EPISODE 63

[INTRODUCTION]

> *"EA: The deliverable that I choose, it really depends on how the team best digest information. So if I'm working with a team who is very, very doc-heavy, and they like docs and write-ups, then cool. I'll do a write-up. Because at the end of the day, I want the insights to sink in, and I want them to be able to be applied to a product roadmap. So really, I'm not very picky on how I do it, but how I can best communicate. That's helpful for me."*

[00:00:30] TG: You're listening to the UI Narrative podcast, the bi-weekly podcast that shares the stories of people of color interface designers and researchers and their contributions towards creating user-centered experiences. And I'm your host Tolu Garcia, let's get started.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:50] TG: Hello, everybody, welcome back to the UI narrative podcast. So this episode is a part two to how to facilitate a user research study with Eniola Abioye. If this is your first time listening, let me reintroduce you to today's guest. So Eniola Abioye currently conducts impactful user research with cross-functional teams at Meta. She began her people research career at Branding Science, and agency in biotechnology space, and later moved on to Advanced Design Thinking at Kaiser Permanente. She then designed a research strategy and led research across a digital platform at Silicon Valley Bank. Outside of her full-time position, Eniola provides career coaching to other UX researchers and leads UX projects with social justice organizations in her community. She's excited to share how UX researchers are uniquely positioned to drive inclusion and accessible innovation in tech. Everybody, please give a warm welcome to Eniola joining us again on the UI Narrative podcast.

[00:01:59] EA: Thank you. Thank you so much for having me again I'm super excited.

[00:02:03] TG: Yeah. I want to do a quick recap of part one of this series. So we got to know more about Eniola's story and background in user experience research and human biology. And

to sum that up, Eniola has been in the industry for eight plus years. So you definitely want to tune into that part one and to take some notes. We're using a hypothetical design brief to explain our process for how to facilitate user research on a project. So we use a brief with IKEA as a client.

So IKEA designs and sells ready to assemble furniture, kitchen appliances, and home accessories among other goods and home services. So the client wanted to have a live chat UI added to their website. So Eniola and I are the UX researcher and UX designer on the team to help with their new feature add.

So we went through our step-by-step process, which included how to find the objective and understand what you need to know to make incremental progress on the project. How to be inclusive with your research? How to form a hypothesis and better understand what the team's assumptions are? How to decide on what research methods to use, and the process for gathering research? How to begin putting together a research plan? What it looks like beginning a research study? And last one, what it looks like doing a project without a researcher on the team, and when you're a UX designer or a product designer?

So now we're going to go through the rest of the steps for facilitating the user research study. And we're at the point of the project where you've done like all these preliminary steps. So basically, the pre-interview or user testing steps, and have a research plan put together based on high-level research question. So now is the time like when you will begin your research. So my first question for you, how do you properly prepare for your user interview versus usability test? What are some of your must-haves before you jump on a call?

[00:04:07] EA: Yeah. So there are a few things that I do in both situations. So before going into any like user interfacing work, whether it'd be moderated interviews, unmoderated, usability test, whatever the methodology is, there are four things that I make sure that I go through. The first thing is checking my bias, right? As people, no matter what our profession is, we all hold biases, right?

And so part of the setup process for research and kind of building the research plan and building out the methodologies that we'll use alongside with the team, it really is a team effort,

because you want to make sure, especially as a researcher, that I'm checking all of the biases that I like hold as a person and making sure that the people that I'm talking to are the correct people and can really speak to the issue at hand or speak to the situation at hand. Do they have enough experience? Are they the people who hold the perspective that we're trying to hear from?

Then I always send my materials through peer review, right? So if I'm doing a one-on-one interview or an in depth interview, I'm making sure that researchers besides me are seeing what my plan is and seeing the questions that I'm looking to ask and things like that. Because even as a skilled researcher, having a second pair of eyes is really helpful in making sure that none of my questions are leading, or I'm not making any inherent assumptions that I should verify first with someone.

The second thing is I'm always making sure that I know like the subject matter of the conversation enough to really engage, right? So if I'm helping out a team that's working on a specific product, or gaining background of a specific experience, I need to be pretty well-versed in that so that the conversations are, like, "Yes, I'm listening." But also, I need to know a fair amount of context in order to pro but where it's appropriate, and kind of go down the path that the user is leading me based on what it is that they're interested in. So like knowing lots and lots of context. And I do that by working really closely with a designer on the project, whoever is on the product team, maybe the data person, right? The designer, the content strategist, people like that.

The next thing I do happens after starting it. So this is specific to moderated conversations. But it's definitely always important to start to build that rapport with people, right? So there are ways that you can do it in an unmoderated situation as well. But you never just like go into the questions, right? Like, "Hi, I'm Eniola. Here's my question for you." There's always has to be some warm up to really build that rapport to get users comfortable and to allow them to really understand that the dynamic of the interviewee and the interviewers. As interviewers, were just so grateful that they're spending time with us and sharing their viewpoints. And it's super important for folks to feel comfortable on the call. Because if they're not, kind of what is the point of doing an interview, right? Or what's the point of asking them these questions?

