How to Unlock the Full Value of a UX Audit

Understanding the Need, ROI & Budget
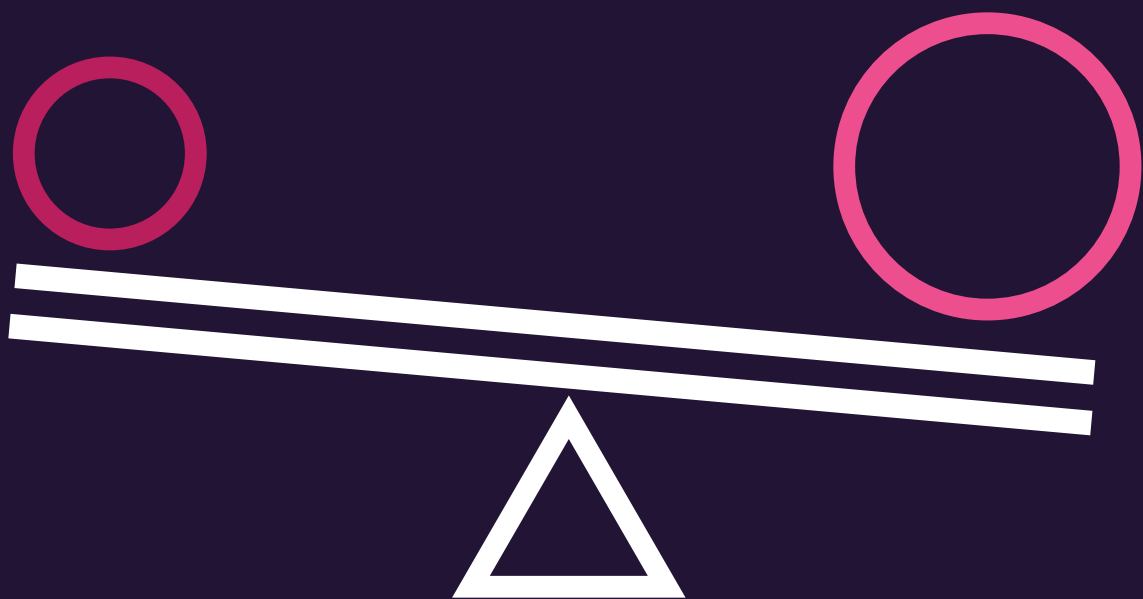
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INTRODUCTION

As a UX design agency, we're often at the receiving end of queries about how to **"strategically" plan, budget, and execute UX exercises in the coming year.** These questions veer specifically in the direction of how to optimize use research to get the most value and impact for the organization.

This guide is the culmination of our rich experience in conducting **UX audits** and assessment exercises for our clients. It focuses on our research services and outlines the value they provide, considerations for circumstances under which to use them, as well as budgeting for them.

WHAT CALLS FOR A UX AUDIT?

Notice these points of friction in your product? These factors drive the need to seek a UX assessment -

- Multiple steps needed to accomplish simple tasks
- Poor integration and/or compatibility with complementary tools
- Periodic and costly IT updates
- Doesn't scale to accommodate new business goals
- Vulnerability to malware attacks and security breaches
- Device dependency that impedes productivity
- Hardware dependency that requires resources and maintenance

These factors may not be visible as easily, but they may manifest in situations such as -

- Your users are missing or abandoning parts of a critical process but you are not sure why

- The metrics you are seeing are not consistent with the actual outcome you are expecting even though the numbers should say otherwise

- Your customer service center continues to get complaints about a group of consistent issues and you want to prioritize your efforts based on budget and timing requirements

- There are many stakeholders and business units making demands and there are conflicts and turf wars erupting

A UX AUDIT IS AN EXPERT ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PRODUCT'S PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF USABILITY AND USER EXPERIENCE.

It involves examining and rating of the existing user journeys to reveal actionable areas of improvement.

★★★★★

WHAT DOES A UX AUDIT ENTAIL?

A team of UX experts uses a combination of approaches, tools, metrics, and comparisons to analyze various aspects of your product.
This includes:

- Understanding what your business goals are and what you want to get out of the product.

- Exploring your business strategy and development plans for the product.

- Understanding your typical user including their persona, needs, and goals.

- Establishing the specific problem your digital products solves and how it does that.

- Reviewing any existing user stories and feedback.

- Analyzing existing metrics for how people use the application.

- Reviewing customer support data for any issues with using the application.

- Looking at interfaces and user flow — how users actually navigate through and interact with every part of the app.

