Internet Applications

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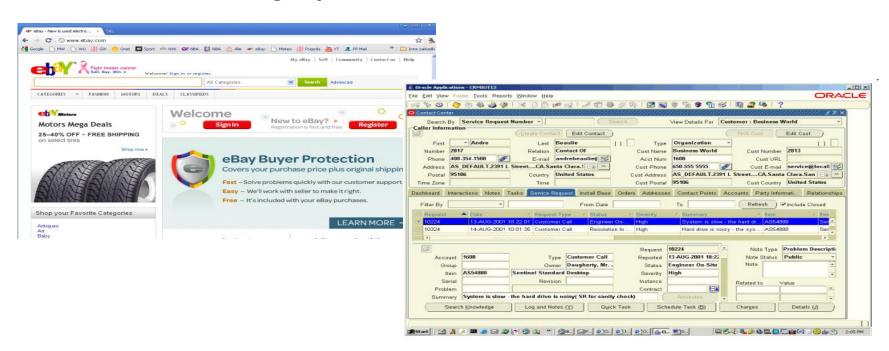
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Best Practices in Web UI Design

- Knowing how to program is not enough to build intuitive and user-friendly Graphical User Interfaces
- Related topics:
 - Information Architecture
 - Usability
- Different approaches:
 - Web Applications
 - Corporate Portals

Desktop App GUI vs. Web App GUI

Same GUI design patterns?



What's Special About Web Applications

Guest users:

- Our Web App is not the only one
- Not trained in how the complete system works
- Give up easily
- Not interested in in-depth exploration of the Web App
- Don't trust the Web App much enough to give away personal information

What it means to Web App designers?

- Support for first-time users
- Trust building
- Clear and intuitive Graphical User Interface

What's Special About Corporate Portals

Trained users:

- Know how the complete system works
- Perform repeatable tasks
- Focused on their work performance

Process large volumes of data:

- Complex Web forms
- Tabular data presentation

What it means to Corporate Portal designers?

- More important to support experienced users (keyboard shortcuts, keyboard navigation, quick access to frequent operations)
- Hard to layout dense page contents
- Need to solve problems not discussed in literature

Where to look for help?

Literature

- Typography, colors
- Navigation
- Selecting interactive form elements
- Error messages

"Industry standards"

- Hints and recommendations developed by vendors to describe how their Web Apps should be build
- Mostly available on thre Internet

Industry Standards for Web Apps

- Available on the Internet:
 - UI Guidelines for CRM WebClient User Interface (SAP)
 - Oracle Browser Look and Feel (BLAF) Guidelines (Oracle)
 - Seagate Web Style Guide(Seagate)
 - Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines (Microsoft)
 - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (W3C)

Typical hints and recommendations (1/2)

- General
 - Page layout
 - Scroll bars
 - Colors
 - Component shapes
 - Typographt
 - Icons
 - Language
- Navigation
 - Navigation regions
 - Menu types
- Tabular data presentation

Typical hints and recommendations (2/2)

Forms

- Form layout
- Labels
- Using and positioning various interactive element types
- Validation

User interaction

- Messages
- Processing status reporting
- Searching
- Dialog boxes
- Wizards
- Keyboard shortcuts
- Accessibility to people with disabilities

Page Layout

- Typically three regions
 - Header (top): system links (eg. Logout), search
 - Navigation (left/right): first level menu, second level menu, optionally extensible/collabsible
 - Work area, with custom toolbar



In the news

After five years in

Main Page Discussion

The Free Encyclopedia

Main page

Contents Featured content the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit

3,771,064 articles in English

Mohammed Abdul Karim

Today's featured article

Nawigacja globalna

- All pages based on the same template
 - Customized templates for page groups allowed

Long Pages, Scroll Bars

- Long pages should be split into sections
 - Section headers
 - Section links on top of the page
- Vertical scroll bars allowed if contents can't fit in wor area
- Horizontal scroll bars forbidden
 - Exception: image gallery
 - How about tables?