So definitely like warming up with just like some questions on – I'll give an example. So like warming up with someone who – If I'm doing an interview with someone about shoes, right? And I'm talking to people who are avid shoe buyers. Maybe I'm talking to a persona where these are like super shoppers or something like that. I'm going to ask them about their shoe collection. I'm going to ask them about something that they're probably really excited to share about. Because it gets them, one, in their element and in the frame of mind thinking about what we're going to talk about. And also, gives them a chance to kind of like share, share and bring kind of their full selves into the conversation. So I always start out with some just like intentional questions. Before we get to the nitty gritty, tell me about yourself, and tell me about some of the things that that you're passionate about.

And then when it comes – The last thing I do is when it comes to starting the conversation. I just make sure, whether in-person or on Zoom, that the person that I'm with knows that I'm actively listening, right? So showing those cues, body-wise, verbally, and just like making sure that they know that I'm grateful throughout the interview, and that I'm listening, and I understand what they're saying. So giving that feedback live. So those are things that I do specifically to a moderated conversation.

In an unmoderated conversation, you can do similar things, right? So if I'm doing a survey, that warming up that I talked about in the interview setting is something that you can do in your introduction of your paragraph and kind of like starting out with questions to let people get comfortable and ease people into the conversation, or ease people into the questions that you'll be asking them when it comes to a survey.

[00:08:51] TG: So are you typically the one reaching out to customers for screening? And the reason I ask this, because I know like some researchers, they'll get like help with this as far as like they'll provide the list of like the age or like the type of experience they need to have with the product itself. But I was just curious of like, if you ever like do reach out to someone, how do you figure out the right person to help you with that type of stuff?

[00:09:14] EA: Yeah. So it's a mix. So sometimes I've done it where I've had help, and I've done it when it's me. Shout out to all the researchers who have to do their own recruitment. But when I do have help, I'm setting up the screening parameters, right? So I will build with the screener.

And it depends on like the conversation I'm trying to have. It depends on the situation or like what phase of research we're in oftentimes. So say I'm doing a usability test, and say it's a redesign for a website. I would talk to people who are likely to actually use the website, right? So if that's a specific group or segment, I would want to talk with them.

And then I would want to both speak to people who use the old website. So people who are internal to whatever company that I'm working for, but also people who are brand new to it and have never used it, right? So I would want to like separate those segments, because I want to see if there any trends in some of the segments specifically that would speak to some of the design.

So for example, if I'm talking to the people who are internal and who have used the existing website before, there might be a little bit of friction or a little bit of tension around the change, right? Because as people, we tend to have a reluctance, or we tend to react to change, right? So I would want to check that by also speaking to people who have never seen the existing website and don't really have any ties or affinity to how it was done previously.

And then when it comes to screening, sometimes there's a really, really particular person that I need to talk to who has the perspective, right? So sometimes, for example, if I'm designing a financial platform and I want to speak to people who do wealth management in a certain market for a certain age group or something like that, sometimes it gets really, really tight. So when screening or when like recruiting participants, something that we can do is say to ourselves like, "Do we really need someone who has used this product before? Do we need someone who's internal? Or can we make the screening process a little bit easier and open it up to people who have this experience, but not necessarily on this platform? Or maybe they have this experience, but not necessarily in this market? Or something like that?" So you can really play around and get creative with your recruitment style and get it to – It shouldn't be specific, right? It should be informed so that you're making sure you're getting the right perspective. But like finding the balance between how open can we make this in order to make sure that we're including everyone that we can and making sure that this design is inclusive, and also getting the type of feedback or the intricacy of feedback that we need from people. So it's that balance of, "Okay, how narrow/how much should I open this up?"

[00:11:58] TG: You also mentioned how you're really cautious about making sure whoever you're interviewing is not nervous on the call. So like, from your own preference, how many people max do you have on a call? Because that's something I've heard from different researchers. Like, they have like a sweet spot, you know?

[00:12:15] EA: Yeah. No, I hear you. So when working with product teams, it's awesome to have them be able to sit-in and kind of like be a fly on the wall and actually hear from users how it's showing how a product is showing up or hear the feedback that they're having straight from the user's mouth. And also, I know, for some people hopping on a call and seeing 20 cameras that are off, intimidating, right? And the last thing you want to do is intimidate the person that you're looking to interview. I would say to help mitigate that, there are technologies or platforms where you can have folks watch without kind of like showing up as another screen. But nonetheless, I always, always, always ask the person that I'm speaking to if it's okay for colleagues to watch or if it's okay for me to record. And I assure them that it's not going anywhere, it won't be published anywhere. And it's just for our internal kind of tools and use.

[00:13:14] TG: In the last episode, you mentioned how important it is to not take detailed notes while having a user interview. And I've been on calls with UX researchers where I'm the one that's like taking the notes. Or sometimes I'll like throw the video and to dovetail to get little insights that we might have missed. Do you have like any other best practices for facilitating user interviews like that?

[00:13:35] EA: Yeah. So definitely, to reiterate, do not take notes while interviewing someone on a call. Usually, I record myself. Like if there's no one – I've done research where I had someone who could help take live notes, which is awesome, and super helpful. And if not, I just record them and I go back myself, or I'll hold down the transcripts so I can go back into them a little bit quicker. Sometimes I'll watch them a little bit faster or speed through the parts where I'm talking, right? Because I don't really care about that. I just want to hear what the user has to say. When it comes to like taking notes like after the fact.

