UX RESEARCH REPORT · 2026

Petal Supply Co.

The research behind the redesign.

An informal UX research report. Three months embedded on the floor — hired as an accountant, not a researcher. What was observed, what was found, what a rebuild would change — and what it would deliberately leave alone.

RESEARCHER Sloane Indigo · Solo UX

STUDIO Shattered Indigo Studios

CLIENT Petal Supply Co. (anonymized) · Regional Wholesale Floral Distributor, Est. 1913

WINDOW 3 months, 2026 — embedded, not commissioned

METHOD Solo · Embedded observation + 5 semi-structured interviews

DELIVERABLES Redesign concept, research findings, design system — concept only, not deployed

TL;DR

The original system ran on 1980s IBM terminal infrastructure, refreshed exactly once, in 2011, and never again. Every order, every inventory count, every bill moved through it by hand. Three months embedded as an accountant — plus five semi-structured interviews with sales reps, a sales manager, and drivers — surfaced a pattern no one had named: this wasn't a technology gap, it was that no one who used the system daily had ever been asked what it cost them. This report documents research that was never commissioned, a redesign that was never assigned, and what I'd measure if it had been.

01 — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A redesign grounded in what was actually happening.

Petal Supply Co. runs its wholesale floral operation on infrastructure installed in the 1980s and refreshed exactly once, in 2011. I was brought on as an embedded accountant, with an informal promise of involvement in an incoming Salesforce rollout. That involvement mostly didn't materialize — I sat through idle hours, then did manual data entry alongside longtime staff. Rather than wait it out, I started documenting.

Three months of embedded observation — order-taking, billing, inventory, delivery, the partial launch of the new system as it happened — combined with five semi-structured interviews across sales, management, and delivery, surfaced eight structural findings. None of them were a surprise to the people living inside them. All of them were invisible to anyone who wasn't.

This report documents the context, the findings, the design response, and — because this was never a commissioned engagement — an honest accounting of what would need to happen before any of it could actually ship.

02 — CONTEXT

Why this report exists.

This wasn't a commissioned engagement. It started as accounting work. I was told I'd have a hands-on role in the incoming systems rollout — instead, most days meant sitting idle until close, then manual data entry beside staff well past retirement who had long since stopped caring how the system worked.

Rather than sit through it, I started documenting every workaround I saw, hand-writing a product catalog that had never existed in digital form, and sketching what an actual rebuild would look like. This report was assembled afterward, from notes taken on the job — not from a research mandate anyone gave me.

Once the pattern became clear from observation alone, I asked five coworkers directly — two sales reps, the sales manager, and two drivers — for semi-structured conversations about what their day actually looked like. Nobody assigned those conversations either. I asked because I wanted to know if what I was seeing matched what they were living, not because anyone requested it.

One detail closes a loop from earlier in this report: the systems rollout that mostly left me sitting idle actually had a real technical answer to the inventory problem. Komet Sales, one of the major upstream vendors, publicly offers integration services for wholesalers like Petal Supply Co. — Esmeralda, another major vendor, does not advertise anything comparable. If the rollout's real-time inventory plan had a specific technical partner, Komet is the far more plausible one. I only pieced this together after the fact.

A second detail reframes something I originally read as a bug. Petal Supply Co.'s old homepage listed four "buy direct" tiles — Holland Direct, Komet Sales, Esmeralda, and Retail Direct. Three of the four are exactly what they claim: real, working logins for outside vendors. The fourth, Retail Direct, does not go to an outside vendor at all — it routes to Petal Supply Co.'s own new ordering portal. That is not a broken link. It is Petal Supply Co. already building its own version of this report's core idea — one unified place to order, combining what the three outside vendors each offer separately — incomplete and still being tested when I left. This report is not proposing something the client had not already reached for. It is picking up something they had already started.

The client did not commission this redesign and has not seen it. Petal Supply Co. is an anonymized stand-in for the real business, used with its details altered throughout this report. Names of interview participants have been changed.

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03 — METHODOLOGY

One observer. No mandate. Three months.

There was no research plan, because there was no research engagement — only a job that happened to put me in the middle of every workflow the business ran on, and five conversations I asked for myself once I realized how much I still didn't understand about what other roles were absorbing.

