

Corporate User-Experience Maturity Model

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Abstract. User experience encompasses all aspect of a persons experience with an organization’s services and products [1]. Organizations may or may not be aware of their customers’ experience with their services or products and give different degrees of attention to developing and managing their customers’ experiences. These degrees of attentions given to their customer experience can be measured and charted by phases or stages along a continuum of dedication or maturity. Based on the Capability Maturity Model Integration [2] and the Corporate Usability Maturity [3], this paper presents a model of user experience maturity by level based on an organizations dedication of resources, budget, and process integration.

Keywords: Corporate, experience, maturity, model, user.

1 Introduction

Organizations and their products and services have a “user experience” regardless if the organization is consciously managing it. User experience encompasses all aspects of the end-user’s interaction with an organization, its services, and its products. A *good* user experience delights customers – increasing adoption, retention, loyalty, and, ultimately, revenue. A poor user experience detracts customers, drives them to the competition, and, eventually, is no longer a viable source of revenue.

As organizations become more aware of their user experience and develop processes to architect, manage, and *measure* it, they gain the benefits.

User experience management varies from organizations that are just becoming aware to the concepts of user experience to organizations where user experience is one of their core distinctions if not *the* core distinction. The User Experience Maturity Model is a framework that describes an organizations maturity along this continuum. It defines where an organization is and provides the instructions to reach the next level. The model also provides a benchmark for relative comparison of organizations.

In this model, there are five levels defined along the continuum of user experience maturity starting at the initial level of no user experience management to customer focused organization. Organizations progress through a sequence of stages as their user experience management processes evolve and mature.

2 Research Approach

I have spent the tenure of my career introducing user experience processes and growing user experience departments with organizations. I have consulted and served in leadership positions for numerous companies and organizations introducing and

integrating user experience strategies and processes. In several cases, the organizations that I have been involved had no user experience strategy, process, or resources and I grew and lead their user experience effort from no user experience process to a dedicated corporate user experience strategy.

Over the years, I have observed how different organizations progress from no user experience awareness to user experience as one of their core distinction. Much of my observation comes from first hand experience of being the change agent within the organization. I also have had numerous discussions with peers with other organizations whose user experience dedication has evolved over time. This paper is based on my research.

3 Results

The results of my research have produced this model that I presented at the Managing Innovation Conference in San Diego, May 16th, 2007 [4]. The model was inspired by the Capability Maturity Model Integration [2] and the Corporate Usability Maturity [3]. The model in Figure 1 illustrates how an organization dedication to user experience matures over time.

4 Level 0: Initial Stage

We don't know what we don't know. Initially, an organization may not be aware of the concept of user experience. Someone shares this knowledge and a grass root effort

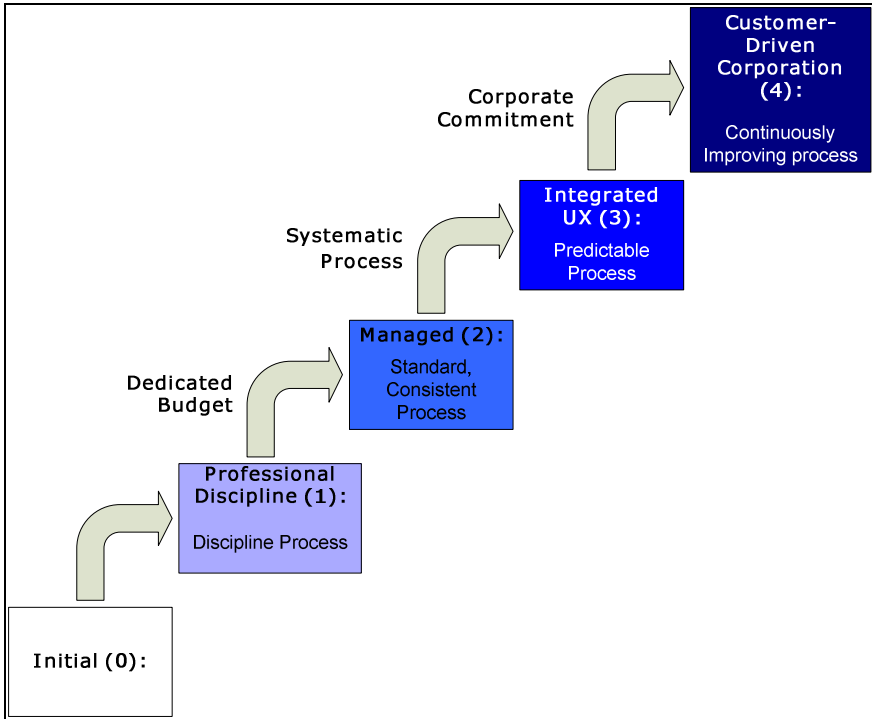


Fig. 1. Corporate User Experience Maturity Model

begins. Usually it is an ad hoc effort on a small project. If the effort is successful and the benefits are recognized then an organization may invest in user experience and advance to the next stage.

