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Don't Make Me Think

(A common sense approach to Web Usability)

1. Laws of Usability
 - Nothing important should be more than 2 clicks away
 - Speak the users language
 - Be consistent
 - Don't make the user think
 - Get rid of half of the words on each page, then get rid of half of what's left
 - It doesn't matter how many times I have to click, as long as each click is a mindless, unambiguous choice.
2. As far as is humanly possible, when someone looks at a web-page it should be self-evident, obvious and self-explanatory. One should be able to get it what it is and how to use it without expending any effort thinking about it
3. When you are creating a website your job is to get rid of the question marks. As a user, one should never have to devote a millisecond of thought to whether things are clickable or not. When we are using the web every question mark adds to our cognition workload, distracting our attention from the task at hand.
4. As a rule people don't like to puzzle over how to do things. The fact that the people who built the site did not care enough to make things obvious and easy can erode our confidence in the site and its publishers.
5. If you can't make a page self-evident, you should at least need to make it self-explanatory.
6. While creating web-pages we are thinking "great literature", while the users reality is much closer to "Billboard going by at 60 miles an hour."
7. Facts of Life:
 - We don't read pages. We scan them.
Because:
 - We are usually in a hurry
 - We know we don't need to read everything
 - We are good at it
 - We don't make optimal choices. We satisfice.
Because:
 - We are usually in a hurry
 - There's not much of a penalty for guessing wrong
 - Weighing options may not improve our chances
 - Guessing is more fun
 - We don't figure out how things work. We muddle through.
Because:
 - It's not important to us
 - If we find something that works, we stick to it

8. To make sure that the users see and understand as much of your site as possible, we should:
 - Create a clear visual hierarchy on each page
 - The more important something is, the more prominent it is
 - Things that are related logically are also related visually
 - Things are “nested” visually to show what's part of what
 - Take advantage of conventions
 - They are very useful
 - Designers are often reluctant to take advantage of them
 - Break pages up into clearly defined areas
 - Make it obvious what's clickable
 - Minimize visual noise
 - Busy-ness
 - Background noise
9. Users don't mind a lot of clicks as long as each click is painless and they have continued confidence that they are on the right track.
The rule of thumb might be something like this, “three mindless, unambiguous clicks equal one click that requires thought.”

Of course there are exceptions. If I'm going to have to drill down through the same parts of a site repeatedly, for instance or repeat a sequence of clicks in a Web application, or if the pages are going to take a long time to load, then the value of fewer clicks increases.

10. We face choices all the time on the Web and making the choices mindless is one of the main things that make a site easy to use.
11. Getting rid of all those words that no one is going to read has several beneficial effects:
 - It reduces the noise level of the page
 - It makes the useful content more prominent
 - It makes the pages shorter, allowing users to see more of each page at a glance without scrolling.
12. Happy talk must die.
Happy talk is like small talk-content free, basically just a way to be sociable. But most Web users don't have time for small talk; they want to get right to the beef. You can – and should – eliminate as much happy talk as possible.
13. Instructions must die.
14. People won't use your Website if they can't find their way around it.
15. There are 2 types of web users:
 - Search-Dominant Users
 - Link-Dominant Users

16. The concept of Home pages is so important because they are comparatively fixed places. When you are in a site, the Home Page is like the North Star. Being able to click Home gives you a fresh start.
17. We talk about Web Navigation because “figuring out where you are” is a much more pervasive problem on the Web than in physical spaces. We are inherently lost when we are on the web, and we can't peek over the aisles to see where we are. Web navigation compensates for this missing sense of place by embodying the site;s hierarchy creating a sense of “there”.
18. The purposes of navigation are:
 - To help us find whatever it is we are looking for
 - To tell us where we are
 - To give us something to hold on to
 - To give us confidence in the people who built it
19. Persistent Navigation or Global navigation is used to describe the set of navigation elements that appear on every page of a site.
Done right, persistent navigation should say – preferably in a calm, comforting voice: “The navigation is over here. Some parts will change a little depending on where you are, but it will always be here, and it will always work the same way.”

It make sense not to use Persistent Navigation @ Home Page.

On pages where a form needs to be filled in, the persistent navigation can sometimes be an unnecessary distraction.

20. Persistent Navigation should include the five elements you must need to have on hand at all times:
 - Site ID (could be logo)
 - A way to Home
 - A way to Search
 - Utilities / Guide
 - Sections
21. The Site ID can be put across in the visual hierarchy of the page:
 - Either make it the most prominent element on the page
 - Make it frame everything else.
22. Utilities / Guide are the links to important elements of the site that are really part of the content hierarchy. Like the signs for the facilities in a store, the Utilities list should be slightly less prominent than the Sections.

As a rule, the persistent navigation can accommodate only four or five Utilities – the ones users are likely to need most often.

23. There are four things you need to know about page names:

- Every page needs a name.
- The name needs to be in the right place
In the visual hierarchy of the page, the page name should appear to be framing the content that is unique to this page.
- The name needs to be prominent
- The name needs to match what I clicked

24. Breadcrumbs

- Put them at the top
- Use '>' between levels
- Use tiny type so it looks just as an accessory
- Boldface the last item

25. Tabs are excellent navigation choice for large sites because:

- They are self evident
- They are hard to miss
- They are slick
- They suggest a physical space

26. Three best things about Amazon TABs are:

- They were drawn correctly
- They were color coded
- There was a tab selected when you enter the site

27. A Homepage has to accommodate:

- Site identity and mission
- Site hierarchy
- Search
- Teases
- Timely Content
- Deals
- Shortcuts
- Registration

28. A Homepage has to meet a few abstract objectives:

- Show me what I am looking for
- ..and what I am not looking for
- Show me where to start
- Establish credibility and trust

29. Some of the constraints while designing Homepage are:

- Everybody wants a piece of it
- Too many cooks
- One size fits all

30. The homepage needs to answer four questions:

- What is this?
- What do they have here?
- What can I do here?
- Why should I be here – and not somewhere else?
- Where do I Start?

