Role of a User Experience Designer (UX)

by Devmountain Tutorials

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This section will explore the role of the User Experience Designer (UX) by discussing:

1. HOW THE UX DESIGNER DOES THE WORK
2. A TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE
3. PROBLEMS SOLVED BY UX DESIGNERS

Mori, User Experience Designer

Hi, I'm Mori. I'm the User Experience Designer for Poodle Jumper and I've been working here for seven months. Before I started here, I worked for a decade as a communications manager at a large bank. I wanted to make a change to something that let me use more of my creativity and love for technology. I enrolled in a User Experience Design bootcamp at DevMountain and that helped me make the career pivot I was looking for. This job is a little different than what I anticipated so let's dig in a little deeper about what it is like to be a User Experience Designer.

1. HOW A UX DESIGNER DOES THE WORK

It's my job to make sure the experience of Poodle Jumper is a pleasant one and not one that makes people feel dumb or frustrated. One of the ways I do this is by talking to people. I talk to the people who use our products. I talk to the service reps who help our customers. I talk to the developers who help build our products. I even talk to the people who run the company.

By having conversations with these different people, I can start to understand the goals, frustrations, and pain points of our customers as well as the goals of the business. I can then use that knowledge to empathize with our customers and design something that will truly help make their lives easier and help the business reach their goals.

That's one reason I love my job. There is nothing quite like seeing the joy in someone's face when you save them hours of work with something you designed. I also find great satisfaction in knowing that the work I do has a direct impact on the business.

As a UX designer, it's my job to advocate for the users to ensure they have a good experience using our products across the entire journey. I'm constantly having to evaluate "Is this design going to resonate with our users?" or "Am I addressing frustrations or helping the users achieve their goals?"

I need to make sure to push back when the people I work with suggest something that I know will not be in the best interest of the users. This may seem counterintuitive or may suggest that I'm not a team player but having someone on the team who is in-tune with the customer can prevent disastrous decisions from going through.

This is where solid communication skills are invaluable. I can't just tell my boss their idea is dumb. That's not very productive and I run the risk of getting on my boss's bad side. I must speak in terms that resonate with them.

This is probably the hardest part of my job. It's difficult to stand up and challenge an idea. Especially if it comes from someone who has authority over me. However, our leaders rely on me being able to do that.

When I have the understanding, insights, and support for an idea, then I bring it to life. I create rough sketches or mockups early in the idea process so the team can visualize what we are trying to do and get on the same page. I test the mockups with users before we start development to validate that we are on the right track.

This is called usability testing. It saves us time and money by limiting the amount of development we have to throw away. After the usability test, I organize the feedback, regroup with the team, and iterate the early designs into a version the Product Manager leverages for development requirements.

Visual Layout for Mobile Design
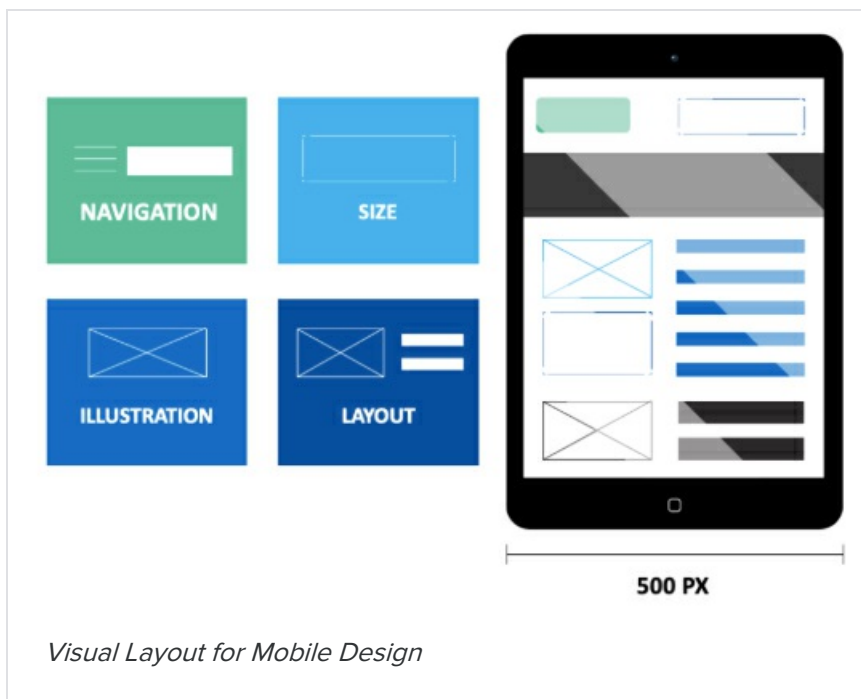
2. A TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE

My day can be filled with various meetings and they tend to change based on the phase of the project. If it's the beginning of a project I spend a good amount of time on research activities. This could include going over analytics, literature review, meeting with the developers to discuss technology limitations, defining what features need to be included with Jose our Product Manager, establishing what metrics we will need to track to determine when the project is successful, creating a survey to send to users, scheduling interviews with users.

For large features or new products, I create a user journey map to detail the different parts, how users flow from one step to the next, and how it all connects in a way that is easy for users. The upfront work helps us set expectations and create goals to ensure we see the expected results.

I share mockups with the development team in a weekly meeting. This gives them the chance to bring up any technical issues that I'm not aware of and helps to get everyone on the same page. I need to be aware of existing design patterns and keep an eye on how other companies solve similar problems. This makes it easier for users to understand our experience and increases our chances of success.

When we have a concept that we feel good about, I create a prototype using design tools like Sketch and InVision. The prototype is an interactive version of the design that shows how the feature or idea works, this makes it easy to share and test with users.

This part of the process is where a lot of iteration comes in. Sometimes I create a dozen versions of a feature before we settle on what to build. It can be challenging to have so much of my work "thrown away." Sometimes I have to remind myself to fall in love with the problem we are trying to solve, and not the solution.

This helps me to stay open to other ideas and the possibility that there are better ways to do things. Fresh eyes really help find the cracks in a design. As we discover and learn things, we change our design to reflect that.

Designing an App

3. PROBLEMS SOLVED BY UX DESIGNERS

When I'm creating a design there are a lot of things I need to think about. Accessibility is core to our mission at Poodle Jumper so being intentional about how a user with impairments will use the feature is important. How the design leverages size, color, spacing, and contrast can have big impacts on accessibility.

Working through how a design will look on different devices can be a challenge. The size, ratio, resolution, and measurements vary between computers, phones, and tablets. My job is to keep the look and feel of the design consistent no matter what device a user is on.

When the layout or design of a page changes based on the device or window size that is known as responsive design. This can be tricky because it requires you to understand what content is critical and what is secondary.

My work isn't finished when the design is complete, I collaborate with the team to make sure it works as expected. Once a feature is released, Jose and I regularly look at analytics and feedback to measure the impact and results of the change. We measure the conversion rates, monthly active users, the number of sessions, and the number of times users took a particular action or used a specific feature.