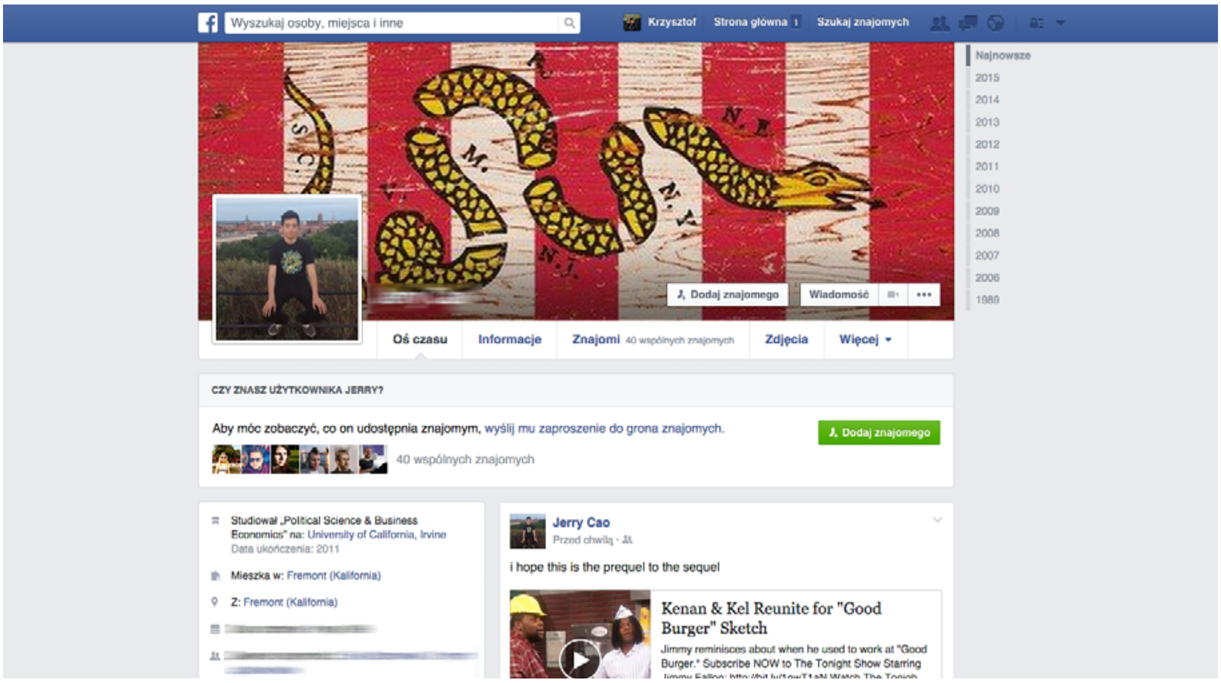
Additionally, Spotify's Discover Weekly takes recommendations to the next level by creating individual playlists catered to each user's tastes, and delivers them every week. First, this is a great service for helping people discover new music (not to mention boost interaction with the site), but on another level it's reminiscent of sharing mixtapes among friends – a very personal activity.

3. Facebook

While we already explained how Facebook uses personalization features for suggesting friends, let examine how they personalize the way users view their feed on the iOS app.

John Paul Titlow, reporting for Fast Co., explains how Facebook personalizes the way users view a non-friend's profile as opposed to a friend's profile. Facebook's methods involved:

- **User testing** – In a type of participatory design activity, actual Facebook users were asked to design their ideal non-friend profiles with pens and profile templates.
- **Comparing to user data** – The results of the user testing were compared with the actual data of the live Facebook site.
- **Merging the results** – The results were then consolidated for a better system for viewing non-friend profiles.



CZY ZNASZ UŻYTKOWNIKA JERRY?

Aby móc zobaczyć, co on udostępnia znajomym, wyślij mu zaproszenie do grona znajomych.

Studiował „Political Science & Business Economics" na: University of California, Irvine
Data ukończenia: 2011

Mieszka w: Fremont (Kalifornia)

Z: Fremont (Kalifornia)

Jerry Cao
Przed chwilą

i hope this is the prequel to the sequel

Kenan & Kel Reunite for "Good Burger" Sketch

Jimmy reminisces about when he used to work at "Good Burger." Subscribe NOW to The Tonight Show Starring

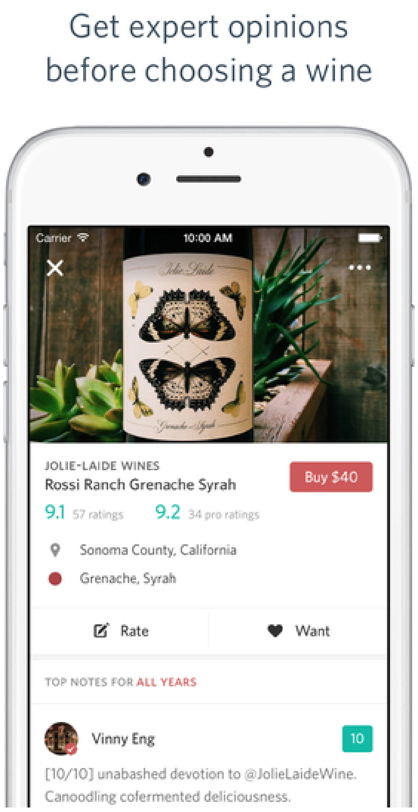
Photo credit: Facebook

The new non-friend profile view highlights any similarities the user and the non-friend have in common so that the user can quickly and effectively confirm or decline a friend request. Tthe Facebook experience becomes a bit more user-friendly, whether the user realizes it or not.

4. Delectable

The wine lover's app Delectable shows that accurate product ratings and recommendations is not just for personalization, but for better business.

Delectable relies on a combined strategy of ratings, social sharing, and reviews to deliver to its users the wines they'll love. Wine recommendations are generated from photos taken by the user, wines favorited, as well as wines popular with the community. The app's entire value is built on personalization.



Get expert opinions before choosing a wine

[10/10] unabashed devotion to @JolieLaideWine. Canoodling cofermented deliciousness.

Photo credit: Delectable via iTunes App Store

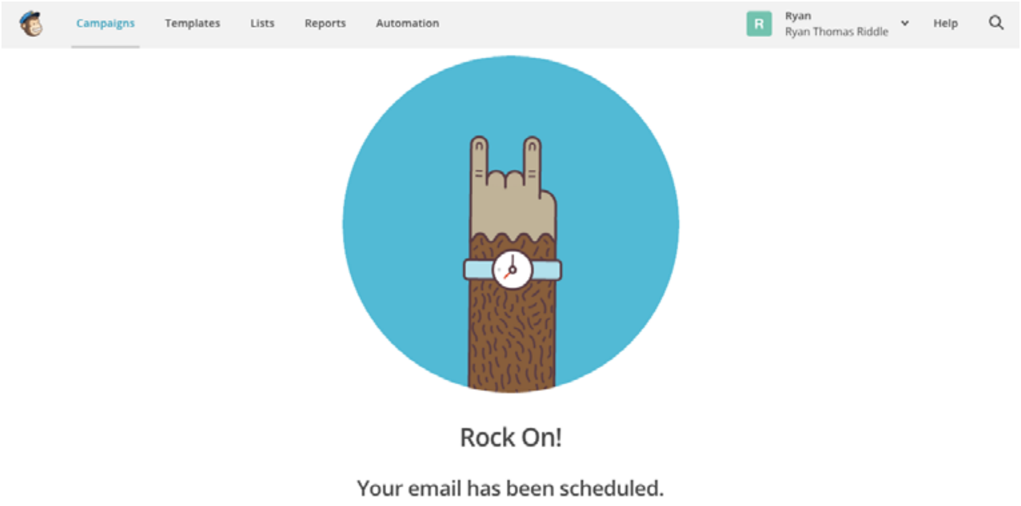
The user flow is stupidly simple. Users only need to take a picture of the wine bottle they want to learn about, and the app presents them with ratings and reviews from the community – mostly educated wine experts. The scans, reviews, and recommendations are free-to-use, but the app also sells wine.

Conclusion: Breaking Boundaries

Every user is different, and what some people may find uncomfortable, others may think is a delightful time-saver. For personalization, as with all other aspects of design, knowing your user is key. This reveals not only how much personalization to offer, but in what areas, and in what features.

Refined Microinteractions

If individual interactions are the cells that make up the UX, then microinteractions are the atoms within the cells. As technology continues to develop, designers are able to delve deeper into the tinier interactions of a UI, and so microinteractions are the new frontier.



Rock On!

Your email has been scheduled.

Photo credit: MailChimp

While miniscule on their own, these tiny moments add up to substantial enhancements to your UX. Microinteractions provide delightful visual feedback, makng the interface feel weightless thanks to the smooth transitions. In this chapter, we'll explain useful techniques for microinteractions and dissect some great examples.

Defining Microinteractions

Microinteractions might be easily overlooked in the greater design scheme, but they actually hold the entire experience together. They are single moments of communication that help users flow through your design.

1. What Microinteractions Do

As first described in Dan Saffer's fantastic book Microinteractions, these tiny details typically serve these essential functions:

- Communicating feedback or the result of an action
- Accomplish an isolated, individual task (i.e., connecting one device to another, liking a friend's post)
- Manipulating a setting
- Preventing user error

Some examples of specific microinteractions include:

- The vibration notification when you switch an iPhone to mute.
- A warm greeting before diving into more straightforward copy
- The pull-to-refresh UI pattern
- An animation confirming an item is added to cart, like with "+1" from Photojojo below.

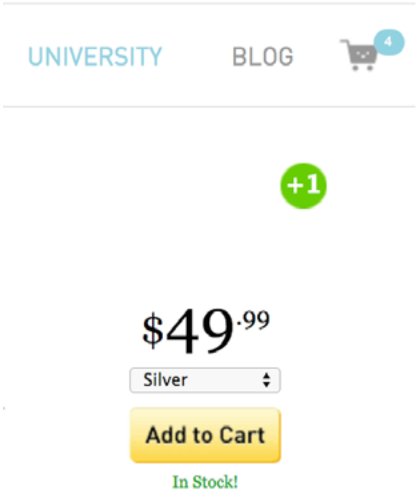


Photo credit: Photojojo

- Interface animation that either shows clickability (a card that changes color when hovered over) or confirms an action (an icon that changes after clicking)

However, the most well-known example of a microinteraction, and a good standard to base all others on, has existed long before the Internet was ever invented. The best microinteraction, is pushing a button: gratifying in completing the action, and irreplaceable in activating a function.

For more microinteraction examples, take a look at this Vine thread, or read this Econsultancy piece on 15 mobile microinteractions (some of which we mentioned above).

2. Why Microinteractions Work

In a nutshell, microinteractions work because they appeal to the user's natural desire for acknowledgement. Microinteractions fine-tune human-centered design in the following ways:

- **More control through immediate feedback** – The user instantly knows their action was accepted giving them more confidence in further usability
- **Instructions** – Whether blatant or subtle, microinteractions can guide users in how to work the system.
- **Visual rewards** – Small but satisfying effects enhance the UX, and can facilitate the habit loop (explained below)
- **Meeting expectations** – In today's web design landscape, microinteractions are the norm – their absence makes a site seem bland.

In short, microinteractions improve the UX by making the UI less machine and more human. As a result, the design is more usable and enjoyable.

3. Identifying Opportunities

Part of the beauty of microinteractions is that, because they're brief, they can be inserted in a variety of places.

In general, though, here are some common areas where microinteractions can add to the experience:

- Switching on/off (features, functions, or the entire UI itself)
- Adjusting setting preferences or continual elements (i.e., volume)
- Viewing or writing a small piece of content (i.e., status message, comment)

- Connecting one device to another (i.e., computer to phone)
- Uploading and downloading
- Notifications
- Social media sharing
- Pull-down and hidden menus
- Showing changes (i.e., an animation to show the Play button changed to a Pause)
- Highlighting calls-to-action

Of course, there are a lot of potential opportunities for microinteractions. Where and how you implement them should be determined by the specific needs of your interface.

4 Steps of Microinteractions

No discussion about microinteractions would be complete without mentioning Dan Saffer, the interaction designer who literally wrote the best book on the subject. He explains that an effective microinteraction follows a four-step process (which we'll describe with an elevator example):

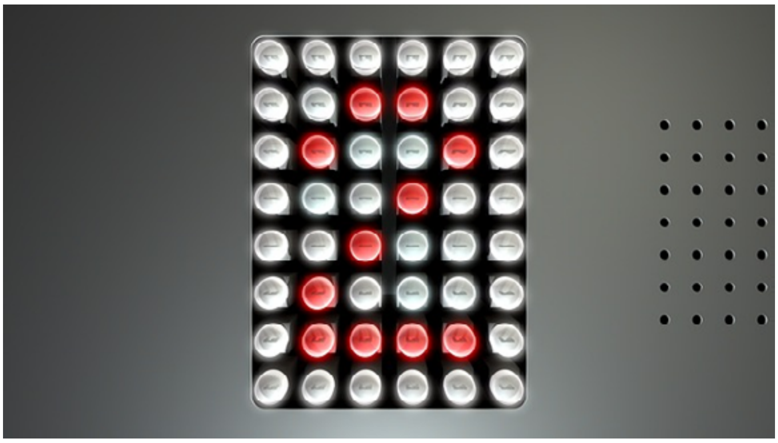
1. **Trigger** – The visual cue or impetus that initiates the action. The numbered button is a clear visual signifier. Pushing the button is the trigger.

2. **Rules** – The parameters the microinteraction follows – basically, what it does. In this case, when you push the button, the elevator will move to that floor.

3. **Feedback** – Verification for the user about the result of the microinteraction. When the button lights up, people know the elevator will respond accordingly.

4. **Loops & Modes** – Considerations about how the microinteraction is reused, including how long it lasts and how it changes for subsequent uses, as well as if the user can change aspects of it in the settings/preferences.

For an elevator, the loop is that the button is recognizable enough that the user will understand the function immediately for different elevators, and that the pushing process is not very difficult. Because microinteractions are brief in nature, they must be designed for repeated use. Modes might be the color of the feedback light, or the typography of the number, all subject to variation.



Now, let's see how these four factors work together in a digital microinteraction, the browser refresh button.

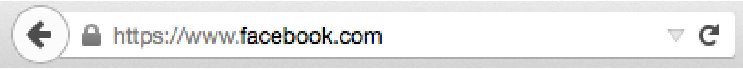


Photo credit: Mozilla Firefox

Let's say you're browsing Facebook and you want to see if anything new was posted since you first opened the site. Naturally, you refresh the site.

- First, you locate the familiar arrow-in-a-circle icon, the trigger of the microinteraction.
- Clicking on the icon starts the action. The loading of the new page is the microinteraction's rule: that's what it does and why you engaged it.
- After clicking, the icon turn to an *X*. This is one of the key elements of a microinteraction, as it provides the user with feedback that their action is being performed. That extra acknowledgement makes performing the refresh function more assuring. Imagine if such feedback were not there: the user might mistake the computer screen for being frozen, and click needlessly over and over.

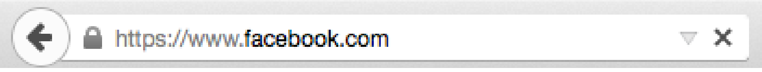


Photo credit: Mozilla Firefox

- Once the new page is loaded, this is the validation for using the microinteraction in the first place. If this action is rewarding enough (in this case, with something as useful as a refresh function, it is), then this incentivizes the user to continue exploiting the microinteraction in the future.

This microinteraction is so useful, it’s become a UI pattern. Safari does the exact same thing.

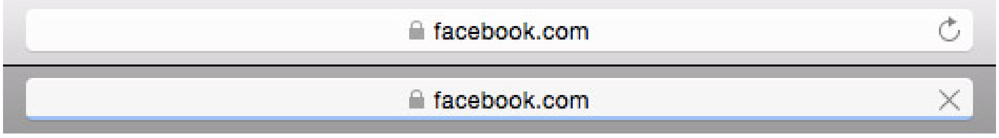


Photo credit: Apple Safari

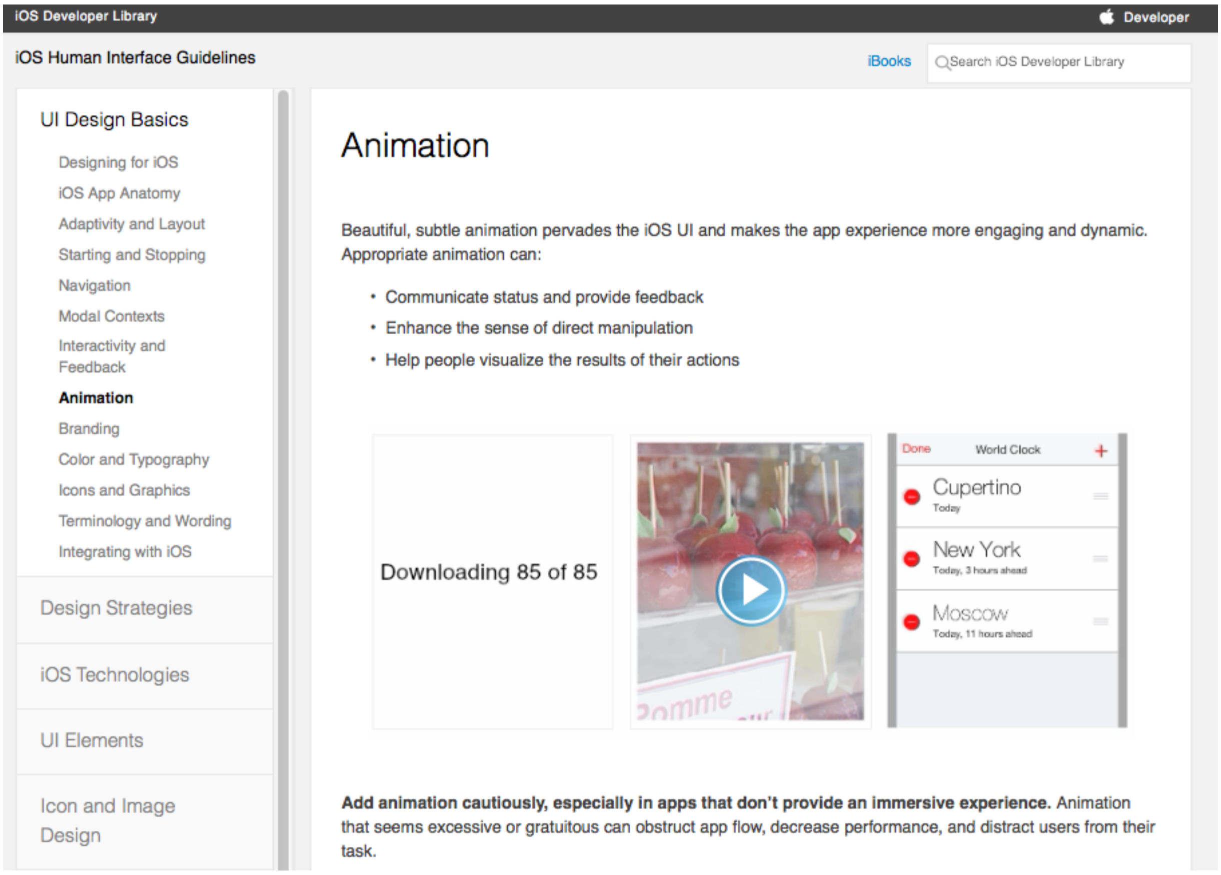
However, they add a blue loading bar at the bottom for even more feedback in case the page takes longer than usual to load.

