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BOB THOMAS

USER RESEARCH CONSULTANT, LLC

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Summary

Bob Thomas is Founder and Principal of his own consultancy: Bob Thomas, User Research Consultant, LLC.

Previously, he was Director of User Research at Liberty Mutual Insurance, where he worked for 11 years establishing a user experience research team, expanding best practices around usability testing and customer research, and scaling user research within the organization. His background includes user experience research, usability testing, design thinking, service design, graphic design, and product management. He is a frequent presenter at international, national, and local user experience events.

He is currently President of UXPA (User Experience Professionals' Association) Boston and the Mentoring Lead for UXPA Boston Conferences. He holds an MBA in Marketing and International Business from Suffolk University, and an MS in Human Factors in Information Design from Bentley University.

Accomplishments

- Created a co-located user research team of 10 user research practitioners responsible for all digital-facing applications and websites
- Championed the accessibility practice for the organization, improving usability for all
- Promoted lean UX research methodologies for 40+ Agile squads, reducing design time and increasing speed to market
- Refined study methodologies to include in-person and remote interactions with customers, leading to increased quality of results in desktop and mobile applications
- Paired qualitative with quantitative research and analysis, providing visibility into trends
- Created communication methods to share study results, increasing transparency in design decisions
- Led design thinking workshops, including customer interviews, persona and journey map creation, and prototyping and brainstorming, improving the quality and consistency of design solutions

He has specific expertise in improving the design and usability of products by emphasizing actionable, high-value aspects of the user experience:

- Working with executives to identify business objectives and product development needs
- Leading cross-functional teams, with a focus on user-centered research and design thinking
- Evolving a customer-centric, Agile way of working
- Supporting the delivery of best-in-class customer experiences
- Strengthening UX operations and culture



15 years of Management Experience



15 years of Mentoring Experience



15 years of User Research and Testing Experience:

- Quantitative Studies
- Qualitative Studies
- Customer Interviews
- Ethnographic Research
- Contextual Inquiry
- Focus Groups
- Card Sorting



Additional Experience in:

- Design Thinking
- Lean UX
- Persona Development
- Journey Mapping
- Market Research



Running a Design Thinking Workshop

Professional Experience

Founder and Principal, Bob Thomas, User Research Consultant, LLC
(October 2019 – present)

Partnered with companies lacking knowledge in the areas of user-centered design, resulting in bottom-line improvements to both online self-service for their customers and usability of their desktop and mobile websites and applications.

- Created and led design thinking workshops and design sprints
- Created and led workshops on how to conduct user research interviews and usability tests
- Created and ran large-scale quantitative benchmark studies
- Created and ran usability tests, card sorts, and tree tests

Director of User Research, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Boston, MA
(June 2008 – October 2019)

Started as an individual contributor in user experience research and built a team of 10 user research practitioners. Championed usability research and testing and elevated the profile of user experience in U.S. Consumer Markets. Furthered the “user experience mission” among all levels of the company. Focused on big picture thinking and key findings.

- Directed, managed, and led a user research team
- Mentored team members
- Defended recommendations to management and stakeholders
- Designed usability tests, analyzed results, and recommended actionable changes
- Conducted in-person qualitative usability tests and large-scale quantitative usability studies
- Facilitated design thinking workshops
- Developed personas, journey maps, and service design blueprints
- Performed accessibility reviews within WCAG AA guidelines for websites and apps
- Led focus groups
- Designed a usability lab
- Created a usability wiki with all readouts and presentations

Research Associate, Design & Usability Center, Bentley University, Waltham, MA
(January 2007 - May 2008)

Improved the usability of applications by ensuring that products were easy to use, safe, satisfying, and profitable. Managed the usability testing and redesign of a corporate intranet, resulting in savings to the company of over \$200,000 annually.

- Performed heuristic evaluations of clients’ websites, and prototyped alternative designs
- Moderated usability tests, analyzed test results, and developed recommendations
- Performed web accessibility reviews within Section 508 guidelines for websites and apps
- Wrote test plans, moderator guides, surveys, and questionnaires
- Developed user profiles and personas
- Developed prototypes, including wireframes and screen mock-ups

Director of Product Management, Bitstream Inc., Cambridge, MA
(August 1999 - January 2007)

- Collaborated with marketing and engineering teams to launch font-rendering and text-composition solutions that served as cornerstones of the company’s product lines
- Presented to international digital TV standards’ organizations for successful adoption of a font technology solution
- Worked successfully with the People’s Republic of China over a three-year period to receive certification for a technology solution that met government standards
- Developed product requirements documents and business cases, based on research as well as feedback from sales staff and customers



Running the UX Fair



Mentoring Leads,
UXPA Boston

Education

Master of Science, Human Factors in Information Design

Bentley University, Waltham, MA

Master of Business Administration

Suffolk University, Boston, MA

Bachelor of Arts

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

Graphic Design Certificate

Northeastern University, Boston, MA

Groups and Associations

- **President**, UXPA Boston (User Experience Professionals Association, Boston)
- **Mentoring Lead**, UXPA Boston Conference and UX Fair
- Boston CHI (Computer Human Interaction)
- SIG CHI (Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction)
- UXPA International

Presentations, Panels, Papers

- *Podcast, 97 Things Every UX Practitioner Should Know, O'Reilly, November 2021*
“[Bring Rapid User Research Methods to Agile Teams](#)”
- *Published Article, 97 Things Every UX Practitioner Should Know, June 2021*
“[Bring Rapid User Research Methods to Agile Teams](#)”
- *Published Article, UXPA Magazine, December 2018*
“[UX Mentoring at Scale: A How-to Guide](#)”
- *Presentation, UXPA International, June 2018*
“[Building a UX Brand](#)”
- *Presentation, UXPA International, June 2016*
“[Faulty by Design: A Psychological Examination of How Our Decisions Are Guided and Made](#)”
- *Published Case Study, Successful User Strategies and Roadmaps, Morgan Kaufmann, September 2015*
“[You Can Build a Successful UX Strategy, But Not in One Day](#)”
- *Published Paper and Presentation, Human Computer Interface International, July 2013*
“[Merging Methodologies: Combining Individual and Group Card Sorts](#)”
- *Presentation, UXPA International, June 2013*
“[Five Arguments Against Focus Groups - And How to Overcome Them](#)”
- *Published Sidebar, It's Our Research, Morgan Kaufmann, November 2012*
“[Visual Survey Results](#)”
- *Presentation, UXPA International, June 2012*
“[Five Rules for Mentoring New User Experience Professionals](#)”
- *Panel, UXPA International, June 2012*
“[Building Out a User Experience Team: Making User Experience Relevant Companywide](#)”



Presenting at UXPA