

Personal Product Stories from
Google, Spotify, Microsoft and More

PRODUCT



How to Make Your Product Stand Out
with Emotional Connection

DR. NESRINE CHANGUEL

Praise for Product Delight

“Though analytics often drive product design decisions, Dr Changuel reminds us in this book that the best way to create real business value is to connect with customers on an emotional level. This book provides the frameworks and solutions you need to create products customers love.”

— **Aarron Walter**, Author of *Designing for Emotion*, Co-founder of Design Better

“Strong product people have recognized that to get someone to actually choose and use your product, customers need to perceive real value. With some products, especially in the enterprise, just being able to reliably deliver the necessary functionality can be enough to earn you a very happy and devoted customer. But often, value requires more. For those products, we strive for our customers to feel real emotion for our products, such as delight, or even love. Nesrine’s book is not the first to tackle this important topic, but most of the earlier efforts took a shortcut. It’s not that hard to use techniques like gamification to make products that are addictive. But today we all know the ethical, cultural and environmental consequences of this lazy approach. For those that want to do better, Nesrine is trying to help you create meaningful delight.”

— **Marty Cagan**, Silicon Valley Product Group

“Product Delight explains why creating emotional connections with users isn’t optional—it’s essential for product differentiation. Nesrine Changuel lays out a practical framework for designing experiences that resonate beyond mere utility. A valuable resource for anyone aiming to build products that stand apart.”

— **Nir Eyal**, Author of *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*

“Nesrine was on my team when working on Google Meet. We closely worked together on bringing a delightful and fun meeting experience to our users during the COVID pandemic. While it was a very intense time to work on video calling, it was also very rewarding to support our users with positive and delightful experiences. I am really happy to see that Nesrine is now taking her experience across different companies and products to a broader audience. I truly hope that this book will result in many more products focusing on user delight.”

— **Niklas Blum**, Director Product Management at Google

“In a world increasingly driven by machines, emotion is the key to product success. In this engaging and practical book, Nesrine Changuel makes it easy to build products that delight their users.”

— **Jeff Gothelf**, Co-founder Sense & Respond Learning

“Nesrine Changuel has created a much-needed guide for product teams who want to go beyond functional success to build products that delight customers. Product Delight gives teams a framework for creating experiences that feel personal, intuitive, and memorable. Whether you’re a product manager, designer, or developer, this book is a valuable addition to your toolkit.”

— **Dan Olsen**, Author of The Lean Product Playbook

“At Mind the Product, one of our slogans for the product community was to ‘build products people love’, but while our industry talks a lot about delight, it’s not often put into practice. It can be really hard to connect the dots between our customer discovery, our business needs, and delight - until now. In this book, Nesrine connects the dots and lays out an indispensable model and toolkit for systematically integrating delight into everything we build.”

— **Martin Eriksson**, Co-author of Product Leadership and Co-founder of Mind the Product

“I followed Nesrine’s career over the past years, and I knew she would, one day, step back, reflect, and write down what it really means to build GREAT PRODUCTS! She was always passionate and excellent at thinking, managing,

designing, and living Product Management and Development. In her book, Nesrine has put her soul and genius to articulate BEST what it means to build products that NOT ONLY work, BUT that win user HEARTS! Her product delight model leads to aligning business objectives and user goals. Her model indeed humanizes technology and makes it LOVABLE! BRAVO Nesrine for bringing to life this product delight structure and model to enlighten product makers on the need to design products that meet user expectations at both the Functional and the Emotional levels! BRAVO!”

— **Jamel Gafsi**, General Manager at Microsoft

“Building truly impactful products today feels like navigating an ever-shifting landscape. Achieving technical excellence — usability, reliability, security — is no longer a differentiator, but simply the foundation. And that’s only the start. Users now also expect products to feel personal, function seamlessly across devices, and align with their values around sustainability and ethics. It’s a tall order — and for product managers already stretched thin, the idea of also creating emotional connection can feel like an insurmountable hurdle.

Yet in today’s saturated digital landscape, functional superiority alone will not suffice. As AI promises to make technically sound products easier to build, emotional connection has become the true differentiator. Indeed, delight increasingly marks the divide between products that fade and those that win and keep hearts.

Nesrine’s book meets this challenge with clarity and structure. It offers an approachable model that makes the idea of delight more tangible and actionable. For those seeking a well-organised overview of how to incorporate emotional considerations into product development, this is a helpful place to start. Still, delight isn’t a formula. The real challenge lies in applying these ideas in the messy, human, and often unpredictable world of product development. This book won’t do that work for you, but it will help you begin, with focus and intent, at a time when genuine emotional connection has never been more essential.”

— **Marcin Floryan**, Engineering Leader, Former Director of Product and Engineering at Spotify

*“Users do not remember features. They remember how a product made them feel. In *Delight*, Nesrine shows why emotional connection is not optional but essential. AI makes launching products faster than ever, but without the craft of delighting users, it only speeds up irrelevance. Nesrine shares real lessons from top tech companies and empowers you to build products users care about, not just use.”*

— **David Pereira**, Author of *Untrapping Product Teams*

*“In a world where functionality is table stakes, emotional connection is the true differentiator. *Product Delight* is a powerful, practical guide to building products that don’t just work—but make people feel. Nesrine Changuel draws from deep experience at the world’s top tech companies to show us how to create products that resonate, inspire, and endure. A must-read for product builders who want to transform user delight into strategic advantage.”*

— **Robert Aichner**, Partner Director of Product Management at Microsoft

*“My favorite product books are almost relentlessly generous in helping product people do their jobs better. I am very happy to say that Nesrine Changuel’s *Product Delight* is exactly such a book. *Product Delight* makes a compelling and comprehensive case as to why emotion is key to making products that actually matter to people—and gives you all the information you need to take that idea and apply it directly to your work. I love how it brings a new perspective to some common product development frameworks and methods, as well as introducing a few new ones to which I will be referring frequently. I highly recommend this book to everybody working in product development!”*

— **Matt LeMay**, Author of *Impact-first Product Teams and Product Management in Practice*

*“*Product Delight* is a thoughtful, well-crafted guide to designing emotionally resonant products. It’s easy to read, packed with relatable examples, and every chapter ends with prompts that help teams put ideas into action. Nesrine offers a structured, approachable way to think about user delight that’s both practical*

and inspiring. This book won't revolutionize your practice—but it will sharpen your thinking around something AI still can't replicate: the human capacity to understand and design for emotion. I believe everyone working in product should be advocating for more emotionally resonant products, and this book helps you do just that."

— **Petra Wille**, Product Leadership Coach, Author, and Conference Curator

"In a world saturated with too many useless features, Product Delight helps you cut through the noise. Nesrine Changuel offers a simple and structured approach to something many teams talk about but few know how to deliver: emotional resonance. This is not a book about adding charm on top—it's about building from the inside out, with purpose, with intent. If you care about building products that are not only useful but meaningful, this book will help you discover and focus on the details that truly matter."

— **Rémi Guyot**, Author of Discovery Discipline

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PRODUCT DELIGHT

How to Make Your Product Stand
Out with Emotional Connection

DR. NESRINE CHANGUEL

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“To my delighters in life, Maya and Nael”

Thank you so much for taking the time to read *Product Delight*. I hope it sparks ideas, challenges your thinking, and gives you tools to create more meaningful and delightful products.

Interested in ordering multiple copies or organizing a book club around *Product Delight*? I'd love that, just reach out at contact@nesrine-changuel.com.

Curious about how to bring the product delight model into your organization? I offer workshops, consulting, and coaching. Drop me a line at the same email and explore the “Work With Me” section at the end of this book for more details.

And if you just want an honest recommendation on the best way to experience Paris, I can help with that too. Don't hesitate to get in touch.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Nesrine Changuel

Coach, Trainer, Speaker, Author, and Former Product Leader at Google, Spotify, and Microsoft

Nesrine Changuel is a product expert, coach, trainer, lecturer, speaker, and author. She has spent more than a decade as a product manager and product leader in some of the world's most successful and product-influencing companies, including Google, Spotify, and Microsoft.

After completing her MSc, Nesrine pursued a PhD at Alcatel-Lucent Bell Labs in Paris, driven by a deep desire to explore and expand her expertise in computer science. Her research journey gave her the freedom to dive into domains such as signal processing, video compression, reinforcement learning, and optimization. She has shared her research at prestigious international conferences and holds a portfolio of patents in her name.

After five years as a full-time researcher at Bell Labs, Nesrine transitioned into product management when Microsoft offered her a role as a video product manager at Skype. She relocated to Sweden to join Skype's Stockholm office, where she led platform growth, developed core video calling experiences, and even collaborated with NASA to integrate Skype with HoloLens devices. She also worked on strategic initiatives such as interoperability between Skype and Microsoft Teams.

After four years at Skype, Nesrine thought that video conferencing tools reached a good maturity level and considered exploring new areas. She joined Spotify, where she led product areas such as video podcasts and media quality, helping the company scale its platform to support new formats and a wider range of devices. But when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, her view on the maturity of video communication was challenged. As society rapidly shifted toward fully digital interactions, new user needs emerged that were deeply rooted in emotional experience and human connection.

This led her to Google, where she worked on Google Meet with a mission to create the most delightful digital meeting experience possible. Nesrine worked on features such as background replace, emoji reactions, and filters. She built solutions for users who didn't just need functionality, but needed to feel seen, heard, and comfortable. In 2022, she moved to Paris and joined the Chrome team, where she took on fresh product challenges at the intersection of productivity and emotional resonance, focusing on delivering delightful experiences in Chrome iOS.

In 2024, Nesrine left Google with a new mission: to help companies and product leaders build more delightful products. Having experienced the power of delight firsthand, she became determined to demystify the concept and make it more accessible. Her goal is to help teams move beyond mere utility, toward crafting emotionally engaging experiences that users truly love. Today, she teaches the concept of product delight through academic programs, executive education, and corporate training, empowering leaders and organizations to adopt the delight model and thrive in increasingly competitive markets.

Nesrine lives in Paris, France.

Introduction

I started my journey as a researcher. Right after completing my PhD, I joined Alcatel-Lucent Bell Labs as a research engineer. Being a researcher deeply shaped my product management skills and personality, it taught me how to dive deep into complex problems, explore them from every angle, and build thoughtful, innovative solutions. In my research work, I investigated challenges, prototyped solutions, presented those solutions, and patented them when needed. However, once a prototype showed promise, it was handed over to the development department for productization. That handoff always left me wondering. What happens next? Do users use what I built? Do they like it? That curiosity pushed me to discover the world of product management. This journey has profoundly shaped me, not just as a product manager but as a thinker and communicator.

I've always loved being on stage, ever since my research days, and I've carried that into my product career, speaking at many conferences around the world. One day, a conference organizer asked me a simple but powerful question: "Have you noticed a common thread among the successful companies *you've* worked at?" It was not an easy question to answer but reflecting on it sparked a realization. Yes, there is a common thread. Each of these companies, from Microsoft to Spotify to Google, are deeply invested in building emotional connections between their products and their users.

That insight led me to dig deeper into the topic of emotional connection in product development. I put on my research hat again, dove into the literature, interviewed product leaders across industries, and synthesized what I learned. In 2024, I left Google with a new mission: to help companies and product leaders create products that connect more emotionally with users.

I call this concept “Product Delight.” Why delight? Most product people agree on the importance of delighting their users, but many don’t know how to operationalize it. That’s why I wrote this book. My goal is to demystify the concept of delight and raise awareness about its power, but also to provide actionable tools, techniques, and a detailed product delight model that makes it easier than ever to build with delight in mind. This book is for every builder who wants their products to be used and loved.

Why Product Delight?

Launching a new tech product is a high-stakes game, with more than 30,000 launches each year and a staggering 95% failure rate.¹ With more than 5 million apps competing in app stores and new hardware innovations emerging every year, building something that merely functions is no longer enough. The hard truth is that a product that works well may still struggle to gain traction if it doesn’t make users feel something. Users don’t just want efficient solutions; they crave experiences that connect with those solutions on a human level.

This book makes the case that emotional connection is no longer a luxury, it’s a necessity. Think about Spotify: millions of users can stream music on dozens of platforms, but features such as Spotify Wrapped, personalized playlists, and mood-driven recommendations make users feel seen, understood, and emotionally connected. That connection keeps them coming back. The same holds for Apple, Dyson, Atlassian, and many other category leaders. These companies have learned that delight is the differentiator, the X-factor that turns a good product into an irresistible product. The goal of delight is not just about sprinkling joy on top of utility; it’s about weaving emotion into the core experience so that the product becomes memorable and meaningful.

Delight has long been discussed in the worlds of design and marketing, with established methods and successful case studies, but there’s still a noticeable gap when it comes to its place in product management and business. As a result, many product teams struggle to align cross-functionally on what

1 <https://schulich.yorku.ca/news/new-study-reveals-how-timing-drives-tech-product-launch-success/>

delight actually means and how to consistently build for it. This book exists to bridge that gap, offering not only a shared language, but also actionable steps to enable smoother alignment between product, design, engineering, and business. When delight is treated as a strategic lens rather than a finishing touch, entire organizations can rally around creating products that are not just functional, but unforgettable.

This book will help you do exactly that. It provides the clarity, tools, and structure needed to make emotional connection an intentional, measurable, and collaborative part of the product development process. Your team won't just build the product right; they'll build the *right product* that resonates deeply with users.

What to Expect from Product Delight?

I built this book using stories from my own personal and professional journeys, and from others who crafted products that people truly love. I believe that we understand better, remember longer, and connect more deeply through storytelling. That's why each concept in *Product Delight* is brought to life with real-world examples, lived experiences, and voices from product leaders across different industries.

In *Product Delight*, you'll uncover the critical role emotional connection plays in product success, and how it enhances customer loyalty, strengthens brand reputation, and drives organic growth. Backed by research from *Harvard Business Review*, McKinsey & Company, Capgemini, and others, this book explains why emotional connection isn't just a nice-to-have; it's a long-term competitive advantage. You'll learn that not all delight is created equal and discover how to differentiate between surface delight (surprising, charming touches), deep delight (solutions that emotionally connect by solving core needs), and low delight (functional solutions).

The book is intentionally designed to be flexible. Whether you choose to read it from cover to cover or jump directly to the parts most relevant to your current challenge, you'll find that every chapter stands on its own. Each section is crafted to be self-explanatory and lightweight in dependency, so you can move freely across chapters without losing the flow or needing to backtrack.

- At the heart of this book is the product delight model, which consists of four key steps: 1) listing the user's motivators, 2) defining opportunities, 3) listing and categorizing solutions using the delight grid, and 4) validating those solutions to maximize impact.
- We'll dive into methods for identifying functional and emotional user motivators and transforming them into meaningful product opportunities through segmentation, user interviewing, and research-driven discovery.

From insight to execution, you'll follow a clear, step-by-step approach to developing delightful features that balance emotional connection with practical value.

- The delight grid is just one part of the product delight model. It helps you classify your ideas across emotional and functional dimensions, and guides you in moving features from low delight to deep delight.
- And because delight shouldn't be left to intuition alone, you'll explore ways to measure it effectively using dedicated metrics and behavioral signals to validate its impact.
- We'll also address the concept of delight excellence, highlighting common pitfalls to avoid such as gimmicks or unsustainable ideas, and cover how to ensure your delightful solutions remain impactful and aligned with your long-term product vision.
- Beyond tools, this book shows that delight is a mindset, one that must shape how teams operate, prioritize, and connect with users. Creating truly delightful products means building a culture in which emotional connection matters as much as usability. Leaders play a key role in making this mindset stick, and a full chapter is dedicated to helping them embed and sustain a delight-driven culture across their teams.

This book is a reference you can revisit over and over again; a guide explained through stories, grounded in real challenges and practical solutions. My hope is that you'll not only learn how to build delightful products, but also feel inspired to reimagine what your product could mean to the people who use it.

Who Is This Book For?

This book is for anyone involved in building products that people use and who believes those products should also be loved. Whether you're a product manager trying to balance user needs and business goals, a designer striving to craft meaningful experiences, or an engineer committed to building solutions that aren't just functional, but lovable, this book is for you.

It's for product leaders and founders who want to create products that stand out in saturated markets. It's for teams that are tired of launching features that check all the boxes but fail to resonate. It's for those who believe that delight is important, but don't yet have the tools, language, or shared mindset to make it a consistent part of their product practice.

While the idea of emotional connection is often embraced in design and marketing circles, *Product Delight* brings it into the core of product and business strategy, giving cross-functional teams a model to align around delight as a shared goal. If you're working in a company where delight feels like a vague ambition rather than an actionable strategy, this book is here to change that.

Whether you're early in your career or leading large teams, this book will give you the mindset, methods, and vocabulary to build products that don't just work, they win hearts.

CHAPTER

1

What Is Product Delight?

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 1:

A delightful product exceeds expectations and anticipates needs.

Think for a moment. What were the best meals you had in the past few months? Do you have a favorite? Great. Now, why did you choose that meal? Was it because it was healthy? Delicious? Beautifully presented? Or maybe it was the atmosphere, the people you were with, or the overall experience.

Chances are, it wasn't just about the food itself. You remember it because it made you feel something. It created a moment of emotions that stuck with you. The same applies to products. Think about a tech product that you enjoyed using. Not one you felt obligated to use, but one that sparked joy, making a lasting impression.

Chances are, you've formed an emotional connection with that product. And that wasn't by accident. The product team behind it approached their work through the lens of product delight, creating experiences that foster emotions, not just utility.

Introducing Product Delight

Imagine a world in which products do only the bare minimum: meeting users' needs in the most functional, mechanical way. They work, yes, but they're forgettable. No spark, no emotional pull.

Now imagine the opposite: a beautifully engineered product that fails to meet real user needs. No matter how impressive the design or technology is, if it doesn't serve a meaningful purpose, it leaves users frustrated and disconnected.

While the second scenario is clearly worse, the first scenario isn't inspiring either. Because today, solving problems isn't enough. What makes a product truly memorable is its ability to create an emotional connection, to make users feel understood, empowered, even delighted.

True product delight happens when a product solves a need, but does so in a way that feels effortless, joyful, and a little magical. Loyalty is born in those small, unexpected moments when utility meets emotion.

The Three Pillars of Product Delight

Delivering delight isn't about exceeding expectations randomly. It requires understanding what makes an experience truly great. Here are three essential elements of creating product delight:

Addressing Pain Points

Users often turn to products because they want to solve a problem or eliminate frustration. Delight happens when a product removes that friction and does so seamlessly.

Take Chrome's password manager; a feature I love. Now, "love" might seem like a strong word for managing passwords, but consider this: you're trying to log into a website but can't remember the password you set six months ago. Frustrating, right?

But just as you hover over the password field, Chrome steps in: "Hey, I've got your password, let me fill this out for you." Saved!

In seconds, you've gone from frustration to relief. That's a delight. An effortless problem-solving that turns a negative experience into a positive one.

Anticipating Needs

Not all user needs arise from frustration, many are unspoken and subtle, and only emerge when the right solution appears. Great products anticipate these needs before users even articulate them.

A product that anticipates needs is one that understands and addresses what the user requires before they even have to ask.

Anticipate needs = Predict + Serve before users ask for it

Take background replace in Google Meet. When we built it, we weren't solving an explicit user complaint. People hadn't flooded forums asking for it. But during the pandemic, we noticed a deeper, often unspoken need: the desire to protect privacy while working from home. Kitchens, bedrooms, and shared spaces became our new offices, and with that came vulnerability.

Background replace was one of the best solutions to solve those needs. Quickly, the feature became a must-have across video conferencing platforms.

This is the essence of anticipating needs: noticing subtle behaviors, listening between the lines, and building features that users instantly value, not because they demand them, but because they feel seen.

Exceeding Expectations

A product that exceeds expectations goes a step further by delivering more value, joy, or quality than the user imagined. It surprises and delights.

Solving user needs is fundamental, but true product delight comes from going beyond expectations. It's about delivering value in ways users didn't ask for but instantly appreciate. Delight happens when a product surprises with effortlessness, memorability, and the feeling that it's genuinely looking out for them.

Exceeding Expectation = Delivering more than expected

Take cashback² in Microsoft Shopping. A few weeks ago, my husband was browsing for a coffee machine on Edge, comparing models and trying to decide which one to buy. After settling on the one that fits best, he proceeded to checkout, expecting the usual process, only to be pleasantly surprised by a suggestion to apply a 5% discount. Edge had automatically sourced a working

2 Cashback when shopping on Microsoft Edge <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/edge/features/shopping-cashback>

coupon without him even searching for one. He hadn't planned on saving money or looking for deals, so that unexpected gesture felt like a thoughtful bonus.

This is the essence of exceeding expectations: not just removing friction, but adding unexpected value that goes beyond what users assume a product will do. It transforms a routine task, such as online shopping, into a moment of delight that builds emotional connection and long-term loyalty.

A Personal Story of Delight

In 2005, I packed my bags, left my home country, and moved to France to study electrical engineering in Grenoble. It was the start of an exciting new chapter, but also a lonely time. Being far from my family and loved ones was harder than I had imagined. International calls were expensive, and writing letters felt too slow and distant. I missed the feeling of being truly present.

Skype was a perfect solution at that time. It offered me the best way to stay connected within my budget.

A year later, Skype introduced video calling, and everything changed. I could see my parents' faces, feel their reactions, and be part of their lives again. I was there, virtually, for birthdays, everyday chats, and even my best friend's wedding. It didn't just solve the problem of communication; it recreated the feeling of presence. It met a deep emotional need I hadn't been able to articulate: to feel close, seen, and connected across thousands of kilometers.

Fast forward to 2014. Life came full circle when I joined Skype as a Video Product Manager. That year, my team worked on launching group video calls on mobile. I still remember testing it with my own family. What began as a tool to reconnect, suddenly brought more people into the moment, too. It turned one-on-one calls into family reunions, weaving in joy I hadn't expected but deeply cherished.

Skype wasn't just about video calls. It was about creating emotional closeness in a digital world.

Skype recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, but also rang for the last time in May 2025. This example serves as a reference that long before video conferencing became the norm, Skype showed us that the most powerful technologies are those that make us feel something.

The Three Types of Delight

When you first heard the term “product delight,” you might have imagined a tech product with a sleek interface, vibrant design, or a playful Easter egg.

In his book, *Designing for Emotion*,³ Aaron Walter refers to these elements as “surface delight,” and that’s often what people think of when they hear the word “delight.”

However, delight goes deeper than aesthetics. There are three types of delight, each playing a different role in shaping user experiences. Understanding all three helps us intentionally incorporate delight into products.

Surface Delight

Surface delight is purely visual or interactive, with polished user interfaces, animations, or small moments of surprise. While these elements can make a product feel more engaging, they don’t help users accomplish goals or fulfill deeper needs.

It’s the most common type of delight because it requires little understanding of user behavior beyond making interactions feel enjoyable.

Apple Watch Celebration

Every New Year’s Eve, the Apple Watch delivers a small celebratory moment. As the clock strikes midnight, a burst of fireworks lights up the screen, marking the occasion. A notification invites the user to tap and replay the animation.

Similarly, on my birthday, I received a “Happy Birthday Nesrine” message. When I tapped it, colorful balloons floated across the screen, adding a festive touch.

Delightful? Yes. These interactions don’t help me achieve a goal or solve a problem, but they make the user smile and foster connections between the user and the product.

3 Aaron Walter, *Designing for Emotion* (A Book Apart, 2011).

Chrome Dino

Google's Chrome Dino is another example of surface delight.

When a user loses internet access and tries to load a webpage in Google Chrome, a pixelated T-Rex dinosaur appears, launching into a simple game. The idea originated to entertain users during moments of frustration, turning a negative experience into a playful one.

Even if it doesn't solve the actual problem of lost connectivity, it's fun and delightful.

By the way, why a dinosaur? The Chrome Dino is from the metaphor that being offline is like going back to the prehistoric era. When Chrome can't connect to the internet, it's like you're being thrown back in time. So the team chose a dinosaur to represent that moment in a playful way.

What began as a tiny Easter egg quickly became a beloved feature, so much so that users started taking it seriously. The Chrome Dino game sparked global enthusiasm, with players competing for high scores, sharing tips online, and even creating mods and custom versions with leaderboards. What was meant to ease the frustration of going offline turned into a surprising source of fun, community, and even a bit of friendly competition.

Deep Delight

Deep delight happens when a product solves a functional need, while simultaneously fulfilling an emotional need. Unlike surface delight, which adds purely emotional touches such as humor, animation, or charm, deep delight emerges from a powerful combination: usefulness and emotional connection. It results from a product feature that works reliably, but also makes the user feel understood, empowered, and cared for. A deeply delightful product feels intuitive, like a thoughtful assistant who anticipates needs and delivers just the right thing at the right time. Achieving this level of delight is challenging because it demands a deep understanding of users' goals, pain points, and emotional drivers. It's not just about what users can do, but how naturally, effortlessly, and meaningfully they do it.

Gmail Smart Compose

A great example of deep delight is Gmail Smart Compose.⁴ As you type an email, Smart Compose quietly predicts your next words, offering suggestions that are relevant and easy to accept or ignore. Functionally, it boosts productivity by saving time and reducing repetitive typing. But emotionally, it eases cognitive load, builds confidence in communication, and makes writing feel smoother and more natural. This is a deep delight feature that helps with a clear task while making the experience feel effortless, intuitive, and reassuring.

QuickBooks Online

For entrepreneurs and employees alike, filing expenses is a tedious chore, often filled with frustration, interruptions, and mental clutter. While photo-scanning paper receipts became common, email receipts from services such as Airbnb or Uber remained surprisingly inconvenient. Users had to download the receipt from their inbox, then upload it into their expense management tool, becoming a small, repetitive source of friction.

QuickBooks, Intuit’s accounting software, anticipated this overlooked pain and introduced email receipt forwarding⁵, a feature that lets users simply forward receipts from their inbox, where they’re automatically matched to transactions in the system.

This is a clear example of deep delight in action:

- Meets a functional need by automating expense tracking.
- Fulfills an emotional need by removing stress and making users feel as though the product “gets” them.
- Feels intuitive; users just forward an email, something they already do daily.
- Saves time effortlessly, without any new learning curve.

4 “Smart Compose in Gmail now available for G Suite,” Google Workspace Updates, September 26, 2018, <https://workspaceupdates.googleblog.com/2018/09/gmail-smart-compose-gsuite.html?m=0&hl=mn>

5 “Email receipts and bills,” QuickBooksHelp, April 30, 2025, https://quickbooks.intuit.com/learn-support/en-us/help-article/accounts-payable/email-receipts-bills-quickbooks-online/L7r2LAQ7C_US_en_US

It doesn't just solve a problem, it removes an invisible frustration and replaces it with a sense of ease and relief. That's the essence of building for deep delight: anticipating real user behaviors and turning daily chore into a frictionless experience.

Low Delight

Low delight describes products that help users accomplish something, but can't create an emotional connection.

These products can be functional, reliable, and usable.

Think about a feature such as Skip in Spotify. This is purely functional. It helps users move from one song to another but doesn't create an emotional connection. No excitement. Users expect it to be there; it's not a feature that sparks joy. It meets a need, but doesn't exceed expectations. It organizes music, but doesn't enhance the listening experience.

While this feature is necessary for usability, it doesn't create a standout moment.

More Definitions

I delayed the theoretical definition because I prioritize practical explanations. However, let's now explore the theoretical foundation behind delight.

Wheel of Emotions by Plutchik

Psychology professor Robert Plutchik developed a framework known as Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions.⁶ In his book, *Theories of Emotion* (pp. 3–33), he identifies eight core emotions: joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, and anticipation (see Figure 1).

He also mapped out non-core emotions, which arise from a combination of two core emotions.

6 Robert Plutchik, "A General Psychoevolutionary Theory of Emotion," in *Emotion: Theories, Research, and Experience, Volume 1: Theories of Emotion*, ed. Robert Plutchik and Henry Kellerman, (Academic Press, 1980), 3.

Delight is one of those non-core emotions, and is a blend of joy and surprise.

- Joy is the feeling of happiness, satisfaction, and positivity that arises when users achieve their goals effortlessly or discover value in a product.
- Surprise introduces an unexpected element, breaking routines and sparking curiosity or wonder.

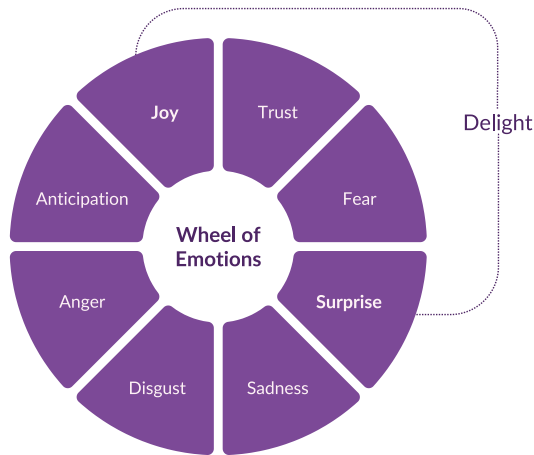


Figure 1: Simplified Wheel of Emotions by Plutchik.

If a user experiences joy and surprise, they feel delighted. Other non-core emotions include the following:

- Love (a mix of joy and acceptance)
- Disappointment (a mix of surprise and sadness)

For product managers, understanding and building this emotional blend can create deeper user connections, fostering loyalty and love for the product. The challenge is to continuously find ways to trigger joy and surprise in your users, ensuring your product remains engaging, memorable, and emotionally resonant.

The Human Factor

Another way to think about delight is as a subtle reminder that real humans are behind the product, designing, caring, and creating moments that feel personal and thoughtful.

I'm Feeling Lucky

To see product delight in action, look no further than Google's search landing page.

Google has always been careful with the use of space on that page, yet one element has remained since 2001: the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button.

At its core, this button is a shortcut that takes users directly to the first search result for their query, skipping the search results page. When first introduced, it was simply a way to save time for users who were confident in their query. It helped them accomplish something efficiently.

Over time, Google infused thoughtful interactions into the button, transforming it into something more playful and engaging. If you hover over it, the text changes to variations like "I'm Feeling Hungry" to find local restaurants or "I'm Feeling Wonderful" to display world wonders.

This simple tweak taps into human curiosity and the desire for serendipity. Users love it because it introduces an element of surprise, hallmarks of true product delight.

Despite its charm, the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button comes at a cost. Because it bypasses search results, Google doesn't show ads on those searches, losing about 1% of its total search ad revenue. That might sound like a significant financial sacrifice, but Google has a reason for keeping it.

Former Google executive Marissa Mayer explained:

It's possible to become too dry, too corporate, too much about making money. I think what's delightful about 'I'm Feeling Lucky' is that it reminds you there are real people here.⁷

7 Debbie Anderson, "10 Things You Didn't Know About Google," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, (September 4, 2015), https://www.inquirer.com/philly/business/10_Things_You_Didnt_Know_About_Google.html

Google understands that delight isn't just a feature; it's part of its DNA. While investing in delight can seem costly upfront, it's often the very thing that drives long-term loyalty, engagement, and ultimately, sustainable growth.

The Misunderstanding of Product Delight

When people think about product delight, they often focus on surface-level elements. This is due to two common misunderstandings.

Product Delight Is (Not) Just About Aesthetics

Many assume delight is all about visual appeal, pleasing animations, colorful designs, or fun Easter eggs. While these elements can contribute to delight, delight goes beyond aesthetics.

A product can look beautiful, but can still fail if it doesn't provide real value. Plenty of apps introduce visually appealing features that serve no meaningful purpose. If a feature doesn't enhance the user's connection with the product, it's not truly delightful; it's just decoration.

Product Delight Is (Not) Disconnected from Impact

Another misconception is that delight exists for its own sake, with no need to drive business or user impact, what I call the "snowflake and confetti" effect.

It's fun to make a product shiny, playful, and exciting, but delight must be tied to business outcomes. Every delightful element should enhance the experience meaningfully, supporting user needs and product goals.

Product delight isn't an excuse to add features that don't serve a purpose.

In 2023, when the *Barbie* movie was released, typing "Barbie" into the Chrome address bar turned the entire browser pink and added sparkles. It was amusing, but did it improve the user experience? Not really. However, since it was part of a marketing campaign, it served a different purpose.

Delight isn't about aesthetic gimmicks or unnecessary add-ons. It's about driving business or enhancing the user experience in a way that's meaningful, engaging, and impactful. If a delightful feature doesn't help users achieve their goals, it's not really delight; it's just noise.

Other Words for Delight

To wrap up this explanation of product delight, I thought it would be interesting to share some other terms people use to describe it.

One common phrase is “lovable product,” which is closely tied to delight because it’s about forming an emotional connection so strong that users truly love the product.

Other terms include “wow effect” and “aha moments,” both of which capture the element of surprise that psychologist Robert Plutchik identified as a key component of delight.

The common thread among all these terms is emotional connection. At its core, product delight is about creating a deep, positive emotional connection, one that makes users feel something meaningful when they interact with your product.

It’s also deeply connected to positive user experience. A delightful product isn’t just functional; it’s enjoyable, satisfying, and memorable, turning interactions into experiences that users cherish.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Delight Creates Emotional Connection:** A delightful product exceeds expectations, and anticipates needs.
- **Levels of Delight:** Surface delight adds charm, but no function. Deep delight makes experiences effortless and enjoyable. Low delight meets needs, but with no emotional connection.
- **Delight Must Drive Impact:** Beyond aesthetics, delight should align with users' and business goals.
- **The Psychology of Delight:** Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions defines delight as joy plus surprise.
- **Delight Humanizes Tech:** Thoughtful features make products more intuitive and relatable.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Analyze Products That Inspire You:** Think of a product you truly love. What makes it stand out? Is it the way it simplifies your life, surprises you with thoughtful details, or makes interactions effortless and engaging? Identify the emotional connection it creates and use these insights to shape how you craft delight in your product.
- **Audit Your Product's Delight Levels:** Evaluate each feature in your product and categorize it as surface, deep, or low delight. Understanding these levels will help you refine your product strategy and prioritize features that drive meaningful engagement. **Align on the Meaning of Delight:** Discuss with your team members the concept of delight from this chapter. Assess their understanding and explore how to integrate delight into your product development mindset.

EXPERT PROFILE

Designing for Emotion



Aaron Walter

Consultant, Author, and Co-founder of Design Better

When I started this book, Aaron was a key source of inspiration. I consider him an expert and a pioneer in advocating for designing emotional tech products. Interviewing him was a must, as his insights deeply align with the core theme of this book.

Aaron Walter, co-host of the *Design Better*⁸ podcast and author of *Designing for Emotion*,⁹ has long championed a human-centered approach to digital product development. His work demonstrates how emotional design can elevate ordinary products into extraordinary experiences.

Drawing from his experience, Aaron highlights a crucial contrast between physical and digital product development. Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Rolex use emotional connection to drive customer loyalty and business value. These examples remind us that, even in the digital world, human emotions remain central to product success.

Aaron challenges the conventional product development approach, which often prioritizes feature delivery over emotional resonance. He believes truly successful products don't just meet customer needs, but also anticipate desires users may not even recognize that they have.

This gap between functionality and emotional connection is especially evident in the fast-paced software industry, where the pressure to ship quickly

8 The *Design Better* podcast, hosted by Eli Woolery and Aaron Walter, explores creativity at the intersection of design and technology, <https://designbetterpodcast.com/>

9 Aaron Walter, *Designing for Emotion* (A Book Apart, 2011), <https://www.aaronwalter.com/book>

and iterate has created a culture of “good enough” products, often at the expense of deeper emotional connections.

A fascinating tension exists between the analytical and emotional aspects of product development. Aarron notes that product managers excel in operations and analytics, but often struggle with the ambiguity of emotional design.

I completely agree with this. For me, this highlights a critical gap: while designers have resources to educate themselves on emotional design, and marketers have playbooks for emotional branding, product managers and leaders lack structured guidance on building emotionally engaging products. This disconnect sometimes creates misalignment and communication barriers within teams.

Aarron advocates for vision over validation. While customer feedback is valuable, he argues that truly innovative products require looking beyond immediate user requests to uncover deeper emotional needs.

One of the most compelling examples he shares in his book is from TurboTax, a tax preparation software by Intuit. TurboTax recognizes the emotional challenges users face, particularly after losing a loved one. When a user navigates tax-related tasks following such a loss, the software acknowledges their situation with a simple yet powerful message: “We’re sorry to hear about your loss. You can count on us to help you get your tax return done right.” This small but thoughtful touch demonstrates that emotional design isn’t just about positive emotions, it’s also about empathy.

Aarron stresses that emotional design isn’t exclusive to consumer products. Even technical or data-heavy tools can benefit from understanding emotional responses. He advocates for cross-functional collaboration, in which product managers, designers, and engineers work together to balance functionality with emotional engagement. While challenging to implement, this approach leads to products that do more than just work well, they evoke emotions.

Through Aarron’s lens, product delight isn’t accidental; it’s the result of intentional choices that prioritize emotional connection alongside functional excellence. His insights serve as a powerful reminder that, in a world increasingly dominated by digital interactions, the products that truly succeed are the products that touch the practical and the emotional needs of their users.

CHAPTER

2

Why Is Product Delight So Important?

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 2:

Delight is a multiplier; it drives loyalty, turns users into advocates, and creates lasting value for your business.

When launching a new product, many companies focus all their energy on making it functional, and that's completely logical. But a purely functional product has little chance of standing out. It risks blending into the noise, struggling to achieve product-market fit or, worse, being overshadowed by competitors that offer more than just utility.

This is where product delight comes in. It's the idea that great products don't just meet functional needs; they also create an emotional connection that makes users feel engaged, valued, and even a little happier. This chapter details the main benefits of investing in doing so.

How Delight Will Make Your Product Win

If you've ever questioned whether investing in delight is worth it, the data makes the case clear. And the best part is the impact of delight isn't abstract; it drives tangible business outcomes.

In recent years, some of the world's top consulting firms, including McKinsey,¹⁰ Deloitte,¹¹ Harvard Business Review,¹² and Capgemini¹³ have conducted extensive research on the impact of emotional connection in product adoption and user engagement.

Their findings are striking. First, the fact that these firms invested in studying delight shows it's no longer just a buzzword, it has become a recognized driver of product success. Second, every study reached the same conclusion: products that build a strong emotional connection are twice as likely to be recommended, purchased, and kept, compared to those that are merely functional.

The four key areas where delight creates measurable value are as follows:

1. Increased Customer Loyalty: Delighted users stay engaged and keep coming back.
2. Stronger Word of Mouth: Delighted users enthusiastically recommend the product.
3. Higher Revenue: Delighted users are more willing to pay.