So if I have someone who is taking notes during the call for me, I'll set them up with a whiteboarding app, right. So I use MURAL. I know there are plenty of other tools right and ways to do it. But I'll set them up with a template to take their notes in. So I know how the discussion

is going to go. So based on the discussion guide, I'll kind of copy over some just like buckets of themes, right? Or I might even copy over some of the questions and then leave room for the person taking notes or myself to take notes within them. So that the information, once I go back and do analysis, is already bucketed. And it makes it a lot easier to then pull that into a deck and kind of like derive insights from them.

So yeah, I do that either way. And that's really helpful. I'm a very visual person. So I love being able to like write on a virtual sticky and then put it on a virtual whiteboard and like see how trends are coming together before I communicate them.

[00:15:06] TG: Something else I want to touch on is that it's okay to make changes to like your user interview script, or like if you're usability testing some of those screens during the testing. Have you had like any instances where you'll find that you can get more context out of the question if you like, switch it up a little bit, because you seem like with the past two people you interviewed, they didn't respond as well as you would have liked.

[00:15:29] EA: Absolutely, absolutely. So the script or the discussion guide that I use is always just a guide, like going in. And part of the great thing about having context about what I'm looking to gain in the interview is that I now feel comfortable to go off script, right? So I understand the script. I know what we're looking to gain and the conversation I'm trying to have. So then I can let the interviewee or the user take a little bit more of the lead, right? So if there's something that someone says, "Oh, this really grinds my gears," "or this really hurts my experience, " "or I really, really love this," then we can go down that path and explore where it takes us to. Because more than anything, I want to hear – In talking about the user experience, I want to hear the things that really stick out or the things that really cause impact, right? Of course, within the realm of what we're trying to gain and what we're trying to learn. But yes, I always go off script, essentially. Sometimes it means hitting things in a different order if they come up. Sometimes I do an introduction with a user. And I just ask, like, "Just to get started, do you have any questions for me?" And sometimes they go from there. So that flexibility. I'd say, know your script like the back of your hand, and know more than just the discussion guide. Know the context of what you're trying to gain, so that you feel comfortable in just having a conversation. And that'll also make it feel and sound warmer and more genuine rather than like kind of going through a list of questions with a user. I'd say I always go off script.

Then when it comes to keeping my product team looped in. After every interview, or every few interviews I'm giving, I like to call them postcards from the field. I'll give like updates to the team so that they're hearing, "Okay, these are some trends that I'm seeing start to fold out. I'll keep you posted. Here are some things that we're hearing." And that helps the team feel more involved in the user research and more kind of like hands-on. And they're kept in the loop about what's coming out and what's unfolding, rather than saying, "Okay, I'll see you in three weeks when I click the readout." So it's always helpful to like give updates. And I found that teams really, really like that.

And so if I'm seeing something around, "Oh –" If I'm doing concept testing, like, "Oh, this concept is really like falling to the bottom, or really rising to the top. Let's shift it a little bit." Or maybe users are having a hard time kind of understanding the product or something like that. Like whenever things come up, or whenever I start to see a trend, I communicate that with a team. And sometimes it doesn't require a shift, but sometimes it does. And that's just part of it.

[00:18:08] TG: How many people do you typically have to interview in order to like call it a trend to where you feel like it's significant enough to make changes to your scripts?

[00:18:16] EA: Yeah, just depends. Especially because I'm a qualitative researcher, it's not about – It's not very much so about percentages or numbers. So if I'm starting to see something and like even two to three people, I'm like, "Okay, this is at the back of my mind. I'll take note of it. And I'll continue to watch it." And then if I continue to see it, okay, then that validates it. And it might not be a big shift, right? It might be, "Okay, let me ask this question. And I have an idea of what might come up. Or it might be if no one is liking this concept, or no one is liking this version, or this version, or this iteration of something, and we're testing multiple, then maybe we drop this, right? Or maybe we deprioritize this."

[00:18:58] TG: I was like being included in stuff like that, because it's like you – Especially within usability testing, it's really hard to know. It's like, "Well, I have another concept up my sleeve." But you don't want to overwhelm them with too many things. Sometimes it's just not a part of like the focus group that they're going with. But I love whenever I'll get people like, "Hey,

like that other design, let's test that, too." Because it's like a quick way to get A and B testing, but it's like more dynamic-based based off of the trends.

[00:19:26] EA: Or even when multiple people are responding negatively to a part of a design and we can say like – I link up with a designer and say, "Hey, people really didn't like this. Or people were really confused about this. Can we tweak it and then see if it tests a little bit better?"

[00:19:40] TG: What do you use to organize your collected data during and after your sessions?

[00:19:46] EA: I'd say I'm pretty old school when it comes to during, right? So I always have a pen and paper right next to me and will jot notes down like sometimes, right? So like not taking notes, but sometimes if a user says something or I make a mental note of something that I want to come back to and I don't want to lose it, I might like jot it down and not like look down at the paper, but just like scribble, right? When it comes to afterwards, like I said, I really like MURAL in terms of being able to organize some thoughts.

[00:20:16] TG: You say MURAL, right? M-U-R-A-L?

[00:20:17] EA: MURAL, yeah. I know, they sound very –

[00:20:20] TG: Yeah. I get so confused sometimes.