Microinteractions in Modern Design Philosophies

The importance of animated microinteractions is reflected in two of the most popular design philosophies today: iOS & Material Design.

1. iOS Human Guidelines

Apple's iOS Human Interface Guidelines echo the points we've made above, reaffirming microinteractions – specifically animation – as a means to make an "app experience more engaging and dynamic" and being able to "communicate status and provide feedback," "enhance the sense of direct manipulation," and "help people visualize the results of their actions."



Animation

Beautiful, subtle animation pervades the iOS UI and makes the app experience more engaging and dynamic. Appropriate animation can:

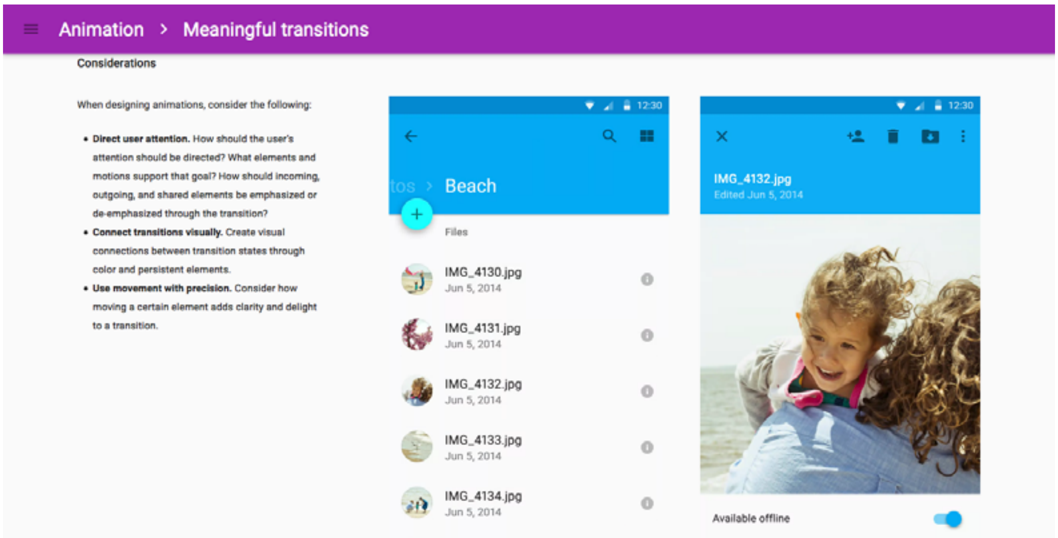
- Communicate status and provide feedback
- Enhance the sense of direct manipulation
- Help people visualize the results of their actions

Add animation cautiously, especially in apps that don't provide an immersive experience. Animation that seems excessive or gratuitous can obstruct app flow, decrease performance, and distract users from their task.

Photo credit: Apple iOS Human Interface Guidelines: Animation

2. Google Material Design

In their Material Design Introduction, another giant Google also touts microinteractions as an integral part in building their "visual language." Their philosophy relies on the usefulness of the details like borders, lighting, and typography to create visual cues and hierarchy.



Considerations

When designing animations, consider the following:

- **Direct user attention.** How should the user's attention should be directed? What elements and motions support that goal? How should incoming, outgoing, and shared elements be emphasized or de-emphasized through the transition?
- **Connect transitions visually.** Create visual connections between transition states through color and persistent elements.
- **Use movement with precision.** Consider how moving a certain element adds clarity and delight to a transition.

Photo credit: Google Material Design: Animation: Meaningful Transitions

More specific to animation, the overview explains that motion is an effective way to funnel the user's attention to a central continuity. From this, we can draw the conclusion that microinteractions can – and should – work together to serve a single, underlying goal.

3. Comparing Ideologies

Similarities:

- Both Apple and Google agree on the usefulness and efficiency of microinteractions like animations. They paint the picture of these minor moments having a greater effect on the UX as a whole, even if they go mostly unnoticed.

- Both also agree that microinteractions should go "beyond the obvious" (as Google puts it). If the opportunity is presented to both show functionality and delight the user with a visual display, by all means a designer should take advantage.

Differences:

- The two seem to disagree about how generously to apply interactions. Apple suggests moderation, cautioning against "excessive or gratuitous" animation, saying it "can obstruct app flow, decrease performance, and distract users from their task."
- Google, on the other hand, explains how animation can be used "within all components of an app and at all scales, from detailed icons to key transitions and actions."

Whether you use animated microinteractions prudently or with a "the more, the merrier" approach, the point is that you use them. On this, there's no need to argue with established UX experts Apple and Google.

Best Practices for Microinteractions

Here, we've collected the top ten pieces of expert advice about using microinteractions:

1. **Fast response time** – A near-immediate response time, within 0.1 second ideally, keeps the user feeling in control.

2. **Keep the user informed** – A loading bar or status icon engages the user and prevents confusion.

3. **Unify in a single theme** – If you can, create a unifying theme to tie together all interactions, micro or otherwise. In the site for the movie *Amy* below, the pink line, which every time is animated to "grow," is used in a variety of different microinteractions

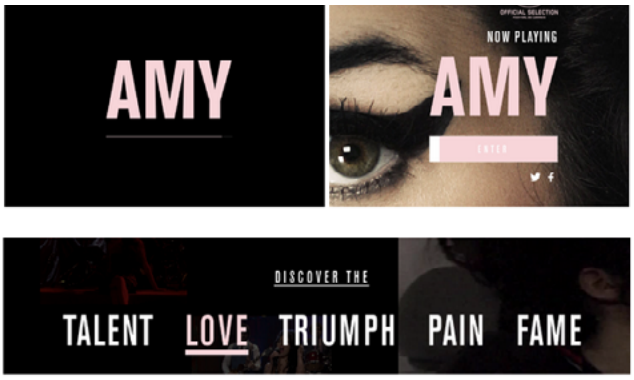


Photo credit: Amy - Movie

4. **Draw from context and user research** – Knowing your users and the context behind the microinteractions will make them more precise and effective. Make sure the visual cues and animations are appropraite.

5. **Use what's available** – Don't add more than necessary: use existing elements to deliver feedback if you can.

6. **Design for repeated use** – Keep longevity in mind. Will the microinteraction get annoying on the 100th use, or is it universally clear and unobtrusive?

7. **Use a human voice** – A casual, friendly tone is good advice for all copy, especially microinteractions with their emphasis on feedback and need-to-know information.

8. **Keep it simple, stupid** – Don't turn your microinteraction into a macrointeraction. It's supposed to be small and simple, so don't get too clever.

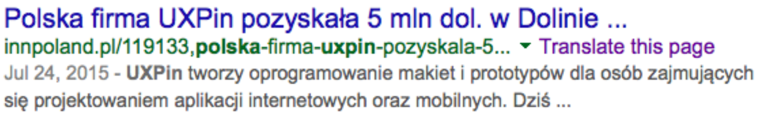
9. **Follow the rules of animations** – Animation – a key component of microinteractions – is a field with its own set of rules. Because the two often go together, brush up on the best practices for animation before incorporating them. Disney's classic 12 rules are a good place to start, which we explain in terms of web design in our *Interaction Design Best Practices: Book II*.

Because microinteractions follow the same principles as other interactions in interaction design (just on a smaller and faster scale), for more guidance download our free *Interaction Design Best Practices: Books I* and *II*.

11 Examples of Magnificent Microinteractions

1. Translate this page – Google

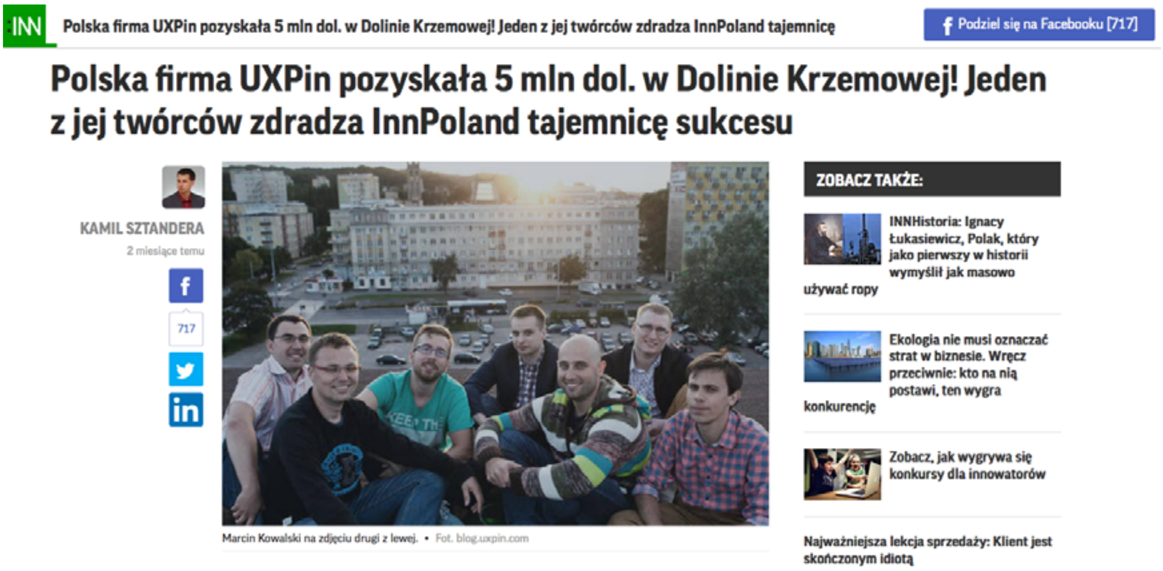
Our first microinteraction is a small feature that goes a long way: Google's Translate this page.



Polska firma UXPin pozyskała 5 mln dol. w Dolinie ...
innpoland.pl/119133,**polska**-firma-**uxpin**-pozyskala-5... ▾ Translate this page
Jul 24, 2015 - **UXPin** tworzy oprogramowanie makiet i prototypów dla osób zajmujących się projektowaniem aplikacji internetowych oraz mobilnych. Dziś ...

Photo credit: Google

This small option tucked into the second line of a Google search essentially opens up the possibility to read every website from all over the world, regardless of language. Which a simple click, Google Translate automatically translates the entire page, without losing fundamentals in the layout.



Polska firma UXPin pozyskała 5 mln dol. w Dolinie Krzemowej! Jeden z jej twórców zdradza InnPoland tajemnicę

Polska firma UXPin pozyskała 5 mln dol. w Dolinie Krzemowej! Jeden z jej twórców zdradza InnPoland tajemnicę sukcesu

KAMIL SZTANDERA
2 miesiące temu

Marcin Kowalski na zdjęciu drugi z lewej. • Fot. blog.uxpin.com

ZOBACZ TAKŻE:

INNHistoria: Ignacy Łukasiewicz, Polak, który jako pierwszy w historii wymyślił jak masowo używać ropy

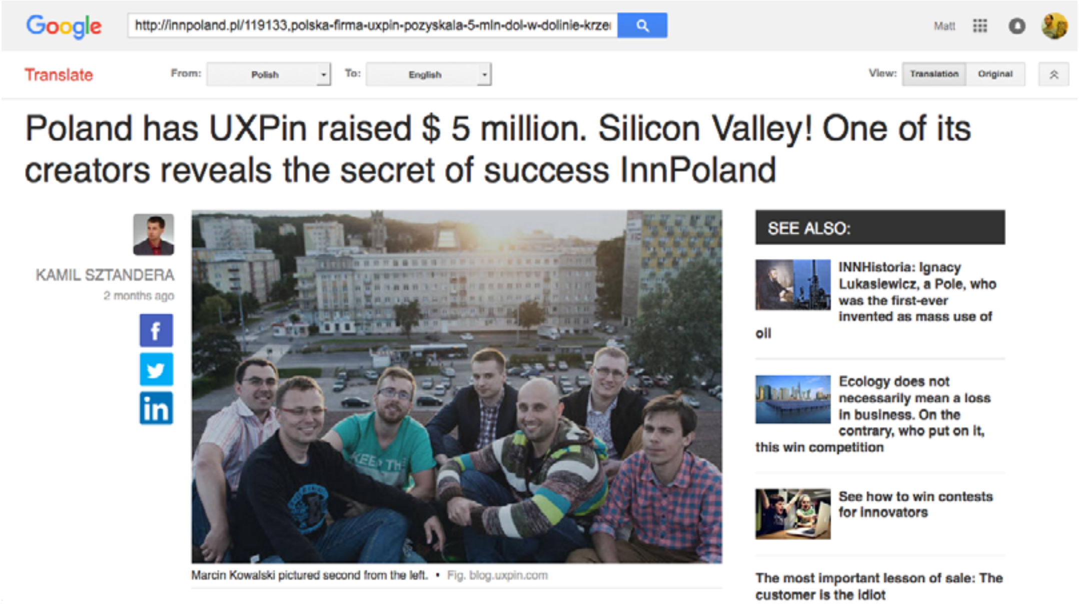
Ekologia nie musi oznaczać strat w biznesie. Wręcz przeciwnie: kto na nią postawi, ten wygra konkurencję

Zobacz, jak wygrywa się konkursy dla innowatorów

Najważniejsza lekcja sprzedaży: Klient jest skończonym idiotą

Photo credit: InnPoland

Of course the translation isn't exact – but no online translator is perfect. The translation is good enough to glean the meaning and read a foreign page in as close to one's native language as possible.



http://innpoland.pl/119133,polska-firma-uxpin-pozyskala-5-mln-dol-w-dolinie-krze

Poland has UXPin raised $ 5 million. Silicon Valley! One of its creators reveals the secret of success InnPoland

KAMIL SZTANDERA
2 months ago

Marcin Kowalski pictured second from the left. • Fig. blog.uxpin.com

SEE ALSO:

INNHistoria: Ignacy Lukasiewicz, a Pole, who was the first-ever invented as mass use of oil

Ecology does not necessarily mean a loss in business. On the contrary, who put on it, this win competition

See how to win contests for innovators

The most important lesson of sale: The customer is the idiot

Photo credit: InnPoland with Google Translate

Furthermore, notice how the microinteraction goes beyond simply the body text. Titles, subtitles, by-lines, captions, dates, and sidebar text are all translated. Even more useful is that the format remains almost identical to the original. This makes the microinteraction seem like magic, fostering the illusion that the foreign site isn't foreign at all.

The feature exemplifies how powerful microinteractions can be. Such a tiny interaction – a small amount of text, a simple click – leads to such a huge gain in allowing access to sites previously thought unattainable. All microinteractions should follow this lead, offering more for less.

1. Swiping Actions – Tinder

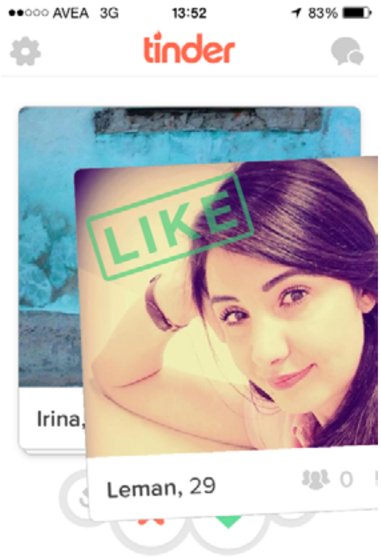


Photo credit: Tinder

One of the most easily recognizable microinteractions is Tinder's swiping actions. This interface choice is about as good as it gets – simple and easy to understand, fun, quick, and original (they were the first to create the dating service in this format). It's even becoming part of our culture with opinion articles and even songs dedicated to the action.

Moreover, their looping capabilities are phenomenal – using Tinder becomes additively fun, with rewarding habit loops in place that keep users on the app "for just five more minutes."

2. Customized Like – Facebook Messenger

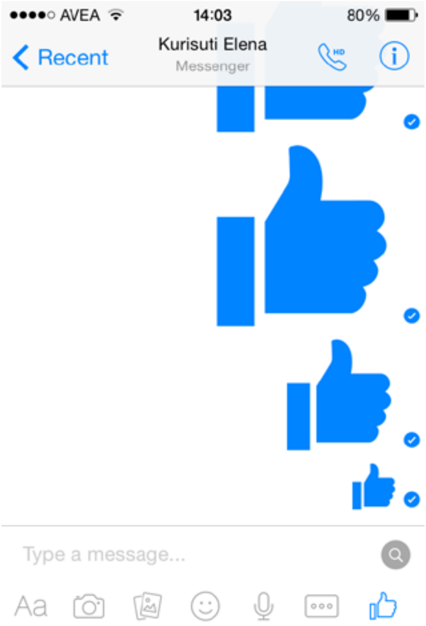
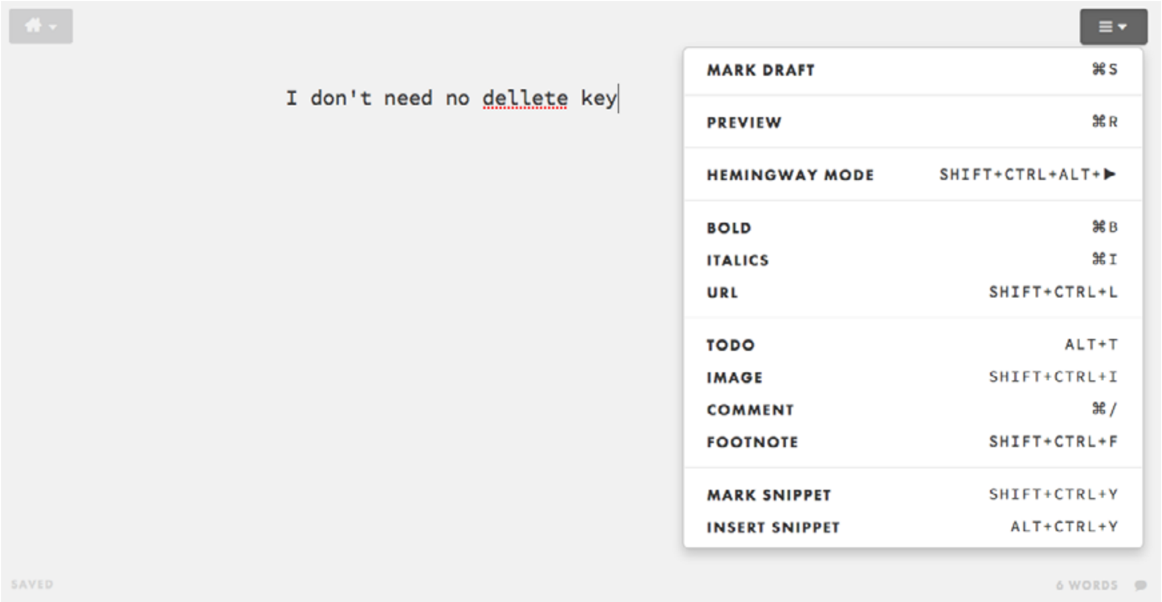


Photo credit: Facebook Messenger

Facebook's free texting service Messenger demonstrates how good microinteractions have a sense of fun and wonder along with their utility. Holding the Like button down for longer increases the size of the stamp, allowing creative customization for the user.

