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A list of usability findings can be difficult to parse: they are long, highlight negative aspects of your design, and no matter how diligently your team works, they never seem to disappear completely. Despite these facts, there is hope. A multilevel strategically organized list can turn a dour take on your design into a tool for developing a compelling user experience. In addition to determining the scope and severity to assess “criticality,” strategically organized lists create a multilevel framing that highlights user objectives and business goals.

Recently, we at Blink took a multilevel approach when helping our client redesign their mobile app. The client wanted to know what did not work and also looked for guidance on the direction the app should go in for the next major iteration. Throughout our testing, we documented a variety of common usability issues such as: buttons that were easily overlooked, difficult to read text, and navigation that did not match the user expectation. However, in our final deliverables, we framed the usability issues in terms of the primary user goals. This allowed us to clearly identify opportunities to enhance the user experience, while helping the client achieve their organizational objectives. We distilled the most important issues into three insights that focused on the user’s goals when using the app. By taking this approach we presented a positive, forward-looking set of objectives for the team to build on.

The user goals emerged from our analysis as we sought out patterns across participant reactions to the app. For example, with this latest round of testing, participants expressed a preference for a non-digital solution to the tasks we presented them with. Based on their previous experiences, the participants felt that a non-digital solution was more efficient and required less effort on their part. From this, we understood that one of their main goals was to complete the process in as few steps as possible, driving us to recommend reducing the actual and perceived number of steps required of the user. Similar patterns emerged when we looked at how participants talked further about their experiences in a non-digital context, prompting us to recommend changing the language used inside the app. Once we identified the primary user objectives, we then organized the usability issues so that they both aligned. This allowed the client to see how addressing the usability issues would help the user easily accomplish what they want while also meeting their business goals.

In implementing a multilevel approach, issues that may seem minor are raised in importance because they impact an aspect of the experience that is important to the user. By prioritizing findings using this approach, you can address core aspects of the user experience in a way that is objective but is grounded in your users’ expectations and needs.