

In the first chapter we learned that the simple processing of information is a fundamental part of the development of an experience. The simplicity of processes and products has an enormous influence on their acceptance by customers and, consequently, on customer satisfaction. In this block you will be reading about rules and ways in which you can prepare information simply for your target group. You will learn the path to simplicity, from broad-brush approaches all the way through to clear instructions. A presentation of various methods from usability and user experience will give you an insight into the way you should work.

In order for a product or service to be perceived as intuitive and simple it has to be either:

- Efficient and effective so no user hurdles can occur

or, when it comes to very complex systems:

- The overall system must be recognizable and the processes have to be consistently depicted in order for the user to follow the plan and never lose his point of reference.

This applies to any kind of complexity. Within the first step of any redesign or development the problem solution must be in the foreground. The rkww principle may be of help:

R → Really

K → Know

W → What

W → Want

The core idea of all products and services always lies in the actual problem solution or in the satisfaction of a need. Thus, products and services are set up to make something better, faster, desirable, easier, or more enjoyable.

From a customer perspective, this basic task should be designed as easily and intuitively as possible. Then, when the basic problem is solved and the basic need is met, it is possible to offer the user a new range of add-on options. However they must never dilute the core task.

- The core task of a hair dryer is to dry hair.
- An electrician has the core task of ensuring a flowing current.
- A hotel has to answer the need for shelter, safety and ultimately a temporary replacement for one's home.

When you want to simplify your service or product, look for its core idea, the added value and the actual reason for a customers desire to buy. This process has to be easily visible and comprehensible for the customer.

- In general complexity follows over time in the form of further developments that accommodate additional customer needs. Nevertheless, it is important to find the heartbeat of your product.

Your product or service should solve no more than **three** needs. When more needs are met, it can be assumed that the product or service in question is diluted and can be simplified again.

2.1 Find Your Heartbeat

When we attempt to simplify a system it is paramount to reduce the product's information overload. To be optimized for human perception the product needs to be reduced to its very core. However, this does not imply that all existing functionalities or services need to be deleted.

The left image illustrates a system with a multitude of features that are not linked to the product's core, Fig. 2.1. In contrast, the right image system encompasses a lot of information (features, services) that is closely connected with the core and is branched out. The heart represents the reason for a customer to buy the product. Through additional information it may be upgraded and refined – or it might as well become less clear and more complex as showcased in the left image.

Between a gem and lots of pebbles often lies only a stones width.

The heart of a coffee machine is to brew coffee. The additional underlying need is typically an energy boost. Thus, this boost has to be achieved in the fastest and easiest way possible.

Looking at the process of buying a new coffee machine, it can be stated that the machine can have many functionalities, but the key objective, the heartbeat, is a cup of coffee. Consequently, the process of opening the packaging to actually being able to drink the first cup of coffee has to be as lean and simple as possible.

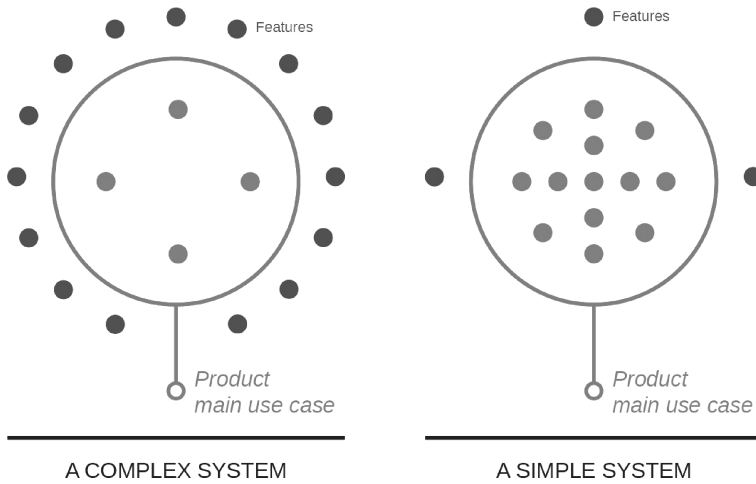


Fig. 2.1 Complex system versus easy system

1. Open the pack.
2. Plug in and switch on the coffee machine.
3. Fill in water.
4. Fill in coffee beans.
5. Coffee preparation.
6. Drink the coffee.

