



product and service to be perceived as an extension of themselves, rather than a disruption. More businesses are becoming aware of the benefits of bumping up the user experience to their top priority. Because you simply can't build true customer loyalty without it, and the goal is of course to create products and services that your customers will want to keep returning to year in and year out. But does good design also mean good business? The Design Management Institute tracked the value of publicly held companies over a ten-year period (2005-2015) and the results showed that design-led companies had maintained a significant stock market advantage, outperforming the S&P 500 index by an extraordinary 211%<sup>1</sup>. In order for this to happen your offering needs to do more than just work, it needs to be meaningful for your users.

## User experience is a journey

You know the feeling at the start of a project when everything is possible. When you finally have some time to take a step back and look at the broader landscape, from which you can form a solid strategy for your development work. There are workshops and research

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performed, and to make that strategy tangible, and visible, you create a customer journey map that shows the experience your users have before, during, and after they interact with your company. The customer journey map is put up on a wall, floor to ceiling, like a fine detailed wallpaper for the whole team to gaze at in admiration. Pats on backs are exchanged, so far so good! And then the development work begins, with new insights and challenges arising. You're getting used to seeing that map on the wall, so much so that you don't even notice when it begins to fade.



Design methods, such as customer journey mapping, are extremely powerful to keep the user experience top-of-mind throughout the entire development process. Yet most of the time, it ends up as sad looking office decoration.

To avoid this we must stop developing purely hypothetical customer journeys, or journey maps done in isolation (often by the user experience function). The map needs to be developed by a cross-functional team and cover all areas needed to deliver the complete user experience, including engineering, operational processes, IT-systems and business perspective. If you have a cross-functional team when you create the map the benefit is twofold; gathering different perspectives makes the map more complete, and it helps to create ownership, interest, and awareness outside of the user experience function.

Another important factor is to acknowledge that the customer journey map is a living document. The cross-functional team working in the project will get new knowledge and insights every day. This new input needs to be reflected in the jointly developed customer journey map, so that the team can analyze what impact it will have on the overall user experience, and quickly identify what needs to be addressed.




## User involvement equals customer engagement

Keeping users actively involved in every step of the development process is a guarantee to get new insights and identify challenges while it is still possible to do something about it. Involving users is something that is often perceived as cumbersome since validating concepts and looping experiment-fail-learn together with users can be a huge strain on time and budget.

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However, every single minute you put on user involvement will be paid back in profit, with interest. The biggest mistake you can do is ignoring the users and develop a product or service based on old convictions, instead of data derived from real user experience.

Depending on where you are in the process, early concepting or nitty gritty detailing, there are still a few general things you can do to facilitate user involvement:

-  **Be creative when finding users.** Create reference groups, reach out through sales channels, interview people on the street, bring in a friend of yours who is totally oblivious to design. Even though they might not be your target group, you will still learn something.
-  **When you are face to face with a user remember that it's not a pitch situation, so drop the sales talk.** In fact, don't talk much at all. Sometimes people need time to gather their thoughts, so don't be afraid of silence. Don't be interesting, be interested.
-  **Mix quantitative and qualitative data.** Get a sense of the scope with quantitative metrics, dig into the problem space and understand why through qualitative data.

