

Foundations for a Great User Experience



Considerations for New Products and Ventures

Prepared by Dorothy M. Danforth for Danforth Media



About Dorothy

Dorothy M. Danforth

Founder & Principal, Danforth Media
Software Design Consulting

- 14 years software design, usability research, and systems development for Fortune 500 and emerging technology companies
- Has made a career out of working with startups and developing new product concepts. Spearheaded web design and usability processes and standards. Led numerous R&D efforts for venture funding.



New Products & Ventures

Have many challenges...

- Lack infrastructure
- Informal or no process
- Missing key personnel
- No proven product
- Smaller budgets



New Products & Ventures

On the other hand...

- No legacy systems
- Quick to adapt
- High innovation potential
- Lower overhead
- “Under the radar”



Presentation Outline

UX Research for New Products & Ventures

1. Brand & UX Design
2. Process Considerations
3. Conceptual Groundwork
4. Research Methods & Examples

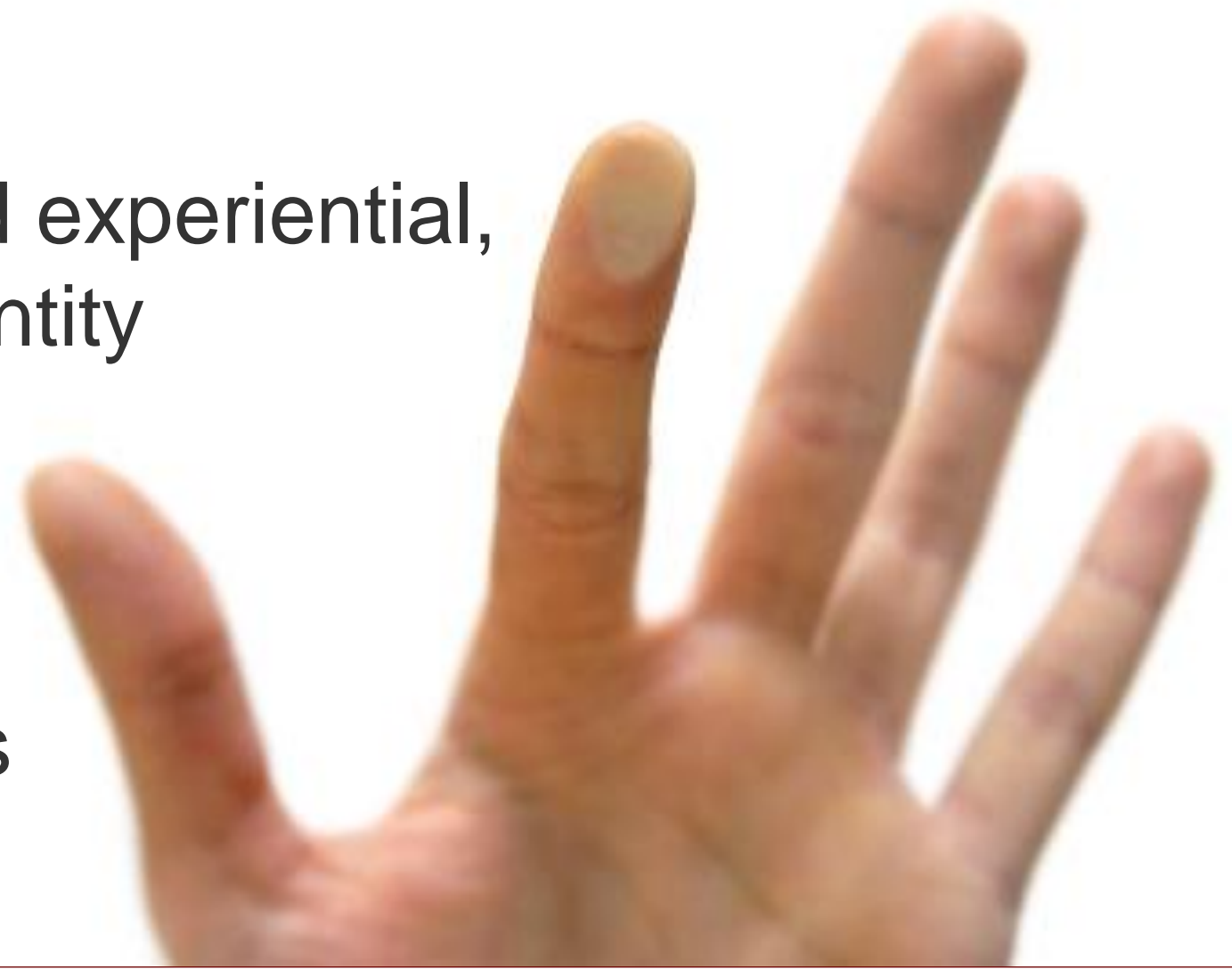


Brand & User **Experience** Design

(keep an eye on the big picture)

By Brand I Mean...

- Symbols, **experiences** and associations connected with a product or company
- Brand is **psychological** and experiential, it extends beyond visual identity
- Brand is a company or product's **personality** as perceived by its constituents



UX is an Attribute of Brand

When defining **user experience** (not just usability) think **brand**...