This detail may be superfluous, but it makes using the app more fun and gives it a personalized magic. Additionally, the animation mimics a balloon inflating, and holding down the emoji for too long negates it, making it almost a game.

3. Hemingway Mode – Draft



I don't need no dellete key

Photo credit: Draft

Chances are, users of the online word document maker Draft will appreciate this Hemingway reference: Hemingway Mode disables editing and deleting, which encourages a brisk, stream-of-consciousness style in your writing (you can turn it off an edit later).

This microinteraction is a good example of knowing your user. Such an option – especially with its clever name – would be out of place for an email service targeting a broad audience. However, the site is targeting literary writers, who find this option not only an enjoyable novelty, but actually quite useful in improving their writing process.

4. Hover Animations – Path

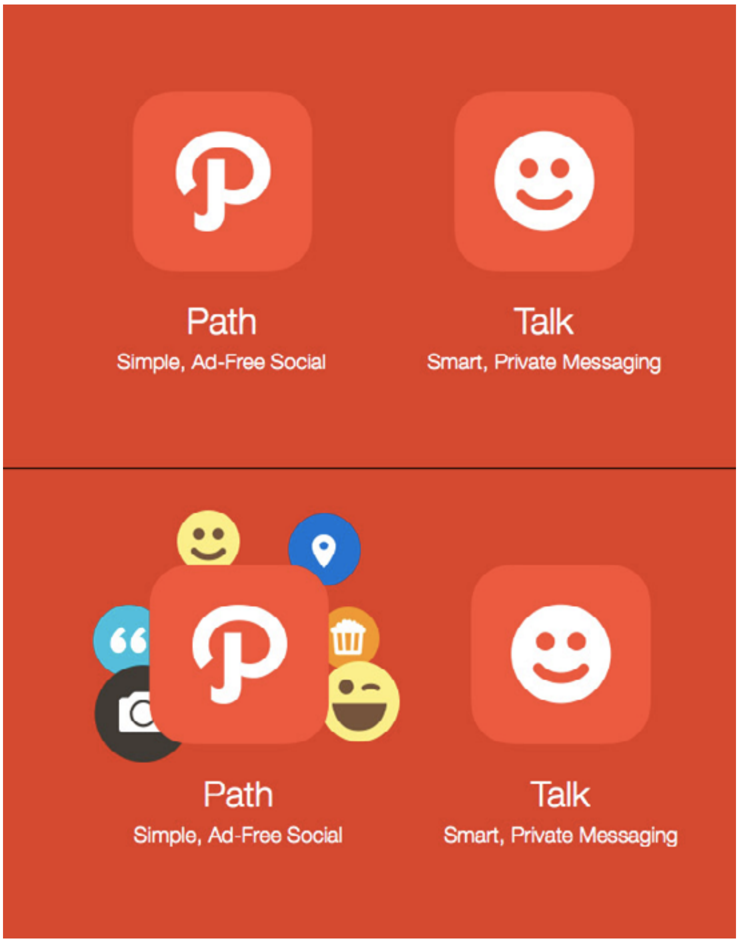


Photo credit: Path

Some microinteractions are just for fun. When hovering over the entrance button on Path's landing page, a cute animation of icons pop out from behind the button. On a useful level this signifies clickability and provides feedback, but really it's there as just a source of delight.

Such hover animations are one of the most popular microinteractions. On sites like Path they may be just for fun, but on sites that intermix interactive and non-interactive elements, this type of microinteraction can go a long way in communicating usability.

5. Customized Header Background and Icon – Reddit

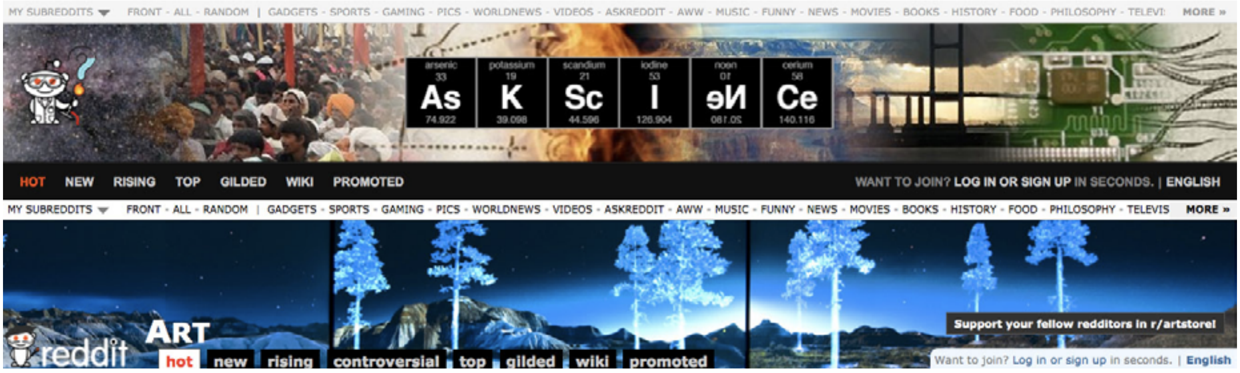
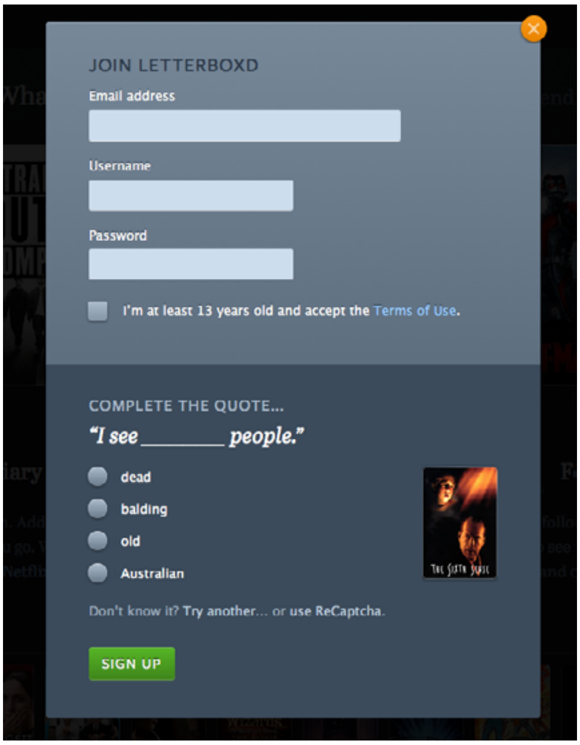

MY SUBREDDITS ▾ FRONT - ALL - RANDOM | GADGETS - SPORTS - GAMING - PICS - WORLDNEWS - VIDEOS - ASKREDDIT - AWW - MUSIC - FUNNY - NEWS - MOVIES - BOOKS - HISTORY - FOOD - PHILOSOPHY - TELEVI: MORE »
As K Sc I Ne Ce
HOT NEW RISING TOP GILDED WIKI PROMOTED
WANT TO JOIN? LOG IN OR SIGN UP IN SECONDS. | ENGLISH
ART
reddit
hot new rising controversial top gilded wiki promoted
Support your fellow redditors in r/artstore!
Want to join? Log in or sign up in seconds. | English

Photo credit: Reddit

The header background and Reddit mascot change depending on which subreddit (category) users visit. It's a small touch, but creates a more unique identity for each subreddit (which deepens the feeling of community).

6. Themed Captcha – Letterboxd



JOIN LETTERBOXD

Email address

Username

Password

☐ I'm at least 13 years old and accept the Terms of Use.

COMPLETE THE QUOTE...

"I see ________ people."

○ dead
○ balding
○ old
○ Australian

Don't know it? Try another... or use ReCaptcha.

Photo credit: Letterboxd

In keeping with their site's movie theme, Letterboxd illustrates a good point with their captchas from famous movie quotes. The clever microinteraction transforms an otherwise annoying task into a task that feels a little more fun.

7. Real Time – iOS Clock App

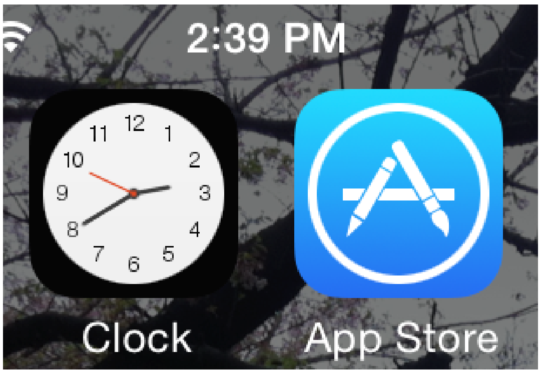
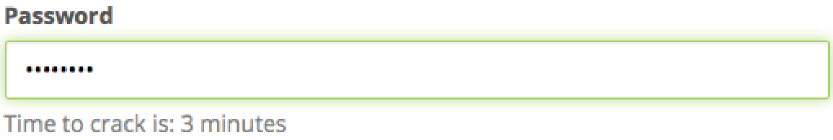


Photo credit: iOS Clock App

A quick time-saver, the iOS Clock App shows the real time right in the display. While not necessary, it's certainly more useful than a static image that could confuse users if it doesn't match the actual time.

8. Humorous Feedback – Geeklist



Password

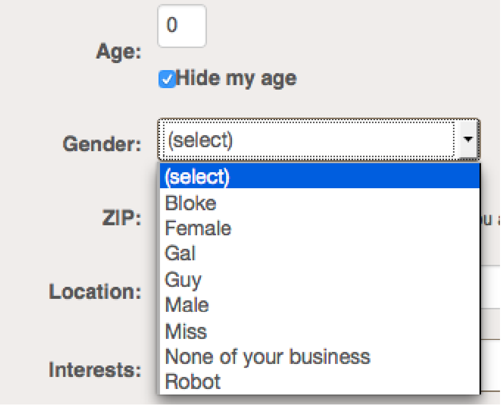
••••••••

Time to crack is: 3 minutes

Photo credit: Geeklist

Geeklist goes above and beyond the common "password strength" to calculate how long the password will take to hack. Funny, original, and keeping on the site's geek theme. It's also quite useful since it communicates password strength in terms that a user instantly understands.

9. Sensitive Profile Options – Instructables



Age: 0

☑Hide my age

Gender: (select)

ZIP:

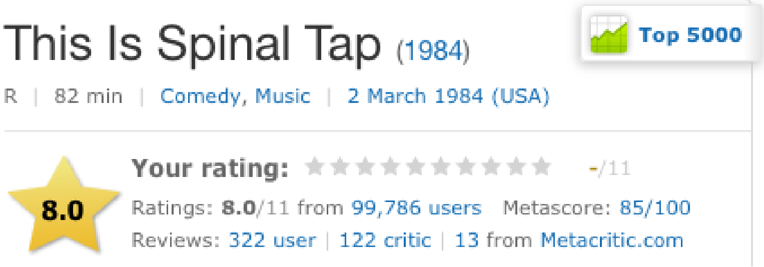
Location:

Interests:

Photo credit: Instructables

With information like age and gender somewhat sensitive, Instructables relieves the tension by offering several options for gender, and the option to hide one's age on the profile.

10. Quirky Format Changes – IMDb



This Is Spinal Tap (1984)

R | 82 min | Comedy, Music | 2 March 1984 (USA)

Your rating: ★★★★★★★★★★ -/11

8.0

Ratings: 8.0/11 from 99,786 users Metascore: 85/100

Reviews: 322 user | 122 critic | 13 from Metacritic.com

Photo credit: IMDb: This Is Spinal Tap

An in-movie reference, the rating for *This Is Spinal Tap* on IMDb breaks form and goes up to 11 instead of 10. This subtle joke within the interface will, when discovered, endear the site to the movie's die-hard fans, and make an experience they'll better remember.

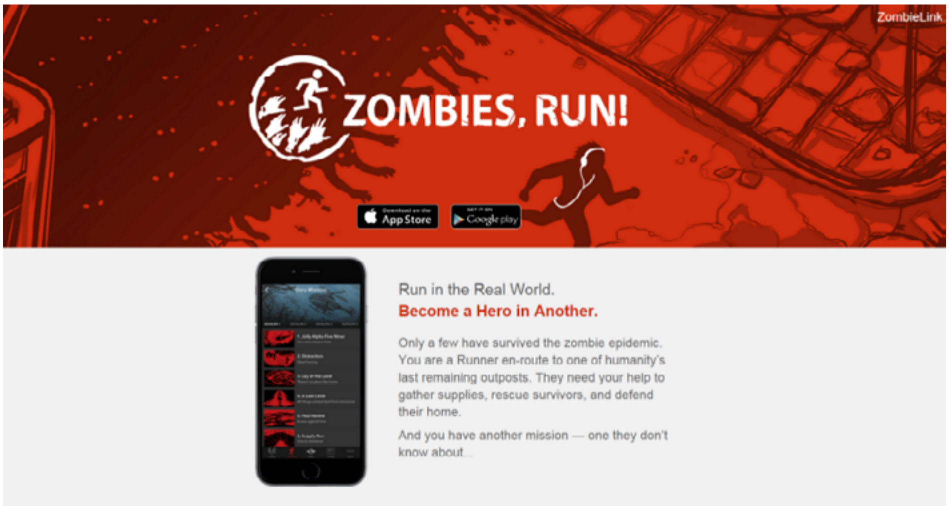
Conclusion: Humanizing a Computerized System

Microinteractions, at their best, provide a utility as good as their enjoyment factor. But, when you view all successful microinteractions together, the one thing they all have in common is that they add a little personality to the site or app. This of course changes depending on the personality of the site itself – microinteractions can be cartoony, or strictly business in streamlining a task.

But in every case, microinteractions are a way to take a dull, negligible aspect of an interface and make it enjoyable and memorable. This is their greatest impact on the UX.

The Rebirth of Gamification

Games and UX design often feed into each other because both share a unique trait that separates them from other mediums: interactivity. Users don't interact with movies or books the same way they do with video games and sites/apps. In fact, the two fields even share devices; most people have more than one game installed on their computer or smartphone, and almost all gaming devices have Internet access.



Run in the Real World.
Become a Hero in Another.

Only a few have survived the zombie epidemic. You are a Runner en-route to one of humanity's last remaining outposts. They need your help to gather supplies, rescue survivors, and defend their home.

And you have another mission — one they don't know about...

It's natural, then, that gaming influences UX design. Gamifying a site or app can create a more fulfilling and personal UX – not to mention it more fun. However, designers must learn from the mistakes of the past, and it's not enough to simply include badges or a point system.

This chapter will explain how to go beyond just adding game elements to your UI, and how to achieve *meaningful* gamification.

Gamification and the Habit Loop

Most sites serve some purpose beyond entertainment. This even refers to sites which feature games in order to spread brand awareness – without the objective of drawing attention to the brand, they wouldn't exist. The KFC video game below wouldn't exist if it weren't promoting KFC.

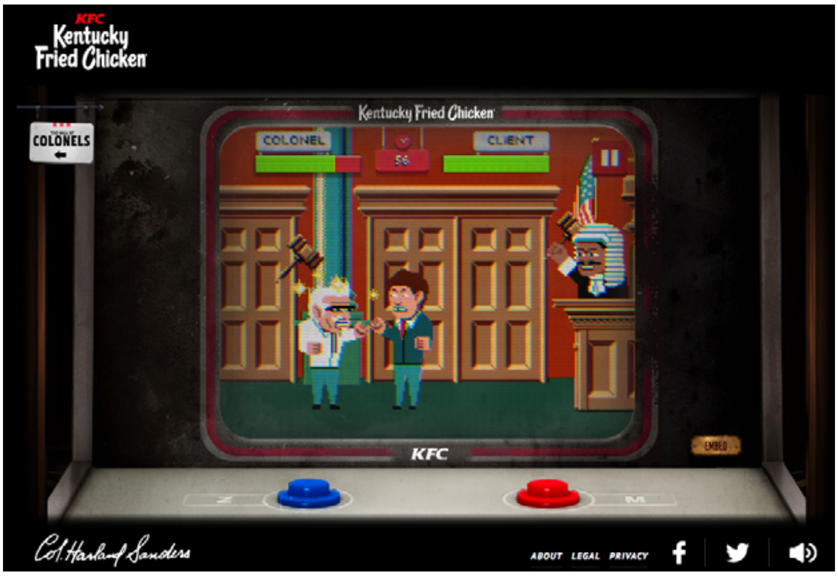


Photo credit: KFC: The Hall of Colonels

The habit loop is essentially what makes video games (and other enjoyable activities) fun, and it translates directly to UX design. It is a powerful tool indeed for UX design because it guides – almost trains – users to continually perform favorable actions. With more than 40% of our time spent on habitual actions, formulating the right habits can solidify success.

Gamification works based on human behavior – it coincides with the natural mechanisms of learning and having fun that are already in place before we ever start browsing. According to product design expert and famed author Nir Eyal, all great habits hook users through four interconnected phases:

- **Cues (or triggers)** – In this context, the cues are the visual information that prompts a game player into action.
- **Routines (or actions)** – These are what the player actually does in the game, whether it's fighting monsters, shooting bad guys, or solving puzzles
- **Rewards** – Tangible rewards include leveling up and unlocking achievements or items, while intangible rewards include the visual delight of advanced graphics and fun gameplay
- **Investments** – As players strengthen their character and advance in the plot, they become personally invested in the game's events and final outcome

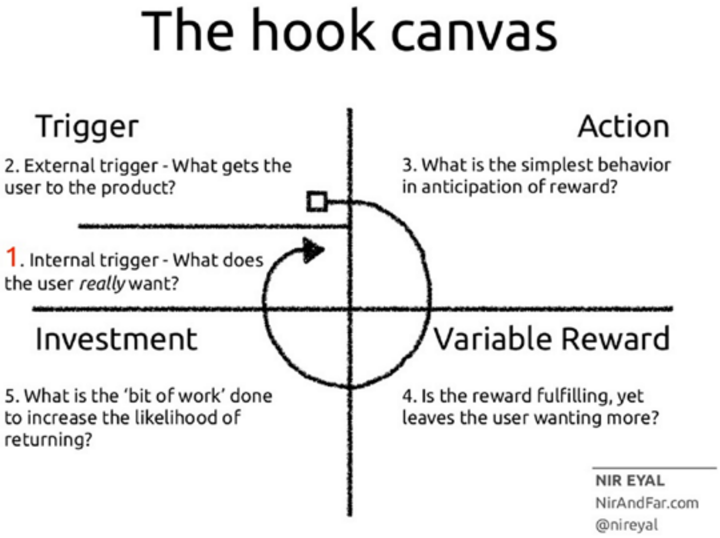

The hook canvas
Trigger
2. External trigger - What gets the user to the product?
1. Internal trigger - What does the user *really* want?
Action
3. What is the simplest behavior in anticipation of reward?
Investment
5. What is the 'bit of work' done to increase the likelihood of returning?
Variable Reward
4. Is the reward fulfilling, yet leaves the user wanting more?
NIR EYAL
NirAndFar.com
@nireyal

Photo credit: Hooked by Nir Eyal

As shown in Nir's excellent book Hooked, you can also see how this "hook canvas" is built into some of today's most popular products, like Pinterest.

