10 essentials for successful user involvement

An inspirational quick guide

The most successful products and services are the ones that people find meaningful, delightful and easy to use. And the best way to develop them is in dialogue with your target users.

From the very start, user insights have been the cornerstone of design-people's people driven innovation process. In fact we devote more than 20% of our entire workload to user insights. Recently, we took a look at what we've learned over the years and boiled it down to the following list of recommendations:

WHO?

1. Define your target group clearly

Align on key users and stakeholder profiles. Be open to the possibility of new segments arising during your research.

2. Include not-yet users

By being unbiased and open minded not-yet-users may hold a key to innovative problem solving and business opportunities outside the box.

3. Pay attention to gender differences

Men and women are built differently and tend to think and behave differently. Know-how about gender differences helps you navigate and realise new user requirements that can boost innovation and business.

WHAT?

4. Study people in the actual context of use

Your goal shouldn't be just to design a product or service, but to improve the everyday lives of your users. The best way to learn about real-life challenges and opportunities is to examine use in real-life conditions.

5. Combine qualitative and quantitative research & data

Combine the depth of qualitative observations and interviews with the breadth of international web surveys. Combine this with analysis of your own user data. This will give you better user insights – cheaper and faster.

HOW?

6. Create hypotheses to focus your research

Kick-start your process by framing your assumptions and your questions. Hypotheses about user values, motivations and barriers will give your study direction and purpose.

7. Entertain questions outside your research focus

It's important to start research with a clear strategy, but it can pay to be open-minded. User studies often suggest new avenues for exploration – don't be afraid to move your focus.

8. Involve users as early as possible

Early user feedback in your development process on quick mock-ups can be invaluable in getting you on the right track. Fail fast, learn early and succeed sooner!

9. Start with the big picture

Begin with people's values and attitudes, move on to context and the user journey, and then end with the product-user interaction. By understanding the big picture first, you'll find it easier to create real benefits for your customers.

10. Use tangibles to trigger the imagination

When working with users, it helps to be concrete. Prototypes, competing products,or visualization of use situations – such prompts can help trigger the imagination and get study participants to respond in greater detail.

From our guidelines you may learn that there is a bit of know-how involved in user involvement. But don't hesitate to start, it's worth the effort and you will learn and improve your solution. And finally - involving just one potential user is always better than solely relying on your or other experts intuition.

For examples of how we develop user insights in practice, visit us at design-people.com

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Let's create winning experiences