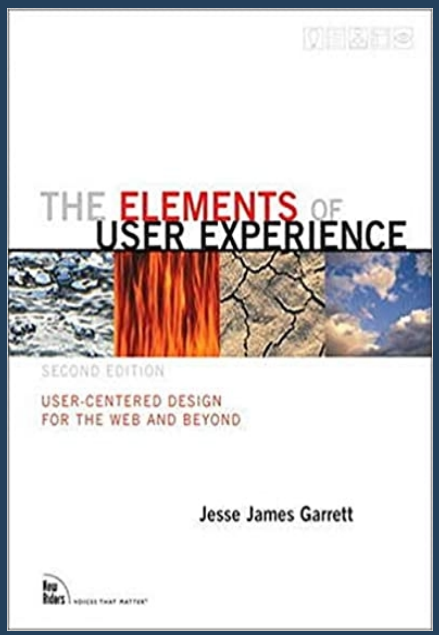

The Elements of User Experience

Year of publication: 2010
Author: Jesse James Garrett
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The user experience is understood as all aspects, from the responses to the perceptions, of a person, resulting from the use of a product, system, or service. This definition is somewhat generalized and has its differential in each aspect analyzed.
If we look at the series of events that take place in each aspect, we can conclude that some could have been avoided. Mistakes can be avoided if the person who produced the product or service made different choices when designing them.
And how is it done? What is the ideal time? It's time to test how the product works externally, where a person comes into contact with it, in the user experience.
Author Jesse Garrett shows in his book "The Elements of User Experience" that creating a successful interaction design requires more than just creating a visual design that is pleasing to the eye. It is also essential to define and fulfill your goals and meet the needs of users.

Score

9

9 Aplicability
8 Inspiration
10 Innovation
9 Impact on results
9 Structure

Main ideas of the book

The book "The Elements of User Experience" brings an understanding of the user experience from the following points:

- How products and services can facilitate or frustrate us;
- What is the strategy for designing experiences in application interfaces;
- The proposal of the five layers that facilitate the decisions made during the user experience;
- Pay attention to the content and not just the site navigation;
- Learn to think like the people who will see your page will think.

To whom is this book indicated?

The book "The Elements of User Experience" is suitable for designers and anyone who is part of a design team that aims to create a successful user experience.

The author clearly and objectively brings the main concepts that make up the creation of a user experience, which does not prevent people who are starting this career from also enjoying the content.

Overview of the book

Overview: Why is the user experience important?

The user experience is what a person feels when interacting with a company's product or service, in real use. When this interaction occurs, the responses generated, such as sensations and feelings, are analyzed and worked on to always be the best possible.
The book "The Elements of User Experience" emphasizes the user experience on websites, and an interesting curiosity is that the user ends up feeling guilty when he has difficulty navigating or finding something on the page.
A true complex product that does not come with an instruction manual and prior training, it is just the user alone without a representative to serve you, that is, no company can neglect the user experience on its website.
If the experience is bad when accessing the site, the consumer will turn away from his company, in search of a competitor that proposes a better experience. And once you get into the competition, getting your second chance is even more difficult, especially for sites that are just starting out in the market.

Monitoring of metrics

In addition to monitoring metrics, if you notice something that is hurting your site, quick action is needed. User experience is a key factor in converting people browsing the Internet into active buyers. A small increase in the conversion rate ends up resulting in a jump in revenue.

Overview: What are the elements of the user experience?

When making a purchase over the Internet, the steps to make it are always the same, so the user experience results in a set of decisions, evaluation of the appearance of the website, how it behaves and what it allows to do.
In this purchase process, we can identify 5 plans:

1. The surface plane: it can be considered the most palpable plane, on which decisions about aesthetic orientations are concentrated. It is where colors, image profiles, illustrations, etc are defined;
2. The skeleton plane: this is where the buttons, controls and photos are located. The search takes place through short interactions, such as the shopping cart location symbol;
3. The structure plan: where the possible flows are mapped, as well as the various responses of the system. The structure will define how the user arrived at the page and how the paths traveled could be, how the user will interact with the product and how the system will behave in this interaction;
4. The scope plan: where information, relevant functionalities are mapped and resources developed to serve consumers. Example: saving the shipping address for future purchases;
5. The strategic plan: where the business objectives are reconciled with the efficient mapping of the user's needs. It requires a lot of research, hypotheses and discoveries and consists of investigating the needs of the people who will interact with the product or service.

