



English Presentation

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Our goal is to improve your site’s usability and design through the best usability evaluation and design consulting possible. We will help you choose a method or combination of methods that are appropriate for your stage of design and development. If you want to browse the stages of the user-centred design process and see which methods we recommend for each stage of design, turn to page 15.

Good business reasons: Usability as a business strategy

- For every \$1 spent on usability, companies achieve between **\$10 and \$100 of product benefit**.
- E-commerce sites can lose **half their potential sales**, if their customers can't find merchandise.
- Content sites can lose **40% of potential return visitors** if the site's usability is poor.
- Find serious problems early: it will cost you **100 times less** to fix usability problems before launching, than after you have launched your product.
- Usability improvements can improve **user productivity by 25%**, improve user morale, reduce documentation costs, reduce training costs, and reduce customer care costs.
- Usability as part of the design process can **improve your brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer retention**.
- Usability engineering has demonstrated reductions in product-development cost and time of **33-50%**.

Some sources (books and articles)¹

¹ **“Usability is Good Business”**

by George M. Donahue, Susan Weinschenk, Julie Nowicki. Compuware Corporation. 1999.

Cost Justifying Usability

by Randolph G. Bias and **Deborah** J Mayhew. Harcourt Brace and Co., Boston. 1994.

Quality Function Deployment: A Practitioner’s Approach

by J.L. **Bossert**. ASQC Quality Press, New York. 1991.

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1/ Axance usability methods

1.1 The methods at a glance

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1.1 The methods at a glance

Usability Testing:

We watch 8-10 users of your target demographics using your site for realistic tasks. We produce a complete report with recommendations for improvements.

Expert review:

Our experts review your application and evaluate it against known criteria for good design. We produce a rank ordering of your problems based on their severity, with recommendations for fixes.

Taskflow Analysis:

Let us help you organize your site. We can recommend a sequence of pages for specific tasks that will best match user expectations, based on our expert opinions.

Wireframe Design:

We can recommend basic page contents, according to our expert opinion and understanding of user needs.

Contextual Inquiry:

We study 5-10 users of your target demographic using your existing product in their natural setting, doing their ordinary tasks with it. We produce a complete report with recommendations for design fixes and common user task flows. Recommended for specialized applications or work tools, not ordinary consumer sites.

Card sorting:

When you need to get feedback on your site terminology and organization, a card sorting test will tell you what users think. 8-10 target users can help organize your site's information in the most intuitive manner.

Questionnaire:

A questionnaire sent to 100 users can tell you what they think of your brand, how easy they find your site to use, how satisfied they are with your customer care. Repeating the same survey every 6 months can help you track changes in their responses as you change your site.

Online user testing:

A combination of questionnaire methods and usability testing, online testing allows you to identify customer response, as well as some areas of concern in usability. We suggest 50-100 people.

Focus Groups :

Test concepts and marketing messages the old-fashioned way, with customers in your target profiles.

1.2 The methods in detail

1.2.1 Usability testing

We recruit 8-10 users in your target demographic. We observe these test users at our facilities as they use your site or your design mock-ups to perform realistic tasks. We interview them during their usage about their difficulties and reactions. We produce a complete report with recommendations for improvements.

Benefits

- Customer behaviour using the application can be observed and compared across subjects (performing the same tasks)
- Trained usability engineers can ask questions to illuminate sources of confusion during the test
- Testing can focus on areas of concern for the client, using paper mock-ups, prototypes, or functional sites.

Limitations

- Occasionally difficult to construct appropriate tasks in a laboratory environment, for applications which require very specific context of use
- May be difficult to recruit testers for specialized applications

Time: 2-3 weeks (testing + complete report)

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	*
Step 2: Early design	***
Step 3: Design & implementation	****
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	****
Step 5: Public launch	***

1.2.2 Expert review

Our experts review your application and evaluate it against known criteria for good design.

We produce a rank ordering of your problems based on their severity, with recommendations for fixes. This is a fast way to get a review of your design.

Benefits

- Can be done by usability experts without requiring user recruitment and travel.
- With a full understanding of the task domain, a simple set of criteria can be applied to assess an interface's strengths and weaknesses.

Limitations

- Not a substitute for real usage of your site by your target users, but can be a useful complement to usability testing or contextual inquiry.

Time: 1 week

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	
Step 2: Early design	*
Step 3: Design & implementation	***
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	***
Step 5: Public launch	***

1.2.3 Task flow analysis

We can recommend a sequence of pages for specific tasks that will best match user expectations, based on our expert analysis.

Benefits

- Provides design guidelines for your site.
- Provides strong solutions to your known usability problem areas.

Limitations

- A good complement to usability testing, contextual inquiry, expert review and wire frame design.
- If your application is very specialized (B2B, workflow), this method may require usability testing or interviews with users as well.

Time: 1+ week

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	***
Step 2: Early design	**
Step 3: Design & implementation	*
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	
Step 5: Public launch	

1.2.4 Wire frame design

We can recommend basic functional page elements, based on our expert analysis of your users' needs and tasks they need to accomplish on your application.

