



RACHAEL JOHNSTON

07447 499 842

contact@rachaeljohnstondesign.com

As a User Experience professional, much of my work is research-based, with outcomes informing the design decisions of the project as a whole. This often means that what I work on doesn't result in a polished visual, but is rather a vital element of research and design thinking that underpins the final outcome. Detailed below are just some of the approaches I've used whilst working with clients.

RESEARCH

Every project I undertake begins with thorough research into the clients' current web presence, competitors and analytics, as well as scoping requirements through questionnaires, interviews and stakeholder meetings. After the initial scoping is complete, any further research methods undertaken will vary dependant on project-specific needs.

I have experience in running focus groups, interviews, guerrilla testing, as well as content strategy, card sorting and information architecture workshops across both internal teams and external users. Research findings are vital in ensuring the site is user-friendly, and that the design is heading in the right direction.



TESTING

User testing is a vital part of any development lifecycle, and – in an ideal project scenario – I would undertake testing before, during and after to uncover any usability flaws and ensure an accessible, user-focussed design. Making use of user stories and personas created through research, I have experience in taking the website to real-world users, testing journeys through the site across devices, as well as analysing changes to behaviour through analytics and A/B testing. Analysis of this data is then fed back to stakeholders and internal teams to ensure constant iteration and improvement.

OUTCOMES

A key part of my role is to turn all insights gathered into screen-flows, wireframes and mockups that are suitable to share with both the client and internal teams for further development. I have experience in using a variety of tools in order to achieve this and can quickly adapt to using new software. When creating mockups, I always aim to work closely with graphic designers and developers on the team, to ensure the vision for the design and interactivity is carried forward as the project continues. In addition, I have a good understanding of the capabilities and limitations of designing for the web and mobile apps, which enables me to collaborate with the development team.



CASE STUDY / BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

As the largest local authority in the UK, the re-design of Birmingham City Council's website was essential to the council to streamline services offered and provide quality, consistent content in an easy to read format. A large investment was made into the website to reduce call centre load and increase web traffic with an accessible, responsive design, resulting in huge savings for the council.

To begin the project, I sent the client a questionnaire to gain a brief overview of their goals to prepare in advance of an onsite design start meeting. I delved into their analytics to understand how the site is currently being accessed and navigated, comparing this alongside their call centre analytics to highlight what services weren't performing on the website and identifying key areas to focus on. In addition, I undertook a competitive analysis into award winning local authorities, using the Better Connected UK report to understand their judging criteria and best practice in the field.

The next step was to go onsite and run a focus group with senior stakeholders and leaders of the council, gaining a deeper insight into goals for the website, work on personas and scenarios and explaining the design process moving forward. Following this meeting, I distilled everything learnt to date into a design brief, before creating the first iteration of content-driven wireframes, showcasing an optimised design across desktop, tablet and mobile viewports, focussed on user needs.

Through Eye Tracking testing of their current solution as well as heuristic evaluations, we determined that despite the huge volume of information, it would be hugely beneficial to completely overhaul the information architecture of the site and rewrite all content. With devolved authoring responsibilities, content had become bloated over time, full of irrelevant information and inconsistencies across the site, making it a very complex user experience. Running Content Strategy sessions with the team, we focussed on using simple English, concise information and clear calls to action. I worked alongside the client to create an exemplar section within the CMS, which the team could then use themselves moving forward in creating content for the rest of the site.

Running in parallel to the content work, I was producing iterations of the wireframes based on internal, client and user feedback, I worked closely with the graphic designer to realise the design before taking this and creating interactive visuals in InVision. With constant review and iteration of colour, style, placement and interactivity, over time we reached a successful, optimised design.

Since launch this has gone on to win two Lovie awards, as well as receiving honouree status from the Webby Awards 2017.

CASE STUDY / MAZDA AUSTRALIA

The Mazda team at CHE Proximity was responsible for all aspects of Mazda communications, from their digital presence right through to printed marketing materials. I was brought in as the dedicated UX resource, ensuring quality across feature development updates to the current website as well as advising on the user experience of digital campaigns. Working with a team of over eighty employees, it was important to collaborate and communicate effectively to ensure our work was consistent across all communications.

The main focus of my work was around the MyMazda platform. MyMazda is an online portal for car owners, designed to provide an easily accessible solution to surface all information relating to your vehicle, including service history, insurance documents and owners manuals.

Working in agile sprints, we'd select our problem statements to bring into the sprint, estimate hours and agree on responsibilities within the team. I worked very closely with the graphic designer, often brainstorming and visualising ideas together and always communicating with a developer to check feasibility. As we began to produce a huge volume of work, we also introduced daily afternoon reviews in addition to morning stand-ups to ensure everyone on the team understood the experience we were designing. This allowed us to work efficiently to meet our strict launch deadline.

As a completely new development integrating with existing databases at Mazda's end, we had some complex issues to tackle, particularly around creating an account and adding and removing vehicles from the account. Between workshops with developers, the contact centre, the client and myself, we came up with solutions that provided the most user friendly experience we possibly could, whilst helping to 'cleanse' their database as well as seamlessly integrate into to their systems.

In creating a new platform the work undertaken was quite varied, considering the end to end experience, including account creation, settings, adding and removing vehicles, booking a service, calculating service cost, downloading documents and providing this all in an easily digestible format. Outputs were typically user flows, wireframes and presentations on strategy and direction.

CASE STUDY / BLACKSNOW STUDIOS

I was brought into Blacksnow Studios to assist with improving the User Experience of their SaaS, form-based software. The product concept was to provide a platform for photographers to manage all aspects of their business, from invoicing to scheduling, and managing their portfolio. As a small startup, the owner of the company – with a development background – had created the beta launch of the product himself and was now at the stage of needing this to be reviewed, tested and iterated into a ready-to-launch service.

As the initial iteration of the software had been built with no design focus in mind, it was my role to critically analyse this work and make informed design decisions on how to progress the software to make it as intuitive and user-friendly as possible. I did an initial review and provided suggestions based on best-practice UX principles to get started, before proceeding with in-depth research to help progress the design, and ultimately the product, further.

Over the course of my employment, I scheduled and conducted various interviews and user testing sessions to fully understand the demands the software must meet and to review our current solution. During interviews I would gain insight into a photographer's daily business tasks and any software solutions they currently used. Competitive analysis into these solutions was then conducted to understand what features we needed to focus on improving and implementing.

Consolidating all research, I would then create wireframes suitable for the developer to introduce improvements and new features. Primarily using Balsamiq Mockups, I illustrated improved page layouts and storyboarded user journeys. It was important all wireframes created were clear and concise as we worked on different schedules, so software development was often taking place while I wasn't around.

The dashboard interface was completely redesigned with a focus on drilling down upcoming work into daily, weekly and monthly notifications, with automation wherever possible to simplify tasks. The work I completed during my time here helped to greatly improve the user experience of the software and helped to guide the development of the product moving forward.