[00:20:23] EA: Yeah. I like MURAL. I haven't tried a bunch of different ones. Like I've done Jamboards and MURAL. But that's the tool that my company had when I started using it. So that's what I use. And I like that a lot.

When it comes to the end deliverable, that changes the other tools that I use, right? So if I'm looking to build a deck, I'm probably going to organize my thoughts and start out in like Google Slides, or PowerPoint, or something like that, and just like dump everything in and then kind of organize as I go. But it depends. The deliverable that I choose, like it really depends on how the team best digests information, right? So if I'm working with a team who is very, very doc-heavy,

and they like docs, and write-ups, then cool. I'll do a write up on it. Because at the end of the day, I want the insights to sink in, and I want them to be able to be applied to a product roadmap. So really, I'm not very picky on how I do it. But how I can best communicate is helpful for me.

So some teams really like readout. So I'll do a presentation and presenting the findings. I do really like readouts, because they're more of a conversation than me giving a speech about this research. But it allows folks to engage and us to brainstorm and kind of talk through recommendations and what's feasible. And let's talk about the roadmap, and timing, and experience principles, and all of the like, right? But yeah, folks like slot, some people like slides, some teams like dots, some people really want the readout. So it just depends on what the end deliverable is. But as far as tooling, anything that allows me to kind of put my thoughts on paper, or put it on a screen, because I'm visual, and being able to manipulate the notes visually is really helpful for me, then that's what I use.

[00:22:09] TG: So you talked a little bit about MURAL, and using that for like organizing all of your thoughts. Is there like a system that you typically do as far as like how you're grouping trends that you're seeing within your research? Or like how you're organizing it in order to be able to come up with a report that you're going to put together?

[00:22:29] EA: Yeah. So like I said earlier, something I tend to do is even before going through the interviews, I'll put up a template. So based on the questions, I can have question and then here are some of the answers. Question, here are some of the answers. I also tend to use different colored stickies for each respondent. So as you know, I'm a qualitative researcher. So there are enough colors to represent different respondents than people that I've talked to in one kind of like group, or one project, or one phase of research. So I like to do that and then write it down, like what color belongs to who, just so when this thought comes back, and I'm like, "Oh, I want to maybe pull a quote or pull a voice note or something like that," then it's really easy to go back and grab that. I love including multimedia, because I'm very visual, and I trust that you know. A lot of people on teams are very visual. Or it just hits a little bit different when folks can see something or hear something for themselves. So that's something that's really helpful for me.

[00:23:30] TG: So I know, you said that you adjust your presentation style based off of like the client itself that you're working with. So if they prefer to have something more visual, then maybe you do a presentation. Or if they prefer to have like a readout, they can go that way, or any other method that works best for them to best understand the value of the research that you're providing. Are there any like other steps that you take to get ready for meetings like that, that just help you feel extremely prepared?

[00:23:57] EA: Yeah. So I'll talk about readouts. Before going into a meeting where I'm presenting findings to the team, I'll usually meet with different members of the core team. So before I'm putting in – So I'll derive the insights, and I have a good understanding of what I recommend. But because I'm not the one building it, or I'm not the one that's going to facilitate it on the team, it's super important for me to link up with maybe the designer, or maybe a software engineer, or maybe the PM and brainstorm together, "Okay, logistically, what could this look like? And where could this fit on the roadmap?"

So I'm giving recommendations that are extremely actionable for the team, right? And that fit within the context of what the team does and what is usable, right? Because all day I can say, "People didn't like this button. Move it. Change it. Do something better," right? But that doesn't really do much for the team as far as giving them an action – As far as next steps and things that they can do to improve it and to make it more user-centered, right?

So that readout, I really see it as a conversation rather than a presentation. And of course, I'm talking a lot, but I open it up to, "Well, let's have a conversation about this." And then I also send out the readout beforehand as a pre-read so people can read through it and they can be kind of informed enough to really engage in a conversation to make that hour or however long that we do it as fruitful as possible. And then during that call, I do take notes, or record it and take notes afterwards. And then the final readout, the one that I like kind of like publish with the team, that has that information from the conversation or the brainstorm that we had embedded into it.

[00:25:42] TG: I like that you include the designers and those conversations, because the key word there was like actionable steps. Like, yes, like as a person, like doing the research, you'll have like a lot of predictions or assumptions of like how you can fix the problem. But it's just good to incorporate the other team members that will actually be doing the work because they

might have some insight into some different solutions that have been tried before. So it might be something that you can bring up in the conversation like, "Hey, we did try this before. But then the reason we didn't go through it was blah-blah-blah". So yeah, I love that you also include like other product team members when you're presenting those findings.

[00:26:18] EA: Yeah. No, it's definitely necessary.

[00:26:20] TG: Alright, so let me throw a curveball here. Let's imagine the IKEA team has pushed back because your research shows that users are strongly against the idea of having a live chat UI on their website. What would be your next steps for the project? Like how would you adapt and pivot?

[00:26:40] EA: So to start out, I would just like to say that I've seen companies take the approach of deciding to build something and then seeing if users like it, right? So we think we should have a live chat UI. Other people in the industry have a live chat on their website. We need to make one. And then we've made this thing. And let's make sure that users like it before we make it accessible to everyone. And that's the wrong way to go about it. It's not user-centered, right? Even though you feel like you're building it for the user or for their experience.

