KAT EHLINGER

User Experience Researcher

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ABOUT ME

With a background in psychology and UX, I love translating the needs and feedback of individual users to teammates and key stakeholders in ways both meaningful and valuable to them. Here's a few notes about me:

I care about our users...actually
Let's be honest, life sucks when no one considers you. I'm passionate about user research because it helps foster empathy between product teams and the people they design for, promotes creative collaboration, and exponentially increases product value.

Curiosity killed the Kat (ope)
Questions, questions, questions. How do we delight our users, build trust in our product, and increase revenue? How do we strike this harmonious balance between people and practicality? I love ideating with cross-disciplinary teams and stakeholders to ask and answer these valuable questions.

I prefer to take both a qualitative & quantitative approach
Diversifying research methods guarantees more reliable results. Which is why I continue to grow in mixed methods research - combining usability testing with user analytics and monitoring support tickets, for example. I like to be thorough.

METHODS I USE
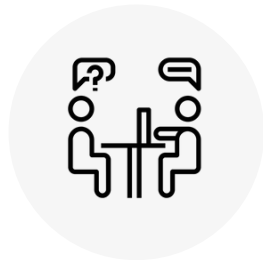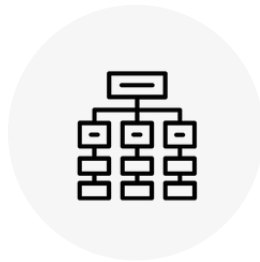
Usability Testing

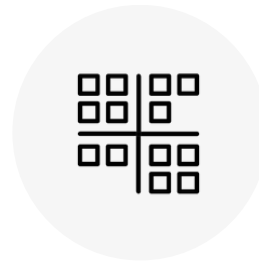**User Interviews**

User Analytics

Workshops

User Personas

Card Sorting

Affinity Mapping

Tree Testing

EXPERIENCE

The University of Nebraska at Omaha
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology

Studied Psychology and Research Methods

CareerFoundry
UX Certification

Studied UX Design, UX Research, Wireframing, Prototyping & Usability Testing

Kiewit
UX Researcher

Managed 1:1 Remote Usability Testing, Facilitated Workshops, Monitored Data Analytics Tool, Provided Analytics Consultations, Conducted Surveys, Tree Tests, Card Sorts, & Developed Design System

Nielsen Norman Group
UX Certification

Received an NNg UX Certification in Facilitating Workshops, Journey Mapping, User Analytics, Measuring UX and ROI, and UX Storytelling

Case Study #1

Resource Planner
An indirect staff schedule and forecasting application for both employees and equipment.

Background
- Resource Planner had recently released new features yet no research had been conducted on the app in 3 years.
- I was tasked with conducting usability testing to see if the app was functional, but I chose to also incorporate user interviews and insights from our user analytics tool to ensure thoroughness and reliability in my findings.

Participants
- Six Resource Planner users agreed to participate in a **1:1 remote usability test and user interview**.
- Participants were both novice and experienced users.

Research Methods

Usability Testing

User Analytics

User Interviews

Deliverables

Usability Test Report

Key Insights | Remote User Interviews
- The app's primary function - forecasting - was unreliable.
- Users were having to use Excel instead of RP to complete their tasks.
- Critical information was missing from the data tables.
- Users did not trust the tool to function as needed.

Key insights | Remote Usability Testing
- Participants completed each task given to them without difficulty (while this reflected that users could complete basic tasks within the app, it did not catch that the app's basic functionality, the forecasting, was broken. Thanks to user interviews, we discovered this in detail).
- Error notifications proved more confusing than helpful.

Key Insights | User Analytics
- Rage clicks, dead clicks, and user flows showed that users were experiencing difficulty completing specific tasks.
- Error notifications appeared to not aid users in progressing.

Case Study #1 : Outcomes & Impact

In conclusion, the research conducted for this project achieved multiple valuable outcomes.

- Both the product owner and developers of Resource Planner developed greater empathy for the users struggling to use the app. Seeing users' feedback in quotes, both positive and constructive, encouraged the team to celebrate what parts of the app were proving useful and enjoyable for users as well as provide clarity for what improvements could be made.
- Research findings alerted the product team as to what parts of the tool were proving finicky and unreliable for users, and inhibiting them from completing day-to-day job tasks.
- Research findings promoted dialogue between myself and the product team as to the users' experience, feedback, feature requests, solutions to usability issues, and opportunities for future research.

Case Study #2

GEP Supplier Registration

Background
- Kiewit suppliers were experiencing difficulty navigating a complex registration process.
- There were so many steps in the process that a 48-page slide deck had been created to walk suppliers through how they could complete registration.
- I was tasked with evaluating the current process and creating a new one that would be more seamless, intuitive, and simplistic for suppliers to complete.