10 Ankit Bisht et al., "Fueling growth through moments of customer delight," McKinsey & Company, August 13, 2024, <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/fueling-growth-through-moments-of-customer-delight>

11 *Exploring the value of emotion-driven engagement: The dynamics of customer loyalty*, Deloitte Development LLC (May 2019), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.mediapost.com/uploads/EmotionDrivenEngagement.pdf>

12 Scott Magids, Alan Zorfas, and Daniel Leemon, "The New Science of Customer Emotions: A better way to drive growth and profitability," *Harvard Business Review*, November 2015, <https://hbr.org/2015/11/the-new-science-of-customer-emotions>

13 Jerome Buvat et al., *Loyalty Deciphered—How Emotions Drive Genuine Engagement*, Capgemini Digital Transformation Institute, n.d., <https://www.capgemini.com/nl-nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2022/05/report-dti-loyalty-deciphered.pdf>

4. Competitive Differentiation: Delight creates an experience that's hard to replicate.

Let's dive deeper into each of these areas, and explore why delight is a strategic advantage that every product leader should embrace.

Product Delight Increases Customer Loyalty

Product delight occurs when a product exceeds customer expectations. When this happens consistently, it fosters an emotional connection between users and the product. This connection translates into increased customer loyalty, making users more likely to stay engaged and committed.

But how much more likely is an emotionally connected user to engage with a product, compared to a highly satisfied user?

According to the study in the *Harvard Business Review*, emotionally connected customers are 52% more valuable than satisfied customers. The research outlines a predictable “emotional connection pathway,” where customers progress from being unconnected to highly satisfied, then to perceiving brand differentiation, and finally to becoming fully connected. The last stage is where loyalty and engagement peak.

The Capgemini study further emphasizes the impact emotions have on loyalty, finding a strong correlation of 0.75 between emotional engagement and long-term commitment to a brand. The report states the following:

Building more meaningful, deep-rooted loyalty means thinking less about points and rewards and more about driving deep emotional engagement.

Apple serves as a powerful example of this principle in action. The brand fosters emotional connection through its ecosystem, which includes features such as iMessage, FaceTime, and AirDrop, making users feel part of an exclusive community. The sleek design, privacy focus, and aspirational brand image further reinforce users' identity and status. This emotional bond

contributes to Apple's extraordinary retention rate of around 90%.¹⁴

Even when competitors offer superior specifications, most Apple customers remain loyal because they aren't just buying a product; they're emotionally connected to the Apple ecosystem and brand.

Product Delight Amplifies Word of Mouth

Beyond customer loyalty, product delight also fuels organic word-of-mouth marketing. Delighted users are more likely to share their experiences, whether by posting on social media or recommending the product to friends and family. This kind of advocacy strengthens brand reputation and drives sustained growth.

From the Studies

The McKinsey study examined the impact delight has on referrals, across 20,000 responses in eight countries and multiple sectors. The findings underscored that, while satisfaction is crucial, delight acts as an amplifier:

Satisfied customers who experienced delight, versus those who didn't, had a significantly higher intention to recommend the brand to others.

This means that, while addressing dissatisfaction is essential, adding delight to an already good experience significantly enhances referral potential.

The study conducted by Deloitte found that when brands use emotional data in smart ways, they can increase customer lifetime value and even create brand advocates. To reach that conclusion, Deloitte analyzed data from 800 consumer surveys, a panel of 112 participants, and 91 million social posts.

Here's a key finding from the report:

Emotions inspire and frame the depth of brand loyalty and advocacy. As the duration of a consumer's relationship and exposure to a brand increases, emotional attachment takes over

14 Riya Shah, "The Power of Customer Loyalty: Unveiling Apple's Strategies and Statistics for 2024", nector.io, January 23, 2024, <https://www.nector.io/blog/customer-loyalty-apples-strategies-and-statistics-for-2024>

and rational needs become less pertinent. Sixty percent of brand-loyal consumers use the same type of emotional language they'd use for family, friends, and pets when speaking of their favorite brands—words like love, happy, and adore.

The Level of Anthimeria

By investing in product delight, brands can cultivate passionate advocates who drive sustained growth through personal recommendations and social influence. This connection can be so strong that it can reach surprising levels.

Consider how people commonly use “Google” as a verb for searching the internet or “Skype” for video calling. This linguistic transformation is known as *anthimeria*, in which a brand name becomes synonymous with an action. This reflects deep emotional integration into users' daily lives.

A product reaches this level of association only when it exceeds expectations and fosters a strong emotional connection. Even when users switch search engines, they still say “Google it.” That's the power of delight-driven loyalty.

Product Delight Drives Revenue Growth

Canadian neurologist Donald Calne concluded that emotions drive action, while reason leads to conclusions. Injecting emotions into your products can increase product adoption, benefiting your business.

Delight isn't just about enhancing user satisfaction, it's a powerful driver of revenue growth. The research by McKinsey reveals that companies delivering emotionally connecting experiences see substantial financial benefits, including higher cross-sell, up-sell, and retention rates. In industries such as banking, insurance, and energy, delighting satisfied customers increased cross-sell rates by 11 to 30 percentage points. In the insurance sector alone, this translated into an 8% to 12% revenue boost, representing several billion euros annually. Companies that prioritize customer delight often double their revenue growth, compared to their competitors.

The study in the *Harvard Business Review* found that moving customers from “highly satisfied” to “fully connected” generates three times the return of moving them from “unconnected” to “highly satisfied.”

For instance, a major fashion retailer found that while fully connected customers represented only 22% of total customers, they accounted for 37% of total revenue. These customers also spent twice as much annually as highly satisfied customers, underscoring the direct link between emotional connection and revenue growth.

Tech Product Examples: Delight That Converts into Revenue

Spotify Wrapped and Duolingo's streak feature are prime examples of how delight can translate into business success.

Spotify Wrapped was one of those projects that made me truly proud to be part of the team. Spotify Wrapped is an annual, personalized recap of a user's listening habits on Spotify, released every December. It showcases the user's top songs, artists, genres, and total listening time in a fun, shareable format with interactive visuals and storytelling.

Wrapped doesn't just show users their listening habits, it makes them feel seen, valued, and proud to share their music journey with the world. In 2020, Spotify Wrapped increased Spotify's mobile app downloads by 21% in the first week of December.¹⁵

Duolingo's streaks feature has had a similarly transformative effect. The streaks feature tracks consecutive days of learning, motivating users to stay consistent. The secret behind the success of this feature lies in behavioral psychology. It taps into the principles of commitment and loss aversion, making users emotionally invested in their progress. The combination of visual feedback, small rewards, and the looming threat of losing progress creates an emotional hook that keeps users returning daily.

Many startups have attempted to copy streaks, but none have replicated its impact at scale. Jackson Shuttleworth, Group Product Manager at Duolingo and leader of the retention team, discussed this in a podcast,¹⁶ emphasizing how streaks evolved into one of the company's most impactful growth drivers.

15 Pulkit Jain, "How the 2020 Spotify Wrapped Marketing Campaign Boosted Engagement," MoEngage, August 18, 2024, <https://www.moengage.com/blog/spotify-wrapped-2020-app-downloads-engagement/>

16 "Behind the product: Duolingo streaks | Jackson Shuttleworth (Group PM, Retention Team)," *Lenny's Podcast*, December 15, 2024, <https://www.lennys-newsletter.com/p/behind-the-product-duolingo-streaks>

The streaks feature has played a crucial role in turning Duolingo into a \$14 billion business in 2024. By reinforcing habits with subtle psychological cues, Duolingo has transformed casual learners into committed, long-term users, generating billions of dollars in value.

Product Delight Creates a Competitive Advantage

Investing in product delight is a powerful way to stand out in a crowded market. With so many competing products offering similar solutions, the one that creates an emotionally engaging and memorable experience will have the advantage.

When two products solve the same problem, users naturally choose the one they feel a stronger emotional connection with. A product that exceeds expectations and delivers an exceptional experience becomes the preferred choice, building long-term loyalty and strengthening its competitive position.

Delight and Product-Market Fit

Competing on functional features alone isn't enough; these are simply the baseline. The real differentiator is a combination of superior performance and a unique delighter, which can significantly increase user adoption and retention.

Dan Olsen, author of *The Lean Product Playbook*,¹⁷ emphasizes that delight plays a critical role in enhancing product-market fit. Once a product has achieved a degree of product-market fit, the goal shifts from simply maintaining it to actively deepening it. The real focus becomes how much value are you truly delivering to your customers? Delight, he argues, adds real and measurable impact. When the core functionality provides strong value, thoughtfully crafted delight moments can elevate the experience even further.

Slack is a prime example of this in action. From its early days, Slack focused on creating a delightful user experience with playful elements such as emojis, GIFs, custom images, and seamless integrations. These small but meaningful details set it apart from traditional communication tools, making adoption easier and speeding up product-market fit.

17 Dan Olsen, *The Lean Product Playbook* (2015) <https://leanproductplaybook.com/>

Brand Perception

Adopting a mindset of delight while building a product shapes a company's brand perception in a way that competitors can't easily imitate. Companies such as Slack and Zappos made delight an integral part of their identity from the start, creating a lasting and defensible advantage. This is described by Joseph A. Michelli in his book *Driven to Delight*¹⁸ as the "so effect." It's the instinctive association people make with a brand's defining qualities. It's when a product or experience is so closely tied to a brand's identity that people naturally express it, saying things like "this is so Starbucks" to describe exceptional service or "so Mercedes" to convey refined design and a prestigious experience.

Competitive advantage is part of the product strategy. Gibson Biddle, former VP of Product at Netflix, developed the DHM Model.¹⁹ According to Biddle, delight is essential because it drives engagement and retention. However, to sustain an advantage, a product must also be difficult to replicate, whether through unique data, brand strength, or network effects. Finally, it must enhance margins to ensure long-term business growth. The model guides strategic decisions.

Biddle argues that the hardest thing to copy is a company's brand and personality. While any company can build a music streaming service, none can recreate Spotify's identity and cultural influence. The same applies to video streaming platforms; many exist, but none can truly replicate Netflix's brand.

The Bonux Story: How Delight Became a Competitive Advantage

Leaving the world of tech products for a moment, I wanted to share the story of a French laundry detergent brand that exemplifies how delight can bring differentiation. And how taking that delightful aspect away can immediately remove the competitive advantage.

Bonux is a laundry detergent that was extremely successful in France (Figure 2). It was very famous around the '90s for one particular aspect; they put a gift inside the big box of powder detergent. The gift was a toy or a card or

18 Joseph A. Michelli, *Driven to Delight: Delivering World-Class Customer Experience the Mercedes-Benz Way*, McGraw-Hill, (2015), <https://a.co/d/8XTVkvN>

19 Gibson Biddle, "#1 The DHM Model," Medium, July 11, 2019, <https://gibsonbiddle.medium.com/2-the-dhm-model-6ea5dfd80792>

something similar. This unexpected reward made Bonux memorable, so much so that the phrase “cadeau Bonux,” meaning an unexpected gift, became a part of French culture.



Figure 2: The old Bonux package with the toy

The problem arose when the market shifted from powder to liquid detergent. Bonux could no longer include the gift in its packaging, so the company removed it entirely. Sales dropped dramatically, and Bonux disappeared from store shelves for nearly a decade.

Recently, the brand made a comeback by finding a way to bring back the element of delight. They still package their liquid laundry detergent in bottles, but they put the gift back in. Bonux redesigned its packaging (Figure 3) to include a special compartment for the gift, reintroducing the feature that had once made it unique. Sales rebounded as a result, proving that what made Bonux special wasn't just the detergent, it was the surprise that came with it.



Figure 3: The new Bonux package

Bonux's story is a clear example of how this type of delight creates a competitive edge. When it was taken away, the product lost its distinctiveness and market share. When it was reintroduced, the brand regained its strength.

Now that you recognize the value product delight can bring, the next chapter will show you how to integrate it into your product routines in a meaningful and sustainable way.

An Unexpected Moment of Delight

I lived in Stockholm for more than eight years and have always loved returning. On my last visit, I caught up with former colleagues from Skype and Spotify. One evening, we ended up at Griffins, a well-known restaurant with an inviting ambiance. Drawn in by its warm glow, we stepped inside and were greeted with a genuine smile.

Everything about the evening felt effortless. The decor struck the perfect balance between modern and cozy, with dim lighting, plush seating, and an atmosphere that was lively and intimate. The food was exceptional, and the service was impeccable.

But the moment that stood out the most wasn't the ambiance or the food. It was the moment of payment.

Settling a bill in a group is usually an awkward hassle. There's uncertainty about who owes what, the uncomfortable discussion of splitting costs, and the disruption of an otherwise perfect evening. But this time, there was no friction. The server simply placed a QR code on our table. "You can all pay from here," she said.

Curious, we each scanned it. Instantly, a collaborative payment screen appeared, allowing us to select our items and pay seamlessly. As people paid, their items disappeared in real-time. No confusion, no waiting, no stress. A single tap could split the bill evenly, and tipping was effortlessly included.

What's usually an awkward, tedious process became frictionless and even enjoyable.

And as we walked out of Griffins, we weren't talking about the food or the service. We were talking about the unexpected delight of that seamless payment experience.

This story illustrates how thoughtful features can connect with users, creating memorable experiences while also fostering loyalty and impacting business success.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Delight Fuels Loyalty:** Emotionally connected users are much more valuable than satisfied users, leading to higher retention and stronger commitment.
- **Delight Drives Word of Mouth:** When users feel seen and valued, they naturally share their experiences, turning into brand advocates.
- **Delight Boosts Revenue:** Products that evoke strong emotions see increased cross-selling, retention, and willingness to pay, translating directly into business growth.
- **Delight Is a Competitive Moat:** In crowded markets, products that evoke positive emotions stand out.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Measure Your Product's Referral Rate as a Baseline:** Track how often users recommend your product to others. This serves as a key indicator of emotional connection. Monitor changes over time as you introduce more delight-driven elements.
- **Gauge Emotional Attachment to Your Product:** Beyond referrals, assess how users *feel* about your product. Are they excited to talk about it? Do they describe it with words such as *love*, *enjoy*, or *fun*? Use surveys, analyze reviews, and track organic social mentions to determine whether your product fosters deep emotional engagement.
- **Analyze Your Product's Retention Rate:** Loyalty is a strong signal of delighted users. Compare how long users stay engaged with your product versus industry benchmarks. You'll also monitor this metric as you introduce more delight-driven elements.
- **Map Your Competitive Differentiators:** Evaluate competitors to see if they rely solely on functional features or if they've built an emotional brand. Identify gaps where you can introduce delight as a competitive advantage, making your product more memorable and compelling.

EXPERT PROFILE

Creating Impact by Leading with Delight



Jonathan Rochelle

Co-Founder, CPO at Lutely, Former VP at LinkedIn, Zapier, Google

Jonathan's journey through the tech industry is a testament to how moments of delight can shape products, drive innovation, and transform entire industries. From his early days as a Wall Street software engineer to co-founding Google Workspace's collaborative tools, Jonathan has consistently sought to surprise users with solutions that solve problems, but also bring joy.

A pivotal moment for Jonathan came in the early 2000s, when his company developed technology that converted spreadsheets into web applications. This innovation caught Google's attention, leading to the creation of Google Sheets and, ultimately, the entire suite of Google's collaborative tools which were a foundation of the Google Workspace suite. The core problem these products solved was something users struggled to articulate but deeply needed, a better way to share and collaborate on digital content.

When I asked Jonathan about the most delightful feature he worked on, his answer was clear: real-time collaboration in Google Sheets. "Real-time collaboration always delighted people, it created a joyful surprise, and it was constant," he explained. The impact was so profound that Google rewrote the original version of Google Docs to match the collaboration experience of Sheets. However, this success became both a breakthrough and a challenge, as the team was constantly expected to replicate that level of delight in future products.

Jonathan's approach to building delightful experiences goes beyond feature development; it's rooted in deeply understanding user pain points. He doesn't just rely on user requests but believes in "living with the user or being

the user.” This philosophy was instrumental when he helped launch Google Classroom. The platform drastically reduced teachers’ workloads, not just improving efficiency but genuinely enhancing their quality of life. Teachers, often burdened with late-night grading and planning, became passionate advocates, spreading the word about Google Classroom even before it was widely adopted. Their organic enthusiasm quickly fueled the product’s growth, proving that solving real, painful problems leads to success.

When I asked Jonathan how to convince leaders to invest in delightful features, he shared a compelling story from Google Docs. Initially, when users shared documents via links, their email addresses were exposed, leading to privacy concerns. The team needed a quick fix without disrupting collaboration. Jonathan tasked a product manager to think outside the box, and the result was a proposal to replace user identities with quirky “anonymous animals” icons, some as whimsical as chupacabras.

Though unconventional, the idea struck the perfect balance between functionality and delight. It preserved privacy, while adding an unexpected element of fun. Jonathan reflects on this as a crucial lesson in leadership: taking risks and letting other people know you want them to take risks to innovate are essential to creating delight. Too often, leaders play it safe, fearing failure, but true innovation comes from bold, unconventional ideas. In his current work, he applies the same mindset; he pushes designers, product managers, and engineers to infuse delight into products through aesthetics and design of interaction.

The key lesson from Jonathan’s experience is that creating delightful products requires more than technical expertise; it demands empathy, observation, experimentation, and the ability to address unspoken user needs. Whether making collaboration seamless in Google Workspace or simplifying administrative tasks for teachers, the goal is always to surprise users with solutions that make their lives better in simple but meaningful ways.

CHAPTER

3

The Product Delight Model

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 3:

Delight isn't a happy accident; it's a structured outcome of thoughtful steps.

I resisted joining Revolut for years, despite my husband's repeated recommendations for currency exchange. Traditional banks felt familiar, and I saw no interesting reason to switch until a recent trip to Singapore changed everything.

Upon landing, I quickly realized my French mobile plan offered no free internet or international calls, and roaming fees were prohibitively high. Suddenly disconnected in an unfamiliar country, I had two choices: scramble for a local SIM card in an unknown environment or accept exorbitant charges. Neither was ideal. The stress of staying connected was already overshadowing the start of my trip.

That's when I saw my husband activating the Revolut eSIM directly from his mobile. Within seconds, he activated mobile data directly from the app, with no searching for SIM cards, no setup hassles, and no hidden fees. He

was online instantly, navigating, booking rides, and staying in touch without disruption.

This experience perfectly showcases one of the key pillars of delight: anticipating needs. Users may not explicitly ask for an eSIM service through a banking app, but Revolut understands its users and their habits, and proactively anticipates their needs. While strong fundamentals create reliability, it's the thoughtful human touches that build emotional connections and long-term loyalty.

Too often, companies focus solely on functional improvements, better speeds, lower costs, and added features, without considering how users feel when engaging with their product. While these functional aspects matter, they aren't enough to create sustained loyalty. Users return to products that don't just serve a purpose, but also evoke trust, confidence, and even joy.

The Product Delight Model Explained

Understanding how to systematize delight in a product is essential for leaders who want to create products that stand out and retain users. I created the product delight model (Figure 4) to provide a structured process and help teams create experiences that integrate functional reliability and emotional connection.

The model is divided into two key spaces:

1. **Opportunity Space:** This space focuses on identifying users' underlying needs, pain points, and aspirations, before exploring solutions.
2. **Solution Space:** This space develops and categorizes solutions that address functional needs and emotional needs, ensuring they resonate with users.

When aiming to create a delightful experience, it's more effective to refer to the initial space as the "opportunity space" rather than the "problem space." This is because it's not just about solving problems, but also about identifying opportunities for emotional connection.

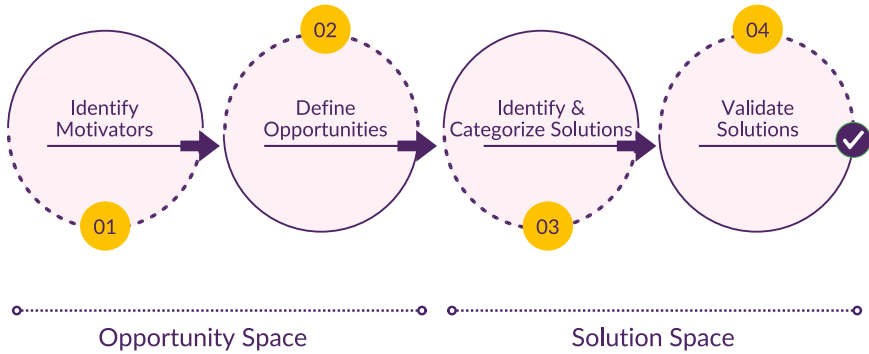


Figure 4: The four steps of the product delight model

Step 1: Identify Users' Motivators

To build truly valuable solutions, you must first understand why users engage with your product.

For instance,

- Spotify users seek to listen to audio content, whether music, podcasts, or audiobooks.
- Google Meet users want to join or host online meetings.

But users aren't monolithic. Different people engage with the same product for different reasons. Understanding these variations is crucial.

Segmenting Users by Motivation

One-size-fits-all solutions are rarely effective. So user segmentation is a key step in creating products that resonate. Segmenting users enables you to create targeted solutions that address the unique needs, preferences, and goals of each group.

There are several ways to segment users, such as the following:

- **Demographic Segmentation:** Group users by age, gender, or location.
- **Behavioral Segmentation:** Categorize users based on how they use the product.
- **Motivational Segmentation:** Focus on the reasons users engage with your product.

Motivational segmentation is particularly powerful, as it groups users based on why they use a product. This segmentation reveals the deeper drivers behind engagement, ensuring products align with what truly matters to users.

You can categorize motivators into functional and emotional.

Functional Motivators

Functional motivators are the practical reasons users engage with a product, tied to specific tasks or goals they want to achieve. These motivators focus on making things easier, faster, and more efficient for users.

For example, the need to find and play their favorite music easily or discover new tracks motivates people to use Spotify.

Emotional Motivators

Emotional motivators are about how users want to feel while interacting with the product. Emotional motivators tap into the user's desire to connect with themselves or others on a more personal level. Customers are delighted with a product when it aligns with their motivation and helps them fulfill deep, and sometimes unconscious, desires.

You can further divide emotional motivators into two types: personal and social. Personal emotional motivators refer to how the user wants to feel when using the product. Social-emotional motivators refer to how you want others to feel about you when you use the product.

I'll cover all these types of motivators in much more detail in Chapter 4.

A Real-World Example of Emotional Motivators

Let me share another experience to illustrate the power of emotional motivators.

Last Halloween, my family and I flew from Paris to New York. As we boarded our Air France flight, a crew member greeted us with a warm smile. He handed my children two small boxes, each containing an activity book, coloring materials, and toys.

My kids were delighted, they spent more than an hour happily engaged with their new gifts. For my husband and me, this meant a peaceful and stress-free flight.

This wasn't just a random gesture. It was a thoughtfully designed feature, integrated into Air France's customer experience strategy.

- For my kids, the emotional motivator was engagement, pride, and fun.
- For me, the emotional motivator was peace of mind and relaxation.

Motivators vary from person to person, so identifying them requires careful attention and a deep understanding of your users.

Identifying Emotional Motivators

The most effective approach to uncovering emotional motivators is to conduct targeted interviews during user research. Strategic user interviews don't just capture data, they reveal emotions. Talking to users in the right way uncovers their underlying motivations, allowing teams to craft solutions that genuinely resonate.

Here are two techniques that work well:

1. **Storytelling Interviews:** Ask users about specific experiences to uncover the real reasons behind their behavior.
2. **Empathy Interviews:** Dive deep into users' emotions, frustrations, and desires, revealing the unspoken drivers of engagement.

I explore how to apply these techniques effectively in Chapter 4, ensuring that every product decision is rooted in real emotional insights.

Step 2: Define Product Opportunities

Segmenting users by motivation allows teams to identify opportunities that don't just help users accomplish their goals, but make them feel good about doing it. The key to creating truly delightful products is understanding where friction occurs, functionally and emotionally.

On the functional side, friction points appear when inefficiencies, complexities, or frustrations slow users down. On the emotional side, pain points arise when users feel disconnected, unfulfilled, or disengaged. These instances of friction indicate key opportunities for enhancement.

For example, if users seek control but feel overwhelmed by complexity, simplifying the product is an opportunity. If speed is a key motivator but the experience is sluggish, optimizing performance becomes essential. Every unmet expectation, unfulfilled desire, or source of frustration is an opportunity to create a better, more engaging experience.

Turning Motivators into Opportunities

To convert motivators into actionable insights, reframe them using “How might we...?” questions. This simple yet powerful approach shifts thinking from problem identification to opportunity exploration.

For each motivator and identified gap, craft a “How might we...?” question to explore broader opportunity areas:

- **Functional Opportunity Example:** If users are motivated by efficiency, but find the interface confusing, an opportunity might be “How might we simplify the navigation to reduce friction?”
- **Emotional Opportunity Example:** If users want to feel a sense of achievement, but the product doesn't reinforce progress, ask “How might we design a system that makes users feel a sense of accomplishment?”

Functional improvements tend to be tangible and measurable, such as reducing load times, simplifying workflows, or enhancing recommendations. These focus on problem-solving and efficiency.

Emotional improvements, however, aim to build a deep connection with users by aligning with their feelings and aspirations. These involve designing personalized, engaging, and delightful experiences.

By structuring motivators into opportunities, teams shift from fixing problems to strategically enhancing experiences, making the product usable and engaging.

In Chapter 5, I explore how to apply these techniques effectively to identify the right opportunities.

Shifting from Opportunities to Solutions

Identifying what to improve is just the beginning. The next step is determining how to improve it, to transform opportunities into real, impactful solutions.

At this stage, product managers should take a step back. Their primary role is to shape the opportunity space, ensuring that the team focuses on solving the right problems. When working with brilliant engineers and designers, such as the people I had the privilege of collaborating with, the best approach is to empower them to define innovative solutions within a well-defined structure.

However, for a team to be successful in solution identification, a strong structural foundation is essential. This is where the next phase of the product delight model comes in, focusing on systematically developing solutions that enhance user experience while balancing functionality and emotions.

Step 3: Identify and Categorize Solutions

Identifying Specific Solutions for Each Opportunity

Once opportunity areas have been defined, the next step is to develop specific solutions that address functional motivators and emotional motivators. A well-crafted solution shouldn't just help users accomplish a practical task, but should also create a positive emotional experience that strengthens their connection with the product.

To explore potential solutions, product teams should ask the following questions:

- What features could help solve this opportunity?
- What experiences could address the functional motivators and the emotional motivators?

By framing solutions in this way, teams ensure they're not just addressing problems, but are actively enhancing the overall user experience.

Chapter 6 introduces several structured techniques to effectively identify potential solutions. Chapter 7 describes nine delighters. These are techniques you can use to enhance solutions with emotional connection. Once you have your ideas, the next step is to categorize them using the delight grid. I created this tool to help assess the balance between functional motivators and emotional motivators in each solution.

Placing Ideas in the Delight Grid

With multiple potential solutions identified, it's important to review, refine, and prioritize them based on their impact on functional needs and emotional needs. This is where the delight grid comes in.

	No Emotional Motivator	Emotional Motivator 1	Emotional Motivator 2	Emotional Motivator N
No Functional Motivator				
Functional Motivator 1				
Functional Motivator 2				
Functional Motivator M				

Figure 5: The delight grid

The **delight grid** (Figure 5) is a visualization and categorization tool that maps solutions according to motivators:

1. **Functional Motivators:** Practical goals users want to accomplish
2. **Emotional Motivators:** The feelings and experiences users seek when using the product

Solutions that have been identified are placed in the delight grid based on the motivators they support.



Figure 6: The three types of delight

Teams can then determine each solution's level of delight:

- **Low Delight:** Solutions that only address functional needs; they don't create an emotional connection
- **Surface Delight:** Solutions that only address emotional needs; they don't provide any functional value
- **Deep Delight:** Solutions that satisfy functional needs and emotional needs, delivering the most impactful user experiences

The goal is to have the three types of delight in your backlog and avoid only having purely functional features. Chapter 8 explores the delight grid in-depth, providing case studies and examples to illustrate its value as a strategic tool for defining emotionally connecting solutions.

It's important to recognize that low delight features belong in a product roadmap. A well-balanced product strategy should include a mix of low delight, surface delight, and deep delight features to ensure functionality, while also fostering emotional connection. The key is to avoid a product that is purely functional but lacks engagement, memorability, or differentiation.

One of the biggest challenges in introducing delight is that it often competes with functional features. Prioritizing delight can be difficult. Chapter 9 addresses this challenge directly, offering guidance and recommendations to help integrate delight into your roadmap across all planning cycles.

Step 4: Validate Solutions

Despite our massive efforts to bring delight into our products, it can come with certain risks. Delight isn't just about adding charm or surprise; it must align with user needs and context. That's why it's crucial to have a guiding policy to ensure we're on the right track. The *Delight Excellence* checklist serves as this guide, helping validate whether a solution goes beyond basic functionality to deliver true emotional impact. It covers what matters most, spanning nine critical areas: user impact, business impact, data and insights, familiarity, feasibility, inclusiveness, distraction, continuity, and measurability. Walking through this checklist prevents misalignment and protects against creating superficial features or emotional missteps that can undermine the overall experience.

Chapter 10 dives deeper into the delight excellence checklist to maximize impact and minimize risks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **The Product Delight Model Ensures a Structured Approach:** By defining opportunity space and solution space, teams can systematically create products that address practical needs and emotional connection.
- **User Segmentation Should Go Beyond Demographics and Behaviors:** Motivational segmentation reveals why users engage with a product, enabling more targeted and effective product decisions.
- **The Delight Grid is a Categorization and Visualization Tool:** It enables the connection of all potential solutions to real user motivators: It helps assess the level of delight in your backlog and roadmap. A comprehensive product strategy should incorporate all three forms of delight.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Analyze Your Current User Insights:** Identify elements that reveal emotional motivators, such as how users feel when interacting with your product, their frustrations, and their aspirations.
- **Implement Motivational Segmentation:** Move beyond demographics and behavioral data by categorizing users based on why they engage with your product, allowing for more targeted and meaningful solutions.
- **Review Your Product Backlog:** Assess the balance between purely functional features and features that incorporate emotional connections. Identify areas in which you can enhance functional features with emotional connection to create a more engaging experience.

EXPERT PROFILE

Introduce Product Delight with Empathy



Edi Bianco

Chief Design Officer at Amplifi Labs

Edi Bianco, Chief Design Officer at Amplifi Labs, has spent nearly three decades exploring how products can evoke emotion and foster lasting engagement. Edi's journey through the digital landscape reads like a chronicle of the internet age itself.

As an Italian designer, he found his way to the vibrant shores of Rio de Janeiro. From his experience with clients, agencies, and companies, he's developed his insights into how technology can forge emotional connections with users.

In his article, "Crafting Emotional Connections: The Heartbeat of Successful Tech Products,"²⁰ and our recent interview, he emphasized that delight isn't an afterthought; it's a core ingredient of successful product design.

Emotional design must be woven into the very DNA of a product rather than being added later as a layer of polish. Many companies prioritize functionality first and attempt to introduce delight afterward. Edi sees this as a missed opportunity.

Instead, he advocates for integrating emotional elements from the minimum viable product (MVP) stage, ensuring that the product resonates deeply with users from day one.

In essence, emotional product design is about understanding human emotions and weaving them into the fabric of your product, so that the 'what'

20 Edi Bianco, "Crafting Emotional Connections: The Heartbeat of Successful Tech Products," Medium, Bootcamp, October 17, 2023, <https://medium.com/design-bootcamp/crafting-emotional-connections-the-heartbeat-of-successful-tech-products-64dfb449bd02>

and 'how,' defined by its functional level, get amplified by its 'why'. When a product achieves this profound connection, it becomes indispensable.

This perspective highlights that delight isn't just about aesthetics or surface-level interactions. It's about ensuring that a product's purpose, functionality, and emotional impact align seamlessly. And a real mind shift happens here when we realize how much impact this has on a business level, whether we're talking about a startup or a more solid company.

Products that succeed in this regard don't just attract users, they create loyalty, habit, and even identity. Many companies, Edi observes, try to replicate Apple's design language without grasping the deeper emotional triggers that make Apple products beloved. Instead, they should do their homework and express their brand value and culture through design, connecting with people on a visceral level.

True delight comes from exceeding user expectations, whether through a seamless experience, a surprising moment of joy, or a product that feels like an extension of the user's identity.

From his early experiments with unconventional user interface designs to his current work helping companies craft meaningful experiences, Edi's approach remains the same: emotional connection must be intentional and built into the product's foundation. When users have endless choices, products that create these genuine connections don't just compete, they thrive.

CHAPTER

4

Identify Motivators

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 4:

Delight doesn't just solve the problem; it addresses the emotion behind it.

I joined Google Meet in March 2020, just a month after the COVID-19 pandemic began, a time that changed everything. Overnight, meetings shifted from offices and classrooms to video calls. Suddenly, Google Meet became a lifeline for millions, and its usage skyrocketed.

This shift brought functional challenges and emotional impacts. As a product leader, I focused on understanding these behavioral changes to identify evolving user needs. My role became deeply rooted in listening to users and addressing these new needs. I realized that this transformation wasn't just about improving functionality, it was about helping people preserve their sense of humanity in a digital space. I refer to this process as identifying user motivators.

Functional Motivators and Emotional Motivators

Users have specific objectives when using a product. It's important to understand these objectives for different user segments to create effective solutions. Knowing what users want to achieve with your product is crucial for meeting their needs. These are called motivators.

What Are Motivators?

User motivators (Figure 7) drive why people choose a product and how they engage with it. The jobs-to-be-done framework is ideal for this purpose, helping articulate customer needs. Developed by Tony Ulwick, an innovation expert, this framework focuses on creating new products by meeting specific customer outcomes. It categorizes motivators into functional types and emotional types, crucial for creating a product that fulfills practical needs and emotional connections with users.

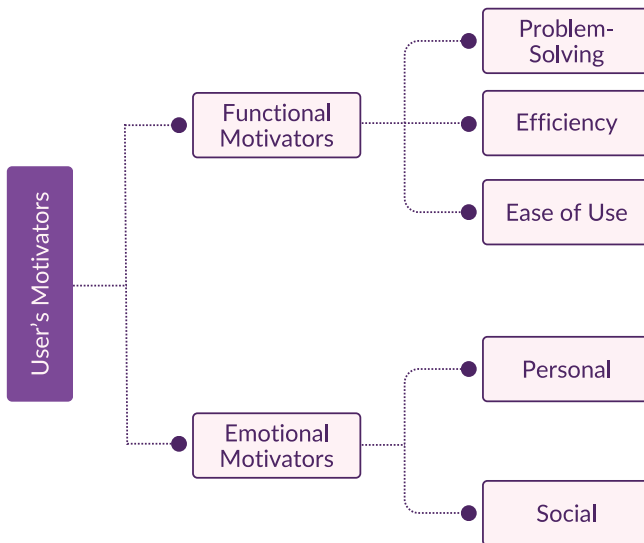


Figure 7: User motivators map

Functional Motivators

Functional motivators are the practical, task-oriented reasons users engage with a product. What specific tasks or goals are users trying to accomplish when they engage with your product?

For example, they want to clean their house quickly, find new music easily, or complete tasks efficiently at work. Functional motivators focus on solving problems and getting things done.

Here are some common functional motivators:

- **Problem-Solving:** Users seek solutions to specific needs or challenges.
- **Efficiency:** Users want to complete tasks quickly.
- **Ease of Use:** Users prefer intuitive, user-friendly products that require minimal effort.

Let's explore the functional motivator for a connected watch.

During exercise, I need a connected watch that can precisely monitor my heart rate and steps to help me track my fitness progress and health goals.

If you are active and busy, it can be hard to charge your watch. A watch with a battery that can last all day or even multiple days would be ideal for you. We'll discuss the emotional motivators and social-emotional motivators for owning a connected watch in the next two sections.

Emotional Motivators

Emotional motivators focus on how you want to feel when using a product. They connect with your desire for personal or social satisfaction. Users engage emotionally with a product when it aligns with their motivations and fulfills deep desires. Feeling engaged, present, and heard are crucial for video conferencing users. The emotional aspect of feeling alive during calls affects customer satisfaction. Two main types of emotional motivators are personal and social.

Personal Emotional Motivators

Personal emotional motivators are the experiences users seek while using a product. It's about how users want to feel when using the product.

Personal emotional motivators come from within and are related to feelings of satisfaction, pride, or accomplishment. For example, a user might seek to feel in control or experience relief when solving a problem.

When using a fitness app, a user may want to feel healthier and proud of their achievements. This shows how users aim to feel about themselves when using the product. Personal emotional motivators may include the following:

- **Pride:** Users want to feel proud of their achievements or decisions.
- **Accomplishment:** Users desire a sense of success or progress after using the product.
- **Control:** Users seek a feeling of mastery or empowerment, in which they're in charge of their experience.

A product that helps users feel proud, accomplished, or in control can create lasting emotional connections. For instance, a personalized playlist on Spotify helps users feel connected to their tastes and preferences.

Back to the connected watch example:

“When I’m training for a marathon, I want a connected watch with a long battery life and offline GPS so that I can feel confident and independent, knowing I can rely on it without carrying my phone.”

The user's confidence and independence are reflected in the personal emotional dimension. The watch's ability to function without the user worrying about battery life or needing a phone gives the user peace of mind and freedom.

Social-Emotional Motivators

Social-emotional motivators focus on how other people perceive and react to the user who is using the product. It's about how you want others to feel about you while you're using the product.

Examples of social-emotional motivators:

- **Admiration:** Users want their peers to respect or admire them for their choices or expertise.
- **Connection:** Users look for ways to feel more connected to others, whether through collaboration or shared experiences.
- **Validation:** Users want their opinions, tastes, or actions to be acknowledged and validated by their community or network.

For example, sharing a playlist on Spotify allows users to feel admired for their musical choices, while owning a premium Dyson vacuum can make users feel validated and sophisticated in the eyes of others.

Let's get back again to the connected watch:

When I'm at work or in social gatherings, I want a connected watch with a sleek and stylish design so I can wear it confidently and make a good impression.

The social-emotional dimension is about status, style, and recognition. A high-quality watch can show professionalism, taste, or success. Wearing a stylish connected watch can boost confidence in various situations. It helps the wearer feel aligned with their personal brand and how they want others to see them.

Combining All Types of Motivators

Products must meet the practical needs of users. This is the foundation of any successful product. Does it work efficiently and solve the problem at hand? This is where you address functional motivators.

Functional motivators ensure that your product works. Personal and social-emotional motivators help your users feel connected to your product and the world around them. Addressing all three motivators creates deeper engagement and delight. Products must meet users' practical needs efficiently to be successful. But users also seek products that make them feel good or meet subconscious needs. Start by talking with users to understand their motivators.

Motivators Map: The Spotify Case Study

Users engage with Spotify for a variety of reasons, driven by functional motivators and emotional motivators. While the full range of motivators is extensive, I'll highlight just three key examples from each category for clarity.

