

# The Future of Workshops

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Head of Product/UX @UserTesting (formerly Teston)



# Who am I? 🧐 🐱 🍅

## Experience

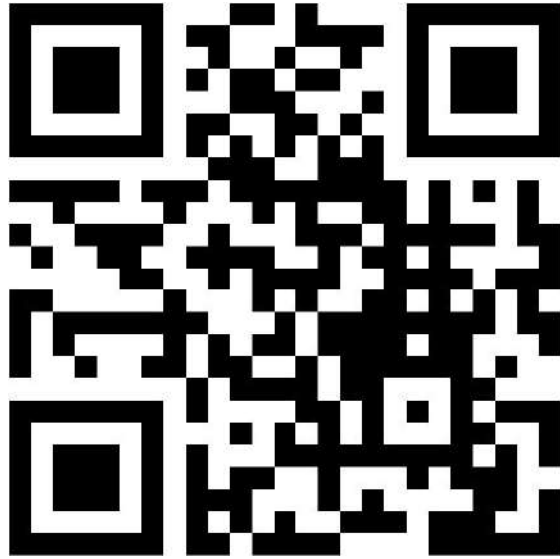
- Head of Product/UX at UserTesting (formerly Teston)
- Design and product management for startups, corporates and agencies
- Remote and distributed teams

## Workshop lover

- Average 1 per week
- Mostly remote
- Usually 4 - 20 attendees



**Who are you?**



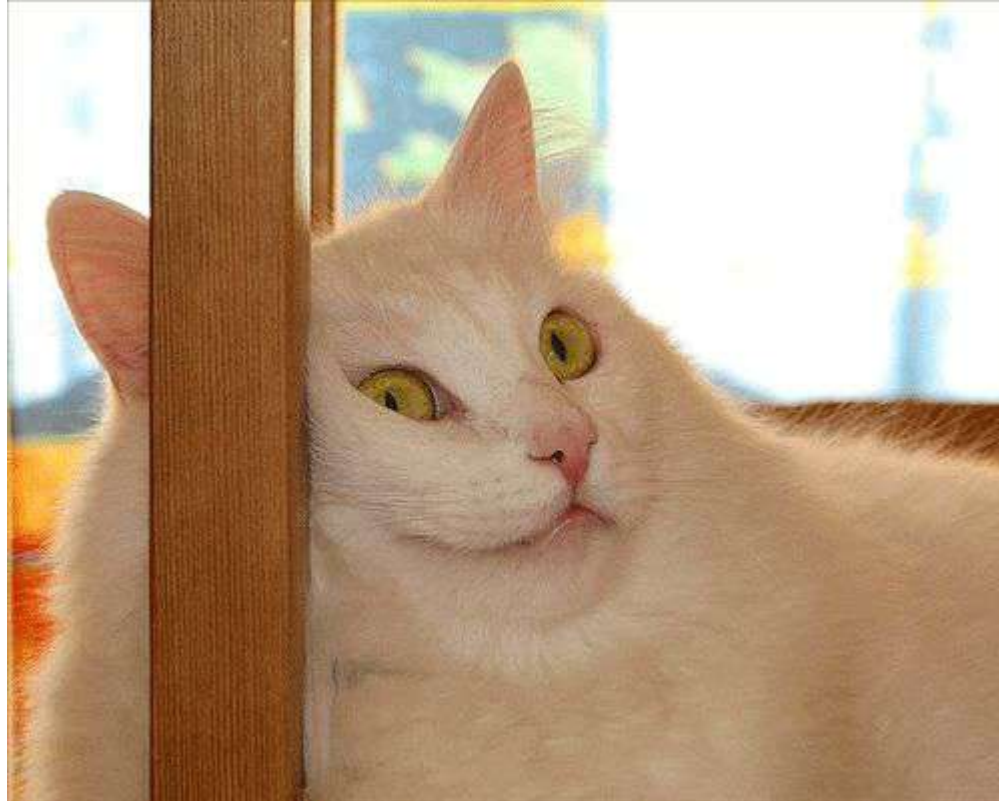
**Let's go to Mentimeter!**

**Go to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and use the code 74 01 27 0**

**I love workshops **  
**(but I don't love meetings)**

**Most meetings could be much more  
effective, engaging, and fun  
if they were workshops!**

# Typical zoom meetings



# Workshops





**Why workshops?**

# The magic of workshops ✨

- Collaborate
- Build stronger relationships
- Teach new skills
- Facilitate cross-functional working
- Tap into specific knowledge from different people
- Align and agree on next steps

# Workshop or meeting?

Plan, solve a problem, reach a decision

Create consensus

Go deep into one subject

Shared ownership important

Active participation and engagement

vs

Share/exchange information

Create awareness

Cover many topics, shallowly

No need for shared ownership

Looking for passive listening

# Workshops

Since the pandemic...



