

User experience design consultancy

G-Cloud 15

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User experience design consultancy

Our content and customer experience services reach from behavioural insight and inclusivity strategy, through human-centred service design, to digital experience platform strategy and out into digital, creative, content and UX design and delivery. CDS' comprehensive suite of customer experience services deliver compelling, intuitive and accessible user journeys, improving engagement and supporting the effortless delivery of digital services to our clients' customer bases.

CDS' multidisciplinary agile teams, user research specialists, design studio and accessibility teams provide digital experience platform strategy and implementation, behavioural insight, research and analysis, accessibility and inclusivity strategy definition and implementation, audience engagement/UX services, content strategy and content creation and communications planning and delivery.

We work with trusted open-source and low-code partners to define, architect and build engaging front ends with minimal cost and effortless maintenance, and our content strategists provide clear, concise copy with robust information architectures, keeping our customers' content fresh and accurate.

CDS' content and customer experience services include:

- Accessibility consultancy, training, workshops and support
- Accessibility training: creating PDFs and HTML from source files
- Accessibility training in PDF remediation using Adobe Acrobat
- Accessibility audit and accessibility testing
- Inclusivity consultancy, user testing and research services
- Content strategy, measurement and optimisation services
- Content strategy and design consultancy
- Content design, strategy and editorial services
- Content design for digital channels
- Content production cloud solutions
- Web editing and proofing and content services
- Discovery research and design
- Experience and service optimisation
- Service design and strategy
- User journey mapping and analysis
- Design system and DesignOps
- User experience design consultancy
- Digital experience platform (DXP) design and performance.

Our user-centred approach aligns with the GDS Standard and supports users with a range of digital literacy/skills and accessibility needs.

Case study

In response to Ofwat's AMP7 regulations, Yorkshire Water needed to rethink how it engaged with its 2.3m customers digitally to deliver more customer-focussed services and deliver its customer experience strategy.

Yorkshire Water's primary customer service channel was via telephone, which was inefficient and, despite the excellent work of its contact centre, did not always meet customer needs. The organisation needed a partner to improve the delivery of its online services and design a new customer-centric digital platform that would reduce the number of inbound calls and ensure customer communications were as inclusive and accessible as possible.

CDS' service design team delivered research and design thinking, aimed at understanding and developing the channel strategy. Our aim was to identify how customer engagement could change in a way that was preferable for customers and manageable for the business, to deliver a better experience for both.

We conducted research to understand where customers were engaging, where they wanted to engage and the challenges they experienced. We mapped user journeys and created 'as-is' maps showing how users interacted with the service, and the steps, actions and challenges they experienced. Using ideation sessions, we created 'to-be' service blueprints and tested them frequently with users, remaining focussed on customer needs and pain-points throughout the design process.

We also engaged with various teams within the business, and added the business perspective of people, processes and systems involved in those journeys.

We presented evidence-based recommendations around what digital channels needed to do to help customers engage with the business, and how channels could operate together to deliver a joined-up experience.

The research underpinned the content strategy and wireframes created by our user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) designers. We undertook a joint approach to development, testing, planning, and prioritising, which ensured the new website went live on time and with more functionality than originally planned.

Since its launch, the new platform has resulted in a 20% reduction in billing contacts, creating improved efficiency and customer experience and significant reduction in ongoing operational costs. The redesigned website won Gold 'Best Use of Digital from the Energy and Utilities Sector' at the Digital Impact Awards 2021.

Service overview

UX design services at CDS follow a user-centred approach to deliver usable, meaningful and delightful outcomes for users. Our iterative UX design process is fully aligned with the GDS Service Standard, and works with user research, service design, content design and interaction design to meet the Standard at Discovery, Alpha and Beta assessment stages.

Our award-winning in-house UX and design studio delivers user-centred design. CDS' design approach is based on four key principles:

- Evidence-based: on user research, data and analytics
- Iterative: testing with users and stakeholders
- Clarity: simplifying challenges and messages
- Inclusive: ensuring media, content and brand design are widely accessible to users with different needs.

We deliver user experience design through a three-stage approach:

- Learn: work with user research team to define research objectives, prioritise findings, and enable actionable insight to guide future stages.
- Define: define solution themes and use co-creation methods to generate potential areas to explore, create to-be user flows.
- Create: Moving from exploratory designs and prototypes which are iterated with rounds of usability testing, to design production activities to communicate the components, patterns and principles to development teams and stakeholders.

We work in close collaboration with the customer throughout the design process. We are accustomed to delivering in multi-stakeholder environments, managing engagement, expectations and communicating the need for change across the business.

Using research from focus groups, interviews and online surveys, remote and lab-based usability testing and ethnographic and observational studies, we provide the foundations from which to start developing and testing design ideas.

