**Calendar Event and   
Task List Manager:**

**Usability Test Report**



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# Summary

The usability test for Team Thundercats’ Calendar Event and Task List Manager was performed on February 26, 2015. We received beneficial and meaningful feedback from both the tester as well as from the class as a whole; this feedback motivated specific improvements to our design. We have detailed those changes in the subsequent sections including both the theoretical foundations for the improvements as well as before and after images.

# Search Box Functionality

For a given webpage, some users may be search dominant in that they navigate through the website by searching while others are may be link dominant in that they browse through the page via links. Modern websites need to accommodate both users well. One student noted that our page did not include a search box as shown in Figure 1.

Figure – Original Layout of the Main Page without Search Included

In our very earlier planning, we decided that a search feature would not be included in our since we did not have plans to support it in this prototype. What is more, we had considered primarily the “link dominant” users. This decision was a mistake not only because it would make the site appear to “search dominant” users as though the site is missing a key feature but also because our site design itself in its own way to the “Feature, Search, and Browse” design pattern. The feature in our design is clearly the calendar since it is the largest item on the page; what is more, if a user has many scheduled events, appointments, and meetings, the calendar will also be very information dense as well. In addition, the to-do list provides a type of list the user can browse. By including, the search box as shown in figure 1, we enable searching without detracting from the site’s browseability.

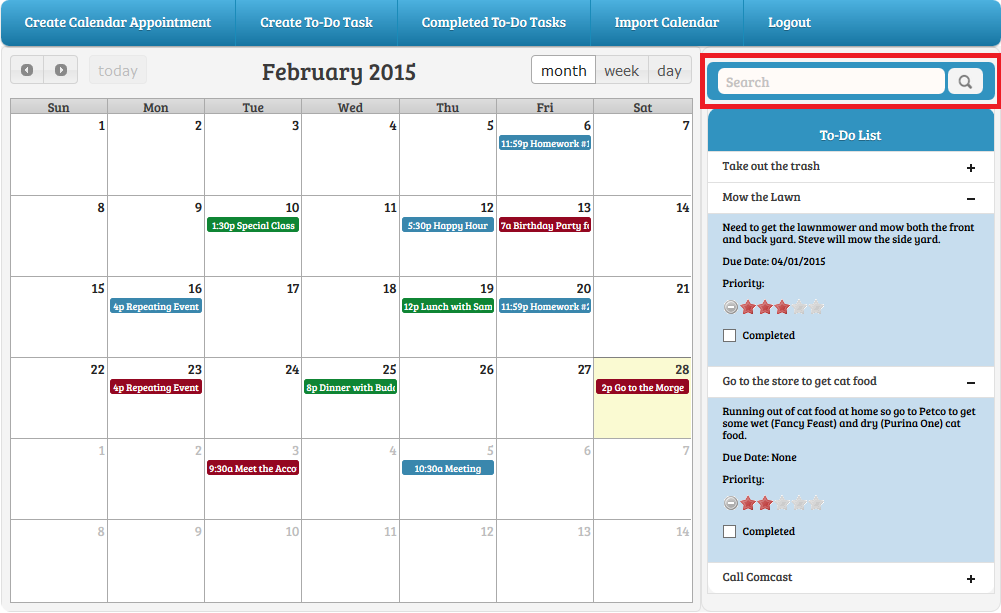


Figure – Modified Layout of the Main Page with Search Included

# Calendar Event Color Coding

As described previously, the main “feature” of our application is the central calendar; it is the largest in terms of size and the densest in terms of information. When deciding on the color scheme for calendar appointments, our original focus was on ensuring consistency by making all of the calendar events the same color as shown in figure 1.

Figure – Original Calendar Event Coloring

When a user is examining a webpage, they typically do not “read” the text it in the traditional sense. Rather, the user’s behavior is more akin to scanning where they are looking for specific keys and triggers. One of the points of feedback we received during the usability test was that users should be able to configure the calendar so that appointments can individually have different colors. This recommendation aligns with the Gestalt principle of similarity where a user typically associates things that are visually similar (in this case similar through color).  To that end, an example where color coding of events would be useful is when a user wants to visually differentiate professional and personal appointments by making the two categories different colors. Our modified calendar with event color coding is shown in figure 2.

