

To: Dr. Kate Crane
From: Sustainability Manual Group
Date: 02-17-17
Subject: Transmittal Memo

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to inform you of our group decisions for the redesign, and of our creation of a prototype of the Sustainability Capstone Manual. In the following sections we will discuss the research that led to these decisions, the processes we undertook, our results, and finally our recommendations for moving forward with the project.

Research

Our group conducted individual research of users by implementing observation and think-aloud protocol. We only selected student users as we were previously instructed by our client to not reach out to community partners at this time. The selected students were individuals who would need to fill out similar capstone manuals for their majors. These students included seniors, a junior, and those with similar majors to Sustainability.

After conducting our individual research, we discussed our findings as a group for our particular users. We sorted out common themes in our research results and discovered that our tested users experienced issues in relation to the length and style consistency of the manual. The major areas of concern from our manual include the excessive length and inconsistent styling throughout the document. These problems were causing users to feel unnecessary stress and confusion while using the manual.

To address these issues we made several decisions concerning how the manual would be restructured. The first was the creation of a formal style guide that our manual will strictly adhere to, along with methods for condensing the information within the document to provide users with less of a daunting task while using the manual. The second was to separate the forms, roughly half of the 31 page document, into their own individual packet. Just as smaller sections of chunked information will appear less daunting, a manual with a smaller page count will be less stressful as well.

Our goal is to produce a finished product that will enable users to use the Sustainability Capstone Manual with as little stress and confusion as possible. With our newly created prototype, our group

will be able to conduct secondary research to discover if our changes to the document are making an effective difference in regards to the usability of the manual.

Process

Our tested users pointed out that many of the headers within the manual were inconsistent thus making it difficult to understand the hierarchy organization of the document. To address this issue, we printed a single page of the manual and marked up areas of the text that would need style modification in order to obtain consistency.

With this information, we formatted a style guide that our manual will adhere to. As a group, it was decided that the use of san-serif font for headers and serif font for paragraph text would be most effective for readability. In addition we resized our various headers, from an H1 to an H3, in order to better show hierarchy. Both ordered and unordered list items would have a small indentation to clearly order list text separate from paragraph text. We also styled concepts for page numbers, logos, borders, and footer information.

We then created a quick paper mock-up of what the page would look like with our styles applied. The mock-up was created with simple lines and shapes taking the place of text, logos, and other information that would need to appear on the page. Once it was agreed that the mock-up was what we wanted, we applied those styles to a single page of the manual. After we reviewed the results the decision was made to apply the styles to the entirety of the document.

Recommendations

At this point it is our recommendation that we move forward with additional usability testing so that we may further refine our design. Once approved, our group will be choosing new participants to test the Sustainability B.S Capstone prototype. We will implement the same test methods and requirements as the previous participant users. We will continue using the think-aloud protocol to assist in our understanding of the participants' thoughts as they go through the document, while also capturing what the participant did in detailed notes so that we will be able to get as accurate a record of the feedback as possible.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read our memo and review the current version of our manual. The previous sections have reviewed our research and processes, detailing how we came to our conclusions and how we applied those on behalf of our clients and primary users. Our next step is to continue user research so that we may further refine our design, testing the most beneficial methods of condensing the length of the document while maintaining maximum usability. Our goal is to produce a finished product that makes the users feel comfortable when engaged with the manual by eliminating stress through readability and structure. We welcome any and all suggestions and are happy to discuss any questions that you might have. With your approval we will move forward into

the second round of user testing. Thank you again giving us the opportunity to work on this project and we look forward to your comments.