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How are Apps Made with You in Mind?

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User Experience design is centered around finding a solution to an issue with the end user in mind.

It is essential for all those involved in the problem-solving process to consider the capabilities, needs, and desires of the end user at all times. Consequently, things such as the medium, technological features, and visual aesthetic are not considered in the early stages of the design process.

**Usefulness** and **usability** for the end user is considered first and foremost.
A Design Brief is a document that establishes the project issues, scope, and direction for both the client and the employees working on the project. As such it:

- Identifies the full scope of the problem.
- Provides an internal and external environmental scan identifying factors such as potential competitors and/or preexisting solutions that may partially or completely solve the identified problem.
- Gives a brief audience identification; this does not need to be an extensive demographic and psychographic breakdown, but must establish initial parameters that will be carried through the course of the project.
- Aims to provide initial solutions to the problem, taking into consideration the chosen audience and the results of the environmental scan.
Personas are documents that aim to describe the typical characters of a target user. When creating a persona, it is important to think beyond demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational, ethnicity, etc. Although these characteristics are important and are included, it's essential to humanize the person to make them as realistic as possible. This is done through including elements such as:

- Biography
- Technical comfort level
- Personal quote
- Social comfort level
- Online & offline activities
- Motivation to use the product/service
This is where some details of an application begins to be thought about. The purpose of a site map is to identify how the individual pages will come together in relation to one another. A site map does not consider the visual elements or content elements of a page beyond topline headings.

Building off of this, a storyboard works in conjunction with the user personas to outline a way in which a specific user would move through the application to complete a specific task. The storyboarding process is the first time a UX designer begins to consider the interface elements of an application. At this point placement, and not aesthetics, are considered.
This is the first stage in which an application begins to come together. Low-fidelity prototypes are typically paper based, with the designer focused on identifying functionality and layout over aesthetics. Features such as pop-ups are simulated through the use of post-it-notes.

The use of paper and hand drawn elements is essential as it stresses the temporary nature of this layout, a perspective that needs to be maintained so that adjustments can be made in response to feedback gathered during the user testing phase.
In this first phase of user testing, the low-fidelity paper prototype is used. Typically, the app is tested using a small group that is ideally representative of the target audience. What is of primary concern to developers at this stage is the functionality and usability of the application.

Testing scenarios are created that very loosely outline a user’s objective. Testers are then provided with a scenario and observed as they move through the app to complete their tasks.

Testers are encouraged to ‘think out loud’ so observers can see any pain points or issues and gain insight into the users’ thought processes.
After the first user testing, the application is built to show how it will look and function when it’s on the intended device, be that a computer, smartphone, or tablet. Visual elements are also prioritized at this stage of development.

The software used to produce this depends on the UX designer and their preferences, however elements like functioning buttons, pop-ups, and sound effects are always included.

If the final product is a website or software that will be used across a range of devices then the prototype will be mocked up to show how the final application will appear on all of these devices.
During this phase of user testing the focus is on overall functionality and usability. The app takes on a form that mirrors the final product, which provides users a realistic experience and also enables developers to find initial technical difficulties.

Ideally a representative sample group consisting of the target market is used. Scenarios are created that very loosely outline a user’s objective. Testers are then provided with a scenario and observed as they move through the app.

Testers are encouraged to ‘think out loud’ so observer can see any pain points or issues and gain insight into the users’ thought processes.
Following the results of user testing, adjustments are made to the final product before it goes live. This is the final stage of development.

