Usability testing

A brief introduction

Philip Morton
Outline
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• What is usability?
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• What is usability?
• Why is it important?
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- What is usability?
- Why is it important?
- How can we find out how usable something is?
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• Questions
What is usability?
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In other words, it’s how people interact with the systems and objects around them.
Usability is all around us
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Why is usability important?

Clumsy doors are annoying, but they’re not the end of the world...
Life and death

http://www.flickr.com/photos/83823904@N00/64156219/
Life and death

Kegworth air disaster.
Life and death

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Life and death

Kegworth air disaster.

- One engine caught fire.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kegworth_Air_Crash_Scene.jpg
Life and death

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- One engine caught fire.
- Due to poor instruments, communication and training, the pilots shut down the working engine.
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- The plane hit the M1 motorway.
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• East Midlands Airport, 1989.

• One engine caught fire.

• Due to poor instruments, communication and training, the pilots shut down the working engine.

• The plane hit the M1 motorway.

• 47 people died.
Money

Bad usability also costs money:
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- More support will be necessary.
- More changes will be necessary.
Customer satisfaction and branding

But good usability can make you money:
Determining usability

How do we find out how usable something is?
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Determining usability

How do we find out how usable something is?

- Expert review
- Interviews and questionnaires
- Log files and analytics
- Usability testing
What is usability testing?

We get people to use something and watch them.
How many people?

You don’t need an excessive number of participants.
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http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20000319.html
How many people?

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It’s better to run more tests with fewer people.
Who should you test?

Almost anyone will do.
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— Steve Krug
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Friends, colleagues, housemates, random people in the street — they’re all likely to be suitable for most tests.
What equipment do you need?

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Most professionals also do eye tracking, which requires a special monitor and costs much more.
What equipment do you need?

However, you can do it on the cheap.

Silverback records the screen, iSight camera and mic. Only on Mac, but £30.
Where does usability testing fit into QAT?

Throughout the design and development of the product.
When should you test?

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Remember: changes are more expensive to fix the further into development you get.
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- Bad usability can be expensive and dangerous.
- Good usability can make you money.
- Watching people using your product is the best way to evaluate it.
- You don’t need a lot of money or people to do testing.
- Test early and often.
Questions?

http://www.flickr.com/photos/david_nicholai/987226801/