

5 User Feedback

A lot of people only think of users during the initial phase of a design process or at the very end when asking for feedback. They fail to note that users are needed constantly as part of the iterative process. There are three major steps involving users in the design process and they are outlined below:

1. Observe/interview to understand needs
 - a. Did users say what you think they would say?
 - b. What details are nuance?
 - c. How can these be expressed as needs?
2. Generate ideas to address those needs
 - a. Select ideas for further development
 - b. Make sketches and build prototypes
3. Ask users for feedback on ideas

Which users should you talk to?

There are multiple approaches that can be undertaken when selecting which users to involve in the design process. Logically, you can talk to the average users. However, studies have shown that it is more efficient to talk to lead users or extreme users. Lead users are those that are more intimate with the product than average users are. They usually have a deeper experience with product inadequacies and at times may have already invented solutions to those problems. Extreme users have special needs and thus use products in unusual ways. They are good for identifying opportunities that not seen generally but may be useful for the market. Example, products for geriatrics usually turn out to be useful for others because they simplify tasks.

Getting user feedback

When getting user feedback, it is important to avoid biasing users as they may want to please you. The worst user sample would be your mother and your friends. Even if they try to be impartial and critique the design, it is psychologically difficult for them to do so.

Some users do not understand the concept of prototypes. They may think that the prototype is real and final, so be sure to explain it to them that prototypes or drawings look and act differently to the final product. If it is possible, have the users interact with the prototype, and tell them to do a certain task or experiment with the product in general. Note the subtle feedbacks that are given during the interaction, such as “I thought this button did something else” or “How do I...?” Look for answers to the following: Does the user have a different mental model of the prototype? What are their difficulties in using it? What do they seem to like about it? It is often difficult to make notes of all their reactions without slowing or pausing the experience, so be sure to document the testing using photos, videos and quotes.

Wizard of Oz Testing

Wizard of Oz testing aims to create a faux “real” experience for the user. The purpose of it is to receive the user’s feedback before placing resources into the product. This is best used when the prototype is complex to create, but user feedback is vital to the product’s development. When designing for mobile applications, paper prototyping is a perfect example of paper

prototyping.

Activity:

While the theory may be easy to understand, gathering user feedback can be tricky. Take a prototype or an existing app that you developed from over the past few weeks get user feedback

on it. Then, create another prototype having taken the user feedback into account.

Remember to:

- Explain to them the concept of prototypes (if necessary)
- Avoid biasing user
- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask for user to engage with the product
- Look for nonverbal feedback