

# 7 steps to building great digital products

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A great product has a solid value proposition and solves a real problem. Ultimately it helps the user understand and perform their task easily and efficiently, whilst creating habit-forming behaviours to keep the user coming back.

Whether you're looking to enhance an existing product, or define a new one, getting started can be hard. Countless hours, days and months are consumed building detailed requirements, sacrificing time to market and delaying realisation of business benefits, which is why it's always good to have an experienced partner to guide you through the steps. We've done this before so we know how to expedite the process and develop the desired output quickly and productively.

This guide explores how to build digital products centred around excellence in user experience. It's a tried and tested formula that we use at Zenitech to build great digital products for our own clients.

## Step 1: Identify the business goals and understand their relationship with the user needs

This is fundamentally the most important step in the process. Essentially you're asking yourself the question "How should our solution benefit the business?" or, put another way "What business problem are we trying to solve?"

For example, increasing customer satisfaction and retention could be the business goal. You can then drill down further to understand how a user's goal relates to the business goal. A user may want to complete their task as quickly and efficiently as possible. So creating a product that helps them do this would result in more satisfied customers who stick with you.

## Step 2: Conduct a portfolio review and product discovery workshop

**Do a digital audit of the product.** Be honest in your review. Where are the weaknesses in your product, and where are the strengths? How is it different from others on the market? The most beautifully-designed app in the world won't make up for an outdated product, so now's the chance to look at what you do with fresh eyes. Find out what you have in your product portfolio that will help you achieve your business goal. Ask some difficult questions. Are the products you provide up to the job, or could you do with updating them to reflect changes in the market or in users' behaviour?



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**Hold a product discovery workshop.** The workshop accelerates the definition and scoping of digital services and products into a single day, capturing the right information to get development started in the shortest time possible. The agenda should include business domain mapping; user roles, pain points and goals definition; product solution ideation; storymap prioritisation; technology considerations; and risks and issues alignment.

The product discovery workshop should bring together representation from each part of the business that the product touches, so their input and perspective can be heard. When carefully managed, it's an incredibly productive and empowering process for everyone involved. The output of the workshop should be captured and documented to ensure a shared understanding of the solution.

### Step 3: Plan and execute UX Research

At the heart of great digital products lies a great user experience (UX). This is essentially about understanding people and thinking like a potential user. UX focuses on enabling users to do what they want when interacting with your business. Every touchpoint your user has with your brand will contribute to the overall user experience.

We've all seen manifestations of UX in the world around us – think about the 'desire paths' created when pedestrians take a quicker route to their destination rather than the path designed by the city planner. People want and choose the easiest, most user-friendly way to achieve their goals online and offline.

UX research is an effective method to provide quick and cost-effective insights into your user's world. It eliminates any unknowns, avoiding endless stakeholder debates and generating fresh ideas in response to your problem statement. Here's some things to think about when planning your UX research.



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**Think like your users.** Do you really know what they want? Take the time to listen to feedback and extract key insights. What would help them complete their tasks more efficiently, or put you ahead of your competitors?

**Modernise your approach to user experience.** All products and applications should be inclusive and accessible by design. Understand what inclusion means to your customers.

**Make it personal.** You may not be able to personalise the experience for everyone, but you can listen to how people use your product in different ways. One person might use their smartphone to text and call, while another might use an app.

**Reflect your culture.** Ultimately, user experience will reflect your culture. How are you perceived and how do you want to be perceived?

**Understand your customers' priorities.** Consumer priorities have changed in the last two years. For example, smaller direct-to-consumer brands have become more popular because of their [personalised service](#). How could that affect your product or service?





Now, you're in the right mindset, you can start the research.

**Start with conducting detailed UX competitor analysis.** Think about where your competition will come from in the future (it's unlikely to be the current pool).

**Compare your offering to your rivals!** How does their UX stack up? A great way to do this is with a simple 'car wash panel' style chart.

**Identify the sweet spot.** What are the gaps in service that you could fill? What's the minimum you need to do to keep up with competitors, and what's the area in which you could surpass them?

**Workshop your digital product.** Now you're ready to shape your product. Use personas to think about who your users are - and who they could be - and if your plans will meet their needs and wants.

**Gain executive level buy-in.** Once the research is done, you'll need to present your output to decision-makers to get full buy-in for the development process and the design direction you take. Setting expectations and ensuring everyone is on the same page is crucial to the project's ultimate success.

## Step 4: Define the UX Strategy

Without a solid UX strategy, it's easy to overdevelop a solution you don't really need.

Start by revisiting the business goal and your product portfolio to remind yourself what the UX needs to achieve.

Next, overlay user needs (captured in the UX research step) to your business goals. By doing this, you can move forward to develop a product roadmap defining the vision, direction, priorities and progress of the product over time.



*UX design is a continuous, iterative process to build a product or service that is truly effortless and enjoyable to use.*



Once you've done this you'll have a complete understanding of the customer need that relates to your business goals, and a roadmap to a product to deliver a solution. This is your UX strategy.

## Step 5: Bring it all together in the UX Design

UX design is a continuous, iterative process to build a product or service that is truly effortless and enjoyable to use. The UX design should incorporate user interface (UI) design, which aims to enhance your UX to deliver a visually stimulating and branded interface.

Start with an open mind and try to distance yourself from legacy systems, processes or 'it's the way we've always done it' thinking. That means a shift in mindset. Design sprints, originally developed by Google, are an effective tool to evolve new designs in five days. The method follows the approach: map, ideate, decide, prototype and test.

Here are the guiding principles for UX design that we live by:

**Great UX is unique to your brand.** When someone comes to your app, does it reflect the brand experience? Do they know they're in your world rather than your competitors'?

