# Why is User Experience Design (UED) important for Organizational Success?

# Abstract

User Experience Design (UED) ensures that the focus of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is on the people for whom it is being created; including technology users, customers and the business. Globally, organizations are coming to realize that traditional, techno-centric methods of technology development can lead to high rates of project failure. Additionally, users and user-derived data is rapidly becoming more important to organizational innovation and to the identification of emerging technological opportunities.

The UED approach can also be used successfully outside of ICT to increase business value; for example, in the area of service or business design.

## Introduction

In order to drive competitive advantage, the need to embed a User Experience Design (UED) capability into your organizational culture has never been more pressing. User Experience is often associated with the cosmetics or design of a product; the reality, however, is much broader (EU Commission, 2009). UED is about putting the user or consumer at the centre of a design and development process – from the conceptual or research stage through to realization and beyond. UED provides the tools and framework to achieve this in a way that has implications for the organization far beyond the confines of the IT department. "When user experience design...brings together business objectives, user requirements, and IT capabilities, then the IT organization is in a position to leverage these three inputs into a significantly large amount of business value" (Sward, 2006, p. 4).

The world's leading technology companies, most notably Apple, have raised the bar for user experience, and people have become more sophisticated in what they expect from the technologies that they engage with. Globally, organizations are embracing User Experience as never before, while user experience designers strive to make technology "ubiquitous", or invisible, and in the best instances, genuinely pleasurable to use.

User experience is developing into a multi-disciplinary field that ideally draws experts from a number of different disciplines; including design, technology, business, marketing, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. The role of UED could be seen as a liaison, bringing multiple perspectives to developing a new product. (Hess, 2009).

## How User Experience contributes to Organizational Success

The way we do business is changing. There is an increasing need to ensure value from investments, particularly in relation to IT. Technology continues to develop at a rapid pace, "people and machines are connected in more ways than ever before – and making new connections, all the time" (Accenture, 2012). For CIOs, these challenges are particularly acute, "perhaps no C-level position has undergone as many changes in expectations, approaches, and philosophies during the past few decades." (Evans, 2012). Technology users are also changing and are becoming more sophisticated and discerning as to what products and services they will use.

Additionally, services are increasingly seen as a way of differentiating an organization in a marketplace where supply largely outstrips demand. Key differentiators in terms of customer engagement are based not only on cost, but also on accessibility, customization, and personalization of the

product or service. Because of this growing realization, there is an urgent need to focus on service research and innovation. A significant aspect of such research and innovation is focused on how people interact with organizations that have become largely virtual; operating and connecting with the world through digital channels.

UED is in a unique position to address all of these challenges and work with existing processes and initiatives to boost an organization's competitive strategy, most notably with regard to its potential to boost such an organization's innovation capabilities. Apple has led the way in transforming its business by putting user experience at the centre of its design and development processes. However, the gap between Apple and its competitors is closing as Apple's rivals come to realize the potential of effectively capturing and understanding the user experience. Google has created a new "UXA" team that is responsible for designing and developing a user interface framework to transform its web offering and work closely with other user experience teams, stakeholders, and the business (The Verge, 2013). In February 2010, the new chief of Samsung's telecom business, J.K. Shin, wrote in a memo to his top executives that the difference between their company's user experience and that of Apple was "truly that of heaven and earth" (Sherr and Ramstad, 2013). Within a few months this change of focus resulted in the release of the Galaxy S, listed by TIME as number 2 in the *Top 10 Gadgets of 2010* (Aamoth, 2010). To help guide its product development, Philips Electronics assembled a multi-disciplinary design team to develop a new vision of the user experience. The result is the Ambient Experience for Healthcare, which, says Thomas van Elzakker, former manager for new ventures, "has strengthened Philip's €3.27 billion imaging business around the world, allowed it to realize higher prices, and improved its profitability". In addition, it has improved the patient experience for many thousands of people (EU Commission, 2012). Laying out her new strategy for Yahoo! in January 2013, Marrisa Meyer announced the need "to bolster our user experiences" (MacMillan, 2013).

The huge potential of user experience and user-driven design for organizational success has prompted a number of European "innovation leaders", such as Finland, Denmark, and the UK to include user-centred design "as cornerstones of their national innovation strategies". Strategies to include users in the design process, including UED, are seen as "a way of providing innovative products, services and systems that correspond better to user needs and hence are more competitive" (Commission Working Document, 2009). The EU Commission agrees "never before has so clear an opportunity existed as now, for the European Commission, Member States and regions to take bold action to enable a new level of awareness about the importance of design as a driver of user-centred innovation across Europe" (EU Commission, 2012). Eric Von Hippel, Professor of Management of Innovation at MIT Sloan, has identified the extremely high failure rates of new products due to the lack of understanding of user needs (Von Hippel, 2005, p. 108). The benefit of user-centred approaches can also be applied to design approaches in other sectors: for example; business operations, and – crucially – service design and service innovation. The field of New Service Development identifies users as "the most important source of [service] innovation" (Sundbo and Toivonen, 2012, p. 5).

It is clear that organizations are benefitting from, and recognize the potential of focusing on user experience when designing new products and services for customers. However, all organizations can benefit from ensuring their IT function becomes more user-centric. Investing time and effort on user experience when creating and selecting new products and services for internal use has multiple benefits for any organization, irrespective of size. Some of these include decreased development time and need for rework; lowered maintenance costs; reduced need for user support and training; increased user productivity, engagement, motivation and adoption of new technologies; and improved communication between the IT organization and the rest of the business.

UED and user-centred practices have a potential to enhance not only the IT function, the wider organization, and the way we do business; but also society as a whole. Putting citizens at the centre of the development process can drive "better, transparent and more effective public services and contributions to social innovation, thereby raising the quality of life for all citizens… and for complex societal problems, design offers people-centred approaches that can achieve better solutions" (Commission Working Document, 2009).

## How to develop your UED Capability

User Experience Design (UED) is one of the critical capabilities that make up the IT Capability Maturity Framework (IT-CMF), which has been developed to help organizations identify the relevant aspects of the capabilities they need to improve on. The framework provides the tools and guidance to help organizations define and

develop their maturity to a level that is appropriate to their requirements. By taking the time to understand their current UED maturity, organizations can focus on the steps they must take in order to develop their ability to deliver products and services in a way that is competitive and sustainable, which in turn is a key factor in developing competitive advantage.

By concentrating on developing a mature UED capability, organizations can quickly start to realize significant benefits through the development and use of user-centred technologies. Some of the benefits of a mature UED capability are:

- An increase in the success rate of new products.
- Less time and cost incurred in re-work.
- Increased user/customer engagement, loyalty, and retention.
- Smoother and faster acceptance and adoption of technologies.
- Access to valuable data that can contribute to innovation and development of new products and services.
- Near real-time awareness of changing user needs/expectations.

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