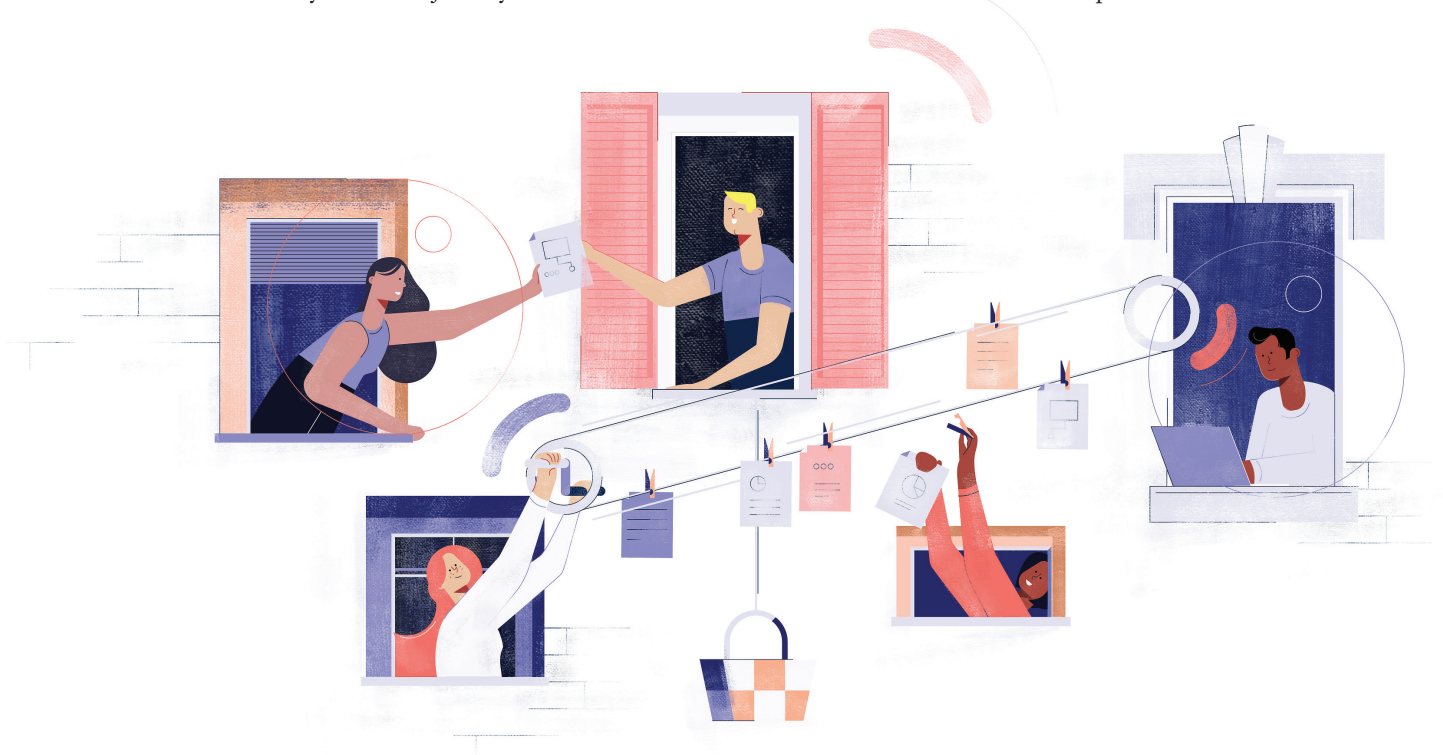
- ❏ **Be mindful of how you ask for data.** If you ask for opinions, you will get opinions - people will rather blurt out something than stay quiet and look stupid. Also, don't ask leading questions. It's very easy to cherry pick results to validate your own beliefs, which is the opposite of what you are trying to achieve.
- ❏ **A good approach is to actively try to invalidate your hypothesis of what should work.** If you can do it you know that you were wrong, and that you need to change it. If you can't, it means you were right - it's a win win situation.
- ❏ **Lower the threshold and dare to test unfinished ideas.** When things get visible, it gets actionable. Sometimes a paper prototype will yield as much insight as a finished product. It all depends on what feedback you need.

And remember that there is always something that can be improved. Feedback is an essential and unavoidable part of improving, evolving, and ultimately making something amazing. If your business is products or services, your business isn't really in the product or service. It's the users. Go talk to them.

## Real change is an insider job

**I**t is often the case that products and services unconsciously get modified and stripped to match existing company capabilities. Existing organizational and governance setups can hinder cross-functional collaboration, the IT-system landscape generally dictates the communication and work structure, and these processes, unintentionally, have a big impact on the delivered user experience.

One way to overcome these structural obstacles is to begin in smaller steps. Start by selecting a key customer journey and form a team that will focus on the wanted user experience for









this journey. Keep the team small, but make sure it includes cross-functional competencies such as design, engineering, IT and business owner. Secure that the team knows what to do - and why - and provide them with autonomy to make their own decision on how to solve the task. Steer the team from the customer journey perspective, including target setting and follow up. Evaluate. Was the outcome any different from this new team?

When these teams start to become the norm, rather than occasional examples, your company has started the journey towards a new way of working, where the user experience is an integral part in the development of products and services. By building a culture in which every single person in the office is involved in the user experience, you will not only enable a creative and inspirational environment but most of all you will make better products and services and ultimately higher revenue.

## Your user journey starts here

**I**t took Apple nearly a year to include period tracking. Make sure that you don't get lost on your way to meet those expectations. It's hard and continuous work, but it pays off. Here is a list of where to start.

-  A good understanding of how your product/service works for the user's in their environment
-  Cross-functional teams working on creating the user experience: design, engineering, IT, business owner
-  A validated customer journey map covering all areas needed to deliver the complete user experience
-  Smooth/quick/easy access to real, unbiased, users
-  Iterate experiment-fail-learn with users and a process to collect the results
-  An organisation that is prepared to take care of the results and change insights to outcomes

Are you all set? Great, then all that's left for us is to wish you safe travels on your user journey. If you ever need a guide, get in touch!