



# Putting user experience first

A SNEAK PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES OF  
THE E-WORKBOOK 10 DESIGN JOURNEY

2015

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# Putting UX at the heart of design

With the launch of E-WorkBook 10, we brought the performance and scalability of E-WorkBook into a web-enabled environment. For organizations looking for a flexible, scalable deployment of a data management platform across multiple sites, devices and operating platforms, E-WorkBook 10 presents an answer.

But it's not only users of the E-WorkBook 10 web client that will notice a difference. This release includes an overhauled user interface (UI) that puts user experience (UX) at the heart of its design.

We wanted to take you behind the scenes of the UX journey taken with E-WorkBook 10 by sharing some of my journal entries from the project development phase.

Enjoy the read!

*Jonathan*

Jonathan Davies  
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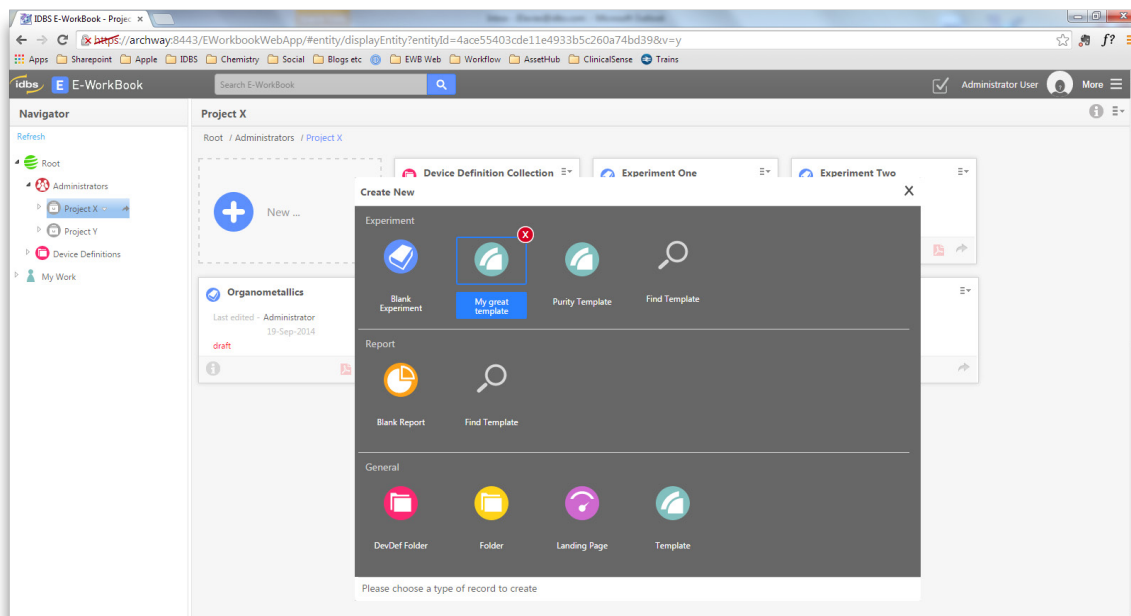
# Experiment creation made easy

- One of the things I really wanted to simplify in this release was the process of creating a new blank experiment or creating an experiment from a template. It's one of the primary routes through E-WorkBook and it needs to be an obvious interaction.

The new design places entity creation big and bold in the user interface. Exactly where it should be. Not buried in a context menu.

The same UI allows our users to easily create experiments from templates. And once a template has been selected it will be remembered for future use. And if you don't need the template in future, the same UI allows you to forget it with a single click on the 'red X.'

