



* CULTURE

DESIGN ITERATIONS

Lydia Lodovisi discusses the importance of using iteration in your web design workflows

➤ Taking an iterative approach to web design might seem like a time-intensive, laborious process. On the contrary, it can lead to faster, more useful designs and outcomes. Adding iteration to your process can help you create with confidence and make more informed design decisions. Let's talk about how iterating might benefit your next web design project.

First, what is iteration? It is the process of prototyping, testing, reviewing or analysing test results (either formally or informally), and repeating this cycle as much as possible or necessary. This can happen at low fidelity (such as with sketching a website wireframe), high fidelity (with fully articulated design elements) or somewhere in-between. Ideally, the sooner you can get something into the hands of the people you're designing for, the sooner you can start to improve it.

Not convinced? Consider these benefits of incorporating iteration into your workflow.

GET FEEDBACK EARLIER

Waiting until website launch to get audience feedback isn't ideal, nor is it a time when it's easiest to make changes. Knowing how audiences interpret designs early on can give you

critical insight into what's working and not working, and help you shape better solutions based on that feedback.

Getting a design, especially lower-fidelity ideas in the form of wireframes, in front of audiences before getting too far down the process, means that there's greater opportunity for revising and improving. You might get feedback that a key task isn't easy to perform, or that a path to important information isn't intuitive for people as they navigate the site. This kind of discovery may impact large parts of your design system, site architecture or other key elements that would otherwise require a complete rethinking of how all the pieces work together. Being able to change that sooner than later makes it easier, faster and less costly to do so.

DEVELOPER INPUT

Not only is it beneficial to get audience feedback, developer input on design can help make a design even stronger. Having a developer eye on designs sooner usually leads to greater success and efficiency when that design reaches the development stage of the process. Developers can help identify where small revisions in a design would

make big difference in development effort. This kind of collaboration can also save the heartache of realising too late that what you thought was a great solution would actually be a development nightmare and negatively impact the project timeline or budget.

TRYING MULTIPLE IDEAS

Sometimes you might be considering more than one solution to a challenge. This openness may also save you from getting set on your initial ideas, allowing more thoughtful or useful ideas to take shape. Taking an iterative approach allows for the space to see how each solution performs when in the hands of audiences and which might be the most appropriate solution. Design decisions then become more definite, rather than a series of educated guesses and provide clarity for both you and your clients on the approach.

SAVING TIME

Incorporating audience feedback, avoiding development nightmares and getting to the best idea as quickly as possible saves time. Staying in lower-fidelity design at the beginning means you can change things rapidly, without a lot of fuss, before you start to get into detailed design where the stakes for change are higher and often more costly.

One of the biggest intents of iteration is to make design solutions tangible quickly in order to continually refine and make those solutions even more meaningful than their first instance. Bringing an open mind and moving past the expectation of perfection will lead to ideas and solutions that better serve audience needs and goals.

The benefits of continual iteration lead to more positive web experiences that are more likely to be adopted and regularly used, along with better UX outcomes and metrics around those experiences. Which in turn leads to more satisfied audiences, more satisfied clients and more meaningful work for designers. It also sets the stage for how that website is managed and updated going forward, inspiring a mindset of continual improvement that keeps a site alive and well into the future. ■

* PROFILE

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