GUI Colors (1/2)

- 216 "Web Safe" colors? Not any more!
- Colors should be context-related
- Example: Oracle BLAF
 - White-blue color palette with beige elements
 - According to Oracle: clean, professional, and business like look that can convey messages such as: trust, security, cleanliness, precision, conservative, technology, comfort, and warmth





GUI Colors (2/2)

- Four groups of colors
 - Basic
 - In BLAF: blues
 - In general: strong, saturated colors, used for the key elements of GUI, eg. tab bar
 - Accents
 - ▶ In BLAF: beiges
 - In general: neutral colors, complementary to basic colors, used eg. for table background, buttons
 - Strong accents
 - ▶ In BLAF: greys
 - In general: adding depth, used for 3D shading
 - Others (in BLAF: white for page background, brown/orange for links, red - for error mesages)



Element Shapes

- ▶ In BLAF: rectangular and rounded elements
 - rounded shapes are quite effective in portraying psychological responses like connection, community, and comfort

a rectangular shape can evoke responses such as order,

logic, and security



Typography (1/2)

- Sans-Serif typeface preferred to convey cleanliness, and modernity, easier to read on low-resolution screens
- If Serif typeface is needed, then Georgia Font should be preferred as the best readable on low-resolution screens (up to 10 pt)
- The most popular San-Serif typeface on the Internet is Verdana
 - Readable even for 8-10 pt
 - Uppercase "I" is Serif!

I can read Verdana!

- Verdana alternatives:
 - Tahoma
 - Lucida
 - Arial (narrower, condenses the text, but cleanliness is compromised)

Typography (2/2)

- Text color, background color
 - Contrast is the priority
 - Reversed contrast is worse (eg. white text on black background is 40% less readable than white text on black background)
- Specify font size in points
 - Pixel-size problems with IE; "small", "medium" etc. do not work properly across browsers
- Emphasize using bold
 - Don't underline will be confused with links
 - Don't capitalize more difficult to read
- When presenting numbers, use group separators (groups of 3 digits)

CAPITALIZE

- Text adjustment: left-side is better than both-side, especially for narrow columns
 - Large, nonuniform spacing between words

Icons

- Dont' overload
- Can replace text labels only for navigation elements
- Are convenient shortcuts for advanced users, but may be difficult to understand for beginners

Language

- Should be understandable to users, but avoid techspeak
- Consistent grammar and style form across the Web App
- Use "please" only if action is inconvenient to a user

Products > Games > Console

Navigation Regions

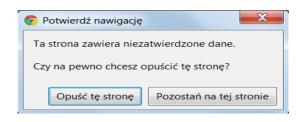
- Should describe user's current location eg. with bread crumbs
- Global, local and context navigation regions



- Popup menus can be used for global and local navigation
- An idea: use home page as the starting page for a user
 - Include the most frequently used tools, liks, reports in the home page

Navigation: Uncommitted Changes

- Detect if there are uncommitted changes on the page being left by a user
- Display a 3-option message box:
 - Commit and continue navigation
 - Discard and continue navigation
 - Cancel navigation
- How to implement:
 - Manually: JavaScript, window.onbeforeunload event
 - Framework
 - In Oracle ADF: uncommittedDataWarning (on/off) in af:document tag



Menu Styles (1/2)

- Horizontal menu
 - Space efficient (+)
 - Readable (+)
 - Limited number of items (max 8-10) (-)
 - Item labels mus be short (-)
- Horizontal menu with tabbed submenus
 - Advantages of horizontal menu (+)
 - Clear relationship between menu items and submenu items (+)
 - Disadvantages of horizontal menu (-)
 - 2 menu levels only (-)
 - Wastes horizontal space (-)
 - ▶ Tabs take more space than regular links (-)

Menu Styles(2/2)

Vertical side menu

- Accomodates lots of items, easy to scale (+)
- ▶ Takes lot of space (-)

Cascading menu

- Saves space (+)
- Desktop application experience (+)
- Accomodates lots of items (+)
- Submenu items invisible until menu item is expanded (-)
- Does not show user's current location (-)
- Side-expandible menus not appreciated by users (-)

Tables: Two Modes

- Two modes of operation:
 - Data presentation
 - Data modification
- The same columns displayed in both modes
 - Additional row selector when in data modification mode
- Additional toolbar when in data modification mode
 - To operate on single rows
 - Options to operate on the whole table should be included in the main toolbar, visible in both modes

General Table Remarks

- Keep the number of columns minimal
- Avoid horizontal scroll bars
 - Make it difficult to use the Web Ap
 - Sometimes cannot be avoided
- Table header required
 - Accessibility requirements
- Most important columns on the left
- Banding and/or gridding improve readibility
 - For small and narow tables gridding is sufficient
 - Vertical gridding not always necessary, eg. in data modification mode only

Navigation and Table Actions

- Table toolbar must have more than one button (unles multiselection table)
- Avoid redundancy between table toolbar and row icons
- Row selection should be disabled only if none of toolbar actions is avaliable for a user
- If a table has an action column, the column should be the first one

Table Row Selection

- no-select
- single-select
- multiple-select
 - Include also SelectAll, DeselectAll
 - Only when necessary, can lead to errors

Form Layout

- Grid-based, 1- or 2-column
- Field sizing: 2 approaches
 - Same length for all the fields
 - Field length to match expected content size



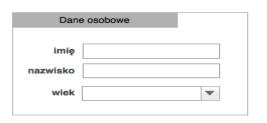
Number fields must always be long enough to accommodate the complete contents!

