Usability @ MS
Pelruf@microsoft.com
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Agenda
- Why usability?
- Brief history
- What does a usability engineer do?
- Usability and the product cycle
- Questions & answers

***Feel free to interrupt with questions at any time.***

Why usability
- Usability is designing software to meet user requirements.
- Good UI is very expensive; bad UI is more expensive.
- Customers expect a higher level of design and usability than they did a decade ago.
- How can we beat the competition?

History of usability at Microsoft
- In 1988, Microsoft created the Usability Group to bring user requirements into the design of Microsoft products throughout the development process
- Microsoft maintains more than 30 participant/observation rooms and five analysis labs devoted to exploring how customers can better interact with our products.

Usability’s job
- Provide empirical data about users
  - to improve the user experience of our products
  - by working as part of the product teams throughout the design process
  - by sharing HCI knowledge across product teams and the company
- Participate in product planning & design
  - Review current user problems & needs
  - Plan direction for User Interface (UI) in next version
  - Review & coordinate on research efforts
  - Review (and sometimes own) product specs
  - Spec for user workflow.

Typical usability questions
- What user needs can the product satisfy?
- What user needs does the current product miss?
- What design will solve those problems?
- How can the user succeed at task X?
- What can users do with the product?
- Is this product fun to use? (Games)
- What can our competitor’s product do?
Some “Typical” Usability Activities

- Conduct iterative lab studies of products in development.
- Cognitive walkthroughs.
- UI benchmarking.
- Customer visits—study users in real-world locations.
- Write/review/contribute to UI specs.
- Plan changes to future products based on lab data.
- Engage with industry groups on common ease of use issues.
- Competitive evaluation.
- Surveys.
- Statistical consultation and analysis.

Usability & the product cycle

Field studies/surveys → Concept
Paper prototyping → Specification
Cognitive walkthroughs → Coding
Rapid iterative testing → Testing (QA)
Longitudinal field studies → Ship
Instrumented version (throughout cycle)
Baseline/comparative studies

The wrong way to go about designing UI

- If a user can’t figure out how to use my tools then they should read the supporting documentation.
- Users like choices.
  - I can not make it simpler because users need all the choices.
  - I’ll impress the world with my all-in-one UI.
  - Different UI for different users: GUI, CLI, WMI, APIs
- We can fix it if people complain.
  - Very expensive to fix later.
  - Beware of the legacy UI phenomenon. Legacy UI is hard to shed (QWERTY)

DFS/FRS example

- DFS/FRS.nbk

- NTBackup
  - When do I use NTbackup?
  - When do I use ASR?
  - When do I use Shadow Copies?
  - When will the system tell me if something went wrong or failed?
  - How do I troubleshoot?
- LH Server backup

Welcome to the Backup Utility Advanced Mode
You can switch to View History to an unmodified version of your program or file.

Backup View
The backup window will display a backup of your program or file.

Backup View
The backup window will display a backup of your program or file.

Automated System Recovery Wizard
The Automated System Recovery Wizard will make a backup boot-up of your system or a copy disk that has your system settings and files. If you do not want a backup of your system settings, do not use this wizard.
Questions & answers

- Contact pelrif for more info.