User-Centered Design

Broadly speaking, User-Centered Design (UCD) is an approach to user interface design and development that focuses on the needs and tasks of the end-users of a computer system. Its purpose is to conceive a usable system, which means that it has to be effective, efficient and enjoyable in using it.

The first propriety concerns the “accuracy and completeness with which users achieve specified goals”. The second indicates how quickly the end-users perform tasks when they have learned the design and the third one shows how a person who interacts with the system is free from frustration and enjoys using it.

In order to conceive a usable system, UCD adopts a series of strategies:

• centralization of user needs as the product development leader

• users involvement during the UCD process

• the iterative nature of the UCD process (the knowledge is built step by step)

• it is a multi-disciplinary activity

UCD has many processes to achieve its purpose. In T-UCD, the UCD process has been simplified by dividing it into three phases: user research, prototyping and evaluation. Each of them is composed by specified UCD methods that will be described in the next sections of this tutorial.

Many are the advantages of adopting UCD approach in terms of finance and user satisfaction. Mainly, financially speaking, there is a reduction in development time, effort and support costs and an increase of revenue and sales. That is thanks to the fact that the users of the computer system are more satisfied in using it.