CoLab

User Evaluation Report

UX Review

During earlier stages of design and development, a set of UX goals were outlined for the intended system. These UX goals were put into 3 separate sections. The UX goals that were set for CoLab were as followed.

- Soft Issues and Interconnection
- Productivity and Collaborative
- Motivating and Engaging

Throughout this stage of design UX goals were discussed in more depth, as well as our intended audience. Also discussed was an intended evaluation plan. The evaluation plan outlined at which stages of the development testing of the prototype would occur, and which methods would be used for testing. These methods were picked to effectively identify any problems that may be present with the prototype and its intended UX goals.

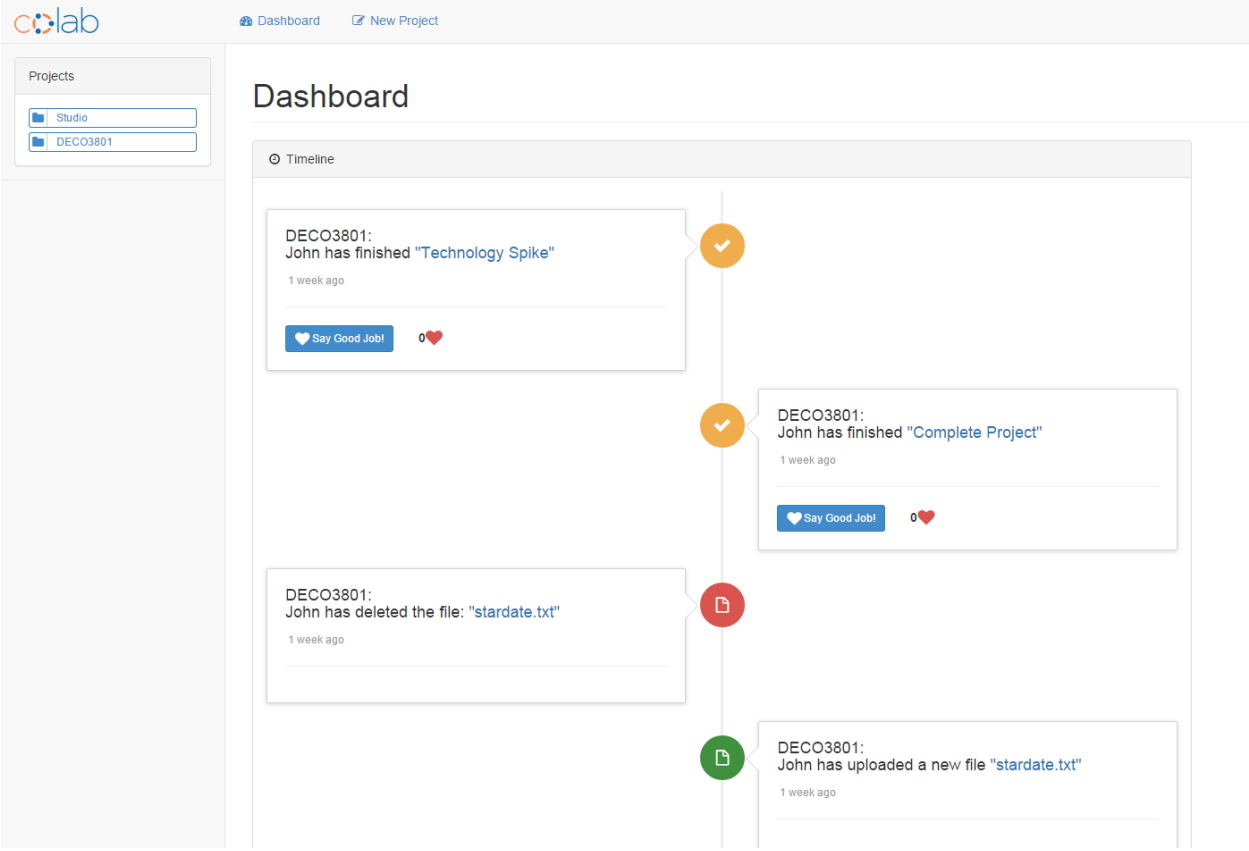
User Evaluation: Heuristic Evaluations

Introduction

Heuristic evaluations are a general testing suite for usability guidelines. For CoLabs Heuristics it was decided that we would ask users to test a certain feature of the application, and then identify any heuristic breakages. If the tests returned any results that were not ideal, discussions and then any approved alterations to the application were undertaken.

