The emperor's new "product"

Do you remember Hans Christian Anderson's 'The Emperor's New Clothes', the tale of an entire kingdom that ignores the obvious for fear of judgment, only to be called out by a child? What if I tell you after almost 200 years the emperor is still wearing the "invisible" clothes and many of those who see the naked emperor walking down the streets decide not to talk about it?

Sayena Majlesein
Published in **UX Collective** · 6 min read · Nov 16, 2018

by Nelleke Verhoeff

When I started working as a UX engineer, my supervisor was this amazing designer who was creative, fast, and innovative. I enjoyed looking at his work and learning from him. However, since my background was in computer science and his background was in design, as you can imagine, a lot of times I would look at something and think to myself *"this guy has no clue about the framework that we use"* , *"has he ever looked at the data model when he was designing this?",* or *"has he done market research and competitive analysis before doing this?"?*

Former Google+ boss Vic Gundotra.

For me, it was one of my first jobs. I wasn't confident enough to ask questions and I was still learning from my colleagues how to express my opinion and speak out. **So when no one else said anything, I didn't want to look dumb by pointing out to the flaws that were obvious to me.**   valeh sajedi

That was a long time ago, but we still see naked products in front of us everyday. We still see designers and developers who prefer not to say

anything about the issues that they see. Designers and developers who don't question feedback of experts, CEOs, and other external members of the organization that are not directly working on their project and instead follow trends, and out of context feedback blindly.

Before we start..confession time

I have to confess something. I talked about design, but as a developer I have to confess that this is not limited to design. A lot of times developers apply their preferences to the product and that causes multiple of obvious problems. Then we, as a team, say goodbye to this **"naked"** product and let it go and sit in front of the user..you know..naked.
The user looks at it and is like *"what is this thing? How does it work? Why is it designed this way? Why is it not doing what it should be doing?"* and then throws the naked product out of his home, office, phone, or laptop.

How to make a well-dressed product?

Now that we are aware of the naked products that are walking down the streets and can be pointed out by any user at any time, it is our duty as both designers and developers to make sure that they are wearing the proper clothes before leaving our teams. In order to to that we need to identify the most impactful factors that lead to the release of these naked products, and address them.

Dynamics

By dynamics, we are referring to the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of a team member's behavior and performance. They are these invisible strings that can limit our performance in an organization due to the influence of other team members, our supervisor, the CEO, etc. However, if used properly, the dynamics can work like a magic in order to help us produce an effective and **well-dressed** product.

Here's an example. A lot of times in our program, we think about a concept as a team and try to answer multiple of questions. Then we form our insights, make decisions, and try to move forward.To do so, we have these amazing instructors that are there to help us with every step of the process and we value their comments and feedback.

What turns the whole thing to a mess, is when an instructor or an expert gives a feedback and the dynamics falsely change because of that. It is our responsibility to clearly understand the context of our work, ask questions when receiving feedback, and make decisions that would address our problem space.

Believe it or not, a lot of times when someone says something that we don't think is right or related to what we do, or when we don't understand their feedback, we don't ask questions. It is due to many reasons, the consequence of questioning it may be more than what we can manage. It usually happens

when someone else is in charge, such as a CEO, and we know that eventually they have to make the final decision.
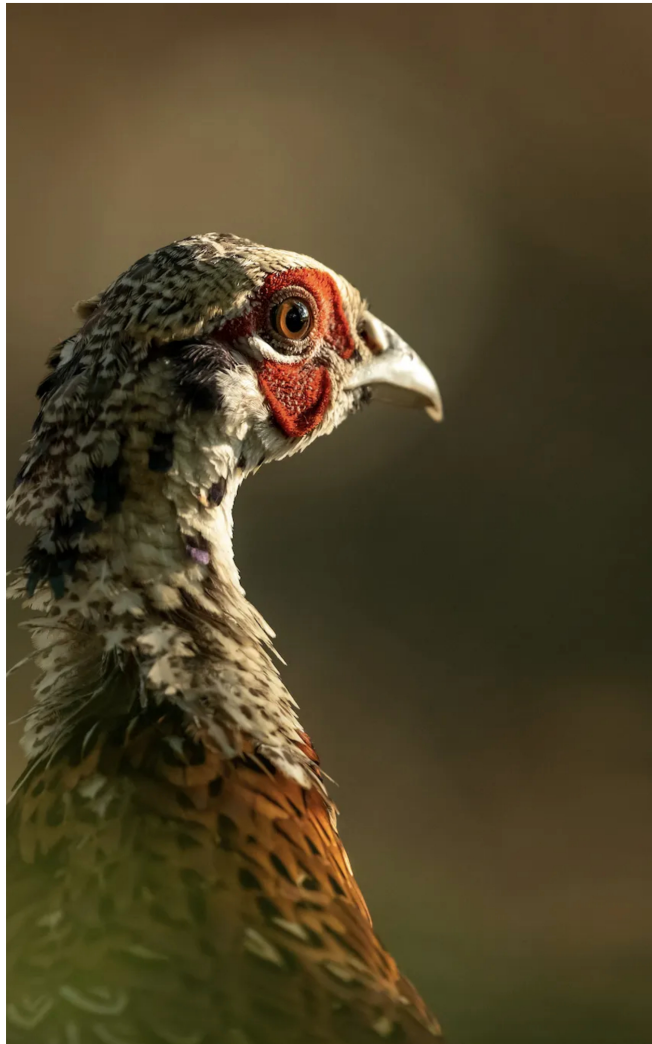
Don't get me wrong! I'm not saying you should challenge every single feedback that you receive. I'm saying the art of acknowledging feedback is something that can be developed by practice. I still have struggles forming questions in a super friendly manner, just because a lot of times I assume my colleagues know that what I'm saying is just my professional opinion and I'm not questing themselves. It is important to appreciate feedback, respect it, and discuss it.

