



Context

Slack is a cloud based collaboration tool focused on providing users with a means for communication across several “workspaces”. Specific users are invited to participate in discussion in individual workspaces and conversations are separated into channels within those workspaces. This style of organization requires free floating “groups” that users can add to their dashboard. This design is contrary to the norm of creating multiple accounts across several forums dedicated to different topics.

Nature

This inverse architecture requires users to create a single (depending on preference) account and to associate discussions (or workspaces) to those accounts. However, due to the free nature of the basic accounts, many users are invited to a workspace by email creating ambiguity among the accounts owned by each user.

Framing

Interestingly enough, Slack promotes the idea that users should be the center of their discussions rather than topics. However, I feel that this type of design lends itself to a principle known as work-centered rather than user centered (Lavari, 2006). The designs were not intended to take the characteristics and preferences of an individual user, rather they are considered indirectly through the variations in how they may use the software.

Recommendations

Slack has gained in popularity largely due to its ability to provide solutions in a way that few other software does. With that in mind, redesigning how the architecture of an account is setup, could provide stability for users moving forward. For example, providing each individual user with an account name, linking that with work and personal dashboards and allowing multiple credentials to be associated with that username would simplify organization from the eyes of the user (see reddit.com accounts as an example).

The screenshot shows the Slack login interface. At the top, it says 'Sign in to your workspace'. Below that, it prompts the user to 'Enter your workspace's Slack URL.' There is a text input field containing 'your-workspace-url' and a '.slack.com' domain suggestion. A green 'Continue →' button is below the input field. At the bottom, there is a link: 'Don't know your workspace URL? Find your workspace'.

