

Brian S. Utesch, Ph.D.

UX Research Leadership | Human Factors | AI Workflow Strategy

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Co-creator of UMUX-Lite (CHI 2013) and inventor of the Recommendation Adoption Score, published by Nielsen Norman Group. Three US patents. More than two decades building research teams and methodology at IBM and Cisco, with a consistent pattern: rigorous methods, measurable outcomes, and research that drives decisions.

SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

10th to 1st place in industry web ease-of-use rankings

Led the ibm.com global redesign research program across 8 international markets, managing a \$1M+ annual portfolio and engaging 2,500+ participants across 7 languages.

Research recommendation adoption from 10% to over 50% organization-wide

Invented the Recommendation Adoption Score (RAS) at Cisco and built the organizational tracking infrastructure to hold research accountable end-to-end. Published by Nielsen Norman Group in February 2026.

Research team scaled from 6 to 18 practitioners at Cisco

Expanded product coverage from approximately 10 to 25+ tools, increased annual study output to 100+ per year, and lifted average researcher proficiency from 2.8 to 4.2 on a 5-point scale.

User research engagement grew from 1,390 to over 9,400 participants across three years

Transformed IBM Lotus/Collaboration Solutions UXR into a large-scale, externally-focused quantitative practice. Customer engagements grew 283% in a single year and the external participant mix climbed from 27% to over 60%.

Sammy Award and Stevie Award in the same program cycle

External industry recognition for the IBM CHQ MarTech user research program.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Head of Intelligent Experience Research

Cisco | Research Triangle Park, NC | 2022 – Present

- Invented the Recommendation Adoption Score (RAS) and built the tracking infrastructure that drove adoption from 10% to over 50% organization-wide. Published by Nielsen Norman Group, February 2026.
- Scaled the research team from 6 to 18 practitioners, expanded product coverage from roughly 10 to 25+ tools, and increased annual study output from approximately 20 to 100+ per year.
- Launched a structured methods readiness program tied to team and individual OKRs, lifting average researcher proficiency from 2.8 to 4.2 on a 5-point scale across qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Developed an AI opportunity identification methodology grounded in current-state workflow research, mapping pain points via journey maps and service blueprints before any solutioning begins, producing defensible before-and-after differentiation for AI deployment decisions.

STSM and Design Research Practice Lead, Manager

IBM | Research Triangle Park, NC | 2019 – 2022

- Led the user research program across the full IBM CHQ MarTech stack, establishing shared KPIs aligned to organizational OKRs across a portfolio of enterprise marketing tools.
- Recognized with two external industry excellence awards in the same program cycle: the Sammy Award and the Stevie Award.

STSM and Design Research Practice Lead

IBM | Research Triangle Park, NC | 2006 – 2019

- Served as the primary voice of the customer for all IBM digital sales tools globally, translating Voice-of-the-User findings from on-location sales center research in Seoul, Dublin, Dallas, and Atlanta directly into product roadmap priorities.
- Founded the Seller Feedback Community, growing it from zero to 250 active sellers in approximately five months, and created reusable Design Thinking research assets deployed across worldwide product squads.
- Established the attitudinal KPI framework using NPS, UMUX-Lite, and SEQ, and implemented the intercept survey infrastructure across IBM's Cognitive Sales Advisor, the first of its kind in the IBM Digital Sales portfolio.

- Co-created UMUX-Lite, a validated 2-item usability scale published at CHI 2013, correlated to the System Usability Scale, and adopted by IBM Design as a company-wide standard.
 - Led ibm.com user research across 8 international markets on a \$1M+ annual portfolio, delivering findings that moved IBM from 10th to 1st place in industry web ease-of-use rankings.
 - Transformed Lotus/Collaboration Solutions UXR from qualitative-first, IBM-employee-only research to large-sample, externally-focused quantitative practice. Customer engagements grew 283% in a single year and the external participant mix rose from 27% to over 60%.
 - Built the first quantitative model demonstrating a direct relationship between how easy it was to complete tasks on ibm.com and how favorably customers perceived the IBM brand, giving executives data-backed justification for investing in customer-centric web design.
 - Recognized as ibm.com Innovation Champion, received the GM's Innovator Award, was appointed to the IBM TechGen program (one of 70 selected company-wide), and inducted as an Associate Member of the NC Technical Experts Council, an IBM Academy affiliate.
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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Human Factors Psychology | Wichita State University

M.A., Psychology | Wichita State University

B.A., Psychology | Baylor University

CREDENTIALS AND AFFILIATIONS

Certified User Experience Professional (CUXP) | ACM SIGCHI Member | UXPA Paper Reviewer | Journal of Usability Studies Reviewer

PATENTS

US10567257B2 | US8139732B2

SELECT PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Utesch, B. and Fitzwater, T. (2026). Recommendation Adoption Score. Nielsen Norman Group.
- Utesch, B. and colleagues. (2021). How Do You Know Your Users Feel Satisfied? UXPA International, Baltimore.
- Utesch, B. and Nguyen, T. (2021). UX Researcher Checklist: An Analysis of 100 UX Researcher Open Job Postings. UX Y'all (virtual).
- Lewis, J.R., Utesch, B.S., and Maher, D.E. (2015). Investigating the Correspondence Between UMUX-LITE and SUS Scores. HCI International.
- Utesch, B.S. and Blanchflower, T.J. (2014). The In-Demand Characteristics of a User Experience Researcher. UXPA International, London.
- Lewis, J.R., Utesch, B.S., and Maher, D.E. (2013). UMUX-LITE: When There's No Time for the SUS. CHI 2013, Paris.
- John, B.E., Starr, S.M., and Utesch, B.S. (2012). Experiences with Collaborative, Distributed Predictive Human Performance Modeling. CHI 2012, Austin.

20+ additional presentations and publications available upon request.