- Any experience a customer has with a company develops its **brand image**

UX as an attribute of brand:

1. Facilitates **tough decisions**
2. Allows for “**charismatic**” experiences



Brand Strategies Trickle-down

Facilitates Long Term Product Decisions

- There is no single “**correct**” user experience
- Successful software involves making **tough decisions** about what stays and what goes
- Decisions are informed by a common, **guiding set of principles** results in continuity that helps with product predictability, ease of use, and customer loyalty



Brand Strategies Trickle-down

Apple iPhone: Online Activation

- Mobile users more **loyalty to carrier**
- Many phone manufacturers offer service through **multiple carriers**
- Apple as an “exclusive” brand initially **limited service** to AT&T...
 - This helped Apple’s web designers to craft a simple, **easy to use** activation process



A Charismatic UX...

The difference between a good & great experience

- Charismatic? ...a special **magnetic charm** or appeal
- “When usability, interaction, and visual design connect through brand to create a **unique, confident,** and **compelling** experience”

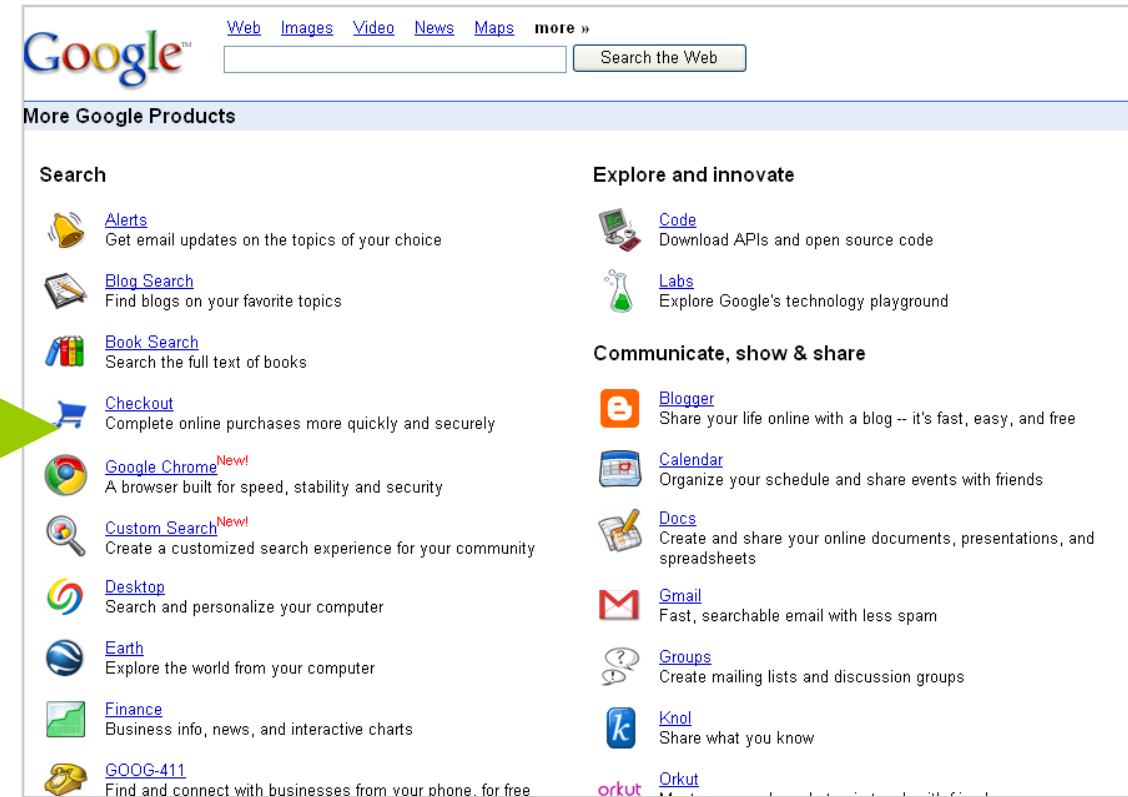
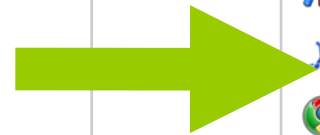
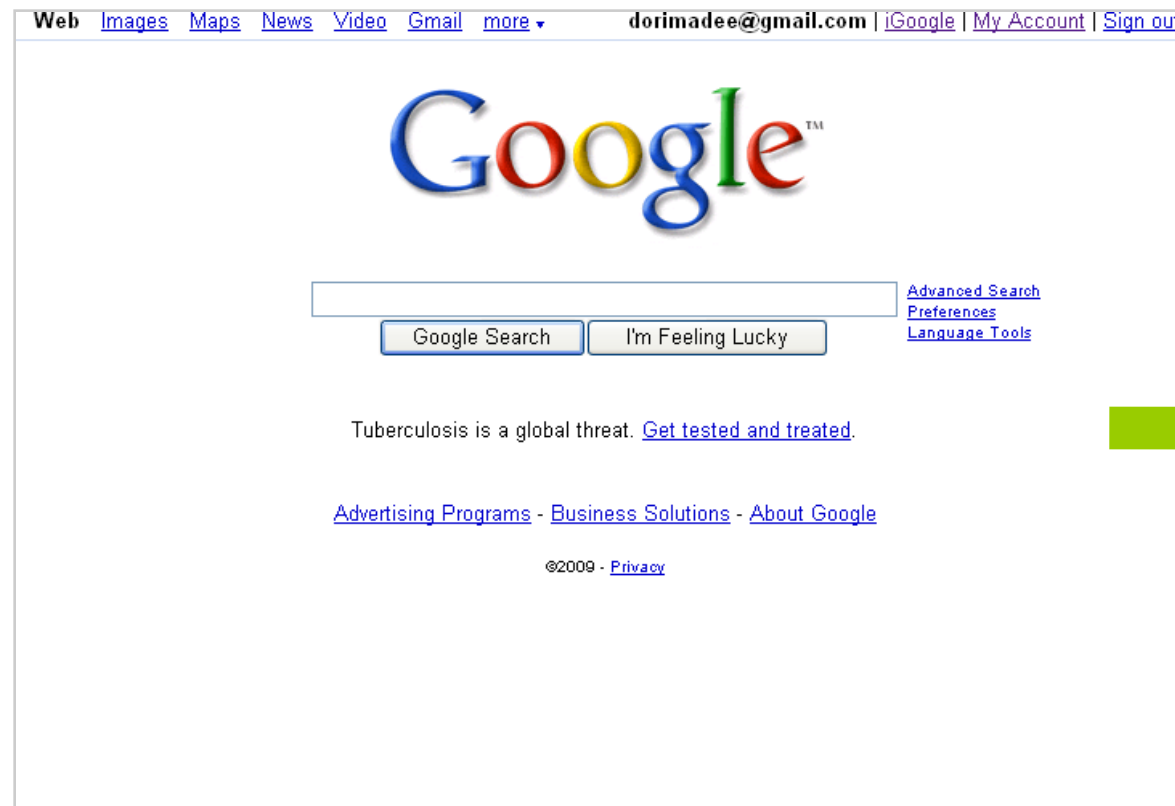