On a functional level, users may turn to Spotify for the following reasons

- **Enjoy high-quality audio**, ensuring a seamless and immersive listening experience.
- **Discover new content**, exploring fresh music, podcasts, and personalized recommendations.
- **Search for audio content**, quickly finding specific tracks, albums, or episodes.

On an emotional level, users may seek to do the following:

- **Feel immersed**, using music to enhance their mood, focus, or relaxation.
- **Express themselves**, curating playlists and listening choices as a reflection of their identity.
- **Feel connected**, engaging with shared music experiences.

These motivators can be mapped in the motivators map, as shown in Figure 8.

The starting point to identify users' motivators is talking with your users in a way that makes those motivators apparent. Later in this chapter, I'll explore methods for identifying and leveraging these motivators to create more engaging user experiences.

Before we get into those techniques, I want to highlight the jobs-to-be-done framework that helped me identify the importance of emotional motivators and suggest an approach to uncovering them.

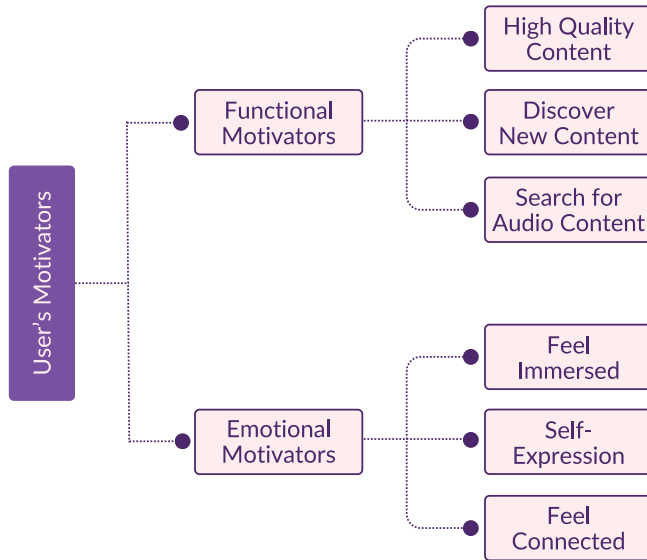


Figure 8: Simplified Spotify motivators map

Jobs-to-Be-Done Framework

In the world of product and innovation, the jobs-to-be-done (JTBD) framework has become a cornerstone for understanding what drives customers to buy products and services.

At its heart, JTBD is about uncovering the underlying reasons behind customer choices, what they want to accomplish, and why they choose one solution over another. There are four fundamental concepts that form the foundation of JTBD, as follows:

- **People buy products and services to get a “job” done.** A job is a problem they’re trying to solve or something they’re trying to accomplish.
- **Jobs are functional with emotional and social components.** You may interpret the description of jobs that people want to accomplish as being purely functional. However, you’re also interested in why they’re trying to accomplish that job, which speaks to the emotional and social aspects. These are the motivators that we talked about above.

- **A job is stable over time.** What people want to accomplish stays fairly consistent. How they choose to accomplish it changes. This stable job allows you to understand the value your product can deliver.
- **The job is the unit of analysis.** JTBD places the focus of your discovery efforts on what your users want to accomplish in a situation, the job, rather than your product or your user's characteristics and demographic profile.

Clayton Christensen, in *Competing Against Luck*,²¹ explored how functional and emotional motivations drive people to choose specific products, even across unrelated industries.

“Here’s one example to illustrate the point. When a smoker takes a cigarette break, on one level he’s simply seeking the nicotine his body craves. That’s the functional dimension. But that’s not all that’s going on. He’s hiring cigarettes for the emotional benefit of calming him down, relaxing him. And if he works in a typical office building, he’s forced to go outside to a designated smoking area. But that choice is social, too—he can take a break from work and hang around with his buddies. From this perspective, people hire Facebook for many of the same reasons. They log onto Facebook during the middle of the workday to take a break from work, relax for a few minutes while thinking about other things, and convene around a virtual water cooler with far-flung friends. In some ways, Facebook is actually competing with cigarettes to be hired for the same Job to Be Done.”

If you're looking for in-depth literature on applying JTBD in product management, start with *Competing Against Luck* for foundational insights and *What Customers Want*²² by Anthony W. Ulwick for a structured approach using outcome-driven innovation.

21 Clayton M. Christensen et al., (*Competing Against Luck: The Story of Innovation and Customer Choice* (New York: Harper Business, 2016).

22 Anthony W. Ulwick, *What Customers Want: Using Outcome-Driven Innovation to Create Breakthrough Products and Services* (McGraw-Hill, 2005).

For practical applications, *Jobs to Be Done: Theory to Practice*²³ by Ulwick offers actionable strategies.

Adapted UXR: User Interviews

Upon joining Google Meet, my immediate focus was on understanding users' needs and challenges, especially in such unconventional conditions.

Despite using Meet frequently, I was cautious not to assume that my team and I accurately represented our customers. To gain a deeper understanding, I engaged with Meet users beyond the product team and outside of Google, which led me to discover our users' motivators.

I conducted a few user interviews to gather detailed insights. The user interviews played a crucial role in this process, so I'll elaborate on them below.

It starts by strategically selecting users to interview. My goal was to uncover their typical usage patterns, emotions while using the product, and the reasons behind their actions. In my several PM roles, I used two different interview approaches: storytelling interviews and empathy interviews; I often incorporated them into the same discussion called *motivational interviews*.

Storytelling Interviews

I like beginning interviews with a storytelling approach. I typically start by asking a set of standard questions that prompt the interviewee to share their experience in a recent interaction with the product. If I discover that they have multiple interactions with the product per day, I might inquire about their daily routine.

The storytelling approach helped me gather specific information about tasks and goals that users wanted to accomplish with the product. This approach is effective in most situations, especially when you're just beginning work on your product. The crucial point is to engage the person you're interviewing in discussing a specific situation. You'll typically start these interviews with questions such as these:

- “Tell me about the last time you used product [X].”

23 Anthony W. Ulwick, *Jobs to Be Done: Theory to Practice* (Idea Bite Press, 2016).

- “Tell me about the last time you encountered [X] situation.”
- “Tell me about the last time you had challenges using the product [X]. How was your experience?”
- “Can you describe a typical day using tool X?”

The questions are open-ended, aiming to capture a broad range of experiences with the product. This interview approach doesn't emphasize specific features or products but seeks to understand overall perceptions and user experiences.

Empathy Interviews

Once I had my interviewee describe their experience, I began asking questions such as “How did you feel about that?” to delve into their emotions regarding different aspects of the situation. This technique is known as empathy interviewing, which is highly effective in grasping the user's feelings, motivations, frustrations, and overall emotional experience.

Here are some examples of questions that you can ask during user interviews:

- “What inspired you to use [product/feature] the last time?”
- “How did you feel when you first started using [product/feature]?”
- “How did using [product/feature] make you feel?”
- “Can you share a moment when [product/feature] helped you feel [specific emotion, e.g., confident, connected, relieved]?”
- “Can you walk me through a recent time when we used [product/feature] and describe how you felt about it?”
- “Tell me about the time you felt frustrated while using [product/feature].”
- “What were you hoping to feel when you used [product/feature]?”
- “What feelings do you want to avoid when using a [product/feature] like this?”
- “Can you recall any times when [product/feature] didn't work as you expected? How did that make you feel?”

The key is to frame questions that foster understanding and pinpoint the user's true feelings.

Instead of asking this question:

“Would you like a connected watch with health tracking?”

An empathy interviewer might say this:

*Tell me about a time when you felt concerned about your health.
What did you do? How did you feel?*

This allows users to share real-life experiences, leading to a deeper understanding of their needs, perhaps revealing that it's not just about tracking health but about feeling reassured about their well-being.

Structuring User Interviews using Motivational Interviewing

There are various methods for structuring your user interviews, but one that I find particularly effective is the one used in Motivational Interviewing (MI). MI was created by clinical psychologist William Miller and later refined with Stephen Rollnick²⁴ and is a client-centered approach designed to resolve ambivalence and motivate behavior change. Initially developed for treating alcohol use disorder, MI has since found applications in coaching, education, and organizational culture due to its empathetic communication style.

In the context of product and service design, MI shifts focus from changing behaviors to uncovering the motivations behind them. By using MI techniques in user interviews, designers and product managers can gain deeper insights into user needs, motivations, and barriers. This understanding fosters empathy and helps create user-centric products that align with users' true desires, driving stronger connections and more effective solutions.

24 Miller & Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing*, 2nd Edition, 2002

The core of MI lies in four fundamental techniques: open-ended questions, affirmation, reflective listening, and summarization, represented by the acronym OARS (Figure 9).

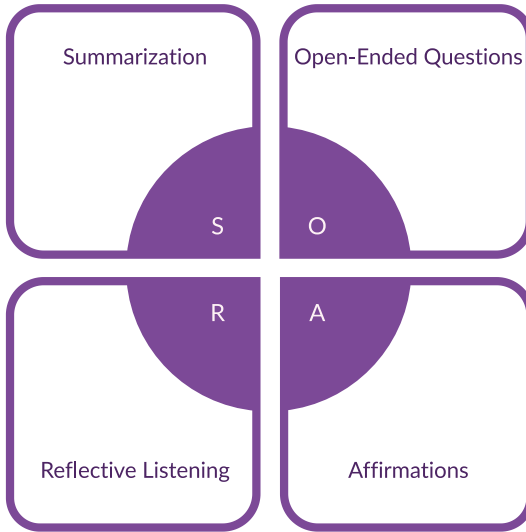


Figure 9: OARS structure in Motivational Interviewing

Open-Ended Questions

Our storytelling questions are the ultimate example of open-ended questions. When we asked interviewees to talk about their actual experiences in remote meetings, participants felt free to share their experiences. Those storytelling questions and our empathy-related questions helped to build empathy and reinforced that the interview centered on their needs and perspectives.

Imagine you’re conducting a motivational interview with a potential user to understand their fitness habits and barriers to adopting a connected watch.

Open-ended questions in the health tracking example:

- “Tell me about your fitness routine. What motivates you to stay active?”
- “Can you describe a time when you struggled to keep up with your fitness goals?”
- “How did you feel about approaching your fitness goal?”

Affirmations

During interviews with my video conferencing users, as they walked me through their marathon meeting days, I occasionally interjected comments that acknowledged their experience and showed empathy. These small gestures helped me build trust and encouraged the interviewees to be open and candid.

Let's check the connected watch interview example.

Affirmations in the health tracking example:

- “It's great that you've made fitness a priority, even when it's hard to stay motivated.”
- “It makes sense that you'd want a solution that helps you stay on track without feeling like a burden.”
- “You feel happy about making progress toward your goal.”

Reflective Listening

The key aspect of this interviewing approach is to let the interviewee do most of the talking, while you focus on listening. When I spoke, it was to ensure that I understood the interviewee's intended message by reflecting on what was said. I employed various techniques for this, such as repeating what was said, summarizing the main points, or reflecting on the emotions conveyed.

I wanted to make sure I genuinely listened and understood what the interviewee told me. That was more important than sticking with our original goals. I often found that the conversation generated new and interesting insights.

Reflective listening in the health tracking example:

- User: “I try to stay active, but I often lose motivation after a few weeks.”
- Interviewer: “It sounds like you start off strong, but it's hard to stay consistent. What do you think makes that difficult?”

Summarization

During the interview, I summarized key points shared by the interviewee. This helped to maintain a coherent conversation flow, but also offered valuable insights. I pinpointed discrepancies in the interviewees' comments, which then guided me in formulating follow-up questions.

Summarization in the health tracking example:

- “So from what I’m hearing, you value staying active but struggle with long-term motivation. You also find tracking fitness important, but it needs to be simple and non-intrusive. Did I get that right?”
- “Based on what you shared, if a watch could help keep you motivated without feeling like extra work, that might be something you’d be interested in. Is that correct?”

Empathy Maps

Another technique to identify and structure users’ motivators is the empathy map (Figure 10), a well-known structured technique that focuses on understanding users’ needs with an emotional dimension.

The empathy map is a common tool used in agile and design communities to visualize a user’s experience. It helps in expressing our understanding of a specific user by organizing user knowledge in one place. It can be used to categorize and understand research materials, identify gaps in knowledge, and develop personas, by combining the empathy maps of different users.

The general idea behind the empathy map is to walk awhile in your user’s shoes and use that opportunity to answer a series of questions:

- What do our users hear?
- What do our users do?
- What do our users feel?
- What do our users say?

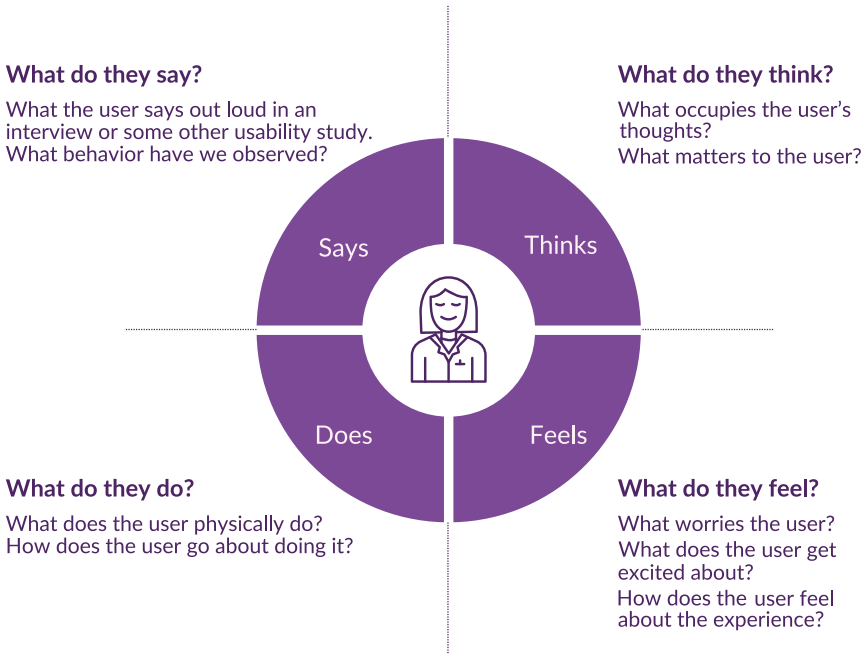


Figure 10: Empathy map

The output of the exercise is a list of actions, feelings, and emotions you can use to segment your users into personas and understand the emotions at key points in their user journey. By capturing users' pains, gains, and perceptions, an empathy map makes it easier to uncover functional and emotional motivators, the driving forces behind user behavior. This understanding is crucial for designing products that solve problems effectively, but also create meaningful, emotionally engaging experiences. A lack of information in the empathy map shows the need for more research.

Filling the Empathy Maps

I used empathy maps to picture users' needs and visualize pain points. Let's take the following example that could represent a segment of artists.

I start by gathering qualitative and quantitative data from interviews, surveys, and usage analytics. Usually, I conduct 10 to 20 user interviews with people who regularly used our products. I then identify the most insightful patterns, focusing on their emotional triggers, pain points, and needs.

Let's take Zara, a hypothetical 25-year-old emerging musician, as an example. Based on the interviews, we can start populating the empathy map for her:

Empathy map breakdown for Zara:

What Zara Says

- “I want to reach more people with my music, but it's hard to stand out.”
- “I prefer apps that recommend songs that are like the music I make.”
- “I use multiple apps, but none of them really seem to get what I want to hear.”

Insights: Current platforms frustrate Zara and she feels they don't cater to niche emerging artists like her. She's actively seeking ways to grow her fanbase, and appreciates apps that help her discover music similar to her own work.

What Zara Thinks

- “I think I would gain more followers if more people could hear my music.”
- “If this app helps new artists like me get exposure, that's worth my time.”

Insights: Zara is ambitious and believes in her potential to grow as an artist. She's looking for platforms that will help her build an audience. She sees apps as tools for discovery, not just for herself as a listener, but as a musician trying to be heard.

What Zara Does

- Zara spends about 2 to 3 hours a day browsing music apps such as SoundCloud, Spotify, and Bandcamp.
- She frequently shares her music on social media, and tags platforms to get featured.
- Zara explores new artists who have a smaller following, hoping for a mutual exchange of support.

Insights: Zara is proactive in engaging with platforms and social media. She regularly uses apps to listen, but also to self-promote. She's heavily reliant on digital platforms for exposure.

What Zara Feels

- “I’m anxious that my music won’t reach the right audience.”
- “It’s exhausting to always be on the lookout for new ways to promote myself.”
- “I feel proud when someone tells me they discovered me through a playlist.”

Insights: Zara experiences a lot of anxiety and pressure as an emerging artist. She’s passionate about what she creates, but feels unsure about how to get it in front of the right people. She craves validation from new listeners.

Collecting Motivators from Zara’s Empathy Map

Based on the collected insights, we can fill in the empathy map, then focus on identifying Zara’s functional motivators and emotional motivators. Here’s what we can define, based on the map up to this point.

Zara’s functional motivators:

- Discover music similar to her own.
- Promote her music to a broader audience.
- Understand listener engagement with her tracks.
- Use playlists as a tool for discovery.

Zara’s Emotional Motivators:

- Feel validated as an artist.
- Reduce anxiety about self-promotion.
- Experience pride when listeners enjoy her music.
- Feel connected to a supportive community.

Using Data

It's possible to get some insights about users' motivators from your existing data. A study conducted by Deloitte²⁵ analyzed data from 800 consumer surveys, a panel of 112 participants, and 91 million social media posts. The study revealed that brands can enhance customer lifetime value and cultivate brand advocates by effectively using emotional data.

Here are a couple of examples from my experience.

Example from Spotify

Daylist²⁶ is a highly dynamic and personalized playlist that evolves with your music preferences based on the day and time. Spotify believes that, just like your mood, your playlist should constantly shift to match your ever-changing vibe.

By analyzing your listening habits, the app creates playlists that match the vibe of your random Tuesday mornings or stressful Thursday evenings. These playlists are updated throughout the day to stay in sync with you, giving you a personalized soundtrack that makes every moment feel cinematic.

Spotify adds to the fun by giving your playlists quirky and fun titles, making you anticipate the next one with excitement to see if it will make you chuckle or feel as though Spotify is reading your mind.

Using this data can influence listening recommendations and convert that information into an opportunity for delight. Creating that delight encouraged our users to form an emotional connection with Spotify.

Data is also used to influence marketing campaigns.

25 *Exploring the value of emotion-driven engagement: The dynamics of customer loyalty*, Deloitte Development LLC (May 2019), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.mediapost.com/uploads/EmotionDrivenEngagement.pdf>

26 *For the Record*, Spotify, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/>



Figure 11: Spotify ad; picture taken in a Paris metro station in 2024.

Figure 11 displays a Spotify ad in a Paris metro station, indicating the number of times the song “Espresso” by Sabrina Carpenter has been played. This information is used to connect with users by translating it to user behavior: “Are you still at work?”

Example from Chrome

While working on Chrome, I noticed a recurring behavior: many users had dozens of tabs open, a habit I identified with. It sparked a curiosity in me: could this be more than just convenience? Might it reflect a sense of being overwhelmed?

I began analyzing usage patterns and conducting interviews, eventually uncovering signs of frustration and difficulty navigating tab overload. This blend of behavioral data and user insight helped me better understand the emotional undertones of digital habits.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **User Motivators Can be Functional and Emotional:** Users interact with products to satisfy practical needs (functional motivators) and deeper emotional desires (emotional motivators). Recognizing and addressing both dimensions is key to building products that truly resonate.
- **Unlocking Deeper Insights Through User Research:** Effective user research goes beyond surface-level feedback. Leveraging storytelling and empathy interviews helps uncover how users experience, feel about, and interact with a product, leading to richer insights.
- **Data as a Bridge to Emotional Connection:** The combination of quantitative insights (usage data) and qualitative research (interviews) allows product teams to identify opportunities for delight and deeper engagement, ensuring products connect with users on functional and emotional levels.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Familiarize Yourself with the JTBD Framework:** This will help you to better understand the motivations behind why users engage with your product.
- **Identify Functional and Emotional Motivators:** Define the practical reasons users engage with your product (functional motivators) and the emotions they seek (emotional motivators). Understanding both ensures a more holistic product experience.
- **Enhance User Interviews with Empathy Technique:** Expand your current user research by incorporating open-ended questions that reveal deep emotional drivers behind user behaviors. This will uncover insights beyond surface-level needs.

- **Build an Empathy Map to Highlight Motivators:** Use an empathy map to visualize user thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This allows teams to uncover deeper motivations that influence product engagement.
- **Leverage Usage Data to Strengthen Emotional Connection:** Analyze user interaction patterns to identify moments of engagement, frustration, or delight. Cross-reference with interview findings to pinpoint opportunities to enhance emotional resonance in your product.

EXPERT PROFILE

Behavioral Science and Product Delight



Liz Immer

Head of Product at Vision Group

I am convinced that there's a strong connection between building delightful products and behavioral science. Delight requires deep empathy and a profound understanding of what motivates users. These motivators can be uncovered using behavioral methods and techniques, and I was eager to get Liz Immer's perspective as an expert and experienced product leader.

Liz Immer, Head of Product at Vision Group AG, brings a refreshingly human-centered approach to product development, shaped by her background in behavioral science. Liz learned that we have a much better chance of designing delightful products if we deeply understand human behavior. She describes delight as more than just surface-level satisfaction; it's not simply the "cherry on top" but the entire "ice cream sundae." This metaphor captures her belief that genuine delight must combine immediate emotional satisfaction with long-term rational fulfillment.

One of Liz's most compelling insights is the connection between delight and self-improvement. The most successful products don't just solve problems; they help users become better versions of themselves, while fostering meaningful connections with others. Liz illustrated this idea with Miro, a digital whiteboard tool. Miro makes users feel like better leaders, better facilitators, and better thinkers. This example highlights that delight isn't just about usability; it's about how a product makes users feel about themselves.

Delight isn't exclusive to consumer tech or entertainment. It also plays a crucial role in industries that seem unemotional, such as scientific publishing. Liz shared a fascinating example from academic journals, where research showed that journals fostering emotional connection had significantly higher

citation rates. When reviewers and authors felt a sense of belonging and community, they were more engaged, more likely to cite articles, and more willing to volunteer for peer review, all critical success factors in the publishing world. This demonstrates that delight isn't just about making users happy in the moment; it's about creating trust, emotional investment, and engagement.

One of Liz's most impactful projects involved redesigning a debt repayment system for a telecommunications company. The original system had a 50% failure rate. Half of the customers who signed up for installment plans failed to complete them. Her team implemented a counterintuitive change: they slowed the setup process down, introducing more steps. Instead of asking users how many installments they wanted, they reframed it as "How much can you afford per month?"; and they added reassuring visuals, including a handshake image at the final step. The result? During usability testing, users physically relaxed, indicating lower stress and higher confidence, and compliance later jumped from 50% to more than 80%. This example underscores how small choices can profoundly impact user behavior and delight.

Liz also highlighted the importance of effectively measuring emotional impact. She strongly prefers moderated user testing over traditional surveys, arguing that surveys often fail to capture true emotions because respondents may not even be aware of their own preferences. Instead of asking people to report their reactions with formats such as numerical scales or scales labeled with words, she suggests using visuals like emojis as answer formats. She emphasized that watching users interact with a product in a natural way reveals more about their emotions than self-reported data ever could.

Throughout our conversation, Liz reinforced that delight isn't just about making a product fun or enjoyable at the moment, it's about creating a deeper connection that makes users feel understood, valued, and even empowered.

CHAPTER

5

Define Opportunities

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 5:

Delight lives in the space between what users want to feel and what products make possible.

A few months ago, I was in an Uber on my way home from Charles de Gaulle Airport when the driver politely asked, “Would it be okay if I make a stop at a gas station? I’m not entirely sure if I have enough fuel to take you all the way home.” I couldn’t help but wonder, did I really have a say in the matter? We made a pit stop at the station, and as we waited in line with other Uber drivers, all taking their chances in the fuel roulette game, my Uber app suddenly pinged with a notification:

Need help? Your vehicle’s been stationary for a while. Please let us know if everything is OK.

The app made me feel cared for like my parents did when I was out late. Uber used data to anticipate distress and offer reassurance. Uber met my need to get home and feel safe.

Designing excellent products requires understanding practical needs and emotional needs, and integrating thoughtful features. By addressing safety both as a functional and an emotional motivator, Uber has successfully created a more holistic user experience:

I shared my Uber experience as a user. I never discussed my need to get home from the airport or asked to be safe with Uber's product teams.

That's a challenge that product teams face. Your users won't come out and tell you what motivates them to use, and continue to use your product. You have to discover these motivations. So this chapter describes how you can structure those motivators and turn them into delightful products.

In Chapter 4, I explained functional and emotional motivators. Once you identify those motivators, the next step is to structure the collected insights and turn them into actionable opportunities. To uncover such opportunities, one must engage in deliberate observation, structured analysis, and a deep understanding of user behavior. This means you must do the following:

- Be strategic in gathering insights
- Synthesize findings into a structured format
- Use established frameworks to map out opportunities

One of my favorite frameworks for generating opportunities and solutions is the Double Diamond framework (Figure 12). It's a structured approach to problem-solving that helps teams explore more opportunities by expanding and refining their understanding of a problem before jumping to solutions. It comprises two key phases: the opportunity exploration and the solution development, each following a cycle of divergent and convergent thinking. In the opportunity exploration phase, the first diamond, teams gather insights through research, user interviews, and data analysis to fully understand the

problem space, ensuring they don't settle on assumptions too early. This is followed by the define phase, in which findings are synthesized to articulate the problem. This structured approach ensures teams are solving the right problem before moving into ideation.

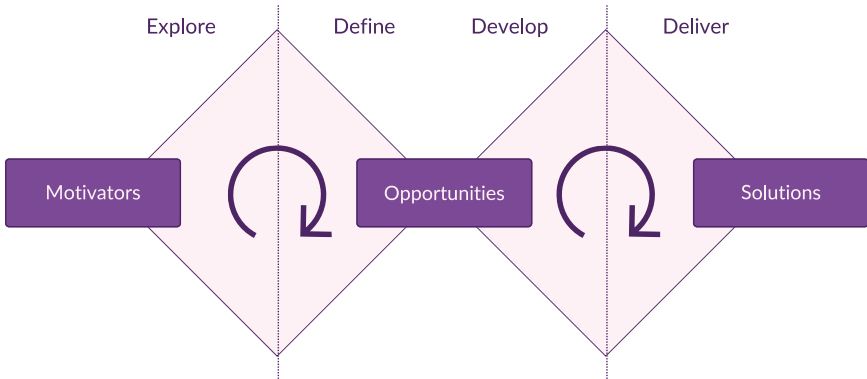


Figure 12: The Double Diamond Process.

The second diamond focuses on solution development by first expanding the range of possible answers in the development phase, in which teams brainstorm, prototype, and test different concepts. This encourages creative exploration, allowing for multiple approaches rather than defaulting to the first idea. By alternating between broad exploration and focused refinement, the Double Diamond helps uncover hidden opportunities, reduce risks, and create solutions that are more innovative and user-centered.

In this chapter, we'll be mainly in the first diamond exploring product opportunities using user motivators as a starting point.

Clustering Motivators Using The SONCASE Model

Motivational segmentation proves to be more effective in understanding the underlying factors that influence users' decisions. In Chapter 4, I discussed various types of motivators and techniques for recognizing them.

I need to admit that gathering insights may be overwhelming because of the volume of data, making it challenging to draw conclusions. Therefore, it's crucial to categorize motivators and create user segments that resonate with each motivator. The upcoming sections will outline methods that aid in categorizing the users' motivators.

Different users have diverse preferences and priorities when using or purchasing a product. The SONCASE²⁷ framework (Figure 13) was developed by Jean-Denis Larradet, a commercial executive at GNFA (Groupement national pour la formation automobile). The name SONCASE is derived from the French acronyms of the following seven drivers:

1. Security (Sécurité): Users need reassurance.
2. Self-esteem (Orgueil): Users seek validation.
3. Novelty (Nouveauté): Users want cutting-edge experiences.
4. Convenience (Confort): Users value ease and simplicity.
5. Price (Argent): Users are cost-sensitive.
6. Affinity (Sympathie): Users seek belonging and confidence.
7. Environment (Écologie): Users prioritize sustainability.

Some users prioritize reliability and assurance (Security), while others prioritize validation (Self-esteem). Novelty appeals to those interested in innovation, while comfort is important for those valuing convenience. The SONCASE model, which was initially developed for sales, is influenced by Maslow's hierarchy of needs and aids in organizing emotional motivators. This model is highly beneficial in identifying personas according to their motivators within the opportunity space.

²⁷ Jean-Marc Décaudin and Jacques Digout, *e-Publicité: Les fondamentaux*, (France: Dunod, 2011).

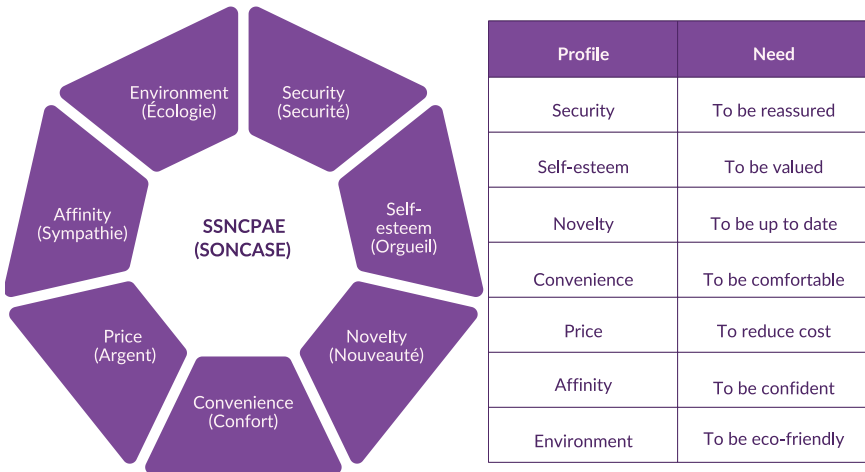


Figure 13: The seven drivers of the SONCASE model

Identifying Moments of Delight with User Journey Map

A user journey map (Figure 14) is a visualization tool that outlines the steps users take when interacting with a product, service, or experience. Originally from the customer experience (CX) and service design fields, user experience (UX) design and product management are now also adopting the technique.

This technique captures the user's goals, actions, thoughts, and emotions at each stage, helping teams identify pain points, opportunities, and moments of delight. By mapping the full journey, product teams can design more user-centric solutions that enhance both engagement and satisfaction, while addressing functional needs and emotional needs.

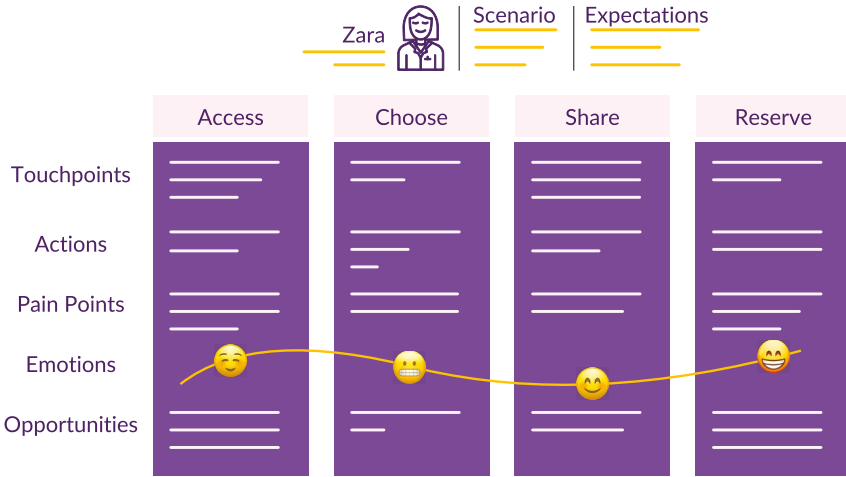


Figure 14: User journey map

Running a User Journey Map Exercise

The best way to start a journey map is to have insights from the users. This means you've finished the following:

- done your interviews
- documented your insights from those users
- have data about how users interact with the product

With all that in hand, you're able to base your journey map on real insight from users rather than from guesswork. In addition, the likelihood of the journey map being an accurate reflection of your user's experience will increase.

When you put the user journey map together, remember to create it as an entire product team and involve key stakeholders. That way, you've got multiple perspectives looking at all the customer information you pulled together. And of course, do a separate user journey for each persona.

For me, a user journey map has two key components: emotions and touchpoints. The most critical aspect of a user journey map is identifying pivotal moments, the emotional highs and lows throughout the user experience. These

moments serve as opportunities to enhance product delight and strengthen emotional connection. Touchpoints are the interactions users have with your product. It's crucial to list all touchpoints to avoid missing any. Identifying touchpoints for each stage enables you to engage with users effectively, based on their emotions.

While mapping out stages and pain points is essential, the true power of a user journey map lies in capturing users' emotions at key moments. If the goal is to build emotional engagement, understanding how users feel at different touchpoints is just as important as knowing what they do.

If it helps to explain why, think about the user's journey as being at the airport (Figure 15). There are different stages at the airport, such as check-in, security control, search for the gate, waiting in the waiting room, then boarding the plane. Then think about your last trip to the airport. I'm going to guess emotions played a big part in various, if not all, aspects of that journey.

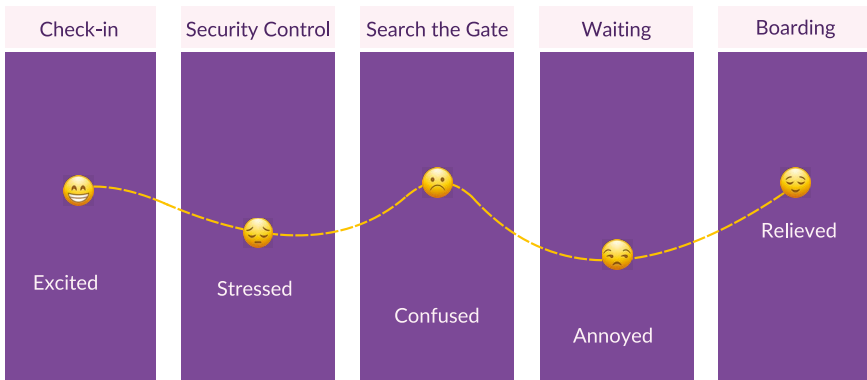


Figure 15: User journey map for an airport experience

There isn't a specific step-by-step approach to creating the user journey map. You could start with the pain points, touchpoints, or emotions. It doesn't matter where you start, as long as you base it on results from your users' interviews and product usage data.

Pivotal Moments

Emotions are plotted as a single line across the journey phases, literally signaling the emotional “ups” and “downs” of the experience. These are also called *peak moments* for the ups and *valley moments* for the downs. Think of this line as a contextual layer of emotion that tells us where the user is happy versus frustrated. These are called *pivotal moments*.

I first heard about peaks and valleys in Chip and Dan Heath’s book *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact*.²⁸ In that book, Chip and Dan showed that standout experiences have a large impact on our memories and perceptions. Those standout experiences aren’t necessarily the longest, but they’re the most extreme in terms of positive emotions or negative ones.

People remember the best moments (peaks) or worst moments (valleys) of an experience, as well as the last moment, and forget the rest. Building on this idea, we need to consider the peaks and the valleys when we want to build an emotional connection with users and our product.

These peaks and valleys are important because they provide prime opportunities to build emotional connections with your users. If you have a peak moment, you can take steps to amplify that joy. So if your user goes through a great joyful moment, you can celebrate them achieving a personal goal.

You see that a lot of products add in some sort of animation, such as balloons, when a user hits a certain level or accomplishes a specific goal. This has the effect of amplifying joy or creating surprise, both of which drive delight.

Starbucks does this when they give you a free coffee on your birthday. It’s not that unusual, but it works well.

So what about those valley moments? It’s more or less the same thing. If your user is experiencing negative emotions, there are a couple of benefits to connecting with them. First, you can turn a negative into a positive, which improves the journey experience. Second, if there’s nothing you can do to improve and your product recognizes the negative moment and exhibits empathy, it’ll build trust and loyalty from the user.

28 Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

A great example of turning a valley moment into a delightful experience is Chrome's Dino Game. When users lose their internet connection, frustration is inevitable; it disrupts their workflow or browsing experience. Instead of leaving them with just an error message, Chrome introduces the Endless Runner game featuring a pixelated dinosaur. This small unexpected touch transforms a negative experience into a fun, engaging moment, shifting frustration into amusement.

Another example of a positive response to challenging moments can be seen in how some companies handle issues. Recently, I experienced this firsthand with Uber.

I had booked an Uber and was initially assigned a driver. However, a few minutes later, the driver canceled. Frustrated and worried I wouldn't catch my train to London on time, I grabbed a taxi that happened to pass right by. Unbeknownst to me, when the first driver canceled, the Uber app automatically assigned a new driver to ensure my journey could continue. By the time the second driver arrived, I had already taken the taxi.

To add insult to injury, I later discovered that I was charged for the Uber ride I never took. I felt angry and confused by what seemed like an unfair situation. Seeking a resolution, I reached out to Uber's help center via the app to report the issue and request a refund (Figure 16).

I had a pleasant surprise with the refund process. It was straightforward and had only two simple steps. Even though I was initially frustrated, Uber's customer service impressed me with its efficient and effective response.

This was an obvious example of exceeding expectations. I thought I'd have to submit a case and wait a few days for a response. However, the process was much faster and smoother than I expected.

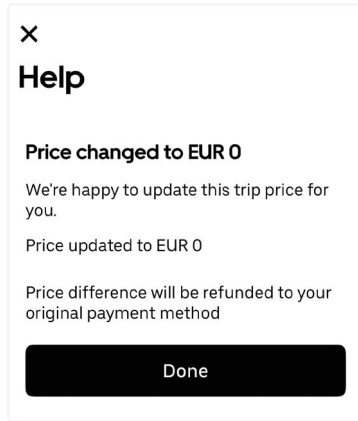


Figure 16: Screenshot of my refund request on the Uber App²⁹

Converting Motivators into Delightful Opportunities: The Google Meet Case

You can convert peak and valley moments into real product opportunities. These are the points in the journey map where you can act to enhance your product's experience.

I conducted many user interviews and, together with my team, we analyzed the insights we gathered. Through our discussions, we uncovered some of our users' deeper motivations. Interestingly, three key demotivators emerged, factors that were detracting from their experience rather than enhancing it.

While I typically emphasize leveraging positive motivators, I learned that sometimes it's easier to address and reduce the emotional demotivators.

This is a template that could be used to synthesize the interviews.

