Usability –

Why Bother?

Overview

○ What is usability and why be concerned about it?

○ Overview of usability methods

○ What to expect from usability results

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A Simple Definition

○ Usability: The quality of a user's experience when interacting with a system.

○ The ease in which a person can learn and use a system.

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The International Standards Organization (ISO) Definition

○ Usability is the effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction with which a specified set of users can achieve a specified set of tasks in a particular environment.

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Factors that Influence Usability

- Productivity - can users accomplish necessary tasks with the system? Are tasks completed in a reasonable amount of time?

- Ease of Learning - how quickly can a new user learn the system?

- Learning Retention - can users who have used the system before easily use it again without having to relearn everything?

- Error Rate & Recovery - how frequently do errors occur and how serious are the most common errors? How easily can users recover from errors?

- Satisfaction - Do users willing use the system?

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Why Worry About Usability?

- Company Brand - Reputation
  - Bad usability causes bad user experiences.
  - If a site is frustrating or annoying, visitors associate that with the brand.
  - On average, people who have a bad experience online tell 10 others.

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Lost Revenue

- If people can't understand something, they won't use it

- If a site/system makes things difficult, users will look elsewhere.

- Employees forced to use poorly designed systems will be less productive

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Lost Revenue (cont.)

- Customers will not buy from sites they cannot use
  - 82% of customers attempting to purchase items online gave up as a result of bad usability (A. T. Kearnew, 2002)
  - 60% of the time, customers cannot find the product or information they are looking for (Forrester & Jupiter, 2000)

- 50% of customers will not return to a site if they have difficulty finding necessary information.

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Usability – a necessary condition for survival on the web

- If a web site is difficult to use – people leave

- If the homepage fails to clearly state what a company offers – people leave

- If users get lost on a website, they leave

- If information is hard to read or doesn't answer key questions – they leave

- There are plenty of other sites available – leaving is the first line of defense when users encounter a difficulty

John Britsios – www.webnauts.net/usability

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Benefits of User Centered Design

○ Reduced software and eCommerce costs

○ Improved marketability

○ Increased consumer revenue

○ Increased productivity

○ Decreased staff turnover

○ Increased user trust

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Increase Satisfaction

○ Systems developed with a user-centered approach increase user satisfaction by ~40%

○ Users are more satisfied when the system/site offers relevant services that meet the users' needs and expectations.

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Satisfied Customers...

○ Stay on a site longer and consume more

○ Will return to the site again

○ Tell others – word of mouth advertising

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Increased Productivity

- The average system has 40 design flaws that impair the employee's ability to complete their tasks.

- If the interface is well designed, then the users can concentrate on the task at hand rather than the tool – this enables users to operate effectively and efficiently, rather than lose vital time struggling with a poorly designed user interface full of functionality problems.

- Reduced errors – If the interface is consistent, unambiguous and caters to user expectations in terms of the sequence and structure of tasks, then the user error rate will fall dramatically. This will help increase the productivity of users.

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Usability Methods

○ The handout provided covers a variety of user-centered design methods that can be incorporated into the development cycle.

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Usability Evaluation Results

○   What will we learn?

○   How can we incorporate results into our system/site?

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What will we learn?

○ Find problems *before* your customers do, thereby producing a higher-quality product

○ Learn more about your users

  ○ Discover where users have difficulty with your site

  ○ Features and content that users appreciate

  ○ User wish list

○ Test design concepts

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What Else Could We Learn?

○ Understand how users approach common tasks and how users *actually* use your system

○ Learn details of your user's physical, social, and organizational environment and how these factors affect their interaction with your site

○ Get ideas for marketing opportunities and new system features

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Incorporating Results

- A good usability evaluation report will offer recommendations for:
  - Improving the process
  - Simplifying the interface
  - Replacing obstacles with elements that facilitate user goals

- Recommendations should be specific and provide screen mock-ups as examples, where appropriate

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Incorporating Results

○ Usability consultants should be willing to meet with developers, marketing staff, etc. to discuss solutions that will meet business, as well as customer, needs and constraints

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Usability: Why Bother?

- "Regardless of whether you're a supplier, an investor, a potential hire, or a customer, you need to find what you're looking for quickly and easily.

- If our site is designed well, it will reflect our respect for each of our diverse audiences." - Yvette Jenkins, manager of Varian's Web Communications.

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○ "Data indicate that usability offers a better return on investment than almost any other business action. When times get rough, usability shines. The benefits are huge. Usability is a weapon that can save you money, improve your competitive position, and improve customer loyalty. Now is the time to invest in the research.

○ John S Rhodes, Editor and Webmaster at WebWord.com

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Conclusion

○ Whether your system/site is for staff, colleagues, customers, or potential customers, the benefits of usability are far-reaching

○ Providing difficult or frustrating systems can be much more costly than the expenses associated with user-centered design and testing

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