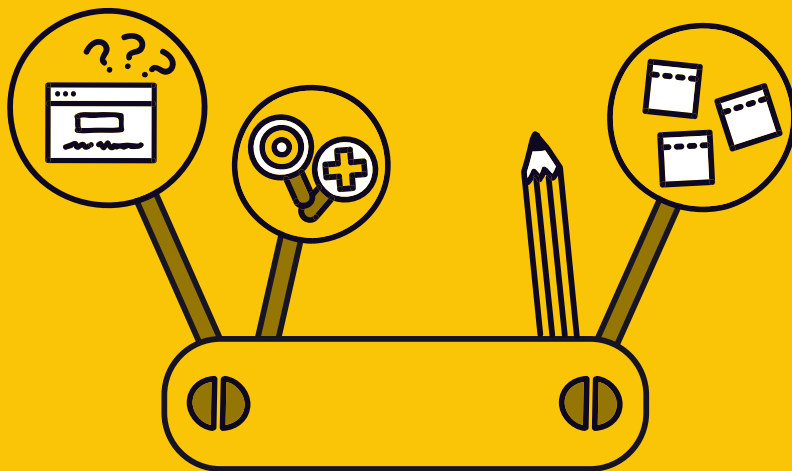




OPTIMAL
WORKSHOP

How the biggest companies use UX to win



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Chapter 0

Introduction

Times have changed. We're no longer living in a world where user experience (UX) can be considered a 'nice to have'. Instead, UX now needs to be a first and foremost consideration for every organization – regardless of industry.

This isn't just conjecture: The most successful companies in the world today understand the value that a focus on customers delivers – and they've known this for some time. The second president of IBM, Thomas J. Watson, famously said that “good design is good business”. Speaking to students in 1973, he said: “We are convinced that good design can materially help make a good product reach its full potential”.

Writing for Nielsen Norman Group, Jakob Nielsen explained that from 1983 to 2017, the UX profession grew from about

1,000 people to about 1 million people. Taking a longer view, he expects the industry to grow to around 100 million people by 2050. Additionally, [IBM's report on User-Centered Design](#) points out that “every dollar invested in ease of use returns \$10 to \$100.”

But, we get it. You need concrete evidence, and that's what this ebook is about. We're going to dive into how some of the largest, most successful organizations use UX to win – and break down exactly how they do it.

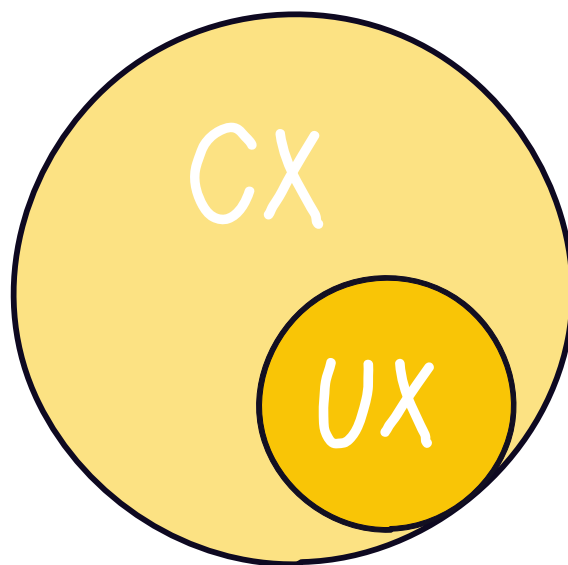


Chapter 1

Understanding UX terminology

Even if you're relatively new to the field, chances are you've come across terms like UX and CX (customer experience) plenty of times already – but what do they actually mean? And how do they relate to each other? Here's a little clarification.

It's best to think of CX as an umbrella term which encompasses UX (user experience). CX is much broader than UX, and covers any number of customer touchpoints that an organization has. Think things like customer support, printed materials, in-person customer visits and web and mobile. UX, on the other hand, more typically relates specifically to the usability of a website or mobile app.



Any cursory browsing of UX industry blogs and Twitter feeds is almost certainly going to throw up countless other acronyms and terms, but it's best not to get too bogged down in the terminology. The key takeaway is the approach – user and customer experience need to come first.



Chapter 2

How the biggest companies use UX

UX has always been something that's tough to prove when it comes to return on investment. You'll typically find that organizations carry out a small amount of discovery research (if even that), only to abandon the effort when there's no perceived cost benefit or immediate gain. But UX requires a step back and a look at the bigger picture. In fact, it's all about the big picture. UX can be notoriously difficult to justify when you're right up close, focusing on the benefits of one project.

