

# ART 4909-01

## INTERACTIVE DESIGN 2

### THE STUDY OF USER-CENTERED DESIGN

#### BRIEF:

Select an interactive object (website) and test it with three users. Observe the users while asking them to perform simple tasks. Collect and analyze information that reveals how easy is to use the interface and the difficulties affecting usability. Present your findings in the form of a written report and post it in discussions.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ To understand the concept of usability through readings and through conducting user testing.
- ▶ To understand how to 'read' and use the information obtained from conducting user testing for the design of effective interactive objects.
- ▶ To familiarize yourself with the way people interact with interfaces to see how easy they are to use and obstacles to usability.

#### PROCEDURE:

In a group of two people, select one of the following graphic interfaces to test it:

- ▶ e-commerce website
- ▶ non-profit organization website
- ▶ university website
- ▶ (note, a usability test can be conducted on anything with an interface, cell phones, navigation equipment, kiosks, cash machines, operation systems, ect. For this class lets only test websites.)

#### PART 1:

Familiarize yourself with the interface before elaborating a usability test.

*A usability test consists of showing something to one user at a time (whether it is a website or another graphic interface) to ask to either figure out what it is, or try to use it to do a typical task. Based on this, there are two things that you could do when you test your users: (a) ask them about the purpose of the interface, the way the information is organized, the way the interface works, ect.; and (b) ask them to do something while watching how well they do.*

ART + DESIGN DEPARTMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
DULUTH

Spring 2007  
Course #67281

T+Th, 2-3:50pm  
SPE 17

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#### READINGS

*Don't Make Me Think: A  
Common Sense Approach to  
Web Usability*

*Usability testing: The Movie:  
- How to do your own testing.*

*Don't make me think!  
- Krug's first law of usability*

*How we really use the web:  
- Scanning, satisficing, and  
muddling through.*

*Omit needless words :  
- The art of not writing for the  
web*

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#### PART 2:

Elaborate a usability test based on the sample test session provided. The main part of this test comprises the elaboration of questions concerning the user's understanding of the interface and the performance of simple tasks.

##### Questions concerning the user's understanding of the interface:

These are aimed at seeing if the users can understand the graphic interface before interacting with it (what it is, what is the information that is portrayed, what are the options or tasks they can perform with it, ect.).

##### Questions concerning the performance of simple tasks:

These are aimed at knowing how easy is for the users to interact with the interface as well as the difficulties that the users encounter while using the interface.

With respect to this, elaborate three simple tasks that the user would like to accomplish when using the interface. Elaborate them in a way that they differ in their complexity, being the third task the more complex task.

##### Example of tasks concerning the use of an ATM machine:

1. Could you access the balance of this account (checking account, pin number: 1212)?
2. Could you now withdraw \$20 from this account?
3. Could you now pay this electric bill by using this account?

#### PART 3:

Once you have your usability test ready, test three users (anyone could be your user, but try to avoid testing people who are very familiar with the interface selected.)

##### The Testing:

After introducing yourself to the user and explaining what you are going to do, ask permission to the user to videotape the test session explaining that the information will be only use for the purpose of this assignment. Set the video camera on a tripod and start the camera when the session begins. (*Note: it would be good if you also tell your users that it is OK if they don't know how to perform a task, and that they could leave the test session at any time.*)

Within your group, one person will play the role of the *facilitator* while the other person will play the role of the *observer*. The facilitator is the person who tells the users what she/he wants them to do, encourage them to think out loud, listen carefully to what they have to say, and protect them. The observer is the person who listen, observe the test session, and take notes.

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#### Recommendations for the facilitator:

*Protect the participant:* try to prevent any damage to your user's self-esteem. Be nice with them. If they don't know how to continue, don't let them get too frustrated. Be sure to thank them sincerely after you are done. Let them know that their participation has been very helpful – exactly what you needed.

*Be kind, patient, and reassuring.*

*Try to observe the user's thought process:* Encourage the user to think out loud, and whenever you are not sure what they are thinking, ask them.

*Don't give them hints about what to do:* if they don't know how to continue, try to guide them by asking more questions (example: what would you do if you were using this interface by yourself, without us observing you?).

#### Recommendations for the observer:

Try to observe if the user figures out without any help what the interface is, what it does, and where to start using it.

Try to observe if the user notices and understands the way of interacting with the interface.

Try to observe and take notes of any difficulty experienced while using the interface.

#### Recommendations for both:

At the end of each test session, take notes and review the information for the final report.

#### Analyze the information gathered during the test session by trying to find overall patterns:

*Did the user understand the graphic interface before interacting with it?*

*Were they able to perform the tasks?*

*What were the major obstacles in using the interface?*

#### PRESENTATION:

The presentation of this assignment will include the following:  
A written report with your findings. (This report will comprise a description of the test conducted and an analysis of the information gathered. This analysis will show how easy it was for the users to interact with the interface, any difficulty experienced while using the interface, and some recommendations for the design of effective interfaces.)

A presentation about your findings to be given in class. (Note: you may use PowerPoint or other presentation software to present your work.)

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#### SCHEDULE

Thursday, February 1  
- Introduction to assignment  
- Selection of an interface  
- Readings

Tuesday, February 6  
- Discussion on readings  
- Draft of the usability test

Thursday, February 8  
- work day

Tuesday, February 13  
- Presentation  
- submission of assignment

Thursday, February 15  
- NO CLASS