31. The top 5 plausible excuses for not spelling out the big picture on the homepage

- We don't need to. Its obvious.
- After people have seen the explanation once, they will find it annoying
- Anybody who really needs our site will know what it is
- That's what our advertising is for
- We'll just add a "First time visitor?" link

32. Everything on the homepage can contribute to our understanding of what the site is.

But there are two important places on the page where we expect to find explicit statements of what the site is about.

- The Tagline
- The Welcome blurb

A few guidelines ofr getting the message across:

- Use as much space as necessary
- ... but don't use any more space than necessary
- Don't use a mission statement as a Welcome blurb
- Its one of the most important things to test

33. Given the unique responsibilities of the Homepage, it often makes sense not to use the persistent navigation there. Typical differences include:

- Section descriptions:
Since the homepage has to reveal as much as it can of what lies below, you may want to add a descriptive phrase to each section name or even list the subsections – something you don't have the space to do on every page.
- Different orientation:
The Homepage often requires a very different layout from all the other pages, so it may be necessary to use horizontal instead of vertical navigation or vice versa
- More space for identity:
The Site ID on the Homepage is usually larger than in the persistent navigation, like the large sign over a store entrance and it usually needs some empty space next to it for the tag line, which may not appear on every page.

But its also important not to make any changes you don't have to. The Homepage navigation and the persistent navigation need to have enough in common so users can recognize immediately that they are just two different versions of the same thing.

34. The trouble with pull downs are:

- You have to seek them out.
- They are hard to scan
- They are twitchy

They are best for alphabetized lists of items with known names.

35. In a focus group, a small group of people sit around a table and react to ideas and designs that are shown to them. It's a group process, and much of its value comes from participants reacting to each other's opinion. Focus groups are good for quickly getting a sampling of user's opinion and feelings about things.

The kinds of things you can learn from focus groups are the things you need to learn early on, before you begin designing the site. Focus groups are for early in the process.

36. In a usability test, one user at a time is shown something and asked to either

- Figure out what it is
- Try to use it to do a typical task

37. Some important point about Testing:

- If you want a great site, you have got to test
- Testing one user is 100 percent better than testing none
- Testing one user early in the project is better than testing 50 near the end
- The importance of recruiting representative users is overrated
- The point of testing is not to prove or disprove something. Its to inform your judgment
- Testing is an iterative process
- Nothing beats a live audience reaction

38. The ideal number of users for each round of testing is three or at most four. The first three users are very likely to encounter nearly all of the most significant problems. Testing only 3 or 4 users makes it possible to test and debrief in the same day, so you can take advantage of what you have learned right away.

39. How to recruit people for usability testing?

- Take anyone you can get and grade on a curve because.
 - We are all beginners under the skin
 - Its usually not a good idea to design a site so that only your target audience can use it.
 - Experts are rarely insulted by something that is clear enough for beginners
- The exceptions are:
 - If your site is going to be used almost exclusively by one type of user and it's no harder to recruit from that group, then do it.
 - If your audience is split between clearly defined groups with very divergent interests and needs, then you need to test users from each group at least once.
 - If your site requires specific domain knowledge, then you need to recruit people with that domain knowledge for at least one round of tests,

40.

	Traditional Testing	Lot-Our-Lease Testing
Number of Users per test	Usually 8 or more to justify the set-up costs	Three or four
Recruiting Effort	Select carefully to match target audience	Grab some people. Almost anybody who uses the Web will do.
Where to Test	A usability lab, with an observation room and a one-way mirror.	Any office or conference room
Who does testing	An experienced Usability Professional	Any reasonably patient human being.
Advance Planning	Tests have to be scheduled weeks in advance to reserve a usability lab and allow time for recruiting	Tests can be done almost any time with little advance scheduling
Preparation	Draft, discuss and revise a test protocol.	Decide what you are going to show
What/When Do you Test?	Unless you have a huge budget, put all your eggs in one basket and test once when the site is nearly complete.	Run small tests continually throughout the development process
Cost	\$5000 to \$15,000 (or more)	\$300 (a \$50 to \$100 stipend for each user) or less
What happens afterwards	A 20-page written report appears a week later, then the development team meets to decide what changes to make.	The development team and the interested stakeholders debrief over lunch the same day

41. When you are recruiting:

- Offer a reasonable incentive
- Keep the invitation simple
- Avoid discussing the site before hand
- Don't be embarrassed to ask friends and neighbors

42. Type of problems you are going to see most often when you test:

- Users are unclear on the concept
- The words they are looking for are not there
- There's too much going on

43. Some triage Guidelines:

- Ignore “Kayak” problems
- Resist the impulse to add things
- Take “new feature” requests with a grain of salt
- Grab the low-hanging fruit

44. Things that diminish goodwill

- Hiding information that the users want
- Punishing the user for not doing things your way
- Asking the users for information you don't really need
- Putting sizzle in users way
- Your site looks amateurish

45. Things that increase goodwill

- Know the main things that people want to do on your site and make them obvious and easy
- Tell users what they want to know
- Save users steps where ever you can
- Put effort into it
- Know what questions the user is likely to have and answer them
- Provide user with creature comforts like printer friendly pages
- Make it easy to recover from errors
- When in doubt apologize