But, as they say, the proof is in the pudding, and we thought we'd share some examples of those organizations that have put UX first – with clear results.

Samsung

Balancing technology and design

Multinational conglomerate Samsung is known for having a hand in nearly every industry under the sun, but it's the organization's world-class electronics that have really allowed them to take

titles like ‘world’s largest smartphone manufacturer’. Modern Samsung electronics consistently rank highly in consumer and professional reviews, and there’s a significant focus on the usability and accessibility of their products. But it wasn’t always this way.

All the way back in 2005, Samsung was just a shadow of its current self. Struggling in the TV market, the company decided to carry out some user research to find out how people used their TVs. Researchers visited people around the world, talking to them about their usage habits and observing them to find out how they used their TVs in their homes. The results were illuminating. Up until this point, Samsung had a firm focus on the technical specifications – things like excellent picture and sound quality – but not really looked beyond this. It turned out, people actually viewed their TVs more as a piece of furniture. Instead of wanting to show off their TV’s technological benefits (like the picture and sound quality), they wanted it to blend in and not take over the room.

With this data in hand, the researchers returned to Samsung and passed the feedback along to the product and design teams. Samsung started focusing much more on the design of its TVs, adopting features like built-in speakers and slimmer, more minimalistic designs. Sound and picture quality were still important, but these features were balanced with customer desires for a more attractive piece of technology.

This research was carried out in 2005. By 2007, Samsung had doubled its share in the worldwide TV market.

More recently, Samsung also completely redesigned its phone interface with a focus on usability. It's no secret that phones are getting bigger, so Samsung decided to create an entirely new interface to make using large phones easier. OneUI, as it's known, brings a lot of the most-used elements of their smartphones down near the bottom of the screen, where they're easier to reach with one hand.

Amazon

An obsessive-compulsive focus on the customer

When Amazon first started selling books in 1994, the staff would ring a bell every time the company made a sale. Now, the technology giant sells everything from diapers to cloud computing services and managed to pull in US\$232.9 billion in revenue in 2018. It's true that a number of factors enabled Amazon to get to where they are now, but one important focus right from the start proved key.

According to Forbes, Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos was set on customer experience even when staff were still ringing the sales bell. During the company's first year of operation, they invested 100 times more into the customer experience than they did into advertising. Speaking to the Economic Club of Washington in 2018, **Bezos explained** that "The No. 1 thing that has made us successful by far is [an] obsessive-compulsive focus on the customer as opposed to obsession over the

competitor.”

There’s also the fascinating story of Amazon Prime (the company’s expedited shipping service). While there was initially an air of uncertainty about the service internally, Bezos was convinced that people would pay for faster delivery. Now, Amazon Prime offers Amazon customers far more than just speedy shipping, and **Prime customers spend significantly more** per year than non-members.

Apple

The Ritz-Carlton approach

Apple didn’t invent the portable music player or even the smartphone – but it was the first company to make these products truly easy to use. Perhaps more than most other technology companies, Apple has always had a reputation of placing users first. Diving a little deeper, its also got a reputation of taking an idea that’s already been taken to market and

releasing a more refined, more usable alternative. This started with hardware and software, but recent years have seen this focus spread pervasively throughout all areas of the company, from retail through to security.

One particularly interesting area is Apple's efforts in the retail space. When the company decided to open stores, it sent employees to Ritz-Carlton training hospitality training courses. From a CX point of view, this makes perfect sense. After all, one of the Ritz-Carlton credo states that "the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission".

Here are some of the ways the Ritz-Carlton credo manifests in Apple retail stores:

- Apple employees know and use customers' names
- Employees bring the credit card reader to the customer, instead of making them line up at a checkout counter
- The Genius Bar is modeled after the concierge desk in a hotel.

The outcome? In 2018, Apple achieved a customer loyalty rate of 90 percent, and the company now generates 28 percent of its profit from retail stores.



Chapter 3

A quick segue into the financial sector

While tech companies certainly steal most of the limelight when it comes to the visibility of their CX and UX practices, the Ritz-Carlton example above shows that a focus on the customer/user really does transcend any one industry. Those organizations that put their customers first are some of the most successful in the world.

One area where UX change is happening fast is the financial sector – and it's sorely needed. A report from Instantor noted that 60 percent of consumers surveyed in Sweden abandoned banking applications in 2018. The same happened in Germany, with 40 percent abandoning. In the United Kingdom, 56 percent abandoned. It's not a great picture.

Thankfully, the growing focus on mobile and digital-first is pushing many of these traditionally stoic institutions to focus on user experience.