Form Modes of Operation

- 2 modes: presentation and modification
- In modification mode all read-only fields implemented as Read-Only Elements
- Date pickers and drop down lists available in modification mode only
- Mandatory fields marked with "*" and/or different background color
- If a field holds a web link, the link should work in presentation mode only
- Adjustment: in presentation mode: to the left, in modification mode: numbers to the right, other values to the left
- In presentation mode fields may be concatenated

Form Item Grouping

- Form elements can be grouped
- Each group has a label
- ▶ Each group has max. 8 rows
- ▶ Each group has min. 1 element
 - For 1 element only use group label instead of element label
- Two-column groups, horizontally adjusted
- Page navigation must be consistent with element grouping



Nested Elements

- Nested elements provide further details for an element
- Should be located closer to their master element even if it's against your spacing rules
- Nested elements for a checkbox should be disabled if the checkbox is off

imię		imię	
nazwisko		nazwisko	
wiek	▼	wiek	~
~	zatrudniony		zatrudniony
	firma		firma
	płaca		płaca

Labels

- Unambiguous, unsuprising, consistent with user experience (eg. "Help", "Contact")
- Don't use abbreviations
 - Use a popup hirt if lahal doesn't fit



- Consistent within the Web App:
 - Character case, visual style (font style, size, color, etc.), grammar (verbs, nouns, questions)

Label Placement and Adjustment

Above

Users save 50% of time to understand the form; disadvantage: takes much space

Left

- Adjust to the right to save space, difficult to read
- Adjust to the left: easier to read, good for novice users

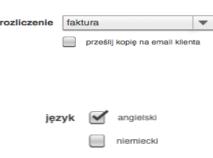
imię nazwisko wiek

Inside

Space efficient, must be redisplayed when field is cleared

Checkboxes

- Can have two types of "labels": label and checkbox text
- Labels are not used if checkbox is connected to another element
- For checkbox groups only the first checkbox has a label
- Adjusted to the left



Radio Buttons

- Always grouped, usually vertical, adjusted like checkboxes
 - If connected to another element, then displayed under the element, with no label, adjusted to the left
- Group label
- Usually 2-5 radio buttons in a group, for more options use lists

Radio Buttons vs. Checkboxes

Checkbox vs. two radio buttons?

- If deselected value is not self-evident, then use radio buttons (eg. portrait/landscape)
- If both options are equally important, then use radio buttons (eg. female/male)

Checkbox group vs. radio group

- If selection of 0, 1 or more options, then use checkbox group
- If selection of 1 or more options, then use checkbox group and display an error message if none selected

Drop down lists

- Sorted alphabetically unless business logic requires another type of ordering (eg. process states)
- LOV (list of values) if too many options for a dropdown list

lista typów produktów

Typ 1

Typ 2 Typ 3

- LOV displayed by pressing a button/icon or when validating a text field

 Typ produktu Text
- LOV displayed as modal dialog boxes, resizable by a user

Buttons (1/3)

- Icon buttons should only be used for generic actions
 - Provide a tooltip
- Button location is dependent on its action:
 - Work area toolbar
 - Table toolbar
 - Table first column
 - Below form element group
 - At form element
- Adjustment:
 - Generally to the left
 - Exceptions: some generic toolbars eg. Print, Help

Buttons (2/3)

Active/inactive:

- If a user is not allowed to invoke an operation, the button should not be displayed at all
- If an operation is not available at the moment and it is obvious why, the button should be displayed but inactive
- If an operation is not available at the moment and it is not clear why, the button should be displayed, should be active, and it should display an explanation message when pressed

Buttons (3/3)

- Buttons in dialog boxes:
 - Text only (no icons)
 - Adjusted to the left or centered
 - Confirmation button should be the first on the left

- ▶ Microsoft OK Cancel
 - "use this order (from left to right): OK, Cancel, and Apply"
- ► Apple Cancel OK
 - "the action button in the bottom-right corner of the alert"

Button or Link?

- Link:
 - Navigate to details
 - Can contain the object's name/id
- Button:
 - Invoke an operation or navigate to an operation
 - Generic name



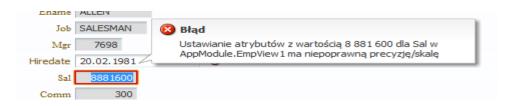
Button for the "typical" action, link for an "emergency" action

Validation

- Erros should be displayed next to the element
 - A message box with a list of all validation errors is not a good idea
- On-line field validation
- If field's size is limited, the limit should be displayed and adjusted when typing
- Validation errors must be reported immediately, erroneous fields should be marked

Validation Error Messages

- Red icon in a message
- Error messages should be consistent
- An error message must provide three types of information:
 - Whet error?
 - Where?
 - What next?

