

Unit 5

Usability testing of technical document

What do you mean by usability test? Explain the process of usability testing of technical documents. **(Fall 2022)**

How do you explain the concepts usability and persuasiveness in audience-centered technical communication? **(Spring 2023)**

Usability Testing of document

Usability testing is a method of evaluating a product or website's user experience. By testing the usability of their product or website with a representative group of their users or customers.

Usability testing allows researchers to uncover any problems with their product's user experience, decide how to fix these problems, and ultimately determine if the product is usable enough.

Identifying and fixing these early issues saves the company both time and money: Developers don't have to overhaul the code of a poorly designed product that's already built, and the product team is more likely to release it on schedule.

Usability testing is a valuable process in technical communication to ensure that user documentation, such as manuals, guides, and online help, meets the needs of its audience effectively.

Benefits of Usability Testing

- Usability testing has five major advantages over the other methods of examining a product's user experience (such as questionnaires or surveys):
- Usability testing provides an unbiased, accurate, and direct examination of your product or website's user experience. By testing its usability on a sample of actual users who are detached from the amount of emotional investment your team has put into creating and designing the product or website, their feedback can resolve most of your team's internal debates.
- Usability testing is convenient. To conduct your study, all you have to do is find a quiet room and bring in portable recording equipment. If you don't have recording equipment, someone on your team can just take notes.

- Usability testing can tell you what your users do on your site or product and why they take these actions.
- Usability testing lets you address your products or website's issues before you spend a ton of money creating something that ends up having a poor design.

For your business, intuitive design boosts customer usage and their results, driving demand for your product.

Here are some key aspects of usability testing in technical communication:

Define Objectives: Clearly outline the objectives of the usability testing. Understand what aspects of the documentation you want to evaluate and improve. This could include clarity of instructions, ease of navigation, and overall user satisfaction.

Identify Target Audience: Define the target audience for your documentation and ensure that representative users participate in the usability testing. This helps in gathering feedback from the actual users who will be using the documentation.

Create Realistic Scenarios: Develop realistic scenarios or tasks that users might perform with the documentation. These scenarios should cover a range of tasks and situations that users are likely to encounter in real-world scenarios.

Select Appropriate Test Participants: Choose participants who represent the diverse user base. Include both experienced and novice users, and individuals with varying levels of technical expertise. This ensures a more comprehensive evaluation of the documentation.

Observe and Collect Data: During the usability testing, observe participants as they interact with the documentation. Note any challenges they face, areas of confusion, or misunderstandings. Collect both qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, interviews, and task success rates.

Iterative Testing: Usability testing should be an iterative process. Conduct multiple rounds of testing, making improvements to the documentation based on feedback from each round. This helps in refining the content and design over time.

Evaluate Navigation and Layout: Assess the ease of navigation within the documentation. Check the overall layout, organization, and accessibility of information. Ensure that users can quickly find the information they need.

Gather Feedback on Language and Terminology: Pay attention to the language and terminology used in the documentation. Ensure that it aligns with the understanding of the target audience. Clarify any technical jargon and make sure instructions are clear and concise.

Accessibility Testing: Consider accessibility aspects during usability testing. Ensure that the documentation is accessible to users with disabilities by checking for compliance with accessibility standards.

Feedback Analysis and Documentation Revision: Analyze the feedback collected from usability testing, identify common issues, and prioritize them for improvement. Revise the documentation accordingly, and ensure that updates address the identified usability concerns.

By incorporating usability testing into the technical communication process, you can create documentation that is user-friendly, efficient, and meets the needs of your audience effectively.

Two main Objectives of usability test of document

- a. Omissions or ambiguous passages in the documents
- b. Better ways to recognize and present information

Steps or specific goals of document usability test

1. Planning the test

Test subject, what to do

Organization of information

Accessibility (table of contents, page number, headers, tabs, graphics)

Clarity and readability of prose

Completeness of prose

Appropriateness of visual aids

2. Designing the test

Summarize the purpose of test

Outline what you want testers to do

Thank for participating

Inform them that they can quit if they become too frustrated

3. Conducting Test

Record any comments users make during the test

Note problems they have or request for help

Identify passages in the draft that confuse them

Note problems they have finding information

Note information that is not used (skipped over)

Note any strategies they use to overcome obstacles they encounter

4. Reporting the results

- Objectives of test
- The target users' level of knowledge with in the subject matter of the document (Optional)
- A description of the test subject

- What happened during the test
- Comment of users (Optional)
- Plans for revising the document
- A copy of instructions given to the test subjects (as an appendix)

Rhetorical challenges of writing a usability report

- Analyzing your data
- Writing the report
- Evidence for your revision plans
- Demonstrate your skill and competence
- Usability testing is valuable
- Design consideration