CITES USABILITY
CONSULTING SERVICE
WHAT IS USABILITY EVALUATION?

- **Usability Evaluation** - the act of evaluating a product by having *Users* (members of your target audience) use it while the *Observers* (usability team) watch, listen and take notes.

- Put another way, Usability Evaluation is a form of proof reading, which allows for an objective review of a product/material (be it a website, course site, software interface, form, etc.) and is intended to improve its overall performance and structure.
Why Evaluate?

- Instructions are not always clear and we may not realize it because we are too close to the material.

- A pot pie example
CITES Usability Consulting works with clients to evaluate and improve the usability of their web sites, applications, and other information technologies.

Clients needs are not all the same so we offer both a Consulting and a Coaching model.
THE RIGHT FIT

- Not every client has the time or staff resources to perform their own evaluations.
- CITES UXD can do it for you.
- We use a number of methods to evaluate user interfaces and provide feedback on how to improve them.
- We strongly encourage active participation from our client's department to experience the process and feedback firsthand.
We can also coach clients on how to perform their own evaluations.
  - Usability needs to be an iterative, progressive, integral part of the workflow.
- A UXD Usability Expert works with unit staff demonstrating how to plan, facilitate, and run evaluations, as well as how to recognize issues and suggest improvements.
UXD sits down with the client and assess the project to determine:
- Scope of the project
- Major audiences
- Interaction needs
- Best Evaluation Method(s)

Some well known methods we employ include:
- Card sorts
- Paper prototypes
- Computer based evaluations
Card sort

- List content on index cards and have the user sort them for you. Very useful for developing taxonomies, information architecture and navigation strategies.

Two different types of card sorts:

- Open Card Sort - Asks users to group/organize content into their own categories.

- Closed Card Sort - Asks users to group/organize content into a pre-defined set of categories.
CARD SORT
Paper prototype

- Allow for quick changes to interface designs through the use of “sketches”. Extremely flexible and cost effective.
- An excellent means of evaluating page layout and design before implementation.
- Prototypes are used to explore what we don't know about the project / problem so that it may be solved / understood before the product goes into production.
- Very helpful for form design or to develop work flows / navigation paths.
PAPER PROTOTYPE
Computer-based or Interface Evaluations

- Task Based Evaluation - By having the user perform actual tasks on the site/tool, the interface may be evaluated for ease of use and ability to complete desired tasks.
- Task-less Evaluation – The user is asked to explore the site based on a typical real life scenario, without being given any specific tasks to perform.

Gives insight into how a site or tool is actually used.
UXD uses Morae software to capture the user, audio and the computer screen which allows for further review and the creation of video “highlight” reels.

This type of evaluation is well suited to reviewing existing web sites and user interfaces.

Highly recommended as the first step in a redesign process.
COMPUTER-BASED
COMMON MEASURES OF USABILITY

- Ability to complete task (yes/no).
- Paths taken to complete task.
- Task completion time.
- Number of errors or paths taken that do not lead to task completion.
- User rating of ease of use (1-5).
- Percentage of evaluators who encountered a particular issue.
UXD and client assess the project and determine which route to take: Consulting or Coaching.

We then run a primary and secondary round of usability evaluations with users from each major audience.
- If we are coaching, UXD staff will train the clients in how to prepare and administer the evaluations.

After each round of evaluations, we analyze the results and provide feedback.
- Coaching: client is trained in analysis and feedback preparation.
PRACTICAL BENEFITS

- Usability increases goodwill toward the organization.
- Usability practices can reduce costs.
  - Increases value
  - Anticipate costly problems
  - Less tech support required = fewer Help Desk calls, simpler documentation, and fewer modifications
- Usability evaluations can be done very inexpensively, especially when they become part of the standard project workflow.
WHAT DOES IT COST?

- Rates are around $50 an hour, and most "medium-sized" projects tend to take 20 hours of UXD staff time.
- Cost can be reduced with client involvement in the process.
  - Requirements gathering
  - User recruitment
  - Etc.
- Order before midnight tonight!
- Projects will be scheduled on a first come first served basis.