What's better is to go through and take like a larger lens and say, "Let's do some foundational research about the user's journey when they come to our website, or what people are looking to do." A framework that people use really often is their jobs to be done, right? When a user comes to our website, what are they trying to accomplish? What do they do to accomplish that? And then what does that journey look like? And are their pain points or friction points that we can meet our users where they're at and facilitate the goal that they're looking to achieve, right? That's where you get to user center, by flipping kind of the order of the design process, right?

So given that, going into the research before – There's a lot of like pre-work and set up beforehand to understand, "Okay, what is that we know? What it is that we don't know?" And so if we don't know that users have asked for, or suggested, or alluded to the fact that a live chat would help on this journey, then I would argue, if I was part of the team, I would not advise that we build it first, right? I would advise that we start out with that foundational research.

So to avoid this exact situation of us doing this research and then hearing, "Oh, users don't even want that," and we've spent time and resources building something that's not applicable, right? So hopefully, we don't get to this point.

If we get to this point, right? So we have done some foundational research. We're understanding that users aren't really interested, the users in retargeting aren't really interested in live chat, then I would take it – We would go back a step. And we would – So say we're in like usability testing, or say we're in concept testing of these live chat UIs that we're testing with people, and people aren't really interested in live chat at all, we would go back a step and do some codesign with users to understand, "Okay, this is the journey as far as we understand it." One, is this correct? Or does this resonate with you? And then two, at these points, at these friction points that we've identified that a live chat might be helpful, let's get live chat out of our mind, and let's ask the user more broadly, "What would be helpful in this situation?" Because one, it's possible that people just aren't resonating with the concepts that we have up in our – Because what they're seeing in front of them doesn't sit well or doesn't resonate with them, they're not into the idea or intrigued by the idea of a live chat at all. Or maybe we're doing it wrong. Maybe we didn't hit the nail on the head. Maybe we had an idea and we went down a path and we need to shift or kind of just like build it differently. So opening it up more broadly to understand, "Okay, what can we do or like what would help facilitate your goal here? Or if it's around conversation, what would make you feel heard or make you feel like that people at the company are accessible for you to ask any questions to or have any conversations that is part of your journey in purchasing ready-made furniture?" Let's take a step back and allow them to kind of design with us instead of designing first and then checking later.

[00:30:18] TG: Yeah, yeah, those are all amazing decisions there, especially like about how you go back into the research. And you might already have some of this collected, like, as we were talking earlier, how you pivot sometimes and go off script when you find that you need to get more context on it. So as you are discovering, like people are strongly against the idea of live chat UI. You might have like already began to like formulate like new questions for the research to see like, "Okay, what would you prefer? Is there like a competitor?" or something like that.

So let's go back to a happy scenario here. Let's say the stakeholders all love the new findings and want to move forward with next steps. What do you need to facilitate next in the process?

Like, who are you communicating with? Scheduling meetings with? Is the work done? Or how are you progressing forward?

[00:31:11] EA: As researchers, when we conclude the research project, the work is nowhere near done. Like I've heard someone say, after the research project is closed, and it's presented, you've done about 50% of your job.

The bigger job that we have to do as researchers is to help these product teams build user-centered projects, right? That's a lot of the job, I'd say, that people don't necessarily kind of think about sometimes. So after kind of I've presented the findings, I'm still working with the product team to help apply these recommendations and the insights to their work. And these insights oftentimes aren't just based on one design or one product, right? You're adding it to your knowledge base of what you know about your users and how to design for them.

So something that's really helpful to pull out when you do do research is pull out these principles, pull out these experience trends that you're seeing and help the team keep a note of that, so that when you continue to build for the same group, or you continue to build something that's part of a similar experience, then you can go back and say, "Hey, we learned in this time that security is something that comes up very often for users." Or we've learned that people like having a record of the conversations that they have on our live chat, right? So as we're designing similar things or other things, we can go back and keep those in mind, right? So part of my job is helping people really, really internalize what we're learning from the research.

Another part is, "Okay, we've done the research. We have some actionable next steps. How do we make sure that we incorporate those next steps into our product roadmap?" Okay? So if we're working on an MVP, and we're going to release the MVP, or if we're working in just the early, early design stages, in the roadmap of how we're building out this product, the findings that we have, and the next steps that we agreed to, where did those fit on to the roadmap? And how can I help to fill-in any gaps in that process, right? We may have learned this. And then, okay, we're going to do this. Next month on the roadmap, we're going to work on this. Are there any questions that come up when it comes time to apply this, right? Or do we need some information on how exactly to design for this? Do we need to do a check with users to see we've learned that people want to live chat? Is this what they were thinking when they said that? Or

should it be tweaked, right? So it really is a continuous process of learning and of helping the team incrementally become more user-centered, and work from that space.

[00:33:48] TG: Yeah, I'm glad you brought that up and especially went into detail about it, because I know, for some like junior researchers I've talked to they feel kind of like stuck, like, "Okay, I've done the initial research. Like what value am I going to provide now?" But like you can continue to ask research questions. You can continue to make sure that every finding that you've discovered is being implemented and understanding when it's going to be implemented in like the whole sprint process and launch process, because sometimes it may take like two years before all the finding – Especially if you found some like really like critical discoveries there.

