

Helping Sony Ericsson recapture a leading position in smartphone design

From early 2010 Sony Ericsson released a series of new smartphones using the Android operating system. As part of a commitment to product excellence they wanted to gain deep understanding of customers' experiences and feed this learning into future development. Sony Ericsson commissioned *new experience* to plan and execute a rolling programme of research to evaluate new handsets across Europe, Asia and the Americas.

In-home observation to capture set up experience



We recruited people across the different countries who were looking to upgrade their handset to the type of phone involved in the research. They didn't know upfront who the research was for but we told them that they'd receive a new phone that it would be theirs to keep. We came to their home with the phone and observed them setting it up. Once they felt they'd completed set up we discussed their first impressions and any issues they encountered. This revealed the ways

Sony Ericsson could better support users in configuring the phone's software and settings, transferring contacts, and learning how to navigate and scroll.

Blogging and discussion group to capture early thoughts and feelings

Following the initial set up we got participants to record their experiences with the new phone through a private blog. They were able to add photos and videos to illustrate their experiences, and they sent through many interesting, detailed, and often surprising anecdotes. A daily 'blog digest' comprising stories of delights and pain points was eagerly read by client stakeholders. After 10 days we brought the participants together for a discussion group. Using creative exercises we explored key pluses and minuses, and looked at how the phone was changing behaviours. The sessions also revealed common issues and reasons people might call customer services or return the phone.



Follow-up tasks, and final 'tell-the-CEO' video



For a further 20 days following the discussion group we sent participants specific tasks to try out and report on. This enabled us to get feedback on features of interest unique to each phone. At the end of the study participants posted a final video to tell the CEO of Sony Ericsson about their experiences, and whether they would recommend the phone to a friend. The videos were powerful for internal communication within the company – and the CEO *did* see them!

Enhanced design as a result of our research

Since we started this rolling programme of research Sony Ericsson has fed our findings back into the development process resulting in many enhancements that include improved set-up wizards, easier contacts transfer, easier unlocking and initial navigation, better calling experience, and a more easy-to-learn interface. With each new handset we have seen customers' ratings improve. In what is a very competitive market Sony Ericsson's new phones have recaptured a leading position in design and are at the forefront of satisfying customers' needs.

What Sony Ericsson had to say about working with us

"*new experience's* research approach has helped focus minds on the customer and ensure we up our game with each new phone we release." *Paul Simpson, Global Research Manager*