The 5 plans must be considered for a good user experience when developing the website. These elements involve different disciplines, such as information architecture, interaction design and interface design.
It is not necessary to be an expert in each of the areas, but it is important that you have a professional prepared to spend part of your time analyzing and thinking about each of these issues.

The interface of a project

Before thinking about the interface of a project and what it should look like, we first have to think about the people who will use it and what their needs are.
Another important item is the content. Users, when accessing a website, look for some content and do not experience the joy of navigation. And along with the content is the technology that is always adapting to the user's needs for an excellent experience.

Overview: Product objectives and user needs

In formulating the objectives of any product, it is necessary to create the brand. Not just the visual aspect of the logo, but the set of conceptual or emotional associations. These associations can happen accidentally or as a result of conscious choices made when designing the product.
On the website, by coding specific qualities for the explicit purpose, you increase your positive impressions. And to monitor whether the product is meeting the objective, it is important to develop indicators, also known as success metrics.
The indicators allow analysis, immediate actions and monitoring up to the medium term. They must be clearly linked to the users' behavioral aspects and must be analyzed in a broad way. Any metric taken in isolation can be misleading.

The creation of the persona

Author Jesse Garrett says that we must consider that we are making the product for someone else and not for ourselves. In research, we have to step out of our own limited perspective and see the real user's point of view. When creating a website or even an application, we have a variety of needs for the most diverse users. Coming to the definition of who our end users are, we can do research directed to them, answer questions and observe the behavior. With that, it will be possible to prioritize what they need when using the product. The book “The Elements of User Experience” says that to understand what users need, you need to know who they are. This is done through interviews, field tests or even focusing on groups to collect information about users' general attitudes and perceptions.
Thus, we can create the persona consistent with what we already know from users, even if it is a fictional character. Personas help us keep users in mind at every stage of the project.

Overview: Specifications and content requirements

The definition of the product is important because it provides the reference for the entire team of the stages of each execution project. Defining the process, on the other hand, requires addressing possible conflicts while everything is still hypothetical, identifying what to face now and what to do next.
It is necessary to have clear requirements so that everyone knows what is being built, the stages of the project and the objective to be achieved, and seeing the whole scope it is possible to divide the responsibilities efficiently.
In the course of development, new ideas are emerging and it is necessary to evaluate what best fits at that moment and what should be saved for another stage.
If there is no control and clarity of the initial objective, you will be surprised by the feared increase in scope and each additional requirement generates an increase in deadlines, costs and often even uncontrolled to finalize the product.

Overview: Interaction design and information architecture

This chapter of the book “The Elements of User Experience” shows the development of a conceptual framework for the website. In the development of content, information architecture aims at organization, grouping and presentation, defining patterns and sequences.
Interaction Design is concerned with the possible description of the user and with a system that will respond to their behaviors.
Programmers are focused on building a system in a more efficient way. This software was previously created in a way that worked best for machines and now we finally start to design in a way that works best for people.

Another point is the treatment of errors. Learn how to deal with the error that the user makes and what the system can do to avoid it. We must be aware of prevention, correction and recovery, providing a way for the user to recover from the error.
Information Architecture is where the user sets out his opinion about the product or service and consists of critical or positive consideration of information sites with a product-oriented impact.

Overview: Interface design, navigation design and information design

The elements of Interface Design, Navigation Design and Information Design are closely linked.
But even if interconnected, good navigation design cannot correct bad information design. The navigation designer is like a lens where the user sees the structure. After the user experience in the functionalities and in the navigation designer, the user arrives at the information design, having the communication of ideas.
The interface design recognizes the features most likely to be used by the user and makes them easier to access. Effective action, in this case, is to think carefully about the default options selected when the interface is presented to the user for the first time. If he understands the process, he will have no trouble finishing it.
Thinking about navigation design, it is of great importance that each page of a website clearly communicates to users where they are and where they can go, they must provide a point for another website and they must relate the content to what the user is viewing.
Information design is all about deciding how to present information so that people can use and understand it easily. It can be text or it can be visual in the form of graphs, figures, images, etc.
In the layout of the website page, this is where the information design, the interface design and the navigation designer meet.

