

Motivation for Writing the Paper: *Designing Quick & Dirty Applications for Mobiles: Making the Case for the Utility of HCI Principles*

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This paper discusses the author's interest in proving that it matters whether someone builds a new application using HCI principles. This is an important issue to discuss because many HCI professionals and researchers think that the conclusion is obvious i.e. that of course it matters and that we should build an application with an end user in mind and then test it with a subset of said users. However, most application developers disagree and actually build their applications using a 'field of dreams approach' i.e. if I build it, they will come. This issue/disagreement has become especially important to discuss given the advent of mobile applications for the i.phone and other quickly programmed applications.

Keywords: usability, evaluation, mobile applications

1. Motivation for Writing a Paper

I am told time and time again by HCI specialists that the utility of what they do and its worthiness is obvious. I am then told by companies and programmers with whom I work that it is a useless waste of time as the programmers know how to build the application and can undertake functional testing. Basically HCI for companies and programmers = extra cost for no extra benefit.

The paper is a basic investigation into whether or not both stances are true in order that I can prove both of them wrong i.e.:

HCI Professionals: yes, you do have to explain the worthiness and the ease of applying HCI principles.

Programmers: yes, it is worthwhile applying HCI principles as most of the time your customers/users will be left crying in frustration at your difficult to use but functionally perfect application.

2. Motivation for the Contents of the Paper

The paper I presented at ITI 2009, *Designing Quick & Dirty Applications for Mobiles: Making the Case for the Utility of HCI Principles* is a good example of what I mean. It is not an unfamiliar situation for HCI practitioners to be asked to justify the costs of usability testing and of adhering to HCI design principles when many applications have been built that did not. Our contention is that not adhering to them often comes with a cost and that is that our applications might have: worked better, not failed and have been more user friendly if they had. The hypothesis of the paper is therefore that not adhering to basic HCI design principles would have an important impact on the user experience of a throw away application.

3. Conclusions

If you design an application without adhering to HCI principles, then people will try to use it, but give up using it very quickly. This will be due to: frustration (it took too long to do

X), irritation (why do I have to press that button so many times?) and the time it takes to learn (e.g. do I have to learn all those steps in order to access my email?). In my other evaluation studies I have found that if a user using a mobile application can't do something in under 30 seconds, then they won't try to do it again. With PC and other applications users are much more generous and will give the system up to a minute and a half. Most programmers test their application on a PC. The paper therefore concludes that basic HCI principles are more, not less important in this arena and that HCI professionals still need to get the message out there that HCI design and testing is easy to do and cheap.

ITI 2009 was the first conference that I expressed this idea to after many years as a frustrated professional hoping that someone else would write this paper. This was so that I could then reference said paper as proof of the utility of applying HCI principles to design. I hope that by including the paper in this issue of CIT, this will be the first journal that this idea is proved in and that it will help disseminate the concept further and hopefully others will conduct larger and more in-depth studies.

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LYNNE BAILLIE, is a Reader and Director of the Multimodal Interaction Group at Glasgow Caledonian University, UK. She first attended ITI in 2002 and has been back four times since this initial visit. Once she even drove from Vienna all the way there (this was before the motorway was built), such was her enthusiasm to attend! She has published over 50 peer-reviewed scientific papers in the areas of Human Computer Interaction (HCI), pervasive computing, mobile and home environments. She believes that the reason that she returns to the ITI conference is that the people who attend have open minds and hearts and that this is a very safe and positive environment in which to discuss her group's latest research.