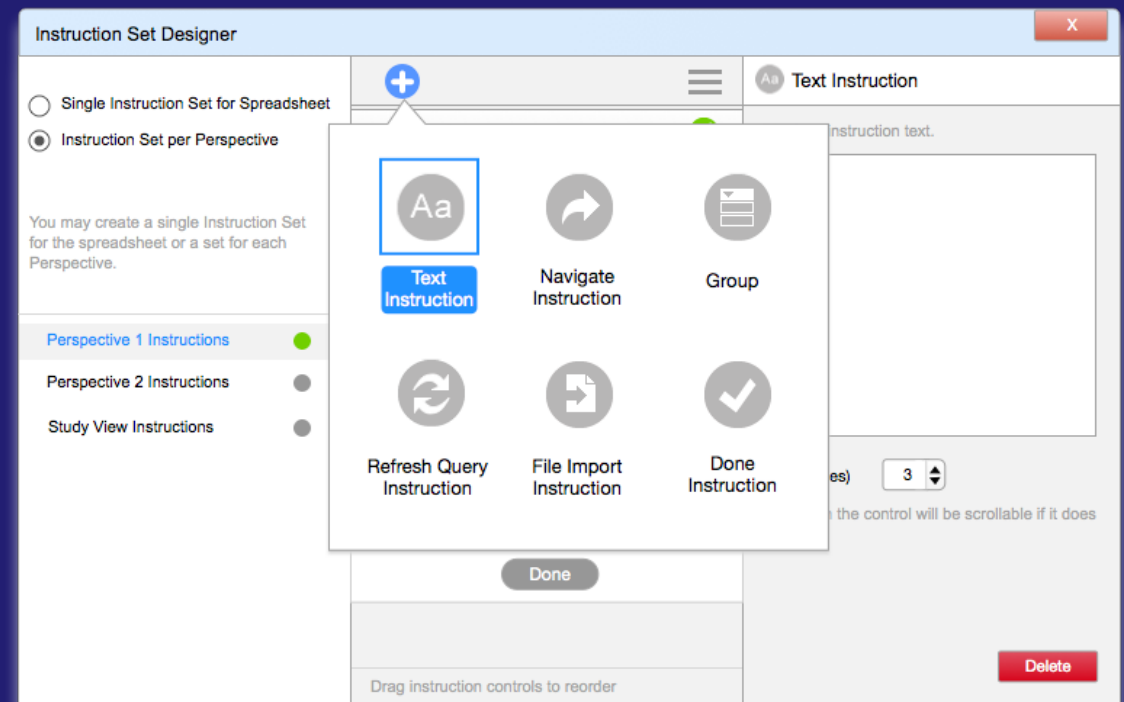
Simple!



# Helpful experiment authoring

I believe the Instructions feature in the Spreadsheet Web Editor is a really transformative part of the E-WorkBook 10 experience. It allows our customers to create a guided path through the process of experiment authoring.

Although the Instruction Set Designer lives in the desktop Spreadsheet Designer, I've brought across the design language from the web UI without deviating too radically from the rest of the Spreadsheet Designer look and feel.



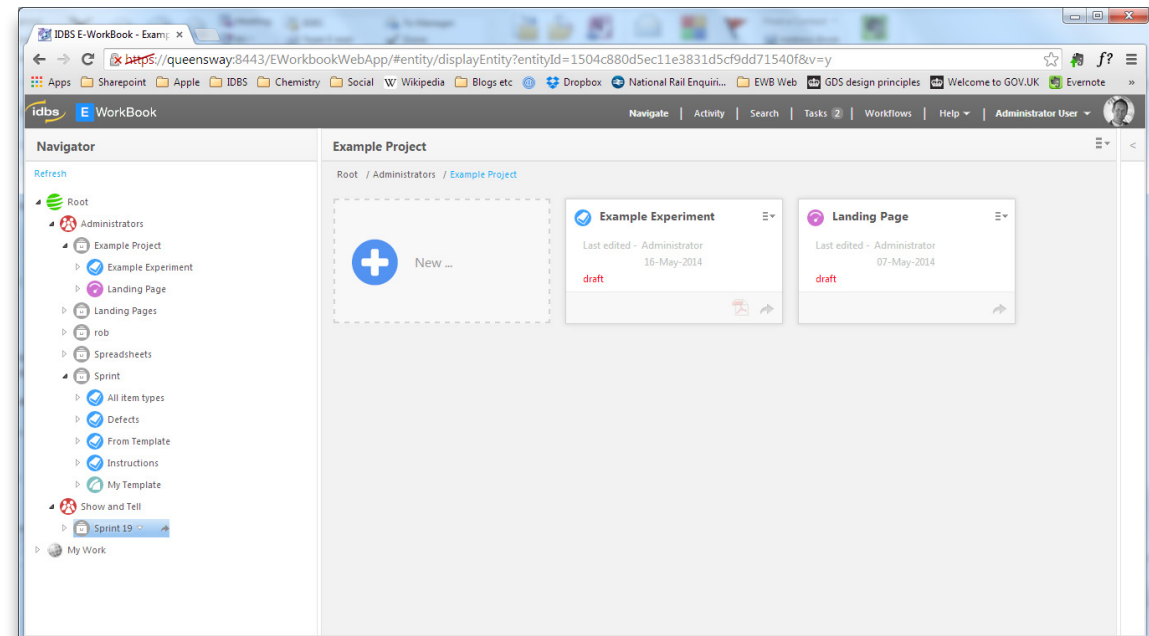
# Circles in UI

What was the top answer to a question posted on Quora this week?