I will use a hypothetical example for someone, say a project manager named Emily, to describe her last day spent on meetings. I'd note the following information:

- What are her motivations?

29 Used for illustrative purposes only. All trademarks and visuals are the property of their respective owners.

- What are her emotions?
- What are the distractions?
- What's aggravating the situation?

I then synthesize the interviews by converting the results into stories to describe motivators and emotions.

Emily, a project manager, starts her day with back-to-back Google Meet meetings. Already feeling overwhelmed, her attention wanes as the hours pass. By the third meeting, she struggles to focus and zones out as colleagues repeat topics from previous discussions.

- **Motivation:** To effectively take part in and manage daily meetings
- **Emotions:** Feeling overwhelmed, bored, and fatigued
- **Distractions:** Repetitive content, prolonged screen time
- **Aggravators:** Meeting frequency, lack of engagement, repetitive discussions

Then I turn those identified emotions of feeling overwhelmed, bored, and fatigued into opportunity statements.

Stage	Emotion	Opportunity Statement
Early day	Overwhelmed	Help users manage meeting schedules effectively
Mid-Morning	Bored	Keep meetings engaging
Afternoon	Fatigued	Prevent meeting fatigue

From those user interviews, I can identify the emotional demotivators that I want to reduce.

Motivation Statements for Opportunities

To identify opportunities effectively, start by writing them in a concise and emotionally engaging way. I've created motivation statements using a simple format that captures user context and deep underlying drivers (Figure 17).

The structure is as follows:

[User characteristic] wants to [motivation] because [underlying insight].

This statement assists product teams in turning user motivators, including emotional and functional motivators, into actionable product opportunities. It emphasizes aspiration and emotional insight, which is great for pinpointing delight levers. These are moments that enhance an experience through emotions.

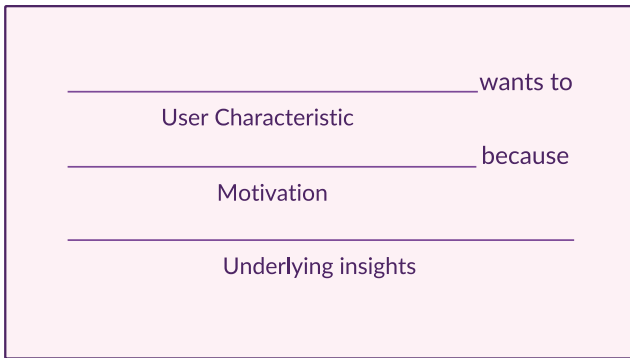


Figure 17: Motivation statement structure

Back to the Google Meet example. For the boredom demotivator:

Remote team members want to stay energized and connected because feeling seen and purposeful helps them stay engaged in their work.

For the Zoom fatigue demotivator:

Remote team members want to feel refreshed and mentally present because sustained focus and emotional comfort help them contribute meaningfully.

This insight opened the door to exploring ways of creating presence, connection, reducing cognitive overload, injecting moments of relief, and fostering emotional balance in long virtual meetings far beyond fixing boredom and simply addressing fatigue.

Think of motivation statements as the compass; they help you orient around the user’s deeper needs and desires. Use them early in discovery to uncover meaningful opportunities.

“How Might We” Statements for Solutions

Once you’ve identified the motivation behind a user’s behavior, it’s time to explore how to act on it. This is where “how might we” (HMW) statements shine (Figure 18). HMW turns a need or frustration into an opportunity space, allowing teams to generate creative and diverse solutions. It reframes the conversation. Instead of asking “Why isn’t this working?,” you ask “How might we make this feel meaningful, engaging, or even fun?”

To create an opportunity statement using HMW, identify the intended action, the user you’re targeting, and the benefit, gain, or result you want them to experience. Then work it into the following format:

How might we _____

Intended Action

to/for _____ in order to

Targeted Users

_____ ?

Benefits, Gains or Results we’d like to see

Figure 18: HMW statement structure

Back to the Google Meet example and the boredom demotivator:

- **How might we** improve the meeting experience
- **for** participants in prolonged online meetings
- **in order to** maintain their engagement and reduce their sense of boredom?

This exercise marked the beginning of multiple ideations to make Google Meet more engaging and encourage interactions during video calls. If you're curious to know what those ideations were, and what we landed on, be sure to read Chapters 6, 7 and 8 where I talk about identifying and categorizing solutions.

We can now look at the challenge of video call fatigue. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a new term emerged: Zoom fatigue; For the record, I was relieved it wasn't called "Meet fatigue".

It was a very interesting opportunity to explore, so a possible HMW statement is as follows:

- **How might we** increase comfort
- **for** participants in prolonged online meetings
- **in order to** make extended video meetings less fatiguing?

Such a statement opens the floor for a variety of potential solutions to explore. To find out what solution we came up with, you guessed it, check out Chapter 6.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Identifying Motivators as a First Step to Discovering Opportunities:** By using classification techniques like SONCASE, you can better understand user motivations and categorize insights to guide your product focus.
- **Empathy as a Path to Emotional Opportunities:** The best products create an emotional connection with users. Achieving this requires not just knowing users but deeply understanding them through structured tools such as empathy maps and user journey maps.
- **The Power of Pivotal Moments:** Identifying high and low emotional points in the user journey provides unique opportunities to create delightful experiences, turning emotional moments into meaningful interactions.
- **Motivation and HMW Statements as Tools for Opportunity Framing:** Use motivation statements to uncover why users care; they reveal emotional and identity-based drivers behind behavior. Then use HMW statements to explore how you can address those motivations with creative, delightful solutions.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Create Motivational Personas:** Identify key motivational triggers among users and build personas based on their emotional and functional affinities. A classification tool such as SONCASE is useful for this process.
- **Identify Pivotal Moments Using the User Journey Map:** Leverage user journey mapping to detect critical moments in the customer experience. These high-impact touchpoints reveal areas where you can strengthen emotional connection and engagement.

EXPERT PROFILE

Product Delight and the Amplifying Effect of Emotions



Teddy Florent

*Former CPO at a Global Luxury Watch Brand and
Head of Product for Amazon Alexa*

Teddy Florent’s product development journey spans from Amazon’s Alexa to the world of luxury watchmaking. His experience offers valuable insights into how delight manifests differently across industries, particularly in luxury.

For Teddy, delight is about creating excitement. “It’s how we build excitement through software features or physical products for the end user,” he explains. This excitement can be both functional and emotional, but in luxury, emotion plays a far greater role as it amplifies a product’s impact beyond its features.

He describes emotion as an amplifier. While functional benefits create a direct, logical response, speaking “brain to brain” with users, emotional connections multiply that impact many times over. This explains why luxury brands focus so intensely on emotional engagement. They are not just selling features, they are selling dreams.

Luxury’s approach to delight reveals a fascinating dichotomy in user personas. Teddy identifies two distinct groups with different motivations. The first consists of financially secure individuals who seek luxury for its quality, beauty, and craftsmanship. They value authenticity and storytelling. The second aspires to belong to the first, viewing luxury as a social signal, purchasing products for brand recognition and status.

This distinction shapes how luxury brands design and market their products. “The key is to personalize the full customer experience to each of those two audiences as if they were the only ones,” Teddy notes. The first group

demands technical excellence and authenticity, while the second prioritizes brand exclusivity. Successful luxury brands balance both needs in product design and presentation.

A key part of Teddy's philosophy is personalization. Unlike mass-market products designed for broad appeal, luxury items strive to make users feel recognized and understood. "A luxury product doesn't just provide functionality," he explains. "It tells you who you are and who you aspire to be."

This approach is evident in his work on connected watches, where different editions catered to specific lifestyles. The strategy was not just about offering variations but about deeply understanding user segments and crafting products that reflect their identity. When done right, Teddy believes, the likelihood of deep user connection becomes almost certain.

One example is a famous golf edition of a connected watch, designed specifically for golfers. Despite its niche appeal, it resonated strongly with its audience. Another success was a special edition inspired by a global gaming icon, which sold out worldwide in under ten minutes, demonstrating the power of aligning a product with a passionate community.

Teddy's insights extend beyond luxury. His understanding of emotional amplification, persona-based design, and personal connection applies to any product aiming to delight users. True delight is not just about what a product does but how it makes users feel about themselves.

His perspective offers valuable lessons for any product competing on emotional appeal. Whether designing mass-market technology or high-end luxury, the key to delight is deeply understanding users and crafting experiences that resonate with their aspirations. The goal is not just to meet needs but to create meaningful connections, transforming products into experiences that inspire, excite, and leave a lasting impression.

CHAPTER

6

Identify Solutions

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 6:

Delight is rarely the first idea; it's the one you almost didn't explore.

Moving from Step 2: Define Product Opportunities to Step 3: Identify and Categorize Solutions in the product delight model means transitioning from the opportunity space to the solution space. While this shift often happens naturally, it's important to recognize the distinction.

In this chapter, I'll focus on solution identification and detail the solution categorization in Chapter 8. Examples of how to include delighters are in Chapter 7.

Many product teams tend to jump straight into solution mode. It's the exciting, creative part of product development, especially when working with a skilled team. But rushing in increases the risk of building something nobody wants, let alone something truly delightful.

In this chapter, we're at the second diamond of the Double Diamond framework discussed in Chapter 5. The goal is to explore multiple solutions for

the identified product opportunities, allowing for multiple approaches rather than defaulting to the first idea.

To identify solutions, I've found that different ideation techniques can be useful, some designed for quick idea generation and others requiring more time for deeper exploration. I categorize these into rapid ideation and extended ideation techniques.

- **Rapid Ideation** happens within a short time frame, typically during a 1- to 2-hour meeting, making it ideal for brainstorming sessions in which speed and spontaneity are key.
- **Extended Ideation** takes place over a longer period, ranging from a day to a full week, allowing for deeper reflection, research, and iteration.

Let's take a look at both variations.

Rapid Solution Ideation

If I have an opportunity statement and want to quickly generate several potential solutions, I like to use either brainwriting or Crazy 8s.

Brainwriting

Brainwriting (Figure 19) is one of the most effective solutions-identifying techniques that I've used in my career. Compared to traditional brainstorming, brainwriting fosters inclusivity, creativity, and diversity of thought, while minimizing bias.

How Brainwriting Works

1. **Silent Ideation:** Instead of discussing ideas aloud, each participant spends 10 minutes writing down their thoughts on sticky notes, focusing on a specific opportunity.
2. **Idea Sharing:** After the silent phase, participants share their notes with the group, either by posting them on a board and reading them aloud.

3. **Affinity Mapping:** The group then identifies similarities and common themes among the ideas, clustering them into solution groups that share patterns and concepts.
4. **Collaboration and Refinement:** Once ideas are grouped, the team begins prioritizing them. Various prioritization techniques, such as reach, impact, confidence, effort (RICE); must have, should have, could have, and won't have (MoSCoW); value vs. effort; and others, can be used to determine which ideas hold the most potential. Voting can also be useful to identify the best solutions to explore.

Brainwriting Sheets



Affinity Diagram

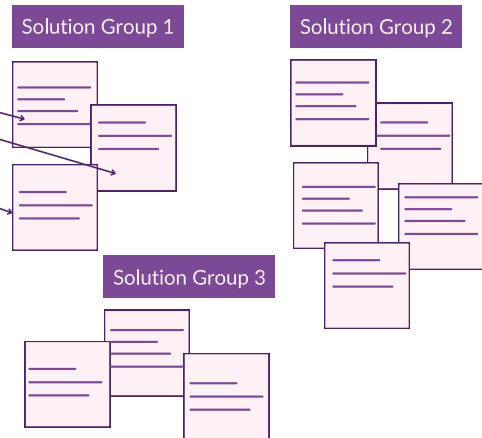


Figure 19: Solutions generated and grouped in a brainwriting session

Why Brainwriting Outperforms Brainstorming

In a typical brainstorming session, people share ideas aloud, often leading to a few dominant voices steering the conversation. This can unintentionally create bias. When one person presents an idea, others may unconsciously focus on refining that idea rather than generating completely new ideas. In contrast, brainwriting ensures that every participant contributes independently before any discussion begins. Here is the list of benefits you can get from using brainwriting:

- **Encourages Equal Participation:** Everyone has an opportunity to contribute, ensuring the inclusion of quieter team members or those who prefer reflection over spontaneous speaking.
- **Reduces Cognitive Bias:** Because ideas are generated independently, no one is influenced by the loudest or most senior voices in the room.
- **Fosters a Greater Range of Ideas:** Without immediate feedback or judgment, participants tend to explore a wider variety of solutions.
- **Promotes Inclusive and Innovative Solutions:** Since ideas emerge in an unbiased way, the team can better address the functional needs and emotional desires of users.

Having experienced brainstorming and brainwriting, I've found that brainwriting consistently leads to more innovative, well-rounded solutions. Removing the pressure of immediate verbal contribution and minimizing groupthink creates an environment in which every voice truly matters.

Crazy 8s

To stimulate fresh thinking and move beyond predictable solutions, the Sprint book³⁰ by Jake Knapp and his team at Google Ventures suggests a fast-paced sketching exercise called Crazy 8s (Figure 20).

Crazy 8s is a rapid sketching exercise designed to push individuals beyond their first ideas and explore a wider range of solutions. Each person folds a sheet of paper into eight sections and sketches one idea per section within a tight time limit. The goal is to move quickly, think visually, and explore variations of a single concept. Crazy 8s encourages creativity, uncovers unexpected directions, and helps identify strong ideas for further development. It's often used as a warm-up before deeper prototyping or decision-making.

30 Jake Knapp et al., *Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), <https://a.co/d/fqrYhKw>

How Crazy 8s Works

Participants are encouraged to draw multiple variations of a single concept in a short amount of time. This quick drawing technique reduces overthinking and helps uncover unexpected approaches. It's not about polished designs, but about exploring different directions rapidly. This method is both a creativity booster and a practical tool for uncovering promising ideas early in the process.

Step 1: Define the objective or problem

Clearly define what you want to brainstorm. Ensure all participants understand the goal of the session.

Step 2: Assign a workspace/frame to each participant

Each participant gets their own workspace/frame. Take an A4 or letter-sized sheet. Fold it in half three times to create 8 equal sections.

Step 3: Explain the ground rules

Each participant has 8 minutes to generate as many ideas as possible, ideally 1 minute per idea. They can draw, write, or sketch their ideas in the given space.

Step 4: Set time intervals

Do an 8-minute ideation round. The goal is to sketch one idea per section.

Step 5: Fill as many idea cells as possible

Participants should fill in different ideas without overthinking. It should be quantity over quality at this stage.

Step 6: Select and develop the top 3 ideas

Each participant picks their top 3 ideas, gets 5 minutes to refine them, then presents them to the group.

Step 7: Vote on the best ideas

Everyone uses stickers to vote for their favorite idea. Participants drag and drop a sticker on their chosen idea.

Define the objective

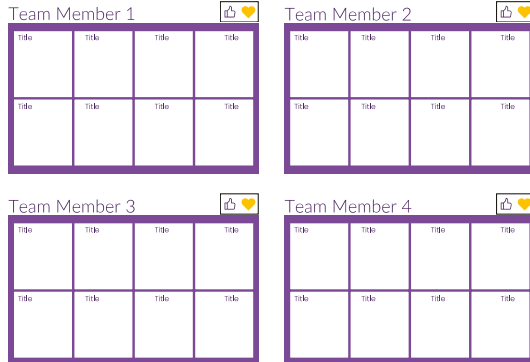
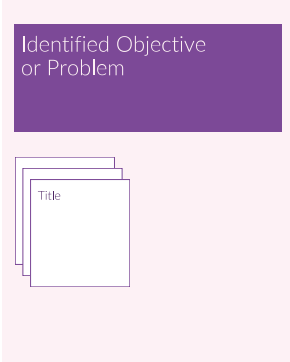


Figure 20: Steps of the Crazy 8s method

Why Crazy 8s Is Effective

- **Forces Divergent Thinking:** Since participants must generate multiple ideas quickly, it prevents them from settling on their first, most obvious solutions.
- **Encourages Visual Exploration:** The technique encourages generating ideas and sketches. Sketching ideas makes abstract concepts more concrete and easier to iterate on.
- **Reduces Bias:** Since each person ideates independently before sharing, there's less influence from dominant voices.
- **Speeds Up Decision-Making:** By surfacing multiple potential solutions quickly, teams can refine and prioritize the best solutions.

When to Use Brainwriting vs. Crazy 8s

Brainwriting and Crazy 8s are both effective ideation techniques, but they serve different purposes and suit different team dynamics.

- Brainwriting allows participants to write down their thoughts independently before sharing them with the group. This method

reduces groupthink, ensures every voice is heard, and is ideal for teams that thrive on deeper reflection and iteration.

- Crazy 8s pushes participants to generate multiple different ideas in just a few minutes. It encourages quick thinking, creativity, and out-of-the-box solutions.

I recommend choosing brainwriting for depth and refinement, and Crazy 8s for speed and creativity.

Extended Solution Ideation

Design Sprints

Traditional product development can take months, often leading to costly missteps if teams build the wrong thing. Design sprints (Figure 21) compress the learning process into just five days, allowing teams to test ideas quickly, minimize risks, and align stakeholders around a clear direction.

To learn more in detail about how to apply a design sprint, I recommend reading *Sprint*³¹ by Jake Knapp, with John Zeratsky and Braden Kowitz. Written by three Google Ventures designers, the book provides a step-by-step guide to running a five-day sprint to solve critical business problems, prototype solutions, and test them with real users.

A design sprint combines elements of design thinking, agile methodologies, and lean startup principles, offering a fast and effective way to de-risk decisions while fostering innovation.

Running a design sprint involves gathering a cross-functional team, defining the problem, brainstorming and prioritizing ideas, creating a rapid prototype, and testing it with real users to gain immediate feedback.

31 Jake Knapp et al., *Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), <https://a.co/d/fqrYhKw>

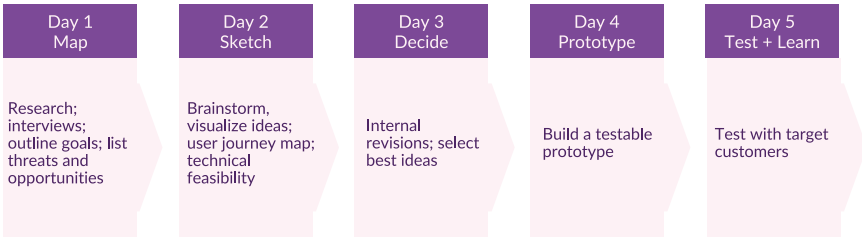


Figure 21: Days in the design sprint

The Five Phases of a Design Sprint

Phase 1: Understand and Map (Day 1)

- Define the problem by gathering user insights, business goals, and expert input.
- Create a customer journey map to identify key pain points and opportunities.

Phase 2: Sketch Solutions (Day 2)

- Instead of brainstorming as a group, each participant independently sketches solutions based on insights from Day 1.
- Encourages diverse, unbiased contributions and prevents groupthink.

Phase 3: Decide and Storyboard (Day 3)

- The team votes on the best solutions using a structured process (e.g., dot voting).
- A detailed storyboard is created to visualize how the prototype will work.

Phase 4: Prototype (Day 4)

- Build a high-fidelity but low-effort prototype focused on the critical user experience.
- Use tools such as Figma, Miro, or paper prototypes to create something testable.

Phase 5: Test with Users (Day 5)

- Conduct real user interviews to gather feedback.
- Identify what works and what doesn't, and decide whether to refine, pivot, or move forward.

Note that Phase 1 in the design sprint corresponds to steps 1 and 2 of the delight model. If opportunity identification has been previously done, solution ideation can start from phase 2.

Benefits of a Design Sprint

The benefits of using a design sprint include speed, risk reduction, and user validation before investing in full development. I structure the benefits under the following four areas:

- **Fast and Focused:** Solves problems in just five days instead of months.
- **User-Centric:** Prioritizes real user insights over assumptions.
- **Reduces Risk:** Tests ideas early, avoiding costly development mistakes.
- **Aligns Teams:** Brings together cross-functional teams to collaborate efficiently.

When applied to identifying emotional and delightful features, design sprints help teams explore deeper user motivations, and test elements that drive emotional connection.

Hackathons/Hack Weeks

While structured problem-solving frameworks such as design sprints provide a systematic way to develop solutions, another highly effective alternative is hackathons and hack weeks. These immersive events foster rapid innovation by giving teams the freedom to explore, experiment, and prototype new ideas in a time-boxed, high-energy environment.

How Hackathons and Hack Weeks Differ from Traditional Ideation

Unlike brainstorming or structured frameworks that focus on gradual refinement, hackathons prioritize speed, creativity, and execution. Instead of

lengthy research and analysis, teams dive straight into building and testing functional prototypes, often leading to breakthrough innovations that might not emerge through conventional processes.

- Hackathons (1–3 days) → Intense, competitive events in which individuals or teams work around the clock to develop prototypes within a short time frame.
- Hack Weeks (5+ days) → A longer, structured version that allows for more iteration, deeper experimentation, and better integration of ideas into real-world products.

Spotify's Hack Week: A Model for Driving Innovation

At Spotify, hack days and hack weeks were powerful techniques for fostering innovation, generating new ideas, and fast-tracking feature development. As a media experience PM for four years, I saw firsthand how these structured yet creative moments shaped Spotify's product evolution. Every month, teams across the tribe participated in hack days, dedicated time to explore new concepts, brainstorm, and rapidly prototype ideas. These short sprints provided a space for free experimentation, allowing early-stage ideas to take shape.

In addition to hack days, at the end of the year, the entire company came together for hack week, a week fully dedicated to refining and executing these ideas at scale. By this point, many concepts had already matured through months of hack days, so hack week became a focused sprint to create demonstrable prototypes. More than just a week of hacking, it's a company-wide ceremony of collaboration, execution, and celebration, in which teams showcase their creations and inspire future product directions. Some of Spotify's most well-known features, such as Discover Weekly, AI DJ, and Daylist, were born out of these hack sessions, proving that innovation isn't always planned. Sometimes, it emerges from being playful, working iteratively, and a culture that empowers teams to build beyond the roadmap.

Why Spotify's Hack Week Works So Well

- **Bottom-Up Innovation:** Anyone can propose an idea and build a team around it, fostering a grassroots culture of experimentation.

- **Freedom to Explore:** Participants are encouraged to work on anything that excites them, without immediate business constraints.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Hack week brings together employees from different disciplines, leading to unexpected, high-impact ideas.
- **Well-Developed Ideas:** The opportunity for teams to brainstorm and refine their hack concepts throughout the year allows ideas to mature by the time hack week arrives.

When to Use Design Sprint vs. Hack Week

Design sprints and hack weeks serve different purposes in the innovation process. The biggest difference between them is structure and focus.

- Use a design sprint when you need a structured approach to solving a specific problem within a short time frame. If a team faces a clear challenge or product question, a design sprint helps quickly ideate, prototype, and validate a solution with users before committing resources to development. A design sprint is ideal for reducing uncertainty, aligning stakeholders, and accelerating decision-making on high-priority initiatives.
- Use hack week when you want to explore open-ended ideas, encourage bottom-up innovation, or foster creative experimentation. Hack weeks are best suited for generating new concepts, passion projects, and technical innovations without immediate business constraints. Hack week is valuable when you want to give teams the freedom to push boundaries and uncover unexpected opportunities.

The Video Conferencing Solutions

In Chapter 5, I shared how I identified fixing boredom and Zoom fatigue as key opportunities to explore. Now, it's time to reveal the solutions proposed for these challenges.

Reduce Boredom

Remember, I wrote the boredom opportunity as the following:

- **How might we** improve the meeting experience
- **for** participants in prolonged online meetings
- **in order to** maintain their engagement and reduce their sense of boredom?

Over multiple ideation sessions, we came up with several possible solutions, then had to pick which one we wanted to try first.

I'd like to take a moment to share some reflections and insights from my exploration of this problem. Boredom came up repeatedly, and I was determined to come up with a solution that countered it. But what is the true opposite of boredom?

At first, I assumed it was having fun. But that idea quickly fell apart. After all, even fun can become monotonous. Imagine going to Disneyland every day; eventually, the thrill would fade. I know this from personal experience.

A few years ago, I went to Disney Paris with some friends, and I was beyond excited. At the time, Disney had a promotional offer: a second ticket for free, but it had to be used within the same month. In hindsight, I'm not sure it was the best promotional strategy. My first visit was incredible, full of excitement and joy. But the second visit, so soon after, felt entirely different. The excitement was gone, replaced by a sense of obligation. The magic had disappeared simply because the time between the two experiences was too short.

As I delved deeper into the subject, I realized that the true antidote to boredom isn't fun, but feeling alive and engaged. When we're fully absorbed by a topic or a cause, boredom simply can't take hold.

I believe these reflections are worth sharing, as they underscore the depth of thought and ideation behind every product solution.

One key limitation of video calling is that commenting can feel complex, and enabling the mic to speak often feels invasive. To address this, we introduced emoji reactions in Google Meet, allowing users to engage seamlessly without interrupting the flow of the conversation.

Address Video Call Fatigue

The opportunity statement I had for Google Meet-involved Zoom fatigue was this:

- **How might we** increase comfort
- **for** participants in prolonged online meetings
- **in order to** make extended video meetings less fatiguing?

This topic also requires deep understanding and exploration of the meaning, but also the causes. Likely, at that time, I found a very recent and relevant study that allowed me to bring clarity to that subject. Communication professor Jeremy Bailenson, founding director of the Stanford Virtual Human Interaction Lab, studied the causes of this phenomenon.³² The study shows that prolonged self-view leads to heightened self-criticism and mental strain. In the real world, no one would willingly have a mirror reflecting their every move while interacting, making decisions, or giving feedback. Yet, video calls replicate this experience for hours each day, with significant emotional consequences.

Among several potential solutions, Hide Self³³ was introduced to allow users to minimize their own video tile while keeping their camera on.

Of course, we considered the potential risks. One concern was that people might forget their video was still on and behave in unintended ways. To mitigate this, we added a notification reminding users that their camera is active.

We often use product features without knowing the thought process behind them. In successful products, each feature stems from a deep understanding of users' functional and emotional needs. Features such as Meet emoji reactions and Hide Self view enhance video calls and reduce participants feeling bored, overwhelmed, and fatigued. That creates a more engaging and comfortable experience.

32 Vignesh Ramachandran, "Stanford researchers identify four causes of 'Zoom fatigue' and their simple fixes," Stanford Report, February 23, 2021, <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2021/02/four-causes-zoom-fatigue-solutions>

33 Hide Self in Google Meet," Chrome Web Store, <https://chromewebstore.google.com/detail/hide-self-in-google-meet/gffddgigccibcpijeoaaffbggdeanifk>

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Divergence Is Key in the Second Diamond:** The second phase of the Double Diamond framework focuses on expanding thinking and exploring a wide range of potential solutions.
- **Idea Generation Can Be Flexible:** Solution ideation can be rapid or extended, and structured or free form, depending on the context and goals.
- **Use Fast-Paced Methods When Needed:** Techniques such as Crazy 8s or brainwriting are ideal for quickly generating a variety of diverse, unbiased ideas during time-limited sessions.
- **Validate Through Prototyping:** Methods such as design sprints or hackathons are powerful for generating, refining, and validating ideas before committing to full development.
- **Match the Method to the Moment:** Selecting the right ideation approach depends on your objectives, the maturity of your ideas, and the level of alignment needed with business outcomes.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Facilitate Divergence, Not Just Decision-Making:** Create intentional space in your process for diverging and exploring multiple solutions, don't rush to converge too early.
- **Prototype Before You Build:** Turn top ideas into low-fidelity prototypes and test them quickly with users or stakeholders before investing in development.
- **Align Ideation with Business Impact:** Use business objectives as a filter when evaluating ideas, ensuring the solutions you explore have the potential to drive real outcomes, not just creativity for creativity's sake.

EXPERT PROFILE

Product Delight Emerges from Aesthetics and Functionality



Raluca Bujoreanu

Product Lead at Zalando (at the time of the interview)

In the heart of Europe's fashion e-commerce landscape, Raluca Bujoreanu is redefining how luxury meets digital at Zalando. As a product lead responsible for the designer and luxury experience, she demonstrates how meticulous attention to detail can transform a standard shopping platform into a sophisticated digital boutique. Zalando, a leading European online fashion retailer, offers clothing, accessories, and beauty products, with a strong focus on convenience, personalization, and sustainability.

Raluca's approach to product delight stems from a deep understanding that luxury retail requires more than just functionality; it demands an atmosphere. Just as high-end department stores create distinct environments to enhance shopping experiences, she has led a digital transformation that sets designer products apart within Zalando's ecosystem.

Her definition of delight revolves around creating moments of joy throughout the customer journey, not just through grand gestures, but also through subtle touches that enhance the experience. "It's like receiving a thoughtful gift from a friend," she explains, highlighting how delight can emerge from aesthetic pleasure and functional innovation. This philosophy drives her team to go beyond merely meeting customer expectations; instead, they aim to create experiences that surprise and delight.

The designer boutique experience at Zalando exemplifies this dual approach. On a surface level, careful attention to typography, color schemes, spacing, image proportions, and photography style, creates a refined aesthetic that signals luxury. However, the real innovation lies in how these elements

work together to craft a cohesive and distinct experience within the Zalando platform.

3D product spotlight feature allows customers to closely examine high-end items, helping build trust in their purchase decisions. Yet, its execution is so visually sophisticated that it enhances the shopping experience itself. Similarly, the editor's note feature transforms standard product descriptions into engaging editorial content, merging information with inspiration. This approach acknowledges that luxury shoppers aren't just buying products; they're engaging with a lifestyle and narrative. By elevating product descriptions to editorial status, Zalando creates a more immersive and enjoyable shopping experience.

This case demonstrates that product delight in e-commerce isn't just about adding superficial flourishes. It's about understanding users' emotional needs and practical needs and simultaneously satisfying them both. For luxury retail in particular, this means creating digital experiences that capture the sophistication and personal attention of high-end in-store shopping, while leveraging the convenience and accessibility of digital platforms.

As a frequent Zalando shopper, I can personally attest to the frictionless and enjoyable experience it provides. When I spoke with Raluca, I shared two features that significantly contribute to this feeling. First, when buying shoes, Zalando helps eliminate sizing uncertainty, a common issue with international brands. They do this by allowing users to order multiple sizes, try them at home, and return the ones that don't fit, all with minimal effort and only being charged for one pair. Second, the pay-later feature eases the stress of making a wrong purchase. Since returning items is common, Zalando lets users receive their order, try the items, and decide whether to keep them and pay or return them. These features significantly reduce purchase anxiety, making the experience more enjoyable and stress-free.

Raluca's work at Zalando proves that achieving delight at scale requires more than just good intentions; it demands a systematic approach to discovery, design, and delivery. The success of this approach lies in its holistic nature. Delight isn't an afterthought or a set of isolated features, it's woven into every aspect of the experience. From subtle motion effects that respond to scrolling, to thoughtfully curated editorial content, every element contributes to a more engaging and seamless shopping journey.

CHAPTER

7

Apply Delighters

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 7:

You can deliberately amplify emotional connection by using delighters into your solutions.

As you think about creating delightful features, it helps to have some guidance and inspirational examples to adopt a delight mindset.

For instance, let's consider the audio progress bar in Spotify. Originally a purely functional feature for tracking a song's duration, Spotify managed to occasionally infuse some delight into it. How did they do it?

On Star Wars Day (May 4th), Spotify transformed the progress bar into a lightsaber, synchronizing its animation with the day's theme when listening to Star Wars-themed tracks.

Users were surprised and thrilled to see a playful nod to the Star Wars universe while listening to their favorite tracks.

Spotify isn't alone in this creative use of progress bars. For example, YouTube used a pumpkin-shaped progress bar indicator during Halloween, aligning with Halloween-themed videos and content. These playful tweaks,

though small, resonate with users by making them feel part of something timely and special.

Similar to the progress bar example, I'll share in this chapter a list of delighters to go beyond users' needs and requests to create emotional connections with users.

The Nine Delighters to Add Emotional Connection to Your Product Features

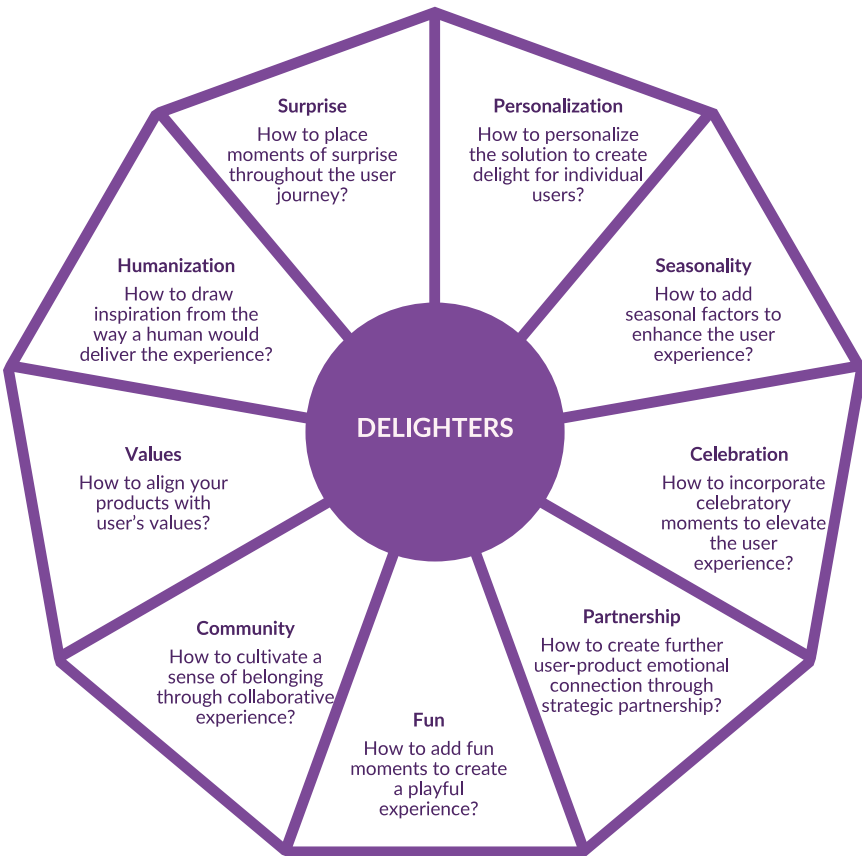


Figure 22: The nine delighters

Here's a set of strategies designed to infuse your features with emotional richness. These nine delighters are humanization, surprise, personalization, seasonality, celebration, partnership, fun, community, and values (Figure 22). The most successful products commonly use these delighters because they help elevate their product beyond functionality, creating moments users remember.

Let's dive into how these delighters work and how you can use them to generate delightful features.

Humanization

This is my first and favorite delight enhancer.

When we interact in person, an emotional connection happens naturally, just from being face-to-face. If you're tired, someone may notice and offer help. If you're upset, they might ask what's wrong. But in software, this connection is often missing. The challenge is, How can we bring back that warmth and attentiveness to digital products?

At its core, delight is about reminding users that real people are behind the product.

A good way to achieve this is to ask the following question:

“If my product were replaced by a real person, how would they make this experience better?”

Asking this question allows you to think about your product in a more humanized way.

I once spoke with Andy Nesling, a product leader at Dyson, and it happens that I have a Dyson vacuum cleaner that I love and feel proud of. I asked him, “What's your best practice for creating such loved products?”

His response was simple, yet powerful: “At Dyson, we don't compare ourselves to competitors. We compare our products to how the job was done when a person handled it.”

Take robotic vacuum cleaners as an example. If you hired a real person to clean your home, you'd likely tell them where to start or which areas need extra attention. Dyson applied this thinking to their robots, adding intelligent recommendations based on how people naturally clean.

Talking to Andy, I realized this mindset was exactly what we used at Google Meet. Instead of comparing Meet to Zoom or Teams, we asked ourselves,

“How would this experience be better if the meeting were happening live in a real room?”

This approach raises the bar and makes the solution feel more human and intuitive. This thinking allowed for adding features like “raise hand,” “gesture reactions,” and more.

Humanizing features means making them feel alive, relatable, and empathetic. It’s about acknowledging the human on the other side of the screen and designing experiences that resonate emotionally.

One way to do this is through subtle, meaningful touches. Take Slack’s App Store release notes as an example. Once, when they had no major updates to share, they wrote: “We don’t have any big updates this time around, so we wanted to use this space to remind you to be kind to yourself and those around you.”

This small, thoughtful message made users smile and fostered goodwill, not because it added functionality, but because it felt human.

Surprise

Within the definition of delight, there’s joy and surprise. A positive surprise can transform a mundane feature into a memorable moment. Surprise works because it triggers positive emotions and creates a sense of wonder.

The surprise delighter is all about how to place moments of surprise throughout the user journey. Once you’re building your solution, can you think of ways to create a moment of surprise for the users while they use your product?

Here are a few examples:

- Hidden Easter eggs (e.g., playful animations when users perform specific actions).
- An annual report or a surprise insight.

Good examples of surprising features are Spotify’s Wrapped and Chrome’s Dino. These features contain elements of surprise that drive curiosity and deepen connection with the product.

Personalization

Personalization is one of the most powerful ways to make a product feel intimate and meaningful. Think about Starbucks; they could simply call out, “Number 65, your coffee is ready!” But instead, they write your name on the cup. That small touch makes a difference. Our name is the most familiar word to us; it creates an instant emotional connection.

But personalization goes beyond just names.

- Spotify’s Discover Weekly curates music tailored to your taste.
- Netflix’s recommendations evolve based on what you watch.
- E-commerce platforms suggest products based on browsing history.
- Cars offer the possibility to save driving settings for each driver.

When done well, personalization makes users feel seen, understood, and valued, which builds loyalty and engagement.

However, personalization isn’t one-size-fits-all. What delights one user might feel irrelevant to another. To be effective, it’s crucial to understand different user segments and design experiences that cater to their specific needs.

Here is a nice example of personalization. Jira, Atlassian’s popular project management tool, offers a great example of personalization in enterprise software.³⁴ Traditionally known for its structured workflows and task management, Jira now allows teams to customize their workspace with background colors, images, and card covers. From Atlassian’s website:

“Wish Jira better reflected your team spirit? With new background colors, images, and card covers, now your team can truly make Jira feel like home. Personalize Jira to reflect your team vibes (we’re more of a cute dogs-in-hats kind of team).”

By introducing these customization options, Jira adds a layer of fun, identity, and relatability to an otherwise functional interface, making the work environment feel more personal and engaging.

