Nielsen Norman Group
Heuristic Evaluation Workbook

Use this workbook to conduct your own heuristic evaluation.

For each of Jakob's 10 Usability Heuristics, look for specific places where the interface fails to adhere to the guideline. Write your recommendations for how to fix those usability issues.

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Heuristic Evaluation Workbook

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Product:	Employee Management System
Task:	Data Export Functionality

1

Visibility of System Status

The design should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within a reasonable amount of time.

- Does the design clearly communicate its state?
- Is feedback presented quickly after user actions?

Issues

Clicking the "Export" button provides no feedback to show if the export was successful, ongoing, or failed.

Recommendations

While the file is being created, recommend a progress indicator or a confirmation message like "Export Successful."

2

Match Between System and the Real World

The design should speak the users' language. Use words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, rather than internal jargon. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

- Will user be familiar with the terminology used in the design?
- Do the design's controls follow real-world conventions?

Issues

The word "export" might not be immediately clear to understand, especially for non-technical users.

Recommendations

Use more descriptive words like "Download (CSV File), Save As and Extract" or include a tooltip clarifying the activity.

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3

User Control and Freedom

Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted action without having to go through an extended process.

- Does the design allow users to go back a step in the process?
- Are exit links easily discoverable?
- Can users easily cancel an action?
- Is *Undo* and *Redo* supported?

Issues

There's no confirmation window that appears when I click the export button, and the action cannot be reversed once the export button is pressed.

Recommendations

I suggest adding an "Are you sure you want to export data?" prompt or the choice to cancel exporting if the process is long.

4

Consistency and Standards

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

- Does the design follow industry conventions?
- Are visual treatments used consistently throughout the design?

Issues

The Export button's design and behavior differ from other buttons in the system; it lacks an icon, and it has a different style such as hover and drop shadow effect.

Recommendations

Ensure the Export button follows the same visual and interaction conventions used throughout the interface.

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5

Error Prevention

Good error messages are important, but the best designs carefully prevent problems from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions, or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

- Does the design prevent slips by using helpful constraints?
- Does the design warn users before they perform risky actions?

Issues

When database has no records or the export fails silently, the system does not warn the user. Also, when I click the export button even though it

Recommendations

Disable the Export button if there is no data, and display a warning if the export fails due to system errors.

6

Recognition Rather Than Recall

Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the interface to another. Information required to use the design (e.g. field labels or menu items) should be visible or easily retrievable when needed.

- Does the design keep important information visible, so that users do not have to memorize it?
- Does the design offer help in-context?

Issues

Users may forget where the exported file is saved or what file type to expect.

Recommendations

After exporting, display a message like "employees.csv has been downloaded to your Downloads folder."

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7

Flexibility and Efficiency of Use

Shortcuts — hidden from novice users — may speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the design can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

- Does the design provide accelerators like keyboard shortcuts and touch gestures?
- Is content and funtionality personalized or customized for individual users?

Issues

No shortcut keys or multiple export options for advanced users are available.

Recommendations

Implement keyboard shortcuts or allow users to filter and export specific fields or data sets.

8

Aesthetic and Minimalist Design

Interfaces should not contain information that is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in an interface competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

- Is the visual design and content focused on the essentials?
- Have all distracting, unnescessary elements been removed?

Issues

The Export button appears too close to the "Add Employee" button.

Recommendations

Provide spacing and organize action buttons using a visually balanced layout to improve clarity.

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9

Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no error codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

- Does the design use traditional error message visuals, like bold, red text?
- Does the design offer a solution that solves the error immediately?

Issues

If the export fails, no error message is shown, and users may not know what went wrong.

Recommendations

Display clear error messages (e.g., "Export failed due to server error") and suggest a retry.

10

Help and Documentation

It's best if the system doesn't need any additional explanation. However, it may be necessary to provide documentation to help users understand how to complete their tasks.

- Is help documentation easy to search?
- Is help provided in context right at the moment when the user requires it?

Issues

There is no visible help or guidance on what the Export button does or what format the output will be.

Recommendations

Include a tooltip or "?" icon with brief documentation or a help section explaining the export function.