Name: Chun-Chi Huang
Class: SEGR 5240 - SW Architecture and Design II

Chapter 9 User Models – Better Wrong than Vague

As a project is developing, several requirements will need to be satisfied. Sometimes they are explicit, and these requirements are easy to be completed correctly. In real-world projects, requirements are usually implicit and vague. The customers assume that designers know the requirements, and designers are not willing to double-check them with customers. In my previous work experiences, some people tended to avoid stating explicit statements because they did not clearly understand the exact requirements, and they feared being blamed for any mistakes. During the meeting, people usually stated vague ideas. That was so they could have more excuses when they failed projects. I do not agree with this culture. In my understanding, the more explicit the requirements are, the higher possibility there is for projects to succeed. As for team design, explicit models and assumptions are very important. If the leader explicitly states the ideas, every member of the team is able to clearly understand the principles of the team. There is no implicit zone, which will improve the integrity and coherence of the team. When the complexity of design increases, more explicit models are required. If implicit assumptions dominate the design, they will make the design more dangerous. If there are no available facts for evaluation, what can people do? There are two approaches in this chapter. The first approach is guessing: “An articulated guess beats an unspoken assumption.” Explicit guessing can help the team generate useful discussion. The other approach is not to make things vague even if they could be wrong. Vague ideas cannot make people understand clearly and results in poorer design.

Chapter 15 The Divorce of Design

After reading this chapter, I was reminded of my first real-world design experience. By the time I started my first job at a mobile phone manufacturing company, I was assigned to develop applications such as a stopwatch and an online radio. I spent two months implementing all the features, and all the designs were my own ideas. However, the manager was not satisfied with my design and asked me whether I consulted with other peers or experienced designers. I realized just how important actual user experience was. Back to the content of this chapter, the author mentions that a century ago designers were usually both real users and implementers. For example, Edison completed all his inventions in his laboratory, and the Wright Brother built their planes by hands. One possible reason could be that the technology in the past was not as complex as now. However, now technologies are more complex and sophisticated. Consequently, design tasks have been divorced from actual user scenarios. The author suggests some ways to improve designs. Designers should have the actual user experience in their design such as being apprentices in the user operating environment. Next, designers should work together with actual users from the beginning of the design and continue iterating the design. Finally, designers should be educated with user experience knowledge. All the above approaches can help designers generate suitable designs for actual users.