Procedure

During earlier stages of development we continually reviewed the prototype. At this stage a review of the heuristic was done to ensure that the user design was going smoothly. One of the main features that were to be evaluated was the dashboard that users would see when they first logged into their account. When users first log into the application, they are directed to a dashboard that displays overall information to them.



As shown above, the current dashboard can be evaluated with some of the following heuristics.

Aesthetic and minimalist design

Aesthetics and minimalist design are arguably one of the more important design heuristics when creating a web application. This original design of the application dashboard is minimalistic; however, aesthetically is where it lacks.

Help and documentation

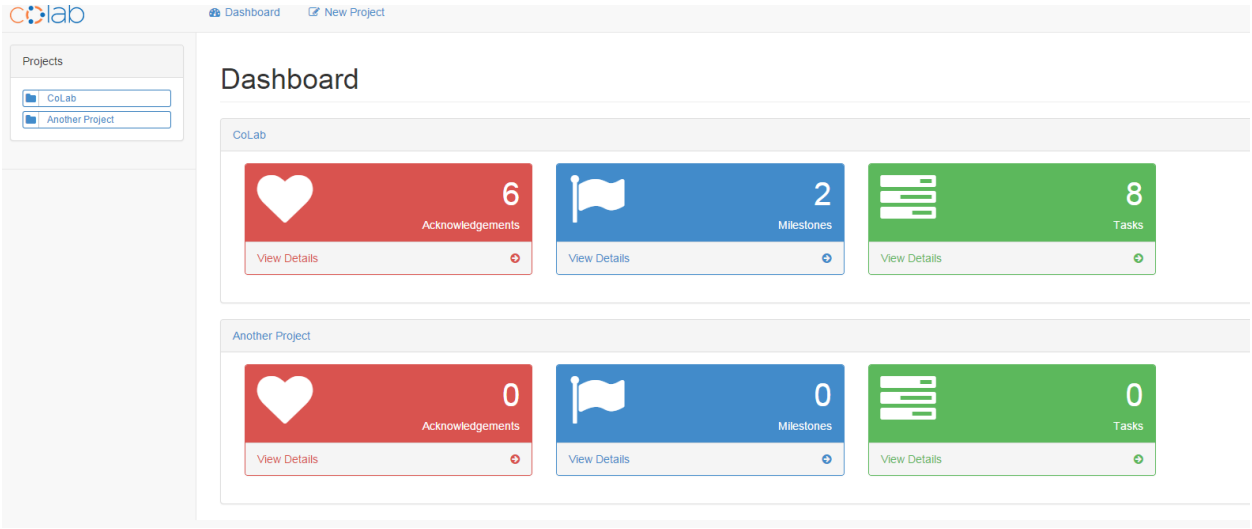
The dashboard of the application influences the UX goals heavily in the application. A well implemented dashboard can make using the application productive and efficient. However, adding too much to implement on the dashboard can quickly become confusing and overwhelming. Help and documentation on using the dashboard would be a valuable asset to go with the extended features that are implemented.

Findings

Through evaluating the dashboard page of the application, it has been decided that a complete rework will be done. A redesign will make the page more minimalistic and aesthetically pleasing. The dashboard will link out to each individual project and make aware how many tasks and milestones still have to be completed.

Outcome

After performing evaluations on the applications dashboard, its functionality and potential performance were reviewed. It was decided, as stated above, that a complete redesign would be done. The outcome of this redesign is shown below.



