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By [Claudia Haon](#)

Interaction designer Claudia Haon attended ConveyUX, a user experience conference in Seattle hosted by Blink. It was a fantastic experience: she learned from engaging, articulate speakers and shared ideas with UX professionals from all over the world. There were some reoccurring themes that many of the speakers addressed, two of which particularly stood out and resonated with her: questioning the problems we are solving and defining what we mean by "success."

I had the opportunity to attend ConveyUX, a user experience conference in Seattle hosted by Blink, and it was a fantastic experience. Not only did I learn from engaging, articulate speakers, but I had amazing conversations with people from Germany, Korea, Italy, and all over the U.S., who work in a variety of industries. I discussed the ways QR codes are used more widely in Asia with a UX researcher from Korea, and talked about the intricacies of regulations a designer of medical devices has to navigate in her work. Plus, I ate a lot of really delicious food.

ConveyUX featured longer workshops and shorter presentations, which I found to be a very effective format. I went to presentations about digital transformation, research techniques, brain science, ethics, and a variety of other topics. There were some popular themes that many of the speakers addressed, two of which stood out and resonated with me.

Making connections at the ConveyUX Speed Networking Lunch,

Are we solving the right problem?

Actual users and their ecosystems

In response to this question, several presenters shared lessons and advice on conducting research with the right users in an effective way. They emphasized the importance of talking to and observing actual users, not just collecting information from product owners and stakeholders or using empty, market-driven personas to drive decisions. Kevin Richardson stressed that to get to real innovation, not just a better product, you need to go beyond what users *want* and try to figure out what they *need*. He talked about observing how people work and also what surrounds them, their "information ecosystem," and using these observations to help determine what information drives their decisions.

Alana Washington presenting, "Designing for AI – Ethical Roles for Designers and Product Managers." Photo courtesy of ConveyUX attendee Christine Ryu (@UX_ryu)

Data bias

Another hot topic concerning solving the right problem was data bias. In Alana Washington's fascinating presentation about ethics in designing for AI, she examined algorithmic bias and how AI sometimes inadvertently perpetuates and compounds societal inequalities because the data used to develop it is often historical and impacted by prejudice. She had a very powerful illustration of how historical data, impacted by minority redlining, influences insurance costs and leads to minorities being charged higher rates. Indi Young also discussed systemic bias that comes from historic data and the demographic assumptions that affect research. Both presenters emphasized how it's essential to diversify the teams working on research and design in order to combat such bias. Joy Buolamwini's quote, which Alana Washington highlighted in her talk, should become an industry mantra until we see more diversity among us: "Who codes matters, how we code matters, why we code matters."

Indi Young closed ConveyUX Seattle with her keynote, "Paying Better Attention to the Problem"

What does success look like?

Aim higher

The second theme that I came away thinking about is examining how we look at and measure success in experience design. Several speakers touched on the importance of considering our success criteria and the impact that our view and measurement of success have on our final design solutions. In the conference opening keynote, Arif Grusel compelled us to rethink the MVP as a goal, talking about how no one should be striving to design something that's minimally viable. He proposed shooting for a DVF (desirable, viable, feasible) product instead. Geoff Harrison and Bill Flora inspired us to aim higher — to strive to design something that works well, is distinct and cohesive, and that delights people with how well it functions.

Find the right KPI

Speaking with a more ethical lens, Alana Washington encouraged us to think about whose success we are designing for. She urges that we think about who is not represented in our scope and consider designing for the people with the most needs first. Similarly, David Evans talked about examining the KPIs we measure. He wants us to strive to create solutions that are less about clicks and conversions and more about achievement. He encourages us to design products that help people achieve their life goals, not just consume.

At the end of the conference I felt inspired and connected to a broader UX community. And all of this inspiration came alongside some practical, hands-on experience. One of the best sessions I went to was John Whalen's workshop, Designing for How People Think, which melded brain science and affinity mapping of research observations, using a lot of humor. Not only did he have the coolest pre-printed sticky notes for us to classify, but he also had the most memorable slide of the conference — a slide that asked the eternal question, chihuahua or muffin.

If you're looking to jump-start your thinking, I highly recommend ConveyUX. For the first time ever this year, we're hosting a second ConveyUX in Boston. You can join us at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel from August 14-15.

[Learn more about ConveyUX Boston](#)

John Whalen presenting, "Designing for How People Think"