Twitter

Whimsical and **unique** error screens...



The **confidence** to lead with one “not evil” thing...

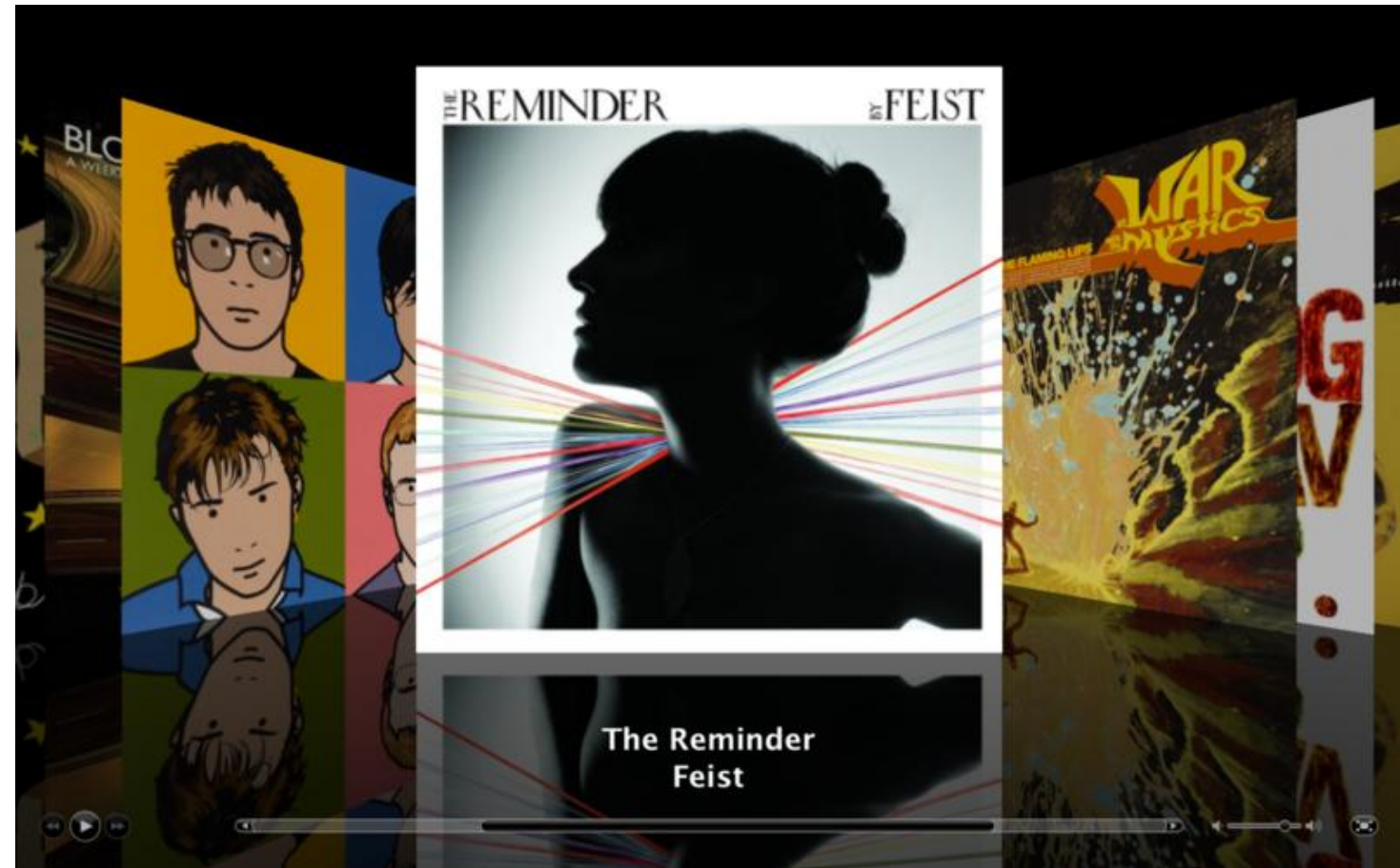


do it *really* well, and let users seek out more.