- Reviewing the app against best practice and industry standards around responsiveness, usability, navigation, clarity in design, and more.

TEMPTED TO CONDUCT A UX AUDIT IN-HOUSE? READ THIS FIRST.

You might be tempted to complete a UX audit in-house. While it's certainly important to get opinions from developers, designers, business users, and perhaps an in-house UX team as well, they don't tell the whole story, since they're too close to it to be objective, or may possibly have pre-ordained biases. Referring the job to an agency, on the other hand, presents advantages including -

- They will provide a completely objective view of what can be improved to enhance the user experience.

- Having worked on other products, they harbor the best means to contrast and compare and come up with the most suitable recommendations.

- A UX agency understands what works well — they have exposure across industries, understand user needs, and have years of experience with how people use these tools.

- They can benchmark various aspects of your app against industry standards and best practices.

An experienced, specialized team of UX professionals will be able to arrive at actionable insights on a much shorter timeline as compared to an in-house team. This is because an agency-commissioned audit is a contract that is time-bound and falls within the stipulated budget. The objectivity that the agency professionals possess translates into actionable insights that are honest and impartial.

WHO IS A UX AUDIT BEST SUITABLE FOR?

Although UX audits can help anyone developing SaaS products or complex web applications, they are especially helpful to certain types of business:

• Businesses without internal UX design and research teams wanting to initiate UI/UX overhaul projects

• Organizations knowing their product needs revamping but not sure where to begin and how to prioritize

• Companies practicing Agile product development, wanting to ensure UX enhancements are in line with user needs.

BENEFITS OF COMMISSIONING A UX AUDIT

Commissioning a UX audit provides several possible benefits to you, your business, and your team:

- An objective report on every aspect of the user experience, based on real-world usage of your app.

- Gain insights to help make rapid changes that really benefit the end-user, and base future improvements on hard data and analytics rather than guesses or hunches.

- Clear, actionable direction for further design and development work to improve UX.

- Advice on making your UX a pleasure to use including speed, responsiveness, navigation, and more.

- Advice on additional metrics and feedback you can collect to align future improvements with user needs.

- Some UX auditors can also provide external design, development, and technical expertise to help you enhance the app further.

Ultimately a UX audit is designed to help you improve the end product you're providing to customers, by helping you prioritize areas of the product that need the most attention. These could be time-consuming workflows, confusing interactions, or any pain points bogging your system down - and achieve maximum ROI.

SETTING A BUDGET FOR A UX AUDIT

There are several ways that product managers may look to set the UX budget, depending on various factors - say for instance, as a percentage of the research and development budget, or as a ratio of engineering to UX.

