



UX DESIGN

What is a UX Design and a UX Designer?

User Experience (UX) design is the process used to ensure products and services provide a meaningful, and relevant experience to their users. UX design has been a part of our society for decades, dating back to the Greeks and Romans creating military weapons to fit the specific needs of their soldiers, but the term “User Experience” wasn’t established until the early 1990’s [1].

UX design covers a vast array of other areas of design. A UX Designer is concerned with the entire process of acquiring and integrating, a product or service, including aspects of branding, design, usability, and function. When designing a product, a UX Designer needs to concentrate on the user's experience when using it.

THE WHY, WHAT AND HOW

When working on a product, a UX Designer should consider three aspects of the product - the Why, the What, and the How [2]:



The Why involves the user’s motivation for adopting a product. A UX Designer needs to be able to relate the product to the user so that they can see themselves using or valuing it.



The What addresses the functionality of the product/service, and what people can do with it based on how you designed it.



The How relates to the design of the product, and having it be accessible and aesthetically pleasing to the users as possible.

Skills that Help Professionals

A combination of personal attributes and communication skills can help a UX Designer [3]:

Communication: A UX Designer spends a lot of time presenting to clients and stakeholders, interviewing users, drawing design solutions, and collaborating with the members of their team. For this reason, the number one soft skill to have as a UX Designer is communication — whether written, verbal, or visual. A UX Designer needs to be able to articulate their ideas clearly, while also being an active listener.

Empathy: As decisions are being made about the direction of a product or service, UX Designers are required to be the voice of that product/service's users. A UX Designer must advocate for them, and be able to view the product or service through their eyes. What are their pain points? What are their goals? What do they want? Empathizing with your users will allow a UX Designer, and anyone else they're working with, to make better design decisions that will result in a more user-friendly product/service.

Organization: A UX Designer works with many documents and design deliverables in their role. This can include anything from design briefs, research findings, and interview results to wireframes, prototypes, and design specifications. It's therefore essential that a UX Designer be highly organized.

When it comes to completing the day-to-day work, the technical and functional skills designers need to know are:

User Research: Research can be the determining factor between a great experience and a terrible experience for users of a product or service. User research, and the analysis of this research, can play a crucial role in discovering user needs and wants for a product/service. It also plays a pivotal part in the UX design process. Tasks for user research include, but are not limited to, user testing, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups.

Information Architecture: Information architecture refers to the organization of information in an effective, accessible, and meaningful way. With the sheer amount of information now available online, the role of information architecture has become more significant. Good information architecture ensures that whenever a user enters your site or app, they know exactly where to go for the information they need and can easily navigate to it.

Wireframing & Prototyping : Wireframes and prototypes are a crucial component of any design process. They allow a UX Designer to quickly communicate and test their ideas with teammates, stakeholders, and potential users before time and money are poured into the product's visual design and development.

Though UX Designers are relatively new to the tech sector, there are a few formal user experience courses at post secondary institutions within Nova Scotia, as well as online resources for people to use to receive an education about UX:

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Graphic Design [7]:

In this program, students will learn the essential skills required to be a successful Graphic Designer by covering subjects such as design process and management, design history, typography, digital imaging, editorial design, branding and professional graphic design practice. You also learn about entrepreneurship while working in a studio environment.

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) Expanded Media [8]:

For students in first year, NSCAD requires that all degree students complete two semesters of Foundation Studies, which are designed to introduce the practices, principles, approaches, and issues of art, craft, and design. After completion, students are able to enroll in the Expanded Media program. This program offers students the opportunity to explore interdisciplinary practices, collaboration and research, and conceptual and social issues in a range of media arts, including: film, video, installation, performance, audio art, digital media, electronics, animation and photography.

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) Interdisciplinary Design [9]:

Interdisciplinary Design is a unique program that takes a distinctly collaborative, interdisciplinary, and process-oriented approach. It covers a range of design disciplines from communication, to graphic, interaction and product design. Focusing on the process of design thinking and the various visual and technical skills associated with the design disciplines, students learn to solve problems, identify opportunities, and communicate solutions across a broad range of media and contexts.

CareerFoundry - UX Design [10]:

An online resource that will allow students to learn all of the skills, tools, and processes necessary to become a UX Designer. Students work with an experienced industry mentor as well as a tutor to gain day-to-day feedback and build out a portfolio of projects completed in the course. Participants will also receive tailored coaching from the Career Services team to prepare for interviews, with a guarantee to find a job as a UX designer within 180 days of graduating from the course or your money back.

Interaction Design Foundation UX Courses [11]:

An online resource that is trying to raise global design education, without raising the price. IDF is pay-as-you-go, with memberships only costing \$14 per month. Members will be granted access to an extensive library of design-related textbooks and instructor-led design courses, which students can enroll in as many as they want. Members who enroll in the UX Design course will learn an introduction to all aspects of UX design, including key design and psychological principles, what cognitive processes underlie human-computer interaction and how to design with this knowledge in mind, how visual perception affects the viewing experience, examples of good and bad design to help you avoid common mistakes, and the importance of usability over aesthetics.

Udemy – UX Design [12]:

An online resource that anybody can access and use. There are countless courses that people can sign up for, ranging anywhere from \$14.99 - \$100+ depending on the course. Each of these courses is a series of lecture slides and notes that students can read at their own pace to learn the course material.

WHAT DO THE PROFESSIONALS THINK?



**JULIANA
KROSCEN**

UI/UX DESIGNER,
HOMEEXCEPT

Juliana Kroscen, a UX/UI Designer at HomeEXCEPT, says that the current state of the profession in the province is growing, but is not established in every major company, tech or not, just yet.

“A lot of companies, and people, weren't even aware of what UX was, and what UX Designers did for an organization, even as recently as a year ago. Since then, word has spread throughout the tech community, educating companies about UX and bringing awareness to the profession. Now, most companies are aware of it and, even if they're not entirely sure what it is or what it does, everyone is trying to hire a UX Designer now.”

The more you know



According to a 2018 report, although UX and UX design is on the rise throughout the country, the majority of positions available are in Ontario and Quebec [4]

WHAT DO THE PROFESSIONALS THINK?



JAMIE GERRARD

DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY
AND DESIGN,
20/20 EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Jamie Gerrard, Director of Strategy and Design at 20/20 Experience Design, says that many tech companies in the province are just now realizing the value that a UX Designer can bring to an organization.

“An organization that is designed-focused, and puts their customers ahead of everything else, is an organization of the future. If an organization can get practice being design-focused, and designs their products or services with their customers needs and wants in mind, that is timeless, and they will see the benefits of that.”

The more you know



69.5% of all UX Designers working in Canada are between the ages of 26-45 [5].

WHAT DO THE PROFESSIONALS THINK?



**JOSH
UDALL**

CREATIVE DESIGN,
WATZAN



Josh Udall, creative director at Watzan, agrees that there is still a lot of confusion surrounding the field despite its growth in the province.

"On average, when most people think about UX, and UX Designers, they think about designing apps and websites, and that's it, when there is really a lot more to it. UX is about user experience with everything about a company, not just their technology. A UX Designer helps design that experience so that the user can have as great as an experience as possible with whatever they're doing."

When asked for advice to give students, or young professionals that are thinking about entering the industry, all three of their answers were the same — never stop learning. Use the internet to find out as much as you can by watching videos and reading articles about UX, attend workshops and classes in the area, and find companies that have a UX Designers and go talk to them about their job.

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