Benefits

- Provides structure and information content guidelines for your site
- Provides strong solutions to your usability problems

Limitations

- A good complement to usability testing, contextual inquiry, expert review, and task flow analysis.
- Not a graphic design solution

Time: 1 week

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	
Step 2: Early design	***
Step 3: Design & implementation	
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	
Step 5: Public launch	

1.2.5 Contextual inquiry

We study the actual users of your application in their work setting, as they use your product. This is an excellent way to improve your understanding of users' needs, their work tasks, their problems with existing products, and their use of your competitors' products.

Benefits

- Excellent for studying difficult "knowledge domains": domains that require significant expertise and specialized job functions.
- The best method for understanding actual use, in real contexts

Limitations

- More open-ended than other methods, hence may take longer to analyse the data
- Choose users carefully: specifics of the users studied can play a large role in the conclusions drawn with this type of study

Time: 3+ weeks

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	****
Step 2: Early design	**
Step 3: Design & implementation	
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	**
Step 5: Public launch	***

1.2.6 Card sorting

We recruit users in your target demographic segment to help organize your site content into logical categories that you can use to build your site's navigation. They help identify the proper terminology for your site's navigation labels, and they tell you where they would look for content of different types on your site.

Benefits

- Useful when building the navigation on a new site
- Provides insight into users' understanding of terminology and their content needs

Limitations

- Exploratory: results may differ significantly across users
- Solely focused on category groupings and labels; final design should be tested for understanding of the graphics, layout, etc.

Time: 3 weeks

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	**
Step 2: Early design	****
Step 3: Design & implementation	*
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	
Step 5: Public launch	

1.2.7 Questionnaire

We send a link to a web-hosted questionnaire to 100 of your (target) users asking:

- What they think of your brand
- How easy they find your site to use
- How satisfied they are with your customer care
- Or whatever you want to know.

Repeating the same survey every 6 months can help you track changes in their responses as you change your site.

Benefits

- Quantitative and subjective: potentially large number of responses, if access to many customer email addresses is available
- Measures brand concerns (customer perceptions of the software and the company, depending on the questions asked)
- Can help you understand future user needs (feature requests, software capabilities, requirements)

Limitations

- Self-report about behaviour is suspect and limited by users' memories
- Complex usability information cannot be gathered this way: observation of usage is required for a complete understanding of customer usability issues
- Detail is limited: customers may rate software as "ok" overall, but in actual use, some parts are more difficult to use than others

Time: 3+ weeks

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	***
Step 2: Early design	**
Step 3: Design & implementation	*
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	**
Step 5: Public launch	***

1.2.8 Focus group

A traditional method, we recruit (with our partner Opinion-way) a group matching your target segment and arrange a group discussion with a trained moderator.

Benefits

- Allows a client to understand attitudes of particular target segments towards brand or product concepts before development
- Brainstorming with creative customers can be an effective way to flesh out your requirements

Limitations

- Not effective at establishing usability of a product (this would require usability testing or expert review)
- Subject to crowd dynamics: talkative people dominate and may sway opinions of others

Time: 1-2 weeks

When to use it:

Stage in User-Centred Design	Value at that Stage
Step 1: Requirements analysis	***
Step 2: Early design	*
Step 3: Design & implementation	
Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping	
Step 5: Public launch	*

1.3 Method packages

You know our methods, but perhaps you can't figure out which one is best for you. The next section describes the design process, and you can check your own progress and see which methods are best for your current stage of design. But you may also want to consider some of the scenarios below, and the methods we propose for each, combined to produce the best results for the problem at hand.

Your situation	Our suggestions
<p>Localisation: You are translating and localizing your site for 3 countries to launch a European business. You want to be sure it will work with the local customers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usability testing: we will recruit users and test in multiple countries to see if the localized versions are usable.
<p>Intranet workflow redesign: You are redesigning an intranet application for workers in the CRM field of a large multinational corporation. You want to better support their needs on the job but you have little insight into their concerns. It's still early in your requirements phase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual inquiry: we help you learn how the customers use the tools now, and what their needs are • Task flow analysis: we help you do the initial user task planning for your early design stages
<p>Beat the competition! You are starting to design a competitor to a well-known investment site. You don't want to copy their mistakes, and you don't know what their users think of their services overall. You are formulating the basic design and functionality requirements now.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire: find out brand responses and attitudes of your target users, and their response to the competition. • Usability testing of the competition: get the best analysis of the competition's design with a real usability test • Focus groups: check with users of the competition; they can help brainstorm competitive offers
<p>Customers confused? You launched a new mass-market e-commerce site, and your success depends on customers finding the products and completing their purchases online. You have heard from customer support that the order process on the existing site confuses users, and you want to redesign if necessary. Page views and sales must increase!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usability testing: find out if it's confusing by having real users work with it. • Task flow analysis: we can suggest structural improvements to the site payment process. • Expert review: We review your whole site and give you advice on your overall design.