34 Dave Meyer, “The *new* Jira is here,” Atlassian, Products & News, October 18, 2024, <https://www.atlassian.com/blog/announcements/the-new-jira>

Seasonality

Seasonality is one of the simplest, most cost-effective ways to make a product feel engaging, and connected to users' lives. Seasonality can be categorized into two types. Personal seasonality relates to dates specific to an individual, such as a birthday or the anniversary of using the product. A simple "Happy Birthday!" notification or a personalized celebratory message can create a delightful and memorable moment. On the other hand, community seasonality is tied to broader cultural or global events, such as Christmas, Halloween, or International Women's Day. These moments allow products to feel more in sync with users' experiences, strengthening their emotional connection to the platform.

I typically don't give my kids McDonald's food but, while on a trip to New York last year, I couldn't resist. McDonald's had their popular Boo Buckets with every Happy Meal: A collectible Halloween-themed pail that replaced the standard Happy Meal box. With the seasonal vibe and such an iconic location, it felt like the perfect time to get some.

At Google Meet, I explored this idea extensively by introducing seasonal backgrounds, some permanent, some temporary. During Diwali, users could brighten their calls with festive Diwali-themed backgrounds. At Easter, playful spring visuals appeared. During the Olympics, users could choose from backgrounds celebrating the Games. These small, time-sensitive updates may seem like surface-level additions, but they sparked curiosity, leading to noticeable spikes in feature adoption and engagement.

The key to effective seasonal updates is balance. While elements such as holiday-themed designs, limited-time features, or custom greetings can enhance the experience, they should never interfere with usability. A festive touch should feel natural and unobtrusive, complementing the core functionality rather than distracting from it. When done right, seasonality gives users something new to look forward to, reinforcing a sense of presence and relevance in their digital lives.

One important element when addressing seasonality is inclusion. Not all users celebrate the same holidays, and some may feel excluded by culturally specific themes. Offering a variety of seasonal options or allowing users to opt in or out of these experiences ensures that updates remain joyful, rather than

alienating. Thoughtful, inclusive design makes seasonality an opportunity to bring users together, rather than inadvertently leaving some users out.

Celebration

People remember products the most when they evoke strong emotions, whether it's joy, excitement, frustration, or relief. If a product can make a great moment even better or provide support during a tough time, it becomes unforgettable. Celebrations are good ways to empathize.

I experienced this type of delighter in the Airbnb app. Having been a host and a guest, I've seen Airbnb from both perspectives. As a host, my main objective is to uphold my Superhost status. Every three months, Airbnb assesses hosts based on reviews and guest feedback. When I successfully maintain my status, I receive a small yet significant reward: the Superhost Badge. Airbnb doesn't just send a congratulatory message; it also includes a fun confetti animation on the screen. This simple gesture makes it feel as though Airbnb is celebrating with me, recognizing my hard work. This brief moment of acknowledgment creates a lasting emotional impact, strengthening my bond with the platform and motivating me to aim for it once more.

Partnership

Partnerships help create emotional connection by associating a product with brands, people, or causes that users already trust, admire, or feel emotionally connected to. This strategy taps into personal motivators and social-emotional motivators. On a personal level, it can make users feel inspired, seen, or connected, especially when the partnership reflects their identity, values, or passions. On a social level, it boosts feelings of pride and belonging, offering users something they're excited to share or be associated with. Whether it's a collaboration with a beloved artist, a cause-driven initiative, or a surprising brand mashup, a well-chosen partnership adds meaning, surprise, and cultural relevance, deepening emotional engagement with the product.

Multiple products use partnerships for this purpose. Take Nike's partnership with Apple for the Apple Watch Nike+.³⁵ By combining Apple's cutting-edge technology with Nike's deep understanding of fitness enthusiasts, they created a smartwatch tailored for runners. This partnership seamlessly integrates Nike's exclusive sports bands and watch faces with Apple's fitness tracking capabilities, making the experience feel truly built for athletes rather than just another smartwatch.

The key to delightful partnerships is authenticity, they should enhance the product's core experience rather than feel like just an add-on. When done right, collaborations strengthen emotional connections, boost engagement, and make the product feel more meaningful to users.

Fun

By infusing playful elements and lighthearted interactions into product design, products can tap into users' emotions, creating memorable and enjoyable experiences. Some companies leverage fun to establish emotional connections and foster long-term engagement. A notable example is Duolingo, which demonstrates how incorporating fun can enhance the user experience. In addition to daily interactions, Duolingo's Annual Report translates personal progress into a festive summary, showcasing streaks, words learned, and even favorite phrases in a fun, visual, and shareable manner. This functionality instills a sense of pride and accomplishment in learners, encourages friendly competition, and bolsters Duolingo's community-oriented ethos.

The key to successfully integrating fun is thoughtful execution; it should align with the product's tone and purpose and appear at just the right moments. When used effectively, surprise and humor can transform ordinary interactions into delightful moments that users cherish. But if overused or forced, they risk distracting from the core value of the product.

35 "Apple & Nike launch the perfect running partner, Apple Watch Nike+," Apple Newsroom, September 7, 2016, <https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2016/09/apple-nike-launch-apple-watch-nike/>

Community

One of the most common emotional motivators is the need for connection and a sense of belonging.

Creating a sense of community around your product fosters deeper engagement and loyalty by connecting users through shared interests and goals. A strong community provides users with a sense of belonging, amplifies their experiences, and often drives organic growth through word-of-mouth advocacy. When users engage with your product and with each other, they form meaningful connections that enhance their overall satisfaction and keep them coming back.

Real-time collaboration in Google Docs, Slides, and Sheets is a great example that illustrates this type of delight enhancer.

When I asked Jonathan Rochelle, former Google Workspace product leader, about the most exciting feature he had worked on, his response was straightforward: real-time collaboration in Google Sheets. He explained that real-time collaboration always delighted users, offering a pleasant surprise that was consistent. The impact was so significant that Google revised the original version of Google Docs to mirror the collaborative experience found in Sheets. The primary issue these products addressed was something users had difficulty expressing but truly required, a more effective means of sharing and collaborating on digital content.

Spotify's Collaborative Playlists are a great example of a community delighter, features that foster connection, co-creation, and a sense of shared experience. By allowing multiple users to contribute to the same playlist, Spotify turns music listening from a solo activity into a collective one. Friends can add tracks, react to each other's choices, and even use playlists as a living memory of shared moments, like road trips, parties, or remote hangouts.

For community building to be effective, it must feel genuine and aligned with the product's purpose. The best community features are those that encourage interaction without feeling forced. When users feel seen, valued, and connected to others, their bond with the product, and each other, deepens, creating a thriving and engaged community.

Value

When a product aligns with a user's core values, it creates a deeper emotional connection and enhances delight beyond just functionality. Users feel more attached to products that reflect what matters to them, whether it's sustainability, inclusivity, social responsibility, or personal growth. By showcasing how a product supports these values, companies can turn engagement into a more meaningful experience.

Several companies attempted to emulate Spotify Wrapped with their products, but did not achieve the same success. This is because, for the annual recap to be compelling, the shared insights need to be meaningful and to resonate with users, evoking a sense of pride that encourages them to feel good and to share the insights with their community.

I am a frequent user of SNCF Connect, the leading French train service and, at the end of the year, I received a personalized annual retrospective. What I loved most was that it didn't just focus on the number of kilometers I traveled or the cities I visited. Instead, it highlighted the positive environmental impact of my travel choices, and how much carbon I saved by taking the train instead of a plane or car. Instead of dry statistics, they translated the data into playful comparisons relating to the Olympic Games that happened that year in Paris:

- “2,496 kg of CO₂ avoided compared to a car, equivalent to 28 ping-pong tables.”
- “17,119 km traveled by train, equal to 342,380 breaststroke lengths (with a tight swim cap).”

This approach resonated with me because it recognized eco-consciousness as a key emotional driver. This kind of storytelling makes sustainability feel more tangible and personal, reinforcing my decision to choose rail travel.

When value-driven messaging is authentic and aligned with users' beliefs, it transforms a product from a tool into a reflection of the user's identity, deepening loyalty and long-term engagement.

Who Should Be Involved in Bringing in Delight

To intentionally elevate the emotional impact of a feature, product teams can apply a set of design techniques called *delighters*. These include Humanization, Surprise, Personalization, Seasonality, Celebration, Partnership, Fun, Community, and Value. Each one acts as a creative lens through which a solution can be enhanced—not by changing its core function, but by deepening its resonance with users. Whether it's adding a playful animation (Fun), launching a feature tied to a cultural moment (Seasonality), or letting users co-create with friends (Community), these delighters help transform functional experiences into emotionally engaging ones.

When it comes to who works on applying delighters, I'm of the strong opinion that the more you involve people, the more and better opinions you'll get on the topic. So you'll certainly involve your product team, but there may also be some experts in your organization you'll want to include for their specific perspective. Also, it's not necessarily the same people throughout the entire process. When you're in the opportunity space, you'll tend to talk with marketing, behavioral scientists, and your product team. Whereas when you're in the solution space, the majority of your conversations are with the designers and engineers on your product team. Getting multiple opinions helps create the most inclusive and delightful experience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Use Delighters to Generate Delightful Features:** Apply the nine delighters (Humanization, Surprise, Personalization, Seasonality, Celebration, Partnership, Fun, Community, and Value) to transform functional features into emotionally rich and memorable experiences.
- **Delight Needs Collective Intelligence:** The best delight ideas come from cross-functional collaboration. Involve your full product team and seek out diverse voices from across the organization.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Map Delighters to Your Feature Set:** Review your existing and upcoming features. For each feature, ask, “Which delight enhancer(s) could elevate this experience emotionally?” Use the list: Humanization, Surprise, Personalization, Seasonality, Celebration, Partnership, Fun, Community, Value.
- **Run a Delight Enhancer Brainstorm:** Organize a cross-functional workshop. Assign each enhancer to small groups and ask, “How might we apply this enhancer in our product today?”
- **Plan for Rotation and Refresh:** For delighters such as Seasonality, Surprise, or Celebration, build a calendar to rotate themes or moments. This prevents habituation and keeps delight fresh over time.

EXPERT PROFILE

The Essence of Delight in Hardware Products



Andy Nesling

Head of Engineering and Product at Dyson

Andy Nesling's journey at Dyson exemplifies how creating delightful products requires a deliberate blend of functionality, design, and emotional connection. As the former product manager for robotics and intelligent machines, and current head of software for new product feasibility, Andy brings unique insights into how a leading consumer products company approaches product delight.

For Andy, product delight starts with a simple but profound metric: Does using the product make you smile? This seemingly straightforward question encapsulates a deeper truth about product development. Truly delightful products create positive emotional responses that transcend mere functionality.

As I spoke with Andy, I realized that I already owned several Dyson products and took unconscious pride in using and even showcasing them when visitors came over. Dyson doesn't leave emotional connections to chance; they follow a systematic approach that begins with mastering the basics. According to Andy, the foundation of product delight is exceptional performance in the product's primary function. No additional features or aesthetic touches can compensate for a product that fails at its core purpose.

Once Dyson ensures a product excels in its core function, they focus on eliminating friction. Andy describes this as a relentless process of refining every interaction, no matter how small. Each moment of frustration or resistance erodes the potential for delight, making meticulous attention to detail crucial for consistently positive experiences.

The third layer of Dyson's approach involves engaging all the senses. Andy explains that the company considers not just how a product looks, but also

how it feels in the hand, how it sounds during operation, and even how it fits within a user's home environment. This multi-sensory approach creates a richer, more immersive experience that extends beyond mere functionality.

Andy also highlights the role of the unexpected in creating delight. However, he makes an important distinction: the unexpected elements should tie into superior functionality, rather than mere novelty. For example, the transparent dirt chamber in Dyson vacuum cleaners isn't just a visual feature; it provides immediate feedback about the product's effectiveness, creating a lasting sense of satisfaction for users.

This focus on meaningful innovation extends to Dyson's discovery process. Rather than starting with features or technology, Dyson begins by deeply understanding the problem to be solved. As Andy notes, elements of product delight, such as friction reduction and sensory engagement, can be applied across products, but the specific problem being addressed is unique to each case.

The success of this approach is evident in how Dyson products create what Andy calls "long-lived" delight, a positive experience that persists long after the initial novelty fades. This sustained emotional connection stems from consistently delivering exceptional performance in unexpected ways, transforming everyday tasks into sources of satisfaction.

One of the most striking insights from my conversation with Andy was how Dyson compares its products. Instead of fixating on competitors, they assess their products against an idealized, humanized solution. So rather than comparing their robots to other robots, they evaluate them against the standard of a human cleaner. This approach elevates the bar and infuses an emotional element into their products. For example, if you hired a person to clean your home, you might instruct them to start in a specific area or clean a corridor vertically instead of horizontally. By applying this thinking, Dyson enhances the experience of its robotic products, introducing elements that foster deeper emotional connections with users.

The lesson is clear: creating delight requires attention to the functional aspects and the emotional aspects of the user experience. It's not enough to build products that work well; they must also make users feel good about using them.

CHAPTER

8

Categorize Solutions

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 8:

You can't aim for deep delight without first mapping where your ideas land.

There's certainly a benefit to generating several ideas. Of course, even if you've identified several potential solutions, that doesn't mean that you'll deliver all of them. The collection of solutions gives you options to select from, so it's helpful to have some techniques you can use to assess those solutions and determine which ones you want to move forward with.

Without a clear understanding of their potential impact, prioritization becomes a guessing game. The question here is "How can I ensure that the solution is delightful and contributes to creating emotional connection with the users?" This chapter introduces two essential techniques to help you categorize and assess your features effectively: the Kano model and the delight grid.

Before diving into the details of these two techniques, it's important to clarify that neither of these techniques is a prioritization method. Instead, they're categorization techniques designed to help you classify features based

on their impact. By using these tools, you gain a clearer understanding of how each feature contributes to the overall experience, making it easier to assess their potential impact before prioritizing them effectively.

The Kano Model

The Kano model (Figure 23) is a framework developed in the 1980s by Noriaki Kano, a Japanese professor and researcher. This framework helps categorize product features based on the impact they have on customer satisfaction. Kano created this model to help businesses understand what truly delights customers rather than just meeting their basic expectations, allowing teams to build products that drive emotional connection and loyalty.

The idea is you determine which category every solution or feature fits into based on its value proposition for your user.

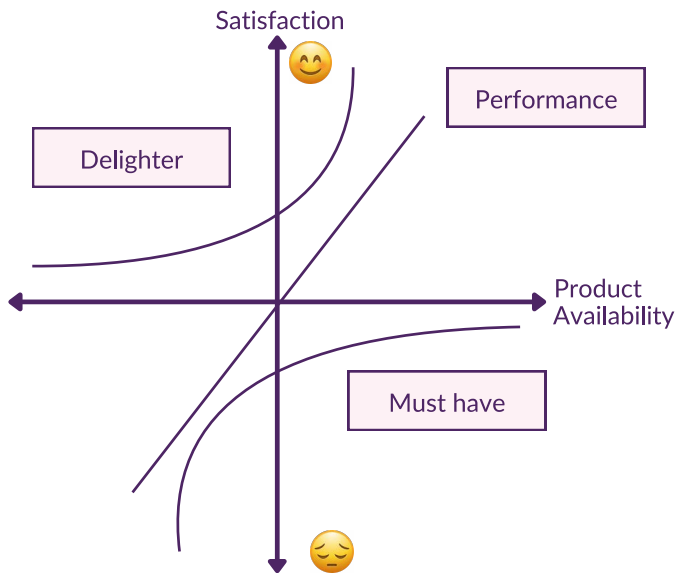


Figure 23: The Kano model

Kano identified that not all features contribute to satisfaction in the same way. He separated them into five main categories.

Kano Model Categories

The five categories in the Kano model are must-have, performance, delighters, indifferent, and reverse.

Must-Have

Must-haves are features that customers expect to exist in the product. If a must-have feature is in your product, it doesn't bring any additional satisfaction for the user. However, if a product doesn't have a must-have feature, it causes frustration and negative emotions.

For example, if you're staying in a hotel, you expect your room to have hot water. If your room has hot water, you're probably not going to feel highly satisfied. However, if there's no hot water, you can bet you're going to say something to the front desk and write a scathing review.

Performance

The more performance features your product has, the more satisfied users are. These features impact satisfaction proportionally. The same situation happens if the feature isn't there.

In the hotel example, you can think of the size and thickness of the mattress as a performance feature. The better the mattress is, the better the performance and the more satisfied customers are.

Delighters

Delighters are unexpected features. So if delighters are there, that presence is a pleasant surprise. Since these features aren't expected, there's no dissatisfaction if they aren't there.

In the hotel example, a voucher for a spa or a cocktail in the room may be a delight. And if there's some personalization, the satisfaction can be even higher. I remember once my family and I went to Madera and, as soon as we got into the room, we found two teddy bears, one for each of my kids. That was a nice piece of personalization because it showed they knew we had two kids traveling with us.

Indifferent

Indifferent features don't bring satisfaction whether they're there or they aren't. Sometimes indifferent features have to be there because they're related to the technical performance of the product, but it's not necessarily related to satisfaction.

In the hotel example, a rug on the floor may be something that doesn't necessarily make any change in the satisfaction of the users.

Reverse

The more reverse features that are in your product, the more dissatisfaction they cause. These are features that have to happen due to security, legal, or financial reasons. It's important to remember that reverse features aren't necessarily bad, but you should know why you're implementing a feature you've categorized as reverse.

For example, consider ads in Chrome, or any other browser; most people don't like ads. In fact, the more ads you introduce into a product, the more user satisfaction declines. This is an example of a "reverse feature".

Choosing Among the Different Categories

Every time I talk about the Kano model, people ask me "Should we always prioritize must-haves over performance features and delighters?" My answer? Not always.

Of course, a product exists because of its must-have features, they're nonnegotiable. However, the risk of focusing only on must-haves is that you end up with a backlog filled with purely functional improvements, making the product feel utilitarian and devoid of emotional connection.

The best product backlogs strike a balance between all categories. A great example? McDonald's Happy Meal.

- **The Must-Have:** The food, without it, there's no product.
- **The Performance Factors:** The quality and quantity of the food.
- **The Delight:** The playful packaging, the toys, and the books.

Sure, McDonald's could have prioritized better food quality or larger portions to improve performance. But instead, they invested in delight, offering a fun and large variety of gifts, creative designs, and an engaging experience. Why? Because for Happy Meal users, delight is the real driver of choice.

This is why balancing must-haves, performance, and delight is crucial.

Limitations and Risks of the Kano Model

The Kano model is a powerful tool for categorizing features based on their impact on user satisfaction. While it identifies which features can surprise and excite users, it doesn't delve deeply into the nuances of emotional connection.

Limited Depth of Delight

One of the key limitations of the Kano model is that it doesn't account for the varying depths of delight. Not all delightful experiences are the same; some may create momentary joy, while others foster long-term emotional attachment.

For example, a fun animation in a user interface (UI) may generate a quick smile, but a thoughtfully personalized onboarding experience can create a much deeper, lasting connection. The Kano model doesn't differentiate between surface delight and deep delight.

Overlooks Emotional Motivators

While the Kano model categorizes features based on their functional impact on satisfaction, it lacks emphasis on why certain features create delight. True delight often stems from emotional motivators, whether personal (e.g., feeling accomplished, valued, or understood) or social (e.g., feeling connected, admired, or included).

For example, Spotify Wrapped is delightful not just because it's unexpected, but because it taps into personal nostalgia and social validation. People love sharing their music taste and seeing their listening history reflected back to them. The Kano model doesn't provide a way to connect between the product category and these deeper emotional triggers.

While the Kano model is a great framework, product teams looking to create truly standout experiences need to go further. By integrating emotional motivators and exploring deeper levels of delight, they can move beyond just identifying delightful features to intentionally creating products that users love, remember, and keep coming back to.

The Delight Grid

How can we move beyond aesthetics to build features that truly connect emotionally with users?

The delight grid (Figure 24) is a tool that helps categorize the identified solutions by connecting the motivators each solution addresses.

Once you’ve identified several potential solutions, it’s time to review and refine these options to ensure they align with functional motivators (practical tasks users want to accomplish) and emotional motivators (how users want to feel when using the product).

These motivators are placed in the delight grid:

The first column lists the needs that are only functional.

The first row lists the needs that are only emotional (personal and social).

	No Emotional Motivator	Emotional Motivator 1	Emotional Motivator 2	Emotional Motivator N
No Functional Motivator				
Functional Motivator 1				
Functional Motivator 2				
Functional Motivator M				

Figure 24: The delight grid

The idea is to place all potential solutions within the delight grid. The solutions are placed within the grid based on which motivator(s) they address.

The Delight Categories

- **Low Delight:** Solutions that address functional needs only. These are essential, but they don't connect with the user's emotions. Example: a solution addressing functional motivator 2 only.
- **Surface Delight:** Solutions that address emotional needs only. These bring excitement, but may not solve critical functional problems. Example: a solution addressing emotional motivator 1 only.
- **Deep Delight:** Solutions that address functional needs and emotional needs, creating the most impactful user experiences. Example: a solution addressing both functional motivator 2 and emotional motivator 1.

A solution can address multiple emotional needs, making it even more likely to create emotional connection.

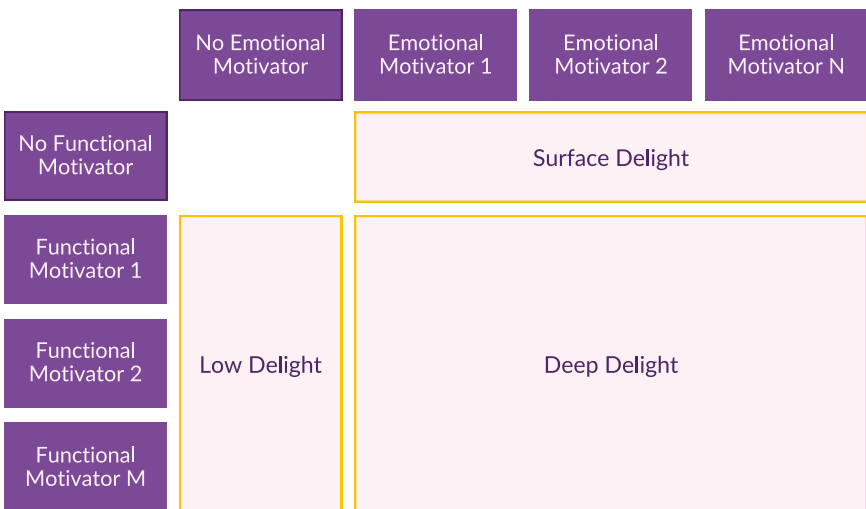


Figure 25: Categorizing solutions based on their level of delight

The Delight Grid empowers product managers to visualize and categorize solutions that address functional motivators and emotional motivators (Figure 25). But it's more than a tool for visualization and classification. It creates a clear, visual connection between each feature and real user needs and motivations. This ensures that the solutions being developed aren't just relevant, but are also impactful.

Successful products incorporate various forms of delight to offer a comprehensive user experience. The main objective is to develop deep delight solutions that exceed expectations, establish a deep emotional connection, and ensure lasting user contentment. In the upcoming chapter, I'll discuss strategies for prioritizing the three categories of delight.

When to Create Your Delight Grid

The question now is, when is the best time for the delight grid exercise? Identifying motivators should be an ongoing process during the discovery phase. It's important to maintain a dynamic list of motivators. As you conduct user interviews, you can add newly identified motivators to this list. This list forms the basis for the delight grid.

I recommend that, at each planning cycle, you add the features you're considering to the delight grid. This will ensure that you're developing features that address real user motivators and can gauge the level of delight. Keep in mind that success comes from integrating all three types of delight within the same planning cycle.

The delight grid is more than just a categorization tool. It provides a clear, visual representation of your roadmap and backlog, helping product teams balance different types of features. By using the delight grid, teams can avoid the trap of building only functional improvements or surface-level delights, and instead strive for a thoughtful mix of low delight, surface delight, and deep delight features. This ensures that the product not only works well, but also resonates emotionally with users, creating a stronger connection and long-term engagement.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **The Kano Model is a Useful Framework:** It helps identifying delightful features, but lacks depth in the different levels of delight. **The Delight Grid Maps Solutions Based on The Motivators They Address:** functional, emotional, or both.
- **The Delight Grid is a Categorization and Visualization Tool:** It helps assess the level of delight in your roadmap by connecting each feature to real user motivators.
- **Three Delight Categories Emerge:** low delight (functional only), surface delight (emotional only), and deep delight (both).

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Build Your Delight Grid:** Start by mapping out key functional and emotional motivators in a large grid. This forms the foundation.
- **Place Your Planned Features on the Grid:** Place each feature from your backlog on the grid, based on the type of motivator(s) it addresses. Classify them as low delight, surface delight, or deep delight.
- **Identify Gaps and Opportunities:** Spot features that can be enhanced, look for ways to increase their emotional impact, or combine functional and emotional value to shift them toward deep delight.

EXPERT PROFILE

The Compounding Effect of Delight



Dan Olsen,³⁶

Consultant, Coach, Speaker, Trainer, and Author

It was an absolute pleasure chatting with Dan, a visionary product expert who has made a significant impact on the ecosystem. His insights were truly inspiring, and our shared passion for creating delightful products made the conversation even more enriching.

With a background in electrical engineering and a childhood spent coding, Dan eventually transitioned into the tech industry, joining Intuit. There, he refined his product management skills, learning to balance functionality with user experience, which later shaped his insights on product delight.

His career path led him to consulting, serving as an interim VP of Product for various startups, and ultimately writing one of the top product reference books, *The Lean Product Playbook*³⁶.

Dan views product delight not just as a feature, but as an emotional response within the user. His perspective is heavily influenced by the Kano model, in which delighters are those unexpected extras—neither essential nor purely performance-based—that can elevate an experience from merely functional to truly memorable.

Using MailChimp’s playful animations as an example, he illustrated how moments of surprise and humor can break up routine tasks, leaving lasting positive impressions. These small but thoughtful additions inject fun into otherwise mundane workflows, creating a moment of joy in the user’s day.

I loved his perspective on the relationship between delight and product-market fit. People often talk about product-market fit in binary terms, you either have it or you don’t. But Dan sees it as a continuum.

36 Dan Olsen, *The Lean Product Playbook*, (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), <https://leanproductplaybook.com/>

Once a product reaches some level of product-market fit, it's not just about maintaining it but about strengthening it. The real question is, How much customer value are you delivering? He believes delight contributes measurable value. If a product delivers 100 units of value through core functionality, well-designed delighters might push that number to 115 or 120. However, the impact depends on visibility, an incredible feature tucked away in an obscure part of the product won't move the needle.

Dan also shared his thoughts on what makes a delightful feature. Often, when teams brainstorm delight, they default to large-scale, complex ideas that require massive engineering efforts. But delight doesn't have to be about big scope.

A great example from Spotify is how the song progress bar turns into a lightsaber when playing a *Star Wars* track. It's a small, simple touch, yet it sparks joy for fans. I also recently saw Google's YouTube doing something similar, swapping the video progress bar for a pumpkin during Halloween when playing "Thriller" by Michael Jackson. This is the kind of detail that resonates, creating an emotional connection and a sense of immersion. I love this type of feature because it makes users smile and strengthens their bond with a product.

Dan believes the impact that delight has on product success operates on multiple levels. While a single delightful feature might not be enough to drive user adoption, the accumulation of delightful experiences builds goodwill, acting as a buffer during technical hiccups and strengthening user retention. Delighted users naturally become advocates, driving organic growth through word of mouth.

Through his consulting work and thought leadership, Dan continues to champion the balance between functionality and emotional design. His experience reinforces the idea that while delighters may not always be the primary reason users choose a product, they often become the reason users stay and share their love for it.

CHAPTER

9

Prioritize Delightful Solutions

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 9:

Delight must be intentional and prioritized.

Throughout my career, I've had different relationships with building delight. At Google Meet, I was explicitly the delight PM; my role was to make Google Meet a more delightful experience. That experience taught me a lot about the topic.

However, few companies can fully dedicate a product manager to delight. That's why I often refer to my experience at Spotify, where delight was a key part of my mission, even though it wasn't my official title.

When I worked at Spotify, my role was to create the best media experience. As a product leader, I managed a packed backlog filled with feature requests, alongside highly technical and non-feature-related work, such as system migration. Despite this, my team successfully delivered a range of features that spanned all three types of delight.

One of the most common questions I receive is, "How did you prioritize features such as Canvas or Wrapped, which don't solve an immediate

functional need?” And more importantly, “How do you maintain the right balance between the three types of delight?”

In this chapter, I’ll share two different ways of shifting your mindset, from thinking about delight versus functionality, to a more actionable approach.

Delight *and* Functionality

Once you’ve refined and categorized your solutions using the delight grid, it’s time to integrate them into your product roadmap. Every feature plays a critical role in the success of the product, but they should be balanced based on their level of delight.

Functional features that solve core problems are essential because they represent the main reasons why users are using the product. However, to create a truly engaging and delightful experience, the roadmap should also include features that drive emotional connection.

The 50/40/10 Model

When prioritizing features for the roadmap, it’s essential to balance low, surface, and deep delight solutions.

I recommend a 50-40-10 distribution when planning the roadmap (Figure 26):

- **50% Low Delight:** These features address well-defined functional needs and ensure the product’s core functionality is solid. Low delight features are crucial because they solve users’ primary problems and ensure that the product delivers on its basic promises.
- **40% Deep Delight:** Deep delight features address functional needs and emotional needs. They address practical challenges, but also create an emotional connection, which is key to building long-term user loyalty. Prioritizing these features helps the product exceed expectations and delight users at every level.
- **10% Surface Delight:** Surface delight features focus solely on emotional engagement, providing moments of surprise and joy.

While they may not address functional needs, they add personality and warmth to the product, reminding users that there are real people behind the experience.

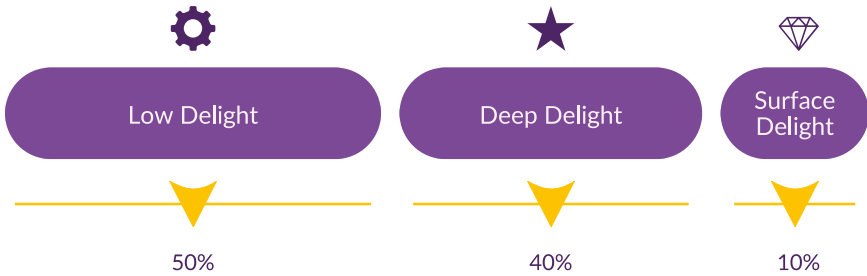


Figure 26: Delight levels distribution

Each category contributes to the overall success of the product. Low delight features provide stability and functionality. Deep delight features drive both satisfaction and emotional connection, while Surface delight features create memorable, humanized experiences.

The percentages indicate how much of your team's capacity is used for each type of delight. For example, out of 200 developer weeks, 100 are for low delight, 80 for deep delight, and 20 for surface delight. I used developer weeks as an example. The idea translates to whatever unit of measure you use to track your team's capacity.

I should also note that the 50-40-10 split is a guideline. The key is that you're delivering items in all three categories, with a larger percentage of time and effort spent on items that include functionality enhancement (low delight and deep delight) and a lower percentage that's there for pure emotional enhancement (surface delight).

One final note when it comes to prioritizing items in your roadmap: it's helpful to visually distinguish what type of delight your items deliver. I love coloring my roadmap to show which items deliver low-delight functionality, which deliver deep delight, and which provide surface delight. I also make it a point to use brighter colors to represent deep delight and surface delight.

Delight in Functionality

Besides combining and mixing functional and delightful features, a good way to create delight in your product is to think about delight in functionality.

Minimum Delightful Product

A nice way to get into this mindset is the use of the minimum delightful product (MDP) concept (Figure 27). MDP builds upon the concept of the minimum viable product (MVP), introduced by Eric Ries in *The Lean Startup*.³⁷ While an MVP prioritizes speed and core functionality to validate viability, an MDP ensures the product isn't just functional but also emotionally engaging, optimizing the product for user delight.

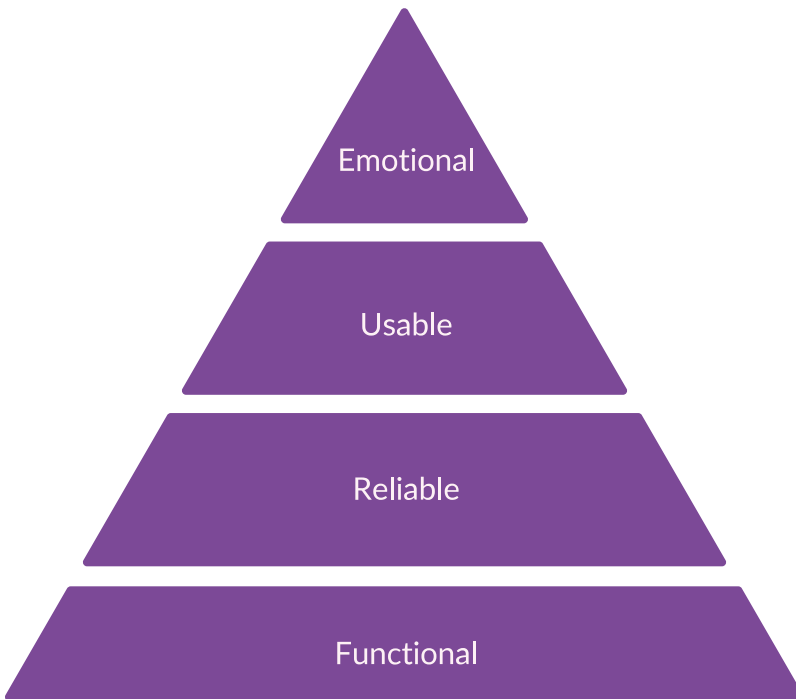


Figure 27: Minimum delightful product

37 Eric Ries, *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*, (New York: Currency, 2011).

This idea aligns with psychological theories of human motivation, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1940). Maslow suggested that people must first satisfy basic needs (e.g., food and shelter) before progressing to higher-level needs such as love, self-esteem, and creativity. Similarly, in *Designing for Emotion*, Aaron Walter presents a hierarchy of user needs that mirrors Maslow's framework. He argues that pleurability (the pinnacle of the user experience) can only be achieved once foundational needs such as functionality and usability have been met.

By integrating delight into functionality rather than treating them as separate choices, product teams can create experiences that not only work seamlessly but also spark joy and emotional connection, leading to deeper engagement and long-term success.

The Inactive Tab Example

One of the features I helped develop as a product manager at Chrome was inactive tabs: a solution for managing the ever-growing number of tabs users leave open on their mobile devices.

The idea stemmed from a simple observation: many Chrome users (myself included) keep dozens, sometimes hundreds of tabs open, often for very different reasons than they do on the desktop. While desktop tabs are tied to productivity, mobile tabs tend to be a mix of reminders, unfinished tasks, and plain negligence.

I started by asking this critical question: "Is this a problem for users and for the product?" From the browser perspective, open tabs take up space and memory, potentially having an impact on performance.

From the user's perspective, it was more complicated than that. I had to conduct multiple user interviews to collect insights on the emotional impact that multiple tabs could have on the users. Extensive research revealed diverse emotional responses to open tabs. Some users felt annoyance, disturbance, or even confusion.

Interestingly, the number of open tabs displayed at the bottom of the tab grid could also trigger emotional reactions, adding stress as the count grew.

The challenge was clear: How could we reduce the clutter while respecting users' autonomy? Simply closing tabs on their behalf would have been a terrible mistake, it would disrupt trust and cause frustration.

Instead, we crafted inactive tabs, a feature that automatically groups into a separate section within the tab grid any tabs that haven't been visited for multiple days. It allowed users to declutter without losing control over their content, seamlessly combining functional needs with emotional motivators.

Inactive tabs allowed cleaning the tab grid and displaying fewer tabs and thumbnails; but more importantly, it reduced stress while respecting how users feel about their browsing habits. This, for me, is a pure example of deep delight that joins functionality, reliability, usability, and emotional engagement.

Other Viewpoints on Prioritizing Delightful Solutions

Adam Nash on Building Delight

For Adam Nash, CEO of Daffy and former product leader at LinkedIn, Apple, and eBay, great products aren't just about shipping features; they're about building organizations and experiences that endure. Throughout his career, Adam has emphasized the role of delight in long-term success, arguing that leadership, culture, and emotional connection are as critical as technology or execution. Adam shared his perspective on delight in multiple events and podcasts.³⁸

In his interview on the In Depth podcast, Adam discussed the limitations he saw in a purely metrics-driven approach to development. At eBay, prioritizing revenue over user trust led to a disconnect with customers. At LinkedIn, he introduced a two-part model: Metric movers (features that drive business key performance indicators, or KPIs) and customer requests (features based on user feedback). Yet something was still missing, emotional resonance.

38 Adam Nash, *Building products that delight customers* | Adam Nash (Daffy, Wealthfront, LinkedIn, eBay, Apple), posted April 4, 2024, *In-Depth* podcast, hosted by Brett Berson of FirstRoundCapital, YouTube, 1:16:19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxYFdSgg6BM&ab_channel=FirstRoundCapital

Inspired by his time at Apple, Adam added a third bucket: delight features, designed to surprise, engage, and emotionally connect with users. While these rarely top traditional prioritization models, he believes they drive long-term loyalty and differentiation. As he puts it, “Delight isn’t rational; it’s emotional.”

To keep delight intentional, Adam uses a 70-20-10 model: 70% of effort goes to metric movers, 20% to customer requests, and 10% to delight. This ensures delight isn’t an afterthought, but a consistent part of the roadmap. His 10% aligns closely with what the product delight model calls surface delight, features that emotionally engage without sacrificing functionality.

At Daffy, a donor-advised fund platform, Adam applied this philosophy by intentionally building delight into the product experience. Two standout examples illustrate how delight can drive engagement and differentiation:

1. **The Family Plan:** Adam recognized that charitable giving is often a shared experience, yet most donor-advised funds were designed for individual users. By introducing a family plan, Daffy made it easier for families to give together, reinforcing emotional connections while increasing engagement.
2. **Jewish Giving Tradition Integration:** Many early Daffy users followed Jewish charitable traditions, in which donations are typically made in multiples of 18 (a symbol of life). The team added quick-select donation buttons for 18, 180, and 1,800, along with celebratory animations. This small but thoughtful touch made users feel seen and valued, and unexpectedly led to an 80% increase in median donations to Jewish charities.

While neither of these features was designed purely for growth, both drove unexpected engagement, proving that delight can have real business value when done right.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Use the Delight Grid to Guide Roadmap Planning:** After categorizing features by their level of delight (low, surface, or deep), integrate them into your roadmap with intention and balance.
- **Balance Functionality and Emotional Impact:** Functional features are essential for solving user problems, but emotional connection is key to building long-term engagement and loyalty.
- **Delight Can Live in Functionality:** Don't just treat delight as a layer on top; look for ways to infuse delight directly into the functional experience itself.
- **Apply the 50-40-10 Model:** When prioritizing features, aim for 50% low delight (functional essentials), 40% deep delight (functional + emotional), and 10% surface delight (pure emotional value).

