

Strategic Value of Outstanding User Experience in the Workplace



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Introduction

The average smartphone has more than 60 installed apps, but you most likely learned how to use them with minimal trouble. This is because the user experience in applications for personal use is so intuitive. Users rarely visit the 'Help' section, and even young children are proficient without needing guidance.

However, it's not the same case in software development. Global enterprise IT spending reached \$3.7 trillion in 2019, but much of the user experience in enterprise software remains stuck in the past. Applications were often developed with feature and function in mind first; user experience was an afterthought.

And because of this, most business software users have settled for what they got, even if it's not intuitive or well designed. Thus, users have grown accustomed to widely different experiences when submitting invoices, or completing business expenses for reimbursement vs. looking for directions on Google Maps.

This inefficiency is not only unnecessary, it's also costly: employees in the U.S. waste approximately 22 minutes each workday, on average, dealing with technology-related issues, the equivalent of more than two weeks per year in lost productivity.¹

¹ "Wasted Workday: Employees Lose Over Two Weeks Each Year Due To IT-Related Issues", Robert Half Survey

Unpacking the Discrepancy

Multiple reasons drive this user experience gap:

- **Business applications are naturally more complex and require more features:** improving the user experience on legacy systems is difficult and faces resistance from long time users who are averse to change. These users have essentially trained themselves on a suboptimal way of working. While they may not have liked it initially, they now have become so acclimated to it that they vehemently resist change. In some ways, we cannot blame them. They have no guarantee that the new way of working will be better and fear it will simply require them to relearn perhaps a new, but still cumbersome, application. Outdated internal systems present multiple challenges to employees. Poorly designed user interfaces are intrinsic drivers of bad user experience and have high tangible costs. Buggy interfaces lead to a high number of employee help desk calls. Challenging navigation can turn into a major source of uncompleted tasks. Lack of personalization generalizes language and workflows in such a way that they stop addressing industry-specific needs. All of these issues drive employees to adopt non-compliant tools, increasing firm exposure and driving up risks of data breaches.
- **Software usage:** much of the software in businesses today is not fully leveraged. It sits as shelfware: installed but unused across businesses, which amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars annually. In one example, Avon wrote down \$125 million in software costs, after sales representatives started leaving the organization in droves due to poor user experience with a new order management tool.¹ Not surprisingly, a tremendous amount of software sits idle in desktops around the world. Research estimates that 38% of all global software deployed is not used by employees. This amounts to an average of \$7.4 million in software waste per business, adding up to a total annual waste of \$34 billion in the U.S. and U.K. alone. Industries such as manufacturing and retail show above average software waste, at 40% and 39% respectively.²

For years, reliability and sturdiness took the front seat while user experience became an afterthought. Organizations became attuned to the importance of user experience for end-customers but continued to deprioritize the employee experience with internal software. Employees started looking for ways to avoid using mandated enterprise software, either by reducing usage to the minimum required tasks, or by using non-compliant alternative tools while no one was looking.

User Experience Drives Employee Value

52%

of employees are dissatisfied with software¹

38%

of global software deployed sits unused²

95%

of employees would be happier with better tools¹

\$34b

total annual software waste in UK and US²

1. State of Software Happiness Report 2019

2. 1E Research, Software Usage and Waste Report 2016

1 "Avon Pulls Plug On \$125 Million SAP Project", InformationWeek

2 1E Research, Software Usage and Waste Report 2016

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Making User Experience Paramount

Generations of employees have faced a steep learning curve every time they have been introduced to new technology, wasting hours of productivity and becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their experiences in the workplace. A survey with thousands of employees in the U.S. shows that approximately 52% are dissatisfied at work because of software tools they are using.³

User experience is key to change this perception. Organizations observe an immediate reduction in costs driven by lower demand for training and help desk support. Businesses also save by redirecting dollars from software replacements to software upgrades, which are less costly.

In addition to direct cost reductions, great user experience drives higher employee productivity through better performance and increased satisfaction. Intuitive interfaces reduce the amount of time needed to complete tasks, freeing up workers to focus on more valuable activities.

Digital transformation and its impact in the workplace have made companies realize that poor user experience negatively impacts employee productivity and happiness. Through experience mapping, user research, and design thinking, software companies are tackling employee disenchantment with user experience head on. And UX arrived and became a core element of technology, in constant evolution.

Leading companies, like Epicor, have changed the way they design software to put UX front and center, with solutions that offer more than just an attractive interface. They see experience as

³ State of Software Happiness Report 2019.



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fundamental to streamline critical business functions, facilitate industry-specific best practices, and ensure organizations are able to meet their targets and user needs today and in the future. Organizations that provide outstanding user experience observe greater collaboration among employees, lower attrition rates, and increased employee satisfaction. According to a 2019 survey, 95% of employees would be more satisfied if they had better software tools at work.⁴

The Epicor Approach

Three key aspects drive Epicor's UX approach and make us stand out in the market. They enable our

4 State of Software Happiness Report 2019
Icons by flaticon, freepik, nhor pai and srip

customers to improve performance and profitability by freeing up resources, reducing complexity, and increasing efficiency.

