



# ExperienceLab

Design guidelines | EPGs

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## Summary

In a programme of independent research, Serco ExperienceLab evaluated the Electronic Programme Guides (EPGs) used to provide TV listings on the UK digital television platforms - SKY and ONdigital. During the studies, consumers were asked to use the EPGs to plan their TV viewing. These studies reveal important design issues. They are presented here as a set of general guidelines to support those developing or commissioning EPGs on all digital TV platforms.

## Design Guidelines

### Make it easy for users to access and leave the EPG

- Provide a prominent means of accessing and leaving an EPG - a dedicated 'Text' or 'Guide' button is a better entry/exit point than a channel number. Users do not tend to associate EPG services with specific channels because of their experience with text services on analogue TV, where they switch between text and TV 'modes' by pressing a 'Text' button.

### Ensure 'click-through' mechanisms are visible and predictable

- Some EPGs allow users to 'click through' to a TV programme from the EPG. However, one of the biggest problems found during testing was that users clicked directly through to programmes when they expected to see programme details. Consider providing details about a TV programme before users 'click through' to the programme.

### Give users a clear return path after they use a 'click-through'

- Provide on-screen cues to help users return to an EPG after they click through to a TV programme - in the absence of such cues, users were often unable to return to EPG services. In fact, they often navigated to the EPG of a 'rival' service instead.

### Provide programme listings in a range of formats

- Users want to know what is being broadcast across different channels, as well as having detailed listings for preferred channels.
- Users like the concept of listing programmes by genre (such as movies, sport, and news) – consider presenting scheduling information in this format as well as for each channel.

### Make it easy for users to compare across channels

- Ensure that users can easily and quickly navigate between channel listings presented on separate screens – for example, tabbed screens allow quick comparisons across channels.
- Avoid overwhelming users by presenting too much information on screen – it is better to present a subset of channels clearly, than to have all channels shown in a confusing and complicated way.

- Allow users to consult TV listings while watching a programme in the background – pop-up transparent windows support this and are particularly useful for listings that show current and subsequent programmes.

## Provide a clear and simple means of accessing programme information

- The means of selecting programme information should be obvious and consistent, e.g. standardise on the 'select' button.

## Offer information appropriate to the type of programme

- Users expect different kinds of information for different types of TV programmes – one-off programmes or those with changing content require more explanation. For example, movie viewers often want to know about the plot, the director, and the stars. A news broadcast or a regularly scheduled series does not require the same level of support information.

## Ensure EPG listings add value

- Add value to EPGs by providing extra information like review comments as well as factual details.

## Ensure important remote control functions are represented on the TV screen

- All important options and functions available to users should be visible on screen - users look to the TV rather than the remote control for cues on how to interact with an EPG. They tend to look at the remote control only when they are experiencing difficulties.

## Design for correspondence between the TV screen and the remote control

- Use symbols, colours and labels on-screen carefully - match the on-screen design to the remote control, where a direct correspondence is intended.

## Support peoples' natural TV planning strategies

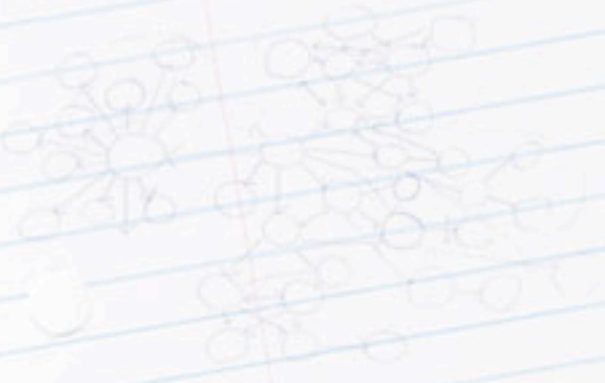
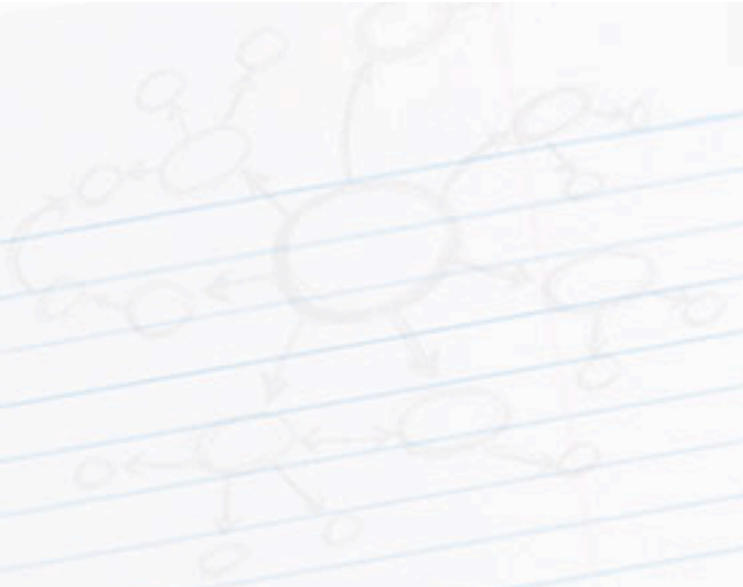
- Understand the viewer's goals in using a programme listing – design EPGs based on knowledge of how people plan their television viewing. For example, it is important to know how far in advance they plan, how much information they require, and how they want to compare across channels.

### *About ExperienceLab*

ExperienceLab (formerly Serco Usability Services), are a global experience design research agency. They help organisations optimise their customer experiences, from web to TV and mobile, from advertising to physical environments. They've been doing this for a while, pretty much since the first computers and networks were created, so they know a thing or two about how to make people, processes and technologies work in harmony.

ExperienceLab use a wide range of techniques to tailor a research solution that fits your business objective, including ideation sessions, proposition analysis, customer needs mapping, usability testing, benchmarking and touch point integration studies. As a co-founder of the UXalliance we also provide research on a global scale.

Why not visit the ExperienceLab blog ([www.experiencelab.info](http://www.experiencelab.info)), which features the latest thinking on experience design issues.



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