Research Methods
- **Service blueprint workshop:** I facilitated a workshop with the Kiewit team handling the supplier registration process . This created an opportunity to learn about pain points associated with customer actions, frontstage, backstage, and support processes. Note: I was not allowed to speak with Kiewit suppliers (our user group) directly.
- **Heuristic evaluation:** Together with a fellow researcher and UI designer, I used this method to evaluate usability in the registration form design, account and profile setup.

Research Methods:

Service Blueprint Workshop

Heuristic Evaluation

Deliverables:

Service Blueprint

Heuristic Evaluation

Key Insights | Remote Service Blueprint Workshop

- Poor form design frustrated and often disabled users from completing their goals (this knowledge was generated by key support members present at the workshop).
- Steps in the registration process were sometimes repetitive or unnecessary altogether (e.g. repeated manual entry).
- Error notifications were not explicit enough to be useful.
- Multiple fields were required to proceed but not all users possessed the required information, stalling their progress.

Key insights | Heuristic Evaluation

- The registration form design did not follow logical sequencing or grouping of questions. Input and formatting requirements were not specified. Several inputs were required when they should have been optional.
- Activating a new account and setting up a supplier profile required users to follow a series of links that were poorly distributed in the visual hierarchy.

Case Study #2 : Outcomes & Impact

In conclusion, the research conducted on this project provided multiple valuable outcomes.

- Facilitating a remote Service Blueprint workshop created space for the team handling the project to build empathy for the users struggling to complete the supplier registration. Additionally, space was created for the team to share feedback they'd received from users and to explore what parts of the registration process could be minimized or deleted altogether. With this information, the team shortened the registration process, minimized manual user entries, and created a more streamlined experience.
- Completing a Heuristic Evaluation showcased quick fixes we could readily make to the form design inhibiting users from finishing registration.

Case Study #3

Material Visibility

A materials database requiring system integrations, able to import component data, systematize data tables, establish and maintain bills of quantities.

Background

- Multiple efforts over the last 20 years had taken place to build a database of this scale, but none had succeeded.
- Myself and a UI Designer, alongside a team of knowledge experts representing each Kiewit department, were tasked with identifying all key user groups and creating/executing a research plan that would build out this materials database.

Sample of Initial Research Questions

- What idea sparked this initiative (what pain points are driving the project)?
- Who are the users? How are they being affected by a particular problem? What do they need, desire, and value for a solution?
- Why is this problem occurring? What affects does this problem(s) have on the users and the organization? What is the magnitude of the problem and the opportunities associated with it?
- What does success look like? How will we know we've been successful? What can we measure going forward to make sure that we're effectively working towards our desire outcome?

Research Methods

Workshops

Key Insights | Remote Qualitative Interviews
Qualitative interviews had been conducted prior to my involvement by the knowledge experts on the team. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to speak directly with any users at this juncture of the project. Instead, I was referred to 30 hours of recorded meetings referencing user feedback. While this helped me mentally form a picture of the needs of the project, it was not useful in terms of documented research.

Key insights | Remote Journey Mapping Workshop
Employing a journey mapping workshop with our team of knowledge experts allowed for us all to visualize the process each of our users would go through to accomplish their goals over time and across channels. This workshop created a visual representation of our user journeys, highlighting pain points and opportunities.

Key Insights | Remote Service Blueprint Workshop
While the journey mapping workshop helped our team visualize overarching processes, the service blueprint workshop helped us get down to the nitty gritty, step-by-step information that our UI Designer needed to create low and mid-fidelity wireframes in preparation for our wireframing workshop.

Recommendations for Future Research
After our wireframing workshop, I concluded my time working for Kiewit. Prior to leaving, I developed a set of research recommendations intended to guide the Material Visibility team through the next year of product development. Among those recommendations were 1.) immediately conducting usability testing on our mid-to-high-fidelity wireframes with users from each department (not just our knowledge experts), 2.) conducting short qualitative user interviews to ask questions and receive feedback from users about their initial impression of the database, and 3.) inviting users of varying degrees of expertise to a collaborative, forced-ranking workshop (where users could identify the most important features to focus on to help them accomplish their daily workflow). Given the diverse set of users and user needs, I wanted to help our team focus on learning each user group's workflow so that the database could be developed with a feature hierarchy implementation that would help users accomplish their most important tasks as quickly as the database development would allow.

Case Study #3 : Outcomes & Impact

Much of the value I provided on this project was by acting as the organizer and facilitator in our workshops. Each workshop had about 10-15 participants and keeping them on task, collaborative, and contributory throughout our workshop sessions helped 1.) generate deliverables that were a catalyst to the project vision, 2.) aid cross-team collaboration, 3.) surface diverse user needs, 4.) shape wireframe designs, and 5.) illuminate compelling questions for future research.

What questions do you have?

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