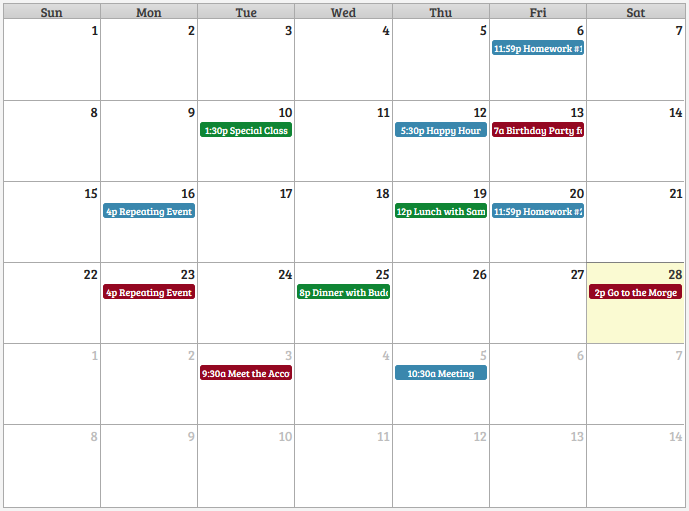


Figure – Modified Calendar Appointment Color Coding

# Menu Item Naming and Ordering

Concerning the menu bar at the top of the main page, we received two primary pieces of feedback from both the tester as well as the class as whole. First, the tester found the original menu bar button descriptions (shown in figure 3) to be a degree unclear. For instance, she was unsure from just reading the menu text what the button “” would do. To better align the application’s functionality with the mental models of users, we renamed the menu bar items as shown in figure 4. The specific changes were:

1. Ggfh

Figure – Original Main Page Menu Bar

Modified Menu Bar.png

Figure – Modified Main Page Menu Bar

One point of feedback from the class was that one way to improve the information architecture of a page is to order items in the menu bar according to the likelihood that the user will perform that task. The student specifically mentioned that they would rarely, if ever, import calendars from a third party site so putting that item first in the menu bar may not be best. In our original planning, we had not paid sufficient attention to the optimal ordering of the menu bar so we missed this detailed. We decided to adopt the student’s feedback and place “Import Calendar” second to last in the list right before “Logout.”

# To-Do Item Due Date

Our application combines calendar appointments (which we describe as synchronous events) with to-do items (which we describe as asynchronous tasks that are not associated with a specific time). The intent behind the to-do list was that the user could do the task at his/her convenience. As such, in our original form to-do task creation form shown in figure 5, we did not provide a feature for the user to add a “Due” (or to borrow a legal term a “Drop Dead”) date, which would serve as the absolute latest the task could be done.

Figure – Original To-Do Task Creation Form

The usability tester mentioned that she would like to have “due dates” for tasks. For example, if a task was to “File Income Tax”, the “due date” would be April 15. To accommodate this feature, we added a “Due Date” field to the task creation form as shown in figure 6. This field is optional (as denoted by no red star next to the description) since not all tasks necessarily have a due date.

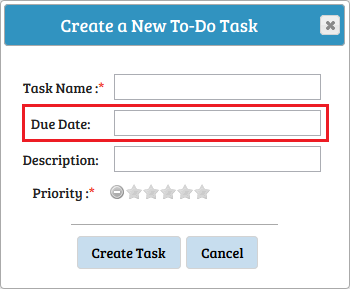


Figure – Modified To-Do Task Creation Form

With the addition of the “Due Date” field to the task, the inlay list used to display all tasks also needed to be updated to include a field for this information. The updated “Due Date” field in the to-do list is shown in figure 7.

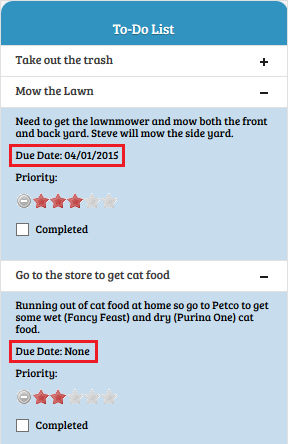


Figure – Modified To-Do List with Due Date Field

# Skipping the Setting of a To-Do Item’s Completion Time

In our mental model for the to-do list, we had expected that when a user completed an item that they would want to specify the task’s completion time the vast majority of the time. As such, when we designed the menu for completing a task, we did not feature prominently the feature to bypass specifying the task completion time.

Figure 8 is the original menu for specifying a task’s completion time; for a user to bypass this menu, they click the “X” in the top right corner. Admittedly, this process is not optimally intuitive.

Figure – Original Form to Specify the Completion Time of a To-Do Item

During the usability test, the user showed little interest in specifying a task completion time and was rather confused by the process. In her mental model, this feature did not provide much utility, and she quickly wanted to bypass this feature. To address her feedback, we modified the task completion form as shown in figure 9 to make the feature to skip the step of specifying a task completion time by adding a “Skip” button. With the introduction of this new button, we also thought the “**XXXXXXXXXX**” button’s text should be modified since the text no longer made as much logical sense in the new model. As such, that button’s text was modified to “Set Completion Time”, which we believe more completely describes its functionality.

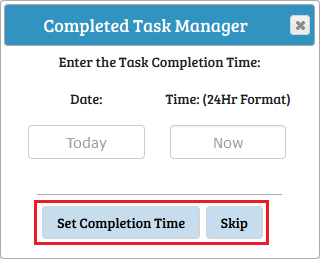


Figure – Modified Task Completion Time Form