UX & Design Thinking ImplementationGuide

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These materials are most effective when used in association with the book Digital Marketing Strategy

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

UX & Design Thinking Implementation Guide

This guide is designed to give you a step by step guide to implementing your UX strategy.

Other guides are available for other digital marketing channels. To best understand how this fits into your broader strategy see the book Digital Marketing Strategy by Simon Kingsnorth.

How it works

The guide is designed to be as easy to use as possible. Each guide is broken down into simple, key steps to take to ensure your strategy is as effectively and smoothly implemented as possible. So less of this chat and let's get to the detail.

1 Understand UX

A 2005 survey found that 80 per cent of companies believed they provided a superior service. Only eight per cent of their customers agreed. Even successful businesses, it seems, don't really understand their customers. UX, or user experience, is a new discipline dedicated to bridging the gap between companies that want a prospect to behave in a certain way – usually buying their product – and prospects whose primary concern is solving their immediate problem.

Every digital touchpoint, whether a website, app, or smart device, is part of UX and Experience Design (XD), and delivers an experience aligned with user needs and brand identity. It's not just about usability; it's about creating meaningful, elegant experiences that meet real user goals while supporting strategic business outcomes.

2 Appreciate context

Digital is fast becoming the primary channel of our lives, which means user context is more important than ever. Building a great website is no longer enough. Mobile users, use a touch screen instead of a keyboard, expect to be interrupted and are more likely to be browsing than ready to buy. A key mistake many marketers make is assuming that their message is sufficiently compelling to hold a user's attention. This is not how the modern world works and successful brands adapt their strategy to thrive in this changing environment.

Context also includes the platform through which the experience is delivered (e.g. voice interface, app, or website), each requiring a different understanding of user behavior. Great UX isn't just responsive to devices – it's responsive to user expectations, behaviors, and the emotional tone of your brand.

3 UX Research

Traditionally, markets were segmented on the basis of demographics. This approach is far too blunt for the digital realm, where the first rule is to never make assumptions. Instead, research should start with understanding real behaviors, motivations, and needs, as revealed through observation and user interaction rather than guesswork. It may seem like overkill, but every moment you spend trying to find out what your audience really wants and how they behave will be rewarded in conversions many times over.

It's important to blend qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative insights help uncover the why behind behaviors, offering richer context and confidence in design decisions. There are many UX research tools available, the most useful of which are heatmap software, user interviews and ethnographic models of observation. The primary purpose of all these tools is try and put the designers in the user's shoes. Web analytics provide a lot of information about clicks, time on page and search traffic, but they don't tell you what actions a user takes before clicking. That's the job of heatmap software. Knowing where your website visitors have pointed and hovered can give vital information about what page elements are most appealing and which are interfering funnel progression. Eyeball testing does the same.

Usability testing is a form of evaluative research that is often done live and in-person and lets users tell researchers exactly what's working on the site and what isn't. The last stage of UX research is multivariant or split A/B testing. Two or more options are run live simultaneously to determine which version performs the best. This can be as simple as running different headlines on the same piece of content or as complex as two completely different versions of a website. Ideally, this evaluative testing is preceded and informed by formative research conducted earlier in the design process to ensure the foundation being tested was built on real user needs.

4 Tactical UX

Of the two types of UX activity, tactical and strategic, tactical UX is the one that applies the core principles of good interaction design directly to maximizing conversions. Every interaction is designed to be as simple and effective as possible to reduce the chances of customers dropping out of the funnel. This can be as simple as minimizing the number of steps in a shopping cart sequence or making sure your website loads images quickly. UX designers often use split A/B or multivariant testing to determine which permutations convert best.

Tactical UX efforts often focus on mapping the user journey, defining and refining each step a user takes toward completing a desired action. Multidisciplinary teams can work iteratively to test and improve these flows, ensuring that every interaction is purposeful, usable, and aligned with business goals.

5 Strategic UX

Strategic or human UX is a bit fuzzier, as it is concerned with discovering customer needs and designing experiences that meet those needs in a way that is consistent with brand identity. Since shiny marketing campaigns no longer compensate for a poor value proposition the first step is to be honest about what your product or service does for your target audience.

The market has shifted from constantly blasting key messages to creating brand experiences. This is a much more complex but ultimately more fruitful approach. When your UX people are able to research thoroughly, they usually turn up opportunities that are entirely new, as well as saving you from potentially disastrous miscalculations.

This level of UX engagement reflects a more mature XD practice, where research and design are embedded into business strategy. Truly effective design happens when UX teams help define not just features but the product direction itself, identifying unmet needs and delivering brand-consistent, emotionally resonant experiences.

6 Using design thinking

Design thinking is a process that uses logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning to figure what is possible and work out how to create products and experiences that benefit the end user. The double diamond method, used at companies like Lego, Alessi and Microsoft, has four phases: discover, define, develop and deliver.

Discover means understanding your users and their challenges, which will tell you what design principles you need to work with. Define is looking at how you can solve problems with the opportunities available. Solutions that are theoretically possible but not fiscally or strategically a good fit are discarded. Develop is creating a set of design principles to guide the project based on the solutions identified in the define stage. Deliver is doing the work.

Design Sprints are another proven method for quickly aligning teams and iterating solutions. compressing a problem-solving cycle into five focused days. These sprints involve goal-setting, ideation, prototyping, and real-user feedback within a structured week, helping teams avoid opinion-driven debates and move decisively toward validated solutions.

No-code development tools enable modern design workflows by allowing non-developers to create and test digital experiences using visual, drag-and-drop interfaces. Content Management Systems (CMS) like WordPress, Wix or Squarespace also allow marketers and designers to manage and publish content efficiently.


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