

The Levers Framework

The Levers Framework was created by GAIN Conversion, a leading global conversion rate optimization consultancy who combine UX Research and Experimentation methodologies to help companies make evidence-based decisions.

The framework was built from analyzing data from thousands of experiments and studies to uncover the primary factors that drive user behavior across digital experiences. It is a framework that enables teams across research, product, design, and marketing to have a shared language and to take a structured approach to ideation, prioritization and meta analysis.

Overview *of* the Levers Framework

A “Lever” is a feature of the user experience that influences user behavior, and the Levers Framework is a comprehensive taxonomy of the features of user experience that influence it.

The framework is a hierarchical tree-like structure that describes changes to user experience at three levels: Master Levers, Levers, and Sub Levers. What we mean by ‘changes to user experience’ is changes that take place within the mind of the user, rather than the specific component changes on an online experience.

There are 5 top-level Master Levers:

1. **Cost:**
concerned with the costs that a user encounters while completing a purchase or using a product. These costs can be monetary, effort-related, or otherwise
2. **Trust:**
concerned with the perceived risks associated with completing a purchase on a given website
3. **Usability:**
concerned with the practical, on-site steps that a user has to take in order to convert
4. **Comprehension:**
concerned with how well a website explains information about the product/service or company
5. **Motivation:**
the inverse of Cost, concerned with the upsides that a user stands to gain from purchasing the product or service

Each of these Master Levers branches into a number of constituent Levers, which then break down into a number of Sub Levers. The Cost Master Lever for example breaks down into 3 Levers, which break down into 5 Sub Levers.

The Lever Framework

MASTER LEVER		LEVER	SUB-LEVER			
Cost	Loss	Financial cost	Known cost	Anticipated cost	Relative value	
		Soft cost	Time cost		Effort cost	
		Commitment				
Trust	Anxiety	Legitimacy	UI quality		Brand recognition	
		Credibility	Authority	Social proof	Customer service	Reassurances
		Security	Payment security		Personal info requests	
Usability	Frustration	User flow	Location		Direction	
		Effort	Experienced effort		Anticipated effort	
		Choice	Findability	Structure	Recommendation	
		Attention	Distraction		Engagement	
		Persistence	Progress presentation		Positive feedback	
Comprehension	Satisfaction	Education	Educational content			
		Product understanding	Product information		Product depiction	
		Transactional understanding	Savings understanding		Payment structure	
Motivation	Comfort	Value statement	Value proposition		Benefits	
		Motivational depiction	Motivational imagery		Motivational video	
		Preview access	Full trials		Limited free content	
	Excitement	Obligation	Reciprocity		Altruism	
		Sociability	Community		Exclusivity	
		Urgency	Availability		Price change	
		Product range	New product		Variety	
		Delivery	Delivery speed		Delivery ease	
	Joy	Gamification	Immersion	Progression	Competition	
		Humanization	Friendly language		Human depictions	
		Control				

When to use the Levers Framework

The Levers Framework can support alignment and drive impact in a few different ways. Below are three key ways we've put the framework into practice across our work.

✓ Ideation

The framework can be used as a way of interpreting insights from any research method and deciding on what action to take from that insight.

For example, imagine you want to identify and prioritize opportunities to boost subscriptions to your service. You've conducted different types of research:

