Liquid UI Blogs

Enterprise User Experience is Definitely a Thing Now

There’s a lot of talk about user experience (UX) in the SAP ecosystem today.

The thing is, while the term “user experience” has been around since Don Norman coined it in the late 1990’s, user experience has actually been among the most important factors determining product success for as long as products have been around.

To understand what user experience means, let’s look outside the enterprise space for a moment, to a space where user experience has demonstrated huge value: the B2C software marketplace.

Knowing a Great Product When You Use One

In my own personal experience, the measure of a great software product is pretty simple. On any given day, given how many things I have to do, and how many different directions my attention is pulled, I only have room in my life for products that enhance my ability to do the things I want to do. Therefore, I will define a great product as one which I’ve chosen to integrate into my life.

Off the top, here’s what I would pick as my top 5 (pretty much just a snapshot of what’s running and in use on my computer right now):

Gmail
ToDoist
Dropbox
Evernote
Apple Music

When I look at this list and try to understand why I’ve chosen to integrate these products into my life, I realize that the most important thing is not what the product looks like, or even really what it’s capable of doing. **The most important thing is what the experience of using the product actually feels like**.

In other words, it’s not the nuts-and-bolts (features) of the products themselves that make a great product. There are lots of productivity tools out there which make the same feature claims. It is actually the manner in which the features are strung

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together that matters: **the products I choose to use work in concert with the ecosystem of my life**.

Use Product, Feel Something (Hopefully Good)

Another way of saying this is that the experience of **using a great product precipitates a positive feeling in me**. This is what separates a great product from all the rest. When this type of emotional response is elicited, the technology ceases being a widget, and instead becomes a platform for user empowerment.

It's a paradigm shift: no longer do I, the user, see myself as being a subjugant of the software, limited in my thinking and actions by the constraints of a limited framework. Instead, I see myself as having access to a dynamic toolkit which enables me to solve my unique challenges according to my unique preferences.

This is the empowered user paradigm.

Unfortunately, for SAP end users, the choice to use SAP probably looked nothing like my choice to use Evernote. In fact, it can hardly be called a choice at all for the SAP end user! Those of us who must interact with SAP, did not, in most cases, have an active role in either the choice of software, or whether or not to use it. And those who did have an active role in making that choice, in all likelihood, did not deeply consider how the end user would feel while using SAP.

Fortunately, there's always someone who refuses to accept the status quo. For the SAP user interface, that's Liquid UI!

We've has been leading the crusade for an empowering user interface in SAP since 1998. And while we market Liquid UI as being a business-centric product, it's actually the same user-centric truth that determines whether or not SAP will return on investment: **can end users integrate the new software into the ecosystem of their professional lives with little or no disruption?**

When the answer is yes - i.e. when the user is empowered by the product and its interface - SAP investments return bigger, and businesses flourish.

User Experience or User Interface?

You may have noticed that I began this post talking about user experience, and I ended it talking about user interface. What's the deal? Let me explain.

The SAP user interface is is where the SAP end user actually interacts with the software. It's the buttons, menus, fonts, as well as their size, color, and how they're arranged on the screen.

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User experience describes decisions which are made after considering how, and in what context, the user actually engages with SAP.

Therefore, for SAP, what is crucial for user empowerment is not just a new look for the user interface. It's the end user-derived logic and insights that are crucial, and specifically, how this logic and insights affect change in the user interface.

So, to create an empowering SAP user experience, you need two things:

- **A willingness to talk with your SAP-end users** about their needs, pain points, and opinions, while simultaneously examining the business processes in which these users are involved, and

- **A tool with which to easily manipulate SAP's user interface** according to user-derived logic and insights regarding process improvements

The first of these is pretty much up to you -- although we can certainly help! (We've been doing this for 18 years, and have worked with thousands of unique business processes across dozens of industries. We've seen a thing or two!)

The second one is where Liquid UI can really help -- and in a big way! Enabling SAP customers to re-tool their SAP interface according to their end users' specific needs is our bread and butter.

Give us a visit to see how Liquid UI makes it easy to take control of your SAP UI and empower your SAP end users.

This post is the first in a series dedicated to looking at the SAP user experience through the lens of user empowerment. Be sure to tune in to the rest of the series by following us on LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook!

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