“My Next Days” Prototype - Usability Test

Evaluation Plan

What will be tested

My point of view is, that writing your dates offline on Post-It notes is fast, and and gives you the freedom to *write whatever you want*. Opposed to this, entering information in almost any calender software is cumbersome, because it forces you to fill out forms.
The webapp “My Next Days” should satisfy the need to manage the upcoming events, deadlines or notes. It wants to blend the freedom of "write what you want” with the power a web application can give, such as search and location independent access by multiple people if needed.

What I want to learn

I want to learn if

- the concept of a single input field is suitable to enter new upcoming events
- the interaction for correcting a wrong input works
- entering dates as relative dates (e.g. “tomorrow” or “next friday”) is used and recognized as facilitation
- if the tooltips are helpful (or may be totally ignored?)

Additionally I will look for usability problems while the participant uses the prototype:

- Does a slip or mistake happen?
- The direct manipulation criterias: Feedback, Constistency, Discoverability should be fulfilled by the prototype, are they?

The test will take place at a PC or the experimenter.. At least 3 participants will be tested.

Method to get Feedback

The user is given a scenarios including tasks which can be carried out using the prototype. He is encouraged to speak about his intentions or problems while interacting with the application. The usability is measured formally by specific measurable questions for each task. Additionally notes are taken to gain informal usability results.
The tasks will be followed by a short interview to get further insight on specific concepts on the usability of specific concepts of the application (single input field, relative date information, no help but tooltips, etc.).

Experimental Protocol

Instructions

Instructions are written in italic letters. Instructions are for the experimenter only. They must not be disclosed to the participant during the experiment. It should be strictly adhered to the advices inside the instructions, when running this experiment.

Required persons and knowledge

The experiment should be run by two persons: one moderator talking to the participant, and one logger who takes notes. (The experiment may also be run by one person, doing both, but this isn't the ideal case). The experimenters should know how to use the application prototype and they should know the user need which the application tries to satisfy.

The person who takes notes should be well versed with this datalogging note taking method described below

Datalogging for taking Notes

The note taking experimenter should use the "datalogging" method for taking notes during the task execution. The method is described here: thttp://www.userfocus.co.uk/articles/datalogging.html

This set of marker definitions should be used:

Code	*Definition description*
X	*Usability problem*
D	*Duplicate usability problem*
V	*Video highlight — an "Ah-ha!" moment*
C	*Comment (general comment by participant)*
P	*Positive opinion expressed by participant*
N	*Negative opinion expressed by participant*
F	*Facial reaction (e.g. surprise)*
A	*Assist from moderator*
G	*Gives up or wrongly thinks finished*
I	*Design idea (design insight by logger)*
M	*Misc (general observation by logger)*

Preparation

Have a copy of the consent form available for every participant.
Have a copy of the tasks below available for each participant.
Have a little present for each participant (e.g. a small chocolate, or a promotional item)
Have a stop watch present for note taking.
Open the application in a browser window: http://www.mynextdays.staticloud.com
Reload the page for each new participant.
The experiment will take up to 30 minutes for one participant, normally less.
Summarize the content of the consent form, let the user read and sign it.

Before Task execution

Explain to the participant, that she is expected to execute some tasks and think out loud about what he is doing. She should solve the tasks on her own. She may ask about the task itself but not on about how to execute it in the application. Tell the participant, that not she is assessed but the application. Tell her that she should state when she finished a task.
Hand out the tasks to the participant.
While the user is executing the tasks, take notes according to the datalogging method mentioned above. Also log the results of the "Usability measures" below.

Usability Measurement Criteria

These questions allow to measure the usability in an explicit formal way beyond the more informal notes which are taken.

1. *a) How long did it take until the user added her first entry? Time:*
   b) Did the entry include the right date (tomorrow) on the first try?
   Yes ( ) or No ( )
   c) Did the user remove the entry with a single click?
   Yes ( ) or No ( ) if user didn't choose the right action on first try

2. *Was the user able to execute the search without slip or mistake?*
   Yes ( ) if the user focused the input field, entered the search term and clicked the search button (or pressing STRG+S) without other interactions, No ( ) otherwise.

3. *How many things did the user do, that were not required by the task, until she finished the task successful? Count:*
   Count every action (e.g. positioning the mouse, Clicking or scrolling) that isn't required for the tasks goal.

4. *How long did it take until the user finished the task successful? Time:*

Tasks

Your friend gave you a link to this calendar application, so that you can view his dates and find a suitable date for an activity. You want to go shopping together for buying a birthday present.

1. Test how the application works, by entering an event for tomorrow. Can you make your change undone?

2. Filter the shown elements, so that only events are shown which have “christmas” in the text.

3. Your friend asked you to find a date when you can go buying a present for a birthday party together. The birthday party will be next Friday.
   - Please add the birthday party to the list of events
   - Please add your date suggestion, yours and your friends name to the list of events

4. You remember that the date isn’t suitable for you.
   Can you please reschedule it one day before or behind the current one?

Interview

Conduct an interview by using the following questions. The questions try to be open, to prevent yes/no answers. Use the goals to evaluate the answers and extract the desired information.

Single input field

Where did you expect to enter the date information?
How are you used to input a date in other applications?

Goals:
Is a dedicated date input field expected, when dealing with events?
Does the user think, that having a dedicated date field would be better

Relative dates
Can you remember any other application which works in a similar way, e.g. with similar input possibilities or usage?
Can you think of a situation where you would would prefer to enter the absolute date (like “01.12.2012”) of one where you would type in a relative date (like “next friday”)?

*Goals**:***
Is the user is familiar with such an input method? Did she like it and sees some benefits?
Does the preferred method depend on the situation, or would the user prefer to use absolute dates always?

List of dates
Think about your current “real” calendar where you place your dates. In which situation did you search for dates which have passed?
Where would you expect to find passed dates in the application?

*Goals**:***
Is the additional functionality to see past dates needed? Has a participant a good idea how this may be included and used?

Help
Where did you search for help on completing a task?
Goals:
Are tooltips and gray example text in the input field “enough” help or is a comprehensive help page needed?

Debriefing

Thank the participant for taking part in the experiment. You may explain the application, if the participant is interested. Give the participant the little present.