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INTERVIEWS Sales reps, manager, drivers	ACTIVE OBSERVATION Embedded on-site, full-time	FINDINGS Documented, ranked by impact	FORMAL MANDATE Self-directed, not commissioned

A note on mandate

Sheffield Grave Care's report is honest about researching after designing. This project reverses that honesty in a different direction: I was hired to do one job and did another alongside it, including asking five coworkers whether my read on the system matched theirs. No one asked me to look this closely, or to ask them to talk to me. Proximity did the work a mandate would have done on a commissioned project — but it also means every finding here rests on one observer's account and five informal conversations, not an independently designed or recruited research study.

Limitations

One embedded observer, five semi-structured interviews, three months, no formal survey instrument. This is a real sample of direct testimony and sustained close-range observation — not a validated or generalizable research study. Findings should be read as directional, grounded in firsthand accounts and daily exposure to the workflows described. Floral shop buyers were not interviewed directly; their perspective is inferred through sales-staff accounts and direct observation of the ordering process, not their own words.

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04 — VOICE OF THE FLOOR

Five interviews. Three roles. One shared complaint.

Five semi-structured conversations — two sales reps, the sales manager, and two drivers — confirmed from the inside what three months of observation had already suggested from the outside. Names below are changed. What follows is synthesized from those conversations, not verbatim transcript, since no recordings were kept.

Shelley & Heather — Sales Reps

Both reps described a system where inventory was never a known number, only an estimate — and more than once, that estimate put them in open conflict with each other over which of them actually had the stock to fill an order already promised to a buyer. Neither had a way to check who was right without walking to the cooler and counting themselves.

George — Sales Manager

George's role had quietly become a manual relay. Every tariff or fuel-driven price change ran through him first — updated by hand across three separate systems, then communicated to the sales team by word of mouth, who then had to relay it to buyers themselves. No step of that chain was written down until the invoice.

Tom & Bill — Drivers

Both drivers described the same bottleneck from the opposite end of it: waiting on slow order-packing, then absorbing pressure from buyers for same-day changes once they were already on the road, with no GPS system and no digital bill to check a load against before leaving.

The same finding surfaced in every conversation, in different language: nobody who actually used this system had ever been asked what it cost them to use it.

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05 — KEY FINDINGS

Four findings. Ranked by impact.

Eight structural problems were documented over three months. These four carry the most weight — the rest are folded into the problem statement and the solutions that follow.

01 No single source of truth

EVIDENCE *Observed daily · corroborated by Shelley & Heather, sales reps*

Data was entered manually into 3 separate systems. Inventory was counted by hand, written on paper, entered, printed to verify, then discarded. No system spoke to another — every handoff between departments was a chance to lose or duplicate information. Inventory was never a known number, only an estimate — one Shelley and Heather each independently described colliding over, more than once, when both believed they had stock already promised to a buyer.

02 The order process was entirely analog

EVIDENCE *Observed directly · corroborated by sales reps, drivers, and buyer behavior*

Floral shops ordered by phone or personal text to a sales rep's cell phone. One buyer regularly texted 100+ items in a single order. There was no digital trail, no confirmation, and no accountability if something went missing between the text and the truck.

03 Pricing was dynamic but invisible

EVIDENCE *Observed at billing · corroborated by George, sales manager*

Prices moved with tariffs, fuel costs, and demand — red roses ran $1.00 a stem normally, $1.95 on Mother's Day. Every sale involved a manual markup of 2– 2.5x over vendor cost, calculated by hand and valid only for that day — staff could quote today's price but never a forward one, because the number did not exist until it was calculated. Surcharges generated enough calls and emails on their own to be a recurring support burden, not an occasional one.

04 The 2011 refresh was cosmetic

EVIDENCE *Confirmed on-site · terminal hardware and menu structure*

The underlying infrastructure dated to the 1980s. What staff called "the refresh" in 2011 changed little about how the system actually worked — by the time of this engagement in 2026, the "recent" upgrade was already fifteen years old, sitting on top of technology twice that age.

06 — PROBLEM STATEMENT

Three pillars. All structural.

The findings consolidate into three pillars. Unlike a consumer-facing redesign, the friction here wasn't emotional — it was structural, and it compounded daily across every department that touched an order.

Pillar 01 — Fragmented truth

No system talked to another. The same piece of information — a stem count, a price, a delivery address — could exist in three places at once, disagreeing with itself, with no way to know which copy was correct without walking over and asking.

Pillar 02 — Invisible economics

Pricing moved constantly and was surfaced to no one until the bill arrived. The business absorbed the cost of that surprise in support calls, disputed invoices, and buyers who simply stopped asking and started guessing.

Pillar 03 — Physical inefficiency

Every order cost real steps: into the cooler, back to a bubble terminal, keyed in one field at a time, printed in triplicate, walked to accounting. None of it was necessary. All of it was routine. Drivers Tom and Bill absorbed the far end of that inefficiency directly — waiting on packing that couldn't move faster, then facing buyer pressure for changes once already on the road, with no system to check a load against before leaving the lot.

A note on scope

One competitor comparison is worth softening the digital-presence critique with: Esmeralda Farms' own login page still displays a copyright date of 2005 — twenty-one years stale, next to Petal Supply Co.'s comparatively minor 2020. Neglected auxiliary pages appear to be an industry-wide pattern, not a Petal Supply Co.-specific failure. The finding stands; the framing is fairer read as "even the leaders let this slide" than as a unique failure.

Petal Supply Co. also runs two freight services — Cold Chain Advantage and Local Delivery Advantage — consolidating third-party shipments onto its own refrigerated trucks and handling last-mile redelivery for other companies' orders. This is a real, separate line of business, and it is explicitly out of scope for the Driver Dispatch concept in this report, which is built around Petal Supply Co.'s own orders only. Extending dispatch to cover third-party freight would be a distinct project, not a natural extension of this one.

FROM RESEARCH TO DESIGN

The sections that follow shift from what was found to what the design does about it. The observer and the designer here are the same person — the work is still documented separately so each can be evaluated on its own terms.

07 — PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Five interventions. Each tied to a finding.

SOLUTION	USER IMPACT	BUSINESS IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION
Unified ordering portal	One place to order, see stock, and see price before	Portal orders get fulfillment priority; fewer text-order	Live catalog, saved history, cart, checkout — catalog

SOLUTION	USER IMPACT	BUSINESS IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION
	committing.	errors.	spec includes stem length, matching how buyers actually shop, not just variety and count.
Real-time inventory	No more "let me check the cooler" holds on a call.	Single entry point — no triple re-entry, no discarded verification printouts.	Komet Sales integration for incoming stock data, combined with on-site counts — not manual entry alone.
Pricing shown up front	Buyers see the real number before they ask, not after they order.	Fewer billing disputes and support calls tied to price surprise.	Tariff and seasonal adjustments shown at the product, not the invoice.
Holiday & specialty pre-booking	Buyers can pre-book holiday volume and request varieties Petal Supply Co. doesn't normally stock, instead of hoping a text gets seen in time.	Predictable holiday demand planning; captures specialty-order revenue that used to depend on informal asks.	Standing-order-style pre-book flow, separate from the standard live catalog.
Mobile tools for reps	No more cooler trips just to check what's in stock.	Reps spend order time on the phone, not walking.	Handheld order entry, live stock lookup, no bubble terminal.

08 — DESIGN DECISIONS WORTH DEFENDING

Five moves. All grounded in what was observed.

DECISION 01

Pricing shown before checkout, not at the invoice.

The single biggest finding was that invisible pricing broke trust at the worst possible moment. The redesign puts real numbers on the product, not the bill.

DECISION 02 KEPT

Phone and text ordering stayed available.

The obvious move would have been forcing every order through the new portal. It doesn't. Some buyers will always call — the fix isn't eliminating that channel, it's making sure a text order and a portal order land in the same system instead of one being invisible to the other.

DECISION 03

Ordering at midnight means first pick of fresh stock, not a scheduled drop.

New shipments physically arrive around midnight. Buyers who order right at that window are choosing from the full fresh selection; buyers who wait are choosing from what is left. The redesign keeps this real incentive rather than replacing it with an arbitrary catalog-refresh schedule — and surfaces it honestly, since right now nothing on the portal explains why midnight matters at all.

