Usability Testing

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Agenda

- Intro
- Sample clips
- User research methods
- Key features of usability testing
- Demo
- Value of testing
- When to test
- DIY testing
- Tips for facilitating
- Preparing for usability testing
- Analyzing the results

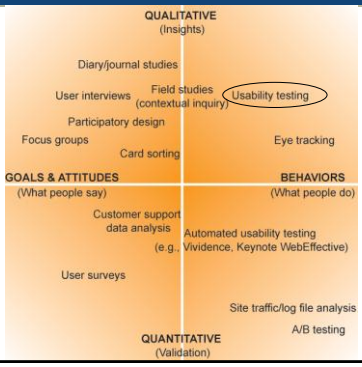
Our upcoming webinar

- "**Self-Service Nation**: Improving the user experience to maximize digital government efficiency and ROI": Jan 18, 12-1pm CST
- Look under Upcoming Events on our home page at **fredcomm.com**

Sample clips

- Tester 1 City of Los Angeles: Graffiti Removal
- Tester 2 City of Los Angeles: Graffiti Removal

User research methods



Key features of usability tests

- **One** participant at a time
- Representative users
- Can be as few as 5 participants –
  we usually have between **8-12**
- Sessions last about an **hour**
- Representative task scenarios – usually 6-12
- "Think aloud" protocol
- Facilitators observe, take notes, record data
- Big benefit:
  Observing what users actually do

Let's try it…

- Task scenario:
  You have just moved to Pierre, South Dakota and there are several things you want to find out from the city website.
  - You know about the floods and want to find out if you can receive any alerts from the city about flooding or other disasters or emergencies.
  - Where do you put recyclable materials? Does the city collect them? If so, when? If not, what do you do with them?
  - You want to build a back deck on the house you bought. Do you need a permit?

Another example…

- Task scenario:
  You live in Las Vegas, NV, and are worried about the possibility of foreclosure. You missed your first house payment and it looks like you might miss your next one too. You have been looking online for resources that can help and ended up on the Nevada Housing Department website. Where would look on this site for information that can help?

The value of usability testing

- *"The testing you did paid for itself, many times over…and will continue to do so."* (city gov't client)
  - increased sales/completed transactions/reduced cart abandonment
  - reduced support costs
  - reduced cost of errors
  - reduced time on task
  - increased satisfaction/better overall "brand experience"
  - improved service

Test early

- The longer you wait to test, the more it costs to fix interface design flaws
- Fixing flaws in development costs 10x as much as fixing them in the design phase
- Fixing flaws post release costs 100x as much

- Testing in design/early development – assessment (or formative) testing
- Testing in late development – validation (or summative) testing

DIY testing

- Bringing usability in-house is a good idea – make testing and other forms of user feedback a **standard** part of the design and dev process.
- Possible pitfall of conducting testing in-house: reluctance to call your baby ugly. The usability analysts need to be **neutral and detached**, separate from the design and development team.
- An outsider can be helpful because they stand outside organizational politics.

Tools

- Techsmith Morae (c. $1,500)
- Silverback (c. $70)

Other useful tools:

- 3M's Visual Attention Service (VAS)
  - https://vas.3m.com/
- Color contrast analyzer add-on in Firefox
- WAVE – Web Accessibility Checker

Good practices for facilitating

- Begin the session with some small talk and a few “profile” questions
- Begin the scenarios with an easier task
- Avoid asking **leading questions** – be neutral (e.g., “what do you think about…?”)
- Smile and be warm, but avoid inadvertently influencing the tester via subtle cues
- Avoid the natural inclination to help
- Re-focus the tester when they go on a tangent
- **Ask why** – don’t assume you know the answer, and don’t be afraid to probe

Preparing for usability tests

- Identify your primary/secondary user group
- Determine how you will recruit from this group
- Pick a test location
- Draft your test materials
  - key questions you want the test to answer
  - task scenarios (verb-based or scavenger hunt)
  - profile questions
  - debriefing questions
  - welcome and intro to test session
- Make sure everything works!
- Consider a practice run

Analyzing the results

- Quantitative data
  - ratings
  - time on task
  - errors
- Qualitative data
  - navigation paths
  - comments and questions
  - facial expressions, body language
- **Look for patterns** – what are the common issues and questions?
- Try to figure out **why** users ran into difficulty

Resources

- www.usability.gov
- www.fredcomm.com > Blog and Articles > Recommended Resources on Usability, IA, and UI

- Remember our webinar on Jan 18, 12-1 CST
  Look under Upcoming Events on our home page at **fredcomm.com**

Say Hello!

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Large-scale online testing

- Remote, unmoderated, involving >50 participants
- Requires a tool to moderate the study and collect data
- Task-based, but also captures data about the user's experience via survey questions and clickstream.
- Sample tools: Loop11, RelevantView, UserZoom, WebEffective
- Create your own with SurveyGizmo (http://www.SurveyGizmo.com)

- *Beyond the Usability Lab: Conducting Large-scale Online User Experience Studies (2010),* Albert, Tullis, and Tedesco