User Interface

Consistent and modern user interfaces are two of many essential components of a superior user experience. User interfaces at Epicor minimize content and exclude unnecessary features. When customers accomplish their daily tasks faster and easier, they have more time to focus on growth and innovation.

We have developed a unique visual and functional approach to transform the user experience within our applications, based on design thinking principles driven by user best practices and customer feedback. This approach yields surprisingly simple workflows and gives

flexibility to the experience. It enables end-users to explore only high-level relevant data or drill down on detailed information as needed, while keeping a consistent browser-based experience.

Industry Depth

Industry 4.0 has brought significant changes to production systems, workflow processes, and human competencies. User Experience is the force driving this change, a critical factor in measuring success in the highly digital, sophisticated environments of this industrial era.

At Epicor, we believe deep industry expertise is fundamental to deliver great user experience which, in turn, is critical to enable innovation. Our solutions are purpose built for the Manufacturing, Distribution and Retail industries, and for their sub-verticals. We leverage our

Epicor's Holistic Approach to User Experience

User Interface



Kinetic User Interface makes your job easier and more delightful

User Experience

Configuration



Make the experience unique to meet company and user needs with Epicor Application Studio

Industry Depth



Leverage the software to drive and execute industry specific best practices and processes

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software to execute on practices and processes specific to each industry.

These are some examples of how Epicor is delivering key innovation to support our customers' digital transformation strategies:

- Extending technology to more users through platform, services, and applications
- Providing a browser-based experience so users can access solutions at any time and from any device while maintaining the same level of user experience
- Providing context aware applications for enterprise collaboration like Epicor Collaborate and contextual Help and Support
- Enabling Industry 4.0 trends, such as Artificial Intelligence, through Epicor Virtual Agent and Epicor IoT

Tailored Experience

At Epicor, we understand that one size doesn't fit all. That's why providing end-users with the ability to tailor the system to meet their unique company and user needs has always been a key feature of Epicor solutions.

But this hasn't always been a simple task. System modifications often result in code change that is not easy to maintain and upgrade. Keeping software current and up-to-date becomes a challenging process.

Epicor Application Studio brings a revolutionary approach based on best practices for user personalization and system configuration. It's secure, cloud friendly, and breakproof during upgrades. And the best part: it requires low to no code.

With Application Studio users can easily configure Kinetic applications with layers, using a visual designer with rules and events, moving elements around with drag and drop functionality, and previewing and validating changes before

going live, among other innovative features.

Incorporating Customers' Voices into UI/UX Design

Epicor believes crafting a great user experience that exceeds expectations requires customer participation from the early start. Spending time with customers is the most effective way for UI design teams to learn what matters to users, how they use the software, and what they expect to get out of it.

We use multiple channels to gather customer feedback:

- **Early adopter programs** enable power users to test drive applications early in the process and share feedback through live feedback sessions. Through the Kinetic Preview Program, we let users test drive Kinetic applications before they are generally available ensuring our products reflect customer needs and performance expectations.



Final Thoughts

User Experience starts with the user—and must stay closely aligned with the users—to be exceptional. There is simply no reason that business software should be difficult to learn or navigate. We have become accustomed to easy-to-learn, easy-to-use applications in our day to day lives and expecting the same from enterprise software should be the norm as well. It starts with making and improving on user experience as a continuous effort.

- **Individual sessions with customers** that utilize guided hands-on scenarios to capture one-on-one feedback from a variety of users coming from different industries and demographics.
- **User telemetry** enables organizations to capture data on application usage and performance, including most used screens, data volume consumption, time to task completion, and how users navigate applications. Epicor applies user telemetry to drive smart innovation based on how customers use our system.

It is critical for organizations to act on research data collected. They should be applied continuously to ensure software experience exceeds customer expectations. Effective mechanisms for processing and incorporating user feedback into applications should be put in place. Turning user data into product innovation results in increased loyalty and adoption.

Customer feedback drives our development priorities at Epicor. We take user feedback so seriously that we've introduced an in-app feedback button so customers can easily share comments while using our applications. Users are at the heart of everything we do. It enables us to help organizations become innovators in the industries where they operate.

At Epicor, we take this principle seriously, even naming our new user interface Kinetic because it means *motion*. We adamantly believe organizations, and employees within them, need to stay in motion to pull ahead and remain competitive.

User experience should not be an afterthought, with features and functions taking precedent. Great applications should facilitate, not deter, progress. In its simplest definition, technology (delivered by great user experience) is the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aims of human life.⁵ Technology evolves constantly, changing the world and being changed by it. So do our solutions.

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica definition

About Encompass

Encompass Solutions is a business and software consulting firm that specializes in ERP systems, EDI, and Managed Services support for Manufacturers and Distributors. Serving small and medium-sized businesses since 2001, Encompass has helped modernize operations and automate processes for hundreds of customers across the globe. Whether undertaking full-scale implementation, integration, and renovation of existing systems, Encompass provides a specialized approach to every client's needs. By identifying customer requirements and addressing them with the right solutions, we ensure our clients are equipped to match the pace of Industry.



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