Now it can be seen that the overall look at feel of the dashboard is much cleaner and consistent along all projects. Instead of showing a timeline for each and every project, and if a person has many projects could become confusing fast, it now shows only the important numbers for each project. If a user wishes to view extra details the link is located in the bottom of the box, which is intuitive and easy to understand. This design of the dashboard supports our UX goals. It takes into account acknowledgements, which focus on the soft issues between groups and how they are going, as well as the more hard issues of group work.

User Evaluation: Cognitive Walkthrough

Introduction

Cognitive walkthroughs are another important testing method when it comes to the overall usability of a system. For a system such as CoLab, with a number of different interactions, it is best that any problem areas were identified. Cognitive walkthroughs identify the steps taken to complete tasks within a system, if the path is not ideal, an ideal path is then set, and what changes that could be make to achieve this. Users were asked to complete 2 separate tasks, and asked questions at each stage of the path, and what they disliked/liked about the system.

Users

Users were not completely necessary for cognitive walkthroughs, instead team members were asked to identify tasks that were commonly taken by the intended end user.

Procedure

Performing a cognitive walkthrough includes completing a task in its ideal state. These tasks were identified and questions asked at each point.

Task 1:

First time user navigates through homepage information and ends up creating an account.

Current Path

At the testing point this was the path that had to be taken to gather information and sign in to the application

1. User enters homepage
2. Uses navigation bar to navigate to about us section

3. After information is gathered, user then uses the same navigation bar to navigate to the sign up page
4. User enters form details to create an account
5. Account is created
6. User can now navigate to sign in page

Happy Path

1. User enters homepage and read readily available short information
2. User navigates to sign-up page
3. User enters form details
4. Account is created and user is navigated to sign in page

This was the ideal happy path. This path reduces the users' steps by two, while still achieving the primary goal. A shorter path is ideal for CoLab as one of our main UX goals centers around productivity.

Analysis of the happy path of the application, and why it will suit CoLab. Four distinct questions were answered at each step to support the alterations to the prototype.

Step 1:
User enters homepage and read readily available short information

Question	Answer
Will the customer realistically be trying to do this action?	Yes, when the user first enters the site they will be looking for information. A good easy place to put an overview of the general idea of the site. The front page needs to be aesthetically pleasing and also short and precise.
Is the control for the action visible?	N/A
Is there a strong link between control and action?	N/A

Is feedback appropriate?	N/A

Step 2:

User navigates to sign-up page

Question	Answer
Will the customer realistically be trying to do this action?	Yes, once the user browsers the information about the site and would like to create an account or sign in.
Is the control for the action visible?	Control for this action is to be located in the central navigation bar.
Is there a strong link between control and action?	Once the user presses the button to the sign-up or log in page they are then redirected to the page.
Is feedback appropriate?	Yes, feedback is in the form of the page changing. Once the user has pressed the button, the page will be redircted.

Step 3:

User enters form details

Question	Answer
Will the customer realistically be trying to do this action?	Yes, to be able to complete a login form, users will have to enter their desired details.

Is the control for the action visible?	Control for entering the login will be displayed as a form. Once users have filled out the required fields, they will be able to continue to the completing the final step.
Is there a strong link between control and action?	
Is feedback appropriate?	If the user incorrectly enters an email or password, or fails to enter one correctly, they will be given feedback on how to proceed. Feedback such as ‘email is not correct format’ or ‘password not correct format’ will be displayed if user incorrectly inputs any form data.

Step 4:

Account is created and user is navigated to sign in page

Question	Answer
Will the customer realistically be trying to do this action?	Completion of the signing up form will automatically redirect users to the sign in page, if they wish to sign in immediately after account creation.
Is the control for the action visible?	A create account button will be located directly after the form the user has filled out.
Is there a strong link between control and action?	Once the user has created the account, a message will be displayed that will say ‘account created successfully’. The user will then be able to sign in with their recently created account.
Is feedback appropriate?	Feedback again will be if the user incorrectly inputs any of the form data. Once the form data is successfully completed, users will be made aware that their account has been created.

Outcome

Based on the two separate cognitive walkthroughs, additional changes were made to the prototype. A transition from the current paths to the happy paths would be done before the final showcase. These changes were to be completed by the showcase event so that additional testing would be complete there.

User Evaluation: Showcase studies

Introduction

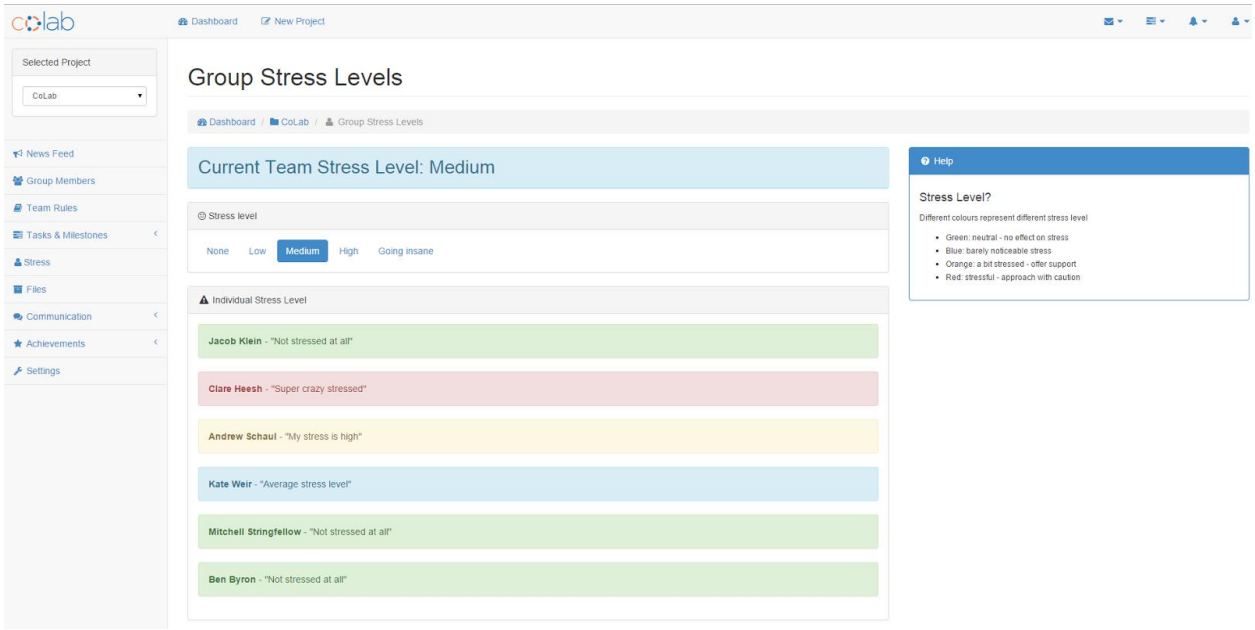
The last method of testing that was used for CoLab was physical prototype and feedback while it was on display on the showcase. During the showcase the application had undergone a the different testing steps, anything that made it through these tests will be identified by users. Without any set guidelines, and not being introduced to the system before hand, errors with the usability of the system are easy to identify.

Users

Peers, teaching staff, and the general public were main user testers for this user evaluation. During the showcase users were given a short pitch about what our application is, and then were invited to test it without ever having used it before. Observations were made on where users were confused and what parts of the application need the most work.

Findings

When users were first introduced to the system, they were curious about the stress monitoring system that we had implemented. Below is shown our implementation of the stress monitoring system.



The main aspects of our system is the interaction between team members and how stressed they are. Individual stress levels affect the teams total stress level, which is shown at the top of the screen. Stress levels for individuals are located down the bottom of the screen.

One of the main concerns users had at the showcase was that their own individual names were located within the groups' names. This made it slightly confusing when they were seeing their own name within the groups. Some users suggested that your own name should be at the top, and slightly separated from the rest of the group. Users liked the system of changing separate stress levels.

Outcome

Outcome of showcase testing has showed that, for the most part, our application was understandable and easy to navigate. Most of the evaluations were done by observing users interact with the application. Not noted is that most of the user were most likely experienced technology users. Because of this it was expected that navigation and general use of the application would be fluent. Some slight changes were made for the final submissions of the application.