Apple's Coverflow

Coverflow is **compelling**, & you “Think different.”

Contact Coverflow



Brand Creation & Evolution

A **Key Element** in the Development of Brand is **Time**

- Brands **evolve** in response to internal and external influences—intentionally or not
- Over time a brand can gain increasing confidence and **clarity articulating itself**
- Research processes should address the need for the **UX to follow** a brand's evolution



Brand Creation & Evolution

Apple Web site in 1997 vs. today...

Find It

- Product Information
- Customer Support
- Technology & Research
- Developer World
- Groups & Interests
- Resources Online
- About Apple

Apple Sites Worldwide

- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- Turkey
- UK & Ireland
- United States

Go

EMATE 300
Mobile, Affordable, & Smart

MOVIES FROM MARS
QuickTime VR Takes You Out of this World

What's Hot

Preorder Mac OS 8
Now you can [preorder Mac OS 8](#), described by Macworld as "the most comprehensive update to the Mac OS in years, sporting a bold new look, a speedier Finder, more shortcuts and integrated Internet functions."

Be the First to Know
Learn about new Macintosh software releases the moment they become available. Check [Hot Mac Products](#) to hear about programs like Speed Demon, ReBirth RB-338 and QuickCRC.

Store Mac iPod + iTunes iPhone Downloads Support Search

The new iPod shuffle. The first music player that talks to you.

Small talk.

Watch the Guided Tour

Hot News Headlines | The new iMac "is a sight to behold"

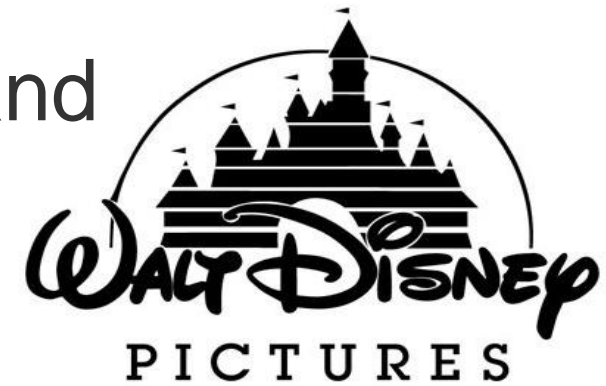
- iPhone OS 3.0 Software
Get an advance preview.
- The new iMac
The new 24-inch starting at \$1,499.
- The new Mac mini
Faster. Greener. Still mini.
- Quantum of Solace in HD
Download and own exclusively on iTunes.



Brand Creation & Evolution

Your company doesn't need formal brand tenets
(or even a logo) to have a **brand identity**

- Many strong brands are extensions of the vision and personality of an individual;
 - Apple = Steve Jobs, MSO = Martha Stewart, Disney = Walt Disney, Ford etc.
- No formally defined brand? ...draw from the **founder's vision** and personality



Process Considerations

(critical success factors)

Organizational Context

Be realistic! You don't need a cannon to shoot a canary...



- Appropriate for **organization's** stage and **maturity**
- “Best practice” doesn't matter if the research cannot be **utilized**
- Understanding context will help set **expectations** about **results**

Foster a Participatory Culture

Want buy-in? Never “silo” UX discovery

- As the UX specialist its *your* job to ensure people “**see what you see**” and are empowered to use data you find
- Identify aspects of UX research that could be **extensions** of other functional areas
- Offer other departments **substantive input** into user testing, surveys, and other research.



Understand Research Goals

Discovery Research? (*theoretical research*)

- **Ideas** and users reaction to **concepts**
 - Early stage explorations
 - Considers interaction models and design preferences

Validation Research? (*empirical research*)

