



Umber UX Facility

How to Usability Test in 12 Easy Steps

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INTRODUCTION

‘How to Usability Test in 12 Easy Steps’ is a pocket handbook for quick reference for Product Managers, Project Heads, Team Leads, Entrepreneurs and Start-ups. Very common queries that every project faces at different junctions of its cycle, is addressed in this book.

To start with; when should you test? Usability Testing can be conducted at any Go No Go decision stage of the project. Out of the box concept can be tested at sketch level. Clickable prototype, product at Beta stage, introduction to new features, Final built product can be tested. It always helps you to fail fast – fail early, giving you good amount of time to improvise on what you never saw and realised.

An expert point of view is presented here for learners, first timer Usability Testers and start-ups wishing to Usability Test before Launch. These simple and effective pointers can be read repeatedly and also in one quick sitting. They will help you condition yourself before carrying out Usability testing at multiple checkpoints

Usability Testing is applicable for Mobile apps/ Intranet sites/ Websites/ Consumer Products/ Business to Business Domains/ Games and Gamification/ Augmented Reality products/ Internet of things (IOT)

The author of the document Shetall Natuu is an UX Design Consultant, Author and Mentor. The guide is a summary of her team’s experience of Usability Testing Services over several projects undertaken by Umber UX facility.

In need of professional support, do connect with us on the address given at the end of the document.

1 ALIGN WITH BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

Start with a good client relation; ask your client about his concerns, his anticipated user's issues and the critical factor on which the success of the project is based on. Find out the stage of development the client is in, emphasise on the efforts he has put in so far. There will be some technical constrains that you have overlooked.

- a. Most importantly know the scenarios for which the product is made for.
- b. What problem of the user will the application/ website solve?
- c. In what context and situations is the solution applicable?
- d. Where will he use the application or device?
- e. Which are the functional parameters in the app that gain status of completion of activity?

Visit the closest competition and find the experience they offer. Benchmark the top player in that space and compare it with your app. Find the key differentiator in your app that is unique. All this will help develop the right questions.

Keeping your objective in focus will align the questions in the right direction. Share your questions with your client. They have to be in synch with your plan at all times.

2 DECIDE HOW YOU WILL MEASURE



Tools to measure: User expression recording device, gestures recording device, screen activity recording tool, online client sharing tool, one way screen, computer to save recorded sessions, monitor screen for the observers to analyse, camera to document the session is a laundry list of equipment's needed.

Qualitative and quantitative both research methods have to be targeted. Subjective study is helpful to study behaviour patterns of different people. Compilation of all the data and its summary will give you objective results. Both are needed to help you make an informed decision.

The best methods will be observing the given set of tasks. And conclude it with an interview that is open ended. Let users talk out their feelings, apprehensions, concerns, likings and so on. Combining both the methods is the ideal recipe for a holistic usability testing.

Finally there is no One Right Method, One Size Fits All situations. A good researcher will always find innovative means to find what the user feels and thinks.

3 FIND THE RIGHT PROFILE OF USERS



A sound user sample should be heterogeneous in nature. Mixing users, non-users, mild to heavy users, boys to girls, to siblings, to friends, different age groups, and family conditions and so on, have to be considered while inviting test participants.

Extra care has to be taken to replace and fill up drop out participants. 20% people will not turn up due to various reasons. So buffer participants have to be coordinated. Skill in hiring test participants brings success to usability testing activity. Cordial approach, follow up and briefing the objective of the study should be regularly practised.

For low budget UT projects, start with friends and family and extend it to neighbours and neighbourhood to find the right user group for testing. Honour their effort and time they have put in to give you the right user insights.

4 INTRODUCE THE OBJECTIVE OF TEST



Goal should be explicitly communicated to arrive at a frank experience from the user. Tell him what you are hoping to achieve out of this test. What is the duration of this activity? How many tasks he is expected to carry. Why does the client want to carry out this drill? The participant's queries have to be fulfilled.

Very importantly “the product is under test and not you” has to be repeatedly told to avoid disappointments in performance.

In several situations it is observed that users think they are under test. They get disturbed and loose interest in the task. At such times the moderator repeatedly has to remind a tester of the reason he is here. And his review is going to improvise the product/ application.

