

The importance of the user journey

As you have progressed through this certificate, the importance of focusing on the end user's journey and experience has been a consistent theme. These principles not only help you create a user-friendly design for your dashboards, but also play a crucial role when transitioning abstract data concepts to tangible wireframes. In this reading, you'll continue to explore essential elements for mapping the user experience during wireframing, and discover how different design elements are tailored for an optimal user journey.

Wireframes for user-centric design

As a reminder, a wireframe is a visual representation of the structure and functionality of a user interface or product layout, like a dashboard or website. Wireframing is the blueprint of your design, and the foundation on which design elements, colors, and graphics are built.

Wireframing is also an opportunity to prioritize the user's journey. Here's why:

- **Guided journey:** wireframing allows designers to decide the pathways users will take, while steering them towards desired actions without them feeling lost or overwhelmed.
- **Visualizing user actions:** wireframing sets the stage for actions like clicking a button, navigating through menus, or using a filter option.

Crucial elements in wireframing

The strength of wireframes is their simplicity. Here are some of the key elements that enhance the user journey:

- Navigational pathways
- Interactivity points
- Structuring content
- Design hierarchy

Navigational pathways

Every dashboard has primary actions it wants users to take. Whether it's gathering insights through filters, or drilling down on specific information, the navigation is designed in a way that effortlessly guides the user to these primary actions. As you're designing a wireframe, think about the main action you want users to take, and make it as easy as possible for them to complete. For example, if you're designing a dashboard that requires the user to filter the data by region, make the filter clear, visible, and accessible.

Interactivity points

When you design a wireframe, think about where users will click, how they'll sort or filter content, or how they'll drill down for more information on the final product. Interactivity points contribute to the user experience, so they need to be clear and functional for users to experience your design correctly.

Consider a dashboard that displays the product performance of a tablet for an educational company. The dashboard contains performance data from the tablet's first version, through the current version. Users may want to compare performance data across versions. So, filters and drill down buttons must be easily accessible, visible, and functioning for users to perform these actions.

Structural content

When you design a wireframe, think about how content will be organized, so that it aligns with the user's expectations, and maintains a logical flow. For example, main menus should have clear submenus or drop downs. Another way to ensure structural content is logical is to employ proper headings and subheadings to guide users. Wireframes aren't as detailed as mockups or prototypes, but they are flexible to adjustments when you receive feedback from stakeholders.

Design hierarchy

Along with structural content, you need to consider design hierarchy when designing a wireframe. A design hierarchy ensures users understand what information is most important. Through wireframing, you can prioritize the elements you want users to notice and engage with the most. For example, a dashboard may implement a large, bold font for a key metric at the top. Less important metrics can be placed underneath in a smaller, bolded font. The font size is intentional because it makes viewers aware of the most important information, and draws their attention to the key metric.

Key takeaways

Wireframing isn't just about structure; it's an opportunity to design with the user's journey at the forefront. Effective wireframes guide users intuitively, visualize their actions, and maintain flexibility. Key wireframe elements like navigational pathways, interactivity points, content structure, and design hierarchy play a crucial role in optimizing the user experience.

Resources for more information

Use the following resource to ensure your content and visualizations are accessible to all audiences:

- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG)