

BEFORE YOU REDESIGN: AN HONEST UX CHECKLIST



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Most redesigns start with a feeling — the app looks dated, or someone influential doesn't like it — and end up rearranging screens without fixing what was actually wrong. The expensive mistake happens before any design work begins: redesigning the wrong thing, for the wrong reason.

Work through this checklist first. It helps you tell a real usability problem from a matter of taste, decide what to test before you touch the visuals, and recognize when the honest answer is *don't redesign yet*. There are no prices in here on purpose: clarity about the problem comes first, and scope follows from it.

1. Name What's Actually Failing — and How You Know

"It needs a refresh" is not a problem statement. Before you redesign anything, get specific about what is failing and what evidence says so.

Answer First:

- What can users not do, or do only slowly, on the product today?
- What is your evidence — support tickets, drop-off, complaints, or a hunch?
- Where in the flow do people abandon, hesitate, or ask for help?
- Is the problem the interface, or the underlying process the interface reflects?

The Rule:

If you can't point to how you know a screen is failing, you're redesigning a guess. Find the evidence first, then redesign the thing it points to.

2. Separate User Complaints From Stakeholder Taste

The loudest opinion in a redesign is rarely the user's. Sort what you're hearing before it sets your scope, because taste and usability pull in different directions.

Sort Your Inputs:

- Which requests come from people who use the product to get work done?
- Which come from stakeholders reacting to how it looks?
- Does a proposed change help a user finish a task, or just satisfy a preference?
- Would you still make the change if the person asking hadn't?

Why It Matters:

Taste changes with whoever is in the room; usability is testable. A redesign built on preferences ages the moment leadership does — one built on user evidence holds up.

3. Decide Which Workflows to Test First

You can't redesign everything at once, and you shouldn't. Pick the few workflows that carry the most weight and put those in front of real users before you design.

Prioritize:

- Which tasks do the most users perform most often?
- Which tasks, when they fail, cost you money or a customer?
- Where do new users get stuck in their first session?
- Which flows generate the most support contact today?

The Rule:

Watch five real users attempt your top workflow before you redesign it. An hour of watching prevents more rework than a week of internal debate.

4. Check the Accessibility Basics

A redesign is the cheapest moment to make a product usable for everyone — and the most expensive moment to skip it. Cover the fundamentals while the screens are already open.

Confirm the Fundamentals:

- Is there enough color contrast between text and its background?
- Can the whole product be operated with a keyboard, not just a mouse?
- Do images, buttons, and form fields carry labels a screen reader can announce?
- Does the layout still work when text is enlarged or the screen is small?

Why It Matters:

Accessibility isn't a separate project bolted on later; it's part of usable design. Building it in during the redesign costs far less than retrofitting it after a complaint.

5. Draw the Scope Boundaries

Redesigns grow quietly — a screen becomes a section, a section becomes the whole app. Decide the edges of the work before anyone starts moving pixels.

Set the Edges:

- Which screens are in this redesign, and which are explicitly out?
- Is this a visual and interaction refresh, or a rethink of the flows underneath?
- Will the existing design cover new features, or only fix current ones?
- Can the work ship in phases, or must it all land at once?

The Bottom Line:

A phased redesign that ships real improvements beats a total overhaul that never quite finishes. Draw the boundary, then keep the work inside it.

6. Protect What Already Works

Not everything about the current product is broken. A redesign that discards familiar patterns can trade one set of complaints for a louder one from users who had learned the old way.

Before You Change It:

- Which patterns do experienced users rely on without thinking?
- What would break their muscle memory if it moved or changed?
- Is a change an improvement, or just different for its own sake?
- How will you tell current users what changed and why?

Why It Matters:

Change has a cost even when it's an improvement. Keep what works, change what doesn't, and be able to explain the difference.

7. Know Who Owns the Design at the End

A redesign produces assets — files, a component library, research. Who owns them decides whether your next change is easy or another full engagement.

Get These In Writing:

- Who owns the design source files when the work is done?
- Do you get a reusable design system, or one-off screens?
- Can any developer pick up the files and build from them?
- Do the research findings and prototypes come to you as well?

The Bottom Line:

Design you don't own is a redesign you'll pay for again. Insist on the files, the design system, and the research — outright, in the contract.

8. Decide Whether to Redesign at All

The most valuable answer this checklist can give you is sometimes “not yet.” A redesign is the right move only when the evidence and the stakes both support it.

Be Honest:

- Is this a customer-facing product where usability drives adoption, or a small internal tool with trained, captive users?
- Do you have evidence of a real usability problem, or mostly a preference?
- Would a focused UI cleanup fix it without a full research engagement?
- Are the underlying problems really design problems, or development ones?

The Rule:

If users are trained and captive and the workflow works, a clean UI pass usually beats a research-led redesign. Professional UX earns its cost when users can walk away and adoption is the point.

The Final Word

A redesign is only as good as the questions asked before it starts. Answer these honestly and you'll know what's actually failing, what to test, what to leave alone, and whether to redesign at all — before you spend a dollar on new screens.

Next Step:

Start with sections 1, 2, and 8 — what's failing, whose input is driving it, and whether a redesign is even the right move. Those three decide most of the scope. When you're ready to turn the checklist into a plan, QOS Software will scope it with you honestly, tell you when a clean UI pass would serve you better than a full research project, and — because we design and build under one roof — make sure whatever we design can actually be built. Call **877.800.7672** or visit **qossoftware.com**.