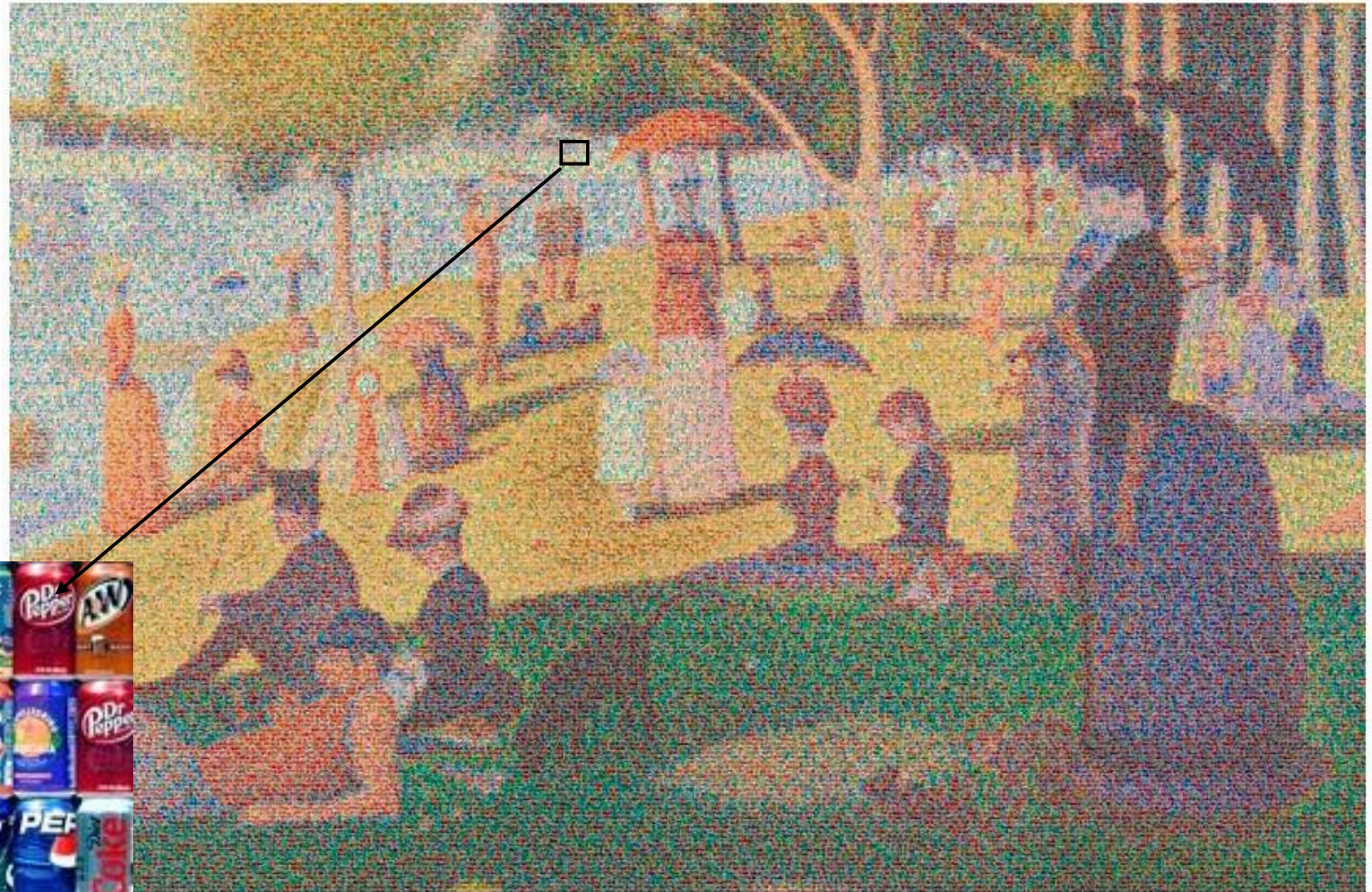
- Gauge user **acceptance** of a **product** or prototype to be developed



Craft a Research Strategy

Good strategies uncover a **breadth** and **depth** of data

(for a full picture)



Chris Jordan's 'Cans Seurat' (2007) ...made up of 106,000 aluminum cans based on Georges Seurat's, 'Sunday Afternoon at the Grande Jatte' (1884)

Craft a Research Strategy

Your strategy should include **incremental testing**

- An iterative multi-faceted methodology...
 - **Cost Efficient** project lifecycles
 - Provides **Progressive Value**
 - **Quicker** product development
 - Offers more **Accurate Insights**
 - **Mitigates Risk**, only invest in what *works!*



Craft a Research Strategy

A “Discovery” research strategy...

- Audits, Prototypes, User Testing & Events
- Initial concepts get refined, **incorporated** into research for next testing round



Research Calendar

A **research calendar** can manage **communication** and help you adapt to organizational changes

- Your research calendar should...
 - Be published
 - Include recurring Items
 - Evolve
 - Have an owner



Conceptual **Groundwork**

(not really rules, more like guidelines)

Look Beyond Demographics

Address **universal needs**, behaviors, and attitudes!

