UXPA Announcement
Delivered by Ronnie Battista, UXPA Treasurer,
June 5, 2012

Good morning. It's an honor and pleasure to welcome you to the UPA 2012 Conference. I want to thank Rich Gunther, our new President, who graciously asked me to speak to you this morning. For those of you that might not know, we typically hold our bi-annual Board meetings the weekend before the conference starts, and in addition to being a speaker, sponsor, vendor, session chair, and wicked hardcore poker player, Rich spent 30 hours leading our Executive Committee and Board Meetings this weekend, and felt that I might be a do a talk of this better justice. We shall see Rich. As this honor was bestowed upon me about 36 hours ago, I thought it best to write this down, so I beg your forgiveness as I might need to read some or even most of this.

This year is a really special year. The theme this year is about Leadership, and it's a most fitting topic given this momentous time in this industry. The journey here started 21 years ago in 1991, when Leaders of our industry formed the UPA to provide a home for usability practitioners. Their vision in forming an organization, and the work that has been done since to promote the importance of user-centered design has helped us all in ways we are grateful for. Because of their efforts, their dedication and passion, we are no longer just the people on the hard work side of the one-way mirror.

As you know the world when UPA was formed in 1991 is a lot different than it is today. The speed of technological advances in the last 20 years has transformed the lives of people around the world in countless ways. With the internet's commerce, content and global networking opportunities, mobility in all

shapes (literally), and the power of social networks, business as usual around the world has changed in real and substantive ways. Along the way there have been winners and losers. Many companies lost their competitive edge because they were unable or unwilling to make the changes to their business model to make them competitive.   And today there are still plenty of them, struggling to remain relevant in a world that's outgrown how they want to do business. And these companies are calling us.

Today we celebrate the fact that the lion's share of businesses that have succeeded in these times because they understand the pivotal role that User Experience has played. And we celebrate the Leaders in this room, and our brothers in sisters around the world that have led businesses into this world. Businesses that have finally get the fact that no matter how much of the market they've cornered, or what flashy new technology, product or service comes, they have come to a conclusion that's innate to us. That people matter. Customers matter. Employees matter. You did that. The UPA did that. *We have been and remain the voice for the human side of business and technology*. And this is a gift the Leaders of UPA have given us that keeps on giving. In a climate where jobs are tough to find, this industry remains a vital and important one. One that Inc. magazine lists as the top 5 hardest jobs to fill in 2012.

And guess what? We have an even brighter future ahead, because the faster technology moves, the more they need us. Technology will always change, but people don't. We have evolved as a species, but not nearly as much as we like to think. Here's an example. What do we really have in common with ancient Egypt? I read a recent blog about a scroll unearthed 3,000 years ago by an Egyptian teenager to his parents. It basically said, "Having a wonderful time. Please send money

and a new pair of sandals." Sound familiar? The Human Interface is the most difficult of all interfaces, and no one knows the coding behind it better than us.

If we just consider at what we've accomplished in the last decade alone, it's clear to me beyond a shadow of a doubt that we've made a serious, measurable and permanent impact on how business is done. We see it in the proliferation of UX Director and VP jobs – ones that have actual teeth! We see it the UX websites/blogs/meet-up groups and online networks like Twitter, LinkedIn that are driving conversations. And notably we're really seeing this in the publications outside our industry like Wired, Fast Company, and Harvard Business Review that are speaking our language, and convincing businesses that we are fundamental to their business strategy. Nicely done people!

And we recognize that in the 21 years since our inception, this is not the same industry it was. The core of who UPA was formed to serve, people in the usability field, has grown and changed. We have Information Architects, Interaction Designers, Rapid Prototypers, Mobile Designers, Accessibility experts, Social Media Strategists, Analytics, Project Managers, Content Strategists. Some of these didn't exist in 1991, and who knows what new roles are coming.

Along with this change, while Usability is still core piece of what we do, it's one piece. The broader term User Experience has become the *global* de facto business term. How many of you have usability in your title? How many of you have UX in your title? We have known this for a while, and we needed to do something about it. So, at the Board meeting this past January, we agreed that if we were looking to change the game of business we first needed to change

our name to align us with business. And so today, June 5th, 2012 I am honored and excited to publicly and proudly announce that from this moment forward, the UPA - the Usability Professionals Association, is now the UXPA, the User Experience Professionals Association.

