

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/staying-rooted-in-your-users/>

Rahul Roy-Chowdhury, Grammarly's CEO, explains the last three principles of the TRUE framework: Responsibility, User Control, and Empathy. Each of these are rooted in ensuring that the user experience is a core part of any product or feature. This includes giving users opportunity for feedback and having a process in place for taking action on that feedback.



Transcript

- Responsibility is about making sure 00:00:06,720 that we are focused on fairness.. We are focused on user safety, and there's a lot of technical work to be done here.. Things like evaluating and making sure you're very high quality training data for your ML models, making sure that data is free from bias.. Making sure you can do things like track and find sensitive text, like hate speech.. And so for example, one of the things we've invested in at Grammarly is a sensitive text classifier.. And so you can think of a large language model generating text, and when our classifier catches that text and says, hey, that's sensitive text, we can then take some appropriate action.. For example, we can say, well, if a user sees this text, it's not gonna be a great experience for them, so let's just not show them this text.. So we can actually keep our users safe from the underlying harm that these models can cause.. And so we invest in these technologies and I would highly encourage everyone thinking about building AI at scale, to really think deeply about how to do this well.. Quality, evaluation, sensitive text, classifiers to detect these things..

These are important things to get right.. But it's not just about the tech, because no matter what you do, no matter what you build, no matter how good your classifiers are, there's always gonna be some unexpected thing that you're gonna run in to when your users encounter your product.. And what are you gonna do then? And that's a question you gotta think through ahead of time and not react after the fact.. So at Grammarly, for example, the way we approach this is we give users a lot of different ways to send us feedback, in the product, email a customer service team.. And it's not just giving us feedback, we have a process so that when we get that feedback, we can take action.. Someone is looking at that and saying, oh yeah, this is a problem.. We gotta fix this.. Who's gonna fix it? Who's on call? Let's fix it, let's roll out the fix.. Let's keep our users safe.. So a key part of responsibility is not just the technical innovation that's happening, which is important and great, but also making sure that you have some plan for the inevitable, unexpected thing that's gonna happen when your real users use your product in their real lives..

And so what's your answer then? And it's important to have an answer.. It may not be exactly the Grammarly answer, but we need some answer.. So that's responsibility.. User control is really the idea that users should feel like they have control over the entire experience.. So they don't feel like the technology is being done to them.. They feel like they're in control of the experience, they are driving the process and they're driving the outcomes.. So with Grammarly Go for example, we are

generating text on behalf of our users.. So number one, we wanna make sure users feel like the text generated by Grammarly sounds like them, represents their voice.. So we built a feature called My Voice where users can control how they sound.. So it's not just boiler plate, generic text, it reflects how you wanna sound..

And then the entire experience allows users to see what's happening.. We provide nudges, we provide prompts, but ultimately we always defer to the user to make the decisions.. And that's not an accident.. That's not just a thing that happened.. That is a deliberate design choice.. And so as you're designing and building these features and products, you're gonna be faced with these choices.. Do I bring the user in, do I not? And my suggestion, and my hard-won experience tells me, bring the user in, make sure that they feel they have control over the experience.. That's the user control piece of TRUE.. And then the final piece is empathy.. And empathy is the idea that we are trying to solve a real user problem..

And it sounds like an obvious thing, like of course, that's what you would do, why wouldn't you do that? But in fact, what I have seen over and over again in my career is that it's very easy to lose sight of that because there's so many distractions.. You're busy working on your product and feature, you started out with the best of intentions.. Here's the user problem, I'm gonna solve it.. And then stuff happens like, oh man, my competitor over here did this other thing.. And so I gotta respond.. Or here's this cool new tech, I gotta get it out there.. Let's see what happens.. And so it's very easy to get sidetracked and you're kind of looking at a bunch of different things and all the time you spend doing those things, it's time you spend not thinking about the user.. And when that happens, usually your product is going astray in actually helping solve a real user need.. And so you've really gotta will yourself, sometimes unnaturally, to come back and ask yourself the question of, what is the user need? What is the problem we are solving for them? And how am I confident that my solution is actually a solution to the problem they actually have? Not just something I've came up with because it's pretty cool and I'm just gonna roll it out there and see what happens..

So empathy is something that is really important to keep bringing back to the conversation as you build and deploy these systems...