Q: What are the best User Interface elements (controls, patterns, etc.) that have cropped up in modern web sites and web apps recently?

A: Circles! Google + circles, of course. But also things like <http://branch.com/> and the circle avatars in Basecamp Next

Well we can now add E-WorkBook to that list, as a designer's vector drawings become product reality.

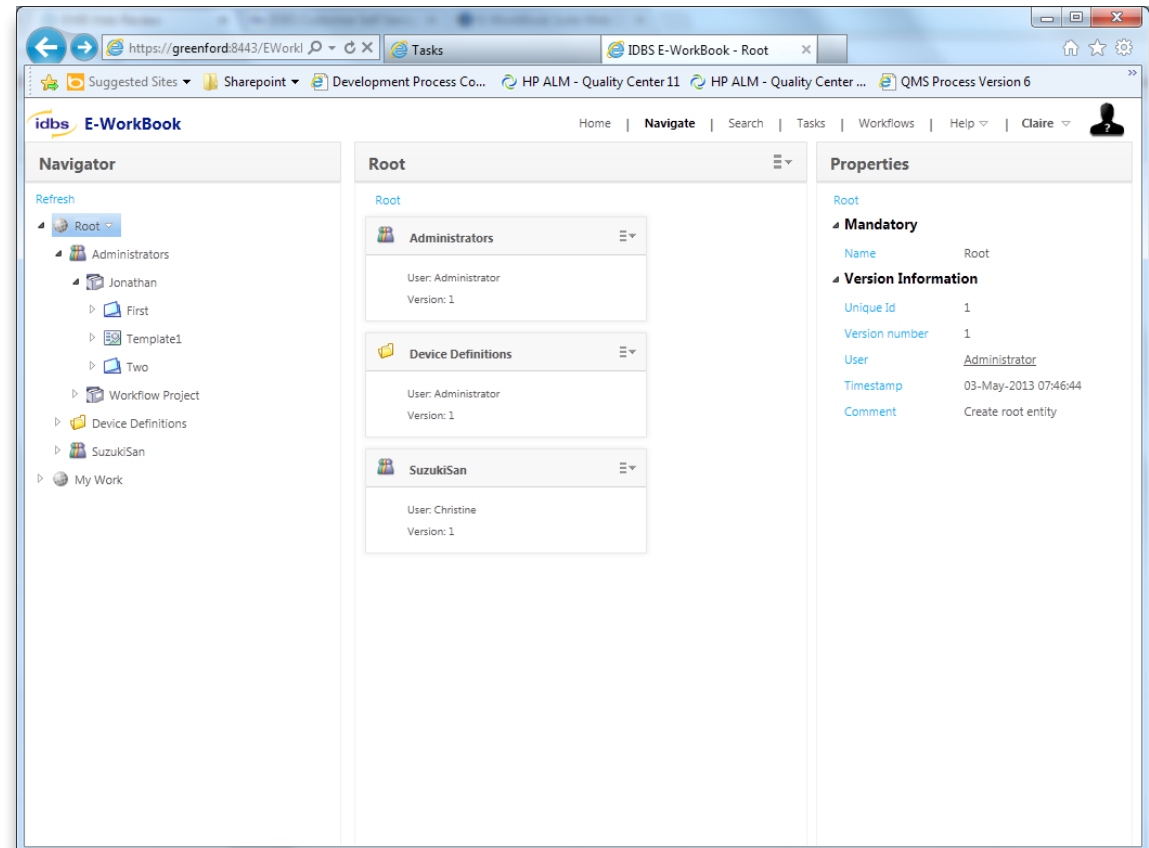


The use of circles in user interfaces is very much a current trend. My theory on this is two-fold. The increased resolution of screens means that circles can be rendered more cleanly with less jaggedy edges. And I think the rise of mobile has a part to play. A round icon reflects the rounder profile of the tip of the finger that touches it.

