

User Experience Audit

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WHAT IS IT?

A UX audit is not too dissimilar to a competitor analysis except that in the audit you focus on your site and provide more depth to your analysis. The audit identifies where your product is not performing well, in particular not converting sales or task abandonment. A UX audit incorporates empirical methods to help understand the existing situation, and offer heuristics-based recommendations for improvements.

WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

There could be many reasons why you want to perform a UX audit, but generally it becomes a prominent tool when:

- Customer purchasing journeys are not converting into sales.
- Tasks are terminated before completion.
- Increased number of bounced pages.
- Unexpectedly high number of calls or emails to support for help.

WHEN DO YOU NEED IT?

As expected, in order to audit something it must by definition already exist. Audits are performed on live sites. It's an ongoing process and should be performed from every 6 months to year, depending on the level of change being implemented to your product.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

1. **Identify your goals** – what is the audit intending to focus on. You have to consider both the business and user goals. There may be particular issues the business is worried about, e.g. low conversion rates, but additionally as the user representation, you need to consider journeys to be focused on: purchasing, form completion, saving, exporting etc. Identify these first so you can focus the audit and manage its delivery. Identifying the goals can be done through a simple questionnaire/email or more in depth 30-

60 minute interviews with product, proposition owners and users.

2. **Evaluations and metrics** there are several pieces of data which can inform your audit, including:

- **Website analytics** look at the traffic source, user flows through your product and any patterns forming, in particular for commerce, look at the conversion funnel – at what stage are users dropping off? Similarly, for multi-stage tasks, look at where users are dropping out before achieving the expected goal.
- **Heuristic evaluation** common usability issues can be found by performing this reliable evaluation. Refer back to your audit goals, performing a heuristic evaluation based on particular user journeys will be more focused and quicker to conduct. If you are doing a full site audit, ensure you review the landing page, task journeys (including any forms), navigation (including the organisation of content and menus), page layout and less tangible items such as whether the site conveys a sense of trust.
- **User evaluation** given an audit should be concerned with both business and user needs, conduct some user testing on the journeys of concern. This will highlight from the user perspective any usability issues. Allow time for a short interview too and ask open questions around why they use the product, do they use other products too? At what stage do they use your product, what do they like/dislike about it, etc..

3. **Analysis** – The easiest way to look for patterns is by documenting all your findings in a form that allows for quick comparison: a spreadsheet. Can you infer anything from what you see? Do the bounce rates indicate that users are clicking the wrong link by accident? Are journeys not being

completed because it's not clear what to do next? The analysis will take time, but the analytics combined with the heuristics and user testing can help you piece together the cause of the problems users are facing. Similarly, if business goals are not being met this could be due to many issues, for example: users are not noticing a call to action, it may be lost in a more important task, or it may be presented at the wrong stage of a journey for it to be deemed valuable to users.

4. **Report your findings** – with all your findings and insights consider which of the following apply:
- **Relevance:** is the user expectation matched by what your product has to offer?
 - **Value proposition:** can users see the value in using your product – is the proposition clear?
 - **Usability:** are there points of confusion in your product interface?
 - **Action:** Are calls to action visible and do users know which action to take?

Use the data you have to back-up any assumptions you have made. The metrics here can be used in the future to measure the impact of your recommendations. While some of your recommendations be solutions, you can also suggest that a recommendation is to do further user testing. Regardless, any changes implemented as a result of your recommendations should be tested with users – make that clear in your report.

Finally a few basics when writing up your report, most importantly think about the audience for the report and then:

- Emphasise the positive – there are always positives and it's good to show you recognise this and have been objective in your audit.
- Express your annoyance tactfully: product owners, developers and designers are reading this, don't openly criticise their efforts.
- Avoid usability jargon; definitely avoid unexplained acronyms. It's best not to make any assumptions about your audience's UX knowledge.
- Be as specific as you can – remember you want to fix the problems so be clear on what they are.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

More detail on UX Audits:

<https://usabilitygeek.com/ux-audit-beginners-guide/>

<https://www.uxpin.com/studio/blog/conduct-ux-review-wont-get-thrown/>

<https://www.352inc.com/blog/6-important-things-to-evaluate-in-a-ux-site-audit/>

For a usability guidelines checklist:

<https://www.userfocus.co.uk/pdf/ExpertReviewCheckpoints.xls>