The budgeting is influenced by variables including industry domain, company size, and the level of UX maturity within the company.
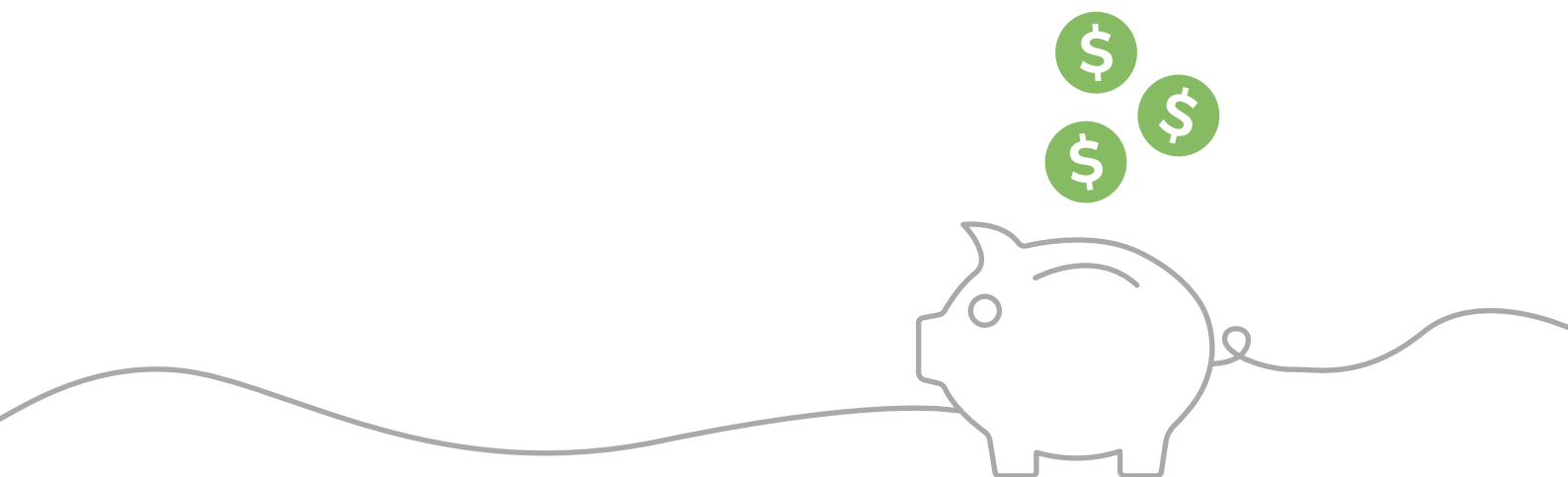
As an instance, a social networking company like Facebook would definitely allocate larger spends on UX-focused initiatives than let's say a consumer packaged goods (CPG) company would. To generalize, it makes sense for software development projects to allocate approximately 20% of the total budget to UX. In order to reap the fruits of well-executed UX exercise, an initial allocation of roughly a third of their budget to UX research and design can be recommended.
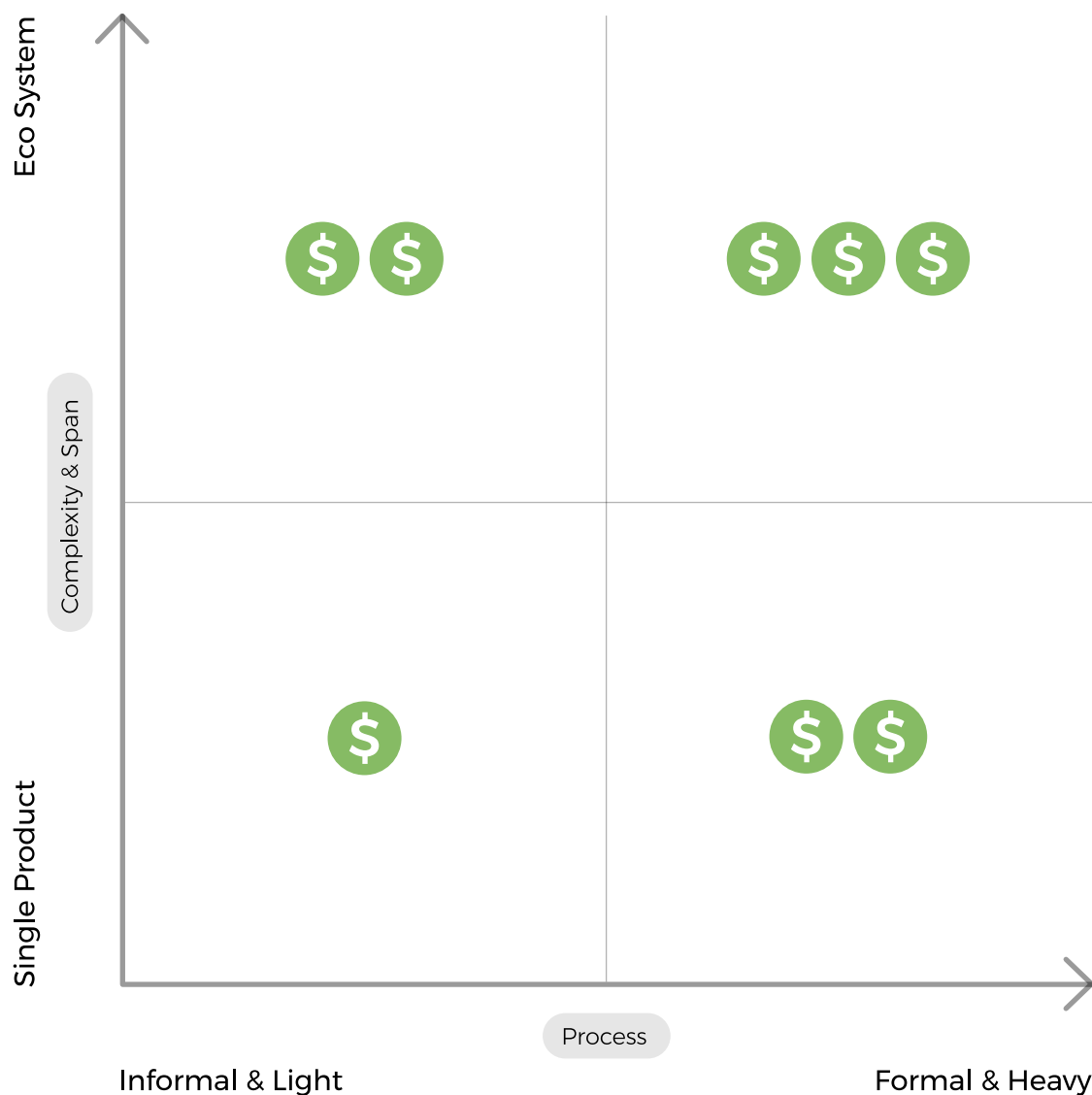
MAKING A CASE FOR UX

