Measuring Holistic User Experience: Keeping an Eye on What Matters Most to Users

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Abstract

When it comes to how we define success metrics for our products, teams often leave out the user. Daily active users, conversion rates, % uptime, CSAT - these are all important metrics to keep track of from a product and business perspective, but none of these fully capture the user's perspective. They don't give insight into what users care about and what they're trying to achieve. With qualitative research, we gain a

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deep understanding of what matters to users, but these insights are often quickly forgotten by product teams. In this workshop, we'll introduce Critical User Journeys (CUJs: important tasks your user needs to be able to complete) and Experience Outcomes (XOs: your user's fundamental emotional needs) as tools that will enable product teams to prioritize based on what matters to users.

Background

When we talk about evaluating user experience of a product, the default is to think of usability, "Are users able to complete this task?". In his journal essay, Sauro highlights the gap in understanding between who users are and their experiences [3]:

"In my experience most organizations either have a pretty good handle on who their users are or know how to collect the data through personas and customer segmentation efforts. There's usually more of a gap in understanding what users are trying to do with a product or website."

Utilizing both CUJs and XOs allows product teams to consider the holistic user experience. CUJs describe the actionable goals a user might have while XOs describe their higher level emotional needs.

Critical User Journey (CUJ)

"I want to know how much I'm going to have to pay."
CUJs focus on functional needs, such as whether users have enough information to accomplish a goal.

Experience Outcomes (XO)

"I trust this company will charge me the right amount."

XOs focus on emotional needs (e.g. trust) and whether users feel like their needs are met.

Traditionally, User Journeys have been used to create empathy and inform design. Assigning priority and identifying which user journeys are most critical turns User Journeys into a prioritization tool. In the same vein, User Experience Maps have traditionally been used to visualize a User Journey, highlighting the progression of emotions as a way to create empathy with product teams. Measuring the fulfillment of emotional needs turns qualitative insight regarding users' emotions into a success metric for a product. In investigating the value of considering customers' emotions, Magids et. al found that fully emotionally connected customers are 52% more valuable than those who are just highly satisfied [1].

In addition, many metrics-driven companies can have difficulty interpreting qualitative insights. Morris et. al conducted foundational research to understand what mattered most to their customers. The team then developed Customer Experience Outcomes (CXOs) derived from user needs and success criteria. These were later measured via survey feedback [2]. This example conveys how investing in CUJs and CXOs can help increase user engagement and drive strategic decision-making.

While instrumented quantitative metrics are great for knowing *what* customers are doing, CUJs and XOs help highlight *why* they're doing it. Embedding user needs into how product teams make decisions ensures that teams focus on the biggest influence on their bottom line - what users care about. Through group activities and discussion, participants in this workshop will get first-hand experience on how to articulate and utilize

Critical User Journeys and Experience Outcomes to bring this focus to their teams.

Goals of the Workshop

- (1) Introduce Critical User Journeys (CUJs) and Experience Outcomes (XOs) as design and measurement tools to guide user-centered product development.
- (2) Provide examples of how CUJs and XOs can be used and operationalized
- (3) Provide tips and tricks for getting buy-in from cross-functional stakeholders and working with them to write good CUJs and XOs
- (4) Hands-on experience and live feedback in writing and evaluating CUJs/XOs

Audience

This workshop targets UX researchers or industry practitioners interested in learning how to guide product development teams to focus on what's most important to their users. We expect to have about 20-30 attendees. To reach out to the community and recruit participants, there will be a website with information on the class and facilitators.

Workshop Structure

The workshop will be a mix of presentation, hands-on activities, and group discussion. Participants will get a chance to practice writing Critical User Journeys and Experience Outcomes for an example product and evaluate a CUJ/XO. Tackling CUJs and XOs can feel nebulous the first time around, so these hands-on activities will give participants a chance to go through exercises and ask any questions that might arise. The workshop will comprise of 2 components, each taking half the day.

Part 1 (morning) will focus on introducing the concepts of CUJs and XOs and giving workshop participants

first-hand experience writing them. Facilitators will give an overview of what CUIs XOs are and how they can help product teams. As a group, we'll look at examples of CUIs and XOs to learn how to identify well-written CUIs and XOs from poorly-written ones. Participants will then get a chance to practice writing CUIs for an example product and get feedback from facilitators and other workshop participants.

Part 2 (afternoon) will focus on teaching participants how to put CUIs/XOs into practice. Facilitators will give an overview of different ways CUIs/XOs can be measured. Workshop participants get hands-on experience evaluating CUIs/XOs in 2 ways: by conducting a CUI walkthrough, similar to an expert review, and by conducting a mock user study. The workshop will conclude with a discussion regarding how to get buy-in from other team members and mobilize an effort to center team processes around CUIs/XOs.

Proposed Schedule

Time	Description
9:00-10:15	<p>Introductions, ice breakers, overview of the workshop</p> <p>Intro to CUIs and XOs (what they are, why they matter, how they can be used)</p> <p>How to write good CUIs and XOs</p>
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	Group Activity + Discussion: Writing CUIs

	Group Activity + Discussion: Writing XOs
12:00-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	<p>Applying CUIs & XOs to your products</p> <p>Group Activity: Evaluating CUI/XOs</p>
15:00-15:15	Break
15:15-16:45	<p>Group Discussion: How to get buy-in from other team members</p> <p>Wrap up</p>

Planned Outcomes

Attendees will leave this workshop with an understanding of how to turn insights regarding user goals and needs into an integral part of their team's product development process by using Critical User Journeys and Experience Outcomes. Hands-on experience with writing and evaluating CUIs and XOs will give attendees a framework to take home and implement with their own teams.

Organizers

Evelyn Tio is a UX researcher at Google who currently focuses on understanding how users around the world access and manage their mobile services (calls, texts, data). Evelyn holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she focused on product design and product development.

Megan Torkildson is a UX Researcher at Google on

Chrome. She focuses on understanding web usage in local, international, and emerging markets. Previously, she worked on communication apps such as Hangouts and Allo. Before joining Google, she studied Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington.

Denise Su is a UX researcher at Google. She focuses on creating amazing mobile app experiences in US and emerging markets. In past work, she has consulted for several large companies that have spanned tech industries including medical, gaming, and voice. Denise holds a doctorate in Developmental Psychology from the University of California Santa Cruz, where she focused on culture and access to information.

Heidi Toussaint leads research across enterprise and consumer spaces at Google. She enjoys mentoring students in STEM and is an active member of local UX community and Diversity & Inclusion efforts in Seattle, WA. Heidi holds a Masters in Human Centered Design & Engineering from the University of Washington.

Aditi Bhargava is a UX researcher at Google who currently focuses on understanding how mobile phone users in the US and emerging markets use their phone to communicate (phone calling, messaging, video calling) to drive product strategy. Aditi holds a Masters in UX Design from the University of Toronto.

Dawn Shaikh is Director of UX for Google Fonts and Icons on the Material Design team. Before joining the Material Design team, Dawn led UX research for Google consumer communication apps and UX for Google Cloud Platform. Dawn holds a PhD in Human Factors Psychology from Wichita State University.

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