This represents the shortest way to get a cup of coffee. Once the coffee machine is then set up it must be just as easy to continue to use it.

1. Coffee preparation.
2. Drink coffee.

If special features are available, such as altering the dosage of the coffee strength, the cup size, the functionality does not necessarily have to be as easy. Clearly, this would be desirable, but if the additional functionalities take a little longer, it is not a big issue since they represent an added value for the user. Nevertheless, the core process must remain simple.

Let's discuss another simple example: online search engines. In the beginning every search engine had numerous features and additional information on its website. Then one search engine appeared that took the market by storm.

Google was the first search engine that was reduced to its very heartbeat

2008: Fig. 2.2.

2013: Fig. 2.3.

The main functionality is the actual search and this is exactly where Google put its focus by only offering one input field. There are no preferences or pre-selections that have to be set. There is only one search box and all additional information and



Fig. 2.2 Google Start Page (source: Google 2008)



Fig. 2.3 Google Start Page (source: Google 2013)

functionalities are presented in a tiny form in the upper frame. Google's success proves this concept's power and potential impact, Fig. 2.4.

However, Google works on further reduction. Have a look at the main landing page in Fig. 2.5 in January 2015.

The heart remains the search and this is being prioritized above everything else. The main functionalities are displayed through direct access while additional features are hidden behind an icon, Fig. 2.6.



Fig. 2.4 Google Start Page (source: Google 2013)



Fig. 2.5 Google Start Page (source: Google 2015)

Fig. 2.6 Google App Icon



Now, let's take a closer look at another renowned example that has caused quite a stir. Amazon specializes in shopping and therefore has reduced its entire purchase process to one click. The heart of Amazon is process of searching and finding of relevant products. The "One Click Shopping Button" reduced the entire purchase process to one single click. **Amazon specialized itself on its heartbeat**, Fig. 2.7.

Every product and service has to fulfill a primary task that constitutes the reason for its creation and design. This core element, this heartbeat, in the first stages this is where the focus has to be set.

In order to find innovative, new, or intuitive approaches, applying the methodology of sceneries is highly recommended.

To put this into practice, trying to adopt your customer's point of view as soon as you have found your heartbeat is ideal. Slowly walk through the entire process once more without paying attention to technical, structural or organizational requirements. In usability, this method is also known as the 'Cognitive Walkthrough'.

What does the process of my product have to look like in order to enable the customer to attain his goal in the fastest and easiest fashion?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the heart that drives your system?
- Is it in the foreground?
- Is the main process established with clarity and simplicity?
- Can you reach the goal as efficiently as possible?
- How long does it take you to do so?
- Do you get distracted?

As soon as you have resolved these questions you must attempt to determine your system's target audience and define it as precisely as possible.

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Fig. 2.7 Example of a product page (source: Amazon 2015)

2.2 What are Your “Personas”?

At the next stage a separation into different target groups needs to happen before the product can move on into the conceptual phase. One could assume that global corporations with global products and a global target group do not work with specific target groups and do not differentiate between workers, managers, students, or seniors. In fact, they have to narrowly define their target audiences as well and differentiate their products accordingly. Of course, they need to design their products as simply and intuitively as possible in order for the majority of the population to adopt it. Nevertheless, adjustments are typically indispensable and happen on a regional basis.

Specific products or services that have specific target audiences such as doctors, lawyers, or engineers, need to be aligned with their user groups. It could be possible that initial customers who make the purchase decision will not be the end-users in this case. Thus, executives may be the ones who need to be convinced of the product in an initial stage however, the end-users will have to be won over afterwards.

