I just have to do good research to show my value — or not?

World Usability Congress

Sabrina Duda

Graz, Austria
12 October 2022

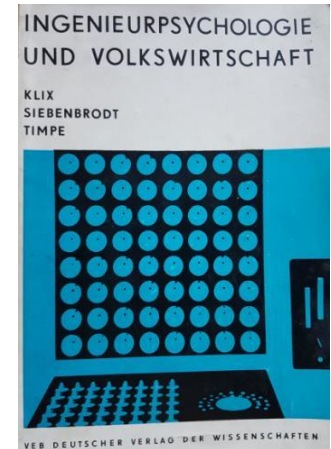# USER RESEARCHER
& PSYCHOLOGIST

Sabrina Duda

MSC PSYCHOLOGY

Engineering Psychology / Cognitive Ergonomics & Computer Science

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

INGENIEURPSYCHOLOGIE UND VOLKSWIRTSCHAFT

KLIX
SIEBENBRODT
TIMPE

VEB DEUTSCHER VERLAG DER WISSENSCHAFTEN

FOUNDER OF EYE SQUARE

Founded one of the first usability agencies in Germany – from 2 founders to over 50 employees.

Founders of eye square & investors

eye square
USER & BRAND RESEARCH

ebay

Deutsche Bank

Ford

OSRAM

LG

TIMELINE OF MY CAREER

MSc Psychology Humboldt University

1998

Founder of eye square: UX agency start-up growing to 50 people

1999

eye square

Move to the UK

2015

Various UX roles: Head of Insight, Principal UX Researcher, Head of UX...

2022

experienceLab

LSEG

REFINITIV

Department for Work & Pensions

NHS Digital

NHS Business Services Authority

valtech_

ZAVA

LAB

experian

Ministry of JUSTICE

/thoughtworks

THE VERY GROUP

How to give value as researcher?

How to give value as an employee?

UX Researcher *Based on study respondents*

Top Skills
– Research
– Writing
– Public speaking

Most Desired Skill
Visual design

Background
Undergraduate degree, often in social sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology) or humanities

Regular Activities
– Qualitative usability tests
– Interviews
– Field studies
– Surveys

UX researcher top skills

TOP 5 MUST HAVE SKILLS

Q: What do you feel are the must-have skills or specialisms in your discipline at the moment?

18%	15%	12%	11%	10%
Knowledge of research methodologies	Usability Testing	Communicating research insights to stakeholders	Qualitative Research	Conducting user interviewing

% OF RESPONDENTS THAT THINK IT'S A MUST HAVE SKILL

What is the problem?

"Less than 15% find the insights they generate/ receive to be very actionable."

Veronica Naguib, Managing Director of ImpactSense, conducted a survey with researchers and people who commission research.

User Research London Conference 2022.

Research insights not actionable enough.

"70% of researchers/ consumers of research believe that the research industry is far from reaching its full potential."

Veronica Naguib, Managing Director of ImpactSense, conducted a survey with researchers and people who commission research.

User Research London Conference 2022.

Full potential not yet reached.

Trend:
UX stagnation over time

UXR Maturity (vertical axis)

Steady Gain
As processes and ways of working are bedded in, efficiencies are gained.

Stagnation
Whilst demand is still high, maturity starts to stagnate

Regression
Then over a longer period the UX maturity can actually regress as the org changes

Acceleration
An initial event or catalyst that often starts to move UXR maturity forward

Time (horizontal axis)

Why?

"We should spend less time doing research and more time working on helping our organisations learn better. "

"Why do we fall into this stagnation period?

Too busy delivering."

Thomas Hayes, User Zoom

State of UX 2022, UserZoom

User Research London conference 2022

Root cause of problems: our self-concept

"We researchers think we are only valuable when doing research."

But: More researchers, more user research doesn't mean more impact.

Behzod Sirjani, User Research London Conference 2022.

Enable others to do research

People with "Research" in their title

The Research Team
(What we think is the Research Practice)

Other People who do Research
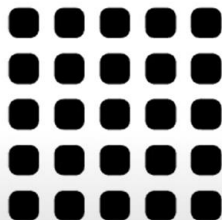
The Real Research Practice

Behzod Sirjani,
User Research London
Conference 2022.

Ratio: Researcher – designer – developer

1 Researcher	
5 Designers	
100 Developers	

- 1 researcher for every 100 developers
- 1 designer for every 20 developers

https://measuringu.com/designer-ratio/

The user researcher is a facilitator

Caroline Jarrett
@cjforms

User researcher's fallacy: "My job is to learn about users". Truth: "My job is to help my team learn about users". #ux

Most common mistakes as a UX researcher

- Doing research without involving stakeholders.

- Taking on all research requests.