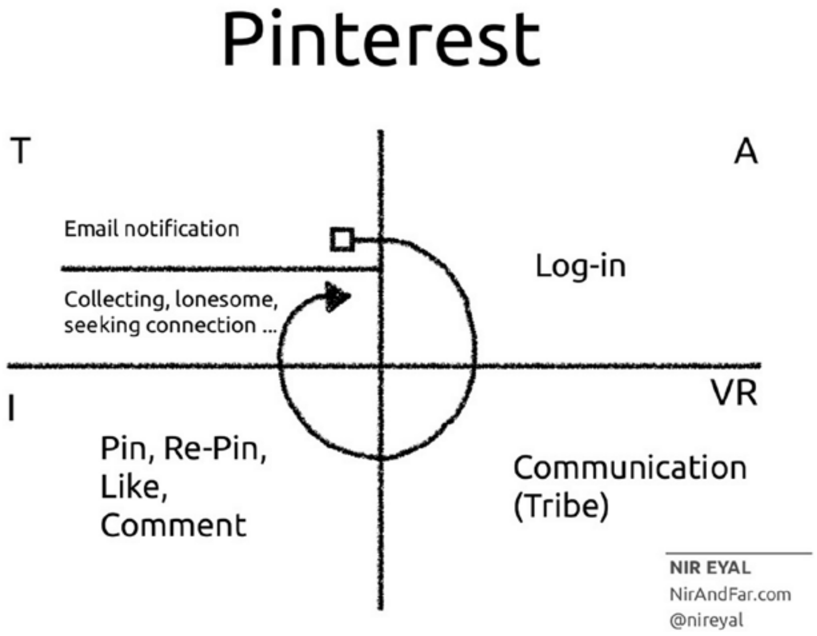


Photo credit: Hooked by Nir Eyal

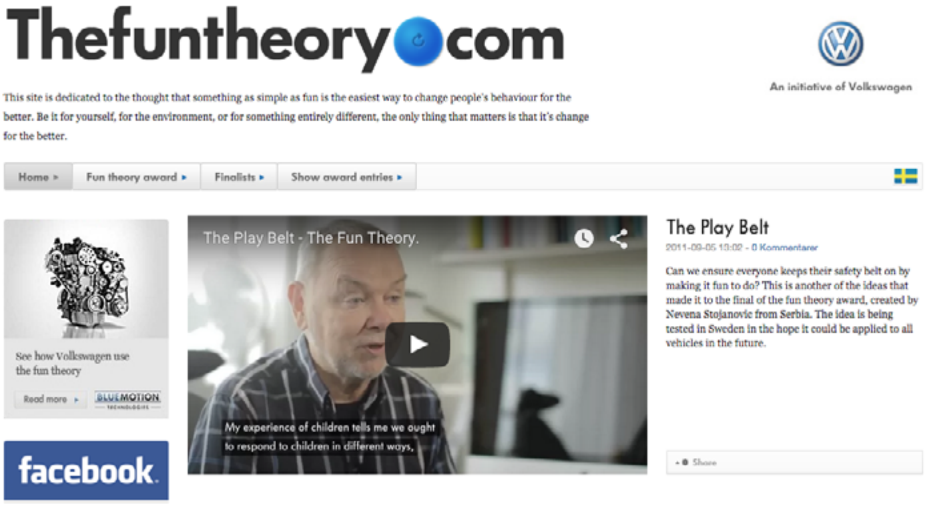
Knowing how to integrate this habit loop gives the designer more influence over which actions the user performs, and makes the UX more fun for the user. Know with actions are sustainable and rewarding when done continually, then design them into the format above.

The History of Gamification and What Went Wrong

The exploitation of the habit loop in both video games and web design is not new, it's just becoming more widespread thanks to new technology. However, it's important to understand where the gamification came from so you can avoid past mistakes.

1. A Brief History

Not long ago, gamification was the darling of business talk. Successful initiatives like Volkswagen's campaign The Fun Theory proved that incorporating elements of games can help achieve tangible goals while increasing customer enjoyment. At some point, when Foursquare had its glory days, it seemed that almost anything could be turned into a game by adding points, badges and rankings.


Thefuntheory.com
An initiative of Volkswagen
Home
Fun theory award
Finalists
Show award entries
The Play Belt - The Fun Theory.
My experience of children tells me we ought to respond to children in different ways,
See how Volkswagen use the fun theory
Read more
BLUEMOTION TECHNOLOGIES
facebook
Share

This site is dedicated to the thought that something as simple as fun is the easiest way to change people's behaviour for the better. Be it for yourself, for the environment, or for something entirely different, the only thing that matters is that it's change for the better.

The Play Belt

2011-09-05 13:02 - 0 Kommentarer

Can we ensure everyone keeps their safety belt on by making it fun to do? This is another of the ideas that made it to the final of the fun theory award, created by Nevena Stojanovic from Serbia. The idea is being tested in Sweden in the hope it could be applied to all vehicles in the future.

Photo credit: Fun Theory

Gamification is so effective in manipulating our natural learning mechanisms, it began to be used in job training. Yet, while successful, its practice is now being met with disdain and resentment for the same reasons web designers are passing it off as an "overrated trend."

As it turns out, gamification is no piece of cake – not for its own qualities, but for its improper usage. Most gamified systems produced mild results, and some caused even quite the opposite effects to those desired.

Early poster children of gamification even started to detach themselves from it: Foursquare, for instance, ended up delegating all gamification features in a separate app – Swarm – that never really managed to stay as relevant as its parent. Stack Overflow explains its success as having nothing to do with the points and badges. And according to Gartner, the penetration of gamification in enterprise last year was no more than 10%.

Even high profile companies like Hubspot acknowledge that it isn't the panacea everyone thought it was in 2011. These days, the mere mention of gamification sounds a bit outdated and tired.

2. What Went Wrong

We can distill the past mistakes of gamification into four main points:

1. **The very notion of a "game"** – Even the name "gamification" is distasteful: it conveys the erroneous notion that everything should look and behave like games. Many companies, product leaders, and consultants, eager to jump on the buzzword wagon, have taken "gamification" literally, creating a pile of goofy products, apps, and systems.

2. **Misuse of points, badges, and leaderboards** – This is the most visible and annoying aspect of gamification. Product designers started to attach virtual currencies to anything, under the silly premise that if you offer people something to collect, they will try to collect it no matter what. But virtual economies add cog-

nitive noise, introducing unwanted distortions both when they are worth too much and when they are worth nothing.

3. **Displacement of rewards** – It's been demonstrated that offering any kind of reward on behaviors that should happen spontaneously puts people into "transaction mode," altering the original motivations system and leaving them less motivated than before. It's crucial to know where and when to take advantage of the habit loop to prevent abusing it.

4. **Condescending tone** – Many gamified systems, for the sake of keeping users motivated, adopt a patronizing treatment, congratulating people in an overly cheerful voice for everything they do. Here, "user-friendly" was somehow interpreted as "toddler-friendly," something most adults won't appreciate. A system that assumes you need to be constantly led by hand makes you feel sort of disabled (remember Clippy).

These mistakes aside, gamification as a design approach *has* introduced very valuable insights and methodologies to product and system design that, if leveraged, definitely improve the user experience.

Best Practices for Gamification

Below are the lessons the design industry has learned recently from years of doing gamification wrong:

- **Make the users feel smarter** – Enhance the tasks that the user already has to do by removing obstacles and barriers. Guide by hand the first time, then allow users to do it by themselves. Avoid a patronizing tone and keep congratulations to a minimum.

- **Enable discovery of advanced features** – When you hide advanced features, you simultaneously make things simpler for novice users while giving power users a sense of accomplishment and exclusivity. As described in our *Interaction Design Best Practices: Book I*, the discovery of new features gives users tiny, random rewards that makes them more productive and engaged, entrenching a habit loop to search for more.

- **Slick, elegant UI** – Well-planned interfaces – with good performance, smooth transitions, consistent tone, and polished design – make users themselves feel more polished and their tasks better executed. Check out *Web UI Design for the Human Eye: Books I* and *II* for more visual interface design tips.

- **Let users define their standards for progress** – People have wildly different notions of "better." Don't enforce your rules on them, and instead give users ways to set their own milestones. The system should be a measurement tool rather than a coach.

- **Show users their progress** – Make them see their achievements in an objective, rational way. Remind them subtly of how they were when they first began.

- **Flow is critical** – Cut out interruptions. Allow users to immerse themselves completely in a task. Offer discrete feedback to what's happening. If possible, allow users to lose their sense of time. When you are motivated, time flies.

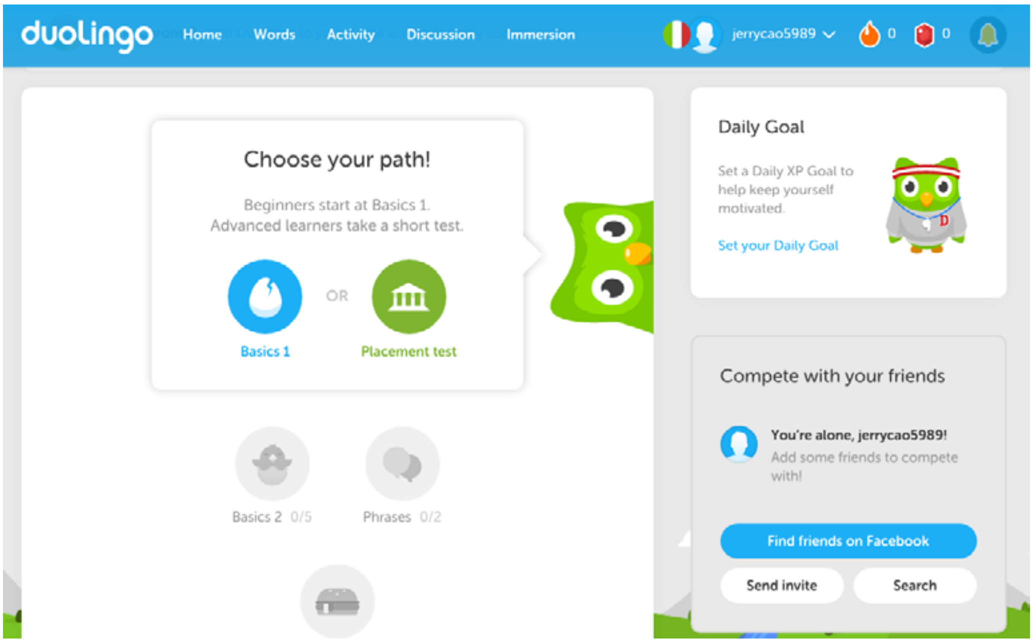
- **Avoid the trap of virtual currencies** – Like real currencies, virtual currencies can rapidly fluctuate in value and become unmanageable. If the currency devalues, it becomes only noise and added complexity. If it becomes too valuable (for example, because it's tied to money incentives), people will start to trade it and will find ways to cheat or corrupt the system.
- **Don't force things to be a game** – This should be pretty obvious by now. Imposing a game over existing social or behavioral dynamics will make everyone feel awkward. Real games are fun precisely because they are opt-in, not forced. This distinction can make all the difference.

7 Examples of Great Gamification

1. Duolingo

This is the best example of a properly gamified system. Learning languages in Duolingo is really fun, light, and motivating. Its effectiveness in teaching fluency from scratch has been scientifically proven.

The key is that it provides a fun way of learning something that users already wanted to learn. People really want to learn languages for fun, for travel, for business, for relationships, etc. It's so important to us that we're willing to learn it the boring way – through courses, reading books, and taking tests.



Choose your path!

Beginners start at Basics 1.
Advanced learners take a short test.

Daily Goal

Set a Daily XP Goal to help keep yourself motivated.

Compete with your friends

You're alone, jerrycao5989!
Add some friends to compete with!

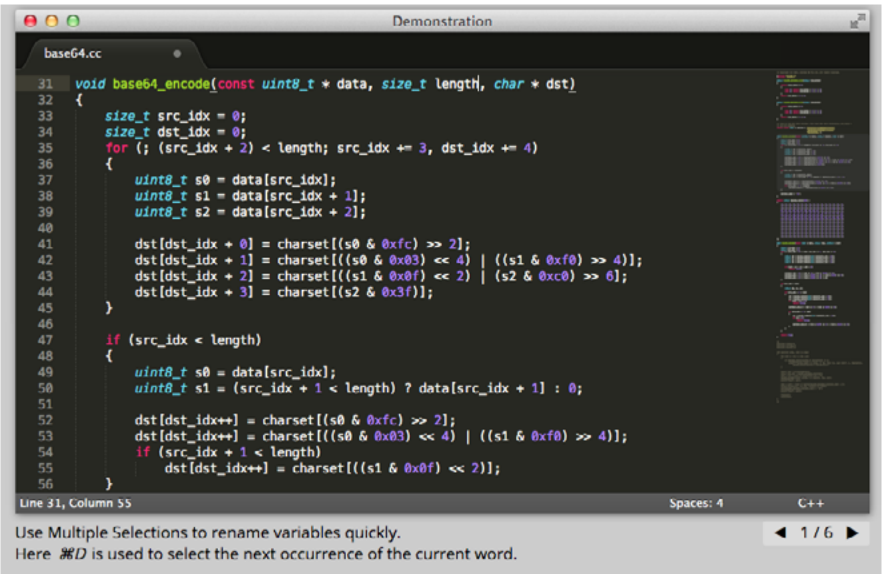
Photo credit: Duolingo

Duolingo is superior because it tackles a tough subject with a light approach and provides the student with a sense of progress. By making you advance through levels, it gives you an objective measure of your advancement. Passing these levels is just the right amount of difficulty, so you'll probably make a few mistakes, which in turn actually enhances the sense of unpredictability that is key to keeping you engaged.

But none of this would work, of course, if people wouldn't want to learn languages in first place.

2. Sublime Text

This example may leave you perplexed, as it's a seemingly simple text editor used mainly for writing code. Probably not even the developers thought of gamification when creating it. But that's why Sublime Text is such a brilliant example: it understands that the core delight of gamification lies in natural discoverability, not a forced sense of progress.



```
void base64_encode(const uint8_t * data, size_t length, char * dst)
{
    size_t src_idx = 0;
    size_t dst_idx = 0;
    for (; (src_idx + 2) < length; src_idx += 3, dst_idx += 4)
    {
        uint8_t s0 = data[src_idx];
        uint8_t s1 = data[src_idx + 1];
        uint8_t s2 = data[src_idx + 2];

        dst[dst_idx + 0] = charset[(s0 & 0xfc) >> 2];
        dst[dst_idx + 1] = charset[((s0 & 0x03) << 4) | ((s1 & 0xf0) >> 4)];
        dst[dst_idx + 2] = charset[((s1 & 0x0f) << 2) | (s2 & 0xc0) >> 6];
        dst[dst_idx + 3] = charset[(s2 & 0x3f)];
    }

    if (src_idx < length)
    {
        uint8_t s0 = data[src_idx];
        uint8_t s1 = (src_idx + 1 < length) ? data[src_idx + 1] : 0;

        dst[dst_idx++] = charset[(s0 & 0xfc) >> 2];
        dst[dst_idx++] = charset[((s0 & 0x03) << 4) | ((s1 & 0xf0) >> 4)];
        if (src_idx + 1 < length)
            dst[dst_idx++] = charset[((s1 & 0x0f) << 2)];
    }
```

Use Multiple Selections to rename variables quickly.
Here ⌘D is used to select the next occurrence of the current word.

Photo credit: Sublime Text

Sublime Text gives power users nice tools for enhancing their productivity, while keeping the interface incredibly simple to novice users (who can still use the app right away without much thinking). Users must discover these controls (literally), as most of them are buried in menus and are not self-explanatory at all.

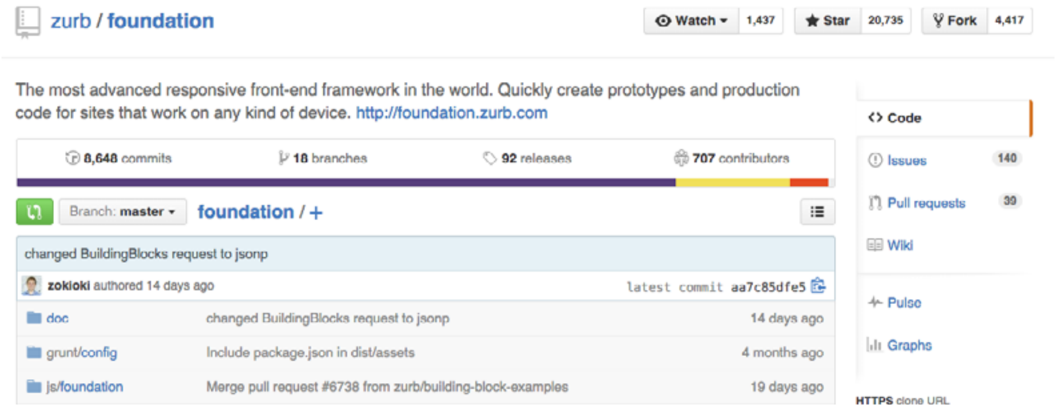
Maybe you hear from one fellow developer that Package Control lets you install amazing extensions and customizations. Maybe you see another developer use a cool selection shortcut to edit several lines at once. Or maybe you just stumble across an article listing some hidden gimmicks. As you get better with the tool, you find better tricks. Over time, the habit loop improves your productivity while making the experience quite addictive.

This sense of discovery and mastery – balanced with a slick, though bareboned interface– makes Sublime Text fun to use. None of these enhancements get in your way or try to be clever with badges or artificial "level up" notifications. Sublime Text represents the spirit of gamification: the discoverables entice users to continue using the app, while rewarding their time with better mastery of the system.

User empowerment is the core to every step of the experience, and no gamified system could ask for more.

3. GitHub

GitHub is a weird hybrid of a repository hosting service and a social network. As a repository service it works quite well, but the social features are what makes it shine as the *largest* repository of code in the world.



The most advanced responsive front-end framework in the world. Quickly create prototypes and production code for sites that work on any kind of device. http://foundation.zurb.com

changed BuildingBlocks request to jsonp

zokioki authored 14 days ago latest commit aa7c85dfe5

doc	changed BuildingBlocks request to jsonp	14 days ago
grunt/config	Include package.json in dist/assets	4 months ago
js/foundation	Merge pull request #6738 from zurb/building-block-examples	19 days ago

Photo credit: ZURB Foundation via Github

Like no other platform, GitHub allows developers to showcase and visualize their work. This is true in many of their features: from the most followed or forked repositories, to the network graph visualizer, the profile contributions graph, and so on.

