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# Wireframe Process Overview

NEURONY INSIGHTS

## **"The first draft of anything is rubbish"** is a line writers and designers often use to describe their process.

For us, the first wireframe is almost always a freehand drawing on a whiteboard or a piece of paper, done during or just after a discussion to capture essential information.

Wireframes are an integral part of our Product Discovery Process; they're also one of the least abstract deliverables of the process and the ones clients tend to find most helpful when giving feedback.

As a consequence, we pay close attention to how they are made, what they represent and what their drawbacks are.



# What wireframes are and are not

Wireframes are visual representations of User Stories & features. Their purpose is to describe general functionality and user flow. They offer little in terms of design & UI, but do paint a clear picture of what information the product's screens contain and how this information should be structured . A wireframe is a starting stage in the product's visual design cycle and can vary in complexity.

The concept of **"wireframe"** is flexible; this is important, because we mold our wireframe output to the client's expectations and experience.For example, large companies with multiple stakeholders involved in a product typically require detailed wireframes to account for less tech-savvy decision makers; at the other end of the spectrum, CTOs tend to be fine with basic sketches.

An important distinction to make is the one between Wireframing and UX Sketching. UX Sketching includes Wireframing (sometimes starting from it) and also covers Prototyping, User Testing, adding Animations, and planning out the whole User Flow.

For some projects, the whole UX process might be unnecessary at the outset (think simple corporate websites), whereas for others it should be as important as the design work itself. We include wireframing in all our projects because, regardless of the variation we just described, wireframes are always useful.

## Our wireframe reference sheet

We use a lot of UX knowledge to build wireframes because even though UX is not their main purpose, they do influence a UX designer's work (directly or indirectly). Over time, we settled on a set of steps and goals we try to take into consideration when designing a wireframe. In a very condensed form, our wireframing process looks like this:

### 🥏 Goal-Driven

- Every screen should help the user achieve 1 goal (e.g.: find out something they didn't know, generate a form submission, a click etc)
- b. It should be made clear to the user what the screen wants from him.
- c. If a type of user behaviour is not to be encouraged, the actions that comprise it should not be made readily apparent within the layout (e.g.: if users should be discouraged from calling a business, the phone number should be left on the contact page alone and NOT be made a link)

Efficient

- a. All screens should abide by the same <u>GRID</u> <u>SYSTEM</u>
- b. All elements in a wireframe should be descriptive and rely as little as possible on the client's imagination. They can even look like shoddy designs if that does the trick.
- c. Repeat, repeat, repeat all pages should have a familiar layout and all crucial elements should be placed in the exact same spots, in the same way and at the same size
- Every screen should have just enough information on it to help the user achieve the goal described at 1.; no more, no less
- A wireframe should help illustrate the parts that a user story cannot accurately convey – they are an imagination supplement



- a. Wireframes for desktop and wireframes for mobile should be different and contain different elements
- b. The goal of a screen should dictate the information hierarchy:
  - i. Make a list of the different points of information that you're working with and order them numerically.
  - ii. Now make sure that number one is standing out a little bit more than number two; you can do this by adjusting the elements of this particular point of information (i.e. its size, colour, weight, etc.).
  - iii. Carry on with this throughout the list and then you would have created a descending hierarchy of information (do the reverse for an ascending hierarchy).
  - iv. And remember it doesn't matter in which direction the document flows, just as long as it flows in a specific direction.

Iterative

- a. Ask someone on the team what they think about your wireframes
- b. Take wireframes through at least 2 rounds of client feedback.
- c. If possible, run the wireframes by someone on the client's team not involved in the project

## Wireframing Toolkit



Whatever gets the job done well is the right tool for that job. That means that on some projects we went with **Balsamiq Mockups**, on others with **UXPin**, and on a number of projects we relied on **Sketch** or **Adobe Photoshop/ Illustrator**. It all depends on where on the Visual-Interaction axis the wireframe needs to be.

## Why we use wireframes

#### Wireframes have to fulfill 3 important jobs:

- Complement user stories & acceptance criteria
- Clarify client requests
- Brief the designer

Most importantly, wireframes offer an intuitive overview of the product. They are abstract, but less so than user stories and acceptance criteria. This makes them the ideal vehicle for client feedback – calling them "an imagination supplement" is no coincidence. Moreover, they have some beneficial side effects we will explore shortly. Wireframes make it easier for a client to give feedback as well as for project managers/ account managers to quickly check whether a client's request has been properly understood. They also are a great brief for interface designers for more or less the same reasons clients love them.

A great (and often overlooked) benefit of wireframes is that they're a couple of steps away from becoming a rough prototype – tools such as UXPin allow you to add basic interactions (navigation, dropdown effects etc) to a wireframe, so they can also be used in a user-testing environment.



# How wireframes reduce production costs

Because they bridge the gap between abstract user stories and technical specifications, wireframes are great as cost-saving measures. Each of their goals achieve a couple of desired effects, as follows:

#### Complement user stories & acceptance criteria

- Improves Quote Accuracy
- Highlights hidden mistakes
- Reduces redundancy

- **Clarify client requests** 
  - Improves Quote Accuracy
  - Highlights hidden mistakes

#### **Brief the designer**

- Improves Quote Accuracy
- Reduces redundancy

Wireframes improve quote accuracy because they make it clearer to everyone involved what the product should look and behave like.

Their biggest merits, however, are due not to their form, but their execution. In building a wireframe, you have to interpret User Stories and acceptance criteria.

You have to be critical of them and make groups of stories make sense together, in a single screen.

This process can reveal gaps in the user stories (missing stories or incomplete acceptance criteria) – the hidden mistakes – or redundant elements that can be safely reduced to a more coherent form.

The way wireframes affect other elements in the product development process and their usefulness to the people involved prompted us to make them a central feature of our Product Discovery Process.

## **About Neurony**

Neurony is a development agency based in Bucharest, Romania, with over 17 years of experience in the IT industry. Its main area of activity is web and custom software development. Working hand in glove with the development team is a strong, experienced marketing team. They make sure that every Neurony-made product is SEO-friendly and market-ready.

For 2 years in a row, Neurony was featured as a B2B Industry Leader in Eastern Europe on Clutch, top B2B ratings and reviews platform.





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