

Heuristics Evaluation of U-Collaborator

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1. Visibility of system status

- Always keep users informed about what is going on.
- Provide appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

Evaluation

Overall the system visibility is pretty good. From the profile/your schedule page it is clear what groups I'm in and what my week roughly looks like. However it'd be nice to see where the free time is during my week. As in if I am in multiple groups, can I see the overall schedule that is created by the combined meeting times. The notification section is also very easy to access and clearly displays each message. Though there is some information missing here such as when the notification is received. Something even more important is what the notification is, for example the notification "New Activity in Group CPSC 481"; this notification tells me there is activity but doesn't tell me what the activity is. Once "Jump to CPSC 481" is pressed this information is lost and the user is required to look around for the new activity.

2. Match between system and the real world

- Speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms.
- Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

Evaluation

Generally the language used throughout the system is easy to understand. However in regards to real-world conventions, it's quite common that users will have commitments at blocks of time that aren't at an hour mark, rather at for example the 30 minute mark. This is unable to be represented in your system resulting in a loss of information.

3. User control and freedom

- Users often choose system functions by mistake.
- Provide a clearly marked "out" to leave an unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue.
- Support undo and redo.

Evaluation

From most pages in the system users are able to quickly access the sidebar if they end up in a location that they didn't mean to be. However there are other tasks that users may want to complete that the system does not allow for. One of these is the user is not able to log out of the system from anywhere once they have logged in/created an account. Another task would be the user wanting to delete a group that they may have created by accident or made an error within the creation process. Lastly users may want to remove a member from a group if they aren't pulling their weight or perhaps they left the group on their own accord.

4. Consistency and standards

- Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.
- Follow platform conventions.

Evaluation

The consistency in this system is at a decent level. The sidebar is always in sight and the color scheme seems to follow throughout. However the various elements on the page shift around

when switching tabs. In addition to this, when looking at a given page the header describing which page you are on switches locations making it a bit of a game to figure out where you are in the system. When messaging through the chat feature there are profile icons, but when messaging your group there are no icons, and the message style is completely different. When viewing the group schedule the color of the red blocks of time are similar to the navigation tabs. This communicates some sort of connection of elements that are not related at all (overall a lot of red is used). In the chat page, when messaging Diane, they have a rounded rectangle icon however when messaging Dom their chat head is round (after messaging them and also when searching for them).

5. Error prevention

- Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place.

Evaluation

Most places on the system have little room for error however one blatant place that should definitely have it is when RSVP'ing for a group meeting time. The user should be given a confirmation message in case they make a mistake and click the wrong button. I'd say this is pretty critical.

6. Recognition rather than recall

- Make objects, actions, and options visible.
- User should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another.
- Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

Evaluation

The system provides extensive information in a good way about how to go about a task. Anything is clearly visible on the sidebar, when searching for names (in chat or when creating a group) the autocomplete is extremely helpful to help users find others quickly or when they don't know enough information. One issue found though is when looking at a Group Schedule is that time slices aren't marked for what color means what. Possibly a legend could be added the color choices clear or even just remove one of the blocks entirely.

7. Flexibility and efficiency of use

- Accelerators -- unseen by the novice user -- may often speed up the interaction for the expert user so that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users.
- Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

Evaluation

A lot of the system only permits for a single way to do things. This isn't necessarily bad as most things need every option filled out. Though one problem that makes the system slow and clunky is when a group wishes to meet for more than one hour, this would require that the user proposes a time for each hour individually and all the group members RSVP Yes to each proposition.

8. Aesthetic and minimalist design

- Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed.
- Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Evaluation

The aesthetic is generally well done and quite clean however there is one style choice that stands out to me. On the sidebar there is a Groups title presumably before each one of the groups the user is a part of. This title is quite small and doesn't look like it is defining much. It could possibly be removed or done in a way that separates it and the groups from any other button on the sidebar. For minimalist design one thing that this system violates is when creating a group the user may not need all of the provided fields for their group. I do see that there is a skip button however I feel that assuming more users will want a team contract for their group than users opting for creating a normal group really hurts the cleanness of the form.

9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

- Expressed in plain language (no codes)
- Precisely indicate the problem
- Constructively suggest a solution.

Evaluation

This Heuristic has been satisfied quite well, though there aren't many places that allow error. One place that is a bit unclear though is when a user is creating an account for the system they are not given any information about what their password restrictions may be or if they need to confirm their email address. This can make it difficult for users to figure out what their problem is when trying to troubleshoot.

10. Help and documentation

- Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation.
- Help information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

Evaluation

Overall I think this Heuristic has been satisfied exceptionally. Once logged in, no matter what screen the user is on they can find help right away. Also when logging in there is quick access to get help as well. The search bar is helpful for those users that may have a less common problem, and the popular topics section helps the majority of users find help quickly. If this needed to be improved it would be for users to be able to ask a question/create a topic that an admin could help them with.