Steam Usability Test Report

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Executive Summary

This usability test report contains a detailed summary of the goals, methodology, participant, tested tasks, post-test questions, results, and key findings and recommendations of the usability test conducted on the print user guide made for the Steam computer application. This report will detail the process of the test itself, as well as any comments or suggestions the participant had regarding the print user guide, or Steam itself.

Goals

The purpose of this usability test was to test the effectiveness of my textual user guide, as well as receive feedback on the process itself on Steam's end. It was intended to see how easily a user could follow my guide and use it to locate, purchase, and install a video game on Steam, and to see how well-made the process itself was.

Methodology

For the usability test, I had one participant help test the print user guide. For the test, I streamed the print user guide to the participant over a voice call on Discord, which the participant and I also used to communicate. I controlled the guide itself and scrolled down to further instructions whenever he asked me to. The participant needed a computer both to communicate with me, see the guide, and perform the instructed actions. The participant was asked to follow the instructions of the guide as closely as possible, using any game he wanted to as an example. I also instructed him that he did not need to complete the purchase of a game if he did not want to, and so he did not. However, he followed the instructions up until that point, and then downloaded an uninstalled game that was already in his Steam library for the final portion of the

test. The participant was encouraged to mention any issues, suggestions, or other comments he had as he performed the test if he wanted to.

Participant Profiles

The participant of the print user guide test was a 21-year-old male. He was a student at UVA, studying Aerospace Engineering and minoring in Computer Science. This background gave him a wealth of knowledge about computers, and he was already very experienced at using Steam. However, he decided to use this knowledge to more heavily critique the guide, following it to the letter and doing no intermediary steps himself, no matter how obvious they were. This provided me with some in-depth suggestions for how I could improve my guide.

Tasks Tested

The guide was made to show users how to use the Steam store to search for a game they want to buy, some limited instructions on how to purchase said game (anything regarding inputting credit card details or anything of the sort was purposefully omitted), and finally the simple process of how to download and install the newly purchased game.

Post-Test Questions

I asked the participant how easy he thought the print user guide was to follow. He said that it was very easy to follow, as he found surprisingly few holes in it considering his personal approach to the test. Since even when he was actively trying to poke holes in the guide he found very few, he thought it was very well done. The next question I asked the participant was how well he thought the process was designed regarding the website itself. He responded that overall he thought it was good, as the process can be figured out rather intuitively.

I then asked the participant if there was anything he thought could be improved on, regarding either the process itself or the guide. The only thing he pointed out was that Steam asks you if you are purchasing a game for yourself or as a gift in two different windows, and the participant found that rather unnecessary, and I am inclined to agree. Lastly, I asked him if he had any final thoughts, to which he responded no.

Results

Considering that the participant was actively attempting to find holes in the guide, there were surprisingly few to be found. However, there were two main comments the participant had regarding potentially missing steps in the print user guide. One was that I should have spent more time at the beginning of the process. Perhaps I should have explained more about how to locate the "Featured" page the guide starts on; in case the user is not brought there by default as I mentioned in the guide. The other was later in the guide, when you are purchasing a game there are a few small, quick windows you need to click through to confirm your action. I failed to properly address all of these in the print user guide, which is something that the participant made sure to highlight.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The results of the usability test indicate that the print user guide does succeed in walking people through the process of finding, buying, and downloading a video game on Steam. That said, the usability test did highlight a few minor issues with the guide, such as an unclear beginning and missing some small steps near the end. It also revealed a small issue with the process itself.