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Assess the Delight Level of Your Roadmap:** Identify the percentage of low, surface, and deep delight features within your roadmap.
- **Apply the 50-40-10 Rule in Roadmap Planning:** When selecting features for your next release or quarterly roadmap, aim for 50% low delight, 40% deep delight, and 10% surface delight.
- **Define Your MDP:** When launching a new product or feature, don't stop at MVP. Identify one or two emotional elements that will surprise or engage users meaningfully from day one.

EXPERT PROFILE

Creating Lasting User Happiness



Satyajeet Salgar

Director of Product and UX for AI Innovation and Research at Google

Satyajeet Salgar stands as a testament to the importance of cultivating user happiness in product development. With more than 16 years of experience at Google Search and YouTube, Satyajeet has been at the forefront of understanding how products can create emotional connections with users.

Satyajeet's journey through different product roles at Google gave him a unique perspective on the delicate balance between quantitative metrics and qualitative user satisfaction. As the current director of product and UX for AI Innovation and Research, Satyajeet brings valuable insights into how companies can measure and enhance product delight.

Satyajeet understands how distinct features contribute to user delight in varying ways. During his time at Google Search, he worked with a team specifically dedicated to delight, focusing on small features that help users form emotional connections with the product. These weren't just arbitrary additions; the team carefully measured and validated those features through user feedback.

One common way to measure this emotional connection at Google is the use of Google's HaTS (Happiness Tracking Survey). The HaTS system reveals a sophisticated approach to understanding user satisfaction. "To me, HaTS as a survey mechanism is very useful," Satyajeet explains. He emphasizes how it serves as a crucial component in the suite of metrics that help product teams understand if they're truly making users happier.

Take, for example, the animations that appear when showing sports scores or the special features that emerge during festivals and national holidays on search result screen. While these might seem like minor details, Satyajeet's

team found that users who encountered these features showed measurably higher satisfaction with the product. “Google recognized something that I care about,” was a common sentiment, demonstrating how small touches can create meaningful connections.

But Satyajeeet’s experience also reveals a more nuanced understanding of product delight. It’s not just about creating momentary happiness. It’s about making products easier and more satisfying to use.

Satyajeeet describes instances when his team undertook major page reorganizations, not just for aesthetic purposes, but with the goal of making tasks easier for users. They didn’t measure success purely in usage metrics, but also in how users perceived the improvement in their experience.

Through his experience, Satyajeeet built a healthy respect for the “habituation effect.” This effect occurs when users initially respond with excitement to new features, but gradually come to expect them as standard.

Understanding this phenomenon influenced how his teams approach both measurement and feature development. Rather than chasing temporary spikes in satisfaction, they focus on creating lasting improvements in task completion and user experience.

“People’s expectations of technology keep changing,” Satyajeeet notes, highlighting the need for continuous innovation in product delight. This perspective shaped his approach to product development, encouraging teams to look beyond immediate metrics and consider the long-term emotional connection users form with products.

Satyajeeet’s approach is quite practical. While maintaining a focus on user happiness, he advocates for a balance between qualitative feedback and quantitative metrics. This method has proven successful across different products at Google, from search features to YouTube implementations, demonstrating its versatility and effectiveness.

Because of his experience, Satyajeeet believes creating delightful products requires more than just adding superficial features. It demands a deep understanding of user needs, careful measurement of satisfaction, and an appreciation for how minor details can create lasting emotional connections.

CHAPTER

10

Validate Solutions with Delight Excellence Checklist

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 10:

*Delight isn't done when it's shipped;
it's done when it is felt.*

When building for delight, we're tapping into users' emotions. This comes with some risks.

The other day, a close friend shared a personal story that quietly stuck with me.

In 2020, she lost her grandmother, someone who had been a steady, loving presence throughout her life. One afternoon, she went searching for a specific photo of her grandmother sitting in a sunlit kitchen, holding her then six-month-old baby and laughing at something on a phone screen. It was one of those quiet, fleeting moments that later took on more meaning.

She remembered the photo being shared on WhatsApp, so she scrolled through an old thread to find it. But when she got there, all she saw was a blurry thumbnail and a message:

“This photo is no longer available. Please contact Maria.”

She told me, “It caught me off guard. That one sentence felt so cold, like it didn’t understand what that photo meant to me. It wasn’t just a file; it was a memory.”

She wasn’t angry at the app. What hit her was the realization that even a simple message from a product could have softened the feeling of loss if it had been written with more care. “What if it had acknowledged what it means to lose something special?” she wondered.

Her story was a gentle but powerful reminder that our products intersect with deeply human moments. A single notification, however functional, can either soften an emotional experience or unintentionally make it heavier.

And the truth is, even if we care, it’s easy to forget this when we’ve got our heads down, working on roadmaps, metrics, and delivery cycles.

That’s why I created the delight excellence checklist, a set of guiding questions to help you assess the delightfulness of the features you are building. It’s how I make sure we’re not just building for performance, but also for people.

The Nine Questions of Delight Excellence

At this stage, you may have a range of ideas, but how do you ensure they provide the delight you expect? That’s where the delight excellence checklist comes in; it’s a checklist to validate the delight your solution offers.

The delight excellence checklist is a set of nine essential questions designed to evaluate and validate the success of delightful solutions. It provides a structured way to ensure that your product not only delights, but also delivers impact.

Crafting innovative features and emotional connections is essential, but it’s equally important to assess their value. How do we ensure that our solutions truly resonate with users and drive business success?

User Impact

Every delightful feature must align with users’ goals and contribute to a meaningful impact to avoid feeling like an unnecessary addition. The question to ask is this:

Does the solution effectively help users achieve their goals?

Learning a new language is a long-term goal, often requiring motivation to stay consistent. Duolingo's streak feature helps users achieve this by celebrating their daily practice milestones with playful animations and encouraging messages. This functional tool (tracking progress) becomes delightful through its celebratory design, making users feel rewarded for their efforts.

The streak feature isn't just a gimmick; it taps into users' desire for progress and habit formation, making it an integral part of the learning experience. Without this alignment, features risk becoming distractions rather than enablers of success. When delight is purposefully designed, it enhances user satisfaction and product success, ensuring the feature feels essential rather than superficial and seamlessly blending motivation with meaningful impact.

Business Impact

The biggest mistake when building delightful features is disconnecting them from business goals. Delight isn't an excuse to create features that don't serve a purpose; it should enhance the user experience and business success. The most effective delightful features drive measurable outcomes, improving user satisfaction while fostering loyalty and operational efficiency.

A key question to ask is this:

Does the solution effectively help achieve business goals?

Amazon's return system is a great example. As a frequent Amazon user, I sometimes need to return products. Occasionally, Amazon allows me to keep the item while still receiving a refund. This unexpected gesture exceeds expectations and reduces the operational costs of processing returns.

Amazon's return system delights users because it eliminates frustration, makes customers feel trusted, and builds goodwill.

The returns system delivers business impact by reducing return handling costs and operational inefficiencies. This policy fosters long-term loyalty, increasing repeat purchases and customer lifetime value.

This thoughtful approach demonstrates how a simple, yet impactful, policy can delight users while strategically advancing business goals.

Data and Insights

The best delightful features often stem from a deep understanding of user needs, fears, and aspirations. Validating these emotional needs and functional needs through data ensures that the feature resonates deeply with its audience.

When introducing a new delightful feature, ask the following question:

Did you use customer insights or data to validate emotional needs?

Uber's "Share Your Ride" feature is a great example of how deep user insights and data can be leveraged to create a strong emotional connection. Built in response to user concerns about safety, this feature directly addresses the fundamental human need for security and peace of mind. By allowing riders to share their real-time trip details with trusted contacts, Uber transforms an often-anxious experience, traveling alone or at night, into one that feels safer and more reassuring. This feature seamlessly integrates GPS tracking and contact sharing to provide a sense of control and connection, ensuring users feel supported throughout their journey.

By addressing the emotionally significant need for safety, Uber increased user trust, but also strengthened its competitive positioning in the market.

Familiarity

Yes, we need to surprise our users, but not too much. Delightful solutions often find the sweet spot between novelty and familiarity. They introduce something new and exciting, while maintaining a sense of comfort and approachability.

The best question here to ask is this:

Does the solution balance being familiar and being innovative well enough to capture interest?

I want to explain this concept with the example of Discover Weekly. Discover Weekly intended to, once a week, provide a list of songs you hadn't heard before. The list was created based on your listening history, but wasn't supposed to include songs from your listening history.

When Discover Weekly was introduced, Spotify users loved it and the product team noticed great adoption numbers. They also noticed there was a bug in the algorithm that caused songs that people had listened to before to show up in the Discover Weekly playlists. The product team hadn't intended for familiar songs to show up, so they "fixed" the bug in the next release.

After that release, much to the product team's surprise, Discover Weekly metrics dropped. When the product team interviewed some former users of Discover Weekly, they found out that while people liked getting exposed to new music, they also liked the occasional familiarity of a song they knew.

So the product team reverted their fix and saw usage numbers gradually increase. It turned out that the bug was actually a feature.

Discover Weekly is a perfect example of the Most Advanced Yet Acceptable (MAYA) principle. MAYA is an 80-year-old principle that's widely used among today's cutting-edge tech products. Raymond Loewy, often referred to as the father of industrial design, defined the principle as a way to design for the future but to deliver the future gradually.

I learned about this framework in the book *Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in an Age of Distraction*³⁹ by Derek Thompson. Loewy sought to give his users the most advanced design, but not more advanced than what they were able to accept and embrace at that time.

The version of Discover Weekly with the occasional familiar song mixed in is an example of the MAYA principle. The familiar song kept people comfortable, while also giving them a chance to explore new music. People need some familiarity so they don't have to completely change their habits and their ways of operating with your product.

Innovation shouldn't overwhelm users; it should feel approachable and intuitive. That's the guiding philosophy behind Google's Material Design

39 Derek Thompson, *Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in an Age of Distraction*, (New York: Penguin, 2017), <https://www.amazon.com/Hit-Makers-Sci%20ence-Popularity-Distraction/dp/110198032X>

principles: introducing innovation while maintaining consistency across apps, so experiences remain familiar, seamless, and easy to use.

Feasibility

As I've discussed, features that offer deep delight combine functionality and emotions. Since functionality is a key component, you must ensure that the feature is feasible and that it can be built and delivered successfully.

The key question to ask is this:

Can the solution be developed within a reasonable time frame and with the available skills and technology?

Multiple delightful ideas ended up being abandoned due to feasibility reasons. As a product leader and coach, I've seen this pattern repeatedly with brilliant ideas that were simply too complex to execute. Often, a simpler, more focused version of an idea could have been far more impactful. Feasibility isn't just about what's possible, it's about balancing ambition with execution to ensure that innovation delivers real value.

Inclusiveness

The biggest risk related to delight is its subjectivity, what brings joy and excitement to one person might feel uncomfortable, frustrating, or even upsetting to another. Emotions are deeply personal and context-dependent, meaning that a delightful feature can land differently based on an individual's mood, environment, or personal experiences. Even something that delights a user in one moment may not have the same effect in another.

This is why it's crucial to ask the following:

Could the product potentially be harmful in some cases?

A feature designed to surprise, entertain, or emotionally engage should always be tested through multiple perspectives to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Take Apple's iOS 17 and macOS's Sonoma update, which introduced gesture reactions during video calls. If a user made a certain gesture, it triggered animations such as hearts, balloons, or fireworks behind them. While designed to add fun and spontaneity, this feature led to unexpected issues. For example, users in serious conversations, such as in therapy sessions, accidentally triggered fireworks which created awkward and inappropriate moments. What was meant to be delightful became an unwelcome distraction.

A similar issue arose with Deliveroo France's 2024 Mother's Day campaign.⁴⁰ The company sent a push notification simulating a missed call from "Mom" to encourage users to order meals and flowers. The goal was to create a moment of surprise and emotional connection, making Mother's Day feel more special. However, the execution overlooked inclusion and emotional sensitivity.

For many, Mother's Day isn't a joyful occasion, it can bring up grief, estrangement, or personal struggles. Instead of evoking warmth, the notification unintentionally triggered sadness and discomfort for some users. This highlights an essential lesson in product and marketing design: delight should never come at the expense of inclusivity. A feature meant to bring joy must consider diverse user experiences to avoid unintentionally alienating or upsetting parts of the audience.

These examples underscore the importance of thoughtful, user-centered design, in which delight enhances the experience without unintended harm.

When designing for delight, it's crucial to anticipate unintended consequences; even the most well-intentioned features can backfire if they overlook the diverse experiences of users.

Distraction

Delightful features should support the user's goals and enhance the primary experience, not create friction or frustration. Misplaced or overbearing features, even if well-intentioned, can detract from usability rather than add value.

40 P.-L.T., «Appel manqué de maman : le message de Deliveroo pour la fête des mères passe mal,» *Le Figaro*, May 27, 2024, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/conjoncture/appel-manque-de-maman-le-message-de-deliveroo-pour-la-fete-des-meres-passe-mal-20240527>

A delightful feature should never stand between the user and their task, instead, it should act as a seamless helper, subtly improving the experience without causing distraction.

The key question to ask is this:

Does the solution enhance the primary experience without distraction?

A well-known example of delight gone wrong is Microsoft's Clippy (or maybe only for my generation).

Clippy was a virtual assistant created by Microsoft, introduced in Microsoft Office 97 and used through Office 2003. Designed to assist users with tasks such as writing letters, Clippy aimed to be helpful and engaging. However, instead of enhancing the experience, it often became a source of frustration, interrupting workflows with unsolicited advice and animations. What was meant to be delightful ended up feeling intrusive and counterproductive.

To ensure a feature truly enhances the experience, test whether it seamlessly integrates into the user journey. Does it provide value without unnecessary interruptions? Aim for delight that complements the core experience, instead of competing with it.

Continuity

Delight is a combination of joy and surprise. But surprise is a tricky element. What amazes us today can quickly become expected tomorrow: the habituation effect. What once felt novel, eventually becomes the norm.

The challenge then isn't just to create delightful features, but to ensure they evolve continuously to maintain their impact.

The key question to ask is this:

Is there a plan to maintain this delightful solution continuously?

Delight isn't a one-time effort; it requires ongoing maintenance, updates, and enhancements to stay relevant and impactful. A feature that remains static risks losing its appeal, blending into the background of the user experience.

Take Google Meet's background replace feature as an example. When we first introduced it, it was a pure delight, enhancing user experience by allowing people to blur or replace their backgrounds during video calls. At first, it felt like magic, but soon it became a must-have. Can you imagine having a video call today without it?

To keep the delight alive, we had to continuously enhance the features:

- We introduced video backgrounds with animated images.
- Then we created immersive backgrounds with lighting effects and adjusted animations.
- Most recently, we launched AI-generated backgrounds, creating personalized environments tailored to users.

Each of these updates brought back a sense of delight, keeping the feature fresh, relevant, and engaging. This commitment to continuous improvement ensures that a once-delightful feature doesn't fade into the ordinary, but remains a key part of the product experience.

Measurability

Delight is measurable. To effectively validate delight, you need to define metrics that assess functional success and emotional impact. These metrics ensure that your feature delivers real value to users, while aligning with business goals. While emotions may seem intangible, multiple attempts have been made to quantify user happiness and delight. Chapter 11 explores in detail the best metrics to assess how delightful your product truly is.

Before launching a feature, ask yourself this question:

Are there metrics to track the desired delight?

Here are key measurement areas:

- **Engagement:** Track how many users interact with the feature, how frequently they use it, and whether they skip or abandon it. High engagement signals that the feature resonates, while drop-off rates indicate friction or lack of interest.

- **Retention:** Measure how often users return to the feature over time and whether it contributes to higher overall product usage. A delightful feature should create long-term reuse.
- **User Satisfaction:** Use the Net Promoter Score (NPS) metric and Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)⁴¹ surveys to gauge how the feature is perceived and whether it meets user expectations.
- **Emotional Impact:** Conduct post-usage surveys and leverage sentiment analysis on user feedback to understand the depth of emotional engagement the feature creates.
- **Business Impact:** Evaluate whether the feature drives key business outcomes, such as increased revenue, higher subscription rates, or improved customer retention.

How to Use These Questions

Now that I've introduced the nine questions you can use to validate delight, here are some tips to use the questions most effectively.

I use these questions when I'm building either a new product, or features for an existing product, that directly impact users. For example, as a PM I used to classify development work into these three categories:

- **Maintenance:** fixing bugs
- **Speed and Productivity:** how to make the product faster or migrate to a new system
- **Product Innovation:** improving the user experience in some way

I then go through the delight excellence checklist for each feature that fell into the product innovation category, but didn't worry about the features in the other two categories.

41 "Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT): What it is and how to use it," *Zendesk Blog*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.zendesk.com/blog/customer-satisfaction-score/>

		Yes/No
User Impact	Does the solution effectively help users achieve their goals?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Business Impact	Does the solution effectively help to achieve business goals?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Data and Insights	Did you use customer insights or data to validate emotional needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Familiarity	Does the solution balance being familiar and being innovative well enough to capture interest?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Feasibility	Can the solution be developed within a reasonable time frame and with the available skills and technologies?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusiveness	Could the product potentially be harmful in some cases?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Distraction	Does the solution enhance the primary experience without distraction?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Continuity	Is there a plan to maintain this delightful solution continuously?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Measurability	Are there metrics to track the desired delight?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 28: Delight excellence checklist

I find it valuable to walk through the delight excellence checklist (Figure 28) from multiple perspectives to ensure a well-rounded evaluation. That’s why I typically involve the product trio of the product manager, designer, and tech lead when validating a feature against the list. If you have a UX researcher in addition to your product designer, it’s beneficial to also include them to bring deeper user insights.

Additionally, consider including other stakeholders, depending on the nature of the feature. For instance, a data scientist can help assess measurability, ensuring that the right metrics are in place. A marketing team can contribute

to the discussion on how to introduce the feature in a way that surprises and excites users. By gathering diverse perspectives, you increase the chances of creating a delightful, well-executed, and impactful experience.

Some additional tips to consider:

1. **Integrate Early:** Use these questions during the ideation and prototyping phases to ensure alignment.
2. **Evaluate Continuously:** Revisit them at key stages, from development to post-launch, to refine and validate success.
3. **Iterate and Improve:** Use feedback and metrics to iterate on features, ensuring that they continue to delight over time.

By using the nine questions from the delight excellence list, you can confidently validate whether your solutions achieve the desired delight objective.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Delight Requires Intentional Application:** Delight doesn't happen by accident; it works when it's consciously and properly applied throughout the product process.
- **The Delight Excellence Checklist Is Your Guide:** This checklist helps validate whether a solution truly delivers delight beyond mere functionality.
- **It Covers What Matters Most:** The list includes nine critical areas: user impact, business impact, data and insights, familiarity, feasibility, inclusiveness, distraction, continuity, and measurability.
- **It Prevents Misalignment:** Walking through the checklist helps avoid superficial features or emotional missteps that contradict the user's context.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Use the Delight Excellence Checklist:** Make it a habit of walking through the nine questions during design critiques, sprint reviews, or feature planning sessions to validate the emotional quality of your solutions.
- **Involve Cross-Functional Teams:** Bring in designers, engineers, marketers, and even customer support to evaluate features from multiple angles; delight is everyone's responsibility.
- **Document and Track Answers:** Capture the responses to each question for key features. This helps with alignment, and builds a repository of learning over time.
- **Identify and Address Gaps:** If your solution shows no in areas such as inclusiveness or familiarity, use that insight to refine or evolve the feature before launch.

EXPERT PROFILE

Product Delight Even When Tracking Time



Jen Benz

Former Product Leader at INTUIT

When Jen Benz describes product delight, her eyes light up. As a Product Leader with experience that spans kids, adults, B2B, and B2C, Jen understands that delight isn't just a nice-to-have feature. It's a fundamental responsibility.

In one of her articles, she introduced the concept of “delightcro moments,” small, unexpected interactions in a product that, while not essential to functionality, create positive emotional responses. These micro-delights are the magical extras added after solving the primary customer problem, enhancing the user experience with moments of joy and surprise.

Jen's insights into product delight weren't forged in the playful world of digital games but in the far less exciting realm of B2B time-tracking software. As a Group Product Manager at TSheets, a time-tracking product later acquired by Intuit, Jen and her team faced a tough challenge: how do you make something as tedious as clocking in and out of work even remotely enjoyable? “Nobody actually wants to do time tracking,” Jen explains. “They want the result, the ability to run payroll or invoice customers, but not the process itself.” This realization led to an important lesson. When users don't inherently love your product, creating moments of delight becomes even more crucial.

No one expects clocking in and out to be delightful. In fact, they hate it. Anything that makes the experience just a little better, even without changing the core job to be done, can have a huge impact. The TSheets team took a creative approach. Instead of sending dry “You forgot to clock out” reminders, they infused humor, playfully joking about users setting world records for the longest work shifts. These small, witty touches turned routine notifications into smile-inducing interactions. The result was reduced friction in adoption and

increased user engagement. Not because users suddenly loved time tracking, but because the experience felt more human and enjoyable.

Jen's journey illustrates a crucial lesson about product delight. It is not one-size-fits-all. In B2B, delight might mean bringing humor and humanity to dull tasks. In consumer products, it is about continuously surprising users who already expect magic. But in both cases, the core principle remains the same. Delight comes from exceeding expectations and creating emotional connections.

She also highlights a key reality about delight. It has an expiration date. Using the example of Google Photos' ability to search untagged images, she notes how features that once amazed users eventually become basic expectations. "Now it's expected," she says. "What do you mean I have to tag my photos manually?" This reflects the ongoing challenge product teams face, the need to continuously innovate and find fresh ways to surprise and delight users.

Through her career spanning different industries and user needs, Jen has demonstrated that true product delight isn't about flashy features or fleeting wow moments. It is about deeply understanding users, acknowledging their emotional state, and finding authentic ways to make their experience better than they expected. Whether it is making time tracking less painful or helping kids engage with gaming experiences in new ways, the principle remains the same. Delight comes from surprising users with experiences that make them smile and keep them coming back for more.

CHAPTER

11

Measure Product Delight

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 11:

Delight is measurable; but not just in numbers.

While working at Skype, one of our North Star metrics for call quality was the Mean Opinion Score (MOS), which was the average star rating users gave a call at its conclusion. For years, we focused on improving this metric by introducing various call optimization features. Yet, no matter what we did, MOS was extremely hard to move.

Things changed when we decided to look at the data differently. Instead of focusing on the average rating, we shifted our attention to the percentage of calls rated poorly only. We named this new metric Poor Call Rate (PCR). This small yet fundamental shift in perspective completely transformed how we approached improving call quality. Unlike 5-star ratings, which were often given arbitrarily just to dismiss the pop-up, low ratings were more deliberate and reflective of genuine dissatisfaction.

By targeting PCR reduction, we found a clear and actionable way to measure the impact of our improvements. Optimizing for PCR allowed us to

correlate specific technical enhancements with tangible reductions in poorly rated calls, offering a much clearer view of how to improve user satisfaction.

That story shows a common issue I ran across while putting this book together. Everyone wants to be able to measure delight, but no one seems quite sure how to do it.

Instead of measuring emotions, you have to find ways to measure the results of delight being present or absent.

This chapter will provide multiple set of metrics to assess and measure the impact of delight.

The HEART Framework

The first set of metrics belongs to the happiness, engagement, adoption, retention, and task success (HEART) framework. HEART was developed by Google's UX researchers and links qualitative emotions to quantitative data to track your progress toward product delight.

The five measures provide a way to determine whether your product solves problems in a way that feels intuitive, rewarding, and aligned with users' values. Here's a look at each of those measures.

Happiness

Happiness measures user satisfaction and emotional connection. It answers the question, "Do users feel positive about their experience?" This measure offers the clearest view of delight in the HEART framework. The main way to measure happiness comes from asking users subjective questions through surveys or user interviews, such as "On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with the purchase process?"

Later in this chapter, I'll cover how to use NPS, CSAT, and HaTS to measure happiness.

Engagement

Engagement measures how actively and meaningfully users interact with your product. If your product has high engagement, that means users find it worthwhile to keep using your product.

To measure engagement, you can track how often users open your product (session frequency), how many features they use per session (depth of interaction), and how long it takes your users to complete a task with your product (time spent).

Adoption

Adoption measures how many new users become active users. Key factors that impact adoption include how you onboard users to your product, and how quickly they can realize value.

A couple of ways to measure adoption include tracking how many users finish onboarding (sign-up completion rate), and the percentage of users who use key features (feature adoption).

Retention

Retention measures the number of users who keep using your product. It reflects your product's ability to remain relevant and minimize churn.

A couple of ways to measure retention include tracking the percentage of users who stop using your product monthly (churn rate), and the number of active weekly or monthly users (return visits).

Task Success

Task success evaluates how efficiently users achieve their goals. You want your product to provide frictionless experiences in which users feel in control.

You measure task success by comparing tasks finished vs. abandoned (completion rate), tracking the number of mistakes requiring correction (error rate), and shorter times (time-on-task).

The DUUF Framework

While putting this book together, I made it a point of asking everyone I talked to how they measured delight. I hoped to find additional effective ways to measure delight beyond the HEART framework and HaTS.

My search bore fruit when I talked to Jared Bauer and he told me about DUUF, which stands for delight, usability, utility, and (product-market) fit.

DUUF balances qualitative and quantitative insights. It answers two critical questions: “Does this product matter?” and “Will people keep using it?”

Jared and his team at GitHub⁴² developed DUUF during their work on Projects beta. Here is a look at how DUUF works and how you can use it to measure the delight your product offers.

When you build a product, feedback floods in. Users praise specific features, complain about bugs, and suggest improvements; but without structure, this data becomes just noise.

The DUUF framework cuts through the chaos by focusing on four dimensions that predict adoption and loyalty.

Delight

Delight is the feeling users get when a product exceeds their expectations. For example, the beta users of GitHub’s Projects raved about the flexibility of table views, calling them “invaluable” for tracking work. This wasn’t just functionality; it was a moment of surprise that simplified a pain point that users didn’t know could be eased.

To measure delight, you can use a variety of techniques, including the following:

- Surveys in which you ask questions such as, “What surprised you in a positive way?”
- Interviews in which you probe for emotional language.
- Behavioral signals in which you track features with unusually high engagement.

Utility

Utility measures whether the product solves a real problem. GitHub’s users, for instance, valued Projects because it let them “categorize issues in a way that makes sense” which was a clear utility signal.

42 Jared S Bauer, “What to measure and how to measure it during a beta,” Medium, December 20, 2021, <https://medium.com/@jaredsb/what-to-measure-and-how-to-measure-it-during-a-beta-e9a1283dc54d>

Some measurements of utility include the following:

- Compare the efficiency of workflows before and after a product change.
- Check task success rates: Can users achieve their goals faster?
- Use feedback prompts to ask users “What’s the main benefit you’ve received?”

Usability

Usability issues often hide in plain sight. Some users struggled with navigation, but still praised the product’s utility. This mirrors a key DUUF insight: users tolerate poor usability early if the payoff is high.

Some ways to measure usability include the following:

- **Session Recordings:** Watch where users get stuck.
- **Surveys:** Use standardized questions such as “Did you find the product unnecessarily complex?”
- **Support Tickets:** Cluster common complaints.

Fit

Fit answers the question “Would users care if this vanished?” This is an adapted version of Sean Ellis’s product-market fit question:⁴³ “How disappointed would you be if you couldn’t use this?” Responses below 40% as “very disappointed” signaled a weak fit.

Some ways to measure fit include the following:

- **Surveys:** Ask, “How disappointed would you be without this product?”
- **Competitor analysis:** Are users still relying on other tools?
- **Retention cohorts:** Do power users stay engaged?

43 Sean Ellis and Morgan Brown, *Hacking Growth: How Today’s Fastest-Growing Companies Drive Breakout Success* (New York: Crown Business, 2017).

How to Apply DUUF

Early adopters tend to forgive clunky interfaces if the core value of your product is strong. This early focus includes identifying and implementing delighters early on. For example, GitHub doubled down on table views after users called them “priceless.”

You also want to validate utility so you ensure that your product solves a problem 10 times better than alternatives.

And finally, test fit to gauge necessity by asking early adopters, “How disappointed would you be if you couldn’t use this?”

Once you’ve proven the core value of the product, it’s time to polish your experience.

You can A/B test workflows to simplify common tasks and make your product as easy to use as possible. You’ll also want to invest in onboarding to help your users get up and run quickly. Finally, keep an eye on support channels so you can find recurring issues that signal usability gaps.

Even when you reach a good level of delight, utility, usability, and fit, you’re not done. DUUF isn’t static and you need to continuously rebalance priorities between the four measures.

DUUF doesn’t just measure delight; it creates it. When users feel understood, empowered, and emotionally connected, they stick around. And when they stick around, they invite others. This is called the delight flywheel. It is a virtuous cycle in which metrics and magic align.

Surveys to Measure Happiness

The best way I’ve found to measure happiness is through some form of survey. The two most common types of surveys are NPS and CSAT scores.

I found that these two types of surveys had different areas of focus and, therefore, different effectiveness in measuring happiness in a way that was helpful to gauge product delight.

Here’s a description of each survey type.

NPS

The NPS tracks customer sentiment for your entire product, using a single question: “How likely are you to recommend our product/service to a friend or colleague?”

Fred Reichheld, a partner at Bain & Company, developed NPS in 2001 in an attempt to measure customer loyalty and predict business growth. NPS gained widespread attention and popularity as a result of Reichheld’s 2003 *Harvard Business Review* article titled “The One Number You Need to Grow.”⁴⁴

The answer to the question is a number on a scale of 0 to 10. When you analyze the responses, you categorize the responses into three groups:

1. **Promoters (9–10):** Loyal users who are willing to spread the word about your product.
2. **Passives (7–8):** Satisfied users who won’t comment about your product unless asked.
3. **Detractors (0–6):** Disappointed users who may actively dissuade others from buying.

To get your actual NPS value, use this formula:

$$\text{NPS} = \% \text{ Promoters} - \% \text{ Detractors.}$$

NPS values can range from –100 (all detractors) to +100 (all promoters). The higher the score, the better; but what value makes a “good” NPS varies from one industry to another?

The score itself provides a signal about your users, but you’ll need additional information to understand what that signal is telling you and why your users feel the way they do.

NPS is good at highlighting systemic issues that affect long-term loyalty. It’s less effective at diagnosing specific pain points, and doesn’t provide a completely reliable signal when it comes to product delight.

44 Frederick F. Reichheld, “The One Number You Need to Grow,” *Harvard Business Review*, December 2003, <https://hbr.org/2003/12/the-one-number-you-need-to-grow>

CSAT Survey

CSAT surveys focus on a user's satisfaction with a specific action or feature. CSAT questions are typically worded in this manner: "How satisfied were you with [specific interaction/product feature]?" with responses being a score of 1 to 5.

To calculate CSAT, use this formula: $CSAT = (\text{Positive Responses} \div \text{Total Responses}) \times 100$ where Positive Responses equal the number of responses in which the user answered 4 or 5.

For example, if 80 out of 100 users rate a new feature 4 or 5 or higher:

$$CSAT = (80 \div 100) \times 100 = 80\%$$

Because CSAT questions focus on particular touchpoints or features, they're better suited than NPS for identifying points of friction in your product.

Combining NPS and CSAT

Given the different but complementary focus of NPS and CSAT, you can combine the two to get a better idea of your user's perspective about your product.

Use NPS to identify strategic gaps. When you get a low NPS score, that's your signal to delve deeper and identify systemic issues. CSAT provides an indicator of potential tactical flaws. When a particular touchpoint or feature exhibits low CSAT scores, that identifies where you can make some improvements.

Then, when you make improvements, use CSAT as a potential leading indicator to longer-term improvement in NPS. And both these metrics give you some indication of how you may be delighting your users.

For example, consider a healthcare app that achieved a high CSAT for its medication tracking feature, but saw low NPS. The team working on the app discovered that users loved the core functionality (high CSAT), but hated abrupt payment prompts during critical health moments (low NPS).

The team can soften payment reminders and add empathetic messaging. This change could result in an increased NPS, without altering the praised feature. This dichotomy underscores why CSAT and NPS are complementary: one assesses tactical success, while the other assesses strategic loyalty.

A More Delightful Survey: HaTS

During my time at Google, I discovered a superior survey method for gauging user happiness and product satisfaction when compared to NPS and CSAT.

HaTS, created by Google, is an in-product survey used to track the user's sense of happiness with the product over time. HaTS is designed to measure user sentiment continuously, providing real-time feedback regarding how users feel about specific features or changes in your product.

In contrast to NPS, which measures the overall brand, HaTS focuses on a specific feature. And in contrast to CSAT, which measures satisfaction at a point in time, HaTS (as its name implies) tracks happiness over time.

There's value in observing happiness over time because you can see the change in happiness related to specific actions you take with a product. When you introduce a new feature, does happiness decrease, vanish, or increase?

How HaTS Works

Imagine you're using Google Meet and a new feature appears. The first time you use that new feature, you see a pop-up asking about your satisfaction with that feature. For HaTS to work, you want to capture user feedback right after they experience that new feature. You may notice that the product team combined feature releases with visual updates so they can get more meaningful feedback on aesthetic improvements.

HaTS surveys are designed to continuously monitor user attitudes and experiences during real-world product usage at scale. They offer an efficient and structured approach to data collection, sampling, and analysis. HaTS typically tracks key metrics such as overall satisfaction, likelihood to recommend, perceived frustrations, and user sentiment around core product attributes. A key objective of HaTS is also to segment users, helping teams understand how different groups interact with and perceive the product. This segmentation enables more targeted follow-ups to uncover specific frustrations, behaviors, and intentions, and to explore why experiences may vary across user types.

The product team that introduced that new feature can adapt questions to measure happiness ("How satisfied are you?") and usability ("How easy was it to complete this task?").

The product team ensures that they continue to collect answers to those HaTS questions over time. This ongoing measurement helps the team identify trends in user happiness. This trend tracking also helps your product team identify the impact of a product change because you can view satisfaction levels before and after the change.

Implementing HaTS in Your Product

If you'd like to try a different approach to measuring happiness and get better insight into product delight, here are the steps you can take to implement HaTS in your product.

Define Your Measurement Goals

Before implementing HaTS, identify what you want to measure. Are you interested in overall product satisfaction, specific feature happiness, task completion ease, or emotional connection with the product?

You'll use your measurement goals to determine what questions to ask and how frequently you ask them.

It's worth noting that while I found HaTS to be a powerful tool for measuring user happiness, I find it works best as part of a comprehensive measurement strategy such as the HEART framework. That way, I can see happiness trends alongside other metrics such as retention and engagement.

Design Your Survey Questions

You'll determine what questions to ask based on your measurement goals. When you identify your questions, you'll want to create separate questions that target functional, usability, and emotional aspects of the user experience.

Open-ended questions gather frustrations, missing capabilities, and areas of appreciation, and are grouped together to improve response quality and made optional to reduce drop-off. As the survey progresses, a matrix rating evaluates key user experience attributes such as ease of use, technical reliability, visual appeal, and speed, followed by feedback on specific product tasks. Surveys are conducted via the web, without pop-up invitations to minimize distractions. The survey follows a funnel approach, starting with broad, high-level questions to build rapport, then moving to more specific

product attributes, and ending with potentially sensitive questions about the respondent's characteristics.

For a broader example of the questions included in HaTS, see the research paper from Google staff members Hendrik Müller and Aaron Sedley that explains the technique.⁴⁵

There are some key things to keep in mind when you formulate your questions:

- Make your questions specific to particular features or changes. Vague questions may not uncover real issues.
- Include questions to get quantitative scores and qualitative feedback. This variety will help you identify issues and gain some insight into why users answered the way they did.
- Include questions about whether the product feels “modern” or “fresh,” but remember these perceptions vary across demographics.

Choose Your Measurement Frequency

One of the key benefits of HaTS is that it tracks changes over time rather than relying on one-time measurements. You need to be intentional about how frequently you take measurements.

Your measurement frequency will differ depending on the nature of your work and your measurement goals. HaTS uses random sampling and is carefully designed to avoid survey fatigue and to ensure high-quality data. Each customer is only surveyed once every dozen weeks, with a target of a large number of responses to reduce error margins and increase confidence.

If you're regularly delivering features, you'll want to check HaTS data after each release. If you're primarily maintaining the product, you may look at HaTS once a month as a general health check. If you're primarily optimizing the product, you may use HaTS as a control metric alongside the other metrics from the HEART framework.

45 Hendrik Müller and Aaron Sedley, “HaTS: Large-scale In-product Measurement of User Attitudes & Experiences with Happiness Tracking Surveys,” Google, n.d., <https://static.googleusercontent.com/media/research.google.com/fr/pubs/archive/43221.pdf>

Regardless of the frequency you select, you'll want to keep your measurement consistent so you can correctly track trends.

Analyze and Act on Results

As HaTS data starts coming in, there's a variety of things you need to keep in mind when you analyze that data.

User satisfaction metrics may vary across different markets and demographics. As an example, cultural and age differences can have a big impact on aesthetic satisfaction measures.

Consider immediate reactions and long-term satisfaction trends. Users may become desensitized to delightful features over time, so you may need to keep an eye out for evidence of the habituation effect.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Emotions Are Hard to Measure but Impossible to Ignore:** Emotional connection is subjective, dynamic, and context-dependent, but its impact on user experience is deeply felt.
- **There Are Metrics for Emotions:** Tools such as NPS, CSAT, and HaTS surveys provide useful, though indirect, ways to assess emotional responses.
- **Use Product Metrics That Include Delight:** Frameworks such as HEART and DUUF are designed to capture emotional aspects of the user experience, such as happiness, engagement, and delight.
- **Emotional Metrics Can Be Productive:** While emotions are not always easy to quantify, with the right tools and mindset, they can be integrated into product decision-making to drive deeper connection and retention.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Incorporate Emotion-Tracking Metrics:** Create a HaTS Survey at key moments in the user journey to gather signals on user satisfaction and emotional response.
- **Adopt Delight-Friendly Frameworks:** Apply product measurement models such as happiness, engagement, adoption, retention, and task success (HEART) or delight, usability, utility, (product-market) fit (DUUF) to bring delight into your success metrics.
- **Analyze Moments, Not Just Averages:** Emotions fluctuate; review emotional feedback in context (e.g., after key tasks, feature use, or time spent), rather than only relying on aggregate scores.

