Analyze the group or groups that will use your site

What to look for: A set of preferences, goals, common points of entry, and an understanding of how and why all of your prospective and current site users are drawn to your product and use it.

Why you need it: This information will really be the basis for how you approach the rest of your user reasearch and site design. If you begin to move ahead with a site design, redesign, or any new project without your end user in mind, you will surely create more barriers for use than paths.

Define the User Journey

What to look for: A step-by-step breakdown of the actions taken and pages visited by a user of your site(and the larger journey of using your product or service in general). Tip: Don't stop the journey with conversion.

Why you need it: Initially it will help you refine and demonstrate your vision. Once you have real data after implementation, it will help you understand user behavior, identify functionality in high detail, and help you define the specific actions needed to facilitate your end goal. You can then adjust and improve.

Strengthen the associations between your components

What to look for: With a technique called card sorting you can have users/potential users group the content and topics of your site. Ex.- Have users line up the names of your site pages, or have cards with the headings of site content and ask users to group them with the page name they feel it most closely fits.

Why you need it: When there is a seamless connection from broad topics to specific content and from one step to the next in navigation, it will make a user's progression through the website easier. This will promote engagement, users returning to the site and leaving with a positive impression.

Optimize layouts for natural eye movements

What to look for: Prominence of the elements you want users to interact with. Tip: Contrasting colors can help. People are more likely to focus on things that are larger and higher than surrounding elements. An image, especially a person's face will draw attention, but be careful not to draw from a call to action.

Why you need it: Utilizing natural human eye movement will guide users to follow your ideal user journey and increase conversion rates.

Continue research as time goes on

What to look for: People to actually test your site and relay their experience.

Why you need it: The more information you have on your user's experince of the site and their progreessing along the user journey, the higher polish you can bring to your site and their experience with your brand. It is best to watch many people interact with your site and record the first place they click, where they get stuck, and what ultimately may cause them to leave. Then you can adjust and retest... and repeat.