

Best Buy — Home Connections

Connectivity Services Tool · In-Store + Digital Experience

Role: **Manager, CX Design** · Team: **2 UX Designers + Research collaboration** · Delivery: **2013**

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Best Buy in 2012–2013 was fighting for its survival. Showrooming — customers researching in-store, then buying online at lower prices — was hollowing out the company’s core business. CEO Hubert Joly’s Renew Blue turnaround strategy repositioned Best Buy from commodity electronics retailer to trusted advisor in the Connected Home. Internet, TV, and home connectivity services were identified as a critical growth category: customers who needed help navigating ISP, satellite or cable TV, etc. choices were someone Best Buy could genuinely help better than Amazon could. Services revenue, historically \$2.3–2.5B annually, became a strategic priority — not a sideline.

By the end of 2014, Best Buy had deployed dedicated 850 sq. ft. Connected Home sections in 400 of its 1,050 stores, staffed with specially trained associates. Home Connections is a digital tool that makes human expertise scalable.

WHAT I INHERITED

This was not a greenfield project, but the upstream work was strategic rather than design. A CX Strategist had mapped the full customer journey for the TV purchaser across six phases (Discover → Learn → Engage → Transact → Serve → Grow), defined the in-store zone architecture, and identified the shared screen as the right conceptual model: a single digital interface that associates and customers would navigate together, side by side.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY FRAMEWORK - SMART TV

1. SERVICES (CHECK-OUTLINE) 2. VISITORS (KNOWLEDGE) 3. EXPERTS (ENGAGEMENT)

PHASE	DISCOVER	LEARN	ENGAGE	TRANSACTION	SERVE	ROW
CUSTOMER GOALS	Research options for the TV	Learn about connected TV	Compare prices and features	Pay for product	Receive product and setup	Use the product
ACTIVITIES	Walk in store to see products on display	Ask sales associate for help	Compare prices and features	Check out at register	Receive product and setup	Use the product
BARRIERS	Not enough staff to help	Not enough staff to help	Not enough staff to help	Not enough staff to help	Not enough staff to help	Not enough staff to help
CHANNEL OBJECTIVES	Help for customer discovery	Help for customer discovery	Help for customer discovery	Help for customer discovery	Help for customer discovery	Help for customer discovery
TELEPHONE OPPORTUNITIES	TV Meet Wall	Smart TV Demo Area	Smart TV Demo Area	Smart TV Demo Area	Smart TV Demo Area	Smart TV Demo Area



In-store zone concept sketches: TV/Meet Wall, SmartTV Demo Area, and HC Consultation Area with dedicated expert

Customer journey framework (CX Strategist, 2012) — TV purchaser across 6 phases with barriers and touchpoints mapped

The UX Research team ran in-store testing of early concepts in November 2012 with real in-market customers. The findings were specific: price display was confusing; the app needed more educational content; progress indicators were unclear; and the BBY Multipack bundle concept tested well.

What didn't exist yet was any design execution. No wireframes. No prototypes. My team built all of that.



In-store usability testing (November 2012) — participant profiles, interaction photos, results page, and key design opportunities surfaced by the research team

PROBLEM

When I came on, the project was mid-stream and struggling under its own complexity. Requirements were still in flux. Stakeholders across merchandising, services, digital, and operations had competing priorities and no unified design direction. The team had real assets — a strategy, a shared screen concept, upstream research — but no momentum toward delivery.

The November 2012 research findings were on the table. Acting on them wasn't. My job was to take what existed, resolve what was broken, and get it delivered.

MY ROLE

I managed two UX designers responsible for all design execution — from early wireframes through final hi-fi prototypes. I owned design direction, stakeholder alignment, and delivery quality across a complex, multi-stakeholder environment. My team translated the CX Strategist's journey framework and the research team's findings into a working, shippable product.

SOLUTION

Starting from the strategic foundation and research findings we inherited, my team designed the full experience — wireframes through hi-fi prototypes — around the shared screen concept. The core interaction model placed the associate and customer side by side, navigating options together: entering the customer's address to authenticate local availability, comparing providers across speed tiers and pricing, and working through the multipack bundle options that research had shown resonated.

