

Learning Center usability study on UserTesting

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Prototype link: REDACTED

Personas included: Olivia (short-term financial planning orientation) and Olive (longer-term financial planning orientation)

Learning Center Summary

6 Olivias and 5 Olives experienced multiple ingress points for the Learning Center and contextual content when going through the initial ESUX onboarding flow. None encountered any catastrophic issues finding the information they needed to feel comfortable proceeding to the next step of the flow, but the study did reveal a few best practices to keep in mind for content design within ESUX onboarding.

Study Objectives

1. What, if any, points of confusion are there for Olive and Olivia seeking contextual help for an individual term within the Chat UI and Page UI?
2. Do users understand how to return to their workflow in the CUI from a page within the Learning Center?
3. Are they able to resume their workflow without friction/loss of context?
4. What, if any, differences are there between Olive and Olivia's expectations for contextual content?
5. What, if any, points of confusion are there for Olive and Olivia seeking a longer form explanation for how things are calculated within the digital financial adviser?
6. What, if any, differences are there between Olive and Olivia's expectations for searching for additional information about a financial concept within the digital financial adviser?
7. How likely are they to search within the app vs. Google the unfamiliar topic?
8. Is content provided by a bank viewed differently than by other content providers?

Learning Center (feature) Feedback

Positive

11/11 Olivias and Olives had no issues discovering the Learning Center ingress points from the page UI, nor did any of them have difficulty discovering the contextual content in the conversational UI. None mentioned any perceived friction resuming the emergency savings workflows after viewing the articles and contextual utterances.

Olive: "I think the interaction is fine. Everything's pretty self-explanatory up until now."

Olivia: "This is fairly straightforward and easy to understand (what to do next)."

Negative

1/6 Olivias missed the Learning Center article explaining why she should save the recommended amount. Without seeing a brief explanation on the monthly transfer setup page as to why she should save 10% of her discretionary income, she was skeptical about proceeding to set up a savings plan.

Olivia: "I wish he gave more explanation as to why he came up with that number (for how much I should save)."¹

Content Design Feedback

Positive

11/11 Olivias and Olives thought the explanation for discretionary income was clear.

Olivia: "I think that's a very good explanation of discretionary income. It can't be much clearer."

Olivia: "That makes sense. It's the extra money that you have after you have to spend money on every month."

Olive: "I think it's a fine explanation. I don't think there's anything that needs to be made more clear."

11/11 Olivias and Olives liked seeing the contextual utterances to check their understanding of individual terms and felt that they could seamlessly continue with setting up their savings plan.

Unlike the Learning Center articles, all 11/11 participants read the entire explanation aloud, and 10/11 of them skipped ahead of the task instructions to the next stage in the prototype.

Olivia: "That makes sense. It's the extra money that you have after you have to spend money on every month."

Olive: "It's a pretty clear explanation. For an example, I'd click on the 'tell me more.'"

Negative

Olivias were more likely to skim the first part of the Learning Center articles to learn about unfamiliar terms but skip the explanations for how the digital financial adviser calculates its recommendations, which caused them to hesitate about committing to the app's recommendations for a savings plan.

6/6 Olivias said that the explanations of discretionary income and the delineation among gross, net, and discretionary income were clear. That said, two of them still misunderstood that the digital financial adviser asked them to save 10% of their discretionary (not net) income on the savings transfer page.

Olivia: "This is pretty clear...maybe some examples might explain it better."

Olivia: "The explanation is pretty good, but I'm still confused by how it knows what my fixed expenses are."

¹ Data point: this is the first time this researcher has heard the digital adviser persona referred to as male by a participant.

Olivia: "I don't get this breakdown, actually. So this breakdown - 30% of things that you want, so discretionary income...but then, I'm paying down debt, so I feel like that's included in my monthly fixed expenses. So that's confusing. Where's that 10% that I should set aside?"

Olivia: "How does setting aside 10% change my fixed expenses?"

Data Points

Olives expressed skepticism about how accurately the digital financial adviser would estimate their expenses and income and would prefer to enter/edit those figures after landing on the monthly expense overview.

