

What is a UX designer?

 By [Inge Rademeyer](#)

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Even if I tell you that UX stands for user experience you'll probably continue to wonder what a UX designer like me actually does. What are my skills and my output and how do I make a significant impact? What kind of person becomes a UX designer and what distinct qualities do we possess?



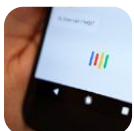
Photo by Kelly Sikkema on [Unsplash](#).

It's easiest to start with the designer part of the title. Think of designers as problem-solvers who reorganise things, try different options and make new connections to create a new approach. In my context, a designer envisions a better version of something and optimises it so that it functions, looks and performs better than it did before.

Think of us a ninjas

As for the user experience part, UX designers are specialists who develop a deep understanding of users and their existing experiences to envision better experiences for them.

UX designers are communicators. We're not monitors receiving information that we can only project or display, or mirrors that reflect what is cast upon us. Instead, we take complex problems, understand them, dissect them, distil them, and make changes to bring improvement. We want to understand and, in doing so, help others understand.



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Think of us as ninjas, as work-in-progress projects: ever-changing, improving, redefining, iterating, learning, trying, testing, failing, learning again, enquiring and optimising. This journey isn't linear, it's a never-ending circle.

We have to understand business, strategy, systems and a number of programs. We have to understand what our other team members do so that we can collaborate with them and drive the product vision from the user point of view. This is why we're usually stationed at the centre of the project, facilitating the team's understanding of what is required, and aligning

business goals with user needs.

On the user's team

Like scientists, UX designers experiment and test hypotheses to make new discoveries, adjusting and iterating as we progress. Like physicians, we search for the cause of the problem to make it better. Like archaeologists, we excavate to find what lies beneath the surface. Like investigators, we ask the right questions to gather the right information, never satisfied with a yes/no answer.



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Like actors, we put ourselves in the shoes of others, empathising to understand their mental models. Like engineers, we make sense of complex processes and systems that require attention to detail. Like entrepreneurs, we thrive on a challenge – if we don't know how something works we will find out. Like psychologists, we observe and analyse behaviours and patterns to validate or disprove assumptions. Like architects, we draw up plans and work with all suppliers to build a structure that users can enjoy.

Above all, we are relentlessly curious, which comes from our deep-seated need to understand.

UX designers have a combination of many qualities and skills that enable organisations to better understand every interaction between the business, their product and its users. We are on the user's team; we make life easier for them, we delight and satisfy them, and when the user wins everybody wins.

ABOUT INGE RADEMEYER

Inge Rademeyer is a Senior UX Designer at VMLY&R South Africa. She has been helping companies increase the conversion rates of their products by improving the UX and user journeys for the last 5 years. She has worked on multiple projects across many industries such as retail, finance, insurance, health and education. Her role as UX covers UX research, UX design, UX strategy and product management.

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