Any UX exercise that you choose to run will have to have pre-decided, tangible outcomes. These may include -

IMPROVED USABILITY

Improved navigation involves reorganizing the UI in a manner that makes sense to users and clearly presents possible actions. Navigating an interface is never the user's goal, but taking minimal time to complete the intended task is.
There was a **success rate of 80%[1]** when people used the navigation scheme structured according to most users' mental model.

UX CONSISTENCY

Consistency refers to the application of similar elements being used to achieve similar tasks and having similar functions and behaviors throughout. A consistent interface is one that follows rules, such as using the same interaction to perform a certain task. Once these are in place, it is no longer necessary for the user to learn how something works. Visual and functional consistency are both important.

Consistency[2] is one of the strongest contributors to usability.

WORKFLOW IMPROVEMENTS

Improving workflows can make a real impact on productivity and morale within your organization and ultimately on your company's bottom line. A UX assessment helps make sense of menus and submenus, their flow, access, and labeling.

Delighting users doesn't build loyalty; reducing their effort[3]—the work they must do to get their problem solved—does.

IMPROVED USER EXPERIENCE

User experience is an all-encompassing term covering all aspects of the user's interaction with the company, its tools, services, and products. Running an assessment of the product helps highlight precisely what ails it, and also includes measures to improve it. This results in a user experience that is overall delightful, invokes happiness and loyalty - a crucial factor contributing to employee productivity.

1 - https://www.nngroup.com/articles/do-interface-standards-stifle-design-creativity/

2 - https://www.nngroup.com/articles/power-law-learning/

3 - https://hbr.org/2010/07/stop-trying-to-delight-your-customers

INTERNAL ROI

- Increased user productivity

- Decreased user errors

- Decreased training costs

- Savings gained from making changes earlier in the design life cycle

- Diminished need for user support

EXTERNAL ROI

- Increased sales

- Decreased customer support costs

- Savings gained from making changes earlier in the design life cycle

Here's how a **UX overhaul** helped enhance interactions between doctors and their patients and led to informed diagnoses.

HOW TO PREP FOR A UX AUDIT

A UX Audit is a lightweight, simple exercise that takes no longer than a few days to complete. It is not intrusive to your daily work processes and does not call for a lot of resources. An audit makes optimal use of the available metrics and supporting material to throw up some eye-openers.

To make the most of the process, you'd want to choose a company with expertise in complete UX audits for SaaS products.

Also, it would enhance the entire exercise if your company can provide some or all of the following -

- A clear idea of the business goals and metrics you want to reach.

- Examples of your typical users and user intent.

- Any metrics or feedback you've gathered from users.

- Design and development plans for the app (current and future).

- The resources you can assign to help complete the UX audit.

If your SaaS product isn't performing as well as you want it to, it's time to bring in a professional UX auditing company. They can give you feedback, reporting, experience, expertise, and recommendations you need. This will help your product delight users as well as contribute to your business goals and strategy.

ABOUT KORU

Koru is a specialized enterprise User Experience (UX) design agency. We partner with a range of companies from SaaS products to enterprise applications to help them increase the ROI from their products through our expertise in UX. Our team of passion-driven professionals has successfully designed and delivered over 350 projects across industries and geographies.

We believe that people deserve to love their jobs. The users of enterprise applications want flexible, intuitive, and easy-to-adopt software that helps them do their job better. However, many current applications do not offer that experience.

Enterprises have a mega impact on the world. Our underpinning for being an enterprise UX design company is infusing a user-centric approach to these systems to manifest the boons of the information age.

We are driven by the fact that our work stands to impact millions of lives across the world. A greater part of our job is to make their everyday lives easier. Today, our reach spans 3.5 million users across the USA with our solutions built for healthcare, finance, telecom, manufacturing, and travel.
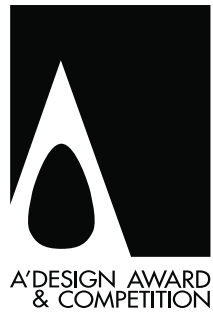
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