Take delight seriously!

Don't mess around with delight

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Delight can't land if the planes don't take off

A few days before Christmas, I was stuck at the airport for 14 hours as my flight got delayed, one frustrating hour at a time. Mine wasn't the only one; the gates were packed. There were no more seats, so I was sitting on the floor. Out of nowhere, a giant nutcracker on stilts marched past my gate, ducking under the overhead signs. Another nutcracker followed him; this one was a one-man band, beating a drum, clashing cymbals and blowing a kazoo. The nutcrackers had clearly been hired by the airport to bring joy and delight to travelers, but no one at the gates seemed delighted. Personally, I'm an easy mark for an unexpected spectacle (I own a hand-held confetti cannon). But these nutcrackers left me unexpectedly frustrated and fuming. Why was this airport sending out an army of ridiculous nutcrackers when they couldn't get flights out on time? Logically, I knew that the team responsible for these nutcrackers had nothing to do with flight operations; but emotionally, these nutcrackers represented a perverse reversal of priorities, and somehow, they were also responsible for my discomfort. I spent the rest of my time waiting on the floor, notably undelighted, picturing a giant nutcracker sitting on my plane, keeping it from taking off.

A holistic and strategic approach
to designing for delight

The nutcracker example illustrates an unfortunate dynamic that you've likely experienced when well-meaning companies attempt to inject surprise and delight into user experience without a clear strategy. When delight isn't right, it comes across as forgettable or ham-fisted at best and insulting at worst. The business of delighting customers is more than just sprinkling an experience with fun and whimsy; it's strategically laying out a path for your customers to experience the right kind of delight, at the right time, in a way that makes it easy for them to connect that feeling with your product or brand. The result can still be fun and whimsical, but it takes work to get there. When teams think about delight, they need to consider how it fits into the entire experience (including areas outside their control) and how they can set up their users or customers to be delighted and to associate that delight with the product or brand.

Here are four key points:

- **Delight starts with satisfaction:** Ensure customer needs are getting met first. There's no way to delight an unsatisfied customer until you fix what is not working

- **Delight exists within a larger experience:** When you design for delight, think about how it fits into the entire experience. Make sure nothing is blocking it, and be intentional about when and how delight features in the overall experience. The more you know about the overall customer experience, including the parts you can't control, the better positioned you'll be to understand how delight could fit into that experience

- **Delight must align with the brand or product and the goal it meets:** A random element of delight can confuse or distract, even if the rest of the experience is solid. Delight should fit into what the product is helping the customer or user accomplish. A simple example is the "Great job! You did it!" message that comes up when you finish your taxes with TurboTax. Taxes are hard and complex, but TurboTax helped you, and now you're in a place to celebrate with them. The customer, the task and the product are all aligned for a quick moment of delight. However, this same message has a different impact if you are submitting receipts for a car insurance claim. It's not that daunting of a task, and it's the insurance company that requires those receipts. It's a mild annoyance for you to do it. You're not in a mood to celebrate; you're in a mood to move on. You need a quick confirmation so you can forget about that tedious task and do something else. Sometimes, delight can mean clearing the way for your users to go do something delightful elsewhere

- **Test, test, test:** Test early with real users and reiterate until your design accomplishes the delight you intended. It's hard to know what's going to work, but you can get closer to understanding how to land delight that resonates with customers and makes sense for your brand through iteration and testing

At Luxoft, we're dedicated to doing delight right. Our strategy team can help you set your customers up for delight through user research, design thinking workshops and testing. We take a human-centered and holistic lens to help you build the path for your users or customers to experience delight at the right time, in a way that resonates with them and enhances your product or brand.

About **the author**

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Erin Popelka is the Principal Director of Strategy at Luxoft's Smashing Ideas. With diverse global experience across industries in corporate strategy, management consulting and design thinking, Erin leads a team that combines design methodologies, research expertise and business acumen to help clients take on a user-centric mindset to tackle complex business and product challenges.

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Luxoft is the design, data and development arm of DXC Technology, providing bespoke, end-to-end technology solutions for mission-critical systems, products and services. We help create data-fueled organizations, solving complex operational, technological and strategic challenges. Our passion is building resilient businesses, while generating new business channels and revenue streams, exceptional user experiences and modernized operations at scale.

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