Olive: "So they're not all accurate - it's an estimate. I think it's OK - it's not my favorite formula. I guess for starting information for starting a budget, it's fine. I would rather see me put in my actual paychecks instead of it go based on what I put on my credit card application. But it's fine to start out with to get a budget started."

Olive: "It sounds like you're doing a lot of estimating. Why don't you ask me to (enter in information) instead of estimating that (monthly income) number?"

Olives were more critical of the financial rules of thumb in the "how are calculations made in the digital financial adviser" Learning Center articles. They wanted to customize how much they could contribute to savings and debt reduction rather than go with the digital financial adviser's defaults.

3/5 of Olives said that they thought the rules of thumb in the Learning Center articles were a good starting point but too basic for where they are with their plans.

Olive: "I like that there's a mention of manual intervention for a lot of these things."

Olive: "I have a different rationale, but I get this reasoning, and for somebody who doesn't have a financial plan, I think this is an OK place to start. That 30% for things you want - I might change that if you have debt and some emergency fund."

Olive: "For me, I tend to be a pretty high saver, so 30% for things that you want seems pretty high, especially if you're trying to set up an emergency fund. Personally would put 15% into emergency savings and 25% into wants. This is a good general ballpark for most people, and it looks like there's a way to adjust that percentage for people like me who want to save more initially."

Emergency Savings Feedback

Positive

11/11 Olivias and Olives found the information on the monthly expense breakdown screen helpful.

Olivia: "I think this is really impressive. I like the breakdown on the list that you could expand each of these categories of what your expenses are. You can figure out how the numbers are calculated, and they give you a grand total for all of these other monthly expenses that you have."

Olivia: "That makes sense. I would think that all of those numbers are based on my spending history."

Olive: "So it's showing those expenses and how those are calculated. It looks like there's the option to fix it if something's wrong. Hopefully there's the option to say, 'oh, this isn't a fixed expense' or maybe it's just a one time cost. Otherwise it's pretty clear."

Olive: "OK, there's the (total fixed expenses) sum down there. You can scroll down to the bottom and see your fixed expenses and see your monthly income to see where the app is coming from. Is it safe to assume that each of these buckets are based on the types of transactions - the algorithm recognizes certain transactions and codes them into those different buckets?"

11/11 Olivias and Olives saw value in setting up a savings plan through the current flow.

Olivia: "I liked it. For someone like me who's tried to do the math but struggles to, it's nice to have some automated system that does that and double check it. You have a goal - I'm a former athlete, and it's nice to have a goal and a plan to commit to doing those things."

Olivia: "Overall, I really liked it. I think that this is something I would take and look into my current savings schedule to see if it's meeting the 50-30-20 rule. What, if anything, would I change? Not much - I think it flowed logically, and at no point was I confused."

Olivia: "I didn't find anything too unintuitive. The flow itself was pretty great. I liked the yes or no option with the chat, and all the additional information happened at the next steps. The flow was great. There was just too much text (explaining things) for me, personally."

Olive: "Setting up the transfers was a good process working through that, being able to change the amount and also, I like that the end message told me that the adviser could let me come back at any time to the system."

Olive: "I think it's a great way to get people starting in your finances if they don't have any plan."

Product Desirability Attributes

We asked participants to choose the top 3-5 words that they thought most appropriately described their experience with the prototype. Both Olivias and Olives rated their experience favorably, though Olivias chose more positive attributes for the chatbot's overall tone than Olives.

Participants' overall top product attributes:

1. Easy to use
2. Useful
3. Approachable
4. Guided

5. Friendly

Olivias' top product attributes:

1. Easy to use
2. Useful
3. Approachable
4. Straightforward
5. Friendly

Olives' top product attributes:

1. Useful
2. Guided
3. Approachable
4. Easy to use

Feature Requests

3/11 participants wanted to have the ability to type freeform text within the chatbot prototype so that they could ask the digital financial adviser for additional clarification if they didn't understand a term or concept.

