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Home Control Design

I used two formal user testers, one informal user tester, and one design expert to ensure good usability and functionality of this interface. The first few examinations occurred within the same week. The design expert, formal and informal user testers look at approximately 30% of the code. When my design was examined by an expert I was warned upon using imbalanced and ambiguous icons. Since my design focus heavily on iconography, it was important that they looked good while also being understandable to the users. It was also suggested that the same types of icons would be used throughout the design. For example, the icons on the home screen were crisper images whereas the icons of the locks were rounded. To fix this I, changed the lock icons to be more like the icons on the home screen. I also made sure that the rest of the icons that I used would be like the icons already in use.

The formal and informal user testers also remarked on, specifically, on the light icon. One user asked if it was a shower head and the other user didn’t figure out what it was until he clicked on it. In addition, the expert and the users were confused with how to work the lock both system. With the way the lock icons were labeled, it was confusing for the first round of users to understand what state the BOTH DOORS icon should be when the front and back door were in different states. To fix this, before my second round of user testing, I relabeled the BOTH DOORS icon so it would say to click to unlock/lock.

One of the things that all the user testers liked was the audio feedback when clicking on the locks as well as the visual feedback when hovering over the home icons.

With the feedback in mind, I redesigned the 30% of code and then continued to implement the interface. When I was almost done, I did a second round of user testing. For this, the user talked aloud while using the cite thus I could observe that she initially had a hard time understanding how to turn things half way. For instance, the user was confused on how to turn the light half on. Quickly the user could understand that you clicked on the icon multiple times to get to the expected condition. To make this clearer I made sure that when the mouse was hovering over the images it changed to a pointer.

The second user also made a comment on the icons. They thought that the changed window icon still seemed out of place when next to the other icons.

The user tester did not like all the white space below the tabs on the light and shade screens. In addition, the user was not thrilled about having to click through the ALL options to change all the respective conditions. For example, having to click to all open on the blinds page. The user suggested listing out the options so it was just one click to complete the desired condition. The reason, I decided against these two suggestions was because I didn’t want to clutter the pages. Hicks law and noise could potentially become issues had I implemented these ideas. If all the conditions were laid out there would be a lot of icons/options in one tab which could increase the time it would take for the user to decide due to all the choices and visual noise.