

Usability @ MS

Pelrif@microsoft.com
May 2005



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.



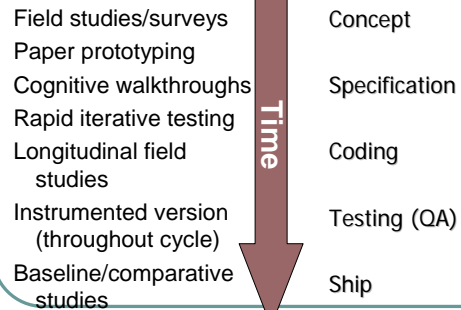
Typical usability questions

- 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



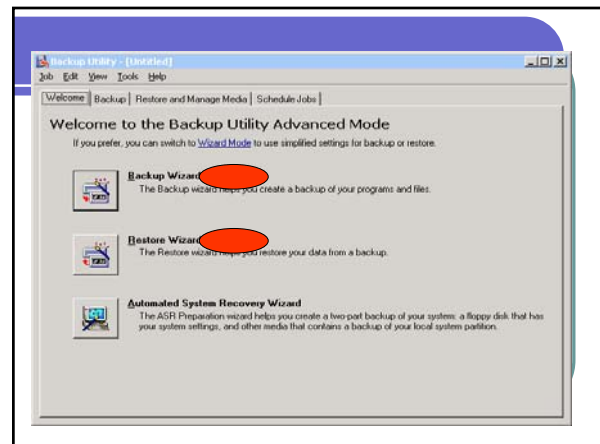
The wrong way to go about designing UI

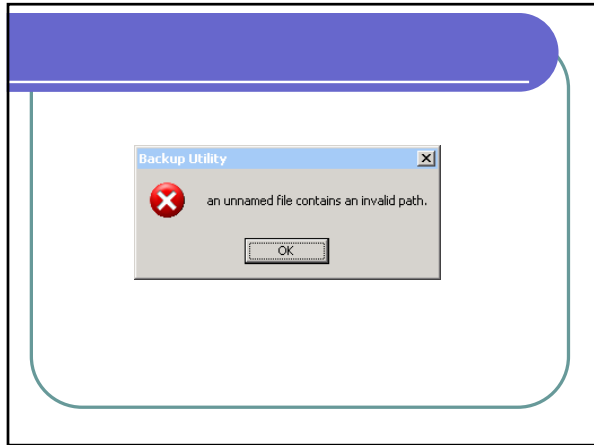
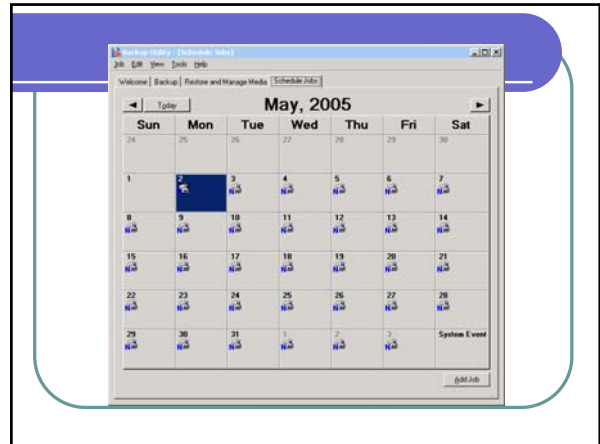
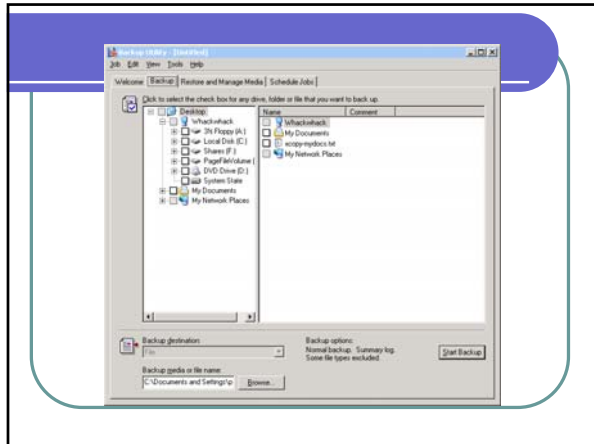
- If a user can't figure out how to use my tools then they should read the supporting documentation.
- Users like choices.
 - I can not make it simpler because users need all the choices.
 - I'll impress the world with my all-in-one UI.
 - Different UI for different users: GUI, CLI, WMI, APIs
- We can 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 deck](#)

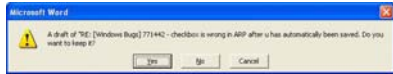
- NTBackup
 - When do I use NTbackup?
 - When do I use ASR?
 - When do I use Shadow Copies?
 - When will the system tell me if something went wrong or failed?
 - How do I troubleshoot?
- LH Server backup





Questions & answers

- Contact pelrif for more info.



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word error dialog box with a yellow warning icon. The message reads: 'A draft of "SE; [Windows Bug] (771442) - checkbox is wrong in AWP after u has automatically been saved. Do you want to keep it?'. There are 'Yes', 'No', and 'Cancel' buttons.