

KOMODO

DESIGNING FOR DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES

How to guide people through daunting experiences using the power of User Experience design.

— WHITE PAPER
USER EXPERIENCE



WHAT'S IN THIS WHITEPAPER

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Estimated reading time: 12 mins

01 — ABOUT US

WHY LISTEN TO US?

We build exceptional digital experiences that guide people to your commercial goals.

KOMODO is a creative product studio that specialises in designing digital products that drive commercial revenue. Since 2003 we've built our knowledge and redefined our methods; in 2022 we offer cutting-edge product solutions for clients across the globe.

To design products that actually win customers and drive revenue, we often challenge our clients on their ideas – especially who your users are and what they want. Our UX specialism sees us research your users' needs, goals and behaviours, and use it as the basis for any product journey. We won't just design your original idea – we'll improve it based on the real requirements of your users.



KOMODO digital studio.

01 — ABOUT US

Most businesses rarely examine their users' behaviour in detail – and even fewer consider how challenging a user might find interacting with them. Businesses must reassess their digital presence with an eye on difficulty.

Empathy is a key aspect of design thinking. Getting inside the minds of your users and understanding their behaviours is critical to successful product design – it helps you gauge difficulty and challenge, and understand users in extraordinary situations that increase that difficulty tenfold. Users who are ill, disabled, undergoing mental trauma or facing other hardship must be accounted for in all digital experiences – even more so when your business focuses on these users, such as a healthcare company.

UX design takes a user's feelings into account, designing to minimise their challenges and empower them to achieve what they want from your product. In daunting environments this becomes a necessary focus that shapes your product into a tool that helps rather than hinders. Working with KOMODO gives you access to this UX expertise and our wider team of designers, developers and project managers. This whitepaper explores designing for difficult experiences – or get in touch and we'll get the ball rolling.

02 — DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES

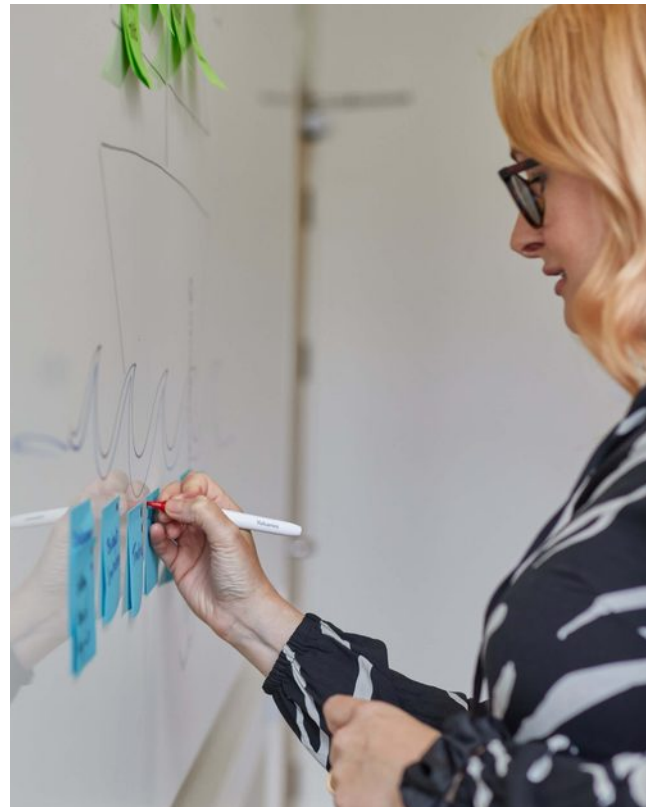
DESIGNING FOR DIFFICULT AND DAUNTING EXPERIENCES

How good design can help guide users through challenging situations.

Removing Barriers

When designing an interface for people facing a daunting experience, it should be as frictionless and easy to use as possible – aiding them to understand the message you're conveying at every touchpoint. You can induce positive emotion across the experience, but first learn to recognise parts of the UI that could cause negative emotions, to eliminate or fix them.

Confusing navigation is a common problem, often caused by bad placement of content and a poorly-planned content hierarchy. Even alone these can confuse – combined with an experience that feels inhuman through a robotic tone of voice, users may feel negative about the whole thing. The Interaction Design Foundation details three ways to prevent this, summarised over the page.



Removing friction from the journey.

02 — DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES

Three Ways to Prevent Negative Emotions

Reduce Friction

Minimise disruption by removing unpleasant experiences. Fight for the benefit of the user, and explain to the team how each disruption you remove enhances the experience.

Demonstrate Intention

Anticipate user needs and wants. Think through each touchpoint with clarity and put yourself in their shoes. Provide walk-throughs or a help area where guidance is needed, and ensure good contrast for readability. A beautiful UI catches attention, but good UX keeps it — with a purpose behind every interaction and feature.

Build the Best Information Architecture

IA is the structural foundation of any interface — website, system, mobile app or in-car. Without it, users can't find what they're looking for, become frustrated, and inevitably avoid the product.

