

COMP2213 - Interaction Design

**Reflection 0:** Paperclip brainstorming and products scale classification for user centric design

Daniel Braghis  
ddb1u20@soton.ac.uk  
UoS ID: 32161204  
12/10/2022

During this week's workshop session, we had the goal of exploring the particularities of a user centric design process by putting ourselves in the shoes of the user through three practical exercises followed by a discussion of our observations. Before starting the exercises, we teamed up with a few other colleagues to make the process easier and more collaborative.

The first task was handed as an envelope containing a paper clip and the problem statement asking us to brainstorm possible uses for the paper clip in a 10 minute time frame. Interestingly, our group did not mention using the clip for binding paper until a few ideas were voiced. This is an important observation because it should be taken into consideration during the design process that the user might not have the "obvious" use case of your product in their mind. Including instructions or accounting for that in the design is an important thing to consider in my opinion.

Another finding during the exercise was that towards the end we started giving very absurd ideas like using the paper clip as a weapon. Accounting for users trying to use the product for non-intended or even malicious purposes should indeed be a thought in the back of our minds when designing.

Finally, after the exercise was concluded, we agreed that the best use for the paperclip is actually binding papers like it is intended but that does not mean that it could have uses outside it. For me, this exercise showed how insightful it can be to let a potential user "play" with your product to try to go outside the boundaries of what it is originally intended for.

The next exercise was to place a set of companies on a usability versus enjoyability scale. From the get-go, I noticed that we first started to place companies on the extremes of the scale (on its sides and corners). This indicates to me a common behaviour of humans to exaggerate their feelings about a particular product as we are not as good at placing things "in between" and quantifying their feelings about a product. It is important to take this in consideration when asking for user feedback. Providing labels like "bad", "average", "great" for feedback would be more useful than a 1 to 10 scale for example.

Moreover, at the end our scale had clearly a diagonal distribution indicating that there is a strong correlation between user enjoyability and product usability. Even if with some outliers, we mostly agreed that a usable app should be up on the enjoyability scale even if personally we didn't enjoy much the product. Making sure the product is usable thus is paramount to user enjoyability. Like us, most groups had not placed any unusable products on the top end of the enjoyability scale!

The final exercise was to place those companies on the usefulness scale. Here it was interesting to observe a lot of products that scored high on the enjoyability to be put pretty low on the usefulness scale. I guess this shows that at least for our age group the usefulness of the app is not a large factor for our enjoyment of the product which I suspect is not true for the older generation who are more practical. It is useful to keep this in mind when designing the product, thinking about the target audience and their values when deciding to use the product or not.

These exercises proved very useful in understanding user centric design in ways I have not expected. Observing the processes throughout the workshop proved even more insightful than the results which I have not expected.