RESEARCH DELIVERABLE

93 Usability Report

The usability report is informed by empirical evidence, helping teams decide whether a product is usable enough to release, or needs revision and further testing with more participants.

Usability reports have come a long way from the long-winded documents that still may come to mind for many non-usability professionals. Today's usability findings are often communicated interactively through the use of video, audio, online access to the protocol and discussion guides, and profiles of participants (including their demographics and psychographics) for the ongoing benefit of project stakeholders and the development team. The goal of a report, regardless of its format and delivery, is to clearly outline which parts of the user interface should be fixed or improved.

In an effort to facilitate the quick turnaround of the most findings, it is now common practice for the entire team to observe the usability tests as they occur, and discuss observations in the debriefing meetings that immediately follow the sessions, and then summarize decisions in emails, informal presentations, or interactive information repositories that includes the following:

Executive summary. Describe the most salient and serious usability problems first. If the report is meant to serve different audiences, provide a section tailored to the concerns of each group.

Total number of problems found. For each problem detected, it is important to include information regarding the frequency, impact, and persistence of usability problems.[1] Embedded videos, screenshots or interactive prototypes with callouts, and participant quotations should be included to anchor the problem to actual events.

The list of problems that will be fixed. It is tempting to fix the "low-hanging fruit," or the simplest issues, first. But the main objective is to identify, prioritize, and fix the most severe and persistent.

Reports on positive findings. The number of problems detected should be counter-balanced with a similar number of observed interactions that showed good usability. This tactic avoids depressing or insulting the team, and keeps them motivated to fix what is wrong.

Detailed task and scenario descriptions. Include all necessary information that shows tasks and scenarios are robust and representative enough to effectively get at a range of usability error types.

The time required to pull together the different parts of a report may vary depending on the number of tests, the number of tasks in each test, and the sophistication required of the report. When most of the people on an interdisciplinary team observe the sessions, the report can serve as an agreement on outcomes, instead of a static document that requires further decision-making. Over time, research findings should reveal trends in how your designs evolve based on feedback.

1. For recommendations on how to determine the severity ratings of usability problems, see www.useit.com.

Further Reading

Barnum, Carol. *Usability Testing Essentials: Ready, Set...Test!* San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann, 2010.

Molich, Rolf, Nigel Bevan, Ian Curson, Scott Butler, Erika Kindlund, Dana Miller, and Jurek Kirakowski. "Comparative Evaluation of Usability Tests." *CHI '99 Proceedings*, 1999.

Rubin, Jeffrey, and Dana Chisnell. *Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests*. New York: Wiley, 2008.

Tullis, Tom, and Bill Albert. *Measuring the User Experience: Collecting, Analyzing, and Presenting Usability Metrics* (Interactive Technologies). San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann, 2008.

"The effectiveness of a report is inversely proportional to the thickness of its binding."
—*Todd Wilkens, Adaptive Path*

Behavioral	Quantitative	Innovative	Exploratory	Participatory
Attitudinal	Qualitative	Adapted	Generative	Observational
		Traditional	Evaluative	Self reporting
				Expert review
				Design process

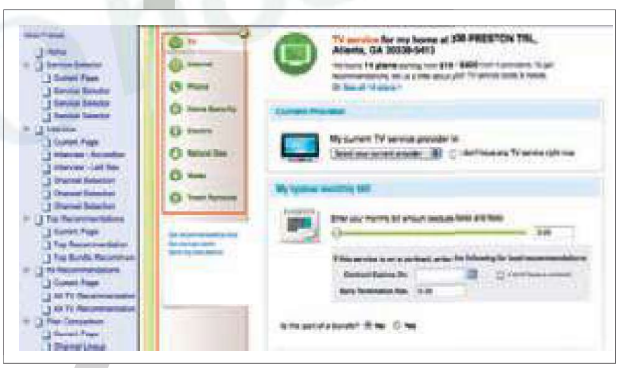
EVOLUTION OF USABILITY REPORTS

Over the last two decades, opinions about the best way to deliver usability test results have evolved. Findings that were originally delivered in static, text-heavy reports quickly evolved into slide deck presentations, and from there, into prototypes that allowed stakeholders to "click through" tasks presented to participants.

Today's usability professionals continue to find ways to leverage technology to deliver interactive experiences—and User Insight, a user research firm in Atlanta, is at the forefront of evolving usability testing and reporting practices. Their proprietary platform called "Voice" aggregates all research documents and information—from discussion guides, participant information, research calendars, and testing artifacts—into a secure online repository for stakeholders to access at any time. By consolidating all research-related information in one place, User Insight can track how designs have evolved, how feedback has changed, and how the user experience has improved as a result of conducting usability tests and user research.

Courtesy of User Insight

User Insight's *Voice* Delivery Platform



Interactive, clickable prototypes

Slide deck presentations with callouts

Static usability reports

See also 69. Remote Moderated Research • 87. Think-aloud Protocol • 93. Usability Report