**What's different about it being remote?**

# All the things that matter are the same!

- Goals
- Outcomes
- Activities

# Some things are better remote!

- More inclusive
- Easier for introverts to engage
- No need for materials: Paper, stickies, pens, snacks, water
- It's more efficient
  - Faster activities
  - No need to interpret handwriting
  - Everything is documented digitally
- It's environmentally friendly!



OK, but what are the downsides?



# Things that are harder when remote

- Engaging the audience
- Keeping energy levels high
- Making the technology work
- Facilitating well



# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
- Keeping energy levels high
- Making the technology work
- Facilitating well



# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience

# Engaging the audience

## The challenge

- **Building trust**
  - Getting to know each other
  - Creating psychological safety
    - Knowing you won't be criticized or ridiculed
- **Encouraging the right level of participation**
  - Awkward silences
  - Stunned wall of silence
  - People speaking over each other
- **More distractions at home**

# Build trust

- Don't skip introductions
- Use icebreakers
  - Simple questions
  - Games

# Icebreaker questions

- **Professional/team questions**
  - What do you like most about your team/this company?
  - What should we celebrate from the work we did last week?
  - In one sentence, how would you explain this project to your grandma?
  - On a scale of 1-7, how are you feeling today?
- **Funny questions**
  - If you were a vegetable, what kind would you be?
  - What are your WFH guilty pleasures?
  - What's your favourite dessert?

# Icebreaker games

- **Two truths and a lie**
  - Each person prepares two truths and a lie about themselves
  - The rest have to guess which is the lie
  - Make sure that you give people time to think!
- **5 things (or 10 things) in common**
  - Put people in smaller groups
    - Ideally 3-5
    - They need to find things that everyone has in common

**These will help people build trust!**



# Encourage the right level of participation

- **Call on people by name**
  - Keeps people more on their toes
  - Clarifies the order of speaking
- **Do 'round robins'**
  - Start with different people each time
- **Use breakout groups**
  - Break people into smaller groups
    - Ideally 2-4 people
  - Don't ask people to self-organise!
    - Use breakout functionality on tools like Zoom
    - Make the groups in advance

# To video or not to video?

## **My personal policy**

- I always have video on for workshops
- I try not to ask anyone to turn video on

## **Most important**

- Be empathetic, respectful
- Be aware that everyone's working from very different circumstances
- Record everything and share
  - Allow people to watch and contribute asynchronously

# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience

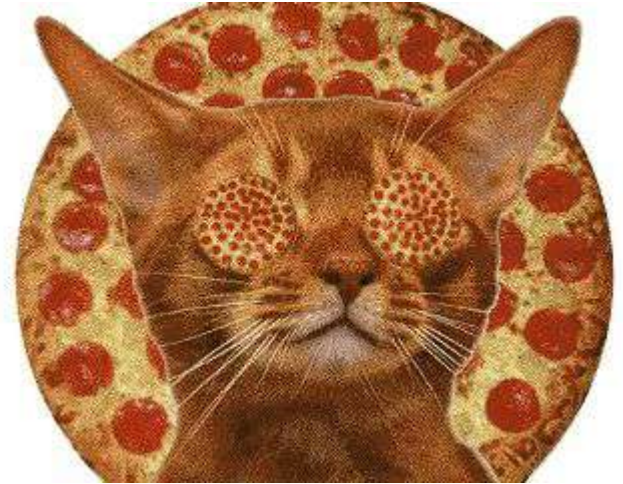
# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
- Keeping energy levels high

# Keeping energy levels high

## ⚠️ The challenge ⚠️

- **Avoid exhausting people**
- **Judging when to take breaks**
  - Reading the audience without body language (or facial expressions)
  - Hard to tell if energy levels are flagging
- **Energising the audience**
  - Many physical energiser games are not possible
  - You can't just supply endless sweets and pizza



# Avoid exhausting people

- **Plan for shorter workshops**
  - Max 4 hours
  - Ideally 1-2 hours
- **Break up longer workshops**
  - Multiple sessions
  - Multiple days

# Judging when to take breaks

## Plan bio-breaks, lots of them

- At least 5 min per hour
- Make it clear when you expect people to return
  - 'Come back at 12.05', not 'Come back in 5 min'



# Energising the audience

## Run remote energisers!

- Bring the energy up
- Maintain energy
- Goal...
  - Engage the creative mind
  - Build stronger social bonds
  - Create a positive vibe
  - Equalise and get everyone the same page
  - Have fun!



# Energisers

- Emoji check-in
  - Pick an emoji that best describes how you're feeling



# Energisers

- Emoji check-in
  - Pick an emoji that best describes how you're feeling
- Drawing
  - Describe how you feel about the last sprint/quarter in a weather sketch
  - If the last sprint was an animal, what animal would it be and why?



# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
- Keeping energy levels high

# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
- Keeping energy levels high
- Making the technology work

# Making the technology work

## The challenge

- **Making the most of technology**
  - Teaching people how to use tools the best way
  - Helping people get familiar and comfortable
- **Working around tech problems (inevitable)**

# Making the most of technology

- **Explain how you want the call tool to be used**
  - Mute by default
  - What features do you want participants to use?
  - Introduce it and have them try it
    - Switch to gallery view
    - 'Raise hand' feature
    - Chat
    - Emoji reactions
- **Run easy warm-up activities on any collaborative tools**

# Working around tech problems

Tech can fail 🦴 have a plan B!

- For example
  - a. Async collaboration via shared slides
  - b. Fall back on physical tools like pen, paper, camera

# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
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# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
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- Facilitating well

# Facilitating well

## **The challenge**

- **Making sure everyone is engaged, following, and understanding**
- **Getting the admin tasks done**
  - Time keeping
  - Documenting
  - Introducing and guiding

# Making sure everyone is engaged and following

## Plan and prep

- **What's the plan?**
  - Goal
  - Topics
  - Timing
- **Presentation slides**
- **Set up the online workspace before-hand**
  - Add clear instructions and examples

# Making sure everyone is engaged and following

## Open and close well!

- **The workshop**
  - Clear goal
  - After, summarise what you've done, and next steps
    - Any actions should be assigned and documented within the workshop!
    - Clarify when you will follow up and how
  - Ask for feedback
- **Each activity**
  - Help people understand why
  - Be clear on the how, for how long
  - Ask if there are questions
  - After, summarise what you did, and how it will contribute to the overall workshop goal

**Over-communicate** 

# Getting the admin tasks done

- **Delegate!**
  - Assign a timekeeper
  - Assign a note-taker
  - Assign activities
  - Be super clear on who will run what

# More time for the good stuff

- **Guide the group**
  - Set the scene
  - Introduce and guide during activities
- **Equal participation**
  - Ensure everyone's voice is valued and heard
- **Stay on topic**
  - Park unrelated discussions



# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- Engaging the audience
- Keeping energy levels high
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# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- **Engage the audience**
  - Introductions and icebreakers
  - Call on people by name
  - Do round robins
  - Use breakout groups
- **Keep energy levels high**
  - Plan for shorter workshops
  - Plan bio-breaks, lots of them
  - Run energisers
- **Make the technology work**
  - Explain how you want the call tool to be used
  - Run easy-warm up activities on collaborative tools
  - Have a plan B in case the tech fails
- **Facilitate well**
  - Plan and prep
  - Open and close well
  - Delegate

# Things I learnt from trial (mostly error)

- **Engage the audience**

- Introductions and ice
- Call on people by name
- Do round robins
- Use breakout groups

- **Keep energy levels high**

- Plan for shorter work
- Plan bio-breaks, lot
- Run energisers



- **Technology work**

- Now you want the call tool
- ed
- y-warm up activities on
- ative tools
- lan B in case the tech fails

- Open and close well

# Things I learned

- **Engage the audience**
  - Introductions are
  - Call on people
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  - Use breakout groups
- **Keep energy levels high**
  - Plan for shorter
  - Plan bio-breaks
  - Run energisers



- Prep
- Open and close well

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ology work

you want the call tool

firm up activities on

e tools

B in case the tech fails

# Workshop activities

**How Might We (HMW)**



# Design principles

# Design principles

Hexgrid

Principle	1 Build for all people, not just a select few	2 Focused, rather than comprehensive	3 Core offering over many features	4 Thoughtful, informed choices, over seamlessness	5 As small releases as possible over big bangs	6 Privacy is a blessing, not just a legal requirement	7 Treat testers as precious, not an infinite resource
Voting area							
Description	<p><b>What does this mean in more detail</b></p> <p>What could be enabling others to create their own capabilities, and how might you contribute to others' capabilities, beyond your own? (Application building requires, to a certain degree, user "flexibility")</p> <p>Not possible for example: creating a new, single-purpose tool to do something that requires user flexibility, an extension, a secondary interface.</p> <p><b>What do we get out of this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased # of users, opportunities for secondary usage</li> <li>Additional user ideas</li> <li>Being at the forefront of things that could be built on top of your product or technology</li> <li>Make a difference for disadvantaged</li> <li>Appeal to people who cannot be reached via regular user requirements</li> </ul> <p><b>What are the consequences?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds trust and loyalty, again by being user design for extensibility</li> <li>Users can build building and return to building to extensibility</li> <li>Extensibility is a key differentiator in a market that is saturated with competitors</li> <li>Enables user-generated content, which can be a source of competitive advantage</li> <li>Builds loyalty to the brand (customer support is part of user "experience")</li> </ul>	<p><b>What does this mean in more detail</b></p> <p>Using things that do things well that, whether you are building a lot of things, or the product is massive, you are going to get something done better than you can do it.</p> <p>What do we get out of this? 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# Design studios

