Inbox

Product

Inbox is a new application launched by Google on the existing Gmail platform. The motive behind Google Inbox is to provide users with the capability to effectively organize their mails rather than just list them like any other mailing application. Enhanced features in Inbox include ability to snooze messages, group emails into "Bundles”, set reminders, highlights and much more.

Problem

Google Inbox was a Google product aimed to enhance the experience of the established Gmail, yet it received considerably less popularity by the users than any other Google product. We as a team based our research on understanding the reasons behind this surprising failure, the limited usage and rate the application on the website and as a mobile application.

Even as a product launched by Google to replace or add on to the features of Gmail, Inbox had limited or no acknowledgement by users. Our team wanted to conduct usability tests on Google Inbox, to evaluate reasons for the limited usage and rate the application on the website and as a mobile application.

Solution

Our solution to the above problem were a set of recommendations based on several heuristic factors.

In conclusion, our group has made the recommendations based on several heuristic factors.  ~~The users seemed to have some issues with finding and visualizing the usability of the product.~~ With a SUS() score of 59/100 for the Desktop Website and an SUS score of 61.25/100 for Mobile Devices, we conclude that Google Inbox does not perform up to its potential. Our recommendations make the product more intuitive and efficient.

Method

We initiated our study to perform an expert review on the application. Internal Walkthrough in the form of expert review was followed by a Usability Test to study its effectiveness from user-centric design perspective. Our ‘Usability Study Plan’ consisted of an introduction script, informed consent form, facilitator script, background questionnaire, task list, post-task questionnaire and System Usability Scale.

Internal walkthrough

Based on the findings from our internal walkthrough we designed the task list to address the pain points in using the new features as well as testing the efficiency of basic features of a mailing application. As a team, we realized that the basic functions served by Google Inbox were challenging to a new user and had a learning curve. Hence, we decided that we will limit the scope of this study to the usability evaluations of the basic functionalities such as

1. Exploring Google Inbox
2. Opening mails
3. Responding to mails
4. Setting bundles.
5. Setting Reminders

Some of our findings as Experts reviewing the website involved: (with pics)

A general absence of font hierarchy makes the concept of bundles difficult to understand. We found it difficult to understand which is the important content and where to focus

We found that there were more interactions available for convenience of users on smartphones than on desktops

We found that there was no information as to what time the email was received even if it is categorized under Today, Yesterday etc.

The use of “mark done” concept was not clear and confused the user when on click of the icon on the mail clicked just disappeared.

The intent of using the plus button is unclear. The options inside the plus button do not relate to the icon used. Users tend to click back on the plus button to close it but then it turns out that it closes on hover.

Target Audience

Our target audience was people who regularly used emails as a mode of communication. We recruited 10 Participants for usability studies. The participants had a mixture of power users who had been using Google Inbox since its release, and some new users who used other mailing platforms such as Gmail, Yahoo or Hotmail etc.

Usability Study Plan

Our Usability Study consisted of Welcome Script, Informed Consent Form, Task List, Facilitator Script, System Usability Scale.

Testing Strategy: A/B Testing

We wanted to conduct A/B testing to evaluate the desktop version of Google Inbox vs the Mobile App version. From our ethnographic studies and secondary research, we learned that 65% of emails were opened on a smartphone or tablet. However, from our interviews with users, we learnt that they were more comfortable using the desktop website to compose and send mail.

With many issues that we found and having recommendations for them, we concluded the project by calculating an SUS rating of the Desktop version of Google Inbox with 59/100 and the Mobile version with 61.25/100

(Pics on findings and recommendations)