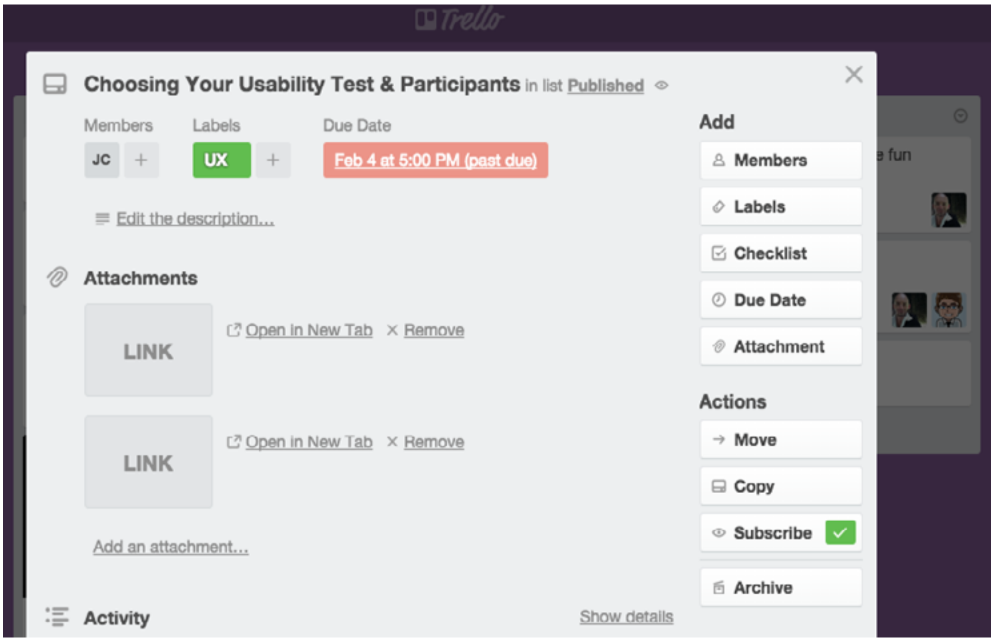
These tools allow users to assess the quality of a developer in a rational way, so the prestige earned in the platform is completely deserved. That's why many companies who hire developers are actually relying much more on profiles from GitHub than LinkedIn – or even resumes – and developers in turn show proudly their GitHub profiles as proof of their talent.

The currency of GitHub is true work, which is infinitely more valuable than any point system. Any currency system prone to abuse devalues rapidly (i.e., LinkedIn's skills recommendation system).

4. Trello

Most to-do list systems leave you sort of depressed, reminding you constantly of the things you haven't done. The more tasks you pile up, the less likely you are to achieve them.

Far from the typical to-do list, Trello is a notable exception: like the Kanban methodology from which it draws inspiration, it acknowledges that tasks may have different states, and that the binary “done” and “not done” approach is not useful for most purposes. Intermediate states allow you to differentiate the tasks you started from the things you have not. This is crucial, because starting a task is the most difficult part. A binary to-do list won’t let you see that.



Choosing Your Usability Test & Participants in list Published

Members: JC

Labels: UX

Due Date: Feb 4 at 5:00 PM (past due)

Photo credit: *Sitepoint* via *Trello*

Dragging and dropping cards across stacks is natural and helps you feel that you are *actually* making a task move forward. And, most important, you have a stack of “done” cards, so you can see things you already achieved, creating a habit loop that motivates you to achieve more. You don’t need badges – the intrinsic reward of seeing a task done is enough. Trello succeeds by recognizing that the things you’ve done matter as much as the ones you haven’t done yet.

5. Kiip

Behind-the-scenes kingmakers in the gamification business, Kiip collects brands and apps together to offer real and relevant rewards to encourage user involvement on any platform.

What they're doing has two unique and successful components:

- **Allows any app to use habit loops** – Kiip naturally incorporates the habit loop into how users interact with an app already. They offer prizes (from partnering brands) for accomplishing the app's normal tasks.
- **Real-life rewards** – Kiip takes the habit loop reward to the next level by offering *actual* prizes. With the promise of genuine products/services from partnering brands, Kiip incentivizes deeper interactions on any app that joins.

For example, if a fitness app uses Kiip, their users are gifted health drinks from one of Kiip's partner brands for regularly using the app. These rewards come from normal interactions, say, logging their latest run.

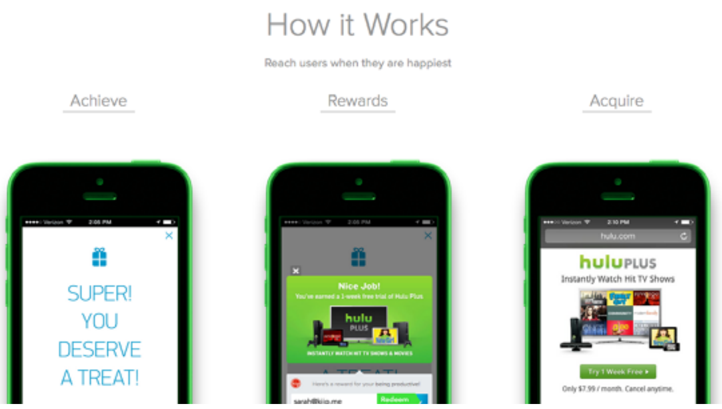

How it Works
Reach users when they are happiest
Achieve
Rewards
Acquire
SUPER! YOU DESERVE A TREAT!
Nice Job!
hulu PLUS
Redeem
huluPLUS
Instantly Watch Hit TV Shows
Try 1 Week Free ▸
Only $7.99 / month. Cancel anytime.

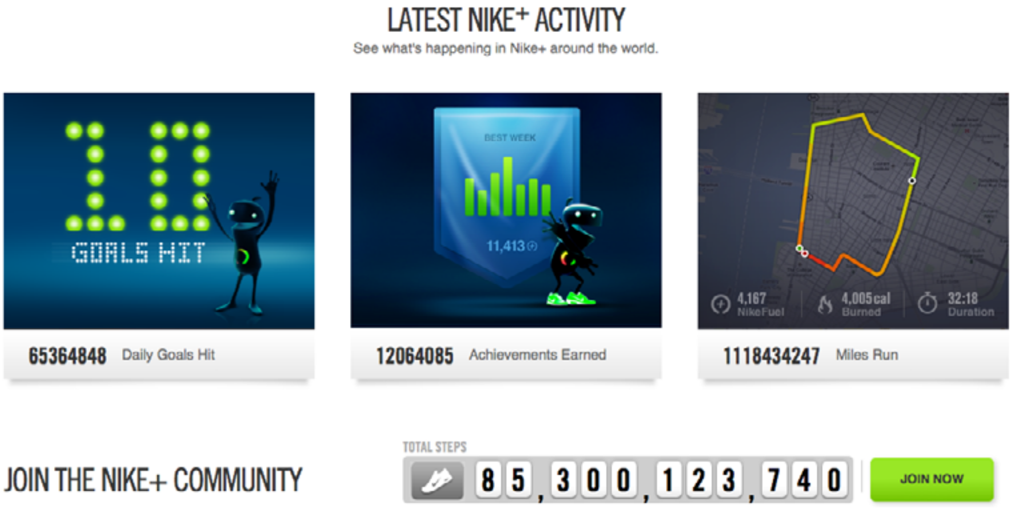
Photo credit: Kiip

Kiip is not at all intrusive or artificial: users aren’t forced into a game, they are simply rewarded for interacting normally, and so encouraged to interact more. And because the rewards are real, their gamification is truly meaningful.

6. Nike+ Apps

Just like Duolingo, Nike+ Apps thrive on the user’s own motivation. Their Running, Fuel, and Training apps showcase the standard gamification principles by allowing users to set their own goals and tracking their progress.

Beyond the basics, these apps also take advantage of the merits of competition by enabling users to share their progress in a community setting.



LATEST NIKE+ ACTIVITY

See what's happening in Nike+ around the world.

65364848 Daily Goals Hit

12064085 Achievements Earned

1118434247 Miles Run

JOIN THE NIKE+ COMMUNITY

TOTAL STEPS 85,300,123,740

Photo credit: Nike+

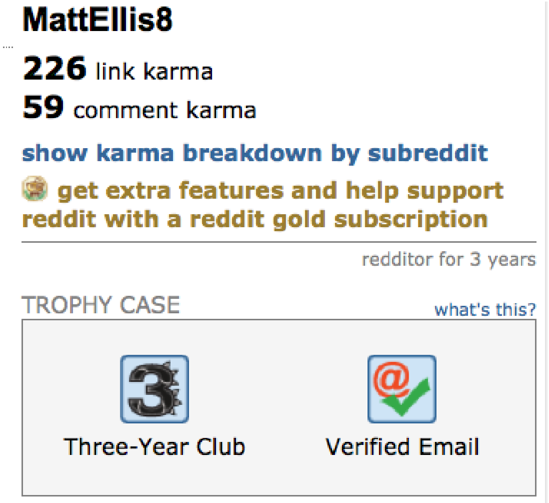
What works about the Nike+ apps, along with other successful gamification apps, is that they enhance what’s already there. Their usage of the habit loop fits organically into the structure the users themselves desire.

Nike+ understands that losing weight and staying healthy requires social support to be successful, then transforms that process into a competitive yet encouraging activity. Design for the path of least resistance, do not gamify by creating artificial motivation.

7. Reddit

While not exactly a new or progressive system, Reddit is nonetheless still an admirable example of gamification. The tried-and-true Reddit system works like this: Users vote either upvote or downvote content. Upvoted content rises in the list, gaining visibility, and downvoted content sinks to the bottom.

While this itself is a gamified way to challenge users to post better content, the reason we're mentioning Reddit here is because of its interesting karma currency system.



MattEllis8

226 link karma
59 comment karma

show karma breakdown by subreddit
get extra features and help support reddit with a reddit gold subscription

redditor for 3 years

TROPHY CASE what's this?

Three-Year Club Verified Email

Photo credit: Reddit

The name is a clever deviation from the norm, and makes the user want to accumulate it more than if its name were, say, "Reddit points." These points are awarded whenever a user posts or comments – basically, whenever they interact with the site. In the site's own words, "[Karma] reflects how much good the user has done for the reddit community."

This system works for the site on several levels:

- It incentivizes regular users to interact more to improve their social reputation
- It shows other users how experienced someone is with Reddit, which could affect whether or not they click (or how much value they assign a comment).

The interesting thing about Reddit's karma is that it exists as an ends to itself. Users don't unlock new features or gain special privileges (although the site does have a separate trophy system reminiscent from the gamification of years past). The value of karma is only as much as the individual user assigns to it.

Conclusion: Gamification for Granted

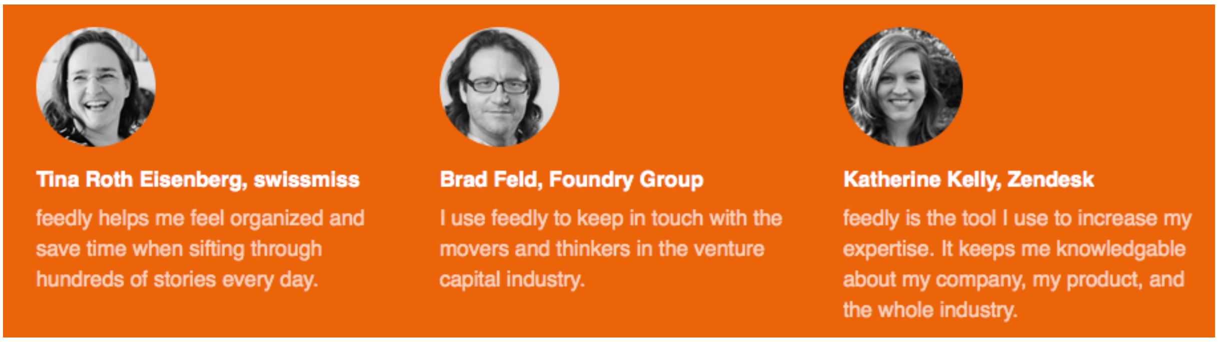
While gamification is easily dismissed as an outdated trend, don't ignore its evolution just because it wasn't always executed perfectly.

A progressive narrative, an intuitive learning environment, enabling an activity to be either competitive or collaborative, and the overall enjoyable nature of gaming are all concepts that will always apply to UX design.

Once a user is emotionally invested, you’ve successfully formed a habit of interacting with the design. And that’s what it’s all about. If you want to make your design addictive, you must make it habitually enjoyable.

Empowering UX Design

Our final UX trend of 2015–2016 is less of a trend and more of a best practice – but one of the most effective best practices of UX design. An empowering UX design has always been a key to success, and lately more and more designers are catching on.



Tina Roth Eisenberg, swissmiss

feedly helps me feel organized and save time when sifting through hundreds of stories every day.

Brad Feld, Foundry Group

I use feedly to keep in touch with the movers and thinkers in the venture capital industry.

Katherine Kelly, Zendesk

feedly is the tool I use to increase my expertise. It keeps me knowledgable about my company, my product, and the whole industry.

Photo credit: Feedly

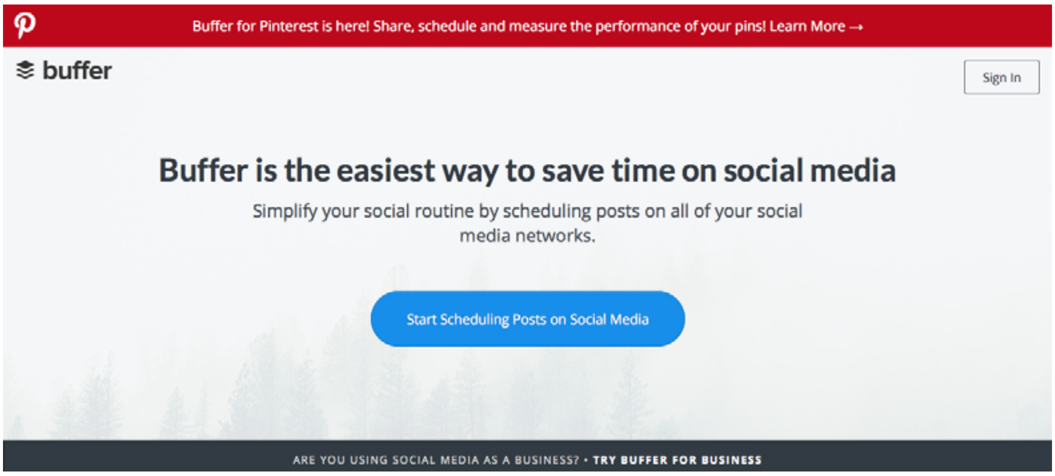
Any good product, digital or not, aims to help the user make their lives better. An empowering UX design, in this sense, molds the user into a better version of themselves. But how do you apply it? This chapter will explain what you need to know.

The 5 Elements of Empowering UX

It’s difficult to explain such an abstract concept of empowerment, especially in how to apply it to UX design. Let’s start by listing the five individual elements that we can see, first suggested by this Codrops article by Patrick Cox.

1. Makes the User’s Life Easier

First and foremost, an empowering UX should make the user’s life easier – in fact, notable designer Paul Boag calls it the secret to any successful UX design. This is why your site or app exists in the first place.



Buffer for Pinterest is here! Share, schedule and measure the performance of your pins! Learn More →

Buffer is the easiest way to save time on social media

Simplify your social routine by scheduling posts on all of your social media networks.

ARE YOU USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A BUSINESS? • TRY BUFFER FOR BUSINESS

Photo credit: Buffer

Designing a product to enhance your user’s life involves:

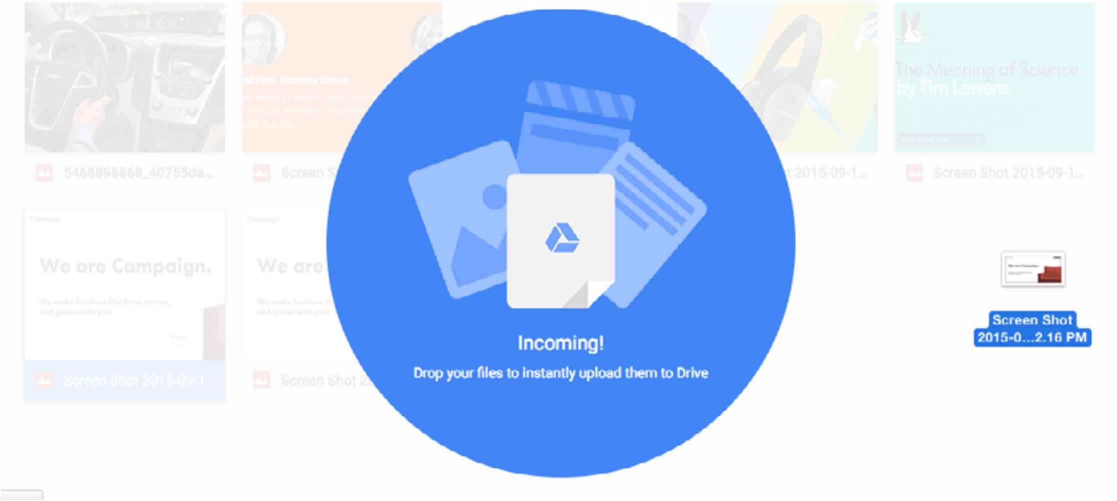
- Knowing your users’ problems
- Knowing your users’ preferences for solutions
- Knowing how your competitors are solving the problems and where their methods can be improved

At the end of the day, a product must solve some core user problem. Before beginning the design, ask yourself, "How is this improving the user's life? What problems is this solving?" To ensure you're designing the right product, first follow the advice in *The Guide to Usability Testing*.

2. **Goal-focused**

After answering "What problems will this solve," you want to ask yourself "*how* will this solve them best?"

The alternative is when designers get hung up on features or a newer version, forgetting the product's original purpose in the first place. A shiny new feature can't mask a poor UX.



Incoming!

Drop your files to instantly upload them to Drive

Photo credit: *Google Drive*

The design must reflect the product's commitment to the user. You can design a goal-focused interface by:

- Stripping away divergent paths in your user flows
- Drawing attention the right elements through visual hierarchy

- Organizing a cohesive information architecture

- Using an intuitive system of controls (e.g. navigation, menus, etc.) that matches your page layout.

- Ensuring text labels and instructions are clear. For headings, be descriptive ("Your contact information"). For button labels and command links, use verb-noun pairs ("Create new prototype") and verb phrases ("Start over").

It's not enough that the plane flies – an aerodynamic shape makes it fly better.

3. Invisible UI (Slippy UX)

Design as little interface as possible. No hurdles, no distractions, and no unnecessary involvement from the interface.

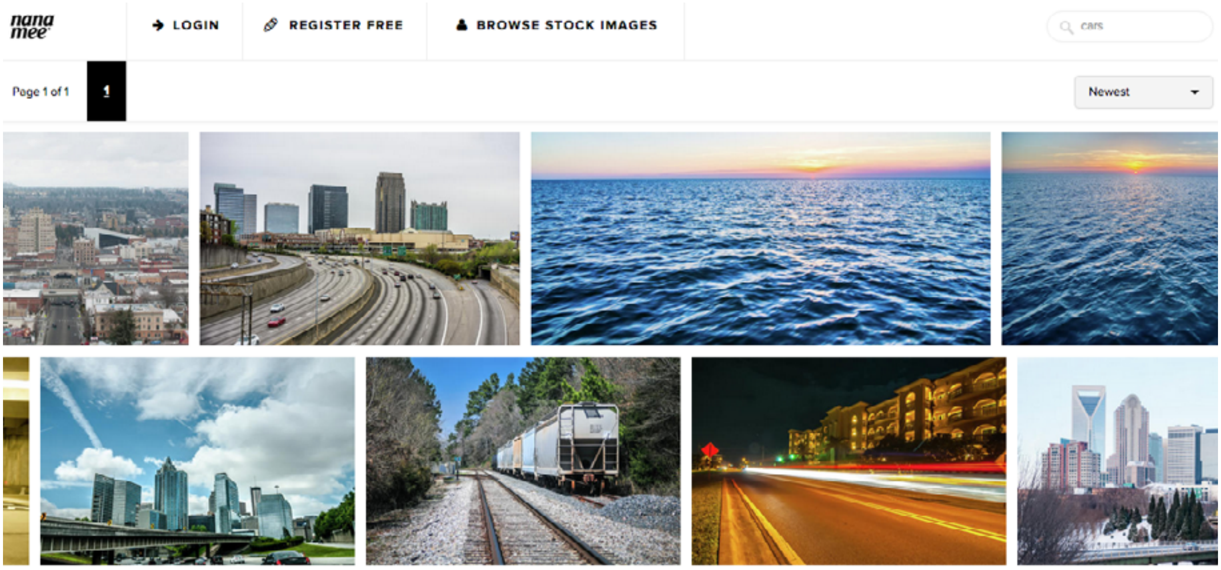


Photo credit: *Nanamee*

Creating what's referred to as "Slippy UX", an invisible UI doesn't mean that every site needs to be minimalist and devoid of interface objects (quite the opposite, as we'll explain later). Slippy UX is simply about reducing all distractions and potential obstacles, creating a smooth ("slippery") experience that guides the user quickly to their goal.