But yeah, even during that phase, like as you're talking with the product designers, seeing like, "Okay, you've put together this design. Let's go." Do some usability testing on it. It's a constant communication and collaboration to make sure that you're continuing to make sure the product is user-centered as Eniola said.

[00:34:42] EA: I want to bring up especially doing UX research in agency life. I started out at an agency where I was working at a centralized company and multiple companies came to us to help them with user research, right? And so a lot of people in the agency world, they think about what I just said, and kind of like your job is not done after you deliver your readout. And you have to continue to support the product teams. Well, oftentimes, in agency life, they come, they have a project scoped out, you complete the project, and then they go back and internal researchers help do the process of helping product teams actually carry it out.

So what's important to note here is even if your agency life and you're not part of the process after you deliver the readout, it's important for you to build that context or like continue that kind of like tracking trends and understanding user principles for yourself. Because as a user researcher, and agency life, you're becoming a subject matter expert, right? So even if you're not working with a particular company, odds are, based on the agency you work at, you're probably working in some kind of niche, right?

So when I was in the biotech space doing user research, I was learning so much working with different companies within similar therapy areas, right? So the knowledge that I'm building, especially the foundational research, it's not just for the weeks that I'm working with that company. But I'm internalizing that and understanding like, "Okay, well, this is what this population, or this is what this segment of users, this is what we've heard from them. And these are some trends that I'm seeing."

And then, of course, agency side, companies come back. Companies come back and look to build on research or say, "Okay, this was really interesting that we learned. Now we want to do another round of research. Maybe we did some foundational work. And now we have some concepts we want to test or something like that." So even for the folks who are agency side, it's still super important to kind of keep up and internalize the findings and track them.

[00:36:42] TG: I'm so glad you brought that up, because not a lot of people getting into the industry understand how your job really differs depending on if you're in-house or agency, and what the workload looks like, and how it changes. Like you're not always going to be brought in and go from point A to point B. Like you'll be dropped in at point W or something, right? So just being able to understand like what you need, like asking the right questions to understand where they are in the phases of project to see how research can make a tremendous difference to the product therefore that they're going forward.

Is there anything else that she wants to add for facilitating a user research study?

[00:37:24] EA: I don't think so. I don't think anything else comes to mind.

[00:37:26] TG: I guess another question, are there any like pet peeves that you have? I know, we address some of that last time. But any other ones come to mind as far as like things that help you do your job better that you try to make sure that it's going well?

[00:37:41] EA: Yeah. So not necessarily pet peeve. But when I'm working with companies, something that I ask for really upfront in the kind of like research kickoff setup process is trying to understand, "Okay, you want to do this research. We have these questions, or these gaps that we're looking to fill in. As a result of getting these questions answered, then what?" Like,

"What's going to happen? How will we use this information?" Because it really flips it back on to the team, the product team, right? So designer, PM, content strategist, data engineer, the whole team to say, "Okay. Well, these question that we're looking for, how are we going to apply it to our work?" right? Because what you really don't want to do as a researcher is to do research for the sake of doing research. "Hey, this will be interesting to know. Let's go ahead and ask about it."

And I make it very clear to product teams like what goes into setting up research. That it's weeks, and it's money, and it's time, and it's resources, right? So if you don't have an idea, at least, or an understanding of the shifts that will take, or if we hear positive feedback on this, then we'll do this. Or if we hear negative feedback, then we have the time, and it's feasible to pivot in some ways, right? What are the next steps? And what is the roadmap look like? Then the team needs to go back and think about that and plan around that before it's time to do research. Because the last thing you want is to build this pretty deck and have these great insights and then it just kind of sit in someone's email or on someone's desktop, and it's not really applied to help the team get more user-centered as far as what they're building.

And I'd say it happens fairly often, right? And I think as researchers, as researchers, it's not our job to be neutral parties for the product team, at least. But when teams come to researchers or when a researcher is embedded in a product team, they're looking at us as the subject matter experts of research, right? What it is that we do? So hopefully, they're open to also hearing the guidance of how to make the research as applicable as possible and effective for the team and how to get the most out of the research. So that's something that I would definitely always ask for. And then if there is any like disagreement or people aren't on one accord, or people are still kind of questioning that, that conversation is necessary to have before starting research, because it's really hard to do that afterwards and kind of push for the team to use the research when they haven't planned out how exactly they're going to use it.

[00:40:22] TG: Thank you for all of that. That's the end of the project. So at this point, listeners, you may still be in a supporting role, like to build out additional features, as Eniola said, or looking for potential opportunities, for features, or maybe like be put on like a new project. But these steps that we've gone over are just like a rough guide for you to follow when facilitating your own user research study.

So just to jump into some things that Eniola does outside of work, she has a company called UX Out Loud, where she provides services like one-on-one guidance, like UX curriculum, portfolio review, resume review, and guidance for getting the promotion if you're already in the field. So if you're looking to get started in UX research, I highly recommend booking an appointment with Eniola. She will set you straight and help you work towards those goals as your career coach.

And Eniola, do you have like anything you like to say on that? Provide your website? And any guidance on like what to expect when they book a session with you?