# Giving properties a new home

I've been working on lots of bits and pieces this week but one of those bits is a new style for the Properties UI. This ties in nicely with a similar styling on the Account Settings screens. The new Properties UI design does away with the permanent 'east panel' that used to display properties of experiments and other entities.

This was a great waste of screen space for something that only needed to be dipped into occasionally. Now properties are available on demand across the UI by clicking the new 'info icon'. Properties display in read-only mode but the



*The old Properties 'east panel'*

facility to edit them is right there in the same UI. No need to hunt around the context menu.

Much simpler.

The image illustrates the IDBS E-WorkBook interface, showing a file explorer view and two property panels for an 'Experiment'.

**File Explorer View:**

- Search: Search E-WorkBook
- Root / Administrators / Jonathan
- Items:
  - Captain's (B)Log (Last edited - Administrator, 26-Sep-2014, Version - 1)
  - Jonathan was here (Last edited - Administrator, 29-Sep-2014, draft)

**Property Panels:**

**Mandatory Panel:**

- Experiment (Edit)
- Status: Started
- Title: Captain's (B)Log

**Optional Panel:**

- Experiment (Save) (Cancel)
- Status: Started
- Title: Captain's (B)Log
- COSH Refs: [Field with +, -, ↑, ↓ icons]
- Countries:
  - Country: [Dropdown]
  - Capitol: [Dropdown]
- Dictionary Numbers: [Dropdown]
- Dictionary Fixed: [Dropdown]

*Properties are now available for read and edit via the 'info icon'*



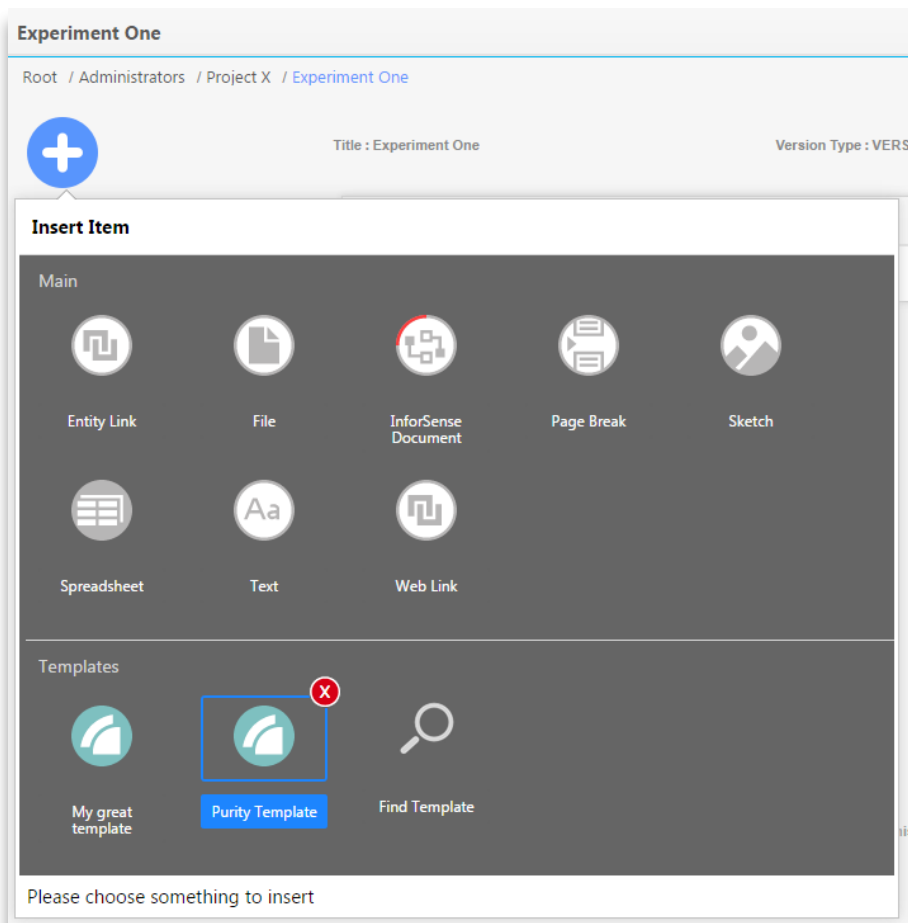
# Speaking the same design language

One of the big pieces of news from a UX perspective from the Google I/O Keynote live stream on Wednesday night is that Google has announced a new 'design language' for Google apps across Android, Chrome, Web and IOS - Material Design.