Professional mental shield

Do you remember the honest kid at the end of the **'Emperor's New Clothes'** that points out to the naked emperor and says *"but he isn't wearing anything at all!" ?* Remember how he doesn't seem to care about how everybody would react to his words and yet he cares enough to express his opinion.

In order to enable every individual in our team to freely express their opinions, what we need to develop is a professional mental shield.

One of the most impactful factors that makes our professional interactions meaningful and effective in an environment is the professional mental shield of the team.

In order to be able to speak out, we need to make sure that our comments will be taken in a professional manner by our colleagues, supervisors, and instructors. That means that they are open to receiving feedback and they are capable of acknowledging the professional message of it.

I have to praise my amazing team mate who made me think about this concept. I've worked with diverse groups of professionals throughout my career *-so far-*, but a few of them had the super power of a professional mental shield. When I work with this specific team mate, I know that we can disagree on a concept for two hours and discuss it, but eventually we are going to walk back home laughing.

We both have this shield that reassures us that we won't be judged because of our opinions and that makes every discussion and disagreement an invaluable resource.

Think, respect, and accept

The last thing to remember is to understand that questioning comments and feedback requires more than being confident or bold, it requires us to really **think** about what we want say before we start talking about it.

Moreover, it doesn't matter if you agree or disagree with a feedback, you have to **respect** the source of it, as well as its message.

You also need to **accept** it. By accepting it, you are not saying you agree with it or not, instead you are saying that you value it and you are going to think about it. We cannot eliminate comments and pretend that they have never happened just because we don't find them useful or related. Instead, we can talk about them, clarify, and modify them in order to adapt them to our project.

Conclusion

I think finding all factors that contribute to the production of naked products demand an entire research group, but I hope by mentioning a few of the most important ones, we can establish our own mental guideline in order to produce a well-dressed product.

Keep that in mind that with the help of social media and other resources that are available to us, naked products can *-and will be-* easily identified by users and experts of the field. So..what if we make sure they're not leaving our teams and organizations without proper clothes before someone points out to them saying

"but it isn't wearing anything at all!"

Written by Sayena Majlesein

Edit profile

250 Followers · Writer for UX Collective

More from Sayena Majlesein and UX Collective

Sayena Majlesein

Life of an immigrant

Being an immigrant can feel like building a solid house on an unsolid ground, but I have…

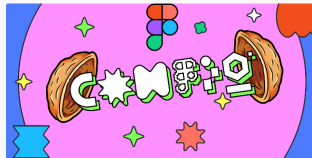7 min read · Jul 17, 2020

219   2

Rosie Hoggmascall in UX Collective

How Duolingo pushes users from freemium to premium

5 monetisation lessons from the world's most downloaded education app

9 min read · Jun 28

2.6K   30

Danny Sapio in UX Collective

15 Figma Updates from Config 2023 in A Nutshell

Every update from Figma's Config announcements and what to be excited about

9 min read · Jun 22

1.6K   14

Sayena Majlesein

Become an empathic analyzer

What do these numbers that impact our lives mean? How can we interpret 3.4% mortality…
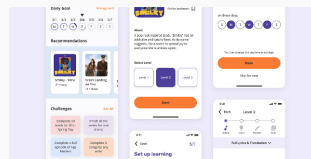
6 min read · Mar 13, 2020

126

See all from Sayena Majlesein   See all from UX Collective

Recommended from Medium

Unbecoming

10 Seconds That Ended My 20 Year

Christina Sa in UX Planet

The UX Design Case Study That

10 Seconds That Ended My 20-Year Marriage

It's August in Northern Virginia, hot and humid. I still haven't showered from my...

✦ · 4 min read · Feb 16, 2022

👏 54K 💬 846   🔖 •••

The UX Design Case Study That Got Me Hired

Getting a job in UX design is tough, but one particular case study helped me stand out...

✦ · 8 min read · Mar 16

👏 8.9K 💬 117   🔖 •••

Lists

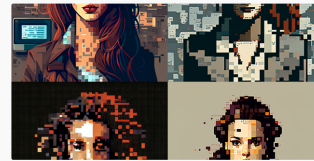|	
Stories to Help You Grow as a Designer 11 stories · 142 saves	**Interesting Design Topics** 199 stories · 42 saves
Figma 101 7 stories · 40 saves	**Icon Design** 30 stories · 27 saves

---

👤 Jared M. Spool in UX Collective

Strategic UX Research is the next big thing

Strategic UX Research is how organizations connect their long-term direction and...

✦ · 10 min read · Jul 16

👏 800 💬 6   🔖 •••

👤 Zulie Rane in The Startup

If You Want to Be a Creator, Delete All (But Two) Social Media...

In October 2022, during the whole Elon Musk debacle, I finally deleted Twitter from my...

✦ · 8 min read · Apr 18

👏 35K 💬 789   🔖 •••

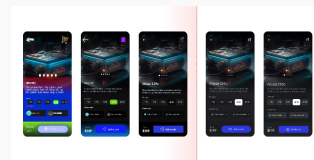👤 Love Shar... in ByteByteGo System Design Allian...

System Design Blueprint: The Ultimate Guide

Developing a robust, scalable, and efficient system can be daunting. However,...

✦ · 9 min read · Apr 20

👏 6.5K 💬 54   🔖 •••

👤 Michal Malewicz

There are FIVE levels of UI skill.

Only level 4+ gets you hired.

✦ · 6 min read · Apr 25

👏 4.7K 💬 55   🔖 •••

See more recommendations