Useful Resource Links

interaction-design.org — How to Prevent Negative Emotions in the User Experience
[Facebook](#) — Designing with Compassion
uxdesign.cc — The Unintended Effects of Designing with Care
prototypr.io — Designing with Compassion
[Smashing Magazine](#) — Reducing Cognitive Overload

03 — TRUST & COMPASSION

DESIGNING WITH TRUST AND COMPASSION IN MIND

When designing with trust and compassion, adopt a heightened awareness of user needs, wants, motivations and goals. To achieve understanding, we must explore and share the feelings of others to determine how they'd handle a task or situation.

To develop trust with the user, you first need to empathise and understand their needs and emotions. It calls on the designer to put themselves in the user's shoes and see things from their perspective.

Empathy is, in its most basic form, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

EMPATHY — DEFINED

When we become more empathetic, we digest information more efficiently and begin to see problems from the user's view that were previously difficult to understand.

Designers must carefully consider the content they design around – whether for terminally ill patients, those experiencing depression, suicide prevention, people at risk and their families, memorialising those who've passed, or vulnerable and harassment victims.

03 — TRUST & COMPASSION

Designing a Compassionate Experience

Great design is never about the designer – it's about working with others to solve their problems. The first step is to know your audience: compassion lets us understand what a person loves and fears, and create an experience that's helpful and consoling rather than exploitative.

Stress Reduction

Prioritise physical, psychological and social well-being over negative emotions or possible stress triggers.

Reduce Danger

Consider what world the user lives in and how your design can help them navigate it safely. An app to donate to a homeless person is useful; going further to supply information on nearby services – food, clothes, shelter, medical care, volunteer help – can save lives.

Perceived Safety

Improve the user's sense of emotional well-being and safety by designing an experience that enhances and prioritises positive emotions.

Empowerment

This one is easy: make people feel good about themselves.

03 — TRUST & COMPASSION

Connecting Offline and Online Experiences

How do you get print and digital to work together?

Print and digital must work in unison – modern consumers consume both daily. Print offers something tangible that patients can review later, while digital provides a readily available hub of information. Thinking of the other half helps both integrate; they need to be thought of as a pair, with every piece of collateral matching the digital experience.

Consider how each side supports the other and the message being delivered to the patient. Often print collateral lacks a next-step prompt – there needs to be a clearly defined user journey to guide the patient through a process, even more so when that journey spans both print and digital.



Print and digital working in unison.

04 — ASSESSMENT TOOLS

DESIGNING ASSESSMENT TOOLS THAT AVOID PRESSURE

Techniques for assessing a user's understanding without causing unneeded stress. Understanding their emotional state is paramount – a smooth experience helps alleviate some of the pressure they may feel.

Creating a Seamless Assessment

Don't overload the user. In 1964 Bertram Gross coined 'information overload' in 'The Managing of Organizations', defined as: "Decision-makers have fairly limited cognitive processing capacity; when information overload occurs, a reduction in decision quality will likely occur."

This coincides with cognitive overload – experienced when digesting copious amounts of information. Information must be designed to match the user's needs: analyse it, decide what's most relevant, and use chunking – grouping data into smaller chunks – to make it easier to digest and understand.



A low-pressure assessment flow.

Setting the Right Tone

Clinical terms unknown to the patient could alienate them. Keeping the language simple and in layman's terms helps it resonate and lets them understand what they're reading.

Provide Help

Patients here will likely be stressed or emotional about the assessment. Providing support – live support, chatbots or FAQs – lets users access help without blockers, and brings you closer to understanding their needs.

The Scientific Roots of Cognitive Overload

Every step or question in a flow can interrupt the user's thought process and increase cognitive load – the total information your working memory can handle. Overload happens when it receives more than it can handle comfortably, leading to frustration and compromised decisions. Removing everything non-essential reduces overload – important for those on the autistic spectrum or with ADHD, who may struggle with busy, overstimulating products.

FROM 'DON'T MAKE ME THINK' — STEVE KRUG

- Users 'satisfice': they take the first or easiest solution, not the best, then repeat it rather than seek a better option.
- Usability is adequate when a person of average ability can accomplish their goals.
- Much web usage is motivated by saving time – users adopt a shark's 'keep moving or die' mentality.

IN CLOSING

Whether you want to build from scratch, rescue a struggling product or improve a launched one, you'll fall into our revolution, reboot or refinement tracks. To get your project where it needs to go, we use a five-step process:

01

UNDERSTAND

We get to know your customers and business – who your users are and what they really need.

02

DEFINE

We define the scope of the project so everyone knows exactly what we'll create and why.

03

IDEATE

We come up with great features and functionality to take your product to the next level.

04

CREATE

We build the product with innovative digital techniques, ready for customers.

05

REFLECT

We reflect on success and continually improve – because a better process delivers better results.

IN CLOSING

AN EXPERT APPROACH THAT DRIVES REVENUE & GROWTH FOR YOUR BUSINESS

“We guide, you move.” We’re not afraid to challenge your ideas and push them further. We bring empathy and understanding to the design process – which might sound wishy-washy until you realise good UX design offers an ROI of up to 9,900%. Just as this whitepaper argues, digital products must understand users and guide them through challenging times – and we’ll do exactly that for you and your business.

GET IN TOUCH