

**Introduction to User Experience  
and Digital Product Management**

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**COURSE SHORT DESCRIPTION**

Creating a great user experience is essential to any business, and technology startups are using it as a secret weapon to usurp incumbent players in almost every industry. Traditionally, companies have competed on the quality of their products and services, pricing, and distribution. User experience adds a new dimension that emphasizes not the product or service itself, but instead the consumer’s experience of using that product or service. It is a subtle and often misunderstood distinction with profound implications. Product management is a growing field born out of the need for someone within an organization to own that experience and with it the entire end-to-end production process. Product management is particularly well-suited to those who want to play at the intersection of technology, business, and management and is often referred to as the “CEO of the product”. This course is aimed at those without a strong technical background who want to develop knowledge and skills to get a leg up when founding or joining a technology company.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. **User Experience Overview**  
   You will learn what user experience (UX) is as well as examples of, common attributes of, and ultimately how to create a great UX. UX creation is generally regarded as a design discipline, but it can and should be practiced by everyone within an organization in order to bridge business objectives with customer needs.
2. **UX as a Business Differentiator**  
   UX is not only “nice to have” but can be a meaningful business differentiator. We will examine specific cases where UX has allowed companies to rise above the competition and how they were able to achieve those results.
3. **Product Management Overview**  
   The field of product management encapsulates not only UX, but any and all parts of the product creation process. You will learn the essentials of product management and actionable ways to drive not only a product, but a team.
4. **Digital Product Lifecycle**  
   The product manager must manage the process of creating a digital product from front to end, and as any product manager will tell you: there is no end. You will learn how digital products get built from conception to launch and the role of the product manager at each stage.

**COURSE ROADMAP/SCHEDULE**

**Session 1: Introduction to User Experience (4 hours)**

* Defining UX
* Common misconceptions about UX
* Core components of UX
* Where UX fits within an organization
* User-centered design process
* User research
* Principles of good UX
* Prototyping

**Session 2: UX as a Business Differentiator (4 hours)**

* UX and customer loyalty
* UX differentiation in commodity markets
* UX differentiation in luxury markets
* Case studies of UX as a differentiator
* Balancing UX goals with business goals
* Creating a UX-centric strategy

**Session 3: Introduction to Product Management (4 hours)**

* Defining product management
* Owning the product
* Owning the process
* Personas, journey maps, and other tools of the trade
* Minimally viable products
* Metrics and measuring success
* Managing a product team
* Communicating with stakeholders

**Session 4: The Digital Product Lifecycle (4 hours)**

* Product lifecycle overview
* The product manager’s role throughout
  + Planning
  + Research
  + UX, UI, visual design
  + Development
  + Quality Assurance
  + Deployment
  + Iteration
* Estimating timelines, resources, etc.
* Common mistakes

**Session 5: Final Presentations and Closing Lecture (4 hours)**

* Group presentations
* Expert panel feedback
* Q&A session with each group
* Instructor’s closing remarks

**ASSIGNMENTS/METHOD OF EVALUATION**

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

**15%** of your grade will be based on the individual assignment outlined below.

**Paper Prototypes and Customer Interviews (individual assignment)**

You will create a paper prototype of a theoretical product and conduct interviews with potential customers that represent your target market. These interviews will aim to answer specific questions and prove or disprove theories you have about your product and about your market. Further details will be disclosed in Session 1.

**35%** of your grade will be based on the group presentation outlined below.

**Final Presentation (group assignment)**

Groups will create and present a presentation to the class about a theoretical product. The presentation must outline the product, the target market, the user experience, and a proposal of how to produce the product and UX. All group members must participate in the presentation. There will be a panel of industry experts (startup founders, VCs, etc.) in the classroom. The panel will provide feedback and ask questions, and there will be an open Q&A from other students. Further details will be disclosed in Session 1.

**50%** of your grade will be based on active participation, attendance, and attention during class.

**Participation**

Coming to class, being attentive, and actively participating are expected and will account for half of your grade. User experience and product management are participatory disciplines. Asking questions, challenging assumptions, and inspiring others are are all part of the process. An active classroom will simulate what it is like to work on a product team.

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS**

Throughout the sessions, various online articles, videos, podcasts, and other materials will be assigned as required content.

**CLASSROOM NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS**

Because of the small number of sessions, attendance at all five sessions is required. As they will take place in the evening, eating in class is allowed. Active participation is encouraged.

**INCLUSION, ACCOMMODATIONS, AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

At Columbia Business School, we believe that diversity strengthens any community or business model and brings it greater success. Columbia Business School is committed to providing all students with the equal opportunity to thrive in the classroom by providing a learning, living, and working environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bias on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or ability. Students seeking accommodation in the classroom may obtain information on the services offered by Columbia University’s Office of Disability Services online at [www.health.columbia.edu/docs/services/ods/index.html](http://www.health.columbia.edu/docs/services/ods/index.html) or by contacting (212) 854-2388.