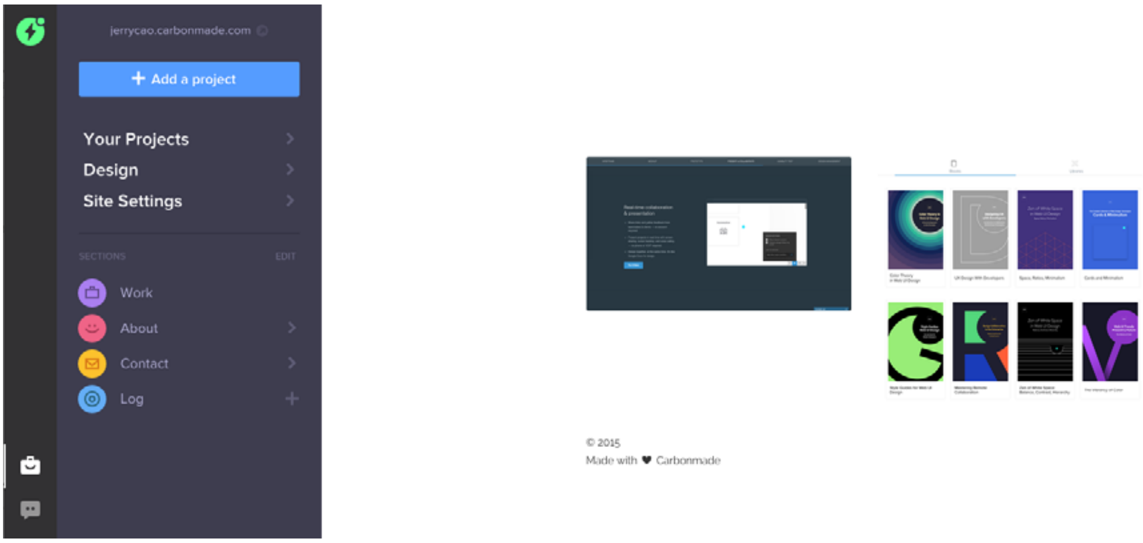


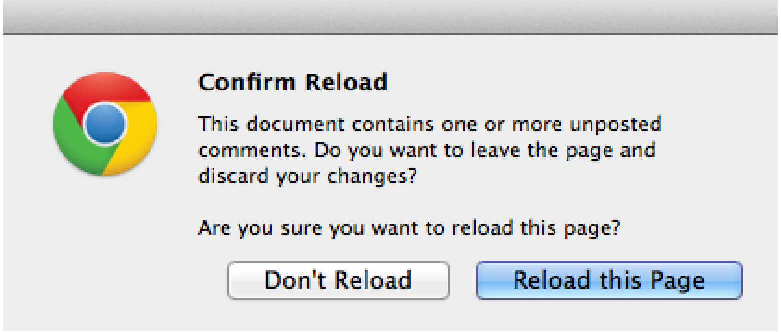
Photo credit: *Carbonmade*

4. Forgiving

User errors are inevitable, so incorporate some foresight into the design. In keeping with the Slippy UX philosophy, if a user error derails their efforts to accomplish a task, it will disrupt their immersion.

Large warnings or technical error messages seem to "punish" the users, which certainly don't improve the UX. These make users blame themselves for easily avoidable faults (quite the opposite effect of rewarding habit loops).

- In clear yet friendly language, remind users of actions with potentially severe consequences, such as losing information.

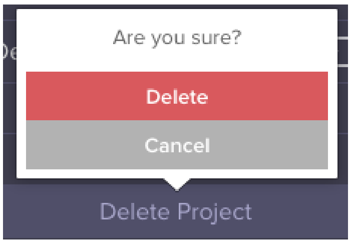


Confirm Reload

This document contains one or more unposted comments. Do you want to leave the page and discard your changes?

Are you sure you want to reload this page?

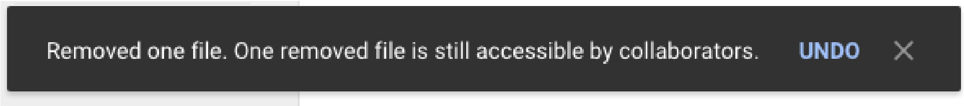
Photo credit: Chrome via Google Docs



Are you sure?

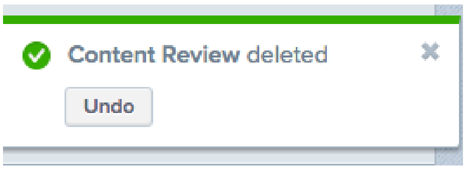
Photo credit: Carbonmade

- In case your users still make a mistake, a subtle and polite message explaining the fix or offering the opportunity to undo it can give them the confidence to continue onwards.



Removed one file. One removed file is still accessible by collaborators.

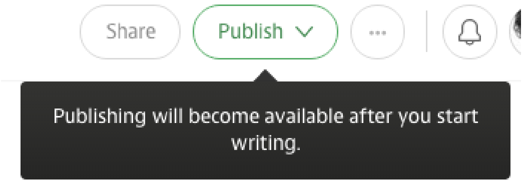
Photo credit: Google Docs



Content Review deleted

Photo credit: Asana

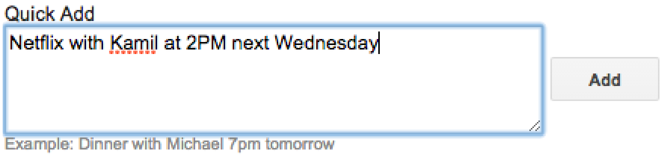
- To reduce unintentional errors, hide certain actions until the prerequisite action is completed. For example, in Medium, you first need to write something before the “Publish” button activates.



Publishing will become available after you start writing.

Photo credit: Medium

- At the subtlest level, use forgiving formats so that your interface responds naturally to how users prefer to input data. For example, Google Calendar allows for multiple input styles when scheduling with the "Quick Create" function. You can write the information as an instruction like "Dinner next Tuesday at 2PM", or as simple as "Dinner 12/15 2:00PM".



Quick Add

Netflix with Kamil at 2PM next Wednesday

Example: Dinner with Michael 7pm tomorrow

Photo credit: Google Calendar

5. Consistent

Consistency is always important because it cultivates security and trust, which are essential to empowerment. Small details like keeping the navigation in the same place on different pages or using a color-code to differentiate topics leave your users with less things to worry about.

The less they need to think, the smarter your users feel.

Consistency eliminates the surprises and confusion that disrupt the user's immersion. A consistent UI lulls the user into a trance where they can focus on achieving their goal – and nothing else.

Photo credit: "Be consistent not uniform." Paul Downey. Creative Commons.

If you'd like to learn more, check out *Consistency in UI Design Book 1* & *Book 2*.

Slippy UX

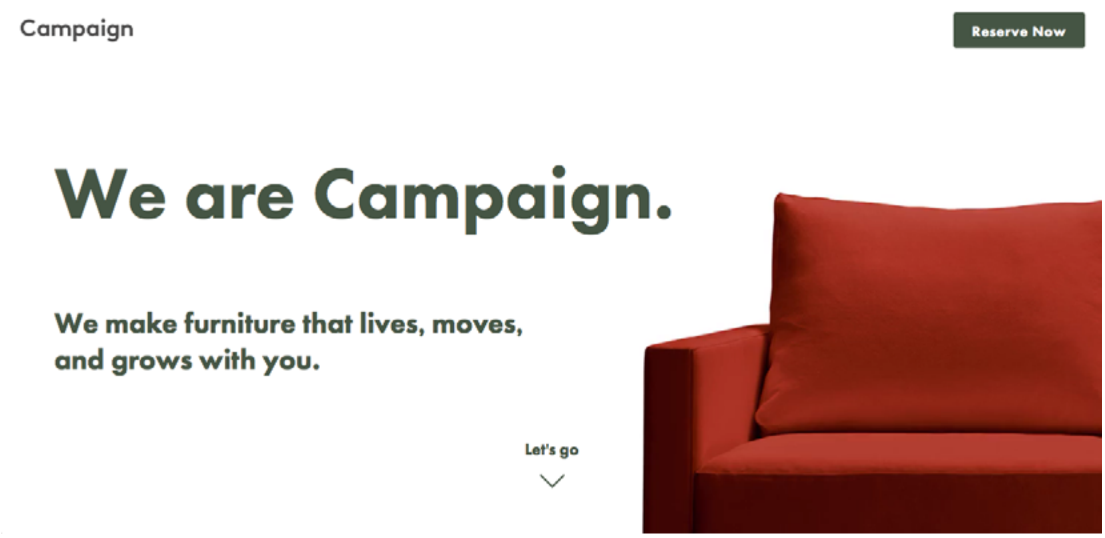
A rich man doesn't need to tell people he's rich, and a good interface doesn't need to go out of its way to prove its usefulness.

First defined by Jake Zukowski of Frog Design, slippy UX is the philosophy that your design requires as little time as possible for someone to complete their goal. It's a large component of empowering UX, and successful UX in general.

1. **What Is Slippy UX?**

   Slippy UX is a system that doesn't draw attention to itself.

   It's a design that sets up everything the user needs and then steps back, so that the user feels they've done it themselves (hence the "empowering" aspect). Less distractions allow the user to concentrate, improving performance and giving them a sense of control.



Campaign

We are Campaign.

We make furniture that lives, moves, and grows with you.

Photo credit: *Campaign*

Slippy UX draws a lot from Hick's Law, which states the more choices a user has, the longer their decision-making will take. While you want to give your user ample choices, you don't want to overburden them.

Slippy UX is about finding the happy medium, where they have enough options without getting distracted.

2. Glanceability and Roots in the Auto Industry

As Jake Zukowski points out, slippy UX was born in the automobile industry, where it's literally used to save lives. Car interfaces themselves are a distraction from driving, which could lead to fatal consequences, so drivers need to operate them in quick glances between looking at the road. Therefore, these UIs are as intuitive as possible, an approach known as glanceability.

Photo credit: "Chevrolet Introduces MyLink." DrivingtheNorthEast. Creative Commons.

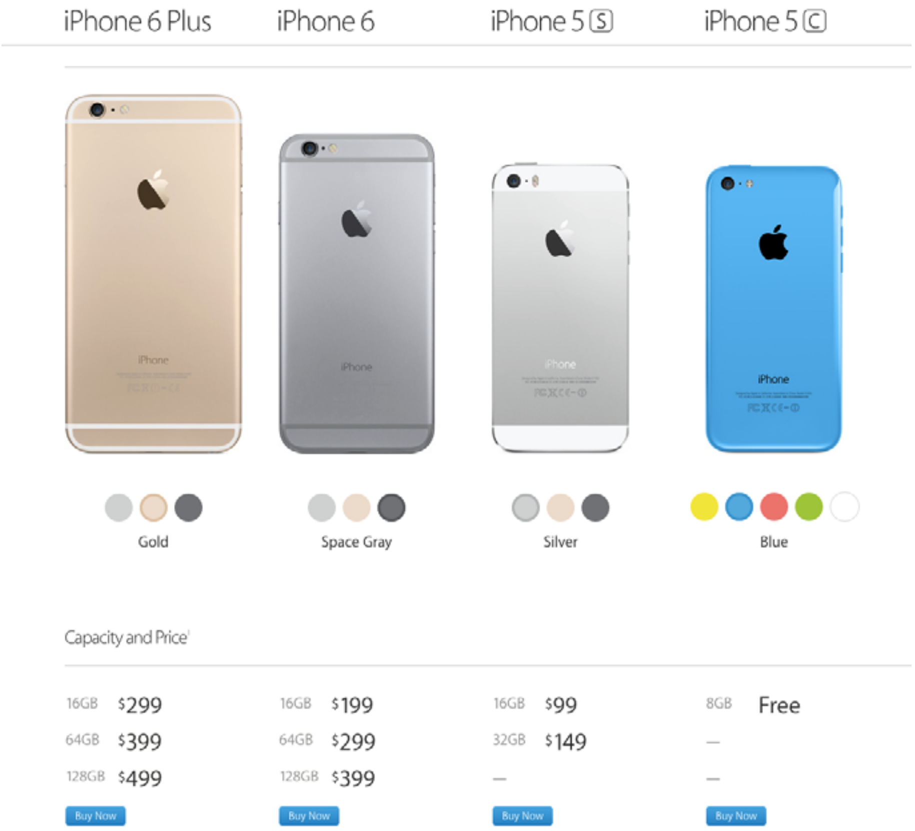
In car UIs, everything should be easy enough to understand in a split-second glance. This principle applies equally well to lesser-stakes interfaces on mobile devices and desktops: the less users have to concentrate on the UI itself, the more they can concentrate on accomplishing their goals.

To learn more about techniques for designing glanceability, check out this excellent post from UX strategist Lyndon Cerejo.

Delightful Design

After all our talk about removing the fluff and leaving only the essentials, it may seem contradictory to talk about the importance of "delightful design." But the two are not mutually exclusive, and once you've trimmed the fat, the remaining parts of your UI should be conveyed in a way endearing to the user.

These aren't superficial choices – they will actually make your site easier to the use.



Capacity and Price

iPhone 6 Plus	iPhone 6	iPhone 5S	iPhone 5C
16GB $299	16GB $199	16GB $99	8GB Free
64GB $399	64GB $299	32GB $149	–
128GB $499	128GB $399	–	–

Photo credit: Apple

In his book *Emotion & Design: Attractive Things Work Better*, design guru Don Norman explains that when a site is enjoyable (delightful design) the user has fun and therefore relaxes more. What most people don't know is that a relaxed brain behaves differently: it recalls memories quicker, creates stronger connections that help learnability, and even enhances motor skills.

This means users interact more successfully with an interface they enjoy. In order to best empower your users, you have to keep them happy.

Below, we've listed three tips for delightful design:

1. **Polish the Aesthetics**

   Studies have proved the effects of visuals on sites:

   - A Stanford study on website credibility showed that almost half of all users (46.1%) determine how trustworthy a site is based on looks alone.
   - An experiment by Masaaki Kurosu and Kaori Kashimura tested two ATMs of the same functionality but different appearances, and users cited that the more aesthetically pleasing site worked better.

   And considering that you only have about 10 seconds to make a crucial first impression, it pays to invest in visuals since the user may not even be around to access the more deeper interactions.

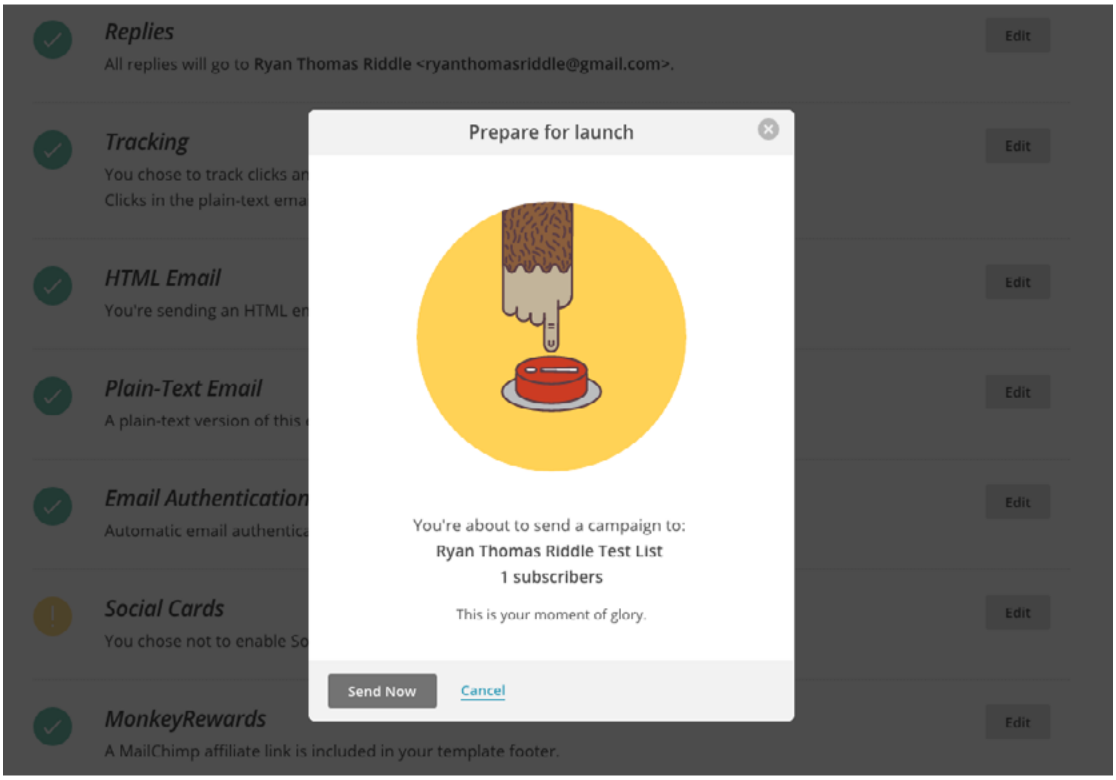
Photo credit: Bose

Colors, layouts, size, textures, typography, photography... There are too many factors in visual design to list here. For the best practices on aesthetic design and visual hierarchy, download our *Web UI Design for the Human Eye: Books I* and *II*.

2. Provide Human Feedback

Feedback (in the right doses) reassures your users that they're being heard. Acknowledging their actions puts them at ease and gives them the confidence for deeper interactions.

Take this a step further with a casual, sometimes even humorous, tone. The less your interface feels like a computer, the more pleasant the UX will be. Of course, exercise some good judgment. The tone doesn't need to be clever or funny (depending on your product), but it absolutely must be clear and friendly.



Replies

All replies will go to Ryan Thomas Riddle <ryanthomasriddle@gmail.com>.

Tracking

You chose to track clicks an

Clicks in the plain-text ema

HTML Email

You're sending an HTML en

Plain-Text Email

A plain-text version of this

Email Authentication

Automatic email authentica

Social Cards

You chose not to enable So

MonkeyRewards

A MailChimp affiliate link is included in your template footer.

Prepare for launch

You're about to send a campaign to:
Ryan Thomas Riddle Test List
1 subscribers

This is your moment of glory.

Photo credit: MailChimp

MailChimp is the master of funny yet useful feedback. Their friendly tone (and cartoony graphics) during an otherwise stressful activity – sending a mass email – acknowledges some of the tension felt by people as they activate a campaign.

