GETTING TO PEAK UX

CHAPTERS

1. DECISIONS

a. Design decisions- human, system or ego centered?
b. Business decisions and UX- product/service/experiences
c. Types of UX Management styles: What's right for your org?
d. Characteristics of Outside-In design decision-making
e. How to support critical decisions that UX needs

2. MEETINGS

a. Relationships: What UX people need
b. Stakeholders: How to bridge gaps
c. Types of meetings & workshops
d. Facilitating Workshops & Deliverable sharing
e. Sprint teams: working with Agile & Lean UX

3. POWER

a. Critical Decisions: product/service and user
b. Process leadership: UX vs Engineering vs Product
Management

c. Roles & Org Chart positioning pros & cons

d. Hiring UX Managers, Designers & Researchers

e. Mistakes manager typically make with hiring

f. Managing & negotiating UX teams: Do's & Don'ts

4. PROCESS

a. Prototyping

i. Wireframes (Design Studios and Sprints)

ii. Culture of Prototyping

b. Validating

i. Testing essentials

ii. Understanding Desirability

c. Creating & Maintaining Design Systems

i. Style guides- Culture of value-add to Dev/ Product M.

ii. Why Design Systems?

iii. Governance and Design System

d. Personas

i. Developing evidence-based personas

ii. Socializing and using personas- Culture of behavioral insight

iii. Managing persona development

e. Journey Maps

i. Developing evidence-based journey maps

ii. Collaboration and Organizational change

iii. Managing & measuring Journey Map results

f. Design Sprints

i. How to use Design Sprints across projects

ii. Design Sprint musts: hacks to Google Ventures process

iii. Managing Design Sprints vs UX activities going forward

5. WORK

a. Design- interaction + visual design

i. Measuring results of Design culture

ii. Auditing your UX work activities

iii. UX innovation critical keys

b. Research- testing and needs gathering
i. Recruiting target users
ii. Getting comfortable with qualitative research
iii. Framing your research objectives & outcomes
c. Generating value
i. Design-led orgs- differentiating factors
ii. Functional vs. emotional value for customers & stakeholders

6. LEARNING

a. Space to breathe: Roles & Retrospectives
b. Space to learn: Formal vs Informal Training &' brown bags'
c. Space to think: Varied experiences- sparking cognitive diversity

7. CULTURE

a. Steps to growing a culture of UX
b. Building & growing a DesignOps practice
c. Building & growing a ResearchOps practice
d. Evangelizing UX throughout the organization

8. MEASUREMENT

a. ROI & getting the business case for UX right
b. 'Right problem' definition
c. Defining your business and user objectives
d. Scorecards and a culture of tracking and measuring ROI

9. CELEBRATION

a. Team durability, repeatability and scalability
b. Team identity: space & time needs
c. How teams celebrate UX gains

10. GROWTH

a. Auditing your UX maturity
b. Developing a realistic Roadmap
c. Hacking growth: moving to and sustaining Peak UX
d. Troubleshooting- Repair and Elevate
e. Creating a UX Transformation Plan

Introduction

This book is about building and managing a User Experience (UX) program or Center of Excellence. It's about the details that lead to success or failure, and ultimately it's about managing people, processes, systems and your business environment (needs, goals, stakeholders, constraints and pressures). It's about helping teams get better and stay better.

What does Peak UX mean?

Whether you are managing a team or contributing as a designer, researcher, developer or product manager, you need to be on top of your game. You want consistent results and a strong process that you can replicate at any time to get you the inputs you need for a consistent result. Getting to Peak UX means reaching a place organizationally where you or your team can consistently achieve results.

Peak does not mean staying on top

Peak UX is not an end goal in itself. It is not about achieving a position— on top of the mountain— or on top of your game.

Instead Peak UX is about maintaining consistency, repeatability and ongoing longevity of a UX Excellence Program. Getting to Peak UX means maintaining your position instead of achieving a position. Maintaining a healthy position of consistent results is more important than temporarily achieving mastery, to be thrown off the mountain when a wind storm or snow storm occurs: layoffs, power dynamics, budgets, loss of organizational knowledge, user adoption failures etc.

Don't get me wrong, achieving breakthroughs with UX success is a big deal in any organization, especially engineering-driven organizations, like Boeing or Intel, or in government organizations. Engineering-driven organizations tend to discount the real power of UX and see it as another aspect of tactical input to a larger construction effort. Governments tend to view UX similarly and loose sight of the power that a strong UX process can have to change how you do business.

Organizations who do have UX in play can also loose their grip. I have seen too many companies, like HP, build a Center of Excellence, all to have it disappear with market condition turmoil. This quick story illustrates a potential problem for any organization:

The year is 2003. A former intern at Experience Dynamics, now UX Researcher, proceed to conduct a usability test at HP's facility. When she got there, there were an impressive six user testing labs, all sporting my new "Importance of Uer Experience" poster she said. I got excited, and then she said, "But there was nobody there, the place was empty, the entire UX team had been laid off and nobody knew how to conduct a usability test". All the organizational knowledge and strength HP had built was lost in a few months of recession-driven layoffs.

Even managers who have good intentions and guard UX
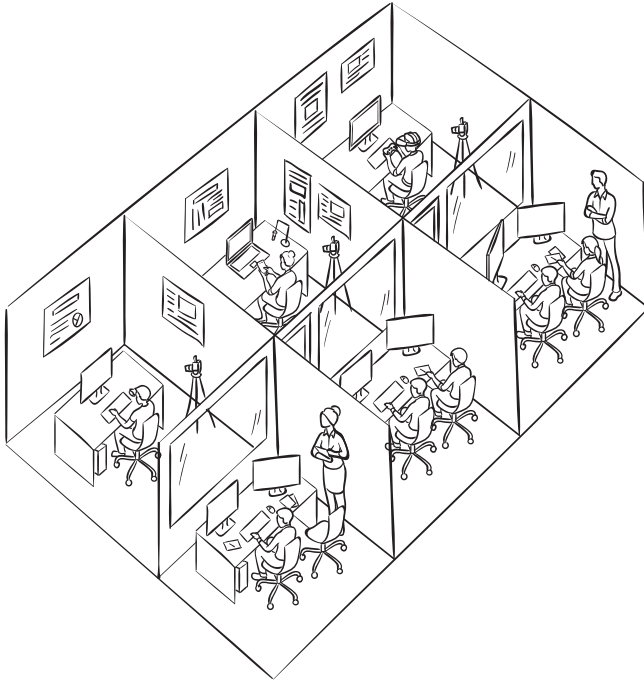
programs, often with a sole UX Designer, face pushback from more powerful forces throughout an organization that do not understand or value UX. All too often a UX Designer is perceived as "the woman who makes pretty pictures" (actual client quote) . Or in the case of a client in the construction software industry, who tried repeatedly with staffing UX Designers and spent 6 years spinning their wheels on this problem. The symptom was poor personality fit (wrong credentials). The root cause was a lack of understanding of the role, the qualifications, where the UX resource sat in the Org Chart etc. Once the company starting seeing this problem as a UX Management problem, and took a wider organizational view about process transformation, they were able to retain UX talent and slowly build a UX program, reaping the benefits a few years on.

You'll see a lot of stories like the above in this book. It won't all

be a pretty picture, but I want you to learn from the mistakes of others. You don't have enough time to make your own*. Taking several years to figure out UX is too long. In this book I will show you how to skip all the mistakes and key lessons I have collected and that litter the last few decades of my career, and bootstrap a program in 2 years, or less.

*If you have a million dollars to waste hiring UX designers, directors and high-price consultants all to waste the effort on "showing your organizational underwear" to the world, you should probably pass this book on to a colleague right now.

Hat tip to Genevieve Bell (former UX Director at Intel) for the great analogy.

You think I am joking? In the early part of my career, in 1999, one of my first clients, The Vanguard Group, who works on 401K among other financial products spent $1 million dollars (or more) hiring and firing the best UX consultancies. I worked with a UX consultancy at the time that stayed there longer than any of the others. I saw first hand how a UX team can produce great results, all to be misunderstood

or derailed by senior management. Vanguard had the money to play the long road to a UX Center of Excellence, and they finally made it there, but it was a long and expensive journey with lots of casualties.

> "A focus on customer experience and an outside-in perspective are the cornerstones of business success."
>
> -Bill McNabb (Chairman and CEO, Vanguard)

What's at the top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs?

There has been an extensive promotion of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. But one of the things people don't mention too often is his work on Peak Experiences. What is a Peak Experience?

From WikiPedia:

Abraham Maslow in 1964, who describes peak experiences as "rare, exciting, oceanic, deeply moving, exhilarating, elevating experiences that generate an advanced form of perceiving reality, and are even mystic and magical in their effect upon the experimenter."[1]:21[2] There are several unique characteristics of a peak experience, but each element is perceived together in a holistic manner that creates the moment of reaching one's full potential.[3] Peak experiences can range from simple activities to intense events;[4][5] however, it is not necessarily about what the activity is, but the ecstatic, blissful feeling that is being experienced during it.[6]

For individual UX designers or researchers it means maintaining a high level of experience-perfect, pixel-perfect and insight-perfect

output. It means having an organization that understands the role and provides a functional working environment where UX/UI can be accomplished to meet business needs but also push the organization along toward improved business outcomes like differentiation and innovation— the holy grail of competitive success.

For managers, directors and Chief Customer, or Experience Officers (CCO, CXO) this means removing obstacles, building support structures and helping teams leverage the most ROI that Design Thinking or UX Design can offer. This is how Apple has managed to build a trillion dollar company around UX and Design-led product development. Apple started in the late 1970's with this process and started to take it more seriously around 1982, when they needed the market to respond. Google followed this trend with founders taking