- Overloading stakeholders with findings.

- Not interpreting business implications.

Anna Efimenko

https://uxinsight.org/4-mistakes-i-made-as-a-ux-researcher-how-to-avoid-them/

"I realized that all these mistakes are about how we as UX researchers engage with stakeholders."

"Learning how to do research, or different research methods, can be after all easier to master than all these additional 'human skills' we need to be effective in an organization. "

Anna Efimenko

The biggest challenges for user researchers

The participants of our Research Challenge workshop on Tuesday found challenging:

- Convincing stakeholders about the value of research.

- Ensuring the research results are not ending up in a drawer and are useful.
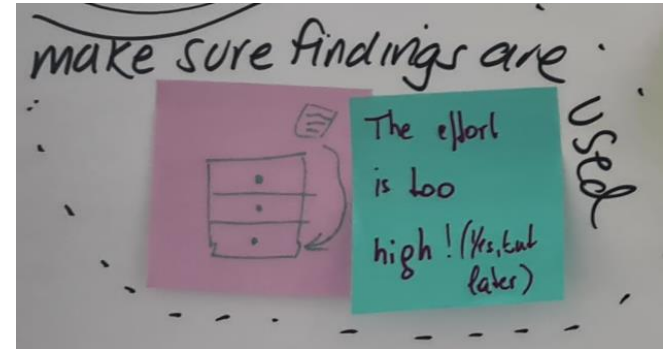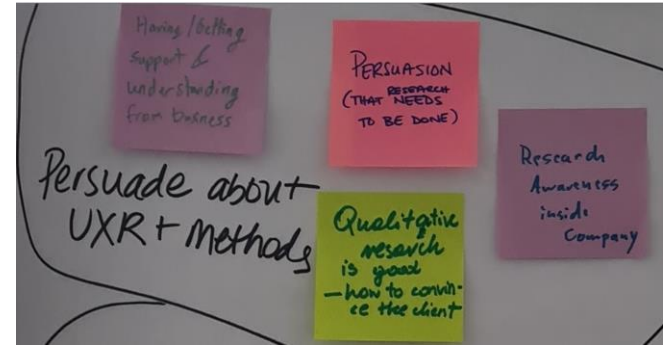
Not starting with discovery

The researcher is often brought too late into a project.
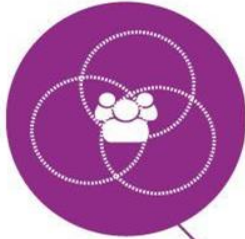
Discovery
Understanding context and problems to solve

continue?

Alpha
Testing options by prototyping

continue?

Beta
Building and refining options

continue?

Live
Continuously improving
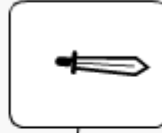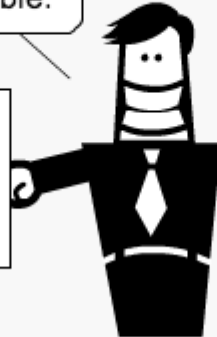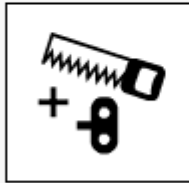
User researcher involved too late
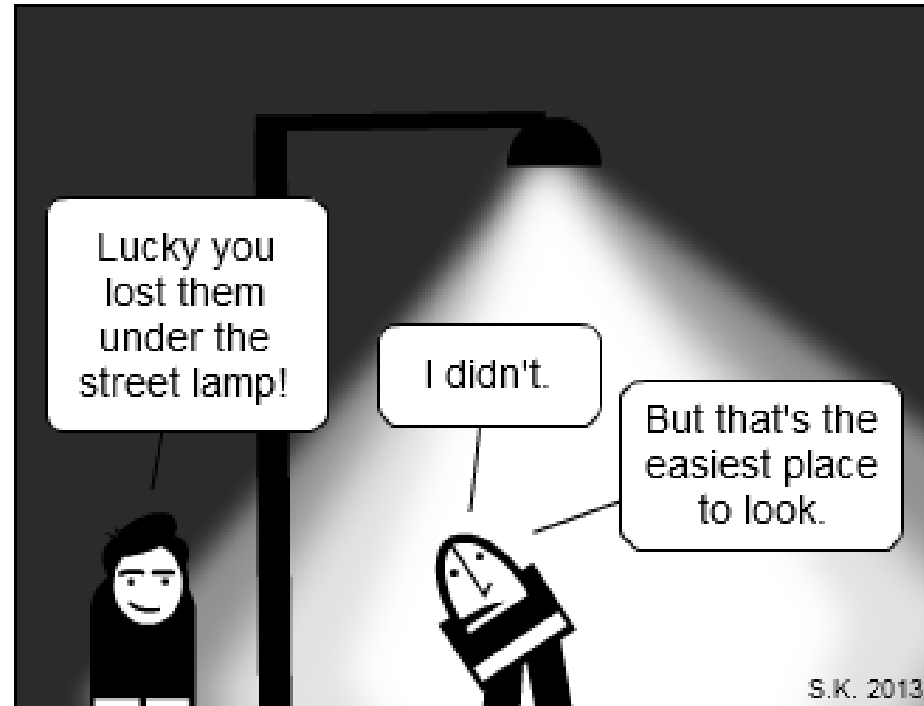
"Most teams are comfortable asking about usability, but the hard thing is not usability, the hard thing is evaluating value."