Overview: Sensory Design

The definition of the interface surface concerns elements that allow the interaction of navigation design, therefore, we are talking about sensory design.
But what would it be? They are stimuli such as sight, hearing, touch and taste that provide greater attention and bring a satisfactory experience to the user. Some examples cited in the book "The Elements of User Experience":

- Smell and taste: they are rarely used by user experience designers because they are the result of the user's choice and not a decision made by the designer to drive a sale.
- Touch: it is concerned with the physical engagement of the user, and this implies interface elements and interaction design. It includes the shape of the device (round or square), texture (smooth or rough), the materials used (plastic or metal) and vibrations.
- Hearing: reproduce an experience with sound signals to send a message. Example: audible signals in the car when it is without a belt or even with the headlights on.
- Vision: each person has a different aesthetic sense, but the designer's decision does not necessarily have to be based on what everyone likes. Attention should be focused on how they work and asymmetrically to the point of being intuitive.

Visual design

It is very important that the user communicates with the brand. If you want to convey a more technical and more serious view, it would not be a good choice to use the bright and colorful interface. It's all about strategy and not just aesthetics.
A simple way is to ask yourself: where should I look first? Or what is the initial project that draws the most attention? They are ways of evaluating the visual design of your product.
Contrast is the main tool to attract attention, as a project without contrast is seen as gray, without characteristic features, which makes it impossible for the user to decide. Contrast is vital for the user's attention, as he understands the navigation relationships and the elements of the page.
The uniformity in a design conveys an effective shape, keeping the sizes and elements uniform, but remembering to work within the patterns of the screens.

It is important to focus on the color palette, some brands are associated with colors such as Coke, which uses red as a specific color. The color palette should have a wide range of uses, and brighter or stronger colors can be used in the foreground, where the idea is to draw attention. Softer colors are more suitable when using the background.
It is extremely important to understand and use uniformly the colors, contrasts and the chosen typography, the use of fonts and types of letters creating a visual style specific to the brand.

Overview: The elements applied

The last chapter of the book "The Elements of User Experience" shows that being able to visualize and understand the problem is fundamental to success in solving it.
An analysis of the user experience must be made, understanding which problem is trying to solve and the consequences of the resolutions. Most of the time, the user experience options fall into one of the following situations:

- Design by default: occurs when the user experience follows the same standards as technology and customer order history and billing is kept in separate data, which would work best to maintain a more fluid user experience.
- Design by mimicry: when the user experience goes through publications, applications or software of similar products, making him feel in a familiar environment.
- Design by fiat: personal preferences rather than product needs or goals. If your color palette is pink because the CEO likes it, you have lost the strategic objective and the user's perceptions.

Solving a problem can be challenging and there is a tangle of decision making for the user experience. Asking questions to users with more specific elements can help to collect more relevant information, but you cannot rely solely on the user to respond to their needs.
A more deliberate design decision costs more time in the short run but will save you much more time in the long run. Tasks that involve a website, such as a graphic or code, are tasks of the first item in the scope, why and in the preparation of the product.

What do other authors say about it?

In the book "**Inside Steve's Brain**", Leander Kahney says that one of the causes of Apple's success is that Steve Jobs puts the best user experience as a top priority.

The author Darren Bridge in his work "**Neurodesign**" brings ideas on how to be successful in advertisements, advertising pieces and various products, through some characteristics, such as impressions, visual prominence and emotions caused by images or text.

Finally, Ed Catmull, author of the book "**Creativity, Inc.**" advises: always give more preference to people than to ideas, because creative people create good ideas, but good ideas can be destroyed by bad teams.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

Designing the user experience is not an easy thing, but it is essential not to believe that an interface solution satisfies users based on their perception of what is "good".

The experience can be designed and planned and this differentiates design as a strategy from design as a resource. It is to emphasize the other side, leaving "what you do" to "how it works" and that focus can be the difference between the success and failure of the product.

In addition, going through the 5 elements of UX (Strategy, Scope, Structure, Skeleton and Surface) is extremely important to add value to the business and / or product and create a memorable and positive experience for the user.

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