

User Testing Evaluation Report
Introduction to Web Development (Q360)
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I. LEARNING TEAM USER TESTING

Comments/ Observations

Our team used the “Web Site Evaluation Form” to evaluate one another’s sites. For the most part, my team members felt that my site met all of the criteria outlined in the form. Many of the criteria only required a simple “yes” or “no” answer, but my teammates also included suggestions or comments when they felt it was appropriate. Following are some of the specific comments I received from my teammates:

Teammate #1- *(IE on a Gateway 2000 166, with Windows 98 and 64MB RAM)*

Design:

“You did a great job of (dividing your site into logical supporting pages). I did not have any luck with frames and you did awesome. I was not sure why you had all your links at the bottom of each page as well as in the frame to the left.”

“(Your multimedia elements had a specific purpose and they showed) great school spirit. Again, I really liked the way the top and right frame remained the same and only the frame in the center changed. This saved loading time.”

Content:

“(Your site contains in-depth content), especially your links. It will be very useful to students and parents and teachers.”

Teammate #2- *(IE on an HP Pavilion, with Windows 98 and 64MB RAM)*

Design:

“Your colors are terrific, very easy to read and the added graphics of your school logo makes it perfect.

“For the visually impaired, (you may want to add) what the logo is (a picture of) in quotes.”

“I really like how you dead end your bottom links to let the viewer know what page they were on.”

Content:

“Site contains content that encourages users to return, especially your Resource and Program Info pages.”

“(Site) definitely serves a purpose for the students and their parents even for people interested in becoming a part of the school district.”

Teammate #3- (*IE on a Dell 400 with Microsoft Windows 98 and 96MB RAM*)

Design:

“Wonderful (graphic design principals).”

“Nice use of framesets (to organize your site)”

Content:

“Excellent, concise writing really enhances your site.”

Credibility:

“I’m not sure I saw (where the site indicated the date the material was created). Did I miss it?”

Learning Team Participation

Of the three people on my team who evaluated my site, their feedback was thorough, insightful, and timely. Their comments not only helped me to identify problems areas, but also made me feel good about what I had done well. I feel that we were able to work together and help each other to improve all of our web sites. With the exception of the one team member who did not submit site feedback, my team was extremely helpful and it is obvious that they took time to carefully evaluate my site and to provide me with constructive comments.

II. INDIVIDUAL USER TESTING

Evaluation Process

With each user, I implemented a three step evaluation method. First, I allowed them to freely browse the site while I observed the pages they visited, the time spent on each one, and the path they used to get there. Secondly, I asked each user three hypothetical questions in which they were to find a specific piece of information on the site including the address of the Transitions Learning Center, the amount of time a student has before being counted tardy, and how a parent goes about entering their child into the Transitions Learning Center program. Finally, asked the user testers what they liked about the site, what they thought needed to be improved, and how they would make those improvements.

User One: Jan

Jan is in her sixties and was chosen as a user tester because she is fairly inexperienced with computers and the Internet. She also has visual impairments that make it difficult for her to see small or low-contrasted screen elements. In fact, for her to browse the site, I had to decrease the pointer speed and increase the pointer size so that she could use the mouse. I felt that she would be a good representative of both Internet “newbies” and the visually challenged.

Observations:

When browsing the site on her own, Jan quickly utilized the navigation menu on the left. She did not stop to read many of the pages, probably because she was in a hurry, but she mostly skimmed the content, focusing mainly on subject heading and items on listed on the “Resources” page. She visited each page on the site, starting with the top of the navigation menu and moving down. After five minutes or so of browsing, I went back to the main page and asked her the three hypothetical questions mentioned above. It took her about 45 seconds to find the Transitions Learning Center address. She remembered seeing it in her general browsing and went straight to the “Contact Info” page. She seemed to be a bit confused by layout of the table, looking at the Middle School address first.

On the second question, it took her only 10 seconds to find the information about tardies. She immediately went to the “Expectations” page and scrolled down to the “Attendance Policy” section.

We did run into a bit of a problem with the final question. She could not find the information about enrollment in the program. Although she went directly to the “Program Info” page where the information was located, she only scanned the information on the screen and did not think about scrolling down to find more. She gave up on that page and started to randomly wander throughout the site. Eventually, I told her that she was on the right page before and that she could scroll down to find more information. After that, she found the “Qualifications” section fairly easily and located the correct information.

Comments/Suggestions:

When asked what she liked about the site, Jan expressed that the information was clear, the navigation was intuitive, and the text was readable due to the site’s color scheme and larger text. Overall, she liked the design and content of the site.

Jan also had a few suggestions about how to improve the site. To overcome the problem of having to scroll through a page to find information, I asked her if a small menu at the top of the page would be helpful, and she said that it would be on the pages with more information. She also thought that it would be helpful to subdivide the “Meet the Teacher” page similar to the “Program Info” page. As far as content, she also thought that a section about student motivation would be a good idea on the “Meet the Teacher” page, too. When I asked her if the layout on the “Contact Info” page was confusing because she seemed to have a hard time with it, she said that it wasn’t now that she really looked at it. She also expressed that if she were familiar with the school district and the community, it would have made a little more sense to her. She didn’t feel that any changes were necessary.

User Two: Scott

Scott is in his early twenties and was chosen as a tester because he is familiar with the Internet and computers in general. He uses the Internet to primarily find information and spends little, if any, time surfing for entertainment. Though he has never worked with HTML, he is currently working as a C++ programmer. Scott’s input is valuable because he is my only male user tester and he can offer feedback from a more experienced and technical background.

Observations:

Scott's methods of browsing the site were a bit inconsistent using both the navigation menu on the side as well as the table of navigation links at the bottom of the page, depending on whichever his mouse was the closest to. He read the information on the site more thoroughly than did Jan because he had more time and seemed to be interested. He also visited each page sequentially from the top of the navigation bar to the bottom.

Scott found the answers to the first two hypothetical questions very quickly navigating directly to the information in less than 10 seconds each. This was partially due to the fact that he had more thoroughly browsed the site on his own and read more of the material. However, he had a hard time finding the answer to the last question. Although he navigated to the right place at first, he missed the information and then started randomly moving through the site, though he admits that the only reason he missed it the first time was because he knew that I was watching the time and his competitive nature compelled him to rush.

Comments/ Suggestions:

When I asked Scott what he liked about the site, he said that he liked the graphics which were pleasant, but not flashy, which he finds annoying. He also mentioned that the site was easy to navigate and he appreciated that information was direct and comprehensive. I had to pry a bit to get Scott to share with me anything that he thought should be improved, but he did finally mention that it would be nice for me to include a picture of myself on the "Meet the Teacher" page. He also thought that I should make the navigation buttons highlight when hovered over, similar to the hypertext links on the page.

User Three: Jenny

Jenny is also in her early twenties and was chosen because she is the only member of the Sullivan community that I have at my disposal right now (Jenny is my wife and we are on vacation in Utah right now). Jenny is a competent Internet user, too, and is familiar with other computer operations. I feel that familiarity with the city and its people will be beneficial to gain a more local perspective from a member of my primary target audience.

Observations:

To navigate the site, Jenny also used the navigation menu at the left of the page. She also, like the other users, moved through the site moving from top to bottom on the menu. Jenny did not spend much time reading the information on the pages because she is familiar with the program, but she did skim all of the contents on each page briefly. She also took particular interest in the "Resources" page commenting that it was "cool". Jenny found all of the answers to the hypothetical questions very quickly, finding each piece of information in less than 20 seconds. Like the other users, she took the longest to find the information about how to qualify students for the program, but she moved directly there and quickly skimmed down to the appropriate section.

Comments/ Suggestions:

Jenny stated that she liked the layout of the page. When I asked her what about the layout that she liked in particular, she cited the both the navigation menu and the overall appearance of the site. She also mentioned that she appreciated the depth of the information and also the "extras" like the "Resources" page.

To improve the site, Jenny suggested that I change the title of the “Expectations” page because she didn’t feel like it was explicitly obvious what the page was about. However, when I asked her for an alternative suggestion, she could not think of anything. Like Scott, she also thought that it would be a good idea to add a picture of myself to the “Meet the Teacher” page so that visitors would have a face to go along with the text I included about myself.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Personal Testing: Changes and Improvements

In addition to the user testing above, I also did quite a bit of testing on my own utilizing various online resources. At both the Doctor HTML site (<http://www2.imagiware.com/RxHTML/>) and the Web Site Garage (<http://www.websitegarage.com>), I tested my site’s HTML code, browser compatibility, and download time. I was able to brush up some HTML errors and reduce my image sizes so that my download time would be under 20 seconds even on a 14.4K modem. Using a virtual testing tool, I was able to test and make changes so that my site is compatible with Internet Explorer 3.x, 4.x, 5.0, and 5.5, Netscape 4.x, and 6.0, AOL 3.0 and 4.0, and mostly compatible with Opera 4.0. The only browsers where I had major problems were Netscape 3.0 and WebTV. In addition, I have personally tested my site on Internet Explorer 5.0, 5.5, and Netscape Communicator 4.72. Furthermore, upon visiting the W3C’s site and using their HTML validator, I was able to make the necessary corrections to verify compliance with the XHTML 1.0 Transitional standards on each of my pages and add their certification logo to my site.

User Testing: Changes and Improvements

As a result of the information gathered through both the team and individual user testing, I will make a few changes to my site prior to final submission. First of all, I am going to reexamine each of my ALT tags to see if they can be improved, in particular the ALT tag for “tlclogo.gif” at the top of the page. Secondly, I am going to move my ADDRESS information out of the navigation frame and onto the main page. I think that Susan missed it because she was using a lower resolution monitor and since I had disabled scrolling, she could not get to it. By moving the information out to the main page, it will be accessible to non-framed users. I will also re-enable scrolling so that a user can still use the navigation menu even if they are operating on very low resolution. Finally, on the “Meet the Teacher” page, I am going to add a little information about student motivation and subdivide it since the text appears to be a little too long for one section. I am also going to add a small navigation menu to the longer pages so that users can more easily access the information contained on them and be able to quickly scan the contents of the page without scrolling all the way through.

Disagreements

When Amy asked why I had additional navigation links at the bottom of my page, it was more of a curiosity than a suggestion, but I still responded to let her know my reasoning. I included those links for the benefit of non-framed enabled users. My NOFRAMES content on my index.htm frameset provides a link to get into the site, and since they would not have access to the navigation menu, I wanted them to still be able to access the information contained therein.

By including the menu at the bottom of the page, I do not have to create separate pages for non-framed users, so I am opting to keep the navigation links.

The only bit of information that I disagreed with is Jenny's suggestion to change the button for the "Expectations" page. The reason that I disagree is because I cannot come up with another word or phrase concise enough to fit on a navigation button that will more accurately describe the contents of that page. I am also opting to not include a picture of myself at this time on the "Meet the Teacher" page not because I do not think it is a good idea, but because I do not have access to an appropriate picture of myself or a scanner right now. However, I do think it is a good idea, so I will be adding a picture as soon as I am able to, sometime during the beginning of the school year. I am also not going to take Scott's suggestion about making my navigation buttons highlight when they are clicked or hovered over. I think that it is a great idea, but I really do not know how to create that effect with my current level of knowledge. I'm sure it can be done with JavaScript, DHTML, or CSS, but since it was not covered in this course, I do not want to venture into such unknown territory on my own.

Usefulness of Testing Methods

I was actually fairly surprised by usefulness of this user testing and the extensiveness of the process. It was very helpful to have my team members evaluated the site for several reasons. Since they are in the same class at the same time with approximately the same skill level, they are aware of the requirements of the assignment and the criteria for evaluation. They are also able to evaluate the site from a uniform perspective and offer more specific technical and design feedback in terms of the content of the course. However, observing live users as they interact with the site also proved invaluable and gave me information that I otherwise would not have had. These users are not only removed from the project, but from the theories and practices of web development altogether. I was able to extrapolate information about possible snags that users of my site may encounter. They were also able to provide feedback in everyday terms to help me pinpoint things that I may have overlooked. Furthermore, it was thoroughly enjoyable to silently observe their interaction with something that I have created. Overall, I must admit that I was reluctant to do this testing and write this report because I did not see the purpose. I figured that I could do a good enough job on my own, but I now know that user testing is a critical part of web site development.