



Influencers in the Field

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Design as Strategy: The Growing Influence of UX and UI in High-Performance Marketing

As marketing continues to evolve in an increasingly digital and experience-driven landscape where brands compete for attention, user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design have emerged as critical strategic tools, rather than the mere supporting functions they've been viewed as in the past. Today's audiences expect seamless, intuitive and engaging interactions across every touchpoint — often before they even fully engage with a brand's message.

Because of this, UX and UI are now poised to deliver greater value as tools that help shape perception, drive engagement and influence conversion, making them essential components of high-performing marketing strategies. Seasoned industry leaders across design and marketing are finding that fostering rewarding, easy-to-navigate experiences alongside overarching marketing goals is no longer optional, but foundational to long-term success.

Understanding How UX and UI Define Marketing First Impressions

Bad websites can devastate a business. We've all seen them; slow to respond and awkward to use on mobile devices, plus the navigation system feels like it was designed by throwing darts at a wall. Not only are bad website experiences frustrating for consumers, but negative interactions across this and other digital marketing touchpoints — such as emails, blogs, social media posts and more — can damage brand credibility, ruin sales opportunities and waste your marketing investments. So, how do we ensure the first impression is positive? That's where UX and UI come in.

UX, as defined by [IBM](#), is the overall experience a consumer has when interacting with a product, system or service, from their initial exposure to its use. It encompasses feelings regarding "...ease of use, accessibility, visual designs, functions of the user interface and the emotional impact of using the product..."

Taken in the context of associations or sponsor organizations, which deliver value to their members through the provision of unique benefits and tools, UX can entail how easily members find much-needed resources, information and tools included in their membership.

While UX encompasses the overall journey, **UI**, as the name suggests, focuses on the user interface. **UI** refers to everything the user interacts with during their digital experience, such as pages, menus, buttons and forms.

Imagine a scenario in which an association member receives an insurance renewal reminder in their email. Within it, there is a chart detailing important renewal information and a button leading to a specialized landing page. A poorly formatted chart, for instance, can lead to confusion, missed enrollment opportunities and customer dissatisfaction; if the button is not set up properly, it can inhibit their ability to renew, resulting in lower conversions and lost revenue.

Confusing or outdated experiences and design, especially those that inhibit or delay a member's ability to find what they need, can create frustration and reduce trust, no matter how beneficial the product or message may be. Conversely, according to IBM, well-designed UX fosters:

- Increased customer satisfaction with enjoyable interactions.
- Improved customer retention through positive experiences.
- Higher conversion rates with pain-free actions.
- Strengthened brand reputation through positive experience association.
- Greater competitive edge by encouraging a user-focused experience.
- Lower support costs through fewer customer service inquiries.



How Experience Design Turns Campaigns into Journeys

Effective marketing is no longer about isolated messages; it's about guiding your audience through a cohesive, intuitive journey from awareness to action. Experience design, backed by the aesthetic efforts of UI team members, supports the full member journey.

Compared to the tired, one-way marketing method, where members receive one-way messages meant to push them down a narrow tunnel toward conversion, UX shifts away from this myopic view in favor of a broader one that takes the [entire journey](#) into account.

Consider your own habits for a moment. When was the last time you made a major decision, such as choosing new insurance coverage, based on one outreach email? It's more likely you would skim the email, discuss your options with your family, do some research on your own, gain recommendations from those you trust, view your options again and then, maybe, after weeks or months of effort, make your choice. In the face of all that effort, how much of a difference did that single email make?

Meanwhile, modern marketing recognizes not all consumer decisions follow a linear path. Instead, it uses a number of touchpoints, such as emails, events, education opportunities and community-building resources, to build awareness and trust over time while ensuring continuity across all platforms and programs. Rather than a generic, one-size-fits-all experience, marketers who leverage UX and UI drop members onto a personalized roadmap that continuously reinforces its benefits at each step.