EXPERT PROFILE

Measuring Product Delight in Technical Products



Jared Bauer

Customer Researcher at GitHub

Jared Bauer's transition from an information science researcher to a customer researcher at GitHub offers a profound perspective on measuring product delight, especially in technical products. His academic work at the University of Washington in distributed cognition and context-aware systems has been instrumental in shaping his understanding of user interactions within their environments, forming a solid foundation for creating products that resonate deeply with users.

In his article, "What to measure and how to measure it during a beta,"⁴⁶ Jared introduces the DUUF metric, encompassing four key measures: delight, usability, utility, and fit. This framework is particularly insightful during the beta phase, as it provides a structured approach to evaluating the functional facets and emotional facets of a product.

To effectively measure delight during the beta phase, it's essential to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys and feedback forms can capture users' emotional responses, while analytics can track engagement levels and feature adoption rates. Metrics such as the NPS and CSAT are valuable tools in quantifying user delight. Additionally, employing a hedonic scale can help gauge the degree of pleasure users derive from the product. By analyzing this data, product teams can identify areas that resonate with users and those that require refinement.

46 Jared S Bauer, "What to measure and how to measure it during a beta," Medium, December 20, 2021, <https://medium.com/@jaredsb/what-to-measure-and-how-to-measure-it-during-a-beta-e9a1283dc54d>

Focusing on the delightful aspect, Jared emphasizes the distinction between deep delight and surface delight. While many products rely on superficial features such as confetti animations to elicit temporary pleasure, Jared advocates for a more substantial approach. At GitHub, this philosophy is embodied in the “beyond confetti” approach. This approach acknowledges that while celebratory elements have their place, true delight arises from a foundation of accessibility, utility, and robust usability. This means that delight should be an integral part of the product’s core experience, instead of an afterthought.

This approach to delight is relevant in the technical space in which GitHub operates. Developer tools have historically been notorious for their challenging user experiences, often described by Jared as “being thrown to the wolves.” GitHub’s success in this space stems from its commitment to user-centered design, making complex technical tasks more approachable without sacrificing functionality.

Jared’s concept of “slices” in product development offers a practical framework for embedding delight from the outset. Each slice represents a vertical segment of the product, encompassing all layers of the user experience, from fundamental functionality to surface-level polish. This methodology ensures that delightful elements are not merely superficial additions but are woven into the very fabric of the product. By delivering complete, albeit simple, experiences in each slice, teams can avoid the pitfall of presenting users with perfectly engineered components that lack holistic value.

In essence, measuring and cultivating delight in technical products necessitates a comprehensive understanding of user context and a commitment to integrating delight into every facet of the product. Jared Bauer’s insights serve as a reminder that true product delight transcends decorative elements, demanding a holistic approach that addresses functional needs as well as emotional satisfaction. In the complex landscape of technical tools, this balanced strategy isn’t just advantageous, but is essential for creating products that users not only use but also genuinely appreciate.

EXPERT PROFILE

The Art and Science of Measuring Product Delight



Lucia Terrenghi

Senior Director, Head of UX for YouTube Creator at Google

Creating delightful products is challenging for any company, but few face the complexity of Google. With billions of users spanning diverse cultures and demographics, how do you quantify something as subjective as delight? This was the question I explored with Lucia Terrenghi, a Senior UX Director at Google, as we discussed how HaTS (HAppiness Tracking Survey) helps measure delight across Google's products.

Lucia's approach to delight reveals a fascinating tension between data-driven decision-making and the intangible qualities that make products truly special. She uses William Bruce Cameron's quote "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." Coming from one of the world's most data-driven companies, this insight carries particular weight.

Her framework for product quality is structured into three key dimensions: Usefulness (Does it serve a clear purpose?), usability (Is it efficient and easy to use?), and aesthetics (Is it delightful?). While the first two are relatively straightforward to measure, the third, the essence of delight, remains elusive.

Lucia's background in industrial design adds depth to her perspective. She notes how physical products have long reflected cultural values without requiring numerical validation, raising an important question: Have tech companies become too reliant on metrics for design decisions? This issue becomes particularly relevant when considering Google's approach to visual updates. Lucia reveals that combining feature updates with visual refreshes consistently generates more positive feedback than purely aesthetic changes, as people often have change aversion to purely aesthetic changes. This suggests

that delight isn't just about beauty, it's about the seamless integration of form and function.

The challenge of balancing delight with business realities plays out differently across Google's products. Startups often take bold, opinionated design risks, while established companies such as Google must weigh every pixel change, knowing it could impact millions of users and significant revenue streams. For instance, Google Meet, a widely used video conferencing tool, can introduce playful elements such as new backgrounds and effects. In contrast, Google Search, one of the company's core revenue-generating products, demands extreme precision to balance the needs of users, publishers and advertisers. "Every pixel counts," Lucia explains, underscoring how delight must sometimes be balanced with business constraints.

Despite these challenges, Google remains committed to delight, even in its most mature products. A perfect example is Google Doodles: the creative, often interactive variations of the Google logo featured on the search homepage, which changes every day. These Doodles celebrate global events, historical figures, and cultural moments. While they don't contribute directly to revenue, they create moments of joy and surprise that strengthen Google's emotional connection with users and build brand equity. This reflects a broader philosophy: delight isn't only about financial return; it's about building meaningful experiences and creating cultural relevance.

Lucia's insights highlight that measuring delight requires a nuanced approach. While data and metrics provide valuable insights, they shouldn't be the sole decision-making force. Factors such as cultural context, user demographics, and product maturity shape how delight should be designed and evaluated.

For product teams aiming to create more delightful experiences, Lucia's advice is clear: use data to inform decisions, not to dictate them. Consider the cultural and emotional landscape of your users, and remember that some of the most meaningful aspects of user experience can't be reduced to numbers.

As we refine our understanding of delight, Lucia's perspective serves as a reminder that truly delightful products emerge from a balance of art and science, intuition and measurement, boldness and restraint. Mastering this balance is where the real magic of product delight takes shape.

CHAPTER

12

The Product Delight Culture

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 12:

*You can't consistently deliver delight
if it's not part of your culture.*

Every time I talk about product delight, I get the same question: “How can I get buy-in from my leadership to bring in delightful features?” If you’ve asked yourself that, this chapter is for you. It’s designed to help individual contributors champion delight as a cultural mindset within their teams and to guide leaders in nurturing a culture of delight across the entire organization.

During my time at Spotify, I worked in the squad and tribe structure, and one of the things I loved most about it was the autonomy. Each tribe was independent. When a tribe leader introduced a change, there was no expectation or pressure for other tribes to adopt the same thing.

For instance, in my tribe, we ran the Squad Health Check⁴⁷ every quarter.

⁴⁷ Henrik Kniberg, “Squad Health Check model – visualizing what to improve,” R&D Engineering, September 16, 2014, <https://engineering.atspotify.com/2014/09/squad-health-check-model>

It's a team self-assessment tool created by Spotify in which squads rate how they're doing across various key dimensions such as morale, speed, and tech quality, using red, yellow, and green cards. It's simple, visual, and very effective in helping teams surface issues, celebrate wins, and continuously improve.

At first, I thought the Squad Health Check was something every tribe at Spotify did in the same way and cadence. But in speaking with other teams, I quickly realized that wasn't the case. Some tribes didn't run it quarterly. Others adapted the questions and methods to their needs.

The same applied to methodologies and tools. Some teams used Scrum, while others used XP or Kanban. Some used Jira, while others preferred Trello or even physical whiteboards.

That's the beauty of the tribe setup at Spotify: real autonomy. If a tribe believes in a way of working—whether it's a process, framework, or tool—they can adopt it. As long as there's alignment with the overall direction and the leaders support it, the team can move forward. That autonomy leads to true commitment, because people aren't just complying; they're convinced.

The same idea applies to adopting product delight. Leaders drive the product mindset. Without their ongoing support, delight quickly fades. In this chapter, I explore how you can make product delight a lasting part of your culture, including how to get leadership engaged. I also explore the impact product delight has on work culture and community building.

Getting Leadership Buy-In

As I mentioned above, even though you don't want your leadership to force change from above, that doesn't mean you don't need their support.

There are some strategies for gaining your leaders' support that complement the approaches you take to adopt product delight in your organization.

Demonstrate Success Through Industry Examples

When organizational leaders want to introduce significant change in their organization, they're always curious about what other, similar companies have done. Think of it as social proof of the organizational type.

A familiar example of how tech companies benefit from introducing product delight in their products is Google Doodles.

When you visit Google Search, you've probably noticed the Google Doodles, which are playful variations of the logo that celebrate cultural moments, events such as the Olympic Games, or the birthdays of influential figures. Some Doodles have even been interactive, like the Pac-Man game in 2010, which famously led to a spike in engagement, with users spending a collective 500 million hours playing the game.

But Doodles do more than entertain. They play a strategic role in strengthening brand affinity and reinforcing Google's identity as an innovative, human, and user-centric company. These small moments of delight contribute to why Google feels approachable and engaging, helping cement its dominant position in the market.

Initiate Internal Pilot Projects

You've convinced people about the impact other organizations have experienced from product delight. Now it's time to show that it can happen in your organization with a pilot project.

Change Begins Within Your Sphere of Control

You don't need a title or authority to spark change; it starts with what you can control. Focus on your immediate surroundings: your team, your peers, and even your boss. Build a high-performing team grounded in trust, collaboration, and empathy. If your boss is challenging, consider the pressures they might be facing, and approach them with understanding. By creating a small "island of excellence," you not only improve your team's dynamic but also plant the seeds for broader transformation.

Exceptional Teams Inspire Growth

Well-led teams naturally stand out. Their performance captures attention, inspiring curiosity from peers and leadership alike. As team members are promoted, they carry those lessons with them, spreading the culture of trust and excellence to other parts of the organization. Over time, these high-performing "islands of excellence" multiply, creating ripple effects that often

outpace and outlast top-down initiatives.

The Power of Small Ripples

The true power to drive change lies with the people, not just the leadership. To reach a tipping point, you only need about 15% of your organization to embrace new ideas. Focus on leading by example, celebrating small wins, and fostering excellence within your sphere of influence. These small ripples can transform the entire organization over time, proving that meaningful change starts right where you are today.

Introducing the Health Check at Google

I began this chapter by sharing my experience with the Squad Health Check at Spotify. Transitioning from Spotify to Google, I was impressed by the effectiveness of the Squad Health Check. I found those meetings to be valuable and beneficial, and conducting them correctly every quarter created special moments of alignment. Upon joining Google, I proposed the idea of implementing a leadership version of the Squad Health Check during a leadership offsite. Fortunately, I received support and we decided to give it a go. The results were surprisingly impactful, leading to open and safe discussions within the group. This practice soon became a regular part of our leadership offsites, helping us to reconnect, reflect, and develop as a team.

Sometimes, people may resist things they have never tried before. However, this resistance tends to fade when they witness someone successfully implementing a new approach and truly believing in its benefits. In this case, I led the leadership Health Check and strongly believed in its effectiveness. Your level of motivation can greatly influence the impact you have. Conversely, if you approach it with doubts and a lack of conviction, others will notice.

Transforming a legacy organization to embrace product delight is a journey, not an overnight shift. By painting a compelling vision, starting small, addressing resistance, and reinforcing wins with data and storytelling, you can create a groundswell of change. Over time, delight will no longer be a model or initiative; it will become a mindset that drives sustainable business success.

Building Delight Culture with ADKAR

You're a leader and you want to build a delight culture in your organization; a great tool to help you with that is the awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement (ADKAR) model. The ADKAR model was developed by Jeff Hiatt, author of *ADKAR: A model for change in business, government and our community*.⁴⁸ The model was created based on research that analyzed what made organizational change successful and, more specifically, how individual change contributes to broader organizational transformation.

Awareness

Awareness is the first time you need to hear about the new concept. That in part is what this book is about when it comes to product delight. If you want to introduce product delight to your team, you need some way to bring knowledge of the idea to them. Talk about it and share information about it from books, podcasts, or presentations. Share success stories and stories about delightful products.

Desire

The second activity is increasing the desire to try it out. Think about how you can make product delight something that people are more interested in trying out. Encourage buy-in and show the impact delight can have on user retention as I mentioned earlier. Use examples from other industries that have managed to do it well.

Knowledge

The knowledge part is probably the hardest because this is where you need to train the team on the product delight model and show them how to use it. First, they're convinced it's a good idea, they have the desire to try it out, then they know how to do it.

48 Jeffery M. Hiatt, *ADKAR: A model for change in business, government and our community*, (Colorado: Prosci Research, 2006), <https://a.co/d/iU2mU5W>

Ability

The next to last piece of the model is ability, meaning that you need to give the team the power or they need to be empowered to implement product delight. Start creating habits that reinforce product delight, such as hosting regular events to discuss delight and identify delightful features. This could be a routine to check and see how your efforts are progressing. You need to give the team the space, the knowledge, and the time to practice and improve their ability to apply product delight.

Reinforcement

The last thing is the reinforcement, which is continuously measuring and celebrating some delight outcomes. Reinforcement is extremely important. Not because it comes last, but because if you stop reinforcing and measuring, it's gone.

This is something the leader has to do. They have to be able to reinforce product delight and continuously track its impact.

The Squad Health Check routine at Spotify was so great because we did it regularly. It's a habit. I'd even call it part of the culture. The need to run the Squad Health Check was never really up for discussion; it was simply part of the routine. Leadership consistently showed interest, and it was understood that it mattered to them. Whether the team felt like doing it or not, we knew someone was expecting those numbers, and that expectation kept it alive.

Impact on Work Culture

Now that we've looked at how to incorporate product delight into your culture, I think it's worth exploring some of the impacts that adopting product delight can have on your culture. Specifically, I've found adopting product delight encourages innovation and enhances employee morale.

Here are a couple of examples that explain how that works.

Innovation

When you embrace a product delight mindset, you naturally foster a culture of innovation within your company.

Focusing on delight drives teams to think creatively and deeply explore what truly matters to users, their motivations, desires, and hidden frustrations. This leads not just to functional solutions, but to experiences that are easier, faster, and more enjoyable for your customers.

Spotify exemplifies this approach through initiatives like hack days and hack weeks, which empower teams to experiment, play, and build delightful features outside the usual roadmap. These initiatives don't just spark innovation, they boost morale, increase engagement, and strengthen the emotional connection with users.

Innovation and differentiation go hand in hand. If you stick to doing the same thing, you risk becoming obsolete as competitors evolve. But when you continuously innovate, especially with a focus on delight, you carve out a competitive advantage that's hard to replicate.

Delight Motivates Your Product Teams

I once gave a delight workshop to all product managers at a well-established health tech company in France. Afterward, one of the heads of product shared feedback about an insight I hadn't covered: how working on product delight can boost team morale and motivation. It made me realize that delight isn't just for users; it energizes the team, too.

Delight fuels motivation in two ways: through external recognition and through the way of working that it fosters. When teams build delightful features, they often receive positive user feedback, tweets, mentions, and shoutouts. This kind of validation lights up the team. I remember at Google Meet, every time we launched a new background and someone shared it online, I'd show the team: *"Look! People love it!"* It wasn't just *my* moment, the *whole team* felt seen.

In contrast, not every team gets that kind of energy. In most product organizations, product managers are spread across different product areas. Some work on functional features, others on maintenance or technical debt, and a few on delight. Motivation often varies. Working on delight can feel more rewarding because of the emotional connection it creates with users.

But it's not just about feedback; it's also about the process. When you're building delight, your approach changes. You dive deeper into user

conversations, brainstorm more creatively, and explore emotional motivators, not just functional needs. That kind of collaboration strengthens team dynamics and makes the work more engaging.

So yes, delight delights users, but it also fuels the team behind the product.

Delight Impact on Community Building

While delight is often seen as a way to boost user satisfaction or product differentiation, there's another, less obvious benefit: it fuels community. When products create emotional connection, through joy, pride, surprise, or personalization, they do more than make users happy. They invite connection.

Delighted users want to share their experiences, connect with others, and become part of something bigger. This is how strong communities begin to organically form around products. Delightful features trigger emotional responses that create a sense of personal investment. When users feel connected to a product, they're more inclined to share it, talk about it, and interact with others who feel the same. This emotional glue holds communities together.

Delighted users don't just use the product, they root for it. They help others onboard, offer tips, and promote the product without being asked. Brian Chesky, co-founder and CEO of Airbnb, said, "It's better to have 100 people love you than a million people that just sort of like you." Delight encourages users to contribute more than just opinions, they offer ideas, co-create features, and provide input that makes the product stronger. These users become extensions of the product team, not just consumers.

Products that continue to delight over time keep users coming back and keep communities alive. As users stay engaged, they deepen their involvement, helping the community grow and evolve.

Slack delighted users by transforming workplace communication into something faster, more intuitive, and more human. Its real-time messaging, playful elements such as emoji reactions and Slackbot, and seamless integrations helped teams feel more connected and less constrained by traditional tools such as email.

Over time, this experience inspired a vibrant ecosystem of users and developers. Teams began sharing best practices, custom workflows, and creative

uses of Slack, from productivity tips to channel-naming conventions. Developers built thousands of integrations and apps, many of which now live in the Slack App Directory, extending Slack's value across a wide range of use cases.

While Slack's community isn't centralized around a single hub, it thrives across forums, developer platforms, and workplace communities. And much like the product itself, it reflects core values of transparency, flexibility, and connection, making Slack more than just a tool for communication; it's a catalyst for culture and collaboration.

The emotional impact of a delightful experience has a ripple effect: it strengthens engagement, invites participation, and builds communities that are essential for long-term growth. If you're looking to create more than just a product and build a movement, delight may be your most overlooked tool.

When to Introduce Product Delight

The final question to address in this chapter is, "When is the right time to invest in product delight?"

Timing matters. The impact of your efforts depends heavily on where your product sits in its lifecycle. If you're a startup, delight becomes a powerful lever for growth, but typically after you've achieved product-market fit. At that stage, it helps differentiate your product in a crowded market and fuels organic word of mouth.

That said, it's important not to wait too long. Introducing delight early—even in small, intentional ways—can shape your product's personality and start building your brand from day one. These early signals show users who you are, what you stand for, and why they should care. Even lightweight moments of delight can go a long way in creating emotional connection from the very beginning.

For larger, more established companies, the focus often shifts toward customer retention and lifetime value. In that context, delight helps deepen emotional loyalty, reinforce brand affinity, and reduce churn.

To better understand how delight plays a role across different stages, let's take a quick look at the six phases of the product lifecycle and explore when and why delight can be most impactful in each.

Development

In the development phase, your focus is on identifying the right problem to solve and designing a solution that's worth pursuing. While you're not actively building delightful features yet, this is the perfect moment to lay the emotional foundation.

It's essential to go beyond surface-level needs and explore your users' underlying functional and emotional motivators. These early insights will guide what you build but also how you build it, shaping the product's future personality and potential for delight. Even at this stage, thinking about how users *want to feel* is a powerful lens during discovery.

Introduction

In the introduction phase, your main goal is to validate that your product solves a real problem for a real audience. You're experimenting, iterating, and working toward product-market fit.

At this stage, it might feel premature to aim for exceptional delight, but even small, intentional touches can go a long way. Consider using delight sparingly to signal your brand's personality and build emotional connection early. A warm onboarding experience, a thoughtful message, or a well-crafted interaction can help users feel that there are humans behind the product, even if you're still figuring out what to ship next.

Growth

Once you've reached product-market fit and entered the growth phase, delight becomes a strategic asset. Now that your core offering is working, your focus shifts to scaling, increasing retention, and generating advocacy.

This is where product delight can shine the brightest. When executed well, it not only strengthens user loyalty but also fuels organic growth through word of mouth. Users don't just use the product; they *talk about* it, *share* it, and *stand by* it. Whether it's through emotionally resonant features, unexpected moments of joy, or small details that make a big difference, delight becomes a powerful engine for sustainable growth.

Maturity

When growth stabilizes and new customer acquisition begins to level off, your product enters the maturity phase. The focus shifts from expansion to retention, and delight becomes a tool for deepening long-term relationships.

At this stage, you should sustain and refresh the emotional connection you've already built. It's about consistency, polish, and continuously showing users that you care, through thoughtful updates, well-timed nudges, and subtle moments that remind them why they chose you in the first place.

In the maturity phase, maintaining delight is just as important as creating it. It's what keeps your product feeling alive, relevant, and emotionally resonant over time.

Decline

When demand for your product declines, both from existing and new customers, you're in the decline phase. Your focus here is deciding whether to pivot, revitalize, or sunset your product.

How to Make Product Delight a Habit

If you haven't been intentionally thinking about product delight, at least before reading this book, there often comes a clear moment when you begin enhancing features with delight in mind. But delight isn't something you start and stop. It shouldn't be treated as an add-on or a phase. Instead, it should be part of your product strategy from the start.

When I worked as a product leader, part of our product strategy included a set of guiding principles, pillars that defined how we built products. One of those pillars was delight. That meant every feature we shipped wasn't just about function or performance; it had to carry an element of delight. It wasn't a separate step in the process; it was a fundamental lens through which we evaluated every decision.

At first, building for delight takes conscious effort. But over time, it becomes second nature, part of your product mindset. Still, delight isn't a one-time win. You have to watch out for the habituation effect, the phenomenon

in which users become accustomed to a once-delightful element, causing its impact to fade. What once felt exciting, eventually becomes expected.

That's why delight requires ongoing attention. It must evolve and adapt, introducing fresh, emotionally engaging moments over time. Rather than relying on a single delightful feature, build a long-term strategy to infuse delight throughout the product experience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Delight Is a Cultural Mindset:** Building for delight isn't a one-off effort, it's a mindset that can become a lasting part of your product and company culture.
- **Leadership Drives the Culture:** Leaders play a key role in establishing a culture of delight by showing interest, promoting it actively, and embedding it into product conversations.
- **Change Starts Small:** Introducing delight (or any cultural shift) works best through pilot projects, storytelling from successful products, and frameworks such as ADKAR framework (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement) to support smooth adoption.
- **Delight Multiplies Impact:** Delight doesn't just uplift users; it energizes teams, strengthens product communities, and creates momentum across the organization.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Champion Delight at the Leadership Level:** If you're in a leadership role, start actively promoting delight, talk about it in team meetings, celebrate delightful moments in the product, and show that you value emotional connection as much as functional delivery.
- **Start with a Pilot:** Choose one small initiative or feature that you can intentionally design for delight. Use it as a low-risk experiment to demonstrate impact and build internal buy-in.
- **Inspire Through Stories:** Share real examples of successful products that used delight to stand out. Use these stories to influence internal stakeholders and show what's possible.
- **Organize a Team Book Club on *Product Delight*:** Start a book club around this book to spark discussion about emotional connection, user joy, and culture-building. This creates a shared language and collective inspiration across your team.

EXPERT PROFILE

Delight with Purpose



Michael McWatters

VP, Product Design at Warner Bros. Discovery

As Vice President of Product Design at Warner Brothers Discovery, Michael McWatters' unconventional origin story is essential to the way he thinks about the user experience for Max, one of the world's leading streaming platforms.

Soon after getting his masters degree in fine arts, Michael came to the disquieting realization that he didn't want to spend his life making objects for people to observe. He wanted to create experiences that were immersive, experiential, and purpose-driven.

He found work at a studio that created laser light displays for movies, rock concerts, and other special events. At the small studio, he touched every aspect of the creative process, including storyboarding, animation, coding, 3D rendering, and set design.

In the mid-'90s, the studio decided to launch its first website, and Michael saw an opportunity to merge his artistic sensibilities with his interest in technology. Teaching himself to code, he dove headfirst into this new medium. Despite its early limitations, Michael realized the web held the potential to inspire, inform, serve, and delight, all within the confines of a simple browser window.

Michael challenges the idea that delight in the context of product design is superficial, like sprinkles on a cake. Instead, he advocates for a deeper, more fundamental approach in which delight is woven into the very fabric of the user experience.

"Delight isn't an add-on," Michael explains. "It's not about clever marketing tactics or surface-level gimmicks. Delight happens when you

give people what they want or need as quickly and efficiently as possible. It exists on a context-dependent spectrum, from high utility to deep immersion.”

The quality of an experience, Michael argues, can be measured against three traits: it serves a purpose; it's easy to use; and it's enjoyable. Put simply, the traits are utility, usability, and joy. Product experiences that are simultaneously functional, reliable, and pleasurable are more likely to be perceived as delightful.

At Warner Brothers Discovery, Michael leads the Discovery and Engagement practice—a set of horizontal product design teams focused on content and brand expression, data-driven design, and UX writing. This unusual mix of disciplines reflects his belief that product teams should consider the many ways delight can be maximized at every point in the customer journey. It also reflects his belief that delight is as much about function as form, if not more so.

“Focusing on quick-hit, surface-level delight is one way to create a positive experience,” he notes. “But considering delight over time—by continuously creating a sense of value, meaning, trust, and pleasure—is a more sustainable way to run a business.” Pursuing delight through clever stunts, he argues, is like gorging on empty calories: immediate gratification with long-term regret.

To maintain a continuous and deeper sense of delight, Michael and his team look beyond their immediate peers and competitors for inspiration. They look to successful experiences in other industries such as e-commerce and social media, trying to identify similar underlying customer problems or opportunities, then adapting interesting solutions to their own work.

Michael's approach to product design shows that genuine delight isn't about adding superficial elements to an existing product. Instead, it's about creating experiences that blend functionality with pleasure, and blend utility with joy. His work at Warner Brothers Discovery demonstrates that this approach can be applied at scale, in a streaming product that attempts to add a sense of sustained delight to match the content itself.

As the digital landscape continues its rapid evolution, Michael's emphasis on meaningful delight over shallow, quick wins provides a framework for a more sustainable product strategy.

CHAPTER

13

Product Delight for All Products

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 13:

Whether B2C or B2B, delight is essential in every Business to Human (B2H) product.

Throughout this book, I've shared stories of product teams and companies that have successfully embraced product delight. One of the most common questions I receive is whether delight can be applied to *any* product, even those that aren't traditionally consumer-facing. My answer is always the same: if a product is used by a human, their emotions must be respected and honored. When talking about emotion, I don't draw a line between B2B and B2C because, in the end, we're all building for humans. That's why I advocate for a B2H (Business to Human) approach.

I like this quote "People don't buy products; they buy better versions of themselves." It means people are willing to pay for products that make them feel valued and help them become who they aspire to be. Whether it's feeling smarter, more confident, more organized, or more connected, great products tap into those emotional and identity-driven motivations. Even in B2B, users

choose tools that help them perform better, look competent, or feel in control. When you build with that in mind, you're not just selling a product; you're enabling transformation.

I've had the privilege of interviewing product leaders from B2B companies such as TSheets and Atlassian, as well as from deeply technical domains such as GitHub and Snowflake. In this chapter, I'll showcase real-world examples of how these companies have successfully integrated delight into their products.

Product Delight in Travel and Fintech: Revolut Case

When Revolut launched in 2015, it was built on one core principle: making international money management effortless. It began as a simple app that allowed users to exchange currency at real-time rates, removing the hidden fees and inconveniences of traditional banking.

What started as a currency exchange tool quickly grew into something much bigger. Revolut had uncovered a significant gap in banking: traditional institutions were failing international travelers, expatriates, and digital nomads.

Identifying the Main Personas and Motivators

Revolut focuses on users with global lifestyles such as travelers, expats, and remote workers. These users faced issues with traditional banks, so Revolut created solutions for them. Users needed real-time access to multiple currencies without high fees, seamless money transfers, financial security, budgeting tools, and smooth travel experiences.

This deep understanding of its audience set the foundation for Revolut's next phase: designing features that solve users' problems while connecting with users' emotions.

Deep Delight

While low delight features are expected and are often straightforward in banking products, building emotional connections is far more challenging. Here are some features that succeed in bridging both, delivering functional value while sparking genuine emotional resonance.

Revolut eSIM

Frequent travelers face the challenge of staying connected without dealing with physical SIM cards. Revolut solved this with Revolut eSIM, enabling users to activate mobile data instantly in the app without buying a local SIM card. Users can choose data packages based on their needs, to avoid unexpected charges. Connectivity management is now as easy as managing finances within the app.

Emotional Impact: A stress-free, seamless travel experience, ensuring that users stay connected without disruptions.

Smart Security

Revolut offers location-based security, instant card freezing/unfreezing, and virtual cards for online shopping to enhance security and prevent fraud.

Emotional Impact: Feeling protected and in control of finances, no matter where you are.

Vaults: A Smarter Way to Save

Saving money requires manual transfers between accounts. With Vaults, users can create savings goals and automate deposits, use round-up savings to save spare change, and share Vaults with friends or family for group savings.

Emotional Impact: A sense of accomplishment and financial security.

Investing in Surface Delight

Beyond functional features, Revolut also invested in elements of surface delight, smaller but impactful moments that make the product experience enjoyable and memorable.

- **Surprise Cashback Rewards:** Unexpected perks that reinforce positive emotional connections with the brand.
- **Airport Lounge Access and Travel Perks:** Lounge access for delayed flights, discounted hotel bookings, and travel insurance.
- **Welcome Home Message:** after an international trip, Revolut can detect once you're back and send a welcome notification.

Emotional Impact: Joy, exclusivity, and a sense of being rewarded.

Customer Delight in the Most Unlikely Place: A Fax Story

Let's be honest, when you think of delight in product design, fax software probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind.

But that's exactly the world Bernhard Hecker was working in. When I met him recently in Munich, he shared a story with me about how he brought genuine human connection and emotional resonance into one of the most boring and overlooked corners of tech.

Bernhard was the Chief Product Officer at Europe's largest cloud fax company for nearly two decades. One of their flagship products was a massive platform that allowed companies to connect a wide range of systems—SAP, email, APIs, and more—to send and receive faxes at scale across the globe. It's not exactly the stuff of viral feature launches or design awards.

The twist? Fax is still in heavy use in some industries, especially in insurance, healthcare, and even food delivery, because of legal, security, or reliability requirements. But here's the kicker: the people using the system day-to-day weren't the ones sending the faxes. The only user group the product team could talk to? Admins.

And here's the constraint that makes the story even more unusual: There was no end-user interface. Just an admin portal: minimal, functional, and deeply technical. That was the only place where they could even try to make a difference.

And these admins were in a tough spot. They were rarely appreciated, not the stars of their companies, and certainly not the people proudly talking about their work at dinner parties. Their job was to make the system work quietly, efficiently and invisibly.

But Bernhard and his team saw something others didn't: an opportunity to delight.

They decided to bet on the admin. They asked these questions:

- Who are these people?
- What matters to them?
- What makes them feel seen, respected, and empowered?

And they acted on it.

- They shared everything (except confidential info).
- They taught them how the system worked from the inside.
- They spoke to them like humans, not just “system operators.”
- They recognized their expertise.
They even shared technical details that didn’t offer immediate value, but built trust and gave admins a rare sense of understanding how things worked under the hood.

And something powerful happened. These admins, once overlooked and underappreciated, began to take pride in their work. They became experts, advocates, and loyal users. And when they moved to other companies, they brought the platform with them.

It wasn’t a flashy strategy. It didn’t rely on end-user feedback or UI magic. It was a quiet revolution of respect and emotional connection.

And that’s when Bernhard shared the mantra he’s carried with him for more than 15 years:

In every single release, we include at least one feature tagged ‘customer delight.’

Delight, he told me, doesn’t always mean something big or showy.

It means including something: *anything* that makes a user smile or feel excited.

Even if that user is a fax admin.

Even if no one else ever sees it.

That, to me, is the essence of great product thinking. Not chasing headlines. But creating small, intentional moments of joy, even in the most unexpected places.

Delight in a Time Tracking Tool

I interviewed Jen Benz, former Group Product Manager at TSheets, a time tracking tool later acquired by Intuit. Jen and her team faced a tough challenge: How do you make something as tedious as clocking in and out enjoyable?

“Nobody wants to do time tracking,” Jen explained. “They want the outcome, running payroll or invoicing customers, but not the process itself.” This insight led to a key lesson: when users don’t love the task they’re doing, delight becomes even more crucial.

To make the experience less painful, TSheets added fun. Instead of the dry “You forgot to clock out” reminders, users received playful messages joking about *record-breaking work shifts*. These small, witty touches didn’t change the task itself, but made the experience feel more human. The result? Higher engagement and reduced friction, not because users suddenly enjoyed time tracking, but because it became just a little more fun and less frustrating.

Delight in Retail: An IKEA Personal Example

Delighting users is a principle that applies to all types of products; not just digital products, but also e-commerce and retail experiences. I previously shared the example of Amazon’s return process, which turns a potentially frustrating moment into a delightful moment by occasionally refunding the customer while letting them keep the item they intended to return.

Another unexpected moment of delight happened to me during a shopping trip at IKEA, the global home furnishings retailer.

I’ve always appreciated IKEA for its convenience, affordability, and simple designs. A few months ago, I needed a new kitchen countertop. I rented a van, bought two large countertops, and unloaded them at home, feeling productive and ready to move forward.

But when the installer arrived a few days later, he told me we had bought the wrong model.

You can imagine the frustration. The countertops were heavy, the van was gone, and we were suddenly stuck.

The one small comfort was IKEA's generous 6-month return policy. Still, the thought of renting another van and hauling them back felt like too much.

We procrastinated. Weeks passed.

Then, just two weeks before the return deadline, I checked IKEA's website, and found a delightful surprise: they offer at-home pickup for returns. You schedule online, and someone comes to your door to collect the items. Relief washed over me. No van, no hassle, just a simple, thoughtful solution.

Why does IKEA offer this? Because they understand real life. Mistakes happen, schedules get hectic, and returning large items isn't easy. This service didn't just solve a logistic problem; it delivered lasting emotional relief. It's the kind of experience that will resurface every time I consider buying home furniture and start to worry about the steps involved.

A B2B Case: A Look at Atlassian's Latest Features

In October 2024, while I was working on this book, Atlassian introduced their latest Jira update.⁴⁹ The update introduced a range of features designed to enhance usability, boost productivity, and bring a touch of delight to teams' daily workflows.

But what makes a feature truly delightful, and how do the latest Jira updates measure up? I thought I'd explore Atlassian's new features and categorize their impact on user experience as low delight, surface delight, or deep delight.

Low Delight Features: Functional Necessities

Low Delight refers to features that meet essential functional needs with no elements of surprise, emotional resonance, or exceptional experience that characterize delight.

Low delight features are necessary for usability and reliability, but they don't create an emotional connection or deeply engage users. They're essential for a balanced product roadmap, serving practical purposes while leaving room to focus on deeper, more emotionally engaging features elsewhere in the product.

49 Dave Meyer, "The *new* Jira is here," Atlassian, Products & News, October 18, 2024, <https://www.atlassian.com/blog/announcements/the-new-jira>

Custom Project Templates: Introducing reusable custom project templates primarily supports consistency and efficiency across teams, making it a straightforward, helpful feature that makes workflows more manageable but doesn't carry a strong emotional connection.

Flexible Terminology: The new customizable work terminology feature in Jira allows teams to redefine how they label work items, offering options beyond "issues" to terms such as "task" or "launch." This functionality primarily addresses a practical need, enhancing Jira's adaptability to diverse workflows. While it significantly improves usability and team alignment, it remains a low delight feature. It's a reliable, user-friendly enhancement that meets functional requirements effectively but doesn't introduce a strong emotive appeal.

Surface Delight Features: A Little Extra Spark

Surface delight features add a thoughtful "extra touch" that, while not essential, reminds users the product is human-centered.

These features closely tie into users' emotional needs, fostering trust and making the product feel more personable. Without them, as is often the case with many MVPs, a product may be usable, reliable, and functional, yet lack a "soul," missing the emotional connection that resonates with users.

Enhanced Personalization: Background colors, card covers, and confetti animations bring a playful and visually pleasing element to Jira. These customization options allow teams to express themselves, fostering a sense of fun and individuality. While this doesn't change how teams work, it makes Jira feel more personal and engaging, adding a touch of joy to daily project management tasks.

Deep Delight Features: Functional Meets Emotional

Deep delight features cater to the user's practical needs and their desire for a meaningful experience. They're features that solve problems, while also engaging users on a deeper, more emotional level.

Here are a few of the new Jira features that fall into this category:

Customizable Navigation: Jira's new sidebar customization allows users to reorder, pin, or hide items to better align with their unique workflows. This feature solves a functional need by making navigation easier and quicker, while also delivering a sense of ownership and autonomy, making navigation in Jira not only practical but personally resonant.

AI-Powered Features: Atlassian Intelligence brings smart automation to the table, allowing users to create work items from Confluence pages or Slack messages, and automatically break down tasks. AI-driven search and task recommendations streamline workflows, saving users time and mental effort. Beyond practicality, there's a touch of excitement here, as AI feels innovative and futuristic, adding an element of surprise and delight in helping teams achieve their goals.

Integrated Goal Tracking: The new Goals feature offers teams a way to set, track, and view objectives directly within Jira. This transparency keeps everyone aligned and fosters a shared sense of purpose, helping team members see how their work fits into larger objectives. Functionally, it's useful for tracking milestones; emotionally, it builds a sense of achievement and purpose.

Categorizing Delight in the Delight Grid

Now that I've described each feature individually, I thought it would be instructive to categorize them in the delight grid (Figure 29) as I've discussed throughout the book.

Remember that one reason to categorize new features in terms of delight is to make sure that you're addressing your user's emotional needs and functional needs.

	No Emotional Motivator	Sense of Control	Self-Expression	Excitement	Sense of Purpose
No Functional Motivator			Enhanced Personalization		
Simplify Navigation		Customizable Navigation			
Improve Workflows	Custom Templates				Goal Tracking
	Flexible Terminology				
Task Creation Automation				AI Powered Features	

Figure 29: Delight grid for the new Jira features⁵⁰

Features such as customizable navigation, integrated goal tracking, and AI-powered assistance, transform Jira into a tool that feels genuinely aligned with the user’s needs, as a functional product but also as an enabler of their success.

Low delight features aren’t undesirable; they’re often critical for solving core user needs effectively. However, they don’t contribute to an emotional or memorable experience. These features are crucial for a balanced product roadmap, addressing practical needs while allowing space to prioritize more emotionally engaging features in other areas of the product.

50 Dave Meyer, “The *new* Jira is here,” Atlassian, Products & News, October 18, 2024, <https://www.atlassian.com/blog/announcements/the-new-jira>

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Delight Is Universal:** Product delight applies across all types of products, industries, and use cases.
- **Yes, Even in B2B and Hardware:** Delight isn't limited to consumer apps. Successful examples exist in B2B, hardware, and tech-heavy environments.
- **B2H Mindset:** Think beyond business labels and build for Business to Human (B2H), in which honoring users' emotions becomes a core product principle.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Shift to a B2H Mindset:** Start treating every user as a human first with emotional needs. Reflect on this in your team conversations, user research, and product decisions.
- **Find a Delight Case in Your Industry:** Research an example of delight in a similar space (e.g., a hardware or B2B product) to inspire your team and show that it's possible.
- **Audit for Emotional Gaps:** Review your current product and identify moments in which user emotions are ignored or missed, and look for opportunities to add delight, ease, or surprise.
- **Run a Small Delight Experiment:** Choose one existing feature and brainstorm how to make it emotionally resonant; try adding a human touch, surprise element, or moment of recognition in your next sprint.