**Great design is simple.** It's easy to create a complicated design. It's harder to make it simple. But it's the simple things that will provide a truly compelling experience.

**Great design is memorable.** A compelling and memorable experience will convert new users into regular ones.

**Great design makes life easier.** If a user comes back to you in six weeks' time, they want to know you'll remember them, their order will be there, and they'll get what they want. Nothing more, nothing less. If you remember them, they'll remember you.

**Obsess over the detail.** It's often the detail that makes the difference, so spending time getting the little things right can pay dividends with happy customers.

**Storymap everything.** Story mapping is a brilliant way to generate and experiment with new ideas. The aim is to discover the best ideas, fast. Use it to plan everything the digital product needs to do. It'll help you create the perfect experience.

**Wireframe the design.** Wireframes are a way to show the functions and features of your digital product. Post-it notes come into their own here. Map every step into groups, and wireframe them to show the skeleton framework of the product. It's a great way to design UX very simply and quickly.

**Bring your wireframes to life.** However you create your wireframes, make them look as "live" as possible, so you can really bring the UX to life. A simple click through demo on a mobile device could achieve this for you.

**Visualise the experience with hi fidelity designs.** Visualisation can really help senior stakeholders fully understand the impact of what their new product can achieve, so take the time to truly demonstrate the art of the possible. It's a powerful way to spark imagination and inspiration, and is crucial to getting buy-in.

**In summary, the design should focus on:**

- 1 Simplicity.** Overcomplicate it and you lose it. Don't make people think, when they could do.
- 2 Usability.** A great product should be easy and intuitive to use, as well as accessible and inclusive.
- 3 Visual appeal.** Great design is humble, powerful and valuable and should be reflected in how people feel about being in your product.
- 4 A great experience.** Make people fall in love with the experience of using your product.
- 5 Innovative longevity.** Take appropriate advantage of the latest technology within operating systems to create a truly compelling experience.





## Brand UX

With so many digital products doing the same thing, it can be hard to differentiate one from the other. You might use several different apps to plan your holiday, for example, that all offer simple, transactional features. The one that will stand out is the one that shows you the dream - your perfect holiday - as well as a simple process that makes the dream a reality. Your experience is unique to that brand. That's brand UX.

Brand UX isn't just about slapping your logo on an app. It's designing an experience that means your customer knows they're in your brand, every step of the way. They have an experience that reflects your brand's values.

A workshop with Zenitech Digital Practice will unlock what that means for your brand, and show how to create the best Brand UX for your customers that represents your brand values. We get under the skin of what your customers want and need (not just what you think they need).

## Step 6: Develop the Product

This is where the rubber hits the road. You'll need to have achieved buy-in from the business (and approval of feature demos) early in the process to take on feedback, which will make development as smooth as possible.

**Keep thinking like an end user.** You might want them to do one thing, but they'll surprise you and do something else. Don't expect them to follow your path, and build accordingly. Think first about what they want to achieve, and then map it to your business goals.

**Keep design and engineering working together.** Break down silos. It's much easier to find and solve problems as you go by working in a unified team - this stage should be all about close collaboration and continual feedback on the development process.

**Adopt an agile culture.** An agile culture thrives on collaboration and creativity. It avoids groupthink. It focuses on action and incremental improvement and encourages you to think about how you can make each process work better.

**Adapt and implement, fast.** Look at where you can use tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to make processes more efficient, which could allow teams to put their ideas into action rapidly.



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## Future proof the user experience

Always think into the future. Stay in tune with your customers' needs, and have a UX that can adapt as they change. How can you make incremental changes so your platform or app can be constantly updated and refreshed, to stay relevant? This is at the core of the Agile approach. It encourages constant innovation. Things change and you need to change with them.

Technology evolves, fast. So you need the right platform, the right technology and the right security that will be future-proof, and you'll need to evaluate it to make sure it's up to date with customer expectation and experience. Just look how quickly we've all moved from passwords, to passcodes, to fingerprint scanning, to facial ID, for example. You need to be able to pivot with your users.

To do this, you need continual support. Don't just build something and leave it to wither. It will need continuous improvement, maintenance and updates so it can evolve successfully.

## Step 7: Review, monitor and improve

Great UX isn't a 'done and gone' process. It's a continual cycle of learning from users, designing and developing improvement. Customer behaviour changes. Trends change. Usage changes.

**Get insights from users.** Continual improvement is a core part of UX design. Monitor how the app or platform is being used by customers, what they love (or hate!) about it, what's working well, and what's being ignored. Insights from that learning will go back into the development cycle.

**Get insights from competitors.** Think beyond your immediate competitors. What's exciting, new, innovative in the market? What technology can you be inspired by? This will help you understand the direction that user behaviour is taking, so you can make sure your product is always at the forefront of user experience.

**Check performance back against the original objectives.** Does the app behave how you wanted it to? Is it performing in the way you'd hoped? Did it bring in more customers? Check back regularly against the original objectives you'd set and confirm any adaptations that were surfaced during the agile process.



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It's a continual cycle of learning*





## The Zenitech approach

At Zenitech, we live and breathe this process, starting with a laser focus on the business outcome you need. Transforming UX can help contribute to revenue growth, business scaling, cost reduction, increased customer interactions, or competitive edge. Great UX can transform businesses - it's as simple as that.

We will give you the advice you need to create the best user experience possible for your customers, guiding you through the digitisation journey, and collaborating closely with you to create the very best digital solutions to address your business challenges.

If you want to explore how you can transform your user experience, [contact us](#) to see how we can help.





# zenitech

## Connect with us



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