UX anticipates members' needs at every stage and eliminates stumbling blocks that could interrupt the journey and cause them to become frustrated and leave. In the context of our shopping for insurance example, that could include:

- Creating an email campaign leading up to the open enrollment window, reducing deadline confusion and ensuring everyone gets the coverage they need.
- Providing a list of common frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding guaranteed issue coverage as part of the member onboarding process.
- Fixing messy product landing pages in favor of streamlined designs that highlight valuable plan information upfront.
- Hosting insurance-specific webinars and online events meant to enhance understanding of the benefits of coverage and how their membership helps them save.

UI, meanwhile, ensures continuity across all touchpoints in a given campaign by reinforcing the brand standards and design elements your members have come to recognize and trust.

UX and UI Directly Influence Conversion and Performance

[Design decisions](#) have measurable impacts on marketing outcomes, including conversions, retention and overall campaign performance. While an insurance product landing page might have valuable information, for instance, if its layout is difficult to understand and harder to navigate, it's unlikely a user will stick around long enough to enroll.

In this way, when UX and UI work together, they can improve engagement and conversion across all member programs. Some of these elements include:

- Designing short, logical forms with fillable fields so all information is provided properly.
- Ensuring website pages load quickly, as per Google's [Core Web Vitals](#) initiative, 50% of people leave a site if loading takes more than three seconds, with 47% expecting it to load in less than two seconds.
- Making responsive, optimized designs for mobile devices. The vast majority of Americans — or 91% — own a smartphone, according to data from [Pew Research](#), making it highly likely that's how they engage with your content.
- Leveraging member experiences through testimonials and reviews shared across channels, building credibility and trust.

When content is designed with the user in mind, it can transform passive consumers into loyal participants. Removing barriers to entry, such as confusing sign-up pages, slow-loading pages and hard-to-navigate elements, reduces frustration that can lead to abandonment and low participation rates. Instead, clear navigation of well-organized content and intuitive layouts places less mental load on members, keeping them motivated and their emotions positive.

As an association or sponsoring organization, you develop a lot of content designed to help improve your members' lives, such as newsletters, learning platforms and other valuable resources. By leveraging the benefits of UX and UI design, you can develop your members into loyal, engaged participants.

UX and UI Are Becoming Core to Marketing Strategy

As organizations prioritize their customers' needs and experiences at the heart of every decision to attain valuable conversions, UX and UI leaders are increasingly involved in marketing strategy and planning from the outset to ensure those experiences are engaging, user-friendly and satisfying. Not only does this new level of crossfunctional collaboration help foster new, compelling ideas, but it also improves alignment between marketing, technology and membership teams by ensuring each supports the other's goals.

For instance, imagine your sponsoring organization or association is creating a new app to better connect members with their benefits — all with the goal of increasing utilization. While the technology team is in charge of the nuts and bolts of building the app, your UI team needs to be

involved to ensure that the app's aesthetics align with your organization's identity, echoing the design elements members have come to associate with the brand they know and trust.

A UX expert, armed with member data and insights from the membership team, should support — or augment — those choices by leveraging user research to anticipate their behavior before they even come into contact with the app. They'll also work closely with the marketing team to ensure the customer journey is smooth. Marketing will attract users through well-developed messaging, while UX ensures those users can navigate, engage and complete the call to action without encountering any pain points.

By working together, all teams involved — technology, marketing, UX and UI — help turn attention and curiosity into long-term engagement, retention and growth.

The growing influence of UX and UI on marketing reflects a broader shift toward experience-led strategy. As digital interactions continue to define how audiences engage with brands, the role of design has expanded beyond aesthetics to become a critical driver of trust, engagement and performance. Organizations that integrate UX and UI into their marketing strategies upfront — rather than treating them as afterthoughts — will be better positioned to meet user expectations and achieve sustainable success. Ultimately, by embracing design as strategy, marketers can create experiences that resonate, convert and endure.