Example

As an example, let's discuss the check-in process at airports. The target group is being separated according to the amount of money spent – First Class, Business Class and Economy Class. Hence, if an airline decided to have all its first-class customers check in along with the ones from the other classes the added value would be lost. Consequently the target audience would be very likely to either pay less or grow smaller.

This means products should be classified in such a manner that allows for processes to be developed as efficiently as possible based on its respective target group.

Another typical separation in this context is the target audience split up into first users and heavy users. There are groups of people who will only use a product occasionally and other groups that will do so quite often, if not everyday. These target groups have diverse needs and approaches to use a product or service.

In order to dive into a first evaluation phase and determine the target audience, consider the stakeholder map in Fig. 2.8 and note all individuals who will be responsible for, or touched by the project. Do not skip any group of people.

Enter all users who have influence on your system from top to bottom and those who use the system from left to right, based on the frequency of usage.

Your target audiences can now be found in the left area. Based on this, you can find your primary target audience which should consist of those people who

- Use the system with the highest frequency,
- Generate the most revenue,
- Are the most experienced,
- Take the most influence.

Based on the above, you are able to define the main target group.

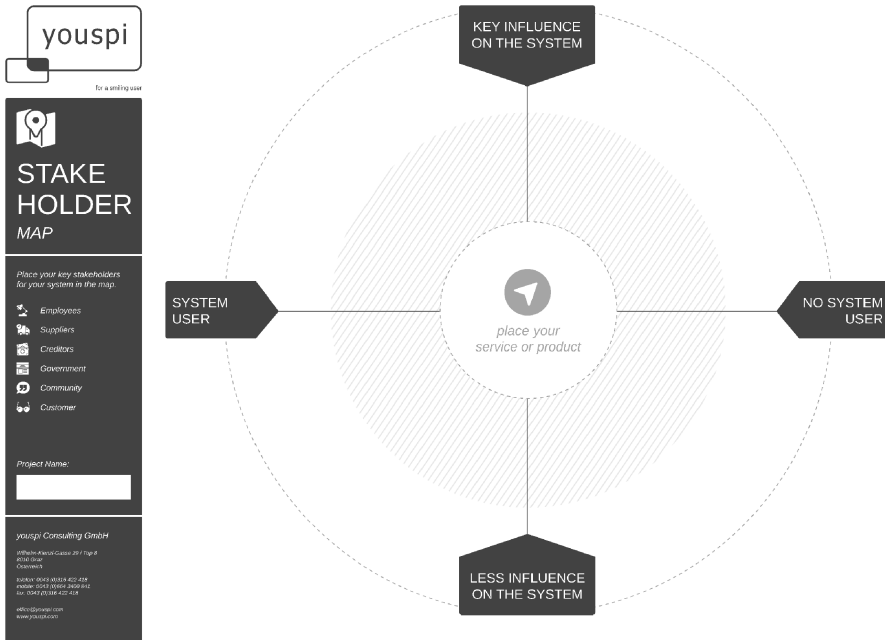


Fig. 2.8 Stakeholder Map

In addition to the main target group, the next two most important target audiences have to be defined in a next step, along with a proper definition of your NONE-target groups. This will ensure that the actual future users and non-users will be kept in mind of developers and designers throughout the entire project.

Once these target groups have been defined, the next step is to find out more about their needs and behaviors. The following methods are often employed to point these out:

- Ethnographic Studies,
- Interviews,
- In-Depth Interviews,
- Observations,
- A Day in the life of,
- Shadowing.

In order to specify the target groups, their respective needs and to structure these findings properly, the methodology of needs setting evaluation can help.

For each identified area, please note all applicable needs, Fig. 2.9. Then, move on to eliciting the ten most important ones and write them in the bottom boxes, along with short notes.

The best and easiest way to make the target groups visible for a development team or an entire organization is the concept of Personas.

Personas represent a user experience methodology that enables the depiction of the target group as a “typical person.”

