

A User Experience manifesto

Simon Lewis — October 2014

Our product's purpose is to deliver a great experience for our users. The quality of that experience will be influenced by many things, including how useful the features of our product are, and how usable we make them.

A product with a great user experience:

- helps me get my job done
- makes me better at my job
- is invisible – it simply stays out of the way
- makes me happy (is "delightful")

In contrast, a product with a poor user experience:

- doesn't do what I need
- doesn't let me find what I need (I'm not even sure whether it does it)
- gets in the way of my work (is anything but invisible)
- makes me worse at what I do (so I look or feel stupid)
- makes me frustrated (is "dreadful")

Delivering a great user experience is everyone's job – not a mystical process for a few "experts". We must all care deeply about our users, learn how they think, and create software that means they don't have to [think].

We will never deliver a great user experience by building software and then trying to connect it to our users through a "user-interface" (no matter how well-designed). Instead, we should be consciously designing the users' experience **first**, and then building the software to deliver it. The job of the software is to deliver the user experience, not the other way around.

Great user experience springs from coherence. Products that offer great user experience have a clear and simple structure whose power comes from the consistency and flexibility of a few carefully chosen concepts. But such user experiences are delicate and easily damaged. We must all strive not to break the user experience by consciously bending or carelessly mis-applying the key concepts.

Details matter too. A few minutes or hours spent making something look or work better may sometimes seem like a waste of time. But if it saves every one of our thousands of users a few seconds of thought every time they use our system, the savings soon outweigh the costs.

And finally, talking about users, we must develop our product in their full view. By letting our users see and interact with our product early and often, we learn what does and doesn't work for them, and we're able to tune the experience from merely good to undeniably great.