Conducting usability research with a team of one

By Christine Kowalski
Proof positive that you can get the necessary research done...
Spring 2007 – Pre-Redesign Usability Research

- Had a TOTAL “thank you for your time” budget of $150 dollars for one focus group, dozens of cards sorts and of usability tests, and an online web survey that was sent to over 27,000 people

- Had 3 students help with the “testing and analysis” phase of the project
Fall 2008 – Post-Redesign Usability Research

- Had a TOTAL “thank you for your time” budget of $100 dollars for one focus group, 25 usability tests, and an online web survey that was sent to over 10,000 people

- No students helping with the “testing and analysis” phase of the project, and only other “web team” co-worker resigned in April 2008
Hurdle #1 - “I don’t have enough time during the day”

How to overcome it

- Test end-users on your lunch break
- Evaluate participants before or after work
- Arrange to do the usability test on the weekends
- Have your student intern perform the evaluations
- Ask a user to take a “5-Second Test”
Helpful Hint: More people tend to be available on campus for focus group and usability testing at lunchtime. How many people would pass up a free lunch?
Hurdle #2 - “I don’t have enough manpower”

How to overcome it

- Get web stat collection tools to do the work for you
- Use a web cam to capture usability tests
- Test fewer participants: “5 users is all you need”
- Collect the data over a longer time-frame
Helpful Hint: You can do the testing yourself – just have the patience to spread the data collection out over a longer period of time.
Hurdle #3 -
“‘I don’t have a budget’

How to overcome it

- Use free tools to help you collect web site data
- Ask your Admissions department, Alumni Association, and fundraising departments for freebies they might be trying to get rid of
- Use pen/paper instead of renting video equipment
- Ask people to volunteer their time [don’t mention reimbursement]
Helpful Hint: No matter which web site you are testing, see what you can get for free from the fundraising departments to give away to the participants – be resourceful!
Hurdle #4 - “I don’t have buy-in from my supervisor”

How to overcome it

- Show how usability testing is a not big production
- Illustrate the results/statistics of preliminary tests
- Ask your design team to watch a usability test
- Hold a post-focus group viewing party
- Test your paper prototypes early on
Helpful Hint: Identify which groups would benefit the most from your website getting a lot of hits. Have them champion your cause.
Crazy Egg --
http://crazyegg.com/

A free web analytics tool that has three different ways to view your data:

- **Overlay** - get the details on each individual element
- **List** - view a full summary of raw click data
- **Heat Map** - see what's hot and what's not
Crazy Egg - Confetti
Crazy Egg - Heat Map
Google Analytics --
http://www.google.com/analytics/

A free web analytics tool that shows how visitors actually interact with your site

- Users can see a statistical output of graphs and charts of data, and make informed site design improvements

- Unique feature - a clickable world map, where you can see what regions, countries, states and cities your users are from.
Google Analytics - Map

Country/Territory Detail:
India

Aug 17, 2008 - Sep 16, 2008

This country/territory sent 223 visits via 29 cities

Site Usage

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<th>City</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Pages/Visit</th>
<th>Avg. Time on Site</th>
<th>% New Visits</th>
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Usability Research References and Additional Resources

As part of the “Conducting Usability Research with a Team of One” poster presented by Christine Kowalski

Articles and Interviews

Five Techniques for Getting Buy-In for Usability Testing
Christine Perfetti discusses the 5 best techniques for convincing management and key stakeholders of the benefits of incorporating usability testing into the formal design process.

5-Second Tests: Measuring Your Site's Content Pages
Christine Perfetti discusses how a simple usability testing technique can help design teams quickly measure how a content page performs with users.

Streamlining Usability Testing by Avoiding the Lab [Jared Spool]
http://www.uie.com/articles/streamlining_usability/
The usability lab, with its fancy cameras, one-way mirrors, and comfortable observation suites, is often considered a can't-do-without necessity for conducting serious usability tests. Even those who feel it's not required will jump at the chance to use a lab when available. However, while studying successful projects over the years, we've found that usability testing can often be more effective when the team eliminates the lab from the process.

Web tools

Crazy Egg -- http://crazyegg.com/

Google Analytics -- http://www.google.com/analytics/

Survey Monkey -- http://www.surveymonkey.com/

Survey Gizmo -- http://www.surveygizmo.com/

Reports

“Usability Return on Investment” by the Nielsen Norman Group
http://www.nngroup.com/reports/roi/

“230 Tips and Tricks for Better Usability Testing” by the Nielsen Norman Group
http://www.nngroup.com/reports/tips/usertest/

“233 Tips and Tricks for Recruiting Users as Participants in Usability Studies” by the Nielsen Norman Group http://www.nngroup.com/reports/tips/recruiting/