[00:41:25] EA: Yeah. So I founded a company called UX Out Loud. It's around career coaching and help, particularly for researchers who have done the research but not necessarily have the title and want to pivot into UX research in tech or other industry that fits their interests. And like Tolu said, I do one-on-one guidance. I also help folks who are in research roles that are looking to kind of workshop things or help through. And it's really all things UXR. It is one-on-one coaching. And so everything is really customizable. And I really enjoy working with researchers, and I enjoy coaching in general. I love seeing my clients win and working with them on getting towards their goals and working on their materials. And some researchers come to me and say, "I want to be a researcher." And I would love to, at some point, be able to get a UX research job or something like that." And we dig into their experience and try to understand what have you done so far. And kind of why UX and what you're looking for?

And oftentimes, I work with clients who have done UX research in their job or done user experience research and don't know how to translate it into what recruiters would be looking for, right? So a lot of times, I'm like, "You're not an aspiring user researcher. You are a user researcher. So let's get you the title, if that's what you want. Or let's help you build on the existing skill set that you do have."

So yeah, if you're interested at all, feel free to check out my website. Feel free to check out my LinkedIn. There's a list of some of the articles I've written or podcasts that I've been on and things like that. So feel free to give those a listen. And if things resonate, and if you think we would be a good fit to work together based on your goals, you can go to the contact page on my website, and there's a Calendly embedded there. And you can feel free to schedule a free

consultation. This is just 20 minutes to understand what your background looks like and what you're looking to do, and if a coaching relationship might be a good fit. You can also follow UX Out Loud on Instagram where we post almost daily about just anything UX jobs, salary negotiations, UX working with teams, kind of all around the board. So yeah, happy to engage there. You can also feel free to add me on LinkedIn. Yeah, there are a few ways.

[00:43:51] TG: Yes. Please, guys, reach out to Eniola with any UX research questions that you have. You can visit her website, uxoutloud.com so you can skip that online bootcamp and get started as a UX researcher today.

So next, I want to get into listener questions. We got through some of them last time, and I just want to touch on the ones that we couldn't get to in the previous episode. So the first one is from fanniefannie.au. They asked, "What's the best training you need to receive to start a UX career? How do you know when you've learned enough for an entry level job?"

[00:44:29] EA: Okay. So the best training. I talk on this a lot, because some people go different routes, right? Some people do the bootcamp route. Some people go and get the master's degree. Some people are self-taught. And there's no one way that's better than others. I always say it's depending on your learning style. So if some people really want the structure of a program or a bootcamp and they need that to kind of help them help track their learning and then apply it in ways that feels structured for them, right?

Some people are really good at kind of pulling information from different sources and self-teaching. So for that, I would recommend kind of like going online and looking at everything that there is. Because everything that you'll learn in a bootcamp, or I'd even say in the master's degree, is online for free, right? It's just about finding it, curating it, and then have the opportunities to apply the knowledge that you're building.

So there's no one way, but like figure out your learning style first, and then figure out what helps with that, right? Some people love one-on-one coaching as far as learning. And so I have a package on my website called Skip the Bootcamp. And I work with folks one-on-one and kind of building the basics and then applying them and based on their goals, right? If they're looking to

find a job, then we can move on to that portion of coaching as well. So it really just depends. Figuring out what works for you.

I would say start with pulling resources online, because there's so much out there for free. And then if you're needing more structure, you're needing more guidance and kind of like how you should curate that information, or how that translates into a skill set that you're building, then feel free to reach out to a coach.

When it comes to how do you know when you've learned enough for an entry level job, that's like the quintessential question not just in UX, but in applying to jobs. Because what applying to jobs is, is selling your skill set. You're saying, "My skill set is worth about this much. I know what you're looking for. And I know that I can do that based on my experience and based on my skill set," right?

So when it comes to an entry level job, I think for UX research, in particular, you should be super comfortable with different methodologies, right? So you should have a basic understanding of some of the UX methodologies when you would apply them. You should have some experience with conducting research with users, right? It may not be in the tech space, or it may not have been called UX research. But you should have some experience with understanding the user perspective and then helping a team to use that to make their product better. I would say you should have a fair comfortability with like sampling or how you choose how many people you talk to. Recruiting just like a base level understanding. You don't have to be an expert yet as far as an entry level job. But you should have an understanding that you can build on.

And then once you feel pretty comfortable in those kinds of elements within UX and have worked with teams and things like that, you should apply, right? Build a really strong narrative of what your skill set is, right? Make sure your resume is really tight and it's in the language of UX. Build a portfolio, right? Even if you feel like it's a light one, right? I'm seeing more and more UX research, job descriptions, even entry level that want some kind of portfolio or some kind of portfolio review. So that's where it really comes to. Even if you're fresh out of school, and you've done some kind of organizing, or club work, or spoken to users as part of your research in school, you're going to want to build a portfolio around that. Because it really just showcases

how you work through a question and your research process and demonstrates that you know how to kind of lead a product team through that process.

[00:48:21] TG: The next question is from LizMassey68. They asked, "Do you know of anyone in UXR who also does UX writing or content design?"

[00:48:34] EA: Absolutely, absolutely. UX, it's such a big space.

[00:48:38] TG: Oh, yeah. So many unicorn roles.

[00:48:40] EA: Absolutely. So many unicorns. And when it comes to companies who may be a little bit earlier on and haven't really built out their entire UX department, right? A lot of times, they'll have designers who also do research or researchers who also do writing and things like that. So there's definitely space for that. And I tell people, figure out what you're most passionate about, or what you really, really enjoy doing, and then find that space for yourself. And if it's within UX, awesome.