Olivia: "It would be nice to type back if someone needs more help."

Olivia: "It'd be nice if the adviser had a way to type. So instead of having to stick to the preset questions or answers, you could type 'what is this' instead of clicking around trying to find that answer."

3/11 participants wanted the digital financial adviser to help them with investing.

Olivia: "I do that (review of my finances) with myself once a month - where are we with savings? Where are we with paying down debt? Where are we with retirement? Invested and non-invested? Where are we with external investments outside of my employee sponsored one? This helps automate Olivia or whoever's using it to get in the cadence of savings. Budgeting and savings is a process, and it's something we all need to spend time on."

3/11 participants wanted the option to choose what goal for which the digital financial adviser would help them, instead of being automatically put through the 1 month CME flow.

Olivia: "It's very clear. I did think it's interesting that it prompted it, and there's no choices. Like, 'Here's what I want to do - I want to save for 1 month or for 3 months or 6.' There's only the option for 1. If I didn't want to do that (1 month), it might be frustrating, but for what it is, it's very helpful."

1/11 participants (an Olivia) wanted the digital financial adviser to suggest where they could cut back in their discretionary spending to find more money to contribute to their savings plan.

Olivia: "It's already analyzing how much I spend on transportation. To that same effect - (let's say) I spent \$600 on transportation in that month. I'm imagining a lot of

that comes from Uber. I'm sure it could connect to other things like public transport apps, or it knows how much public transport costs. 'You live in New York - you currently spend, take 5, 10 Uber trips per week. To reach your goal try taking 1 fewer Uber trip per week and taking the subway.' Or 'try eating out less or buy one fewer drink,' something like that."

Appendix: UserTesting Protocol

Screeners

What best describes your living situation?

Living with spouse, partner or significant other [Reject]

Living with parents [Reject]

Live alone or with roommate(s) [Accept]

Do you have children?

Yes [Reject]

No [Accept]

Prefer not to answer [Reject]

What best describes your work situation?

Regular paycheck WITHOUT health & 401(k) benefits [Accept]

Regular paycheck WITH health & 401(k) benefits [Accept]

Commission based pay WITHOUT health & 401(k) benefits [Reject]

Commission based pay WITH health & 401(k) benefits [Reject]

Freelance or other variable-schedule payments [Reject]

Other [Reject]

Which of these best describes the way you bank?

I exclusively bank at brick and mortar locations [Reject]

I bank mostly at brick and mortar locations, and occasionally bank online [Reject]

I bank equally at brick and mortar locations and online [Reject]

I bank mostly online, but occasionally go into brick and mortar locations [Accept]

I bank exclusively online [Accept]

Which of the following financial products do you have?

Credit Card [Accept]

Checking Account [Accept]

Savings Account [Accept]

Employer-sponsored retirement account (e.g., 401k, or 403b) [Accept]

Personal retirement account (not employer-sponsored, like an IRA) [Accept]

Other investing account (e.g., stocks, or mutual funds) [Accept]

None of the above [Reject]

What has been the most challenging part of managing your personal finances in the last year?

Acceptance criteria for Olivia:

I don't know how to start making a plan to follow. [Accept]

I haven't made a plan to follow. [Accept]

I haven't managed to consistently follow the plan I've created. [Accept]

I put too much work into maintaining my plan. [Reject]

I'm not confident that my plan is the optimal plan for me. [Reject]

None of the above [Reject]

Acceptance criteria for Olive:

I don't know how to start making a plan to follow. [Reject]

I haven't made a plan to follow. [Reject]

I haven't managed to consistently follow the plan I've created. [Reject]

I put too much work into maintaining my plan. [Accept]

I'm not confident that my plan is the optimal plan for me. [Accept]

None of the above [Reject]

Rate your knowledge about managing personal finances.

