Web Usability Testing

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Why Usability Testing?

- Understand our audience needs
- Improve use of site
- Improve reception of information
No, Really Why?

• To meet the ultimate goals of the site. (Recruit students, sell stuff, promote University, raise funds, etc.)

And

• We will have more time to do it.
Sources of User Information

• moderated user session
• card sort
• interview
• “contextual inquiry”
• paper prototyping

• surveys
• focus groups
• usage stats
• search log analysis
• customer support data
What is Usability Testing?

Many definitions - but for our purposes today:

“Testing” a web site by allowing a user to navigate to it, find information on it, and complete “tasks” on it while being observed and possibly recorded.
My Testing Proposal

- Phase 1 - Person on the street interviews
- Phase 2 - Online survey
- Phase 3 - Moderated user session
- Phase 4 - Focus Groups - with new design samples
My Testing Proposal (cont.)

- 4 Audiences
  - Prospective undergraduate students
  - Prospective MBA students
  - Prospective Ph.D. students
  - Executive Education participants
Moderated User Session

Participant Selection

• 3 people from each audience - 12 tests in all
• used “current” new students
• recruitment e-mail to listserv
• selected them on first come, first served
Moderated User Session

Scheduling and Facilities

• One quiet room with network access

• 1 hour per session - 2-3 per day; 4 days over 2 week period
Moderated User Session

Technology

- Closed circuit camera aimed at monitor
- Camtasia
- Morae Software - designed specifically for user testing
Moderated User Session

Test Administrator

- Familiarity with site helpful - allows for departure from script when necessary

- Do not aid unless user is clearly stumped

- Prompt next tasks
Moderated User Session

Test Reviewer

- Morae allows for a remote viewer to observe and mark items as test proceeds.
- Viewer can “tag” the recording with events, such as, unexpected outcomes or interesting user comments.
- Allows for easier analysis after the test.
Moderated User Session

Test Script

- Caveats, requests for permission to be recorded, beginning instructions
- Test the site, not the user’s abilities.
- Simple interview questions
- Tasks based on site goals (apply, find info, etc.)
Moderated User Session

Test Demonstration
What I Learned

- Morae - Excellent Software!
- Although design affects usability, avoid questions on aesthetics.
- Content quality is part of usability, but can be a test in and of itself.
- Test your forms! (May need to be a separate test.)
What I Learned

- There are different types of users.
  - Navigators
  - Imagers
  - Googlers
Moderated User Session

The Results
Practical Tips

• Consider filing a formal proposal with administrators.

• Invite upper level administrators to observe.

• Don’t be too picky when selecting participants. Approximate your audience.
Practical Tips (cont.)

• File a formal proposal with University Office of Research Protections.

• [http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/](http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/)

• Approval aids in securing funds to pay participants.
Conclusion

• New advances will free up our time. (Eventually.)

• Administrators will begin to see the necessity of research in general.

• One morning a month. (Steve Krug)
Thank You

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