

Evaluation Without Users

The objective of this assignment is for you practice a cognitive walkthrough, a method of evaluating an interface that does not involve users. You will also gain experience in producing constructive criticism of an interface.

Assignment Steps

Perform a cognitive walkthrough on the interface that you handed-in for the paper prototype assignment.

1. Assign the following roles out to different team members:

- a. User
- b. Computer
- c. Observers

2. Develop specific versions of each of the three tasks that were part of the paper prototype assignment.

Be very specific. Have all the details present. For example, if the interface works with books, pick a specific book. Preferably, have a physical book available for use during the cognitive walkthrough.

3. Develop the description of a specific user persona.

Include enough information that the person in the role of user can try to act like that user. This will include specific demographics like name, age, gender, and educational background. It should also include background about the specific user that relates to the use of the interface. This may include knowledge of other software, level of expertise relative to the task, or attitude about using the interface.

4. Have the person in the role of user attempt to use the interface to accomplish each of the specific tasks.

The person in the role of the user is to pretend that he or she is the person described in the persona. He or she only has the knowledge of the person from the description. The person in this role may know how to get the interface to complete the task, but believe that the user being imitated does not. If this is the case, the person in the role of the user should not use his or her knowledge of the interface, but rather fail at completing the task.

Have the person in the role of computer make changes to the interface as a response to the user's actions. The person in this role is only allowed to act as the computer. He or she should not talk with the user during the user's attempt to complete the task.

Have the observers record both how the user attempts to perform the task and any problems that the user encounters during the attempts. Be specific in what is recorded. You will have the opportunity to generalize during your analysis.

5. As a team, analyze the results of the cognitive walkthrough.

The analysis should include a description of what problems were encountered and some explanation of why the problem was encountered.

For example, the user was not able to find the icon to save the data. We believe this is because the image chosen for that icon was not an image that the user would have seen before.

The person in the role of the user should include comments of what he or she believed the user was thinking. For example, if he or she believed that the user would be confused at some point, note this as an issue that needs to be analyzed.

Deliverables

Note the order of the deliverables is the opposite of the order of producing the deliverables. It is very common in presenting your work, that you should present your conclusions first, and how you came to them second.

There are two deliverables for this assignment:

1. List of recommendations on how the interface should be modified.
2. List of observations from cognitive walkthrough.

List of Recommendations

For each recommendation, describe the problem and how the recommendation it fixes. Be constructive. The recommendations should be able to be implemented and described in a respectful manner. Also, relate each recommendation to some observation. Be explicit. Site the number of the observation(s) that relate to recommended change.

List of Observations from the Cognitive Walkthrough

First, describe the persona that team member was “playing” for the purposes of cognitive walkthrough.

Second, note observations during the cognitive walkthrough. Number each observation explicitly. Describe the problem that caused you to note this as an observation. If possible and relevant, describe where in the process of completing the task that the problem occurred. Also, describe what part(s) of interface were involved in the problem.