5 DECIDE ON THE TASKS AND THE RATING FACTOR

	Player 1	Player 2	Player 3	Player 4	Player 5
Learnability of the game	3	5	1	3	3
Discoverability of various controls	2	5	1	2	2
Level of expertise gained	2	4	2	3	3
Excitement meter	3	3	2	2	0
Engagement level	4	4	3	3	2
Time taken to learn	2	5	2	2	3
Interaction errors and difficulties					

Scale is from 1 to 5 (1 is low and 5 is high)

The game testing case in this figure lists out the factors of measurement. One out of 5 players has been able to complete the factors of study. Namely ease of learning, ease of discovering, and least time taken to learn and so on. This case also highlights the excitement meter scale. Note the application has extremely low level of excitement it could generate from the participants.

This rating was Averaged-Out Rating given by 13 observers. They all were the part of the design and development team of the game. To their thorough disappointment the game was not perceived as funny and exciting by the test participants.

The game was reworked to scale up the excitement factor in the play. The characters were redesigned to add comical aspect. Character movements and the situations had to be crafted to add fun and humour.

6 OBSERVE FIRST HAND, SEE BETWEEN THE LINES, LISTEN TO YOUR USERS



The art of seeing and observing teaches a million things. Non-verbal gestures, body posture and expressions never lie. A careful observer will identify the changing gestures and the meaning associated with it.

Rejection to one in a certain cases means preference towards something else. One has to patiently probe that aspect. Sometimes you may not get a direct feedback, pay attention to behaviour patterns. There one may find the needs, desires, aspiration and preferences of a typical user.

Word of caution; Extreme attitude and gestures if observed should not be concluded abruptly. After some lapse of time you can reconfirm the emotional status of the user.

7 THANK YOUR TEST PARTICIPANT THEY ARE VALUABLE

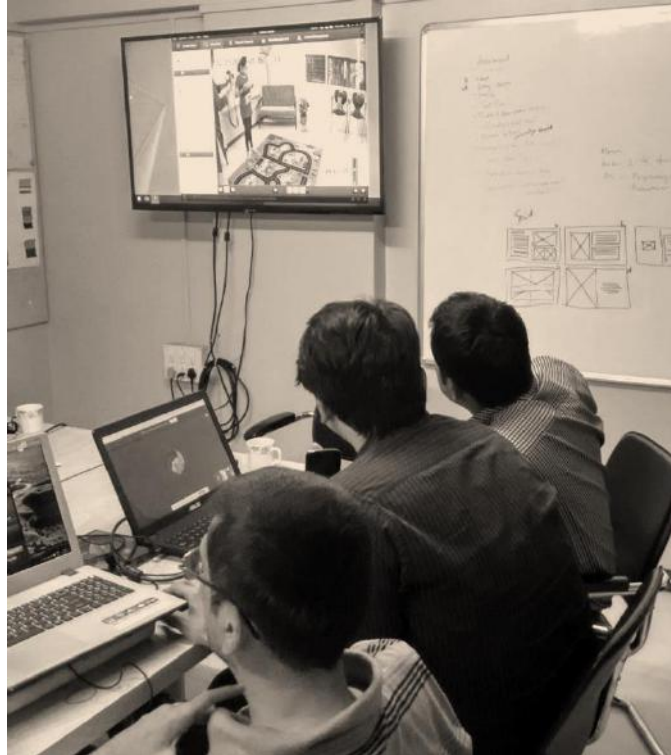


A happy, well looked after participant is conveyor of your goodwill. Word of mouth of this new field is adequate to intrigue and attract other test participants. Good hospitality, reminders at appropriate time and a thank you mail at the end of the test, are simple tips to good base to participants pool.

Remuneration and consent form are most important to remember. Consent to record and document the procedure has to be permitted by participants. NDA protects the clients' interests.

“Aunty invited me to play, let me play thoroughly, gave a lot of sweets and return gift and to top it she gave me money for my Piggy bank” this excited kid talked about her play experience among her friends. This indeed brings traction to research.

8 REVISIT THE RECORDED FRAMES TO GATHER DEEPER INSIGHTS



Recordings are the property of client. Realistically no client will be seeing all the recordings? It is a good gesture if you edit the recordings to insightful pieces. The client team can refer the document and the video to draw exact conclusions.

Visiting the frames again and again offers deeper and insightful knowledge about the 'Why's' of human behaviour. The next point will cover the concept thoroughly.