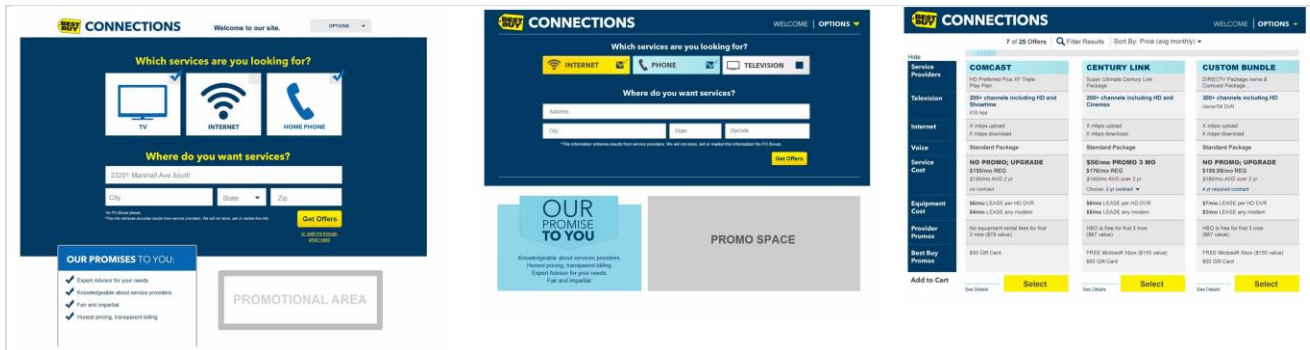
Design decisions were shaped directly by what the November 2012 research had surfaced:

- Price needed context before it appeared — not alongside an overwhelming comparison grid
- Educational content needed to be woven into the flow, not treated as a separate reference layer
- Progress indicators needed to make the multi-step qualification feel bounded and certain, not open-ended



Wireframe screens (2013) — address qualification flow, ISP authentication, and side-by-side provider comparison grid with speed tiers and pricing

The result was a production-ready experience that could hold up consistently across hundreds of store locations — with associates at varying training levels, in different physical configurations, having genuinely different customer conversations.



The modern Best Buy Home Connections experience — a multistep guided wizard still lives today on bestbuy.com — is a direct descendant of this work.



Best Buy Home Connections today (2026) — the experience evolved into a multistep guided wizard, a direct descendant of the 2013 design

IMPACT

The experience shipped on time and launched across hundreds of stores as part of Best Buy's Connected Home rollout — a deployment at a scale where design inconsistency would have been immediately visible and costly.

During this period, Best Buy's company-wide NPS improved over 300 basis points year-over-year, with leadership citing store experience improvements as a primary driver. Services revenue stayed at \$2.3–2.5B annually in the decade since Home Connections rollout. This application was one of the tools enabling the human expertise that drove those results.

The most direct record of impact comes from the people who were there:

“Alex stepped into a very complex project mid-stream, had to learn a new business and manage a new process simultaneously. I am very pleased to say that Alex challenged the status quo, heard what the business needed, and executed the requirements with calm and creativity — delivering a superb product and user experience. This project would not have been delivered on time without Alex’s efforts and expertise.”

— **Joanne Sobelman**, Project Manager

“Alex is a rare breed of manager. He is involved and engaged in the projects of his team, providing feedback and encouraging dialogue without micromanaging. He is great at bringing the team together to evaluate in-progress work, brainstorming ideas, and facilitating creative thought processes in such a way that ensures all edges of a project are accounted for and the best solution is arrived at. He easily stepped beyond the role of simply ‘manager’ and into the role of mentor.”

— **Larissa Lowthorp**, Product Designer

“During our project together, I came to value Alex as an expert in user experience & design along with an individual who got things done. Alex was a down-to-earth colleague who often found creative ways to appease multiple parties with his solutions.”

— **Jesse Loudon**, Program Manager

KEY LEARNINGS

Inheriting a mid-stream project teaches you things a greenfield project never will. When prior work exists, the first job is triage — not redesign. The instinct to start over is often wrong; the skill is knowing what to preserve, what to fix, and what to let go. The shared screen concept was right. The research findings were specific and actionable. Both things were true simultaneously, and acting on that distinction was the difference between momentum and rework.

Scale changes what good design means. A solution that works perfectly in one store can quietly fail across four hundred when you can't control the associate's training level, the store's physical layout, or the shape of the customer conversation. That reality pushed every design decision toward clarity over cleverness — fewer assumptions, more guidance, less room for misinterpretation.

In a project this complex, alignment and delivery aren't the scaffolding around design — they are design. Every stakeholder tradeoff, every requirement resolved under pressure, every decision made without full information shaped the product as much as any wireframe.