

Discussion Slides

9/22/2009

User Interface Design

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Deeper ●

- What would make contexts, objects and actions seem familiar to users?

If the contexts contained the same objects as other processes with which they were already familiar.

If object representations were reminiscent (in type and appearance) of the domain objects they were already familiar.

If the available actions paralleled (in function and name) those with which they were already familiar.

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- With what should icons, actions, navigation, positions, style and grammar be consistent?

They should be absolutely be consistent within a particular application.

Where possible, they should be consistent between all of the applications used by those people.

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- What would make the objects and associated actions intuitive?

If the objects were the ones that the users expected to see, and the actions were the ones the users wanted to take.

- How can we make it clear what actions are available?

Action bars and menus make it easy to see what operations are available.

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- What does it mean to say “the meaning of presented” information is obvious?

It is obvious what the presented displays represent (e.g. these are your grades along with the class high, low and mean).

- How can we make this obvious?

Where there are already traditional formats, use them.

Label each presented block of information.

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- Why should we group related functions?

Because users will expect related operations (e.g. forwards and backwards) to be near one another.

Grouping them will enable the user to do less mental work to understand the displays and options that are being presented.

- Give a common example of GUI displays that violate this principle?

Hypertext links in the middle of content.

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- Why is it important to place similar elements in similar positions on every screen?

So the user can get used to this arrangement:

be able to understand data and find desired content/controls more easily.

spend less time looking for desired information.

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- Why is it recommended to use lots of white space in a display?

Packing too much information in too small a place is confusing, and makes it more difficult to find and read the desired information.

White space is a natural visual organizer, creating distinct clusters.

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- What would be a situation where it would make sense to display additional information in a new window?

When the information is different from the information currently on the screen (e.g. going from a class roster to the grades for one student).

- What would be a situation where a new window would be wrong?

Successive pages in a scrollable list.

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Deeper 🟡

- What is the essence of inconvenience?

Not giving me what I want.

Making me search to find what I want.

Making me take many steps to get what I want.

- What is the essence of convenience?

Offer me what I want, when I want it.

Asking me the bare minimum number of questions before giving it to me.

Ultimately, it is anticipating the user's needs.

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- Is there a conflict between convenience and not forcing a user down a path?

Often, because one way to optimize convenience is to offer the user a simple path that leads straight to his/hir goal.

- How can we provide convenience without forcing the user down a path?

Offer them a simple path, but also give them the ability to back up or jump out at any time.

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Deeper 🟢

- What would be an example of a non-meaningful/non-helpful error message?

Error - aborting.

- What makes a message meaningful?

Explaining what the underlying problem is.

- What makes a message helpful?

Giving you enough information to enable you to fix the problem.

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- How might expert and novice modes be different?

Fewer confirmations

Less verbose commentary

One page forms rather than multi-screen wizard dialogs

More information on a single screen

Short-cuts, or even command line interfaces

What operations you are offered

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- What is wrong with defining new widgets, or new behavior for old widgets?

Unfamiliarity – people will not know how to use them.

Inconsistency – people will have difficulty moving between yours and other applications.

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- Why would we combine multiple implementation objects into a single user visible object?

We might choose segregate data into distinct implementation classes for modularity, code re-use or a variety of issues that have little to do with the user's world view.

A student might reasonably view syllabus, instructor information and grades as all being part of a course.

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- What do we mean by viewing data in the context of different relationships?

A student might want to see their grades with one column per assignment.

An instructor might want to view grades for an assignment, with one column per student.

A student might want to see their scores relative to a per-assignment distribution.

An instructor might want to compare the score distributions for different assignments.

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