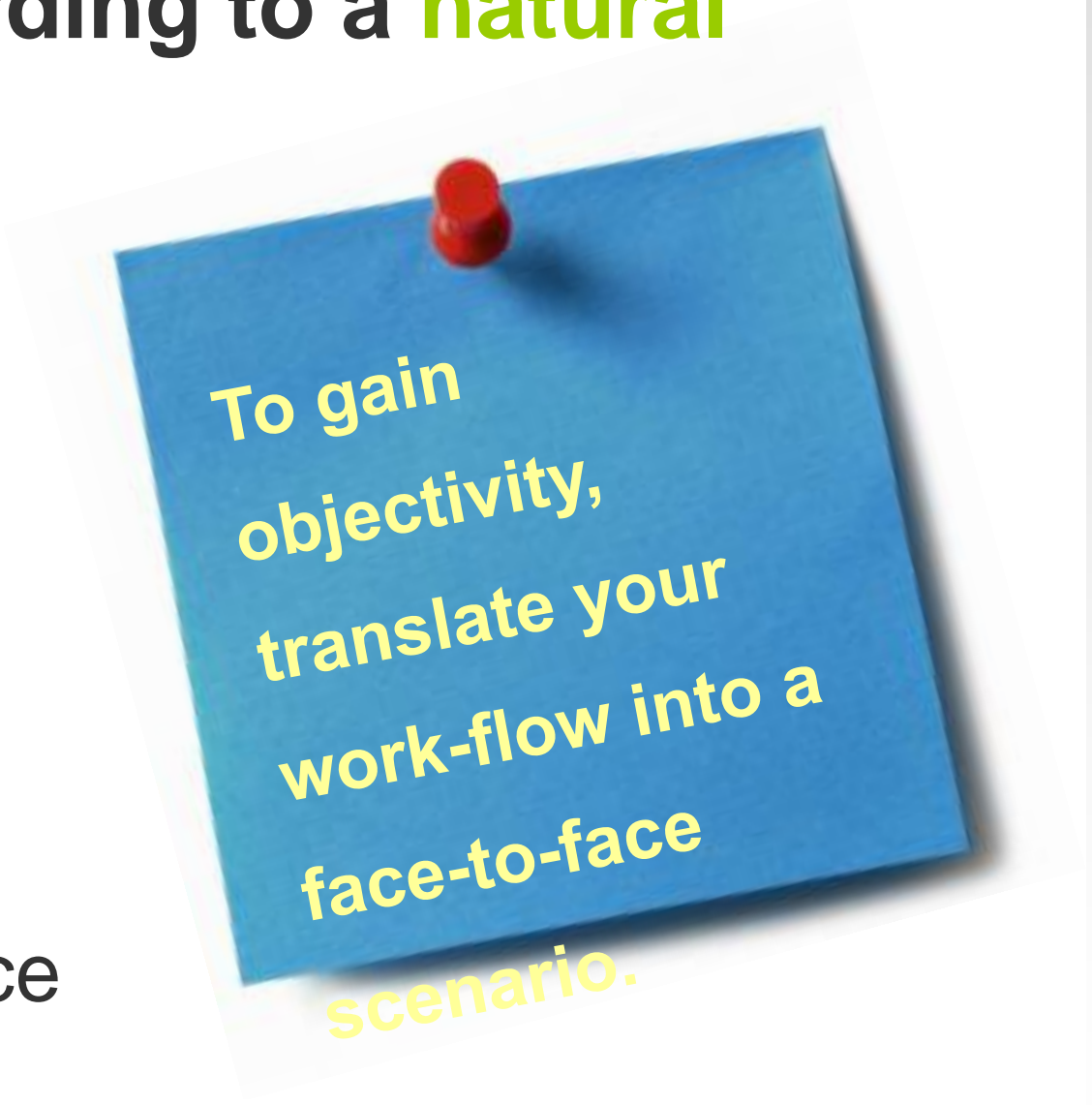
- Software should speak to **individuals**, not **stereotypes** such as “soccer moms”, “early adopters”
- **Personas** can help communicate user goals, but take them with a **grain of salt**...
 - Personas will not indicate useless functionality



Natural Conversations

Users interact with software according to a **natural dialog** (internal or external)

- **Taxonomy** – “I’m in the mood for a comedy, let me look at new releases”
- **Sound Effects** – less formal after repeated interactions. *“interesting”, “uh huh”, “...”*
- **Transitions** – Don’t move too fast or slow, respond in a conversational pace

