UX - THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

Saturday, London, and very British weather that is grey, damp and feels like a bad hangover is the order of the day. I am on my way to play rugby when the driver announces that the bus is being taken off route due to a <<cue some unintelligible noise that is meant to be his explanation>>.

I get off the bus to walk for about 1.5 miles to the train station where I find out that the part of the train route between my current location and my destination is suspended due to <<some more white noise>>.

Alternative bus route it is then (I left my house at 8.00am on a Saturday, might as well see it through). During the 40-minute journey I muse about the experience I have been having so far and, unavoidably, my mind turns it into a User Experience problem.

The Ever-present UX

User Experience is not something limited to a screen or an app, as many may think, but is all-encompassing, i.e. covers all areas of our daily activities, from not being able to reach the intended destination, to trying to figure out just what the hell does 'Unknown error: 0808000x1' mean when it pops up. Anything we read, listen to, touch or interact with in any other way is defined by (good or bad) UX.

What do we want?

Of course, it is easy to complain about an app's poor performance or Facebook not having that 'Dislike' button that so many posts should be tagged with.

However, not many users or, indeed, UX specialists would be able to tell you what is it exactly they would like the problematic feature changed to or replaced with. As legendary carmaker Henry Ford said, "If I asked what people wanted, they would have asked for faster horses." It is becoming increasingly difficult to strike that balance between usability, presentation and business requirements.

User-centred research is the key
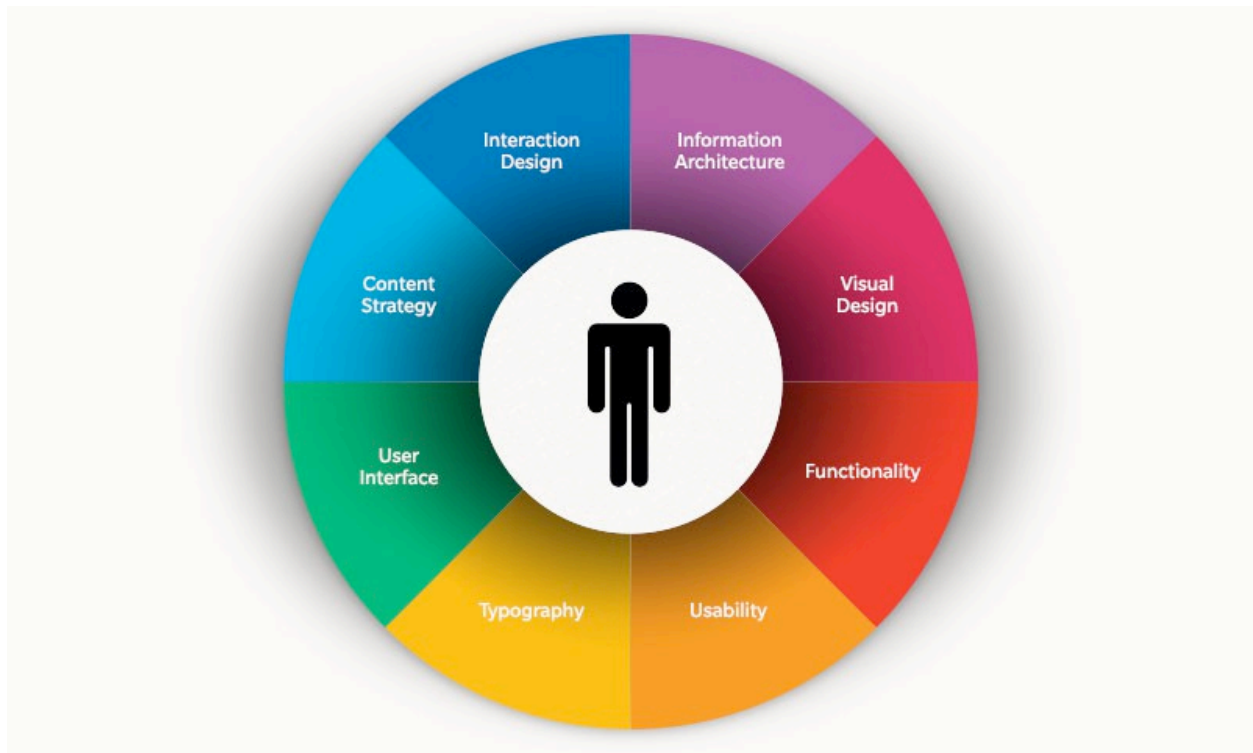
As most products will have different stakeholders along the way, UX designers MUST gather as much information as possible to make sure that, much like Dan Carter (the New Zealand rugby union playmaker), the product does what is expected and looks good doing it.

To do that, the target audience must be taken into consideration; when clients realise that they are being listened to and their opinion matters, they are just that much more likely to stick around.

Conclusion

No matter what your business produces, ALWAYS make sure you look to your audience for advice; after all, those are the people who pay for your products, and if they leave the business simply dies, because those who need your product have left, and those who don't need it… well, they just don't buy things they don't need.

Therefore, cherish and nurture the client base you have, and long live UX!

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