But when it comes to people who do both end, I would advise that you build a strong narrative of what you want to do, right? So I had people who are who come to me and they say, "Well, I want to be in UX, and I'm open to design opportunities, or research opportunities, or content opportunities." And as far as the people that I work with, because I'm really skilled in UX research, I usually work with people who have decided UX research is what I'm looking to do. That's for me. And that's what I would like help on.

So a lot of the UX generalist come to me and they're kind of either or. I just kind of want to explore. And I would say that process should probably take place before someone approaches a coach, just because coaching is an investment, right? And you want to make sure that you're making the most of it, and the most of your time. So the kind of exposing yourself to different career opportunities and understanding what different people do within UX and figuring out what resonates really well with you, that's something you could do for free. So I advise that you do it for free before approaching a program, or a bootcamp, or a coach.

[00:50:19] TG: Good advice there. Next one is from KNNG. They asked, "Do you ever face skepticism on the value of your research? And if so, how do you handle it?"

[00:50:32] EA: Hmm. So oftentimes, as a researcher, I'm working with product teams, right? As far as research, I'm a subject matter expert in UXR. And then there are other roles that are being played on the team. And so it's not that people are skeptical of the value of research. A lot of times it's that people aren't as familiar with research as I am, which makes a lot of sense, right? Because they aren't researchers, and might not be as familiar with how helpful research can be in achieving their product goals, right?

So any job that you have, no matter what company you're at, no matter what industry that you're in, there's going to be an aspect of educating your team, right? On the applications of research, of how research can be done really well, of what you do with the research and how you apply it, right? There's always going to be that education piece that folks look to you to help with because you're the research subject matter expert, right?

So it may come off as skepticism sometime. It may come off as people just having less experience with research and how to apply it. But I would say, the way I approach it is by educating it, is by figuring out what are their goals, and what are our common goals? And then how can I help them meet their goals with research and present it that way?

[00:51:55] TG: That's all the listener questions for this week. As a reminder, you could be included in the next episode. Make sure to follow me on Instagram @uinarrative and Twitter @uinarrativeco. I randomly ask questions that could be featured in an upcoming episode.

Alright, so you know the deal. I like to end the show with a random question, just because I like laughing. So what animal would be the most terrifying with an addition of human arms?

[00:52:26] EA: Oh my gosh. Okay, so the first thing that comes to mind – And bear with me, the first thing that comes to mind are spiders, because –

[00:52:34] TG: Ooh! Extra arms, girl.

[00:52:36] EA: So I'm mildly arachnophobic already. And I just think of that, plus the addition of human arms would just be the end of the world.

[00:52:49] TG: Oh, my gosh. Eew!

[00:52:53] EA: I know, right? Sorry for the picture, anyone who's visualize it was right now.

[00:53:00] TG: Let me think of one. Oh, rats. I mean, they already have arms, but like human arms.

[00:53:07] EA: Imagining two human arms like on the side of them. Yeah. No, that's a lot.

[00:53:13] TG: That's like prehistoric or something. Like, where are you from?

[00:53:17] EA: Because I think so much of like our fear of some stuff is not necessarily just the thing, but it's how they move. Like at least that's what it is for spiders. Like if a spider is just standing there, it's like, "Okay, there's a spider there." But seeing it move, oh my goodness. I can't.

[00:53:36] TG: That's one that makes my skin crawl, for sure.

[00:53:39] EA: I know. I mean, it was a good question, but sadly the answer is kind of painful.

[00:53:45] TG: Where could we connect with you online?

[00:53:49] EA: Yeah. Again, feel free to reach out to me on LinkedIn. The UX Out Loud is on Instagram as UX Out Loud. So feel free to reach out there. And then there's also my website where you can connect with me. You can book a free consultation. You can send me a note through the contact form. Yeah, I'm always happy to hear from folks even if it's just dropping a nice note. Those are always nice to read. And especially if you think working together might be helpful, please reach out.

[00:54:18] TG: Everybody, if you have any questions or comments about today's episode, make sure to tag Eniola on her social channels. And I'll have them all linked in the show notes. Please, guys, go show her your support or appreciation for coming on the episode part two. And also tag me @uinarrative on Instagram or Twitter @uinarrativeco. And please share this episode with anyone else that you think would benefit from it. We've gone over so much this will be especially useful for anyone that is getting their foot wet into user research for the first time, or even if they're just more of a junior, getting started with their first job, trying to get a better handle on how to facilitate some things that or to try to get a promotion. So please, share this episode and tag us if you guys have any questions, or want to show your appreciation.

Thank you so much, Eniola, for joining us again on this episode.

[00:55:10] EA: Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. Thank you for the questions. Thank you everyone who's listening. I really appreciate it. It was one of my favorite parts of my job is kind of like talk to people about something that I really love. So, hope to hear from you all. And thanks so much again.

[OUTRO]

[00:55:28] TG: Thank you for listening to the UI Narrative podcast. If you like what you hear, make sure to show this podcast some love by commenting and subscribing where you listen. You can find me on Instagram and Facebook @uinarrative or Twitter @uinarrativeco. I also respond to emails at hello@uinarrative.com. Talk to you later. Bye.

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