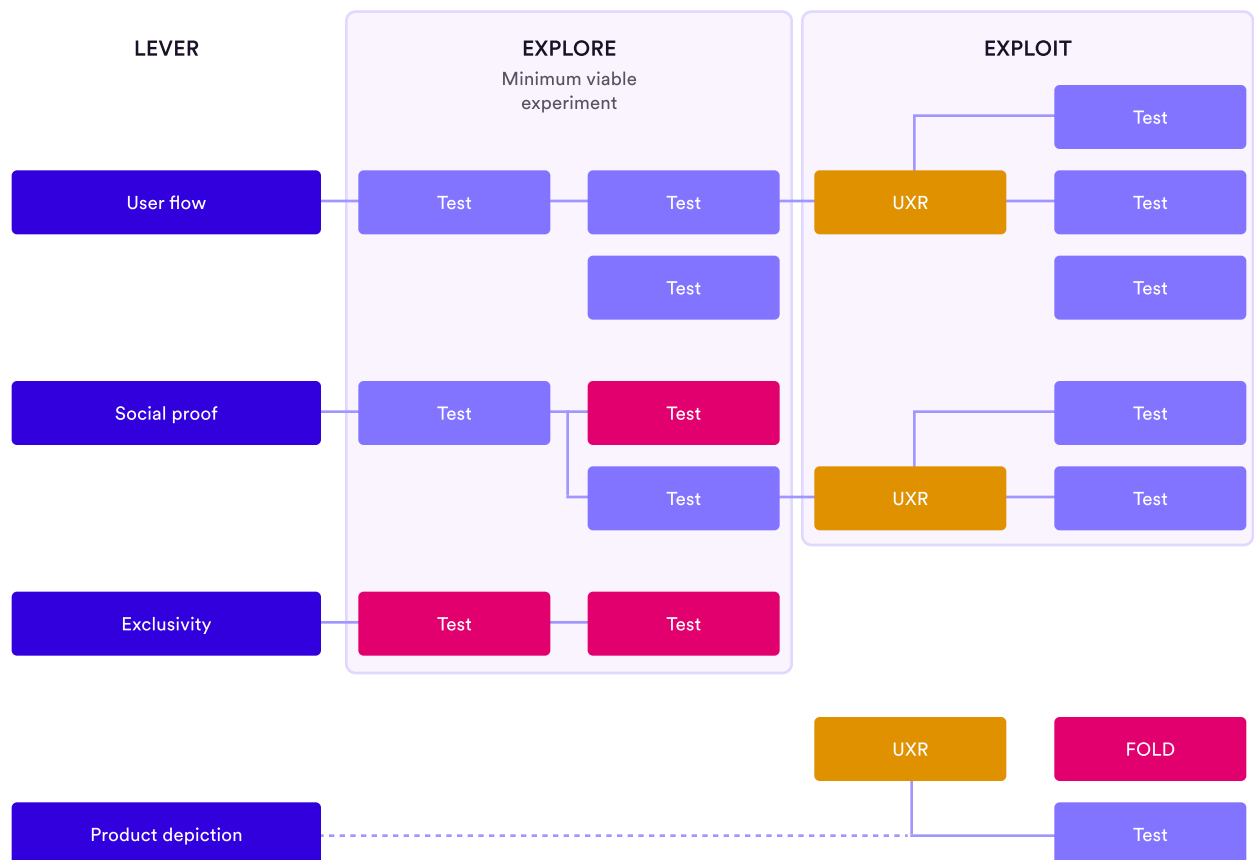
- A survey to understand barriers to subscribing
- A usability study to capture reactions to the subscription sign-up page
- A competitor analysis to compare your website with others
- A look at analytics to understand page engagement and drop-offs

From this research, you have several observations that ladder up to a common insight: a lack of trust in the service is harming conversion. Use the Levers framework to help you interpret this insight, and identify which sublever you can explore as a way of solving this issue: (Trust > Credibility > Social proof).



✓ Iterative learnings

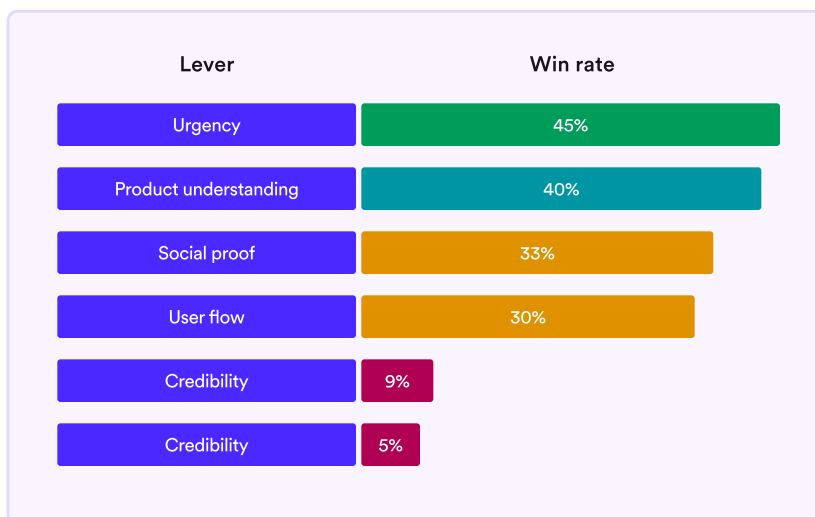
Another way to use this framework is to have a structured way of building confidence in your direction. This helps prioritize where you run experiments and conduct UX Research. By connecting activities with a Lever, you're able to understand which Levers impact user behavior for your website or product, and which don't. You can then prioritize your testing and research resources effectively to have the most impact for your business, doubling down on the levers that are shifting user behavior, and de-prioritizing those that aren't.



✓ Repository and Meta-Analysis

Using the framework as a tagging system for your insights is becoming even more impactful as AI removes knowledge silos across organizations. Without a powerful taxonomy in your insights repository, your database is really just raw data. An effective taxonomy like our Levers Framework offers a way to organize this raw data, and extract real meaning and insight from your database.

By tagging insights with Levers from all of your activities (UX Research studies, A/B tests, competitor analyses etc.), over time you can see what Levers influence users the most (see illustration below). You also have a way to search your database meaningfully. For example, search for all insights related to a certain lever, see what's already known, and discern what the next question is to answer through your research.



Learn more about the Levers Framework

If you're interested in reading more about the Levers Framework, you can [download the whitepaper here](#).

Have any questions or want to discuss in more detail? Please reach out to Harriet Swan, Director of UX Research via email (harriet.swan@thisisgain.com) or [LinkedIn](#).

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