

INTRODUCTION

Card Sorting is an exercise or a method in which participants organize items and sometimes categorize them for a facilitator, in a fashion that makes sense to them. It allows the facilitator to understand what a user would expect to see when using their product.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Yoan, 26, married, project Manager from Albania

Simon, 36, single, Art Director from Sweden

Lina, 25, single, Artist from Sweden

METHOD

With items that would be found in my kitchen or in the office kitchen, I wrote down 20 items on 20 different strips of paper and shuffled them.

- Fork
- Cooking oil
- Bowl
- Microwave
- Tea bags
- Coffee filter
- Milk
- Cup
- Dish soap
- Table
- Chair
- Knife
- Spoon
- Mug
- Flour
- Eggs
- Wine

- Blender
- Juicer
- Napkins

After explaining the goal and my adamant nonparticipation, the group teamed together to figure out how to categorize the items. I did not say anything more beyond the kind of items on the strips of paper and that they should work together to organize them into groups.

RESULTS

KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Microwave

Blender

Juicer

DISHES + DETERGENT

Fork

Bowl

Cup

Knife

Spoon

Dish soap

Mug

INGREDIENTS

Wine

Milk

Cooking oil

Eggs

Flour

KITCHEN FURNITURE

Chair

Table

PAPER ITEMS

Coffee filter

Tea bags

Napkins

The rationale behind the organization was primarily functionality, a thought made more interesting by the fact that all participants considered themselves either average or less than average when it came to cooking / grocery shopping experience.

The project manager, who is married and whose wife does the cooking and grocery shopping, held the most authority in this exercise, at least in the context of practicality.

The artists, both single and both shop / cook for themselves, were more concerned with the disproportionate grouping of each item, stating that the balance / distribution of items into categories was extremely “off,” even if the items were in their appropriate categories.

DISCUSSION

They discussed sorting by shape, material, function, and gut feeling.

Yoan mentioned that the propensity in Eastern Europe is to group items by the material out of which they're made whereas the Swedes were more inclined to categorize things by function or by shape.

Lina suggested they group things by where they would be in a kitchen such as “things you would find in a drawer.”

Simon and Yoan interjected with “you could technically put a blender in a drawer if it is big enough.”

They decided that “chair” and “table” belong together, but not readily apparent what other items go with it.

They were quite stumped by dish soap, coffee filter, tea bags, and napkins, but ultimately grouped them all together with some reluctance behind the dish soap.

When they were finished, Yoan asked everyone how they felt about it or if there was something that could be improved.

“I don’t know, man. Feels disproportionate,” Simon quipped.

The lack of even distribution among the groupings bothered Simon, which was unsurprising to me, him being an artist and all.

“Doesn’t matter if one area has too much and the other one doesn’t,” said Yoan. “But if you want to bring more balance then divide the items into groups of importance.”

CONCLUSION

The visually inclined participants (the artists) were overall concerned about the uneven distribution while the project manager maintained that functionality was important, which everyone eventually agreed upon.

All participants agreed that their agreed organization of the items was the most logical grouping anyway and all felt above average in their confidence that they would know what to expect when walking into a kitchen that wasn’t theirs. They maintained their arrangement would have been the same if building a website.