Acceptance criteria for Olivia:

1 - least knowledgeable [Accept]

2 [Accept]

3 [Accept]

4 [Reject]

5 - most knowledgeable [Reject]

I don't know how to rate my level of knowledge about personal finances. [Reject]

Acceptance criteria for Olive:

1 - least knowledgeable [Reject]

2 [Reject]

3 [Reject]

4 [Accept]

5 - most knowledgeable [Accept]

I don't know how to rate my level of knowledge about personal finances. [Reject]

Introduction

For this study, you'll be interacting with a prototype showing what it'd be like to interact with a new feature on a banking app. Not everything is interactive in this prototype. If you're stuck on a task, you can click anywhere to see what parts of the prototype you can click on - these will briefly flash blue. Please try to answer the questions as though you were interacting with a real app. We welcome your reactions and criticism.

Tasks

Imagine your name is Olivia, and you have logged into your bank's app on your phone to check your savings account. You've heard that there's a new adviser feature that will help you manage your finances, so you decide that you want to see what the coach can do for you. Please click on the money coach's getting started message. After you access the money coach, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task.

This is the first time you've used the adviser in the app, so you'll need to accept the terms and conditions for this feature - you don't actually need to read these to proceed with this study. Please accept the terms and conditions, and then pause. What, if anything, is confusing or unclear about that process? What do you think you'll see next? Select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task.

Now, get started with the adviser by setting up a savings plan to cover 1 month's worth of expenses. Pause once you see "let me show you what your month looks like." What do you think of the dialog with the adviser? What, if anything, could be clearer or more helpful to you? When you're done doing that, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task.

See what the adviser has come up with for your savings plan and take some time to review the information on the screen. What are your initial impressions? What do you think of the information that's presented? What, if anything, could be more helpful or clearer to you? When you're done doing that, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task.

Let's say that you want to know more about how the adviser came up with these numbers. How would you learn more about how these were calculated? Skim through the explanation. What do you think of the information that's presented? What, if anything, could be more helpful or clearer to you? What questions do you still have? After you've skimmed through how these expenses were calculated, return

to the monthly expenses overview that you saw earlier. When you're done doing that, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task.

Proceed with setting up your savings plan. Imagine that you weren't quite sure what "discretionary income" means, and you want to review the definition of that term. Show how would you learn about what "discretionary income" means. What do you think of the explanation? What, if anything, could be made clearer or less confusing? When you're done doing that, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task.

If you didn't know about a financial term or topic that the adviser mentioned, what would you typically do if you wanted to learn more about that? [Verbal Response]

Continue working with the adviser to set up a monthly savings plan. Pause when you're asked to designate how much money you should contribute to your monthly savings plan. What do you think of your interaction with the coach? What, if anything, would be clearer or more helpful? Please describe. When you're done doing that, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task. [Verbal Response]

Before you confirm how much you want to contribute to your savings, view the rationale for why the adviser recommends contributing this specific amount for your savings plan. What do you think of the explanation? What, if anything, was surprising or confusing? Now, complete the savings transfer and wrap up your conversation with the adviser. When you're done doing that, select "Next" in usertesting.com and tap anywhere on the screen in the prototype to proceed to your next task. [Verbal Response]

What was your overall impression of the experience? What, if anything, would you change? What, if anything, did you find confusing or unintuitive? Please describe. [Verbal Response]

Which of these words best describe this experience? Please choose your top 5 from only this list:

Annoying Appealing Approachable Boring Compelling Comprehensive Cutting edge Dated Difficult Disconnected Distracting Easy to use Flexible Friendly Frustrating Generic Gets in the way Guided Hard to Use Helpful Holistic Impersonal Intimidating Intrusive Invasive Judgmental Modern Not valuable Obstructive Ordinary Overbearing Overwhelming Patronizing Personal Pertinent Pushy Reassuring Relevant Rigid Robotic Satisfying Secure Self-directed Smart Straightforward Time-consuming Too Technical Trustworthy Unique Useful Valuable [Written Response]

Overall, how difficult or easy did you find the experience in this prototype? [7-point Rating Scale: 1 = Very difficult to 7 = Very easy]

If you had a magic wand, how would you change the app to be easier or more helpful to use? [Verbal Response]