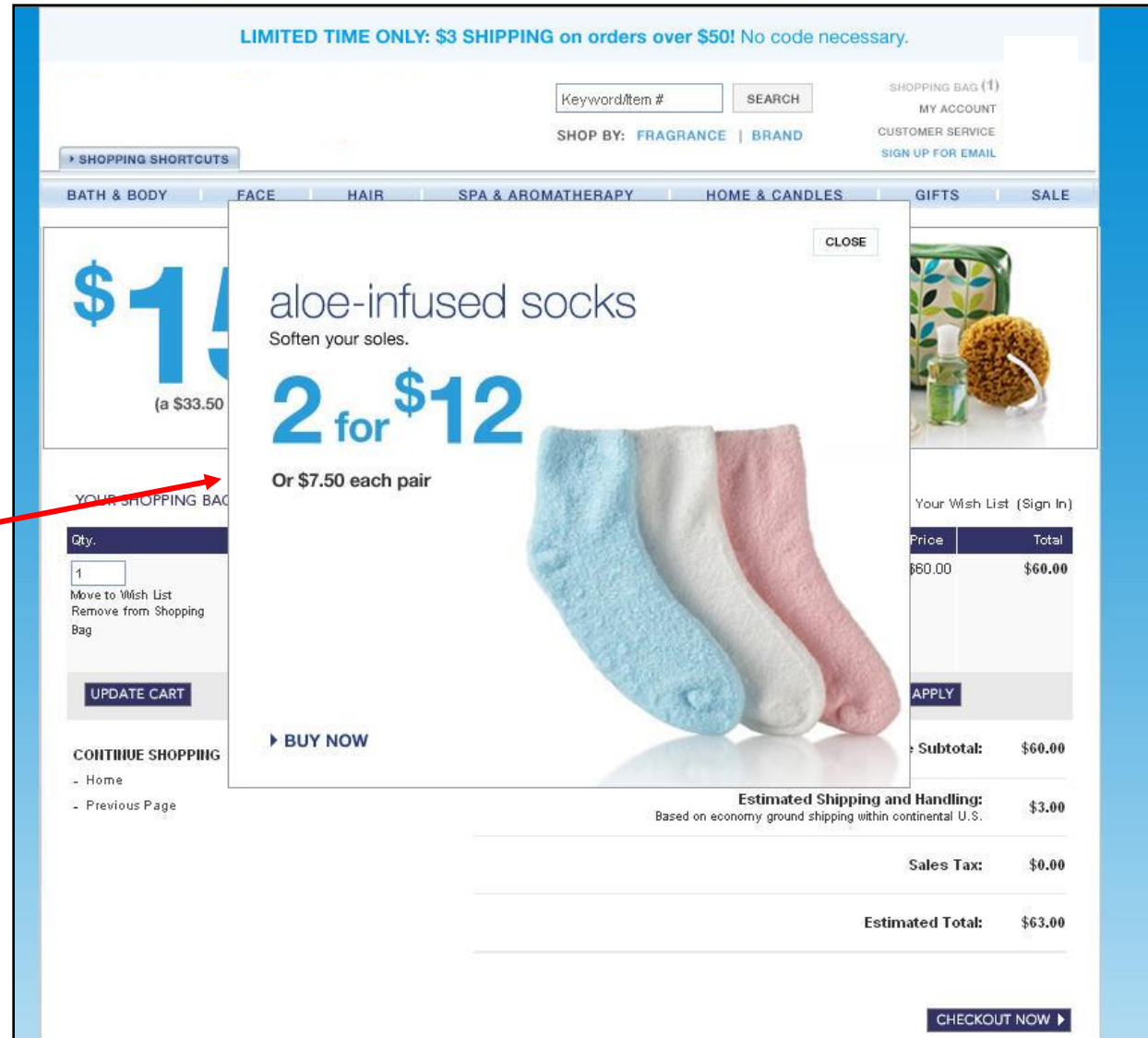
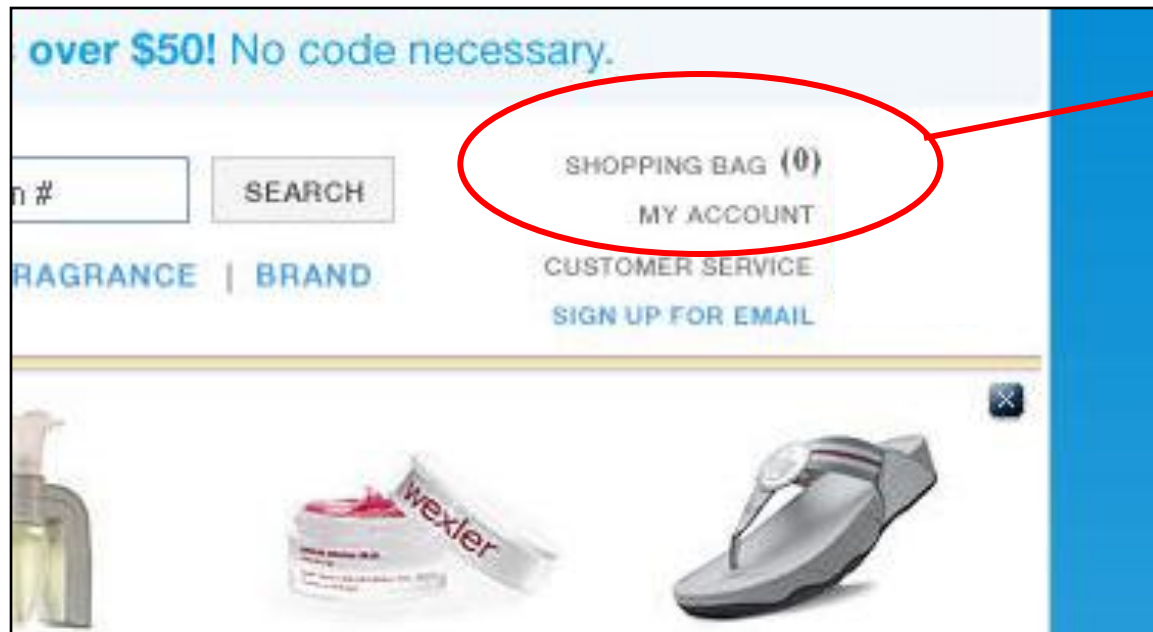


To gain
objectivity,
translate your
work-flow into a
face-to-face
scenario.

Natural Conversations

Shopping Experience

User goes to check out... *wait, what's this pop up?*



Natural Conversations

What was **intended**...



What was **implemented**...



Natural Conversations

A **less intrusive** approach...

Balance **sales** vs.
any negative **impact**
on user experience,
brand image...