I'm glad you are as excited as we are about this important first step. I do want to thank everyone that's contributed to getting us here. We know that a name change is actually easy to do. But the discussion and debate the Board has been having wasn't just about a more business-friendly name. We understood this was a wake-up call that we had to start thinking bigger. Much bigger. Really big. *Good* big. We know that in taking this step we have to take some of our own advice that we're so good at dispensing. And we have the data, believe me, we have plenty of data. Our membership surveys have told us, that as an organization we lost site, not of the value not of UPA and what it stands for, but what membership in UPA-I offers. You told us that we're a bit stale, a little stodgy, that we're not progressive, that we're a few years behind, and the one that personally gets me … we're not that much fun. There are hipper, more fun opportunities out there for people to connect and network in this space. So, it's time we consider bold change; a really NEW, reimagined organization. Nothing is off the table. How it's run, what it does, what it offers, and the greater audience it will serve. Change that renews the covenant with our mission that UXPA be the place that UX practitioners, and the businesses they serve, look to and want to be part of. And that we're fun.

We need to do what we ask of our clients and companies. We ask them

Who is your audience?

What are they trying to do?
And how are we helping them do it?

When thinking about us, let's consider the first of these questions. "Who is our audience?". The reality we have to accept is that there's a reason that other organizations, UX groups, conferences and even 8.000 other self-identified local chapter UPA members around the world haven't embraced UPA International as part of who they are.

The businesses I mentioned earlier, those unable or unwilling to change, the truth is UPA International brand was on same path. Because the truth is, many of our UPA Chapters have been driving the this brand farther into the future, and better than we have. For years now. They have fresh content, great conferences, big name events, state-of-the art technology. So I'm happy that Chris Hass (UPA Boston President) Cory Lebson (DC Metro President) and Jakob Biesterfeldt from the German UPA (a thriving organization with over 1,000 members of which only a handful are UPA International members). Because the truth is these Chapters are doing so well on their own that they don't 'need' us for much if anything nowadays. These people are hip. And they're fun. Relevant to everyone in this space. And they are HERE, and they are actively helping at the International level because they like many of you they believe UXPA is in fact something bigger. And successful as their Chapters have been, we have Chapters globe struggling to stay afloat that need our help. And let's not forget parts of the world where UX is still in its infancy, and we could and should be nurturing and growing much more than we're doing today.

The current way we do things isn't working, and I think the more we've put into trying to change, the more we've gotten in our own way as a Board member for 2 ½ years, it's hard to

explain, and harder to accept, that we can help our clients see and embrace transformation, that UPA International needed to eat some of it's own dog food. We failed.

IT'S KENNEL BLINDNESS. Last night the light went off as to what's happened here. My family used to raise and show English Bulldogs, and kennel blindness is basically the inability to see that you had an ugly dog. "Found in many purebred dog kennels, kennel blindness is a "disease" that results in breeders' inability or refusal to admit to the failings in their own lines of dogs, whether they relate to conformation traits described in the AKC breed standards"

Example: You might not have known this, but since 1991 we've been manually processing membership renewals, conference fees, and other credit card transactions. Though you might have filled the form out outline for this conference, in the back end UPA staff still needs to manually enter every credit card.

That's just wrong.

And we've known that for a long time. So, about five years ago we decided that we needed to change that, including Credit Card processing in a redesign of the UPA site. So we embarked on a project to build our own Credit Card processing engine on a new open-source platform. I can't begin to explain hard many people on the Board and in this audience today worked to make that happen, volunteering their time, working with a string of vendors, to get this here. We were excited and after 5 years we came into this weekend expecting to fully launch this site at UPA 2012 to coincide with this name change. Though we're 'technically' ready to launch this today, we fully recognize that this isn't the site we wanted. In fact it's not even near ready. We aren't proud. We're embarrassed. I will tell you that those in the design community we are looking to reach won't see themselves in it. We talked about keeping this

under wraps until we get it right. Or maybe calling it a beta. It's not even beta. We need you. So we will be putting it out to start a community driven redesign. If it makes sense to port this someplace else that will be more robust and reflective of our this new UXPA brand, we will tap into our reserves and invest in that. We have to do this, and we'll do everything we can.

