

UX AND UI DESIGN VS. WEB DESIGN:



What's the Difference and Why Should You Care?

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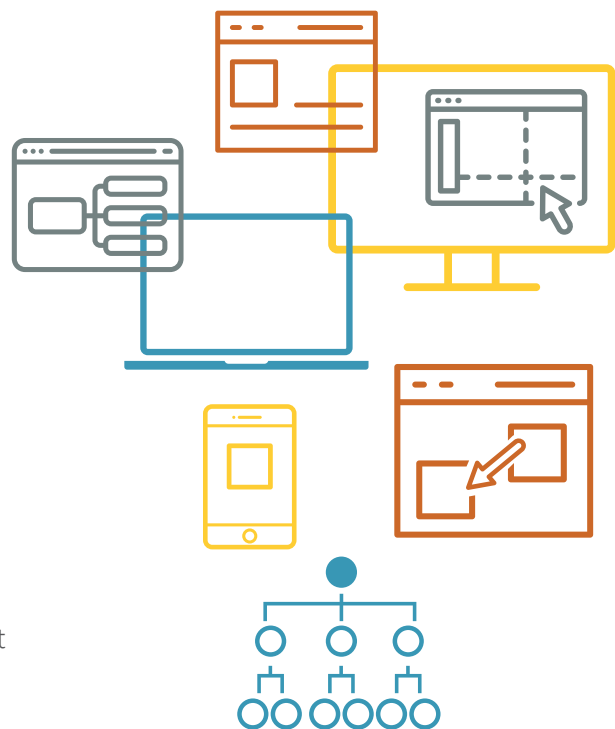
So, you have a project and you need the right digital agency but it's getting harder and harder to understand what various agencies do. The language they use to describe themselves is full of acronyms and insider references; while nearly all sell themselves as web designers, quite a few claim to specialize in UX design and then there are some that do UI design. Sound a bit confusing? In this post, I will briefly address each of these disciplines, explain the differences between web design, UX design and UI design and why it matters to the clients that hire these designers.

Web Design

Web designers today are usually modern era graphic designers trained in visual design to be experts in:

- creative conceiving
- color theory
- typography
- icon development
- diagrams
- infographics
- interactivity, i.e., rollovers, drop-down menus, digital slideshows, call-to-action buttons and forms.

A web designer may have basic knowledge of information architecture (IA), HTML and JavaScript coding, but most designers must partner with a web developer for writing code fit for production and an information architect for the IA. The web designer is also focused on the client's brand from both a visual and messaging perspective.



UX Design

UX is the acronym for “User Experience.” UX design brings a decidedly left brain component to a digital experience and may encompass the design of apps or other software products as well as websites. While a good web designer is focused on the end user’s experience, the UX designer takes it to the next level and applies a specific methodology around the user.

The UX process generally begins with a strong research component resulting in an articulation of a specific, desired end state and the customer journey(s) needed to get there. This involves the development of **User Personas** (detailed demographic, psychographic portraits of various types of users and what motivates them) and a collaborative, iterative approach to defining the story arc and the functionality required.

Before design is contemplated, the UX designer will create clickable prototypes or simple static wireframes. The UX designer will then observe the client navigating through this prototype in an informal or formal usability testing process, depending on the scope of the job. Usability testing may happen again after design has been applied and before launch of a website or application.

A strong focus on UX may be a good fit for websites of some complexity due to:

- Multiple user types
- Multiple products or services catering to different audiences
- Size of the website
- Merger or acquisition

UI Design

UI stands for User Interface, which comes out of the software world in which the User Interface of a product IS the product. UI designers traditionally are experts in designing machine to human interfaces. The adage “Form Follows Function” is the operating principal in UI Design.

With regard to websites, UI Design is more synonymous with front-end development, i.e., managing complex information, tasks and workflows and distilling it into screens and flows that are intuitive and make something complex appear simple. In essence, UI Design represents the intersection of programming and design.

Web Design, UX Design and UI Design are not necessarily mutually exclusive and in fact many website experiences feature elements of all three. As a prospective client looking at different agencies to work with, if you can define which emphasis is most important to you, it will help narrow your agency selection. Agencies use language on their own websites to emphasize where they are strongest, you just may need to read between the buttons!



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