

Usability Report #2

Title: Beta Usability Report

Project: Professor Harris' CompE 572 Website Redesign

<http://jason.sdsu.edu/~tjones/finalproject/finalproject.htm>

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Survey: Users feedback on existing website AFTER redesign.

Overview of Website Redesign

1. A sidebar titled "Course Materials" was placed on the right hand side of the webpage for high visibility. It was subdivided into three distinct sections with menu items;
 - The top section has the course syllabus listed.
 - The middle section lists lectures, homework, projects, and exams.
 - The bottom section is a link to software tools that are used in the course.
2. The items on the sidebar are prioritized in the order of interest to a new student on the first day of class. This part of the redesign was meant to minimize the amount of time needed to get organized and start working on the course material at the beginning of a semester. The course title and name comprise the main banner of the home page;

"CompE 572 - VLSI Circuit Design"

Directly beneath that in the center of the page is a course overview about what the student will be learning, it's relevance to their major, and content to draw the reader in and generate interest and enthusiasm.

3. The bottom third of the webpage has two columns; "Announcements" and "Schedule & Due Dates". The most recent items in these columns will be listed at the top. Scroll bars for these columns were proposed as part of the redesign. However, to maintain the goal of having all

information queued from one page at one glance; these were left off as items could easily be missed if they were scrolled out of view.

Comments

The overall look and feel of the webpage is similar to a state-of-the-art chip design and manufacturing corporation. Images of computer chips and manufacturing processes are clearly visible. A menu bar at the top has links to major industry websites as well as a link to the presiding instructor's own home page.

The redesigned webpage is designed to make the student feel as if what they are going to learn is relevant to current industry trends and they are actually beginning their career as a computer engineer. The webpage should get the student excited about the class and make them feel good about their chosen major.

Findings and Summary

The survey contained eight questions and there were two participants. The participants were computer engineering majors that had yet to enroll in the CompE 572 course and were unfamiliar with the website. Analysis revealed only one area that still needed work, whereas 90% of the issues addressed in the Alpha User Test showed improvement to the point of being non-sequitur.

1. Visibility of the course syllabus only experienced a 10% increase in usability performance. Previously the results were: 40% found it fine, 60% had to search for it. Results after the remodel yielded an even 50% success rate. However, the success rate in users easily locating announcements and assignments increased to 100%.

2. Users were asked to locate information in regards to what the course is actually about and its relevance to the new students major. This produced a 100% success rate, where previously it was 40%. In response to "what is the course sub-title", both users responded with the same exact answer, letter for letter, in a typed response.
3. The users were asked to perform simple search tasks. The success rate here was also 100%. The information they were asked to locate ranged from simple announcements to course materials and upcoming due dates for assignments.

Conclusion

The redesign of the CompE 572 course website for Professor Harris generated overwhelming approval from students, faculty, and Professor Harris himself. Several suggestions were made to modify the website further and add more web-community oriented features, such as a forum where students could discuss and research course topics. However it is recommended that the visibility of the course syllabus be further improved, as it contains the primary source of information for the new student.

Over all, the redesign was successful and achieved the goal of helping the new student to orient themselves and start the course work much faster than before. Because of its attractive design and transparency in delivering course materials, interest in having other course websites redesigned is being considered as an integral part of sustaining student interest and participation.