How does your organization approach usability? [closed]

Asked 15 years, 11 months ago   Modified 15 years, 11 months ago

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I have a good friend (my old college roommate, actually), who critiques my personal projects every once in awhile. He is a usability engineer at a large bank, and I'm constantly amazed at what kinds of things he catches/suggestions he makes. Back when I was in college, I always knew usability was important on some level, but I didn't really care all that much. These days, I've come to realize that a good usability expert is worth their weight in gold.

I have two parts to my question:

1. Does your organization have a team dedicated to usability? If so, how do they fit into your development process?

2. Can you recommend any usability "checklists" for software engineers who do not have access to usability experts to run through when developing UIs themselves? I googled the subject and found a few guides, but they were very long. I'm looking for something small, that I can tack to a tackboard and refer to without having to browse through an online book.

`usability`

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First - congratulations! You've come to realize what far too few project leaders realize - that usability is an extremely important aspect of software. If people don't *want* to use your software, or can't figure out how to use it, then all of its technical prowess means nothing. And if they don't *love* your software, they'll jump to the next best thing when it becomes available.

In my organization, we fluctuate from having a dedicated usability guru, to being very proactive about usability among our engineers. Having a leader with a sense for usability helps, even if he's not officially a UI guy.

I asked a similar question to yours, **Easily digestable UI tips for developers**. The answers there are probably what you're looking for.

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answered Jan 20, 2009 at 13:47

David Koelle
20.8k ● 23   ● 94   ● 130

Thats great, and pretty much what I am looking for! Thanks!
– **Rob** Jan 20, 2009 at 13:50

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This is just about the same question that I asked a while back: https://stackoverflow.com/questions/184073/how-important-is-usability-to-your-workplace-employer
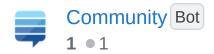
I'm on the company's research team, and there are two people on the team that are usability analysts. The company recently created a usability testing lab for them to meet and conduct usability testing. I was pretty impressed with this, because they took a part of the building that wasn't used much and put up some walls and bought some furniture. The whole thing must have

cost a little bit. I haven't had a lot of interaction with the usability team, so I don't exactly know what they do.

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answered Jan 20, 2009 at 14:24

coder1
3,515 ● 5 ● 31 ● 46

In those organizations (including also bank) that I have worked, there hasn't been such position. Testers and test users are used to get some feedback about usability. Best way is of course to use your own program in longer period than 5 minutes. This will show you some obvious shortcomings - like bad menu structure, missing/conflicting keyboard shortcuts, ability to sort/filter your data, remember user settings, etc. etc.

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answered Jan 20, 2009 at 13:46

Riho
4,583 ● 3 ● 35 ● 49

I've found that using my own software will only help me find the problems I am interested in. It's difficult to step out of your own shoes and approach a piece of software as a non-software engineer would. – Rob Jan 20, 2009 at 13:48

I know - but it helps to find some obvious ones. Otheriwse I always find more problems in other people software :) – Riho Jan 20, 2009 at 13:51

Haha, yes, I do the same with other peoples software.
– Rob Jan 20, 2009 at 13:54

We don't really have a usability team...(which is probably why our software is less usable than it could be). I usually take the opportunity to perform Hallway testing with a couple of the end users because we lack the team resources...

It also helps to eat your own dogfood (as much as you can realistically do in your job)...

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answered Jan 20, 2009 at 13:48

Restore The Data Dumps Again

39.3k ● 12 ● 99 ● 124

A few years ago a colleage of mine working for a large retailer, bouyed up after reading Steven Krug's "Don't Make Me Think" (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dont-Make-Me-Think-Usability/dp/0321344758/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1232460515&sr=8-1), decided to try to forge a new role for himself as the company's usability consultant.

He got made redundant instead.

My point is that sometimes pushing for a formal usability process/team can sometimes make you unpopular (depending on the organisation), but if you just make your apps usable, then people love them.

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