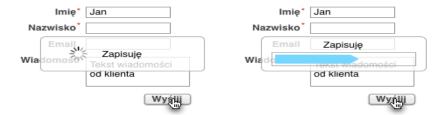


Messages

- Location:
 - Message Bar Message Area (between tooolbar and work area)
 - Not for progress messages
 - table ("no data")
 - dialog boxes
- Four types of icons
 - Error, warning, information, confirmation
- Use proper words and interpunction eg.
 - Don't use "please"
 - Use "." if a question goes next
 - Don't use "!", don't capitalize

Progress Reporting

- For 1+ second actions (mostly asynchronous)
- Progress bar or spinning circle to cheat on time flowe
 - Use one or another, not both
 - Progress bar should make one pass only



Search Form

- Typically 4 rows for initial selection criteria (attribute, operator, value, add/remove condition)
- Natural language operators selected from list
- Special cases:
 - "between" has two fields
 - "is empty" has no fields
- Results displayed on the same page, below the search form
- Full-text searching problems





Dialog Boxes

- Use dialog boxes for:
 - Informational messages
 - Confirming critical actions
 - Personalize Web App
 - Provida additional data
- Do not navigate from a dialog box
 - Close dialog box only
 - Exception: to display help window
- Size depends on the contents
 - Vertical scrollbar allowed
- Buttons centered

Pop-up Windows

- Should be expected by a user
- Should extend the contents of the main window
- A user must know how to close the pop-up window
- One pop-up window at a time

Wizards

- For complex, rarely used processes that can be split into a number of steps
- Always display a progress bar (road map)

Keyboard Shortcuts

- Don't override popular web browser shortcuts
 - May hurt usability
- Shortcut types
 - Tab and Shift-Tab for navigation
 - Accelerators and hot keys for invoking actions bypassing menu and navigation
 - Access keys to move focus on an element
 - Enter to invoke an action on the focused element
- When entering a page, focus on the first element automatically

Colors

- 5-10% users have problems with color perception
- Verify what your pages look like to people with color perception problems
- Vischeck (http://vischeck.com/vischeck/vischeckURL.php)
 - Simulate: deuteranope, protanope, tritanope

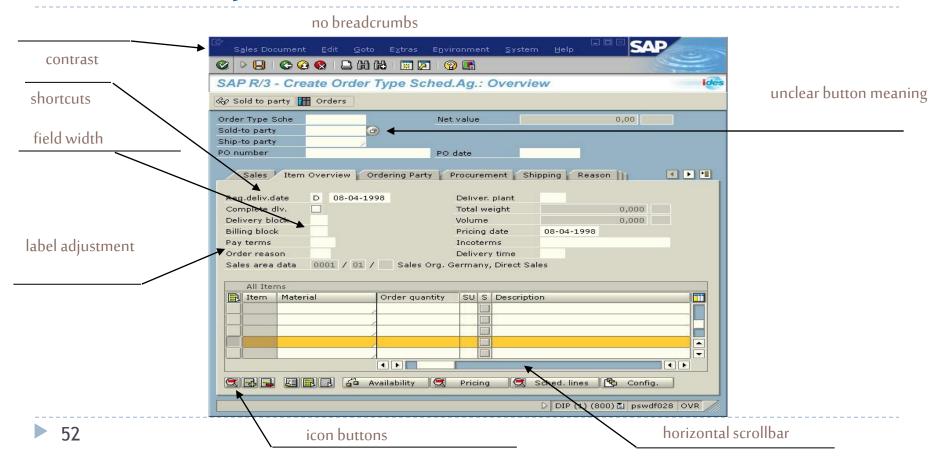


- Colorblind Web Page Filter (http://colorfilter.wickline.org)
 - Simulate: protanope, deuteranope, tritanope, trichromatism, protanomaly, deuteranomaly, tritanomaly, achromatopsy

