**Usability Report**

Team 35

After evaluating our data from the usability findings and design checklist, we found that numerous design elements of the game were often confusing or unattractive to the user. While the players completed their tasks, they often arrived at screens and were not sure what button to press for their desired action. For example, in the trader screen, there are extremely limited directions on how to successfully complete a trade. This leaves the user confused as to which button to click first. There were other instances in the game where user input took too long, and there were clear solutions to optimize the flow of the game.

A main issue we encountered while starting the game had to do with player generation. When creating a character, you have to input their names and then type in their allocation points individually to add up to 20. This can be confusing for users because the game is not clear that they must allocate the 20 points among the different categories. It can also be an issue because the program is relying on the user to give a correct input equaling to 20. Giving the user the flexibility to chose their points is bad because the restrictions for the skill points are more difficult to address that way. A very simple solution to this problem would be to have up and down buttons next to each skill level and also a total skills left indicator. This way, the user can adjust his skill points and know how many points are left in real time.

Our usability data also indicates some problems with the selection of a new planet to travel to. Users thought that this part of the game was confusing because of the implementation of a dropdown menu to choose the new planet. One major flaw in the use of a dropdown menu is the absence of any indication of fuel restrictions. The most important part of choosing a new planet is knowing which planets you have the capability of travelling to. Even if the game checks to make sure the player has enough fuel after the player chooses the planet, this method for enforcing fuel restrictions is very cumbersome for the player. It would mean that the player would blindly select his or her next planet over and over again until finding one that he or she can travel to. A better implementation would be a chart that displays all the planets and the fuel needed to travel to that planet from which the player could clearly see which planets he or she has enough fuel for. This would have made the process of selecting another planet to travel to much more robust.

The last egregious error we saw in Team 35’s usability and design was in the trader encounter screen. What made this portion of the game so confusing was the lack of clear instructions on how to conduct a trade. There is just a list of your items and a list of the trader’s items and multiple buttons on the screen. There is nothing telling the user how to select the items that he or she wants to buy from the trader or sell to the trader. Additionally, what baffled most users was the presence of a trade, buy, and sell button. With the inclusion of a trade button, one must wonder if there is really any need for a buy and sell button. Overall, learning to use this screen is not a quick and easy process.

Throughout the game, an overarching issue was with the buttons. Because there was minimal direction, the fact that the buttons were not always placed in clear locations made some tasks take longer than they should have. For example, the buttons in the trade encounter screen were awkwardly placed so that the buy and sell buttons were on top of your items while the trade buttons were on the left. Users were unsure if they should press the sell or trade button in certain cases. A solution for this would be to simply have directions outlining what to do, and also to move the location of the buttons elsewhere to help the user know which items they are trading.

After addressing these issues, we believe the usability of the game will benefit from some minor design changes. These changes will allow the user to be more engrossed in the game by heightening it’s sense of robustness and learnability.