



Usability Lab Tests

Contents



- I. Introduction
- II. Materials
- III. Preparation
- IV. Instructions
- V. Remarks, Tips, Limitations
- VI. References

Introduction

Usability lab test is a qualitative research method and a part of the user-centered design process

Its function is to observe and measure how effective a product is to the users or how people understand the features of an interface with a purpose to make it more usable.

It is done in the lab by watching or recording the users interact with the product. For that the lab is divided into 2 rooms separated by a two way mirror. Participants and observers sit in one of the rooms each, not in the same. The participants get a list of things to do, which are being observed.

Design Phases





Materials

- ▶ Video recorder
- ▶ Audio Recorder
- ▶ One way mirror
- ▶ Pens & Paper
- ▶ Computer
- ▶ Compensator

Preparation

- To identify the tasks that are to be tested. The tasks are created from the user goals, that is, the actionable and realistic things that every user must be able to achieve on the website/application
- Create the scenarios for each task for the participants
- Figure out the solution for each scenario so there is a benchmark for what success looks like
- Identification of who the participants will be
- Identification of what compensation to offer them
- Recruit the participants
- Test the product internally to identify issues that may come up during the real test

Instructions

1. Welcome the test participants and inform them about the recording. Remind them that they are not the ones being tested but the product.
2. Make the participants understand the task at hand.
3. The observes pay attention to what the participants are doing.
4. Ask the participants questions to follow-up and know why they took certain steps, it is important to pay attention to their non-verbal cues too, because some people may say one thing while doing another
5. Appreciate and thank the participants, offer compensations if any.
6. The facilitator sums up and combines failures and successes for each task by the different participants.
7. Identify the root causes of the failures and the facilitator can also give suggestions to fix the identified issues.



Remarks

- ▶ For existing products, usability lab testing is a good way to know what is really working and what is not.
- ▶ For new products, usability lab tests are a great method to identify the feedback of customers very early which will save a lot of back and forth and money.
- ▶ It is also a way to know the ideas that other people have that the internal team does not have

Tips

- ▶ It is very important for the participants to remember that it is the product being tested and not them
- ▶ As a facilitator, try not to project your ways of doing things on the participants, and watch yourself to ensure to are not giving cues
- ▶ Focus on the behaviour of participants rather than what they say



Limitations

- ▶ Always leave room for the fact that the number of people in the lab test are not your entire customers
- ▶ The environment might make the participants change their behavior to please the facilitator

References

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