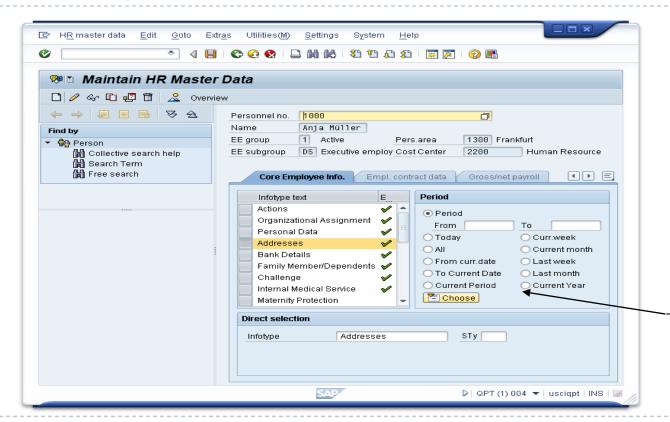
Additional Hints

- Alternate text for non-textual contents
- Separate foreground from background
- Keyboard accesibility for all operations
- Help in navigation
- Compatibility with web browser accessibility settings

Case Study: SAP R/3

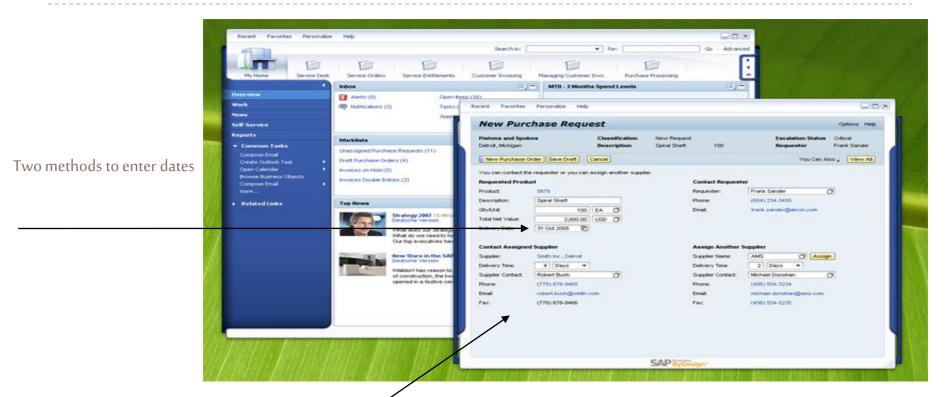


Case Study: SAP R/3



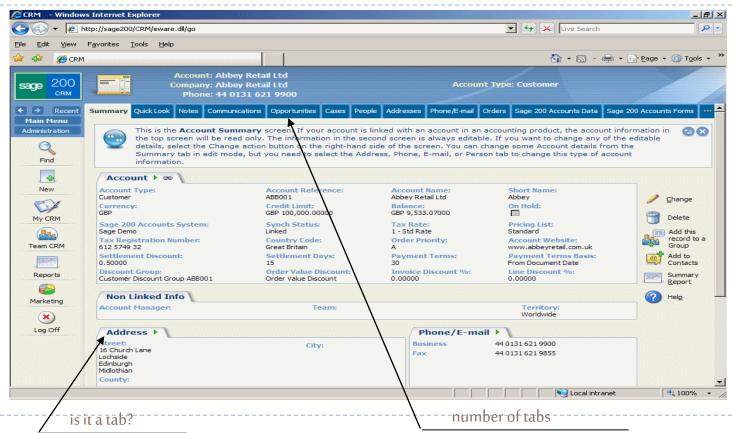
size and adjustment of radio group

Case Study: SAP R/3

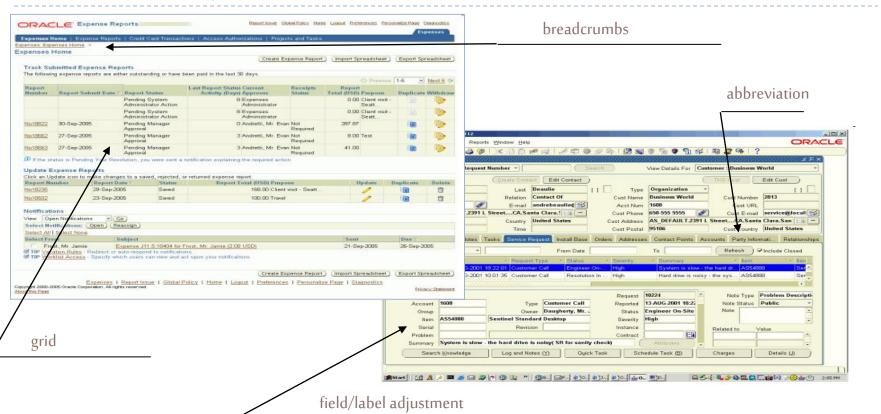


Form section layout

Case Study: SAGE 200 CRM



Case Study: Oracle eBS 11i



Case Study: Oracle eBS 12

