Looking in the Crystal Ball: Future of Usability

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Housekeeping

• Panelists:
  ► Bill Albert, Fidelity Investments
  ► Randolph Bias, Univ. of Texas at Austin
  ► Bill Gribbons, Bentley College
  ► Mary Beth Rettger, The Mathworks
  ► Bob Schumacher, UserCentric
  ► Daniel Szuc, Apogee Consulting

• 10 minutes / panelist

• 30 minutes open discussion / Q&A
Background

• Current State of Usability (UPA 2006, UPA 2003)

• Why is it important to look into the future?
  ► Develop your career
  ► Guide your organization
  ► Shape usability community

• My crystal ball is a bit foggy
  ► Who really knows?
  ► My perspective is unique (and probably not entirely representative)
Future of Usability

• We will be part of a bigger picture
  ► Continue to go beyond traditional usability - Examine the broader user experience (joy, frustration, stress, awareness, expectations, engagement, etc)

• We will have to dig deeper to stay alive
  ► We must evolve from simple description to understanding the underlying cognitive mechanisms of user behavior and perception

• Our role will be even less defined
  ► Overlap with Marketing, Design, Information Architecture, and Business will create more opportunities for impact, but create more turf battles

• We will desperately need more training
  ► Quantitative analysis, academic background in Cognitive Psychology, Information Science, HCI, Design and Business. Cross-disciplinary programs are critical for proper training
Future of Usability

• User expectations will dramatically shift
  ► The bar will continue to go higher and higher – satisfaction will no longer be enough, we will need to exceed user expectations at every opportunity

• Evolve from product evaluation to drivers of innovation
  ► The more “enlightened” organizations will look to user experience to drive innovation and business strategy

• Usability will eventually win out over feature creep
  ► We (as a society) will reach a breaking point and create a significant market demand for simplicity

• Selling usability will be a “non-issue”
  ► Usability will no longer be a “nice to have” – A vast majority of organizations will need to improve their user experience or face significant financial risks, litigation, or diminished market share
Future of Usability

• We will become a more diverse field
  ➤ More people coming from a wider range of fields. Much more international representation. High standards must be maintained – risk loss in credibility

• Greater attention will be paid to select populations
  ➤ India, China (and the rest of the world), older adults, people with disabilities, new users of technology (developing world), etc

• External forces will impact what we work on and how we work
  ➤ Increased globalization, ubiquitous computing, information security, global warming, new technologies, privacy laws, baby boomer retirement in the US, etc

• Usability will be more in the public eye
  ➤ There will be at least two HUGE (i.e. Florida’s butterfly ballot) stories in the next ten years where usability is the focal point

• Wild card
Usability: Then, Now and Tomorrow

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The Changing Marketplace

It’s no longer one industry nor one profession

- Value proposition
- Workload
- Emotions
- Mkt. segmentation
- All touch points
- Services
- Metrics
- Business strategy
- Simplicity

System Functionality  Usability  User Experience

- Features
- Power
- Performance
- Stability
- Accuracy

1980’s

2007

Market Forces

- The traditional user community
- Universal Design
- Global markets and development competition
- The next generation of users
- Business Forces
- Market differentiation
- Reduce development costs
- Maximize profit

Gribbons, 2007 ©
The Good News

• Career opportunities have never been stronger
• Today’s conditions are more realistic than .com days – but it’s getting crazier every day
• Greater diversity of opportunities – roles and industries
• Limited competition offshore – but this is rapidly changing
Today’s Skill and Knowledge Set

• Field Methods
• Cognitive psychology, HCI, Human factors
• Consumer behavior
• Qualitative and Quantitative research methods:
  • Survey design
  • Ethnography
  • Statistics
  • Research design
• Business Skills
  • Project management
  • BPM
  • Negotiation
  • Managing work teams
  • Six sigma
  • Brand management
Threats to usability testing

- Automation
- Offshore
- Process improvements
Tomorrow: Who Controls the UX?