Marty Cagan's #1 Trend 2022

"Measuring product value will be recognized as more important than measuring usability."

Marty Cagan, 2022

https://sprig.com/blog/marty-cagans-6-product-trends-for-2022

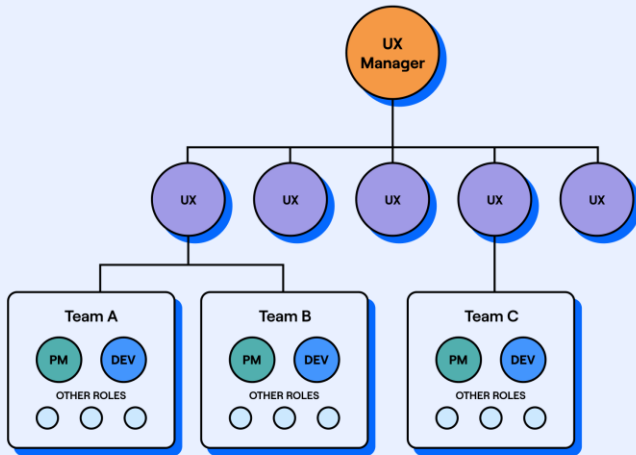# Doing the easiest, which often does not give value

UX in an organisation

Being the one and only... and often the first

- Can be in startups, or also in larger companies that are just starting with UX and trying to increase user focus.

- The researcher can be part of a UX team.

- Alone against the rest of the world.... designers, product managers, developers etc....

Centralised UX Team

Very Group (Shop Direct)

SHOP DIRECT

UX at Shop Direct

2017 — 37

|	
UX research	👤👤👤👤👤
UX design	👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤
UX testing / experimentation	👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤👤
UX dev (iDev)	👤👤👤👤
UX QA	👤👤👤👤👤

Sam Barton, 2017:
Presentation UXCubed-Sam-Barton-
Shop-Direct.pdf

30

We are a team... against another team

- The researcher is part of a research or insights team.

- It is structured hierarchically, with senior and junior researchers.

- Our team against the other team, e.g. the design team.

Matrix UX Team

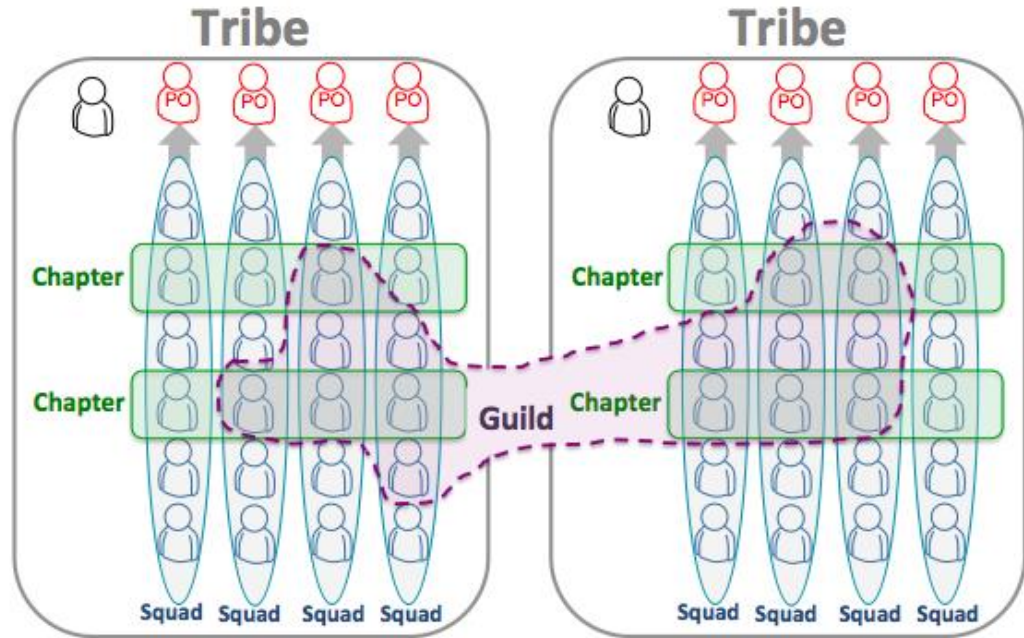https://maze.co/collections/ux-ui-design/ux-team-structure/
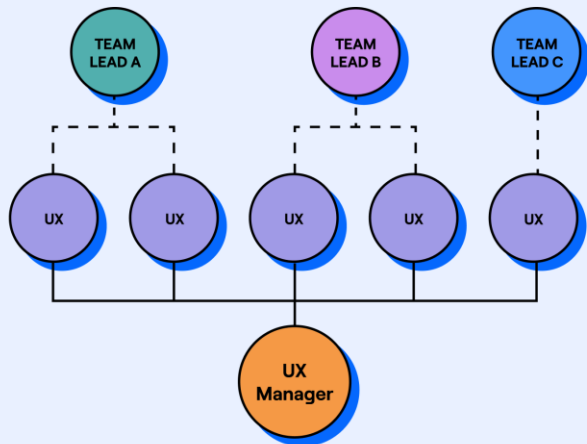
Spotify: Squads

