The User Research steps

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> *Version 1.0*

User research is a form of qualitative research that helps us to understand our users, identify the usability of designs and allows teams to respond to any problems before development or implementation.

User research helps to create services where real users are at the heart of each service that is designed. This practice makes sure that our user's needs are met.

To include user research in your service delivery, you can follow the below procedural steps.

1. Identify what the team wants to learn from user research

To help you plan your user research, you want to understand and prioristise the questions that your team have and want clarified through the upcoming research.

This will include a workshop where your team brainstorms all the questions and assumptions that they want tested via research. To help prioristise the questions, you can group similar questions together into themes and ask the team to vote on the themes they find most important. You want to have roughly 5-6 themes at most.

2. Plan the user research sessions

Based on prioritised themes, the research team will decide on the:

? Dates, length and location of the research sessions

? Way of interview: eg. Face to face interview, interviews via web meetings,

? Type of user groups needed : according to the Service needs, specific type of users might be needed

? number of participants to recruit for research (approximately 8)

? questions and activities for the research script

? number of research rounds that might be needed

? Devices, tools and resources needed for the research sessions to run smoothly

? Type of reserch: usability testing, contextual observation

3. Prepare the research questions and script

The researchers should read in detail the service needs. It is preferable that the researcher should contact the business owner to talk (as a first stip) the problems of the current situation of the service as well as the difficulties that citizen usually complain.

The researcher should study the current situation and the desired one. As soon as this is done, then the researcher will start preparing the questions and create the script to follow in the research sessions.

It is important that the script is followed as best as possible, so that findings can be compared across participants.

The questions should be based on the earlier workshop (step 1) where the team identified the themes that are most important to test during research sessions.

The script should include:

- an agenda for the session – eg. a rough breakdown of activities, the topic of interest
- participant consent – eg. agreement to partake in the research, permission to record the session (if applicable)
- details of activities – eg. include any links or instructions to follow
- the research questions – eg. questions around previous experiences, what's working well, what's not working well

4. Assign note-takers and observers for each research session

The researchers should assign roles to members of the team to note-take and observe at least one research session each. This will help create more empathy within the team for your users and understand why design iterations happen.

Be sure to brief your observers and note-takers on the research ahead of the sessions, so that they know what to expect and to know what notes are most important to capture.

Any personally identifying participant details captured when scheduling participant or note-taking must be GDPR compliant to protect the participants' data and confidentiality.

5. Do the research and take notes

Send email invitations to each participant that will join the interview (to the Note takers, the observers and the participants).

Join the interview 10 minutes before and confirm that there are no technicality issues with your connection. Welcome all the participants and separate the screens so the person that will be interview will not see the note takers and the observers.

Start the questioner by introducing your self. Ask the participant if he/she gives their approval for recording the audio/video so that you can re-watch it later or use it during other promotional presentations. Start the questions of the questioner.

As soon as the research session is done, then the Note-takers should combine and clean all the notes taken during the session. This means to remove duplicates and to make sure the notes are legible and ready for analysis.

6. Analyse Findings from the research

To synthesise the findings, analyse all notes and find patterns in your participants' behaviours or thought processes. Study all the strong points that relate to the themes that you wanted to investigate from Step 1.

Make a summary or your findings, including:

- clear behaviours, reactions or thought processes,
- pain points,
- pleasure points,
- and recommendations for iteration

7. Create typologies of users

If you are at the beginning of your project, you can use your research findings to create typologies of your users. Typologies are user archetypes, or types of users, where you can use them to help you make decisions about the service that your team is developing.

Typologies help the whole team to get to know their users types and to create better services for them.

8. Share your research findings

Once your findings have been synthesised, prepare a meeting with the Analyst and Designers of the DSF Team and share all findings. The Analyst and designers should take in big consideration all findings. Additionally, prepare a presentation and share the user research findings widely to all the team and service owner department.

Note: It is recommended to present your findings to your team, senior stakeholders and external stakeholders. This helps to make the team aware of what is working well and not working well for the users based on research. And, most importantly, it helps everybody to empathise with the users.

The presentation should include:

- The themes or hypothesis set out to be tested in research
- research methodology
- findings

- participant quotes
- video/audio snippets from the research sessions (only if participant has consented)

The team will work to iterate the current design based on the user research findings.

The research team will then prepare for another round of research (steps 1-7) based on the iterated design. This is to verify that the changes to the design or service successfully meet the user's needs.

9. Repeat User Research according to the complexity of the project

Usually there is a need of repeating the user research 3 – 4 times, according to the complexity of the service