

Designing User Experiences: An Introduction for Non-Designers

A class in user experience design created and taught by Billy Hollis

Executive summary

As development teams transition to creation of modern apps, exposure to design concepts, principles, and processes can help the team produce results that are more compelling, more productive, and more likely to have a long shelf life in the modern apps era. Most developers have virtually no experience with UX design, and this class was created to be their entry point.

The class is suitable for just about anyone involved in software development: developers, their managers, business analysts, visual designers, and even corporate executives in companies that furnish substantial value through technology.

When going to a new platform, without guidance the typical development team will usually revert to producing the same sort of user experiences as they produced on older technology. This class can help your organization break from the past and do better. A common sentiment among teams who have had this class is “We don’t even think about software development the same way now.”

Description

This class is for anyone involved in the software development cycle: developers, their managers, business analysts, project managers, and other non-designers. It’s even good for executives who don’t routinely work in software, because it helps them understand the importance of design and how to foster design thinking in their organization.

It is primarily aimed at helping non-designers learn the core concepts needed to do effective user experience design. The objective isn’t to turn them into award-winning designers, or to have them change their careers in any major way. It’s simply to inform them about how to create user experiences that are significantly better than what they’ve likely been producing up to now: faster to use, more intuitive to learn, and with visualization techniques to help users avoid errors and quickly find information they need.

The class time is broken out into the following areas:

- **How design fits into software development** – the need for design in modern apps and how various design-related tasks are integrated into a typical software development cycle
- **Design principles** – conceptual principles about what makes design good or bad, based on both historical design understandings plus the science of the human brain and visual system
- **Design process** – the steps needed for a design process, with options for handling each step so that a team can evolve a design process appropriate to their circumstances
- **Interaction and navigation patterns** – a checklist-based discussion of typical ways users interact at the overall application level, furnishing budding designers with a starter pool of design ideas
- **Additional modules** depending on class needs and length of class – for those creating mobile applications, this includes principles around touch interaction and design guidelines for major platforms. Other options include additional material on user observations, basic concepts for usability testing, data visualization, and technical considerations for creating client software with modern user experiences.

The minimum class for core instruction on UX design is two days, but three and four day versions of the class are also available. Some clients also like to add a fifth day that is dedicated to applying the class to designing parts of actual client applications. The longer classes are highly customized to meet the needs of individual teams.

Hands-on exercises

Design is a discipline, and learning it requires hands-on work. About one-third of the time in the class is spent in hands-on exercises.

Some exercises are just to help attendees assimilate the techniques of design. However, many exercises are specifically created to help developers and other technical team members break with the past and learn how to be more innovative in their design thinking. Some past attendees have praised these exercises as the most valuable part of the class for them.

Class size

A class can contain up to 40-50 attendees without sacrificing individual attention. As mentioned earlier, the class should contain more than developers. Anyone involved in the software development process can benefit.

Instructor

Billy Hollis has been developing software for over 35 years, and he has spent much of that time focusing on client-side software and user experiences. He has been teaching developers how to design better user experiences for over six years. Companies such as Intel, DuPont, C.H. Robinson, and many others have become more design-focused in their software development with this class, and Billy has also done over two dozen workshops on user experience at major technical conferences.

Billy's development team is responsible for applications with a worldwide reputation for innovation in user experience. You can see some of the examples at www.nextver.com.

You can reach Billy on his mobile phone at 615.400.7678.