



What the NHS has just taught me about poor user experience.

Description

Whilst I normally blog about Gamification and finding the benefits in understanding the psychology of people, this post is of a deeply personal nature. It also shows how important user experience is. I hope though, you will retweet this far and wide. Oh – and it is a bit of a rant.

This was to be a letter to our medical practice, but to be honest; I decided that it would not make any difference. The last time I tried to complain to the NHS, they seemed to think that it was perfectly acceptable to be told it was best to take my heavily pregnant wife, who was in labour and begging for help, back home. The same heavily pregnant wife who less than an hour later gave birth to our daughter, in our upstairs toilet with no one but me available to deliver her. All this whilst on hold to the same hospital as the tried to find someone to talk to me. This broke none of the their guidelines. Basic human care was apparently not high on the agenda. So rather than going that pointless route again, they will be getting a short note with the URL to this blog on it.

A few months ago, a lump started to grow behind my ear. After a while, it began to annoy me. So, I went to the doctor. This took some doing, but as I could plan ahead I was able to get an appointment. Anyway, the doctor told me it was some kind of wart and that if it was irritating me, it could be removed. I agreed and waited for my appointment.

A month later, I was on a bed in the day surgery having it removed. If I am honest, this part of the story is great. It was painless and easy and pretty quick to get sorted. I was told that all removed lumps are sent away for analysis and that after 3 weeks I should phone the surgery to just check that there was nothing wrong. As it was “just a wart”, I was not all that worried.

A couple of weeks later, I got a letter from the surgery (below). It said that my results are back and had a few different pre written paragraphs. Things like, get a non urgent appointment for 2 weeks time. Get a phone appointment with a doctor or practice nurse. The one that was ticked and in bold on mine? **Make an appointment to see a doctor**. That was a pretty clear instruction and I called the surgery.



Click the Image above to see it pop out at you ?

A very cheerful lady answers (after my 3rd call – the first one I was hung up on after 5 minutes and the second one I gave up on). She offered me an appointment nearly 2 weeks in the future. In my mind I was politely saying that if I had wanted a 2 week appointment, I would have asked for one. I explained that really, for peace of mind I would love an earlier one, as the letter had suggested – or for the doctor to call me. After all, I had been told I could just call and get my results. She explained that really a doctor would want to talk to me about them.

Now, I have experience with the NHS. My mum was a nurse most of her working life. My dad works for them now, in to his 70s. I even spent a fairly unpleasant year working for them in the labs as part of my degree. I know that they do not put you in front of a doctor over a cheaper quicker option unless they have to. Well, not normally.

At this point alarm bells are ringing. She offered me an appointment for 5 days time and a bit unwillingly I agreed. That is where I made my mistake.

The mind is a cruel and strange place when it comes to fear. I had a lump, it was sent to a lab and next thing I know I am needing to see a doctor. In my mind there was only one logical conclusion – skin cancer. My Gran had it, makes sense I get it. This is not a logical reaction, but fear never is all that logical. For 5 days I went out of my mind. I must have been hell to live with. Up then down then up again, thoughts flitting between anger, depression and mortality. “What if” never far from the end of my tongue. I can only apologise and give praise to my wife for putting up with it all.

I got my results today. Thankfully they were clear of cancer. There are other issues, but they can be dealt with. However, this does not alter the fact that this kind of unthinking attitude is unacceptable. Why is it okay to make someone wait days to find out if they are ill, especially when you have the results in your hands? This is not the fault of receptionist. This is a failure of the way medical practices are run generally. No one gives a damn about the individual now. When I was young, I saw the same doctor nearly every time. Because of this, because they got to know you, they could pick up on things that only they would notice. They did house calls, out of hours checks – just to make sure you were ok. Now I am lucky if I see the same doctor twice. Thankfully, the doctor I did see (a locum as it happens) was very understanding and listened.

I am just one voice, but I still feel that I have a right to be heard. This is my way of getting that done. I would love to hear your stories and would really appreciate you spreading mine. With luck, someone will hear it and others may be spared this idiocy.

There are lessons to be learned for everyone here. User experience is about people, not about processes. As soon as you forget that, you lose trust and acceptance. Ditch the bureaucracy and the processes and get some common sense in place again.

Category

1. Rants

Tags

1. appointment
2. doctor
3. Experience
4. mind
5. results
6. time
7. told
8. user
9. weeks
10. wife

Date Created

19/11/2012

Author

andrzej-marczewski

default watermark