

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on UX and Project Management: Part 2

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WHY WE NEED NEW APPROACHES TO MANAGING UX PROJECTS

Part II of this Special Issue on Project Management and User Experience takes a slightly different view of scholarship at the intersections of technical and professional communication, UX, and project management. My title for this preface is key to understanding this difference. Whereas the title of Part I's preface was "Why We Need New Approaches to UX and Project Management," this new title is meant to signify that not only do we need scholarly work at the intersections of project management and UX, we also need new methodologies for managing UX projects. Not only does the emergence of UX as a field of practice within technical and professional communication create new challengers for project managers of all stripes, in other words, but UX projects in particular create unique challenges that call for new research and design methodologies.

Specifically, and as I mentioned in my preface to Part I of this special issue, UX typically centers on the design of digital products and services such as websites, mobile applications, enterprise software, intranets, and desktop software. What distinguishes UX from such partner disciplines as software development, web development, and IT, however, is a focus on the user. Rather than create product cycles in which applications are developed *and then* tested to see if they conform to user requirements, contemporary UX best practices require project managers to develop product cycles *around* the needs, requirements, and values of users. This emphasis on consistent user representation and participation in product development has created the need for new project management methodologies that successfully engage users while still meeting business requirements such as budgets, deadlines, and client needs.

This disruption of traditional project management best practices, which have tended to favor business requirements over user needs, has not always been smooth. Project managers, develop-

ers, and executives can view themselves as being at odds with UX designers if user needs are not presented to these professionals as an essential, central element in product development. A bottom-line mentality can sabotage essential activities such as user research, usability testing, and accessibility assessment in order to cut costs and speed product development. UX designers can be put in the position to represent users without access to necessary data culled from in-depth interactions with actual users. In order to successfully balance business requirements and user needs without predisposing projects to failure due to spiraling costs, project managers need new methodologies for productively interacting with users.

In the wake of these challenges, Part II of this special issue presents scholarship that provides new approaches to managing UX projects for researchers, practitioners, and students within technical and professional communication and related fields. In “UX as disruption: Managing team conflict as a productive resource,” Emma J. Rose and Josh Tenenberg present an approach for using conflicts between developers and UX designers as moments for negotiating design decisions in a manner that favors all parties involved. In “Rhythm and cues: Project management tactics for UX in game design,” Rudy McDaniel and Joseph Fanfarelli highlight the importance of gamification for UX and consider how users are persuaded through psychological, physiological, and cultural design tactics through an equal focus on both the designer experience and the user experience. As a response to these first two articles, in “The turn to learning: A view of UX project management as organizational learning practice,” William Hart-Davidson reflects on the common challenge for project managers that is at the heart of UX, namely managing the unpredictable, sometimes chaotic process of organizational learning involved. Finally, in “Mutt methods, minimalism, and guiding heuristics for UX project management,” Andrew Mara and Jessica Jorgensen introduce four heuristic questions for selecting project management approaches that are appropriate to the exigencies of individual UX projects.

Like the scholarship in Part I of this special issue, these new articles will hopefully spark additional scholarship on this pressing topic. In this case, new project management techniques must be developed to meet the needs of UX projects. These articles present important considerations for framing such techniques, including how to choose appropriate project management approaches, how to scaffold organizational learning around UX, how to use gamification to improve UX projects, and how to manage conflict amongst UX project teams. These four groups of considerations—approaches, organizational learning, gamification, and conflict management—represent important elements within current project management literature. As these scholars also explain through their literature reviews, many of these elements have also been discussed by UX practitioners. We desperately need more scholarship in the vein of articles in Part II of this special issue, however, scholarship that bridges these two disciplines by presenting new approaches to managing UX projects. The current articles are an exciting start to a very necessary conversation we must continue as a field.

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