2/ The user-centered design process (UCD)

2.1 Overview of process

2.2 Step 1 : Requirements analysis

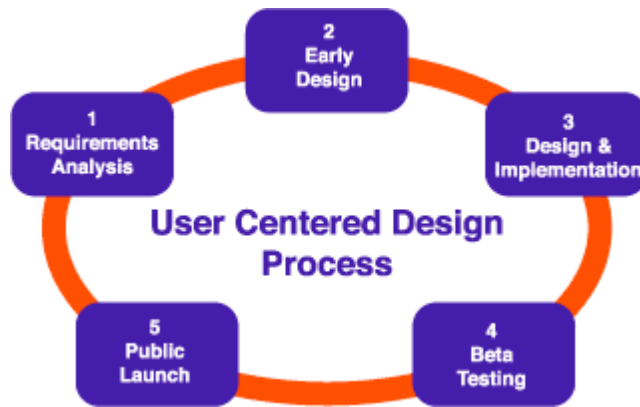
2.3 Step 2 : Early design

2.4 Step 3 : Design and implementation

2.5 Step 4 : Beta testing / prototyping

2.6 Step 5 : Public launch

2.1 Overview of process



1: Requirements analysis

You're identifying your target customers and their needs.
We can help with user studies and assessment of your competition.

2: Early design

You're doing your early design work, creating information hierarchies, and user testing your early concepts before expensive mistakes happen!

3: Design & implementation

The backend is coming together, and you are building the interface.
We can help you test early while you have time for tweaks.

4: Beta testing/prototyping

You are showing your prototype to customers.
Let us help you gather feedback.

5: Public launch

You have a product in the field, and you want to assess its usability and competitiveness.

2.2 Step 1: Requirements analysis

For any new project, you must:

- have clear business goals
- understand your users

Your users should be involved as soon as possible: gather as much information as you can, by data mining your own customer care organization and performing field research on your users. Understand the competition well. We can help you learn about your users and your competition.

Your goals	Our usability methods ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ determine your business and brand goals 	(ask for our partners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ study your competition 	usability testing *** expert review ** questionnaire *
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify your customers : their target demographics? their profiles? 	contextual inquiry *** questionnaire **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify user tasks you want to support with a new version /product 	contextual inquiry ***

¹ Star ratings after each method give our assessment of how effective these methods would be at this stage of design when pursuing the task at the left.

2.3 Step 2: Early design

Your design phase is based on solid understanding of user needs. Design occurs before implementation, and you have time to start user testing before expensive engineering gets under way.

Your goals	Our usability methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create task flow 	contextual inquiry **** Task flow analysis **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine scenarios of use 	Contextual inquiry **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on information hierarchy and terms 	Card sorting **** Usability testing *
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create low fidelity screen mock-ups, review internally and with users 	usability testing ***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create wire frame screen designs for reviews 	wire frame design ***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create high fidelity screen mock-ups, review internally and with users 	usability testing **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a complete user interface specification, review with engineering and marketing 	usability testing *** task flow analysis *** wire frame design **

2.4 Step 3: Design & implementation

You have taken your time getting the design right and testing it. Now you can start implementing your application with confidence. You've got some time to iterate because you can test during implementation, too.

Your goals	Our usability methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get working prototypes ready for review 	usability testing **** expert review **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build your user interface 	usability testing **** expert review **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare marketing efforts 	focus group * (ask for our partners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build your scalable backend infrastructure 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populate your product databases 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ready your support organizations 	

2.5 Step 4: Beta testing/prototyping

If you're set up for a live beta test, you will learn invaluable information before your launch. If not, you can use a prototype for user testing at this stage. Show your working product to a small set of friendly users and track their issues and bugs. Fix any remaining usability concerns. It's your last chance to learn from your users before you hit the market!

Your goals	Our usability methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite a panel of friendly users to try your product out 	usability testing *** expert review **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track and respond to users' issues 	(ask for our partners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get some early predictions of your product's competitiveness 	usability testing *** expert review ** online user testing *** focus group (ask for our partners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test your stability and capacity 	(ask for our partners)

2.6 Step 5: Public launch

You've done a user-centred design process, and you've incorporated your learnings into the design and implementation of your application. You can now track your product's success in the marketplace, and learn for future products revisions.

Don't forget the compromises you made to get to market: fix in the next version!

Your goals	Our usability methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track your product's sales, page hits, customer subjective response over time 	questionnaire **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get regular customer support reports 	(ask for our partners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand your competition 	expert review * online user testing ** focus groups * (ask for our partners)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how your product is used in the field and study its final usability 	contextual inquiry *** usability testing ***

3/ Our facilities

Located on the northeast of Paris, we offer a full-service user testing laboratory:

- Video conferencing with Timbuktu
- Video recording of testing sessions
- 6 individual testing rooms with network and video links
- A pleasant observation room with computer and video monitor
- PAL, SECAM, NTSC recording and tape duplication facilities
(More information available on the French site.)

Rental

Our testing facilities are available to visiting usability engineers for a price of \$1000/day, plus equipment costs (tapes).

To arrange rental from outside of France, email Frederic Gaillard: gaillard@axance.com (English or French).

4/ Contact addresses and numbers

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