Ad hoc efforts may include a simple heuristic review to determine areas for improvement and executing the easiest ones to capture “low hanging fruit” and show immediate benefits of investing in these efforts. Sometimes, it is as easy as bringing in an expert to suggest simple changes to a process or design that can yield big returns in increase efficiency, effectiveness or satisfaction.

At this initial stage, it is typically undocumented and driven in a reactive manner by users’ dissatisfaction. Not all of the stakeholders or participants may know that the effort is taking place. As a result, the new effort is likely to depend heavily on the knowledge and the efforts of relatively few people or small groups. An ad hoc effort with no approved budget may capture “low-hanging” fruit that leads to bringing in a professional in a UX discipline.

5 Level 1: Professional Discipline

Once user experience is adopted as a professional discipline then some user experience processes are repeatable with consistent results. The organization may have adopted developing wireframes as a part of their elaboration phase, found that it reduced cycle time in requirement analysis with development, and integrated this activity into their process. Or maybe they found that conducting a usability evaluation identified easy changes that increased end-user effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction that increased adoption and retention (and revenue). The newly introduced user experience activities to the processes may not repeat for all the projects in the organization at this stage but advocates may use some basic activities to track cost and benefits to start capturing return on investment.

At this stage, the minimum user experience process discipline is in place to repeat earlier successes on projects with similar applications and scope. The organizations project status may now include user experience deliverables to management like completion of major user experience tasks and activities at major milestones.

Consistent positive results from integrated user experience activities may promote a dedicated budget and the forming of a user experience group that develops consistent processes that lead to the next level.

6 Level 2: Managed Process

When the user experience is managed there are documented standards and process oversight. These standards and oversight are used to establish consistence performance across projects. Projects apply standards, tailored, if necessary, within similarly guidelines.

Upper management may establish and mandate these user experience standard for the organization’s set of standard processes, and ensures that these objectives are appropriately addressed. The user experience roles, activities, and artifacts may be integrated into some of the organization’s processes. User experience resources and tasks may be added to template project plans.

Measured results may prove a reduction in the cost of cycle time associated with definition, development, and testing along with training and support and/or an increase in customer satisfaction, retention, and adoption that captures the attention of executive management. The organization may decide that user experience must now be considered in their overall corporate strategy and integrated into their core competence which leads to the next level of user experience corporate maturity.

7 Level 3: Integrated User Experience

When an organization integrates user experience into their corporate strategy then, using metrics, they can effectively control their customers' user experience with their organization, products, and services. In particular, the organization can identify ways to adjust and adapt the process to particular projects and tailor it to fit the needs of the target market, segmentation, and customer type.

Quantitative quality user experience goals tend to be set as part of the organization's overall corporate balanced scorecard. Using quantitative, statistical techniques, process performance is measured and monitored, and becomes predictable and controllable. For example, as part of the organization's financial perspective to increase revenue, increasing customer satisfaction in the customer perspective by measuring the product usability score in the process perspective would be a part of the user experience corporate balance scorecard.

If a focus on user experience becomes a core distinction for an organization then they may enter the highest level of corporate user experience maturity.

8 Level 4: Customer-Driven Corporation

If one of the primary focuses of the organization is on continually improving the user experience process performance then the organization has become customer driven in a controlled and measured way. Quantitative user experience process improvement objectives for the organization are established. These objectives become core to the organization and are annually reviewed and revised to reflect changing market and business objectives.

The user experience process improvements are measured and evaluated against the quantitative corporate process improvement objectives including financial, customer, process, and human capital perspectives. This may include having user experience professionals involved in corporate strategies such as participating in discovering and defining new market segments or participating in third party vendor selection in terms of the overall corporate user experience integration.

9 Conclusion

Organizations products and services have a "user experience" regardless if they are aware of it. Organizations that manage and measure their user experience process gain the revenue benefits from satisfied customers. This User Experience Maturity model

defines organizations' user experience maturity for organizations to understand where they are along this continuum and what they need to do to advance to the next level of maturity.

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