



Headquarters: Toronto, Canada

Founded: 1922

Industry: Retail

THE GOAL

To increase the amount of user feedback throughout product development with limited internal bandwidth

THE RESULT

Ran rapid, frequent user tests to validate and inform design decisions by involving team members from multiple departments

Canadian Tire proactively validates product updates through weekly user tests

Popular retailer makes user testing a standard part of development and promotes a user-centric culture by including members of different departments in UX research.

The Challenge

When Steve McGuire joined Canadian Tire as Associate Manager of Digital Usability and Optimization, the company already knew the value of customer feedback. The team was conducting research with UserTesting on an occasional basis with special projects, such as a site redesign.

McGuire knew that getting user feedback early in product development could significantly decrease the risk that comes with launching an update or a new feature. He wanted to start making UX research a standard part of the development process so that every new design or design change was validated before it launched. This would ensure a better experience for customers.

However, despite the size of the company, he didn't have an internal UX research team. He had limited bandwidth to set up and review user tests but he knew there was a growing interest in the practice of UX across the organization. He needed a way to conduct continuous user testing without an internal UX Research and Strategy department at his disposal.

The Solution

The movement toward creating customer-first experiences in the company was gaining momentum. As McGuire said, "The organization made a commitment to do more testing across a wide range of digital products and offerings." McGuire's colleagues supported the idea of evidence-based design as a way to mitigate risk and save time and resources on development.

He started by establishing what he named "The User Testing Crew" or "UT Crew"—a group of volunteers and UX advocates from different areas of the business, including Design, Content Creation, IT, and Strategy. They weren't professional

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The team is encouraged to capture both the frustrations and delights of our customers. We look for video clips that make good ‘TV moments’. These clips really resonate with the audience of our reports.

- Steve McGuire, Associate Manager
of Digital Usability and Optimization,
Canadian Tire

researchers, but team members who had a desire to come together and better understand customer perceptions of the digital products offered by Canadian Tire. The objective was for group members to learn more about user experience, user testing, and evidence-based design. The desired outcome was to give them a greater understanding of how to implement customer insights to build exceptional digital products.

The UT Crew committed to meeting twice a week. Current design projects are tabled and user tests get written, reviewed and analyzed. A weekly report is generated from the Crew with recommendations for design changes based on the feedback from user tests.

They quickly learned how fast and easy it was to set up studies within the UserTesting platform. Each week, the group gathers to determine the criteria of a test requested for a digital product. Then, three team members will watch three videos each—taking notes along the way and harvesting relevant video clips. They meet later in the week to analyze the video reviews and look for patterns in user behavior from the test results. They use whiteboards to organize their findings and gain consensus among the group. One person is designated to author the report. A report template was created so that key findings and recommendations are understood and easily consumed by stakeholders and executives.

While learning about the different aspects of user testing, team members are able to contribute to the design of products by providing evidence-based feedback to their project teams directly. Sharing the workload means that the team is self-managing with little oversight required and new members to the team can be integrated easily. This weekly commitment to user testing brings two benefits to the Canadian Tire team. First, the research findings can quickly be implemented into the product to create a better user experience. Being able to validate and improve upon design ideas in prototyping or product enhancement phase allows the team to move fast and eliminate guesswork. “When you can validate your product with UserTesting, you’re confident to move forward with design recommendations because they are evidence-based,” stated McGuire.

Second, the excitement around improving the products and providing an optimized user experience spreads throughout the organization. Members of the UT Crew take their learnings from the research back to their own departments to share with their colleagues. Now, McGuire gets research ideas and requests from all across the company. “There’s a movement here towards implementing customer-first experiences and improving usability and UX in general,” said McGuire.

The Outcome

The organization now tests everything from their live products to their early-stage prototypes, and they even use UserTesting to record users speaking their thoughts aloud as they perform card sorting activities and surveys. Getting user feedback

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We want the whole company validating product design and thinking about making frictionless, meaningful experiences for our customers.

early and often throughout development has helped the team build effective, engaging products while saving time and resources on development. McGuire said, “We have to take risks as product designers, but sometimes it doesn’t make sense to take on all the risk. That’s essentially what designers do and stakeholders do if they don’t make efforts to validate their concepts and their ideas. If you can validate your ideas with users early and often, then you can minimize the amount of risk you have to take. It’s really just about coming together as an organization so we can better understand the needs and expectations of our customers.”

ABOUT CANADIAN TIRE

Canadian Tire is a proud Canadian company that knows life in Canada better than anyone else. They offer products and services that help Canadians live active, healthy lives and their store network and staff connect communities from coast-to-coast. Learn more: www.canadiantire.ca



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ABOUT USERTESTING

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