One should reserve twice the amount of time that is spent on live user feeds than on screening editing and converting the recordings into file format of your client's needs.

9 FIND THE WHY'S: WHY DID USERES BEHAVE THE WAY THE DID.



God is in detailing. In an overtly happening situation not everything can be captured. In solemnness when you go through the same set of events and the moment of insight draw on you. This is an important phase of the research. Analysis is finding the WHY's of the behaviour. Why did the person react to this event and so forth is discovered in this process.

Several test analysis brings about a pattern. Patterns give objective reasoning. They validate general behaviour patterns. Decision making is accurate when it is validated by certain number of people. These people fall into 95th percentile of users.

Do listen to odd deviations. Only few or one among many tend to behave in a different manner. This offbeat behaviour will give you an opening to the possibilities that have missed design consideration.

User Personas' validation is a by-product of usability testing.

10 CLEAR DOCUMENT WRITING WILL HELP YOUR CLIENTS

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CRR-UT – Usability Testing

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Design team has many members from different domain expertise. A simple language, with no design jargons, and clarity in thought and process sums up a good document.

Simple documentation principles like index, headers and sub-headers, summery conclusions should be maintained. Detailing like severity ratings, graphs of analysed data, breakup of users against the tasks performed should be part of the body of document.

As a User Experience Design Analyst you should focus on, key take away, design insights and roadmap of design direction. This satisfies a client's UT expectations.

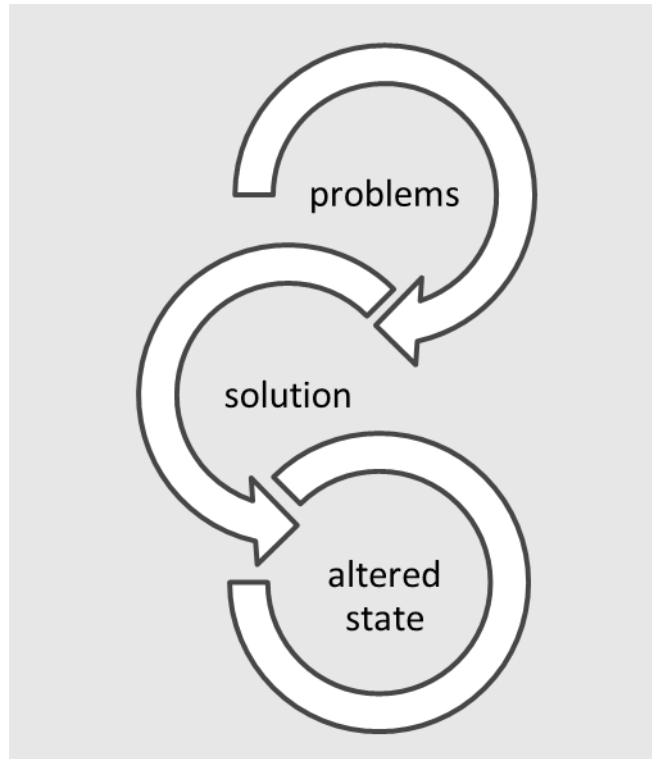
11 PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS IN PERSON



Connect directly whenever possible. Not always is your client available to review your findings. But if you can present the valuable findings in person, it makes a lot of impact. Your involvement, passion for the project and problems that the user faces in the product journey can be enacted to your client. You can share video recordings; queries can be solved on one to one. Doubts or explanation on certain aspects can be elaborated.

Finally the design team can voice their fears and key offerings and thus the team can come with a design roadmap, timeline and role assignment can be concluded in such meetings. Meeting with the client also strengthens your bond with them. Your Usability Testing Service acts like an ancillary to their core design team.

12 END YOUR FINDINGS WITH A ROADMAP



Things that appear before a project and after Usability Testing can be different. You can be taken by surprises and unavoidable deviation decisions can be faced by you.

We consider such severity changes and propose a least rework path. But in certain cases the client had taken a drastic turn and scraped the project to start afresh. It certainly pays to conduct an in process UT to fail fast and fail early conditions.

We also mock drill if we are suggesting an altered design stage or involve users in participatory design thinking approach where users mock the altered event and create a closer to real situation. Thanks to our very well informed and exposed life the users are extremely vocal and clear of their needs and desires.

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