In a paper titled Design Thinking: The new DNA of the financial

sector, there's an interesting section where the authors estimate the year when innovation labs/design thinking started to become a priority, the focus during that time, and the output.

Insert: What is design thinking? Design thinking refers to the cognitive, strategic and practical processes by which design concepts are developed by designers and/or design teams. (Wikipedia).

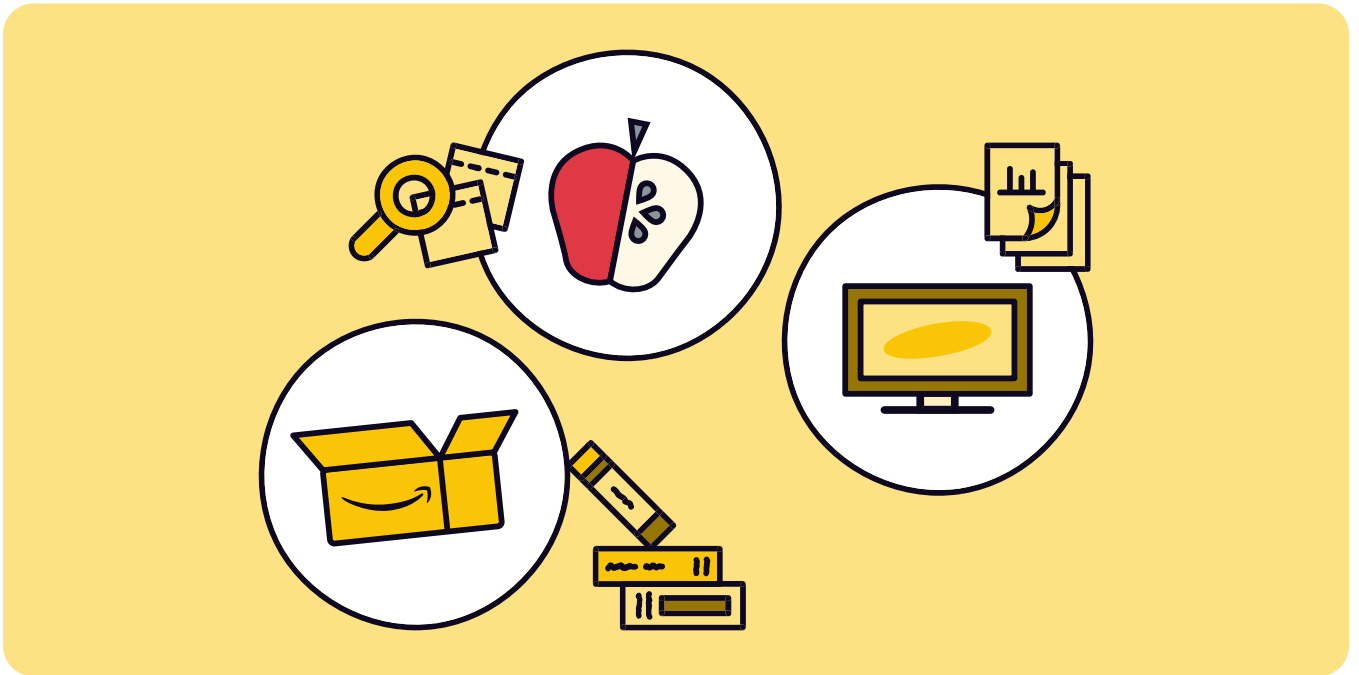
Here's a small selection:

Name	Beginning	Focus	Output
Bank of America	2010	Move to mobile using Design Thinking	Reduced cost
Barclays	2006	Teaching Design Thinking through the organization	Increased innovation engagement activity
Deutsche Bank	2008	Improving the user experience through the IT division	Increased customer proximity
HSBC Holdings	2015	Recruiting design talent	More proposals per year

Name	Beginning	Focus	Output
JPMorgan Chase	2014	Increasing interaction in the distribution channel	Improved user experience and decreased costs

It's clear that many organizations in the financial sector are coming to the same realization that their counterparts in tech have already discovered: By focusing on the real pain points of their users, instead of their internal perception of these pain points, they're retaining customers, lowering costs and operating more effectively and efficiently.