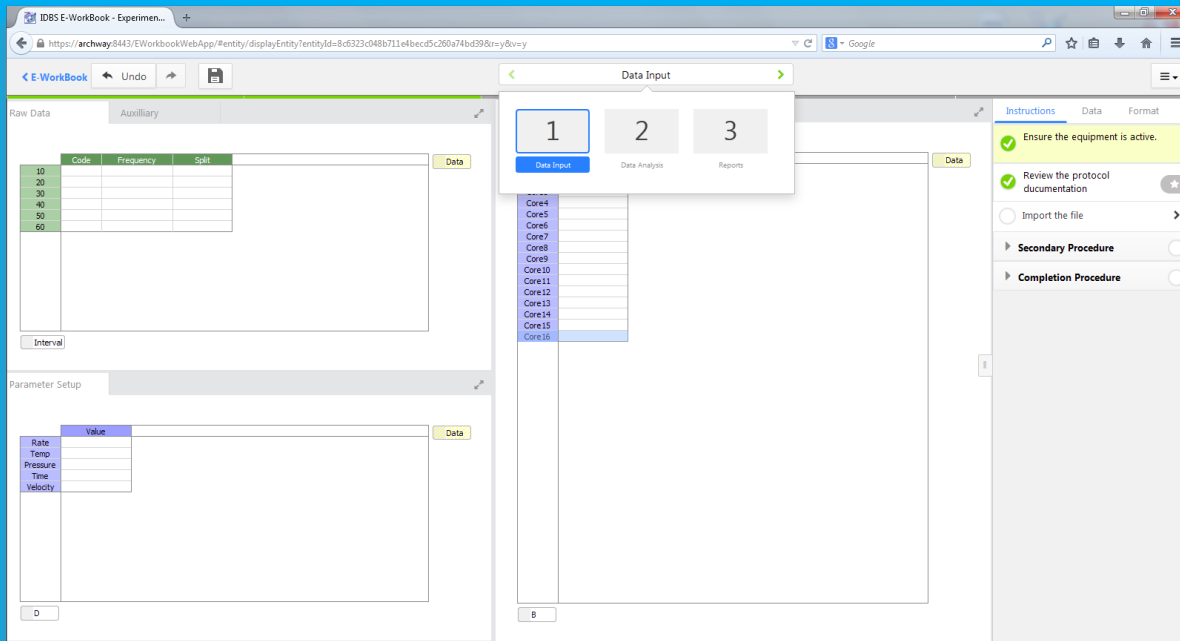
Lots of interesting ideas and things to draw inspiration from. One thing I picked up on is they have introduced the concept of a 'floating action button' or FAB.

This is very similar to something that is making an appearance in the E-WorkBook 10 Insert Item UI changes.

It's part of a design to simplify and unify the insertion of items into the experiment - whether its files, images, text, a spreadsheet, an existing template or something from the inbox.



# Bringing spreadsheets to the web



When we started to think about how we wanted to bring the Spreadsheet Web Editor to E-WorkBook 10 we were faced with a major dilemma. How to balance the power of the spreadsheet but retain simplicity?

We felt the 'in-line mode' of the desktop provided simplicity but constrained the screen space available to unleash that spreadsheet power. While the approach of the desktop spreadsheet client ran the danger of swamping the user with a myriad of buttons and choices.

We converged on the ideas you now see in the Spreadsheet Web Editor in E-WorkBook 10. Very context aware and easily capable of switching between different views of the data. And with a powerful instruction feature to guide a user through the most complex of workflows, it's all designed to provide a simpler user experience.

# Signing off

E-WorkBook 10 has been a thrilling project to be involved in from a design point of view. It's only natural that an established, evolving product like E-WorkBook should suffer from 'feature inflation' and a resulting busy UI. So it was immensely satisfying to take the UI back to basics and use UX as a way of making E-WorkBook accessible and user friendly to new users and old hands alike.

