Research Methods

Surveys
Focus Groups
Usability Testing
Individual Interviews
Direct Observation
User-Centered Design

Involve Users in the design process.
User needs and goals

User interviews
Usability testing
Review prototypes
Iterative design
Benefits of including users

Manage expectations
  • Reduce surprises
  • Consistent training
  • Better communication

Ownership
  • Actively involved users will help accept limitations or issues
Types of users

Primary Users – interact with an interface to do a task
  Subject Matter Experts
  Customers

Stakeholders – anyone with a vested interest in the system
  Executive sponsors
  Managers
  Testers
  Process owners
  Etc.
User Analysis

You need to identify real people who will (at least potentially) use your system.

What types of users are there?

Different types of users will have different perspectives of the system.

  “everyone” is not a user
  “the designer” is not a good user
  “the VP” is rarely the user
Why you can’t be a objective user

You almost certainly aren’t typical
   You’re too technically savvy

You don’t care (just) about the task

You are creating the design model, to you cannot test if the system image directs the user to the correct mental model
Task Analysis

What tasks will the system accomplish?

Different user groups will compete different tasks.
Task Analysis

A detailed description of a complete job that specific users want to accomplish

*What* the user needs to do, not *how* it is done.

Include the details:
- Are there sub tasks, or dependencies
- Specify inputs/outputs

Different user groups will compete different tasks
Tasks define user needs

Tasks are undertaken by users

Define objective goals, for system design.

Defines use cases for user testing.
represent who actually uses the system
set goals for system functionality
basis for system design
“Let’s add this cool new feature!!!”
“Why? Which task does it support?”
basis for comparative evaluation of different design alternatives
basis for user testing
Sample Task - Poor

The user selects the stories that will be in the “news” section of the website.
Sample Task - Better

The user views a collection of stories. The user selects the stories that will be in the “news” section of the website. The user has the ability to edit the list including ordering, and adding/removing incorrect stories.
Rita Neus, the on-line production coordinator for the paper sits down at 1:30 AM before going home for the night, and

Selects the stories stokeef.xy, stguns.xy, stvet.xy, stwres.xy, stcomp.sy (in that order) for the “news” section of the website.

She decides that stvet.xy should be the lead story
She realizes that stwres.xy is actually a sports story and moves it to that department.