3. Surprising Elements

Surprise treats tend to excite people more than predictable ones. Hiding little discoverables in your UI, such as fun animations or witty copy where you wouldn't expect them, create those atomic moments of delight.

Just remember that the element must serve a purpose, it can't just be a cute gimmick.

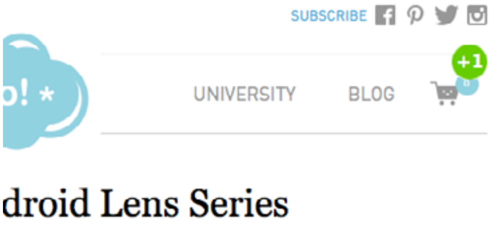


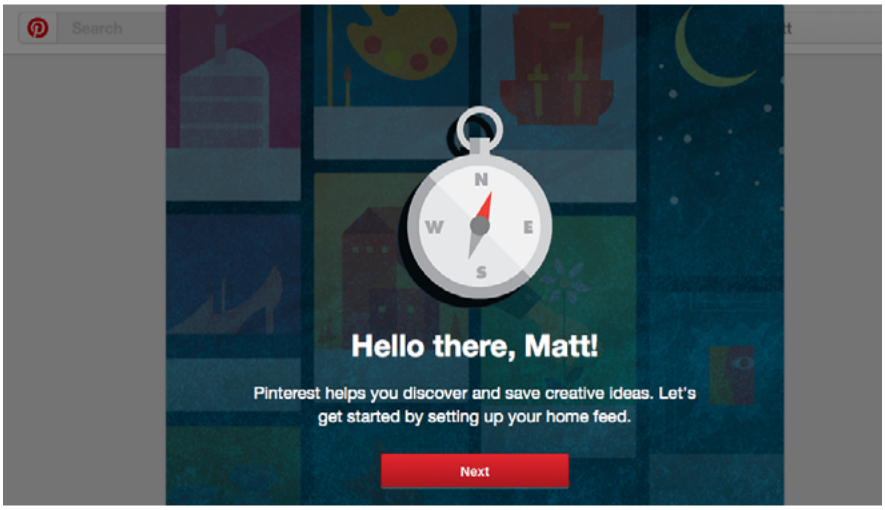
Photo credit: Photojojo

Photojojo uses an animated "+1" balloon to show that an item has been added to the cart. This kind of feedback isn't just a nice visual touch, it also immediately confirms that the user has readied an item for purchase.

The overall design becomes more usable since shoppers can continue browsing or check out without needing to click into the cart to verify status.

Friendly Onboarding

The onboarding period, when your users are first becoming acquainted with your product, offers a lot of opportunities in empowering your user. This critical first impression can make the difference between whether or not they come back, and how often.



Pinterest helps you discover and save creative ideas. Let's get started by setting up your home feed.

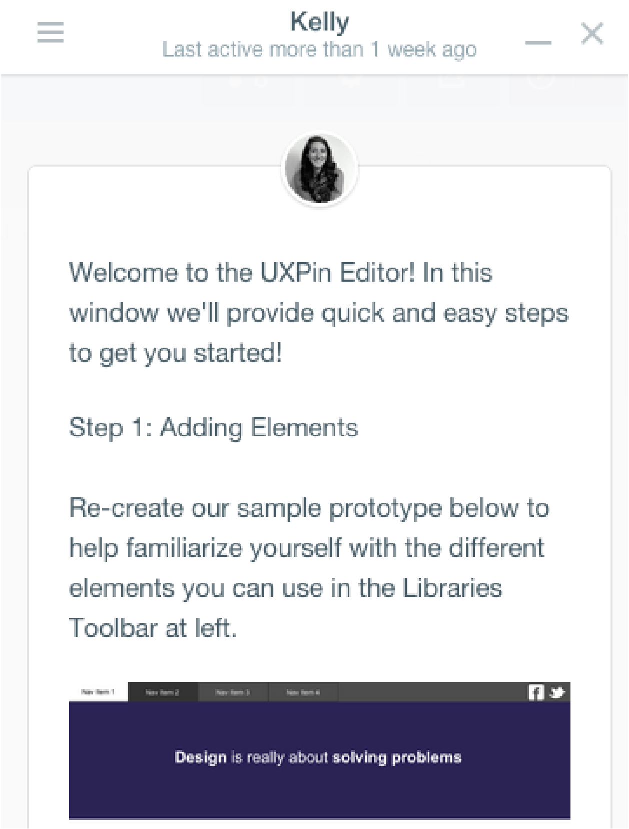
Photo credit: Pinterest

The onboarding phase serves the following goals:

- Teaches the controls
- Familiarizes the user with the product: its structure and its features
- Reveals elements the user wouldn't find on their own
- Entices the user to return (and hopefully upgrade their plan)

Given its importance, designers should treat onboarding as its own artform. MK Cook, UX designer and writer for Digital Telepathy, explains in this overview piece the different approaches to onboarding that other designers have found useful:

1. **Walkthrough** – This standard onboarding approach simply runs the user through the relevant features and how to use the product. While clearly explaining all the necessary information, it doesn't engage the user as much. As long as you cover the core functions to get someone started, this is always a safe approach.



Kelly
Last active more than 1 week ago

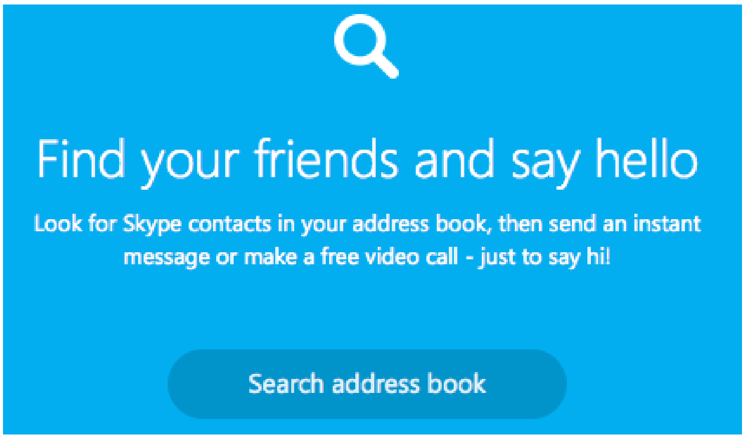
Welcome to the UXPin Editor! In this window we'll provide quick and easy steps to get you started!

Step 1: Adding Elements

Re-create our sample prototype below to help familiarize yourself with the different elements you can use in the Libraries Toolbar at left.

Photo credit: UXPin

2. **Head First** – The opposite to the tutorial, this approach gets users involved right away by having them perform an action (Skype starts users off by having you add contacts). This certainly engages the user, but can make it hard to cover all the basic information.



Find your friends and say hello

Look for Skype contacts in your address book, then send an instant message or make a free video call - just to say hi!

Photo credit: Skype

3. **Setup** – If your product is pretty self-explanatory, you can start users off by setting up their account, whether by asking indirect questions, or having them fill out a form. If your product requires some instruction, combine this approach with a more informational walkthrough.

4. **Hybrid** – These approaches can be applied at the same time to cover all bases without losing user interest. You can engage your user with options during a walkthrough, or explain functions during their setup, etc. Personally, we've found a hybrid approach that combines the "Headfirst" and "Walkthrough" method to be most successful. The first onboarding step for free trial users in UXPin (shown below) offers a "choose your own adventure" experience.

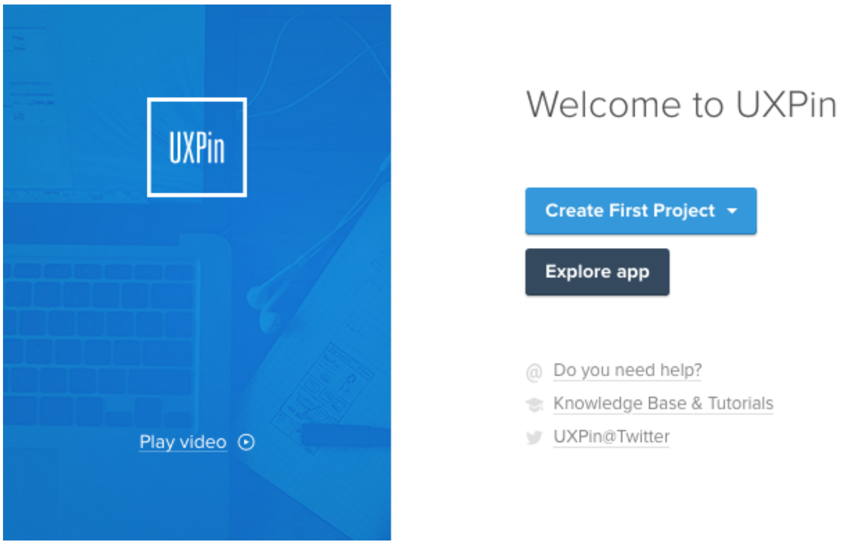
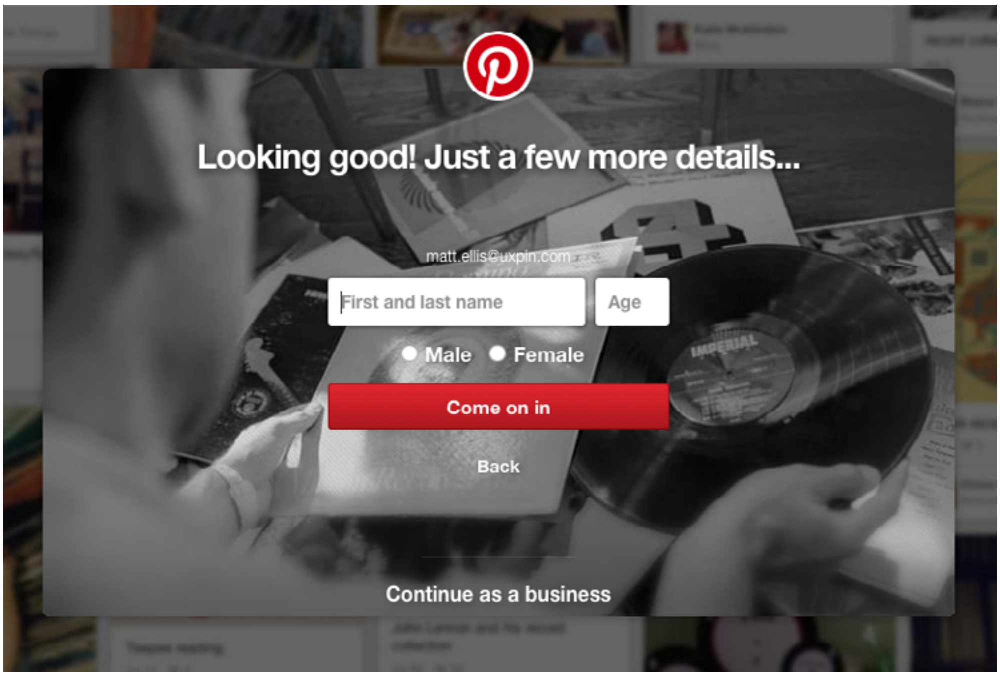


Photo credit: UXPin

Feel free to pick and choose elements from each to suit whatever your project needs. For example, Pinterest starts you off with some basic setup questions like name and age, then engages you by having your follow five categories.



Looking good! Just a few more details...

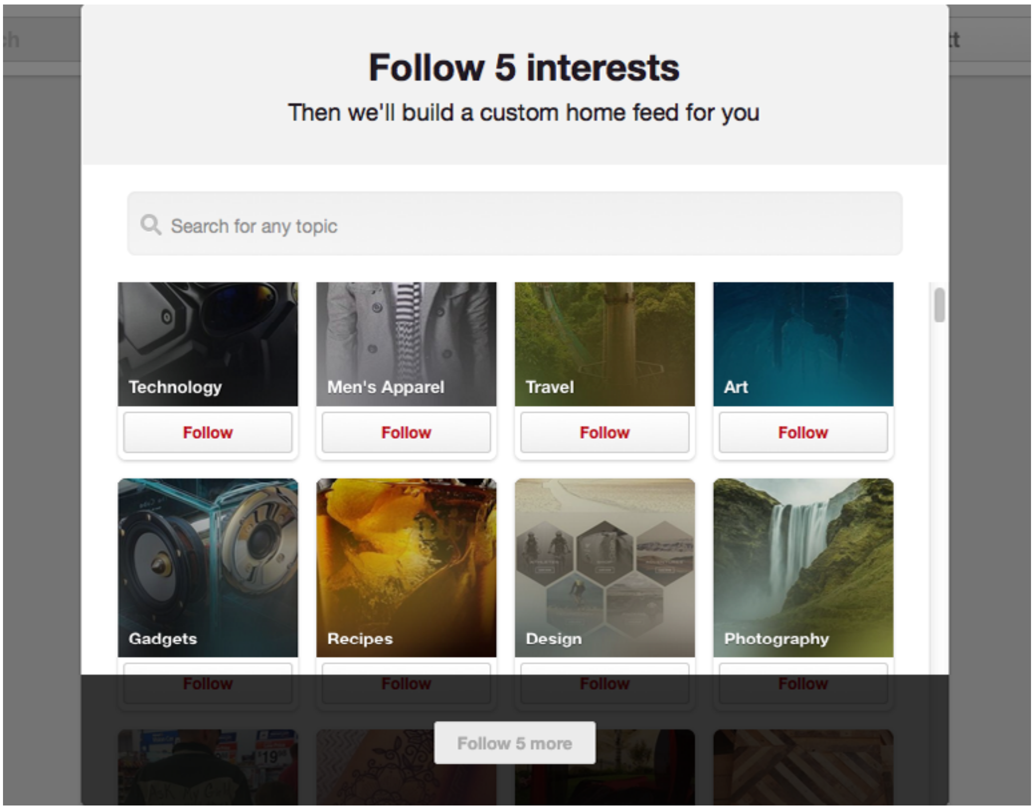
matt.ellis@uxpin.com

First and last name | Age

○ Male ○ Female

Photo credit: Pinterest

Different sites require different levels of instruction.



Follow 5 interests

Then we'll build a custom home feed for you

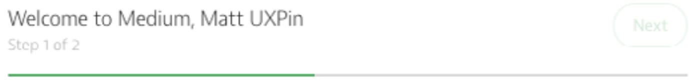
Search for any topic

Photo credit: Pinterest

Onboarding Best Practices

No matter which approach you choose, keep these tips in mind:

- **Be concise** – No one looks forward to the learning curve. Make the onboarding process brief so people can get to interacting as soon as possible. This means avoiding wordy explanations.
- **Pictures are worth a thousand words** – Illustrations can save time and present information more clearly than text, plus give you the chance to demonstrate your site's style and personality.
- **Completeness Meters** – Play into our human desire for achievement by showing users exactly how far they've progressed in the process.



Welcome to Medium, Matt UXPin

Step 1 of 2

Photo credit: Medium

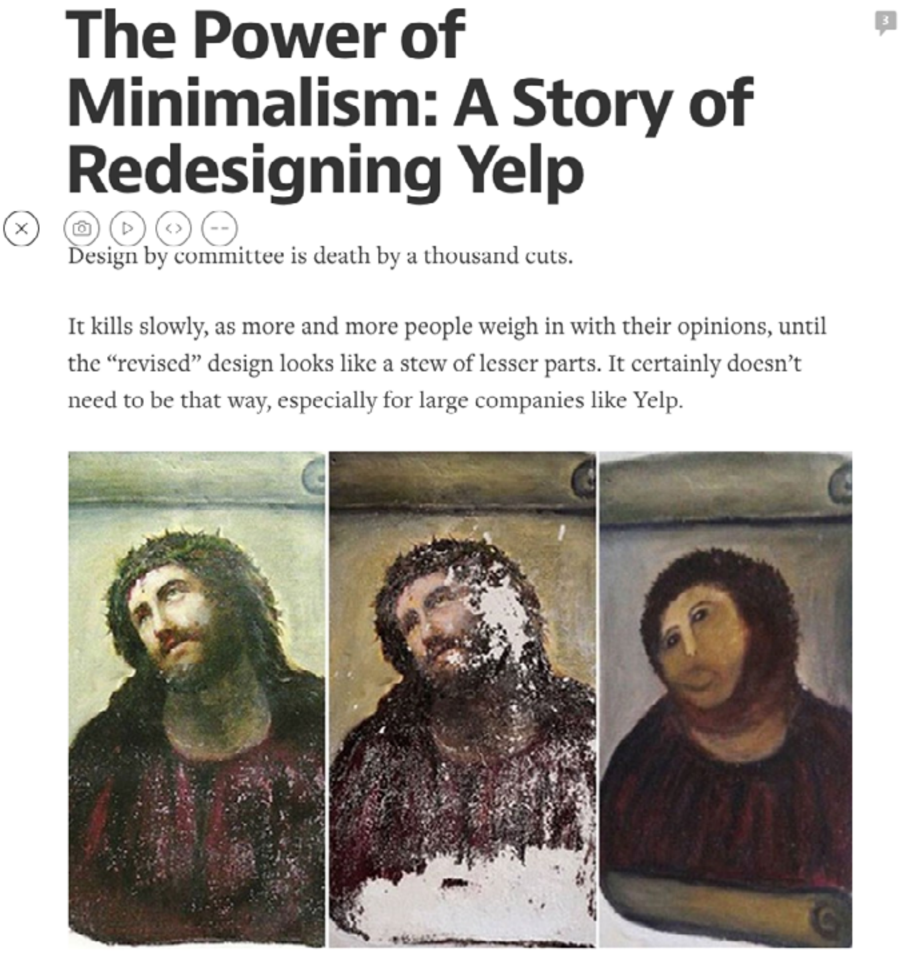
- **Focus on the core features** – Prioritization is the key to successful onboarding. Respect the power of the 80/20 rule. Focus on the 20% of features that users will need 80% of the time. Build in progressive disclosure so that more advanced features naturally reveal themselves.
- **Have some fun** – Again, take measures to make this as painless as you can. A playful tone and interesting graphics all make onboarding feel less like an unavoidable chore.

Starting your users off on the right foot sets a positive atmosphere for the entire journey, so don't take this part lightly. We recommend User Onboard as the most helpful resource for seeing how successful companies orient new users.

Examples of Empowering UX Design

1. **Medium**

   One of our favorite examples of empowering UX design is Medium. Few sites better execute the principles above.



The Power of Minimalism: A Story of Redesigning Yelp

Design by committee is death by a thousand cuts.

It kills slowly, as more and more people weigh in with their opinions, until the "revised" design looks like a stew of lesser parts. It certainly doesn't need to be that way, especially for large companies like Yelp.

Photo credit: "Power of Minimalism," via Medium

The visual style of the site is empowering on its own: its stark black-and-white minimalism combines with a very literary typography to make all users feel like Hemingway.

The spacing between letters and lines, the weight of the fonts, the choices in indentations – all make the user feel like what they're writing is important.

Which brings us to the next point: Medium's invisible UI. The absence of widgets, hover controls, and the extensive white space all free the user of distractions, which are especially detrimental when writing. Still, everything the user needs is evident and clearly displayed (glanceability): the user does little more than click on one of several CTAs to start writing a new post.