# Design studio

## Internal panel recruitment

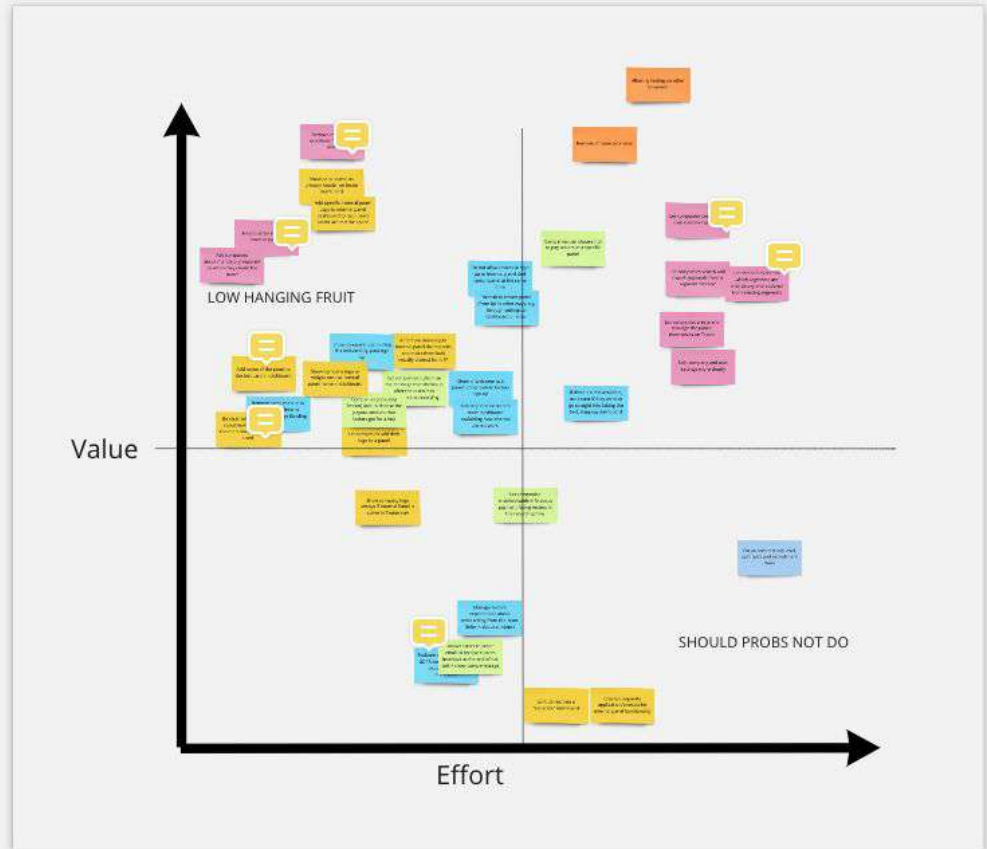
How might we make internal panel recruitment hassle-free?

Copy a post it and pick a colour!

Example:  
Show name of company on test cards for internal panel tests

- tester onboarding
- Segments
- Remove confusion and reassure
- payment
- Remove Chrome limitation
- Other

Internal panel ideas



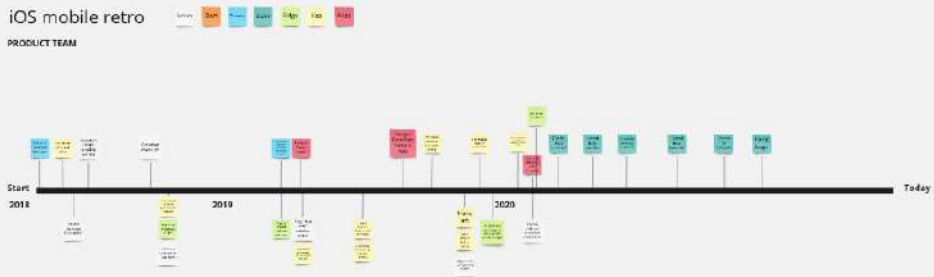
**Post mortem**



## Product team mobile retro

### iOS mobile retro

PRODUCT TEAM



### Timeline

### Learnings

What are the key takeaways that we want to remember for future big/mobile projects?

- Things we did well that we want to do in the future
- Things we didn't do that we want to start doing
- Things we want to continue doing
- Anything from comments to technical nitpicky dirty deets

#### The good stuff

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

#### Q/A session

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

#### Recovering team capacity

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

#### Communication is key

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

#### Research/learn before starting

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

#### Research/learn before starting

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

#### Keep it simple!

• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...  
• We did a great job of...

Own it.



Thanks for listening!

:)

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