PRODUCT VISION & PRODUCT CANVAS

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A **Product Vision board** helps you describe, visualise and validate your product vision and strategy. It captures the target group, user needs, key product features and the business goals.

A **Product Canvas** offers a way of combining persona's (target group), User journeys, Design and constraints with Epics and User stories. It's based on the Product Vision and is regarded as the next step in preparing for the actual sprints. From the two, the Product Canvas is the most tangible input for the Scrum team as it's output can directly be used for implementation.

Note that three of the six ingredients of the Product Canvas are heavily UX focussed and will often require assistance and input from a UX expert.

Although the Product Vision & Product Canvas is recommended as a preparation or starting point for the actual sprints, it's also possible to keep using them throughout the sprints as a dynamic asset. It offers a great and lean way of keeping track of the big picture and goals which the application needs to address. Preventing risk of scope-creep and incoherent userstories resulting in a 'bag of features' instead of a high quality application.

**Concepts and Definitions**

Explaining some of the jargon

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Explaining some of the jargon

**A persona is a representation of a user, typically based off user research and incorporating user goals, needs, interests and frustrations. A persona is not an individual, rather, it is synthesized to be able to represent a significant portion of the total group of people.**

Personas are common and considered best practice in software development projects who’ve adopted a user-centered approach. Different types of endusers (user-role) have one to several personae at its core to help in the design and development of the application. Giving context, behaviour and motivations to user-roles.

Two types of Personas are worth mentioning: **Traditional Personas** (statistically solid, based on extensive research) and **Provisional Personas** (Based on expert’s input who’ve had intense and direct contact with users.) Most Mendix projects have a good fit with Provisional Personae due to time and budget constraints. It is important to realize that they serve as a first version, good enough to start discovering the right UX and product features.

If we look at a Mendix project we would use persona’s to help define our types of end-users in the form of user-roles (the ones we use in our Scrum assets such as userstories). Finally converting them into user- and module-roles in our Mendix application model.

Not every user is the same, even though they’re part of the same end-user group. If we take the example of a webshop with the user-role of ‘consumer’, it’s fairly obvious we need more than one persona to encompass this role. Some people will be impulse buyers whilst some people will want to do a lot of research before committing to a purchase.

Aligning those different kinds of users in one coherent application is a puzzle worth solving if the webshop wants to thrive.

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To read more about the topic, please visit the following links:

USER JOURNEYS AND USERFLOWS

A user journey is a series of steps which represent a scenario in which a user might interact with the application that is being designed and developed. It helps to understand user behaviour, identify possible high level functionalities and how the user is going to use them. It’s a great and fast way to work out how the application is going to help in achieving tasks and goals.

A user journey bridges the gap between persona’s (their tasks, frustrations and motivations) and how the application should present and implement the needed functionality.

User journeys can come in different shapes and different levels of abstraction. Some interesting examples (from high to low in abstraction):

1. **Customer Journeys:**
   Used to explore and map out the actual experience a customer has with a service or application. Often has a high level of abstraction and used in Marketing focussed projects.

2. **Storyboards:**
   Using simplistic illustrations together with minimal amount of text. Very useful in combining persona’s, their surroundings and the tasks they’re trying to accomplish.

3. **Userflows:**
   A schematic and concrete representation of the steps and choices a user encounters when trying to accomplish a task. Often used for mapping out functionality before coding the application.

Most Mendix projects have a need for userflows as they’re concrete, easy to create and very useful for team discussions and preparation. They are limited however in their reach, if for example usage surroundings or device choices play a part, or some stakeholders need convincing; you should invest time in storyboards as they can communicate a bigger picture.

Note:
- [http://theuxreview.co.uk/user-journeys-beginners-guide/](http://theuxreview.co.uk/user-journeys-beginners-guide/)
- [https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2015/01/all-about-customer-journey-mapping/](https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2015/01/all-about-customer-journey-mapping/)
Explaining some of the jargon

STYLETILE  Optional project asset

Styletiles are a **design deliverable** consisting of fonts, colors and interface elements that communicate the **essence of a visual brand** for the web. They help form a **common visual language** and provides a catalyst for discussions around preferences and goals. They bridge the gap between moodboards and high fidelity wireframe comps.

Using this approach prevents a lot of misalignment in the team or with stakeholders and prevents rework in the project with minimal effort. Switching to another visual branding and visual language in the middle of a project can be a (time-) costly affair and can easily be prevented.

Note that if extensive Corporate Identity guidelines exist that also cover online- and application branding, a styletile won’t be necessary as an asset. Using those guidelines in conjunction with wireframes will do the trick as well.

“Styletiles establish a direct connection with actual interface elements without defining layout or designing the actual page.”

Note:

http://styletile.es
http://alistapart.com/article/style-tiles-and-how-they-work

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Explaining some of the jargon

A wireframe is an illustration of a page’s interface that specifically focuses on space allocation and prioritization of content, functionalities available, and intended behaviors. They serve as a blueprint for pages that need to be built.

We can distinguish 3 levels of fidelity when dealing with wireframes:

1. **Low fidelity wireframing:**
   Outlining the bigger picture, elements, and structure. Can be made with as little as pen and paper or a whiteboard with markers.

2. **Medium fidelity wireframing:**
   Adding more detail to the wireframe. Often created with software tools such as Axure or Balsamique.

3. **High fidelity wireframe or mockup:**
   A more realistic representation of a page, including details as well as graphic design and branding.

Creating wireframes is a first step towards opening the Mendix modeler. They serve as a thinking and brainstorming platform as well as a reviewing tool for the application. Aligning the team to the pages and functionality that needs to be built.

**Rule of thumb is to start at low fidelity and move up a level if the situation requires it.** For example: when working on an application that has little need for UX, the standard pagetemplates and Mendix UI Framework will already provide most of what’s needed. A sensible approach would be to create low fidelity wireframing in preparation and create medium fidelity wireframes during sprints, linking the items to pagetemplates and Mendix components.
USABILITY TESTING

Usability testing is a type of testing that revolves around watching people try to use what is being created with the intention of:

a. Making it easier for people to use or
b. Proving that it's easy to use

The focus of usability testing is not on finding bugs but on finding usability issues that can be improved in a next iteration. Hence usability tests are usually done throughout a project.

There are two main categories of usability test methods:

1. Quantitative methods: Methods that use extensive research sessions and statistics to prove things by measuring.

2. Qualitative methods: The main focus is improving the product by collecting insight and not provide proof. As such, qualitative methods are more accessible to less experienced researchers and are easier to implement in agile processes.

It comes as no surprise that Mendix projects need a fast, accessible and qualitative approach.

Since most Mendix projects have very limited time and resources available, finding the best fit with a usability testing method can be challenging.

Steve Krug’s ‘Rocket Surgery Made Easy’ is one of the gems with an excellent fit due to the ‘do-it-yourself’ nature, a meagre investment of one morning a month and the fact it’s easy to learn for everybody.