(good for an eye-
tracking study)

The screenshot shows a shopping cart interface. At the top, there are buttons for 'CONTINUE SHOPPING' and 'PROCEED TO CHECKOUT'. The main cart area contains one item: 'DVD Recorder/VCR Combo RDR-VX560' with a quantity of 1, a unit price of \$229.99, and a subtotal of \$229.99. Below the item, there is a question: 'Would you like to add an extended service plan? Add Extended Service'. Below that is a 'Wishlist' section for '(Sony)' which is currently empty. On the right side, there is an 'Order Total' section showing a subtotal of \$229.99 and a 'Your Price' of \$229.99. Below this, there is a promotional offer: 'and as low as \$15.00/month** 12 Months No Interest, No Payments'. There is a form to enter a zip code for estimated tax and shipping, and a 'CALCULATE' button. At the bottom right, there is an 'Accessories' section with a red circle around it. The accessory is 'High Speed HDMI™ Cable - 6' 6"' priced at \$59.99, with a 'Select' checkbox and an 'ADD TO ORDER' button. At the bottom of the page, there are again buttons for 'CONTINUE SHOPPING' and 'PROCEED TO CHECKOUT'.



Keep Users “In the Zone”

Keeping users engaged and “in the zone” is key to increased consumption

- Don't present the user with **objective reminders** of what he/she is doing
- Group similar tasks, support fluid interactions
- Can be addressed in **workflow** and **functionality**



Casino are designed to keep you "In the Zone"

The Art of Crafting Perception

Explore what **conveys** responsiveness, quality and ease of use...

- The **perception** of speed and robustness can be as important as **actual** reaction times and functionality
 - Car manufacturers design car doors that make a distinctive “quality” sound when closing
- Good **graphic design** will support your approach



Take Cues from Outside

Draw ideas from **comparables** outside your market

- What is this function or process in **abstract**?
- What else works in a **similar way**?
- Who **already** does that really well?
 - Not a one-to-one correlation...
concepts must be carefully adapted
and translated for your industry,
product, context, etc



Research **Methods** and **Examples**

(a few tips to get started)

User Experience Audits

Using Audits & Secondary Research

- A good audit includes a **range** of sources, geared to answer...
 - What are the **current trends** and user expectations?
 - What have we already tried? **What worked** and **what didn't**?
 - What user **issues**, **needs** or **problems** revealed in the data that might be addressed by a more usable interface?



User Experience Audits

Competitive & Comparative Evaluations

- Conduct against **consistent** metrics, geared to answer...
 - How are our competitors handling **usability**?
 - **Idea generation** on how to solve various usability issues
 - What it might take to gain a **competitive edge** through UX?
 - How does our product **rank** in reference to its competition?



User Experience Audits

Quick Analysis Rubric (instead of a full competitive review)

Appendix A: High Level Assessment Criteria

The following high-level assessment rubric was used when evaluating the competitive sites.

	1 - Poor	2 - Average	3 - Excellent
Marketing & Commerce Integration	Option to "Buy Now" is not offered in marketing pages or users are sent to a third party site.	The option to "Buy Now" is available from the marketing pages but there are some usability issues with layout and transition	The marketing and commerce sites are well integrated and provide users with an almost seamless transition
Template Layouts (Commerce)	The basic layout is not consistent from page to page and/or the activity areas within the layout are not clearly grouped by type of user task.	The layout is mostly consistent from page to page and major activity areas are grouped by task type. Some areas with information heavy content or more complex user tasks deviate from the established layout paradigms.	The site shows a high level of continuity both in page to page transitions and task-type groupings. Information heavy content and complex user tasks are well thought out and intuitive relative to the site's established layout paradigms.
Browsing & Navigation	The site lacks a cohesive Information Architecture. Information is not in a clear top-down hierarchy. There are numerous "orphan" or pop-up pages that do not fit within the site structure. Similar content is duplicated in multiple areas or is presented in multiple navigational	The site has a structured Information Architecture. Secondary and Tertiary navigation items are related to parent elements, but there may be multiple menus unrelated to the broader structure. There may be orphan pages of detail or less relevant information.	The Information Architecture is highly cohesive. Information is structured with a clear understanding of user goals. Everything has a logical place within the architecture; secondary menus are incorporated into the site structure or clearly transitioned.

	Marketing & Commerce Integration	Template Layouts	Browsing & Navigation	Terminology & Labeling	Total
Apple	Average (2)	Excellent (3)	Excellent (3)	Excellent (3)	11
Helio	Excellent	Excellent	Average	Excellent	11
HTC	Average	Average	Average	Average	8
Motorola	Average	...			
Nokia					
RIM					
SamSung					



User Surveys

Online surveys are a **quick** and **easy** way to get feedback!

- Can be done often and with **minimal effort** and cost
- Use **follow-up** surveys to compare against a baseline
- Never miss an **opportunity** for feedback
- But keep it short! **Keep it short!**



Iterative Prototypes

“Discovery” Prototypes

- Collection of **ideas**, *not* a viable product
- Requires at least one **validation round**
- Analysis is **tough**, no right/wrong

“Validation” Prototypes

- Reveals changes to **build** a product
- Less open ended, **specific** workflows
- **Easier** analysis –what worked, what didn't



User Testing

User Testing can be In Person, Remote, Formal, Informal

- Plan **interim steps**, not one formal round
- Informal wireframe **concept tests**...
 - Can be as small as five participants (gets over 80%)
 - Get quick feedback and adjust
 - Usually simple “walk through” scenarios
 - Test internal users, great for buy-in



Thank You.