It is constructed as follows in Fig. 2.10.

Personas help us in the development of services and products to better understand the target group. Through observations and interviews need-based target groups are defined – Personas. The findings are then depicted in a pictorial form which allows for a better identification with the target group and enables the project team to put itself in their target group’s position.

Personas are created with a picture, a name, typical characteristics and hobbies. Their mentality is typically depicted in a rather exaggerated way, as this allows to also cover the average user. A persona always contains a description of his or her requirement for the actual product, whereby no solutions are described – only emotional demands.

A student once walked up to me and said, “For the first time ever, we created personas in a project and presented those, along with the copywriting, to the graphic designer. Looking at these, he then stated that this was the first time for him to actually realize whom he was designing for and that this made his work a lot easier.”

Personas enable all project participants to get a clearer and more distinct idea of the target group. This entails not only the fact that the product gets simpler, but even that the communication within the team is facilitated as a common view is defined.

Create personas upon every project’s kick-off and make sure that they are kept alive during the various project phases. In this context, it is paramount to note that personas should never be based on your point of view only – rather, they should be a representation of the results of a qualitative analysis. This will help tremendously in creating sustainable and successful products.

As soon as you have defined and developed your personas and also your non-personas, you can move on to create a contextual map, Fig. 2.11.

The contextual map shows in which areas of life and in which surroundings the work will get done. External influences are also included in this chart and it is important to note for example, whether the work will be done during the day or night and whether it will be cold or hot.

Do you expect to find yourself in a stressful situation during the project execution, or will there be enough time?

Complete the contextual map as this will help you set the right priorities within the next phase. When the design phase starts, the better and more detailed you have worked up to this point, the easier will this next phase be.

Example

In order to better illustrate the use of personas and the contextual map, consider the development of a controller for a biomass heating system. The four main target groups are defined as follows:

- Homeowners who renew their heating system (50+),
- People who construct their own houses (Alter 20–40),
- Heating System Distributors,
- Service staff (repairs).

youspi

For a working user

NEEDS SETTINGS

From the design challenge, determine what the high-level needs are for the users.

Try to come up with at least 3 needs for each.

Project Name:

youspi Consulting GmbH

Witten-Königs-Platz 20 · Top 8
40699 Düsseldorf
Tel: +49 (0)2124 422 424
Fax: +49 (0)2124 422 425
www.youspi.com

WHO?

PHYSICAL CONTEXT

Which needs have to do with the usage environment?

RELATIONAL CONTEXT

Which needs have to do with interaction with others?

WHAT DOES IT DO?

ACTIVITIES

What are the most important user needs related to the activities and operations during use?

OBJECTS

What are the most important user needs related to the objects implied in the service?

WHY?

EMOTIONAL GOALS

Which needs are related to the non-functional goals of your user?

RATIONAL GOALS

Which needs are related to the functional goals of your user?

MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS

Which 12 needs would make the most difference if you offered a good answer to them?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Fig. 2.9 Needs Settings

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For a working user

PERSONA METHOD

Personas are fictional characters created to represent the different user types that might use a site, service, or product in a particular way.

Project Name:

youspi Consulting GmbH

Witten-Königs-Platz 20 · Top 8
40699 Düsseldorf
Tel: +49 (0)2124 422 424
Fax: +49 (0)2124 422 425
www.youspi.com

PERSONA

Illustrate the persona name, role, a brief description, etc.

PERSONALITY

Super Persona

Person

Anti Persona

Personality

TECHNOLOGY

Expertise Level

User Experience Goals

Devices & Platforms

Target for the System

Relationship Brand & Product

Seek and Visual

Using Brand

Brand is...

Product is...

NEEDS FOR THE SYSTEM

NO NEEDS FOR THE SYSTEM

Fig. 2.10 Persona method

UX Redefined

Winning and Keeping Customers with Enhanced
Usability and User Experience

Robier, J.

2016, VIII, 121 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-21061-2