But let's be honest, even if it was a stellar site, we know we wouldn't please anyone. In the case of the current site, we expect some out there Tweeting and Blogging about what's wrong with it. Actually, we're certain it's coming. That's ok, we welcome that. We expect it. And let's make this very clear, we deserve it. So, bring it on. In fact, we will even link to those posts, good or bad. Our simple request to those that have something to say is to provide suggestions. What should we do differently? What's missing? What would YOU do? If a UX organization could provide something you need, what would that be? How would the organization look like? I submit it's got to be very different from what we have now, most notably how we're organized.We know that all "movie critics" or as I saw on a business card recently "Insultants". That's easy. But true UX Leaders know it's not just about what's wrong, it's providing tangible, actionable solutions to get it right that counts. Criticize us for our failure to lead, but demonstrate that UX Leadership by stepping up to the plate to help.

This is a lot to digest, and yes, it's a little unsettling. But isn't that what we challenge our clients and companies to embrace every day? If there is any organization equipped to embrace the new, I think it's us. And while we have had some missteps along the way, we have been making great strides in other areas, most notably the refinement of conference model, which is built each year specifically by listening to what worked and

didn't work last year. There's even more changes coming next that are pretty exciting that you'll hear about later this week. And thanks to our new Regional Directors, two of which are here today, we have have finally executed on a model that's helping us to genuinely reconnect with our Chapters, both those that are succeeding and those that need help. We will actively be reaching out to bring new thinking and voices to the UXPA, which can only make us stronger and more relevant. And we're gonna be fun!

This new organization, this new UXPA will be a grass-roots reflection on how people communicate and organize in this socially connected world. Leadership is as much about providing a path to a better place as it is knowing when to get out of the way and let things happen that way it should. Finding that balance isn't easy, but we envision the UXPA playing a foundational role in providing an *international* platform that gives voice to everyone, especially to those that may not even be considered UX in any traditional sense but are business leaders that embrace and are leading with UX. And we want to strengthen the relationships with sister and cousin organizations. Our Chapters already have partnering with IxDA, CHI, international UX conferences, to seek and share content and expertise. And let me be very clear here. We don't want to "merge" with them. We simply want to be a home for anyone that calls themselves a UX Professional. This isn't a land grab, it's the opposite.

To do this, we can aspire all we want, but we need to create an organization they value and want to be part of, while celebrating the need what makes us different and diverse. We are big tent people. Tell us what you need. Tell us what you want. Tell us how you think we can do it. Help us connect the UXPA to your local networks. Ask them what want or need,

and tell us. Do what it is you were born to do. Learn, Iterate, Get Feedback. Make it better. Progress with us, evolve with us. Let's get a real conversation started about this. Everywhere. Make it something that gets people talking /collaborating / engaging. Push the envelope we have been unable to open. That's where the magic starts. That's what we do. Let's make some magic.

Now we know you have questions. I am fully aware that I've told you in very vague terms what this new UXPA means. So, were I sitting in your seat this morning I'd want more 'real' details of what I'm talking about specifically. What "Big" and "Bold" means. So is it finally time to tell you? Have you waited long enough? Do you want to hear it?

OK, the answer is... **I don't know**.

Well, to be fair or course there are some things *I'd* like to do, and I invite you to come here Wednesday night to have some fun. But it's not just about me. Or you. Or what UPA International was for us these many years. This is a new research and design project. For real. A project plan to engage the tens of thousands of UX professionals that aren't here in a conversation. Hardcore practitioners, newer entrants to the field, college students seeking a career in UX.

I'd like to put this pin on, as and this week other Board members will have these on as well, and I hope you'll talk to all of us. It says Ask Me About... but to be clear we don't mean that to suggest we'll give you the answer. Trust me, the Board doesn't agree on plenty of things, so you'll get many different opinions. That's good, but don't just ask us what we think, tell us your ideas and more importantly, what role you can play in building this new brand. With the smart people in this room

I have no doubt there are game-changing ideas here. We will have two sessions this week on the UXPA change which will soon be updated on the mobile site, and I hope you'll be able to join us and share.

As we honor and celebrate the UPA as it was, in this week of Leadership, we hope you will join us in Leading the way to a future organization that is current, relevant, valuable, international, and dammit, Fun! Connecting all of us who believe passionately in User Experience. It starts with experience. And this experience, this journey, wherever it goes, starts here.

So, goodbye and thank you UPA. But get ready people, and say Hello and Welcome to the NEW. The UXPA.