

Usability Testing

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What Is Usability Testing?

- User-centered iterative design
- Early focus on users and tasks
- Empirical measurement of product usability

Why Do Usability Testing?

- Improve the product
- Reduce support calls
- Minimize risk
- Acquire a competitive edge
- Determine focus and priorities for new features
- Create a measurable record of the product's usability
- Increase sales

What Does Testing Accomplish?

See how users actually use the product

- what tasks do they typically perform?
- what is their level of application and software expertise?
- how do they use the product in their jobs?

What Does Testing Accomplish?

Identify:

- omissions, flaws, or conceptual errors
- which features are most often used
- which features are least/most favorite
- which features are misunderstood or underutilized
- which features are users having problems with
- which features are never noticed or used
- training needs
- the product's learning curve and ease-of-use

What Does Testing Accomplish?

Are there "learning barriers"

- where do they occur?
- how are they most easily addressed?
- once over this barrier, is usability acceptable?

See how we address the needs of novice, intermediate, and advanced users

Reduce backtracking through the product lifecycle

What Does Testing Accomplish?

Implement solutions, focus on specific problems:

- reorganize documentation
- redesign screens
- change Help organization or interface
- change documentation strategy (media, access, audience, information types)
- introduce conceptual overviews
- produce quick-start material
- make improvements in training and tutorials
- provide templates

What Foundation Is Needed?

- Focus group and market research
 - is there a well-defined market?
 - who are the users?
 - what tasks do they perform?
 - how will our product help them with those tasks?
- Customer visits and surveys
- Participatory design (alpha and beta sites)
- Competitive analysis

What Do We Test?

User interface

- logical organization and layout
- ability to locate key features
- welcome look and feel
- speed with which users can perform tasks (benchmarking)
- performance and functionality (these are also local user environment issues)

What Do We Test?

On-line help

- clarity and completeness
 - navigation
 - integration with product
- Documentation
- clarity and completeness
 - navigation
 - level of use

What Do We Test?

Generally

- effectiveness (ease-of-use)
 - time it takes to begin using the system
 - ability to learn new features
- usefulness (did it solve the problem?)
- overall user response
 - initial impression
 - degree to which they like using the system

How Is It Done?

Identify test participants

- fellow employees not on design team
- alpha and beta users
- production product users

Plan the tests

- what do we want to learn?
- what are we testing?
- how will we set up and schedule the tests?

How Is It Done?

Design the tests

- what is the test monitor's role (passive or interactive)?
- what controls will we implement?
- how will observers watch the test?
- how will we simulate the user's environment?
- what are the test scripts?
- what is the backup plan if the test goes awry?

How Is It Done?

- Conduct the tests
- Compile data
- Analyze the results
- Communicate the results
- Propose improvements
- *Repeat as necessary*

Who Is Involved?

Technical communicator

- write test plan
- plan, design, conduct tests
- compile data and analyze results
- communicate results
- implement online help and documentation recommendations

Development staff

- assist with test plan
- serve as test observer
- implement user interface recommendations

Who Is Involved?

Product manager

- determine user profiles, usability goals
- identify test participants
- plan, design, conduct tests
- compile data and analyze results
- communicate results
- recommend (prioritized) strategies for improvement

USERS!!!