Squad
The basic unit of development is the squad. A squad is similar to a scrum team. It consists of 6–12 people and works on a specific area or product.
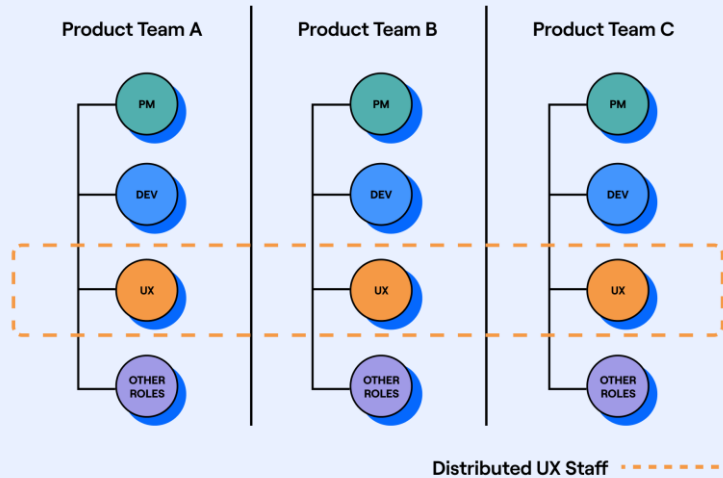
Chapter
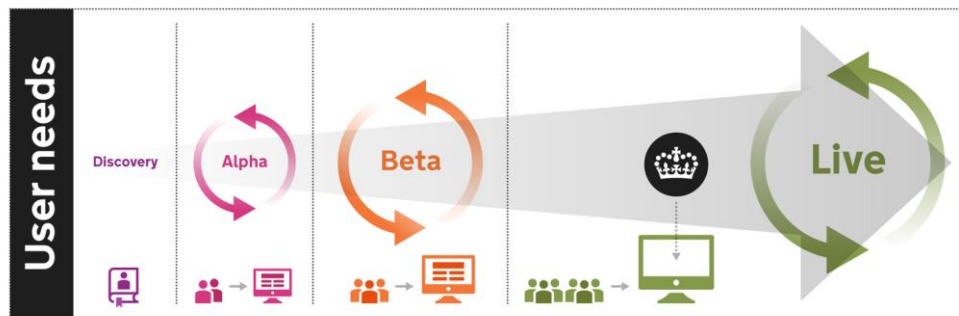The chapter consists of people with similar skills, within the same tribe.

Decentralised UX Team

Cross-functional, agile team

GOV.UK Service Manual

- Product manager
- Service owner
- Delivery manager
- User researcher
- Content designer
- Designer
- Developer

User needs — Discovery — Alpha — Beta — Live

https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/the-team/what-each-role-does-in-service-team

"The whole is more than the sum of its parts"

Being stronger as a team

- The team works together on one goal (the product).

- Less friction between the different functions.

- Everyone works independently and is experienced in their role.

More important than the organisational structure: Individual circumstances

There is no organisational model
    for UX that is always superior.

It depends on:

- Your manager
- Your team
- The kind of project

Summary

How to give value as a researcher

Less is more!

- Do less research.

- Spend more time promoting the value of research.

- Spend more time training and enabling others.

- Democratise research.

- Involve stakeholders.

- Try to get involved in projects as early as possible.

Employee Value — DILBERT BY SCOTT ADAMS

Questions & comments?

THANK YOU!

Sabrina Duda

www.smiling.club
sabrina@smiling.club

www.linkedin.com/in/sabrinaduda
adplist.org/mentors/sabrina-duda