DECISION 04

Reps got mobile tools, not a better terminal.

The fix wasn't a nicer bubble screen. It was removing the terminal from the workflow entirely and letting reps check stock and take orders from wherever they were standing — including inside the cooler.

DECISION 05

Seven-year digital record retention, not shortened.

The existing 7-year paper retention wasn't arbitrary — it matched a real compliance need. The redesign digitizes that practice instead of using the rebuild as an excuse to quietly cut it.

09 — WHAT I'D MEASURE AT LAUNCH

A monitoring plan, not a results claim.

This redesign was never built or deployed — there is no launch data to report, and inventing any would undercut the point of writing this report at all. What follows is what I'd track if it shipped, and why each metric matters, not a claim about what it achieved.

METRIC	HOW IT WOULD BE MEASURED	WHY IT MATTERS
Portal vs. phone/text order share	Order source logged at intake	Tests whether the portal actually earns adoption, not just exists
Billing correction rate	Invoices amended after issue, before vs. after launch	Direct proxy for whether pricing-in-the-open reduces disputes
“Where's my driver” call volume	Inbound call log, tagged by reason	Tests whether dispatch tracking actually reduces the specific complaint it targets
Rep order-entry time per order	Timestamped start-to-submit, sampled	Tests whether mobile tools measurably cut the cooler-trip loop

METRIC	HOW IT WOULD BE MEASURED	WHY IT MATTERS
Inventory re-entry incidents	Count of records entered more than once for the same event	Direct measure of whether “single entry point” holds up in practice

10 — LEARNINGS

What this project taught me.

Lesson 01 — Being embedded beats being commissioned.

No one asked me to look this closely. Proximity surfaced more than a formal mandate would have — but it also means this report has to work harder to earn belief, because nobody asked for it.

Lesson 02 — The best evidence is what people build around a broken system.

The stretched landline cord. The hand-written catalog. Nobody complained about these directly — they just adapted, quietly, every day. The adaptations documented the problem better than a complaint ever could.

Lesson 03 — Systems that still “work” are the hardest to justify replacing.

Nothing had failed enough to force change. Orders still went out. Bills still got paid. The cost was real but invisible, spread thin across a hundred small frictions a day. The job of this report was making that invisible cost visible.

Lesson 04 — A proposal without a mandate has to earn its own case.

Every section of this report had to work for its place, because nobody commissioned it. That constraint made the case tighter, not weaker.

11 — FORWARD RECOMMENDATIONS

What I'd do next. In priority order.

This report ends at a proposal, not a launch. These are the moves I'd prioritize before any of it became real.

- 01 · PLAN — Pilot the ordering portal with the 2–3 highest-volume shops before a full rollout.
- 02 · PLAN — Manually instrument the current phone/text ordering process for two weeks to get a real baseline — none currently exists.
- 03 · PLAN — Interview floral shop buyers directly. Every other role in this report spoke for themselves; buyers' perspective so far is inferred through sales-staff accounts and observed ordering behavior, not their own words.
- 04 · PLAN — Cost out GPS dispatch as its own line item — it's the most capital-intensive piece and deserves a separate feasibility pass.
- 05 · KEPT — Keep 7-year digital record retention. It matches existing practice and shouldn't be quietly shortened during a rebuild.

12 — APPENDIX

Research instruments and materials.

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted informally — two sales reps, the sales manager, and two drivers — without a written interview guide, a survey instrument, or a formal coding scheme. No recordings were kept; the findings above are synthesized from notes taken during and after each conversation. This project otherwise relied on direct embedded observation and informal documentation taken during the researcher's accounting duties, including a hand-written product catalog that had no prior digital form.

No formal participant data was collected, and interview participants' names have been changed throughout this report. The client name, location, and other identifying details have also been altered.

THIS REPORT

Petal Supply Co. — UX Research Report. Research, writing, and document design by Sloane Indigo. Under Shattered Indigo Studios. 2026.

THE CLIENT

Petal Supply Co. (anonymized) — Regional wholesale floral distributor, est. 1913. This engagement was not commissioned; the redesign has not been reviewed or approved by the client.