MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Candice Welhausen
CC: Dr. Derek Ross, Dr. Chad Wickman
FROM: Brandi Jean Jones
DATE: February 16, 2020
SUBJECT: Usability Testing Report Package – Meta-Analysis (CLA Graduate
Assistantship)

This memorandum, for the attention of my Masters of Technical and Professional Communication (MTPC) graduate committee, is to detail and evaluate my completion of a usability testing report package for my graduate assistantship with Auburn University's College of Liberal Arts' (CLA) Office of Communication and Marketing.

This memorandum will detail the background of the project, the overall goal and execution of the project, and the rhetorical choices that I made as a technical and professional communicator to best serve the needs of my client.

Keywords: user testing, user research, user experience, website design

Background of Project

This usability testing report package was completed collaboratively with a team member in my graduate assistantship with CLA's Office of Communication and Marketing, in Fall 2019.

The project consisted of conducting approximately 150 user research tests (card sorting activities and participant interviews) with students across Auburn University's campus to better understand how real-life site users interact with CLA's website. Data and insights discovered from these user research tests were used as the foundation of CLA's large-scale website redesign project, which began in the Fall of 2019.

This usability testing report package was compiled to deliver to CLA department heads and key stakeholders, informing them of how their respective departments fared during user research testing. Additionally, this package contains general and specific observations from the testing, and findings from participant interviews. It also offers recommendations for overall improvement of each site, and mockups of a redesigned navigation bar for each site.

My role in this project consisted of:

- assisting my team member in creating all documentation (pre-test surveys, testing scripts, post-test surveys) for the user testing
- planning and executing the user testing sessions throughout Auburn's campus (Ralph Brown Draughon Library, Student Center, LUCIA Lab, and the College of Liberal Arts' Office of Communication and Marketing)
- conducting user sessions with participants, recording data and analyzing data afterward

- presenting project and data results to CLA stakeholders through presentations and the distribution of the usability testing report package

Audience of Project

The primary audiences of the project were the Web Development and Strategy team at Auburn University's College of Liberal Arts (for review and approval before distribution), and CLA department heads and stakeholders for the 13 departments tested.

Goal and Execution

The goal of this project was to support CLA's Web Development and Strategy team by providing data pulled from user research testing that could aid with their website redesign of all CLA departments.

To complete this project, we familiarized ourselves with the best practices surrounding the planning, preparation, and implementation of usability tests. We used Barnim's 2010 "Usability Testing Essentials: Ready, Set...Test!" as a guide, along with consulting Nielsen Norman Group's methods for Usability Testing 101 (World Leaders in Research-Based User Experience). We focused special care in ensuring our instructions for participants were clear and remained consistent across every test. Additionally, we followed Buley's "Tips and Tricks for Guerilla User Research," by following a pre-written script and explicitly telling our participants why we were completing research, what was required during the test, and an approximate time length for each testing session (Buley, 2013).

We then analyzed the data by searching for trends and common themes and sorting the information in Microsoft Excel. Trends and common themes were noted and added to the usability testing report package for review of CLA stakeholders.

Finally, based on the results of the user research testing, we created mockups using Adobe XD to help our stakeholders visualize how the top navigation bars on the redesigned sites could look.

Participant Interviews

To illustrate the necessity for a full CLA site redesign, we used a pathos-based rhetorical strategy in the usability testing report package by providing quotes and testimonies from participants. One such example included the following quote from a participant testing the Department of Music's website:

> In regards to Handbooks being available on the website, Participate 077 said, *"Why do these need to be on the website? They are using up space. Why not email this information to the people that need it?"*

Conclusion of Project

This usability testing report package was separated into single departmental memos and distributed to respective CLA stakeholders in November of 2019. These departmental memos introduced the web redesign process to each stakeholder and showcased the outcomes of the user testing project on their department.

Contact

If you have any questions or comments regarding this usability testing report package, please contact me at bjj0011@auburn.edu.

References

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