

UX BOOTH

What UX Can Learn from Print

by MIKE STRAUS on MARCH 10, 2015 in CONTENT STRATEGY

Good UX design involves more than just creating a usable product. This week, author Mike Straus shows us how the user-centered design thinking behind print magazines is just as relevant in today's digital era as it was 350 years ago.



During the 2014 World Cup, the UK-based Club Penguin magazine released a themed issue featuring codes for unlockable in-game soccer gear, sports-related articles, and World Cup-related puzzles. Fans loved the engaging, community-centric content,

and sales reflected their interest. *Magazines that tell a cohesive story from cover to cover, like Club Penguin Magazine, are examples of UX design at its finest—where design creates a memorable experience that users love, and nothing feels out of place.*

Good UX design involves more than just creating a usable product. It involves planning, creativity, analytics, and more – and the best UX design supports a rich story. Print magazines have long created stories and provided useful content for a vast audience, wrapped up in a brilliant design that’s both attractive and easy to use. The user-centered design thinking behind print magazines is just as relevant in today’s digital era as it was 350 years ago.

In this article, we’ll use Club Penguin, a massively multiplayer online, or MMO, game as an example as we explore the UX principles and practices of print magazines and how they can be applied to online content strategy, community building efforts, and web analytics processes to create more engaging, and profitable online experiences.

At Club Penguin, UX design begins by identifying the story being told. As Club Penguin’s Editorial Manager, Emma Bullen is an experienced storyteller and a passionate UX enthusiast—but her expertise and words of wisdom are gems for any UX professional wanting to create engaging online experiences. Bullen and her team of professional storytellers are masters of user experience, and by adapting the principles of print magazine design to the digital era, they’ve created a wildly popular online community that children love. Today, Club Penguin is one of Kelowna’s largest employers, and their famous success story has fueled the explosive growth of the local tech industry.

STORYTELLING: CREATING A RICH NARRATIVE

Forming a narrative is a valuable tool for guiding users, keeping their interest, and persuading them to take action. In print design and magazines, storytelling is requisite. In fact, Polish newspaper designer Jacek Utko (whose work has doubled the circulation of certain Bulgarian newspapers) likens print design to making music and says that designers who ignore storytelling in the print design process are killing newspapers.

What’s more, neuroscientific research is showing that stories actually change brain chemistry. Dr. Paul Zak is an economist and a proponent of neuroeconomics – a field that investigates how brain processes impact economic behavior. In one study, Dr. Zak found