Features and benefits

Features

- Build and refine consistent design processes across all design activities, including exploration, production, documentation and socialisation
- Design documentation of foundational elements, components, and templates
- Move beyond atomic design concepts with consideration of interactions, transitions, flows and design patterns
- Develop design principles, pattern language, best practice
- Design tokens and code integration
- Create style guides, component directories, and content playbooks
- Implement rich, online design system documentation using Zeroheight and Supernova, or custom web site
- Capture and document iterations, explorations and changes.
- Provide rich use cases and guidance to assist content creators and editors.
- Easily onboard and upskill new team members and stakeholders.

Benefits

- Ensure high quality of design across an organisation by operationalising processes.
- Establish 'source of truth' for all outputs and workstreams
- Connect design activity to research and analysis inputs and sync with development and engineering.
- Capture and manage feedback, reviews and audits – internally and externally
- Consider all touchpoints and channels, including digital and offline.
- Scale and accelerate design activity across the organisation
- Manage and respond to change quickly
- Understand and track design maturity across the organisation
- Build framework for measuring success
- Identify staff skills and strengths, and areas for improvement and recruitment.

Our approach

User research to inform experience design

We use several different methods to collate a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data.

Desk-based research/performance review: review existing research to understand current views, business goals, challenges and desired outcomes. We undertake competitor analysis and use analytics and search data to understand current usage and define performance metrics.

Field research: we observe users in real world situations, to understand how the service we are designing integrates into the rest of their activities, and the external influences, distractions and pressures they face.

Focus groups/face-to-face interviews: we run focus groups with representatives from each customer user group. Focus groups give an overview of how each user group thinks and feels about the existing service - what they like, what they do not, and how their needs can be better met. Where appropriate, we conduct in-depth face-to-face interviews with sample representatives, to delve a little deeper into the information from the focus group.

Workshops: we conduct workshops and card-sorting exercises to develop an information architecture, mapping, personas, key user journeys and benchmarks against competitor sites.

Online surveys: to engage with a wider sample of users and validate and challenge information from focus groups and interviews. Online surveys provide access to large volumes of quantitative data.

Cocreation: on site sessions to discuss the findings of the user research, develop user stories and agree the key features and functions of the service.

Content audit: we perform content audits to review existing site content and functionality, identify what to keep, what to delete, and what new content/functionality is needed. We also provide guidance on content style, to ensure SEO performance.

Analytics/user tracking: we use a combination of analytics such as Google Analytics and user tracking tools such as Hotjar to gain insight into user behaviour on digital products, both pre- and post-launch, informing KPIs and goals for further optimisation and A/B testing.

User-centred design

Personas and user journeys: we produce user personas that profile the frustrations, motivations, goals and key tasks of users. We create user journeys that clearly demonstrate the steps the user needs to go through to complete a task.

Sketching and rapid prototyping: we quickly sketch screen layouts and user flows. Sketching provides an easy and quick approach to getting initial ideas down and ultimately reduce the need for unnecessary wireframing iterations.

Wireframes and interactive prototypes: we produce wireframes using software such as Sketch, Adobe XD or Axure RP. Using these tools allows us to work at various fidelities, beginning with simple content block layouts and advancing to high-fidelity interactive prototypes.

UI design: we translate tested and validated wireframes into visual designs and UI components, creating mood boards and style frames to test brand, imagery, fonts, styles and overall design direction.

We developed the design through the remainder of the site components and features, working closely with front-end developers, to create a comprehensive design system. This is an iterative process with the customer involved throughout.

We adopt a mobile-first approach, and use responsive design techniques to cater for mobile, tablet and desktop devices.

Usability testing

We can conduct testing both face-to-face and remotely.

We use scenario-based testing with hotspots, eye tracking and video playback to monitor user behaviour and user feedback, which allows us to refine and optimise the user journeys.

Digital Development support and review

Our UX design team works closely with our front end development team to support the build process, ensuring the completed service delivers the user-centred vision, while responding to changes during implementation.

Our handoff process and developer support ensures a consistent, shared 'source of truth' for designs that manages change using versioning, and integrates the design assets into the production and project management workflows.

Optimisation

UX design does not stop once an app or service goes live, but enters a new phase of optimisation. Using a combination of analytics, tracking, user testing and surveys, we gain data-driven insight into user behaviour post-launch and iterate the solution based on user feedback.

We design and test potential improvements and use A/B testing to test design modifications against desired performance metrics. We recommend frequent analysis to monitor performance against KPIs to measure success and identify opportunities for further improvement.

Design System and DesignOps

Our UX design consultancy service specialises in creating design systems and operational processes that allow organisations to iterate design at speed, scale design activities across all digital channels and touchpoints, and build in quality as standard. We also empower organisations to refine their design practice and measure their evolving UX design maturity.

