"Room Raider" Heuristic Evaluation

Introduction

The application "Room Raider" is a project management tool used to coordinate meeting times and facilitate communication between members on a per-project basis using 4 main functions. First, the main screen of the application lets you view current groups and create a new group by adding the e-mail of every member then sending an invitation. Second, from the main screen the user can access a group management menu that lets the user add or remove group members. Third, when a user taps on the name of a group, the chat log of that group appears on the screen as well as a link that goes to a new screen showing a log of URLs shared between group members. Lastly, from the chat log screen the user can access the menu to book a study room based on the desired date and time for the booking. Once the study room is booked, the group members are sent an e-mail notifying them of the location and time of the meeting.

Method

The heuristics used in the evaluation is as follows:

1. Visibility of system status

2. Match between system and real world

3. User control and freedom

4. Consistency and standards

5. Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors

6. Error prevention

7. Recognition rather than recall

8. Aesthetic and Minimalist design

9. Help and documentation

Neilson's "flexibility and efficiency of use" heuristic was omitted because the application only has a small number of features so having accelerators for frequent tasks would be redundant as there are not any complex tasks that would benefit from using shortcuts.

The severity scale for the application is as follows:

0 = This is not a usability problem

1 = Cosmetic problem, very low priority, should only be fixed if there is extra time available

2 = Minor usability problem, low priority

3 = Major usability problem, this is a major issue with usability and should be given high priority

4 = Catastrophic usability problem, the product cannot be released before this problem is fixed.

Findings

1. [H-3 Control and Freedom] [Severity-2]

The user must go back to the main screen access the group management screen rather than accessing it from the group chat.

The severity rating is 2 because the user can still manage the group settings however it is not intuitive and is a little clunky.

The problem could be easily fixed by moving the group management button to the chat screen

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2. [H-2 Match between system and real world][Severity-1]

The icon to return to the main screen resembles a group of people, and which seems to indicate that it would link to the group management screen that lists all the members rather than the initial main screen.

The severity rating is 1 because it is purely cosmetic and does not affect the usability in a big way.

A simple fix would be to change the symbol to a house to indicate "home".

3. [H-1 Visibility] [Severity-2]

At the "book a room" screen, after taps the confirmation button to send the e-mail notifications, there is not sufficient feedback to confirm the e-mail was sent.

This problem has severity rating 2 because the system does close the text box that asks to send the e-mail, so there is some feedback confirming the application registered the user's actions. However, it is necessary to provide additional feedback to confirm that the application has also sent the e-mails.

A fix for this problem would be to flash another textbox indicating the e-mails have been sent after the user confirms they want to send the e-mails.

4. [H-9 Help and documentation] [Severity-2]

There is no help or "contact us" page present in the application, leaving the user without any resources to refer to if they encounter an issue they cannot solve.

The problem has a severity rating 2 because the application is fairly intuitive on its own so adding a help section is not totally crucial to the usability of the app.

The solution is simple, just add a page the user can access at anytime giving a quick overview of the application and contact information for the developers.

Summary

This evaluation found 4 heuristic violations with the "Room Raider" application, however fortunately none of them seriously compromised the usability of the application. First, the icon that returns the user to the main menu should be changed to an icon that better reflects the destination of the button, however this is of least importance amongst the required changes. Second, the user should be able to access the group settings through the chat menu rather than the main menu, as this makes for a better logical sequence. Third, the user should receive more feedback than just a dialogue box closing when sending notification e-mails for room bookings in order to confirm that the e-mails were certainly sent. Lastly, the developers should include a help page that contains a brief walkthrough and/or FAQs as well as contact information the user can use in the event they find a bug or are stuck on an issue they cannot solve themselves. With these slight changes, the "Room Raider" application will have excellent usability when launched.