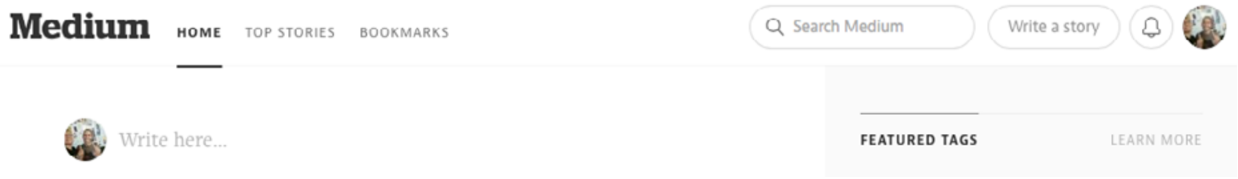


Photo credit: Medium

This makes the UI goal-focused as well. The UI takes a backseat and funnels everything towards one central user goal – writing a post. Secondary elements like browsing and reading other posts are just that, secondary.

As an extra touch, the site is full of delightful discoverables as well, such as the reloading picture option, a nice change from traditional blogging platforms.

What Medium does is not new – there's thousands of blogging platforms to choose from. It's how it does it, through empowering the user and making them feel like a better writer, that makes the site a success.

2. Carbonmade

The portfolio-helpers Carbonmade combine an empowering service, invisible UI, and pleasing visuals to offer a model user experience.

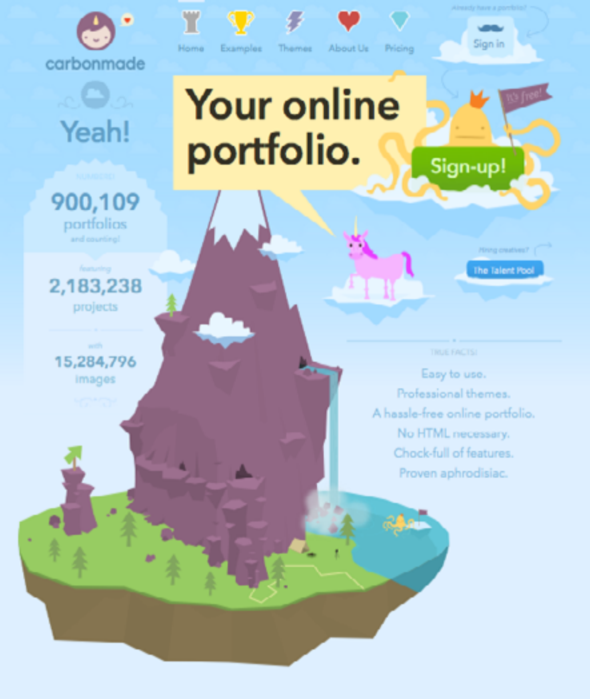
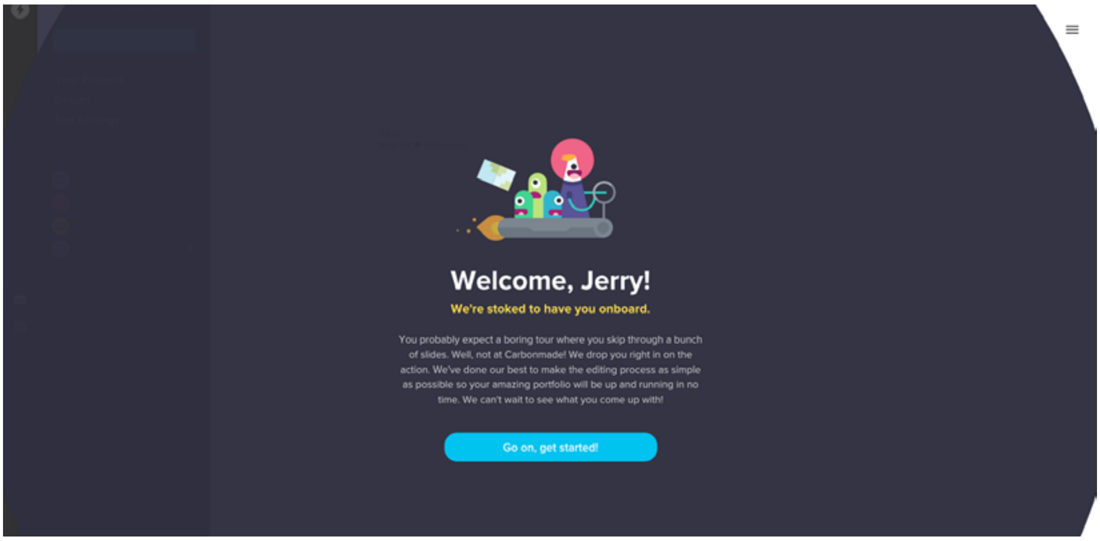


Photo credit: Carbonmade

Carbonmade's service itself is empowering, allowing users to create online portfolios cheaply and easily (the creators' own troubles with this inspired the site). Moreover, it's the way they offer this service that's important.

First, the invisible UI takes a lot of the hassle out of portfolio creation. The true WYSIWIG interface includes drag-and-drop functionality, seamless text input, and easy editing – they deliver on their promise of simplifying the process, making the user's life easier.



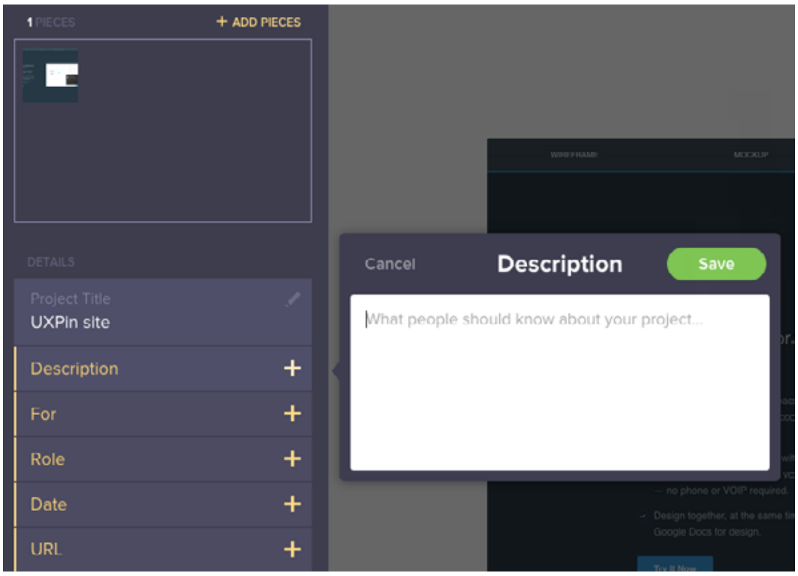
Welcome, Jerry!

We're stoked to have you onboard.

You probably expect a boring tour where you skip through a bunch of slides. Well, not at Carbonmade! We drop you right in on the action. We've done our best to make the editing process as simple as possible so your amazing portfolio will be up and running in no time. We can't wait to see what you come up with!

Photo credit: Carbonmade

Second, the cartoony aspect makes the site that much more fun to use. While colorful unicorns and aliens may not always be appropriate, for a artistic site targeting creative professionals, it creates the right kind of atmosphere.



Project Title
UXPin site

What people should know about your project...

Photo credit: Carbonmade

Even if your work itself isn't that great, Carbonmade certainly helps you present in the most polished manner with the least effort possible. The interface is stupidly simple and incredibly fast.

3. Apple Watch

The Apple Watch embodies a lot of the principles of empowering UX. It's very purpose is to make the user's (wearer's) life better without drawing attention to itself.

Photo credit: "Apple Watch Sport." LWYang. Creative Commons. (Cropped)

What's important to point out, however, is that we feel the Apple Watch is empowering for reasons that may stray from its original design purpose. Aside from the apps, the Apple Watch can be quite useful for busy professionals (e.g. C-level) to manage daily logistics.

- Instead of pulling out your phone and checking email constantly, you can immediately scan and archive email in a matter of seconds.
- The calendar notifications serve as friendly and fast reminders
- The "Do not Disturb" mode is easy to activate, allowing the user to focus on main tasks at hand

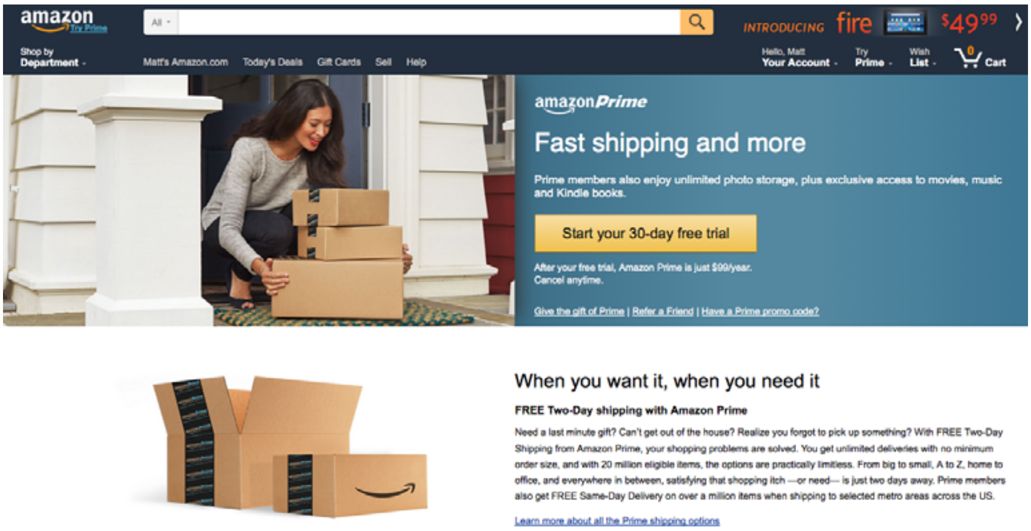
Like car UIs and watches in general, the Apple Watch has glanceability as a main concern. The small screen limits the amount of information. App notifications and messages are treated like time on normal watches.

But the Apple Watches also embodies the principle of enhancing the user's life from the background. Most of the day you forget you're wearing it, but when you need it, it's there. Any good app, site, or device should act the same way.

While we don't think it's reached its full potential yet, watch OS2 should make the wearable more aligned to its intended purpose of making the world available at all times.

4. Amazon Prime

Less subtle than the Apple Watch – but a lot more powerful in its current usage – Amazon Prime seeks to improve every corner of the user's life.



Fast shipping and more

Prime members also enjoy unlimited photo storage, plus exclusive access to movies, music and Kindle books.

After your free trial, Amazon Prime is just $99/year. Cancel anytime.

When you want it, when you need it

FREE Two-Day shipping with Amazon Prime

Need a last minute gift? Can't get out of the house? Realize you forgot to pick up something? With FREE Two-Day Shipping from Amazon Prime, your shopping problems are solved. You get unlimited deliveries with no minimum order size, and with 20 million eligible items, the options are practically limitless. From big to small, A to Z, home to office, and everywhere in between, satisfying that shopping itch —or need— is just two days away. Prime members also get FREE Same-Day Delivery on over a million items when shipping to selected metro areas across the US.

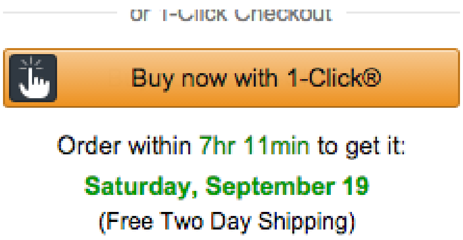
Photo credit: Amazon

What's empowering about Amazon Prime is that they're capable of solving user problems in many different fields, from shopping to TV. Here are some of the most empowering features that Amazon Prime offers:

- Free two-day shipping
- Music streaming
- Video streaming (including exclusive Amazon content)
- Unlimited cloud storage for photos
- 5GB general cloud storage

Much like a butler or assistant, having Amazon Prime just seems to make *everything* easier.

The free two-day shipping alone enhances the user's life, allowing them to buy virtually anything without the delay of online shopping or inconvenience of store trips.



Order within 7hr 11min to get it:
Saturday, September 19
(Free Two Day Shipping)

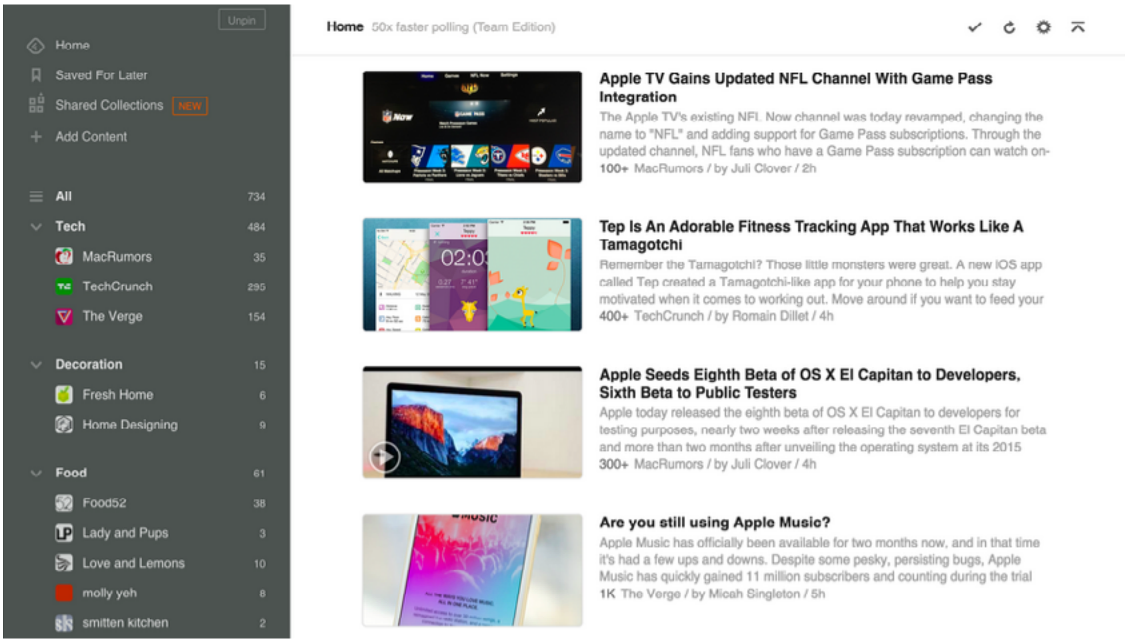
Photo credit: Amazon

With 1-click shopping activated, all user flows are dramatically shortened. Customers can find what they need, click on it, and see the product on their doorstep 2 days later. That process puts a tremendous amount of power in the mind of the user, making the experience quite addictive.

5. feedly

The designers of feedly took a good idea and ran with it.

They collect updates from all your favorite sites – news, blogs, Google alerts, even YouTube – and organize them into one, so you never miss anything. They go beyond entertainment, though, and integrate collaborative communications with co-workers. Think of it like your own personal town crier.



Apple TV Gains Updated NFL Channel With Game Pass Integration
The Apple TV's existing NFL Now channel was today revamped, changing the name to "NFL" and adding support for Game Pass subscriptions. Through the updated channel, NFL fans who have a Game Pass subscription can watch on-
100+ MacRumors / by Juli Clover / 2h

Tep Is An Adorable Fitness Tracking App That Works Like A Tamagotchi
Remember the Tamagotchi? Those little monsters were great. A new iOS app called Tep created a Tamagotchi-like app for your phone to help you stay motivated when it comes to working out. Move around if you want to feed your
400+ TechCrunch / by Romain Dillet / 4h

Apple Seeds Eighth Beta of OS X El Capitan to Developers, Sixth Beta to Public Testers
Apple today released the eighth beta of OS X El Capitan to developers for testing purposes, nearly two weeks after releasing the seventh El Capitan beta and more than two months after unveiling the operating system at its 2015
300+ MacRumors / by Juli Clover / 4h

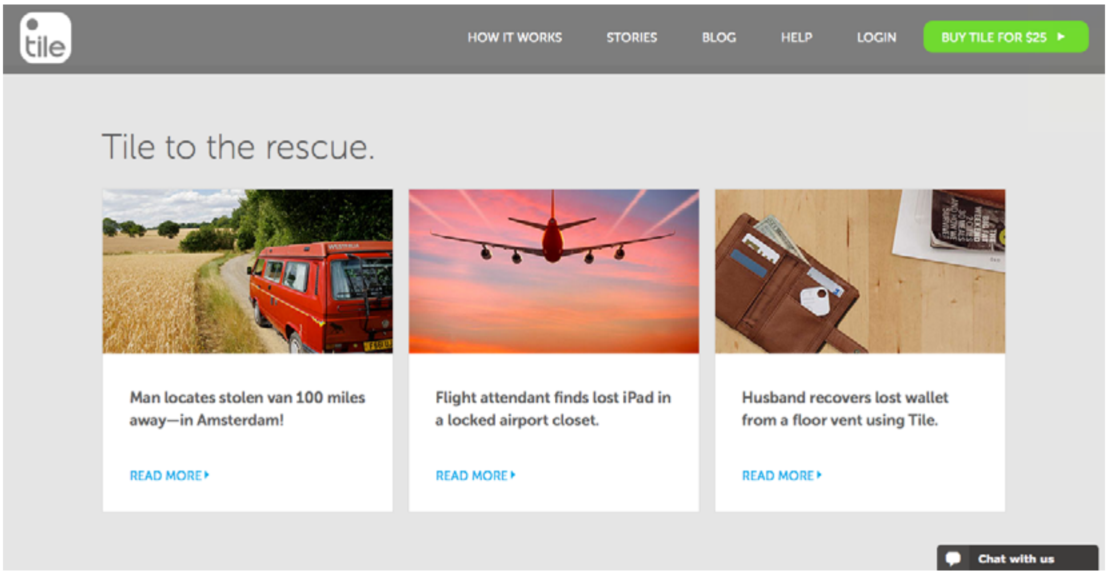
Are you still using Apple Music?
Apple Music has officially been available for two months now, and in that time it's had a few ups and downs. Despite some pesky, persisting bugs, Apple Music has quickly gained 11 million subscribers and counting during the trial
1K The Verge / by Micah Singleton / 5h

Photo credit: feedly

Such a service would not be workable unless the UI was up to the task. feedly's tidy menu keeps everything organized and easy to find (close to glanceable), and is tucked away on the side so the user can focus on the content center-stage.

6. Tile

Last is Tile, an example of how an empowering service alone can make a purchase worth it.



Tile to the rescue.

Man locates stolen van 100 miles away—in Amsterdam!

Flight attendant finds lost iPad in a locked airport closet.

Husband recovers lost wallet from a floor vent using Tile.

Photo credit: Tile

Tile is a useful product for anyone who gets frustrated about losing items. It comes with a small plastic tile that you can attach to your keys, the remote control – anything really. When the object is lost, use your phone to make the tile give off a sound so you can find it.

A nice little discoverable is that this works two-ways. If your phone's lost, you can press on the tile to make it ring.

For people prone to losing things, it's easy to imagine Tile's effect on their life. The product doesn't just help you locate lost objects, it makes you feel less frustrated and anxious when you lose important property. Products that transform emotions are always more memorable and successful.

Conclusion: Just Good Design

An empowering UX design is not just some trend that will fall out of fashion in a few years. It is the backbone of good product design.

Don’t fall into the trap of trying to fix UX with a new gimmick. Unless a new feature will improve the user’s life, it’s just a band-aid. Designers who discover ways to make their users happier – and then design a UI to bring that quality out – will always win out over purely cosmetic tactics.