Business continuity and disaster recovery plans

CDS is committed to minimising and managing its exposure to disruption to the business and the services provided to our customers. This encompasses robust systems and processes necessary to maintain continuity of service and operations.

CDS maintains a comprehensive Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery (BCDR) plan, certified to **ISO 23001**, that defines clear roles, responsibilities, processes, and procedures for assessing and responding to disruptions to ensure continuity during disruptions. **Our plan is tested annually with lessons learned incorporated into plan improvements.**

Our Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) is underpinned by regular business impact assessments and threat and risk analyses, and annual tests to ensure all contingencies remain effective, current, and fit for purpose.

Onboarding and offboarding

Onboarding

CDS provides a tailored onboarding pathway, based on clients' individual requirements.

Onboarding is a collaborative process, through which we fully understand our clients' short-, medium- and long-term goals, and plan our service accordingly, to deliver best value and appropriate resourcing, governance, communication and planning.

Our multi-disciplinary agile teams will work with project stakeholders to understand the client and project needs and requirements.

We will define and capture ways of working, including definitions of 'ready' and 'done', and identify acceptance criteria for each sprint, underpinned by modern test practices and OKRs.

Offboarding

Upon starting the engagement, CDS will provide an exit plan for client approval. This will cover matters such as knowledge transfer and documentation, roll-off schedules, data and asset transfer, intellectual property and removal of access / permissions and return of devices / equipment.

Ownership of data contained in any solution belongs to and rests with the client; as the service is decommissioned, raw data will be transferred to the client. CDS is certified to ISO 27001 for data security and will always adhere to these standards – including data removal and destruction.

Ways of working

At CDS we apply agile principles across our projects, primarily using the SCRUM Agile methodology. We operate multi-disciplinary squads that combine domain expertise with technical excellence, delivering value early and iteratively through two-week sprints. Our approach is underpinned by the following core practices:

- **Daily standups:** A team call for 15 minutes each morning to track progress, surface blockers and ensure sprint goals are achieved.
- **Sprint planning:** Held at the start of each sprint to prioritise the work, align on objectives and ensure the team is fully prepared.
- **Sprint review:** At the end of the sprint, the team demonstrate to all stakeholders the deliverables achieved and present the sprint goal for the next sprint.
- **Sprint retrospective:** For each sprint the team will review what went well, identify areas of improvement and embed lessons learned to drive continuous improvement.

Additionally, we have an Agile mindset and culture at CDS, in which we apply:

- **User-centred design and customer-focus:** Through collaboration and partnership working we deliver outcomes that meet user needs.
- **Adaptability and flexibility:** Short feedback loops enable us to respond quickly to change, with teams empowered to pivot as required.
- **Continuous learning:** Retrospectives encourage open, honest feedback to continually improve ways of working and delivery effectiveness.
- **Partnership and teamwork:** We create a one-team culture with our clients and their supplier partners, working collectively towards shared project goals.

Training

As well as continual ‘on the job’ knowledge transfer to upskill client teams, CDS can provide formal, comprehensive training for administrators and users prior to handover and go live designed to support successful change management, ensure smooth implementation and embed solutions that are integral to business operations. Our training also builds internal technical capability, empowering teams to become self-sufficient and reduce the long-term cost of change.

In most cases, we adopt a ‘train-the-trainer’ model, delivered through a blend of on-site and remote sessions. This is supported by comprehensive training materials and easy-to-follow digital end-user guides, written for non-technical audiences and compliant with WCAG 2.2 accessibility guidelines.

Service constraints

Attainable service levels will be dependent upon the service performance of cloud suppliers within the service chain. Maintenance windows may apply, and clients should refer to the SLA for the specific service in use.

Ordering and invoicing

We recommend contacting CDS before placing an order via G Cloud 15, to confirm and agree scope, scale, SLAs, KPIs, outcomes, etc. We will be pleased to support clients to define statements of work that reflect their requirements.

Invoices are issued monthly in arrears, with payment terms of 30 days.

Pricing

Timescales and costs vary, depending on several factors; we recommend a preliminary review to provide a firm cost.

Please refer to our pricing document and rate card.

Industry standards

CDS delivers all its services to internationally recognised standards. CDS is accredited to the following standards:

- ISO 9001 Quality Management System.
- ISO 27001 Information Security Management.
- ISO 20000 IT Service Management and IASME certified.
- ISO 14001 Environmental Management.
- BSI 1008 Electronic Information.
- ISO 22301 Security and Resilience (Business Continuity).
- ISO 45001 Health and Safety Management.
- ISO 10008 Evidential Weight and Legal Admissibility of Electronic Information.
- ISO 50001 Energy Management Standard.
- Cyber Essentials Plus.
- IASME certified.
- ITIL compliant service desk.
- PlanetMark Sustainability.

We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR regulations.

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