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ENGH 388-A03

Usability Testing Report: User Guide for Creating a GitHub Account

Background

Product/Technology Description: This instructional document provides a step-by-step guide for creating a GitHub account. GitHub is a popular platform used for version control and collaboration on software projects. The guide includes instructions for setting up the account, verifying the email, and customizing the account settings.

Test Summary: The goal of this usability test is to evaluate the clarity and effectiveness of the instructional guide for creating a GitHub account. The test aims to identify any challenges users face while following the guide and to gather feedback for improving the document's usability.

Method

Tools Used:

- GitHub website
- Screen recording software (e.g., OBS Studio)
- Online survey tool (e.g., Google Forms)

Process of Testing: The testing process was designed to mimic the typical experience of a new user creating a GitHub account. Participants were asked to follow the guide and complete the account creation process. The sequence of activities included:

1. Accessing the GitHub sign-up page.
2. Filling out personal information.
3. Creating a password and username.
4. Verifying the email address.
5. Logging in and customizing account settings.

Participants

Who Was Recruited: Four participants were selected for the usability test. They represent a diverse group of potential users:

1. Participant A: A complete novice with no prior experience using GitHub or similar platforms.

2. Participant B: A college student with basic knowledge of version control systems.
3. Participant C: An experienced programmer familiar with other version control systems but new to GitHub.
4. Participant D: A professional developer experienced in using GitHub and other version control systems.

How They Were Recruited: Participants were recruited through social media and personal networks, ensuring a mix of familiarity levels with GitHub.

Process

How You Tested:

1. **Preparation:**
 - Participants received a copy of the instructional guide.
 - They were instructed to prepare their computer with a stable internet connection.
2. **Screen Sharing Setup:**
 - Participants shared their screens using a secured online meeting tool to allow observation of their actions and verbal feedback.
3. **Task Execution:**
 - **Account Creation:** Participants accessed the GitHub sign-up page and followed the guide to create an account.
 - **Verification:** Participants verified their email addresses as instructed in the guide.
 - **Customization:** Participants customized their account settings according to the guide.

Steps Followed During the Test:

1. **Screen Sharing Setup:** Participants shared their screens using a secured online meeting tool. This allowed the observer to view their actions and listen to their thoughts during the process.
2. **Task Execution:**
 - **Accessing the GitHub Sign-Up Page:** Participants navigated to the GitHub website and clicked on "Sign up."
 - **Entering Personal Information:** Participants entered their email, created a password, and chose a username.
 - **Completing CAPTCHA:** Participants completed the CAPTCHA to verify they were not robots.
 - **Verifying Email:** Participants checked their email for a verification link from GitHub and clicked on it to confirm their account.
 - **Customizing Account Settings:** Participants tailored their account settings and selected tools and features they wanted to use.
3. **Feedback Collection:** Participants were encouraged to verbalize their thoughts and difficulties during the test. Feedback was collected through verbal comments and an online survey after the test.

Findings

Qualitative Results:

1. Ease of Account Creation:

- Participant A found the CAPTCHA verification step confusing and suggested adding more detailed instructions.
- Participant B noted that while the guide was straightforward, adding a brief explanation of GitHub's purpose would be helpful for beginners.
- Participants C and D had no issues with the account creation process and found the instructions clear and easy to follow.

2. Email Verification:

- Participant A had difficulty locating the verification email and suggested including tips on checking spam folders.
- Participants B, C, and D successfully verified their emails without any issues.

3. Customizing Account Settings:

- Participant A felt overwhelmed by the customization options and suggested simplifying this section for beginners.
- Participants B, C, and D appreciated the customization instructions but recommended including more context about each setting.

Quantitative Results:

- **Task Completion Rates:** All participants successfully created and verified their GitHub accounts.
- **Time Taken:**
 - Account Creation: Averaged 5 minutes across all participants.
 - Email Verification: Averaged 3 minutes.
 - Customization: Averaged 7 minutes for experienced participants and 10 minutes for beginners.

Detailed Findings:

Clarity and Structure: Participants generally found the guide to be clear and logically organized. The step-by-step format helped users navigate the account creation process without much confusion. However, some sections, such as the email verification and CAPTCHA steps, were identified as challenging due to a lack of detailed explanations. Participants suggested adding more comprehensive text and breaking down these complex steps into smaller, more manageable actions.

CAPTCHA Verification: Completing the CAPTCHA step posed difficulties for several participants. They found it hard to understand the purpose and the exact procedure for completing this step. To address this, it is recommended to provide a thorough explanation of what CAPTCHA is, why it is essential, and how to complete it accurately. Including additional screenshots with examples of the expected output at each step would also help clarify the process.

Visuals and Screenshots: While the existing visuals in the guide were helpful, participants felt that annotated screenshots could further enhance understanding. Adding arrows, highlights, and text annotations to the screenshots can direct users' attention to key areas and actions. This visual guidance is particularly useful in steps like completing the CAPTCHA and verifying the email address.

Verification Email: One participant experienced difficulty when the verification email was not immediately visible, causing some confusion. To mitigate such issues, it is important to include tips on checking spam or junk folders and ensuring email filters do not block GitHub emails. Providing a screenshot of what the verification email looks like can also help users identify it quickly.

Average Time and Errors: The average time to complete the account creation process was 15 minutes, with participants encountering 1-2 errors or difficulties on average. Most participants were able to complete the setup without external assistance, indicating that the guide is generally effective. However, addressing the identified issues can further reduce the number of errors and improve the overall user experience.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. **Enhance CAPTCHA Instructions:**
 - Please provide a detailed explanation of what CAPTCHA is and its purpose.
 - Break down the steps for completing the CAPTCHA into simpler, more explicit sub-steps.
 - Include annotated screenshots to guide users through the CAPTCHA process.
2. **Regularly Update Verification Tips:**
 - Include tips on checking spam or junk folders if the verification email is not received promptly.
 - Provide troubleshooting advice for common issues encountered during the email verification step.
3. **Add Annotated Visuals:**
 - Enhance existing screenshots with annotations, arrows, and highlights.
 - Use visuals to emphasize critical areas and actions, especially in complex steps like navigating the GitHub interface and completing the CAPTCHA.
4. **Include a Comprehensive Troubleshooting Section:**
 - Add a section addressing common problems and their solutions.
 - Offer tips for resolving potential errors encountered during the account creation and setup process.
5. **Incorporate Continuous User Feedback:**
 - Integrate feedback from the usability test to improve the guide.
 - Continuously seek user feedback to ensure the guide remains user-friendly and effective.

Conclusion:

The usability test provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the instructional guide for creating a GitHub account. By implementing the recommended changes, the guide can be improved to offer a clearer and more efficient user experience. These enhancements will help users complete the account creation process with greater ease, reducing errors and ensuring a smooth setup.