

# Can remote, unmoderated user testing be a lifter for UX maturity?

Tina Øvad<sup>1</sup>, Claus Venlov<sup>1</sup> and Sebbe Selvig<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preely, Copenhagen, Denmark  
[tina@preely.com](mailto:tina@preely.com), [claus@preely.com](mailto:claus@preely.com), [sebbe@preely.com](mailto:sebbe@preely.com)

**Abstract.** The following is a position paper arguing that applying remote, unmoderated user testing can be a lifter for the overall UX maturity within organizations.

**Keywords:** Remote Unmoderated User Testing, Remote User Testing, UX Maturity

## 1 Introduction

Working professionally with remote, unmoderated user testing has been an eye opener in terms of the level of UX competencies, ways of working, and the general UX maturity level in (primary) Scandinavian organizations. We want to both address the current state of these areas, and also touch upon the knowledge and opportunities the COVID-19 pandemic has entailed when it comes to improving the said areas.

## 2 The setting

During the COVID-19 pandemic we (Preely) have had a lot of organizations reaching out to us, in order to be able to continue user testing and user involvement throughout the pandemic. This position paper centers around our experiences from talking to - and helping, 50+ organizations transitioning their UX activities to a remote way of working.

### 2.1 Preely

Our platform, Preely, is a self-service platform for unmoderated, remote user testing. We collect most usability and UX metrics, and present insights and analytics in a clear and easy way. The nature of the metrics makes them suitable to be used in a KPI or OKR framework. Not having to moderate the tests makes the workload of testing low - it does not matter if you want to test with 10, 100 or 1.000 participants - the workload is the same. And by excluding the use of a moderator the conditions of the test are quite constant.

### **3 Insights**

Talking to a large number of UX practitioners has revived many similarities in the obstacles they are facing. Here is a walkthrough of the most evident ones.

#### **3.1 Ways of working and UX competencies**

The agile ways of working put a major strain on the UX practitioners, since their methods are not geared towards the agile cadence, and applying academic approaches to UX work demands too many resources and takes too much time [1]. Working in the space of user-centered design, user testing is a key pillar. However, again and again we are faced with the attitude that user testing can only be conducted in one way - via moderated, in-person, think-aloud sessions. Furthermore, the UX practitioners are too spread out within the organizations, often working on multiple projects at a time. So instead of applying the resources where new ideas and concepts are nurtured and developed, they are applied all over the place, in a very thin layer, and often used for headless user testing, to put a 'quality mark' on the product. Furthermore, it is very seldom that we meet UX practitioners, who work from a more mixed- or quantitative perspective. The majority of the UX practitioners we have met have their origin in the qualitative space. Qualitative methods take time, hence add to the workload. And often this approach is not suitable to neither where they are in the development process, nor the industrial setting they work in.

#### **3.2 UX and business**

The winds are shifting within the industry landscape, when we focus on UX. It is no longer enough to create user experiences, user research, and user tests, you need to have a buy-in from business to gain a seat at the table. In order to gain this, you need to be able to speak the language of business and prove the impact of your work. As a UX practitioner it is of great value if you are able to put numbers onto experiences, track development and progress over time, and connect your UX work to overall KPIs and OKRs. This is still something UX practitioners struggle to do, maybe due to the qualitative nature of their work.

### **4 New ways of working**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit it became evident that we need new ways of working with user involvement and user testing, since in-person sessions were not possible. We have experienced that being able to conduct user testing remotely - and for our part unmoderated, frees up a lot of time and resources. We were part of a research study conducted by students from Aalborg University and a big finance organization both danish-based [2]. Here it was found that preparing, conducting, and analyzing a moderated, in-person, think-aloud test with five to seven participants took between 52 to 64 hours. It was compared to using Preely, which took nine hours in total. Hence, they saved between 43 to 55 hours. Hours that were freed up to do other

tasks, without going on compromise with the original process or quality of the product.

## 5 Lifting UX maturity

We believe that continuing to apply remote, unmoderated user testing can be a lifter for the overall UX maturity within the organizations. How?

By continuing to apply remote, unmoderated user testing it is possible to set up a continuous user test process, without using time on moderating. Having this established will heighten the overall UX of the product. We imagine sending out a test after each Sprint to test the new iteration of the product. Instead of using time on moderating the test, the UX practitioners will go work on something else for the upcoming Sprint and let the platform collect data and insights. Hereafter, the UX practitioner will return to the test and harvest insights and results and make informed improvements to the product. Working like this will free up time that can be used on something else - e.g. more in-depth UX research or for testing groundbreaking new concepts, without compromising quality anywhere in the development process. Using an unmoderated, remote approach makes it possible for UX practitioners who are not comfortable with quantitative tests to actually conduct them, since they are guided through the process. This enables all UX practitioners to put numbers to experiences and track performance and progress over time, and they will have UX metrics that can be mapped up against business KPIs and OKRs within the organization. Then we are one step closer to a seat at the table, which can entail more resources to the UX area, and in the end heighten the UX maturity within the organizations.

## References

1. Øvad, T. and Larsen, L. B. (2015). The Prevalence of UX Design in Agile Development Processes in Industry. In: Proceedings from the 2015 Agile Conference. IEEE. ISBN 978-1-4673-7153-7. Page 40-49.
2. Pedersen, J.H.H., Sørensen, M. (2020) Asynchronous Remote Usability Testing in Practice: Exploratory Interviews with IT Professionals. Department of Computer Science, Aalborg University, 2020.