

Visibility of system status

The progress of uploads is a poor heuristic to judge the system by. This is more suited to applications with bulk uploads or large file sizes, neither of which are applicable to a note taking application. The more glaring issue we found was that the system does not communicate the state of notes. There are no confirmation messages when notes are saved. There is no indication where the note is saved to, or where one can access that note later. It is not clear which video, audio and image files are associated with which note. The system should communicate these things to the user.

We suggest adding confirmation messages in the Organize and Upload screen, specifying where the notes were saved, and providing the user with a direct link to the uploaded notes. Similarly, adding a confirmation messages in the Edit Note screen which indicate when and where a note has been saved would help inform the user of the system status.

User control and freedom

Overall the system grants the user a good degree of control and freedom, however we did find that the My Files menu took some of that control away. Navigation was restricted to clicking directly on folders and headings, rather than a separate menu. Without the navigation bar it was unclear how to return to the main menu. Clicking on a file lead directly into the Edit Note screen, with no obvious way to return to the specific folder in the My Files menu.

We suggest keeping the navigation bar, or something similar, in the My Files screen so that navigation through the files is as simple as the rest of the system.

Consistency and standards

The My Files menu has a completely different layout, style and navigation system compared to the rest of the application. The My Files menu breaks consistency with the rest of the system and is partially responsible for why we found that section more difficult to navigate.

The logos in the Edit Note screen are another place where the consistency of the system is broken. They are the only images used for navigation in the entire system, and there is no hover text or label to make the meaning of the label clear. In addition, the logos take the user to a different site, without warning. If you want to incorporate the functionality of another website into yours, it should either be fully integrated or the user should be notified they are opening a separate site.

We suggest changing the My Files screen's layout to make it more consistent with the rest of the system.

Error prevention

The system provides very little error prevention beyond the Login/Registration screen. There are no warnings for creating multiple notes with the same name. The same applies with the uploads in the Organize screen. This is major error that could result in the user losing valuable data.

The system does not warn the user when navigating away from an incomplete note. The flaw, coupled with the previously mentioned lack of saving indicators, means the user is always unsure whether leaving the Edit Note screen will result in data loss. The system does not stop the user from leaving a note unsaved, another major error that could result in data loss.

We suggest adding confirmation popups when the user attempts to navigate off a page without saving their work. Also, warning messages when the user creates a new note or upload that has the same name as one already saved.

Recognition rather than recall

The logos in the Edit screen not only broke consistency but also favoured recall over recognition. It was not clear what each button did based on the image alone. A first time user would not be able to determine the functionality of all the buttons without having read the user manual beforehand.

We suggest finding images with more clear meanings, or if that is not possible hover text that explains what the button does. This will save the user from having to search the manual every time.

Flexibility and efficiency of use

During our evaluation we found no accelerators or "frequent action" options. The system is rigid in its interactions and there are no clearly communicated ways to speed up the note taking process. The suggested accelerator, HTML autocomplete, is not applicable to this context as the forms requiring data entry are all short and almost always require

We suggest adding accelerators like suggested people for events, common tags for uploads, note templates and keyboard shortcuts. The system's flexibility could be improved by adding different ways to organize their notes e.g. by date created or uploaded, and allowing the user to link specific files directly to the note. These features will help the experienced user make more efficient use of your system.

Aesthetic and minimalist design

All evaluators found the aesthetic not distracting and the minimalist design made navigating around the major menus simple.

Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

We were unable to trigger any errors and hence could not assess the system's ability to recover from errors.

Help and documentation

The user manual is not accessible from the application itself. All users would need to be provided with the link separately, which is neither convenient nor feasible. In the user manual itself, the buttons for editing text are not explained in detail. This is a problem because, as mentioned earlier, not all the buttons are easily recognizable and the manual is only a point of clarification for a confused user.

We suggest providing a direct link to the user manual in the application. The user manual should explain the functionality of each button in more detail in the manual and make it explicitly clear which buttons link to separate websites.