



IBM CUSTOMER FACING SOLUTIONS
+USER EXPERIENCE
 Usability



User Experience - Usability

What's the point of an attractive website or application if it's not clear or easy to use? Ease of use is often the critical differentiator between a successful site and a marginal one. That's why our usability specialists put ease of use first, making sure your intended audiences' perspectives are always a priority.

Usability is the discipline of applying scientific principles to ensure that the application or website being designed is easy to learn, easy to use, easy to remember, error tolerant, and subjectively pleasing. Our usability services include all forms of usability evaluation and testing. Experienced usability specialists work with you to assess the ease of use of your websites and applications based on common usability standards and leading practices. We also offer a usability lab that enables us to test real users in a controlled environment, collecting and comparing usability data. A usability

assessment will aid you in determining which improvements would be most effective, helping to optimize your web or application investment.

Usability testing is valuable at multiple stages in a project. Errors are easier and less expensive to fix during the design phase of the project. Our usability specialists employ the following tools and techniques to deliver recommendations on usability improvements for your website or application:

- Usability Testing with a sampling of users
- Site or Application Assessment
- Heuristic or Expert Evaluation
- User Surveys
- Focus Groups
- User Task Analysis
- User Scenarios
- Usage Tracking
- Prototyping

Heuristic or Expert Evaluation

The usability specialist reviews the site or system and provides recommendations based on established principles. This can include a review of competitors and leading practices.

- *When?* At the beginning of a project or when an update is being considered
- *How long?* One day to two weeks, however, the longer the time, the more in-depth the review depending on the size of site
- *Who?* Usability specialist with some consultation with a client system subject matter expert
- *Why?* Helps to identify "low hanging fruit" and common mistakes but is not a substitute for formal user testing

Formal Usability Evaluation

The usability specialist collects user performance data through one-on-one sessions observing users complete a series of tasks on the application. Results from all participants are evaluated for commonality and a detailed report is produced that includes prioritized recommendations.

- *How long?* Three to four weeks elapsed time (average). Usually two to four days to run the test, plus preparation time and a detailed report. This depends on a number of variables some of which include the following:

- The number of user groups
- The number of tasks/scenarios to be tested
- The complexity of the tasks
- Language in which the tests are run
- *Who?* Actual end users of the system, facilitated by a usability specialist. Clients can observe (if being done in a formal test facility)
- *Why?* Users identify problems (what and why), and IBM proposes solutions

Remote Usability Testing

With our ever-expanding global economy it is getting harder and harder to access actual end users. Furthermore, we want to get a better sample of end users and they are not often in the same location. We are able to run sessions remotely with the facilitator in one location and participants in other locations or testing at the client facility.

- *When?* When it is not possible to be in the same location
- *How long?* Depends on the type of test
- *Who?* End users of system, usability specialist, possibly another assistant in the remote location
- *Why?* To save money and access a wider and more accurate collection of end users of the site

The benefits of usability testing include:

- Improvement in users' performance across a range of dimensions including: ease of learning, efficiency, mental workload, accuracy, and satisfaction
- Increased efficiency and effectiveness of end user applications and interfaces
- Increased revenue through efficient customer interaction
- Decreased training and support
- Decreased rework time

Contact Karen Yarmol-Franko at 416.478.2803, kyarmolf@ca.ibm.com for more information on Customer Facing Solutions' usability services.

http://www.customerfacingsolutions.com/offerings/offering_userexperience_usability.html

Impact of Usability

Need some help selling usability in your organization? Consider these statistics:

- B2C site managers identify usability as their number one priority (Forrester, 2000)
- 19 out of 20 major sites — five each in the auto, media, retail, and travel industries — failed Forrester's 2005 Web Site Review because of basic design flaws that are easy to fix (Forrester, 2005)
- Financial service execs rate usability as the No. 1 most important contributor to the success of their site (Forrester, 2001)
- 62% of eCommerce users abandoned a shopping cart in a recent study
- 47% of eCommerce users aren't able to find new information
- 28% of eCommerce users have trouble finding pages they already know exist
- 42% of all extranet users have abandoned the self-service websites for a call centre (Gartner Group 2000, Creative Good, 2001)

IBM Centres for Solution Innovation :: Toronto
120 Bloor Street East, Suite 104
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada, M4W 1B7

http://www.customerfacingsolutions.com/offerings/offering_userexperience_usability.html

© Copyright IBM Corporation 2008