Let's take a look at Bank of America. When it came time to make changes to the online registration system, the bank turned to UX processes to guide their redesign. The result? **Online banking registrations increased by 40%.**



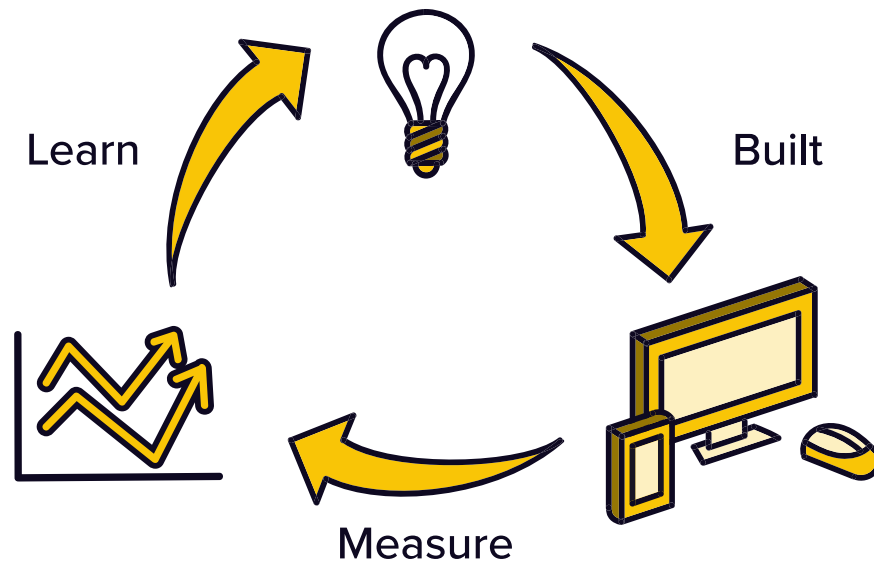
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UX as a competitive advantage

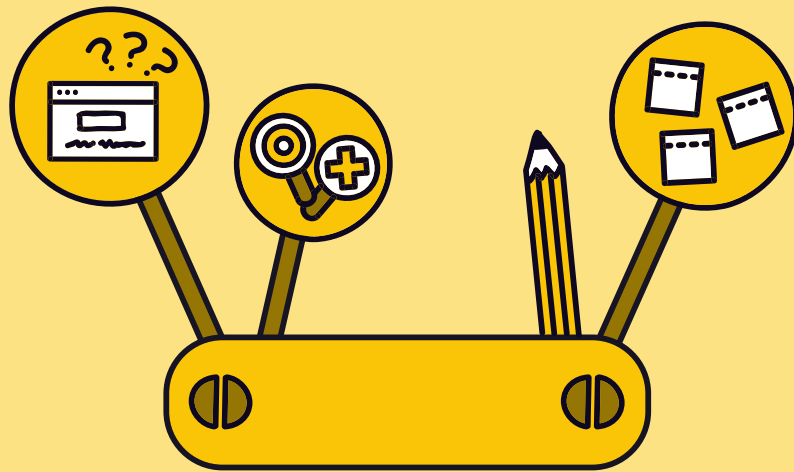
There are common, pervasive themes in those organizations that have placed CX/UX at the heart of what they do. These companies:

- ✓ invested in design thinking
- ✓ embedded research in the organization
- ✓ created a repeatable, usable research process
- ✓ placed users/customers at the heart of business decisions

These organizations have discovered the benefits of learning from their users, building products that address the problems users have and then measuring the success of their efforts to feed this information back into the cycle. The likes of Apple, Samsung and Amazon are world leaders for a reason.



Of course, every organization can and should adopt a similar mindset. As we just saw in the financial sector, these aren't alien practices that only certain companies can adopt, and there's a precedent in nearly every industry and field to provide guidance.



Chapter 5

Why you need a capable set of UX tools

We're not going to go into the intricacies of UX in this ebook – [we have plenty of articles here](#) if you're interested – but we will mention the importance of supporting a UX team with [the right set of tools](#).

The Optimal Workshop UX platform is a staple in the toolkits of many user researchers, designers and UX professionals for a reason. The 5 powerful tools that make up the platform allow you to execute a number of different research methods to learn about your users' behaviors and patterns, test designs and store your research insights and notes. This last point is particularly important, as it essentially allows you to sidestep the issues that crop up when research findings are stored in different locations. You can also generate interesting visualizations – useful for showcasing the results of your research to other interested members of your organization.

Building products that address real problems your users have first requires you to actually discover what these problems are – and this is where UX tools provide a missing link in the chain.

Sources

- [A 100-year view of user experience](#)
- [User research: what it is and why you should do it](#)
- [Good UX is good business: How to reap its benefits](#)
- [The 'secret sauce' to Amazon's success](#)
- [Amazon rime reaches 85 million US members](#)
- [Why Apple is Apple?](#)
- [Apple stores give their customers five diamond treatment](#)
- [Designing delightful banking experiences](#)
- [How to calculate the ROI of your UX activities](#)