Usability

What is it?

Chris Palamara, CTC Inc.
What is Usability and how does it apply to my Website?
Usability is the basic measurement of how well a user can interact with your website.

Ease of learning - Can they figure it out?

Efficiency of use - How many clicks to get to something?

Memorability - When they come back, can they find “it”?

Error Frequency - Can they recover from a “bad” click

Subjective satisfaction - Did they get what they wanted?
If Google weren’t so simple and intuitive, there would be a million search engines today.

The importance of user centered design is that it is inherently focused on the user’s perspective.

You have a few seconds to capture a user’s attention.

User scans site in an “F” pattern. Images impact the scanning.
Overview of the Process

- Planning the site
- Collecting Data from users
- Prototyping
- Writing Content
- Conducting tests with users
- Deploying the site
http://www.lingcars.com
Questions to Start with...

- What are my site’s goals?
- Who will use my site?
- What will they use it for?
- What are the user’s expectations and background?
- Platforms? Hardware/Software? Mobile?
- External Sites (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr)?
Define Purpose

- What is the purpose of the site?
- What are the goals of the site?
Develop Goals for the Site

- Who are the users of the website?
- How would you describe them (demographically)?
- Why will they come to the website?
- When and where will users access the site (mobile, home, business)?
- How (platform) will they access the site?
User Tasks - Define, Refine

- What will users do on the website?
- Define critical tasks, why is this site essential?
- What features are most important to users?
- Which features get used the most?
- What issues would cause users the most trouble?
- Which tasks are most critical to site owners?
- How often will the site be used and would they return?
http://yvettesbridalformal.com/
Determine Measurement

- Which tasks should users be able to accomplish with no problems?
- Which tasks should be quick and efficient?
- What level of satisfaction should users have after using the site?
Discuss Expectations

- What is your (or your client’s vision) of what the site should do?
- Are there limitations to be considered (restraints, mandates, or guidelines)?
- Is there a design model or style you are considering?
Accessibility Requirements

- Section 508 Compliance / Web Accessibility Initiative
- Testing for Accessibility
- Accessibility Tools being used
Site Management / Resources

- Who is going to update and maintain the website?
- Skill levels and training needs?
- Graphic Designers?
- Programming and maintenance
- Marketing and promotion
Technology Needs

- Hosting
- Domain Name
- Content Management System Needs
- Web Metrics/Reporting
- Search Needs
Timeline and Project Plan

- At the very least you need an outline of a project plan.
Measuring the Return On Investment

Usability increases customer satisfaction, productivity, and establishes site authority/authenticity.
User Experience

- Small investment in time early in the design process, pays off BIG TIME down the road!
- Increase user success rate and ease of learning
- Reduce support costs and training
- Establishes trust and Authenticity
Development Costs

- Reduce Time and Cost to Develop an effective website
- Reduce maintenance and support costs
Revenue

- Increase Product Sales, Revenue, and Market Share
- Site Traffic
- Attract and Retain Customers
Information Architecture

The “Other” Design Need
Information Architecture

- The problem with most websites is the site navigation
- Search becomes the most used item
- “Enter Search Term” becomes the most searched for item
- Keep your site narrow and flat
- A user should be no more than 3 - 4 clicks away from what they are looking for.
Taxonomy

- Taxonomy is how you “tag” your content
- The Tagging is what allows users to find the content on the site.
- Taxonomy makes search work “smarter”
- Your Keywords need to be consistent with your navigation (site sections) then drill down to more specific terms. (Sports › American › Baseball › NY Yankees)
Some Examples....

- [link] http://yvettesbridalformal.com
- This site is a nightmare. Extreme example.
- No navigation
- Links take you somewhere, no way to get back.
Examples (cont’d)

- http://www.cnn.com
- How many clicks does it take you to get to the Stock Market Quotes?
- Hint: It’s under Money…
- Much Better (than Yvette’s)…
Examples (cont’d)

- Still on http://www.cnn.com
- Notice from the money page, the global navigation changes, how would you go from stock quotes, World News?
- More clicks---› Broken Website, not a very user-centric design. Could be better…
Better Example

- http://www.bbc.co.uk/
- Go to the Stock Quotes page.
- Get a quote on symbol “goog”
- Depending on how you went - 3 or 4 clicks
- Global Navigation didn’t change
User Driven Commerce

- Customers want to know.....
- What does it look like?
- How much does it cost?
- When can I get it?
- Does your site do that?
Amazon, Ebay, Apple.com

- Great examples of e-commerce
- User focused
- Consistent
- Memorable
- Authentic
- Accessible
Example Summary

- Sites were all different
- Users could find what they wanted
- 3 - 4 clicks to find what you were looking for
- Sites were memorable. You could go back and find what you were looking for again.
WebGUI And Usability

WebGUI has some terrific built-in features that make it a great platform for developing usable websites.
WebGUI Features

- Navigation features are automatic
- URL creation is automatic or can be adjusted by the user
- Content Profiling, Metadata, Keywords
- StoryManager
- Built in Search
WebGUI Features (Cont’d)

- Ease of use (adding/managing content)
- Override of many features (shortcuts!!)
- Ability to create multiple types of navigations (Global, Footer, Left navigations, supplemental navigations). This keeps users from getting lost.
- Custom 404 pages
Award-Winning Website - built on WebGUI, Usability Successes
For america.gov, usability studies are conducted about every 18-24 months.

Primary goal is to ensure the site retains freshness of focus

Meets the goals of the Department of State’s mission for the site.
Usability Study conducted over a few days

In a Government Usability Lab

On members of the sites target audience

Utilize an “eyeball” tracker

Have users perform tasks

Measure response time and success rate
Results

- Allow us to identify and fix problem areas (Design, Taxonomy, Content, Focus, Editorial)
- Drive future directions for the website and content creation organizations
- Retest and measure changes
Conducting Your Own (dirty) Usability Study

You can quickly measure the value of your website to your target audience
- Use your web analytics to determine the top pages of your website

- Use a click tracker (http://www.clickdensity.com) to determine where your pages are being clicked

- Refine your Design/Information Architecture

- Look at your navigation(s)

- Re-evaluate Performance/User Satisfaction
Quick Hits

- PDFs, Word, Excel as Content - generally anything that requires a download is not good.
- Videos and audio files should have transcripts
- Linking content to Social Networking sites that require “membership” to view, bad idea- make public
- Don’t store content on Twitter or Facebook that isn’t on your main site
- Offsite links should open in a new window (user’s should know when a link takes them offsite)

- Users should know (icon) that they are downloading a binary file

- Link to Adobe Reader, Flash Player, or other install files on your page if the content requires it.

- Alt Tags, Title Tags - Very Useful

- Test site in many browsers
- Custom 404 pages to allow your user to get back where they came from or continue on (suggest searches)
- Don’t use extensive graphics
- Measure site performance (no slow loading sites!)
- CSS / JS that degrades nicely
- Smart use of images
- Add help features
- Check for broken links
- Check Accessibility
- Re-think Flash and distracting interactives
- Use Font, hover, visited link standards (support scalable type!)
Resources

- http://www.usability.gov
- http://www.gerrymcgovern.com
- http://www.w3.org/WAI/
- http://iaiinstitute.org/