EXPERT PROFILE

Product Delight Comes from Making Your User Feel Like a Superhero



John Saito

*Product Design at Snowflake, formerly at
Dropbox, Google*

I first came across John Saito through his thoughtful articles and opinionated blogs, particularly on delight in design. His writing challenged conventional wisdom, making me eager to dive deeper into his thinking. When I had the chance to interview him, I wanted to explore his views on delight, but also how his journey across tech giants such as Snowflake, Dropbox, and Google shaped his philosophy on designing meaningful user experiences.

One particular article that caught my attention was “The magic of microcopy,”⁵¹ in which John highlights how small bits of text, such as button labels, error messages, and hints, can significantly enhance user experience. He believes that microcopy humanizes digital interactions, builds user confidence, and adds delightful surprises, making products feel more intuitive and enjoyable. We discussed how these seemingly minor details, when crafted with care, can fundamentally shape how users engage with a product.

John also makes a crucial distinction between surface-level delight and what he calls “superhero moments.” While many designers focus on animations, confetti, and playful elements, John argues that true delight comes from empowering users to accomplish their goals effortlessly. “As a product designer,” he explained, “I want to make the user feel like a superhero.”

This thinking is deeply ingrained in his work at Snowflake, a cloud-based data platform, where his team follows guiding principles such as “Give users

51 John Saito, “The magic of microcopy,” Medium, March 2, 2017, <https://uxdesign.cc/the-magic-of-microcopy-a56c5decbe1f>

superpowers” and “No seams” to create effortless experiences. He pointed to keyboard shortcuts as a great example, small design choices that significantly enhance efficiency and make users feel more powerful.

John’s time at Dropbox, a leading cloud storage and file-sharing service, further shaped this perspective. Unlike entertainment-focused products, Dropbox prioritized productivity, in which delight isn’t about fun but about removing friction and making users feel capable. The company even had a core value called “Cupcake,” representing delight in design. This encouraged teams to push creative boundaries, leading to distinctive elements such as playful illustrations that helped Dropbox stand out. The term “Cupcake” itself was intentionally ambiguous, serving as a metaphor for positive, enjoyable user experiences.

However, John doesn’t just advocate for delightful design, he emphasizes the importance of doing it right. We discussed his article “The dangers of delightful design,”⁵² in which he warns that delight should never interfere with usability, or it risks frustrating users rather than enhancing their experiences. During the interview, he also shared an example from Google Maps, in which sad emojis were used for traffic notifications. While the feature was intended to add personality, it increased user frustration in already stressful situations.

John also cautions against injecting humor or personality into productivity tools. What seems charming at first can quickly become irritating when encountered repeatedly throughout a workday. Instead, he advocates for invisible delight, the kind that manifests through thoughtful design choices rather than obvious flourishes. He believes that the best implementations of delight often go unnoticed because they feel natural and intuitive. *It’s not about flashy moments; it’s about crafting experiences that make users feel more capable and efficient.*

One of my favorite parts of our conversation was exploring how to measure the impact of delight, something notoriously difficult to quantify. John suggests looking at indicators such as the absence of negative feedback, CSAT

52 John Saito, “The dangers of delightful design: How delightful details can get you into trouble,” Medium, November 20, 2016, <https://uxdesign.cc/the-dangers-of-delightful-design-bb5834a1b684>

and NPS scores, qualitative user insights, and usage patterns. While individual delightful elements may not always have direct metrics, they contribute to overall user satisfaction and brand reputation.

John's perspective is a powerful reminder that lasting delight isn't about adding fun for the sake of it. It's about deeply understanding user needs, and designing solutions that empower those users. His experience reinforces that truly delightful products aren't built through flashy features or forced personality, but through careful consideration of how every design choice enhances a user's ability to achieve their goals efficiently and effortlessly.

EXPERT PROFILE

Achieving Delight by Removing Friction



Axel Sooriah

Product Management Evangelist at Atlassian

With more than 12 years in product management, Axel Sooriah's journey from a small startup to a global tech leader offers deep insights into how delight takes shape in consumer software and enterprise software. With Axel, I got the opportunity to dig deep into his perception of delight.

For Axel, delight stems from two key forces: removing pain points and crafting exceptional user experiences. His early days running a digital communications agency, just before the iPhone's launch, gave him a front-row seat to how technological shifts create opportunities for unexpected delight. Later, as employee number one at a B2B SaaS startup, he realized that delight isn't just about flashy features. In the business world, true delight often comes from eliminating frustration. "Sometimes, delight is the absence of pain," he explains, emphasizing that solving a major problem can bring users a profound sense of relief.

This perspective deepened when he led the mobile platform team at Barclays, one of the UK's largest banks. In banking, where processes are notoriously complex, he saw firsthand how simplifying workflows could completely change user perception. He points to modern FinTech apps, such as the commission-free stock trading platform Robinhood, as prime examples of turning something traditionally frustrating, such as opening an account, into a smooth and even enjoyable experience.

Axel believes that products act as bridges between emotional states. Users are constantly moving through emotions, and the best products guide them from frustration to ease, from confusion to clarity. This emotional lens applies just as much to his current work at Atlassian, the Australian software

company behind widely used collaboration tools such as Jira, Confluence, and Trello. Developer tools may seem purely functional, but they carry emotional weight. A disrupted workflow causes frustration, while seamless collaboration brings satisfaction. Recognizing these emotional undercurrents leads to more thoughtful, user-centered improvements.

One standout example is Atlassian's View Publishing feature in Jira Product Discovery, a tool designed to help product teams prioritize and communicate their roadmaps. Product managers frequently struggle when leadership requests last-minute roadmap updates. Teams scramble to compile slides, only for the information to become outdated the moment it's presented. This cycle wastes time and adds unnecessary stress.

View Publishing solved this by allowing teams to create and share a live, automatically updated, version of their roadmap. Instead of spending hours on static slides, they can provide leadership with a real-time, accurate view of ongoing projects. The impact was immediate. Users who once dreaded these requests found the burden lifted. Many described it as a game-changer, with one remarking, "Where was this all my life?"

I loved this example, especially because I have a personal connection with Jira. I used it for more than eight years in my product role at Spotify and Skype. And, while I never felt a particular sense of delight while using it, its absence made me realize its true impact. Not having Jira anymore created significant friction, and that's when it hit me: I had been experiencing delight not through excitement, but through the absence of pain.

Axel's approach to product delight follows a clear philosophy: meet users where they are, understand their emotional journey, and focus on experiences that transform frustration into ease. Whether building consumer apps or enterprise software, the core principle remains the same: great products don't just solve problems; they improve lives.

As technology advances, Axel reminds us that products must go beyond pure function, they must connect with human emotions. The most successful products aren't just efficient; they create experiences that make users feel understood, empowered, and even joyful. This is the essence of true product delight: not just meeting expectations, but exceeding them in ways that resonate on practical and emotional levels.

CHAPTER

14

Integrating the Delight Model with Other Frameworks

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 14:

*Product delight model doesn't replace best practices;
it enhances them.*

While creating the product delight model, I was obsessed with two main principles. First, its global applicability; it needed to work across all types of products. Second, its seamless integration; it had to complement existing frameworks and best practices, not replace them.

It's important to understand that product delight isn't meant to be a standalone product development playbook. Instead, it's designed to work in harmony with other powerful techniques you're likely already using.

In this chapter, I'll show you how product delight can be combined effectively with three widely adopted methods: opportunity solution trees, impact mapping, and story mapping.

Adopting the product delight model isn't an either/or decision; it's a *both-and* approach.

Opportunity Solution Tree with the Delight Mindset: Spotify Case Study

Teresa Torres created the opportunity solution tree (OST)⁵³ to help product teams visualize their options for reaching a desired outcome. This technique is a powerful way to track how you meet users’ needs.

To identify and prioritize solutions that address functional needs and emotional needs, you can supplement the OST with the delight grid.

Teresa Torres emphasizes the importance of aligning user needs with your desired business outcomes.

Let’s consider this business goal as an example.

Business Goal: Increase user satisfaction and engagement.

Identifying Motivators

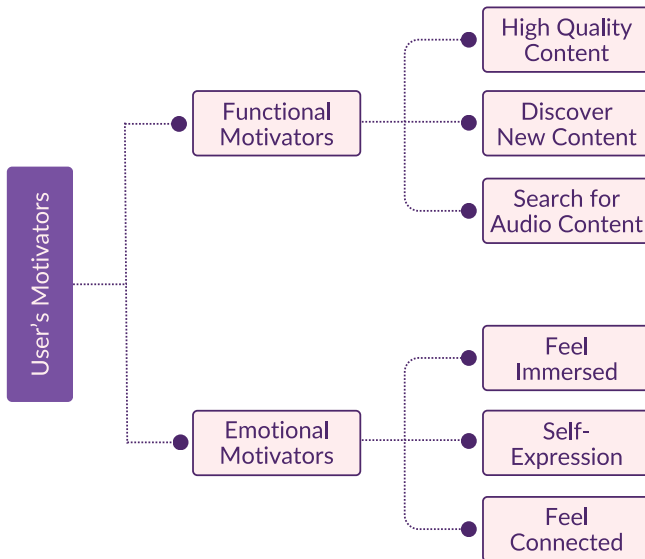


Figure 30: Simplified Spotify motivators map

53 Teresa Torres, “Opportunity Solution Trees: Visualize Your Discovery to Stay Aligned and Drive Outcomes,” Product Talk, March 1, 2025, <https://www.producttalk.org/2023/12/opportunity-solution-trees/>

Spotify users are driven by a combination of functional and emotional motivators. In Chapter 4, I introduced a simplified list of functional motivators and emotional motivators that drive user engagement with Spotify (Figure 30).

On a functional level, users may turn to Spotify to do the following:

- **Enjoy high-quality audio**, ensuring a seamless and immersive listening experience.
- **Discover new content**, exploring fresh music, podcasts, and personalized recommendations.
- **Search for audio content**, quickly finding specific tracks, albums, or episodes.

On an emotional level, users may seek to experience the following:

- **Feel immersed**, using music to enhance their mood, focus, or relaxation.
- **Express themselves**, curating playlists and listening choices as a reflection of their identity.
- **Feel connected**, engaging with shared music experiences.

Converting Motivators into Opportunities

The second step of the product delight model is to turn the motivators into product opportunities.

Let's consider the following product opportunities:

- Provide the best audio quality that resonates with users.
- Foster connection and identity expression.

The next step is to define solutions that could take advantage of those opportunities.

Opportunities and Solutions Using OST

Spotify can identify opportunities by addressing these motivators and aligning them with business goals (Figure 31).

Opportunity	Solutions
Provide the best audio quality that resonates with users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized playlists such as Discover Weekly • Search by lyrics • Audio normalization
Foster connection and identity expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative playlist creation • Spotify wrapped to showcase individual listening habits • Spotify Canvas

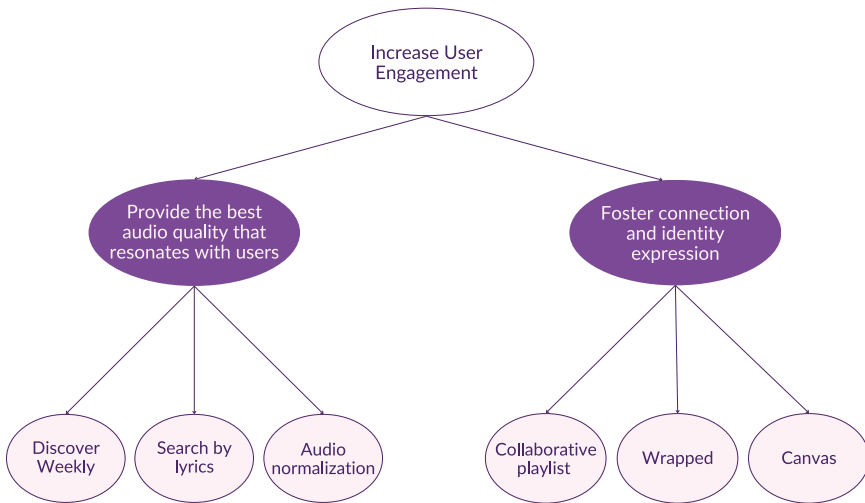


Figure 31: OST for the Spotify case study

Categorization Using the Delight Grid

Once a Spotify product team identifies and lists opportunities and solutions, they can map those solutions onto the delight grid to evaluate their impact on functional motivators and emotional motivators (Figure 32).

When placed in the delight grid, we see how each feature aligns with functional motivators or/and emotional motivators. This categorization highlights the type of delight each feature has, but also ensures that every solution we build is deeply connected to real user needs, whether functional or emotional.

	No Emotional Motivator	Feel Immersion	Self-Expression	Feel Connected
No Functional Motivator			Canvas	Wrapped
High Quality Content	Normalization			
Discover New Content			Discover Weekly	Collaborative playlist
Search for Audio Content	Search by lyrics			

Figure 32: Delight grid applied to the Spotify case

Low Delight

These features improve efficiency and performance, making the product more convenient but without a strong emotional component.

- **Audio Normalization:** crucial for listening comfort and enjoying high audio quality, but doesn't evoke a strong emotional response
- **Search by Lyrics:** makes music search easier and more intuitive, but remains a functional feature rather than an emotionally engaging experience

Surface Delight

These features introduce fun and unexpected elements, creating momentary joy but not necessarily fostering deep, lasting emotional connections.

- **Canvas:** These are short looping videos that appear in the playing view and turns any track into an immersive experience. Canvas Creates a visual identity for artists and fosters auditory synergy with fans, transforming music into an interactive experience rather than mere background noise. This feature is closely linked to the desire for immersion and self-expression.

- **Spotify Wrapped:** This feature creates excitement and fosters self-expression by helping users validate their tastes and choices. It also allows them to feel connected by sharing these insights with their communities.

Deep Delight

These features go beyond user expectations, fostering long-term emotional connections and shaping listening habits.

- **Discover Weekly:** This is a personalized playlist that introduces users to new music every week, making them feel understood and excited about discovery. The playlists are personalized to foster a sense of self-expression.
- **Collaborative Playlist:** This social listening experience allows users to share and contribute to a collaborative playlist. This taps into emotional motivators such as connection and shared experiences, strengthening engagement through community-driven delight.

This case study shows how combining functional motivators and emotional motivators with frameworks such as the OST and the delight grid leads to truly lovable products.

From Opportunities to Delight

By combining the OST with the product delight model, product teams can seamlessly transition from identifying opportunities to creating solutions that deliver functional value and emotional impact.

You can use this integrated approach to ensure alignment with business goals and maximize the potential for delight, fostering deeper connections with users.

Impact Mapping with the Delight Mindset: Google Meet Case Study

Creating products that achieve business goals while delivering delight is key to building loyalty and advocacy. Product teams can ensure they align with

business objectives and address functional and emotional user motivators by combining impact mapping⁵⁴ and product delight.

Impact mapping, popularized by Gojko Adzic,⁵⁵ is a variant of the InUse effect mapping method, introduced by Mijo Balic and Ingrid Domingues. Impact mapping is a strategic planning technique that helps teams align their work with business goals by visualizing the impact of different initiatives. It's particularly useful in product development, strategy planning, and decision-making, ensuring that teams focus on delivering measurable value rather than just building features.

In this section, I explain how you can use these techniques together to identify opportunities, craft impactful solutions, and deliver delightful experiences, using a theoretical Google Meet case study.

Goal: Define the Business Objective

The first step in impact mapping is to define the overarching business goal. Let's use Google Meet as a theoretical example to illustrate how this framework can be applied more broadly to video conferencing platforms.

Business Goal: Improve user interactions during video conference calls.

While we use Google Meet as a reference, this framework applies to any virtual meeting platform, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Webex.

Actors and Uncovering Motivators

Once the business goal is set, the next step is to identify the actors, and the people who can help achieve or obstruct this goal. In impact mapping, these individuals or groups play a critical role in shaping outcomes. For Google Meet, key actors may include the following:

- **Remote workers**
- **Educators and students**
- **Executives and decision-makers**

54 The Impact Mapping website has lots of information about the process and how it benefits product design teams, <https://www.impactmapping.org/>

55 Gojko Adzic, "From Bugs to BEAM: Mining the gray area between bugs and features for product opportunities," <https://gojko.net/>

Users engage with these products to achieve specific goals, but understanding why they engage, beyond just their tasks, can unlock new opportunities for driving long-term engagement and satisfaction.

Functional motivators address the practical needs that drive engagement, while emotional motivators uncover how users want to feel while interacting with a product. These motivators become the foundation for defining impactful solutions.

Remote Workers

- **Functional Motivators:** Conduct seamless virtual meetings, and effortlessly share presentations
- **Emotional Motivators:** Feel confident and professional during calls, and reduce stress from technical issues

Educators and Students

- **Functional Motivators:** Enable interactive virtual classes, and facilitate easy resource sharing
- **Emotional Motivators:** Feel connected to the learning environment, and avoid isolation

Executives and Decision-Makers

- **Functional Motivators:** Make informed decisions, and collaborate efficiently
- **Emotional Motivators:** Feel empowered and in control during meetings

From Motivators to Impact

Traditional impact mapping asks the following questions:

- How should the actors' behavior change to achieve the goal?
- What actions can help or hinder success?

By integrating motivators into this process, we go deeper:

- How can we enhance these motivators to drive the desired impact?
- Which features or experiences reinforce functional motivators and emotional motivators?

This approach ensures that the impacts we define are not just logical, but emotionally resonant, leading to greater engagement and retention.

Example: Mapping Motivators to Impact

Using our identified motivators, we define the *desired impacts* that align with functional needs and emotional needs:

Remote Workers

Functional Motivators: Conduct seamless virtual meetings, and share presentations effortlessly

Impact 1: Less reported technical issues (audio lag, dropped connections)

Emotional Motivators: Feel confident and professional during calls, and reduce stress from technical issues

Impact 2: More users with cameras and mics on

Educators and Students

Functional Motivators: Enable interactive virtual classes, and facilitate easy resource sharing

Impact 3: Increase participation (measured by poll responses, and chat activity)

Emotional Motivators: Feel connected to the learning environment, and avoid isolation

Impact 4: Reduce early dropouts

Executives and Decision-Makers

Functional Motivators: Make informed decisions, and collaborate efficiently

Emotional Motivators: Feel empowered and in control during meetings, project authority, and leadership

Impact 5: More decisions finalized during meetings

Visualizing the Impact Map

After listing the desired impacts, the next step is to define potential deliverables that could enhance the product to achieve those impacts (Figure 33). For each impact, multiple deliverables may be possible, and a single deliverable can contribute to achieving multiple impacts.

Impact Map for Google Meet

Goal: Improve user interactions during video calls

■ **Actors and Impacts**

- **Remote Workers:**
 - Reduce user-reported technical issues.
 - Increase the number of users who turn on their cameras and mics.
- **Educators and Students:**
 - Increase student participation.
 - Reduce early dropouts.
- **Executives and Decision-Makers:**
 - Increase meeting decisions.

■ **Deliverables**

- **Echo Cancellation:** Automatically removes audio feedback and echoes to ensure clear, distraction-free conversations
- **Connectivity Status:** Shows real-time network quality indicators to help users identify and troubleshoot connection issues
- **Animated Reactions:** Lets participants express themselves with fun, on-screen emoji animations during meetings
Breakout Rooms: Allows meeting hosts to split participants into smaller groups for focused discussions or activities
- **AI Meeting Agenda Assistant:** Uses AI to suggest, organize, and manage meeting agendas based on previous conversations and calendar context.

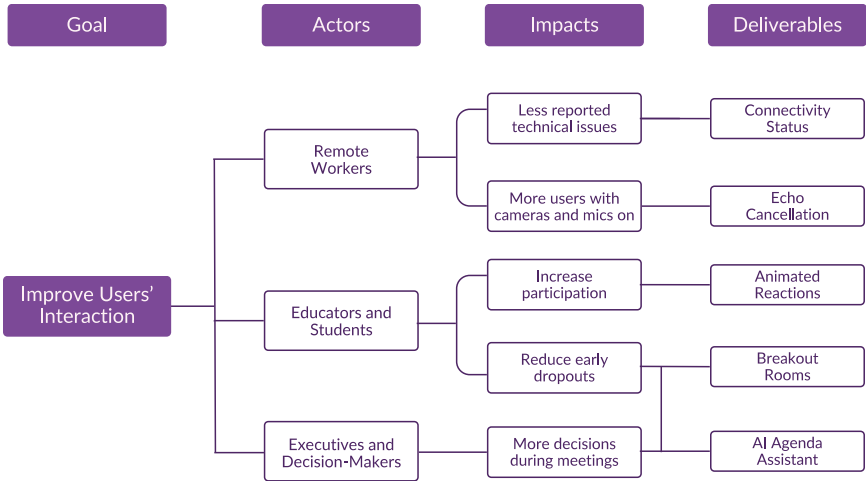


Figure 33: Impact map for the Meet case study

Deliverables and Categorization

The idea is to place all potential solutions within the delight grid (Figure 34). The solutions are placed within the grid based on which need(s) they address.

	No Emotional Motivator	Feel Confident	Feel Empowered	Feel Connected
No Functional Motivator				Animated Reactions
Increase Productivity	Connectivity Status	Echo Cancellation		
Create Interactive Virtual Sessions				Breakout Rooms
Make Informed Decisions			AI Agenda Assistant	

Figure 34: Delight grid for the Meet case study

Low Delight

- **Connectivity Status:** Improved productivity is achieved through clear information about connectivity status, aiding in troubleshooting connectivity issues.

Surface Delight

- **Animated Reactions:** Don't provide a functional improvement, but help users feel more present and connected

Deep Delight

- **Echo Cancellation:** Enhance productivity and boost user confidence with clear, echo-free audio.
- **AI Agenda Assistant:** Empower users to make informed decisions with smart, context-aware agenda suggestions.
- **Breakout Rooms:** Create interactive virtual spaces that foster collaboration and a sense of connection.

To improve the delight grid, start by focusing on low delight features that meet functional needs but lack emotional engagement. Transform these solutions into experiences that create an emotional connection. By combining the delight grid with impact mapping, you can develop products that provide strategic impact and emotional connection in a structured manner.

User Story Mapping with the Delight Mindset

Creating delightful products isn't a one-time effort. It's an iterative process that involves continuously identifying, building, and refining features that evoke positive emotions and exceed user expectations.

The combination of the user story mapping framework with the product delight model provides a powerful method of achieving this goal by ensuring that every release delivers a mix of functional and emotional features.

Here I explore how to generate delight iteratively and combine story mapping with the product delight model.

The Basics of User Story Mapping

User story mapping is a technique introduced by Jeff Patton⁵⁶ to visualize the user’s journey through a product. It helps teams break down a product into activities, tasks, and steps, identifying what users need to achieve their goals.

This framework favors iterative releases (Figure 35), ensuring that teams deliver value progressively.

These are the major parts of a user story map:

- **Activities** represent high-level user goals.
- **Tasks** are the major actions users take to achieve these goals.
- **Features** represent actions within each task.

Build the map vertically (by activities and tasks) and horizontally (by release stages), showing how the product evolves over time.



Figure 35: Release structure in a story mapping exercise

Combining User Story Mapping and the Delight Mindset

The delight mindset is about creating features that go beyond solving basic functional needs to provide delightful experiences. A balanced product roadmap

56 “User Story Mapping: Story mapping is a better way to work with Agile user stories,” Jeff Patton & Associates, n.d., <https://jpattonassociates.com/story-mapping/>

should aim to combine all three levels of delight in each release, progressively moving from low delight to more sophisticated surface and deep delight.

Combining user story mapping with the delight mindset means ensuring that each release includes a mix of low, surface, and deep delight features across the product's journey.

Here's how the combination works:

- **Vertically:** For each step in the user's journey, consider how to have various types of delight among the related features.
- **Horizontally:** Across each release, aim to balance the three types of delight features.

The first release will naturally focus on low delight features to cover core functionality. Subsequent releases should progressively introduce surface and deep delight features, creating a more delightful experience.

Post-Release Feedback and Iteration

After each release, it's essential to gather user feedback and iterate on the product to ensure a balance of delight types. The product team should ask the following questions:

- How did users interact with the proposed features?
- Are we providing enough emotional connection through surface delight?
- Are users surprised and delighted by the new features?

This continuous feedback loop ensures that each iteration not only improves functionality but also enhances the emotional experience for users.

Progressively Enhance Functional and Emotional User Experience

By combining user story mapping with the delight mindset, product teams can ensure that each release progressively enhances functional and emotional user experiences. This approach fosters the creation of MDPs that evolve to deliver a well-rounded, delightful experience at every stage of the user journey.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND SHAREABLE INSIGHTS

- **Integration-Ready:** The product delight model can seamlessly integrate with existing, widely used product frameworks.
- **OST Compatibility:** When applied with the OST, the product delight model helps map directly to business goals while identifying opportunities that solve problems and delight users.
- **Delight Grid + Impact Mapping = Structure + Emotion:** Integrating the delight grid into impact mapping provides a structured way to build products that balance emotional connection with business strategy.
- **Ongoing Effort:** Creating delightful products isn't a one-time task, it's an ongoing, iterative process of identifying, building, and refining emotionally resonant features.
- **User Story Mapping Alignment:** Pairing the product delight model with user story mapping ensures that every product release includes a thoughtful mix of functional and emotional features over time.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Integrate Delight into Your Workflow:** Embed delight considerations within your existing product discovery and delivery practices to ensure natural and seamless adoption across teams.
- **Balance Function and Emotion in Every Release:** Use the product delight model alongside your preferred product frameworks to intentionally craft releases that deliver functional value and emotional impact.
- **Make Delight an Ongoing Practice:** Treat delight as an iterative process; continuously identify, design, test, and refine features that spark positive emotions and exceed user expectations.

EXPERT PROFILE

Emotional Marketing and Connection



Adrienne Kmetz

Marketing and Content Advisor

When I began writing this book, I recognized that emotional connection was already a well-established concept in marketing. Leading companies such as Coca-Cola and Apple have long leveraged emotional marketing to build powerful brand relationships. Given its significance, I wanted to explore how these marketing principles align with the way I introduce emotional connection in product development.

To gain deeper insight, I spoke with Adrienne Kmetz—a Content and SEO Advisor with extensive experience in marketing—having held leadership roles from Head to VP of Marketing in B2B and B2C companies. Adrienne is deeply committed to user happiness and has written extensively about what makes a product truly successful.

She highlights a critical insight: users rarely make purely rational decisions based on side-by-side product comparisons. Instead, their connection to a product stems from practical satisfaction and personal identification with the brand. This is why companies such as Apple foster deep emotional bonds without explicitly focusing on value-based messaging; they create space for users to see themselves reflected in the brand.

Her definition of emotional connection builds on this idea. Emotional connection occurs when customers trust a brand enough to continue using it without constantly weighing alternatives, leading to satisfaction that evolves into brand loyalty. At its strongest, this loyalty turns the product into an extension of the user's identity, making future purchasing decisions almost automatic.

Adrienne's diverse experience, spanning B2B and B2C products, has given her a unique perspective on how different products cultivate emotional

connections. In B2C, companies can often directly tap into user needs and emotions; whereas, in B2B SaaS, corporate structures tend to create layers of abstraction that obscure true user value.

She believes many B2B products could better serve their users by focusing on fundamental value creation rather than layering on derivative features or unnecessary complexity. Emotional connection, she argues, can't be artificially engineered through flashy features or complex strategies. It happens naturally when users feel they're getting their money's worth and that the product is solving their problems effectively. This challenges the common industry approach of prioritizing surface-level engagement tactics over core value delivery.

One of Adrienne's articles that stood out to me was about defining customer happiness.⁵⁷ She explains that customer happiness goes beyond satisfaction, encompassing the overall enjoyment and value a user derives from a product or service. It plays a crucial role in retention, brand reputation, and long-term business success. Businesses typically measure it using CSAT, NPS, and customer effort scores. Actively tracking and improving these metrics fosters stronger customer loyalty and drives positive word of mouth, reinforcing the emotional connection between users and the product.

57 Adrienne Kmetz, "Defining customer happiness: What it is and how to measure it," Paylole, December 8, 2023, <https://www.adriennekmetz.com/blog/customer-happiness>

Where Delight Begins

You've made it to the end of *Product Delight*, but this isn't the end. It's the beginning of something far more important: your journey to build products that people don't just use, but genuinely love.

As I wrote this book, I did my best to apply the principles I talked about in these pages. I didn't just want to *explain* delight; I wanted you to *feel* it. That's why I included personal, honest, and sometimes vulnerable stories from my journey, along with those of others who've created products people truly love. I wanted the ideas to feel real, relatable, and human because that's what delight is all about.

Throughout this book, we've explored the power of emotional connection. We've seen how delight can elevate a product from functional to unforgettable. We've broken down the steps, shared real stories, introduced actionable model, and shown how delight isn't a vague ambition—it's a strategy, a craft, and most importantly, a mindset.

But now, the real work begins.

The journey to delight doesn't require a complete reinvention of your roadmap. It starts with something small: a shift in perspective, a single question, or a moment of curiosity. It starts when you pause and ask, "How will this make the user feel?" It continues when you bring your team together and explore emotional and functional motivators side by side. It grows when you prioritize not just efficiency or scale, but connection, trust, and joy.

You don't need to wait for permission or a perfect moment. Start today, in your next planning session, your next user interview, and your next strategy gathering. Bring delight into the conversation. Use the tools in this book. Experiment. Iterate. Share the mindset with your team. And most importantly, listen to your users not just with logic, but with empathy.

Delight isn't a one-time win. It's a practice. A commitment. A culture.

I hope this book gives you the clarity to understand delight and the confidence to build it and lead with it.

Let your delight journey begin.

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been one of the most emotionally rich and professionally demanding experiences of my life. It began with a question: Can emotional connection be the differentiator of a product? It ended with a journey of reflection, research, learning, and joy. While the writing often happened alone, I was never truly alone, so many people were there with me in spirit, in conversation, in notes, in nudges. This is my opportunity to express gratitude to those who closely helped make this project a reality:

To Maya and Nael, you are my daily source of delight. I hope this book helps build a world where your emotional needs are never an afterthought.

To my partner in life: thank you for holding space for my thoughts, my doubts, my late-night writing sessions. For the quiet support, the pep talks, and the belief when mine flickered.

To my parents, your strength, your sacrifices, your values. This book is rooted in everything you taught me about care, ambition, and purpose.

To my past teams at Google, Spotify, and Microsoft, I carry lessons from every one of you. Some of the most delightful ideas in this book were born during a brainstorm, a bug fix, or a brave experiment. You've shaped me.

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To Kent McDonald, my writing and thought partner throughout this journey. You've been invaluable in making this vision a reality. You helped me hold onto the emotional core of this book while making every line stronger.

And to you, the reader. You are the reason this book exists. If one sentence, one idea, one framework helps you build a more delightful product, then it was all worth it.

With love and deep delight,
Nesrine

Work with Me

Writing *Product Delight* was just the beginning. If you're excited to bring these ideas into your own team or company, I'd love to collaborate and support your journey. I work with organizations of all sizes, from startups to global brands, to help them turn emotional connection into a strategic advantage.

Here are some of the ways we can work together:

Keynotes and Talks

I speak at conferences, company events, and internal offsites on topics such as emotional connection in tech, building lovable products, and adopting the delight culture.

Team Workshops

I run workshops designed to introduce and apply the concepts from *Product Delight* in a practical and hands-on way. These sessions are perfect for product, design, engineering, and cross-functional teams who want to shift toward a delight-driven mindset.

Book Club

Want to get your team on the same page when it comes to product delight? By reading and discussing it together, you'll deepen your understanding but also find ways to apply these lessons in your own work. I'll be happy to attend your weekly book club sessions and answer any of your book-related questions.

Coaching and Advisory

I support product leaders in strengthening their strategy, team culture, and decision-making. I offer tailored coaching and advisory support to help companies elevate their product capabilities, transforming their approach from good to truly impactful.

If you'd like to collaborate, bring me in to speak, or explore a custom engagement, you can reach me directly at contact@nesrine-changuel.com. Learn more at <https://www.nesrine-changuel.com>

The Extra Delight

Thank you so much for reading *Product Delight*. It truly means the world to me that you took the time to explore how emotional connection can help products stand apart. This topic is deeply personal to me, and I'm so grateful you came along on this journey.

As you've seen throughout the book, I believe that delight isn't just something we build into products; it's something we can bring into everything we create, including this book. To bring you a little extra delight, I've put together a set of free bonus materials to help you turn the ideas from these pages into action. On the website below, you'll find templates, worksheets, real-world case studies, and exclusive interviews with product leaders who are building lovable, impactful products.

Access the bonus content at

<https://nesrine-changuel.com/product-delight-book/>

If *Product Delight* inspired you in any way, I'd be incredibly grateful if you took a moment to leave a quick review on Amazon or Goodreads. Your words make a real difference, helping others decide if this book is right for them and helping me continue to spread this message to even more builders and creators.

If you'd like to keep the conversation going, you can subscribe to the *Delight Tips* newsletter, where I regularly share delight stories, practical tools, and best practices: <https://nesrinechanguel.substack.com>



Thank you again for reading
Product Delight.
With heartfelt gratitude,

The Delight Principles

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 1: A delightful product exceeds expectations and anticipates needs.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 2: Delight is a multiplier; it drives loyalty, turns users into advocates, and creates lasting value for your business.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 3: Delight isn't a happy accident; it's a structured outcome of thoughtful steps.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 4: Delight doesn't just solve the problem; it addresses the emotion behind it.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 5: Delight lives in the space between what users want to feel and what products make possible.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 6: Delight is rarely the first idea; it's the one you almost didn't explore.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 7: You can deliberately amplify emotional connection by using delighters into your solutions.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 8: Delight isn't just what you build; it's how far you're willing to take it.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 9: Delight must be intentional and prioritized.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 10: Delight isn't done when it's shipped; it's done when it is felt.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 11: Delight is measurable; but not just in numbers.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 12: You can't consistently deliver delight if it's not part of your culture.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 13: Whether B2C or B2B, delight is essential in every Business to Human (B2H) product.

DELIGHT PRINCIPLE 14: Product delight model doesn't replace best practices; it enhances them.

Glossary

Anthimeria

A linguistic phenomenon where a brand name becomes a verb (e.g., “*Google it*”). It signals deep user connection and cultural relevance.

Deep Delight

Features that meet both emotional and functional needs. These create meaningful, memorable, and lasting product experiences.

Delight Culture

An organizational mindset where emotional connection is valued as much as usability and functionality—shaping how teams prioritize, collaborate, and build.

Delight-Driven Strategy

A product strategy that intentionally prioritizes emotional connection, aiming to increase differentiation, retention, and user advocacy alongside business outcomes.

Delight Enhancers

Tactics such as personalization, surprise, humanization, seasonality, celebration, partnership, fun, community, and value—used to elevate features from low to deep delight.

Delight Excellence

A checklist used to evaluate whether a feature or experience delivers sustainable, inclusive, and emotionally resonant value. Includes dimensions such as user impact, emotional insight, and continuity.

Delight Grid

A visual tool to categorize product solutions based on whether they meet functional, emotional, or both types of needs. It helps teams assess and improve delight potential.

Delight Measurement

The process of evaluating the emotional effectiveness of a product or feature using qualitative insights (e.g., interviews, reactions) and quantitative data (e.g., engagement metrics).

Delight Principles

A set of core beliefs that guide the development of delightful products—capturing what makes emotional connection impactful and operational.

Emotional Motivators

Underlying user needs driven by emotions, such as the desire to feel seen, supported, or proud. They often go unspoken but heavily influence behavior.

Functional Motivators

Task-oriented user needs focused on getting something done or solving a clear problem, such as speed, ease, or reliability.

Low Delight

Functional features that work but lack emotional connection. They are useful but not memorable, and risk becoming commoditized.

Motivational Segmentation

A segmentation strategy that groups users by their underlying motivations—why they use a product—rather than demographics or usage frequency.

Motivators' Map

A visual mapping of both emotional and functional motivators that drive user behavior, used to guide the creation of opportunity spaces in the product delight model.

Peak Moments

Emotionally charged moments in a user journey that bring joy, surprise, or a sense of achievement. These are opportunities to create lasting impressions.

Valley Moments

Painful or frustrating moments in the user journey that cause friction or disengagement. These are opportunities to remove barriers and introduce relief or empathy.

Pivotal Moments

Critical decision points or transitions in the user experience that shape long-term perceptions. Enhancing these moments can greatly impact loyalty and emotional connection.

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

A psychological model that categorizes core emotions. In this model, *delight* is seen as a combination of *joy* and *surprise*, providing a foundation for emotionally resonant design.

Product Delight

A strategic approach to product design focused on building emotional connection through thoughtful, user-centered experiences that go beyond functionality.

Product-Market Fit

The extent to which a product meets strong market demand. Emotional connection, through delight, can deepen and sustain product-market fit over time.

Surface Delight

Features that are playful, aesthetic, or charming, but don't solve a core need. While often lightweight, they contribute to brand personality and emotional tone.

“Product Delight is a valuable resource for anyone aiming to build products that stand apart.”

— **Nir Eyal, Author of Hooked**



“A much-needed guide for product teams who want to go beyond functional success to build products that delight customers.”

— **Dan Olsen, Author of The Lean Product Playbook**

“This book provides the frameworks and solutions you need to create products customers love.”

— **Aaron Walter, Author of Designing for Emotion**

“This book provides an indispensable toolkit for how to systematically integrate delight into every step of your product development process.”

— **Martin Eriksson, Co-Founder of Mind the Product**

Product Delight is a guide to creating tech products that *stand out* by building emotional connections with users. Delight happens when meaningful impact is delivered in a way that resonates with users' emotional motivators. Drawing from personal stories and interviews with product leaders from Google, Spotify, Microsoft, Dyson, Atlassian, and more, Dr. Nesrine Changuel shows how true success comes from solving both functional and emotional needs. She shares practical tools like the Delight Grid and the Delight Excellence Checklist to help you create and validate delight in your product.



Dr. Nesrine Changuel is a product coach, speaker, trainer, and author with extensive product experience at Google, Spotify, and Microsoft. Holding a PhD from Bell Labs in collaboration with UCLA, she brings deep technical expertise to human-centered product development. Nesrine coaches, teaches, and trains companies worldwide on how to create delightful and emotionally resonant products.

