

Usability testing is a powerful technique for identifying issues that prevent users from getting the most out of your products and for making decisions about how to improve. We ask users to complete a set of tasks with your software, and get them talking about their experience while they work through the tasks. From this, we produce a video of activity on the screen with audio commentary provided by the user. We usually finish the test with a questionnaire about the experience.

### Preparing for usability testing

**Creating a test script** Before the tests, we work with you to understand what you want to find out. Common goals are:

- Ensure users spot a new area of functionality and are able to use it.
- Check that nothing in the end-to-end process of your software confuses users.
- Understand why your support team gets a high volume of calls about a specific feature.

We design a test script that will get users working with the required area of the software in a realistic way, keeping test conditions as representative of real-life situations as possible.

**Selecting test participants** In most cases, it's best to run usability tests with participants who are the type of people who could be the end-users of the software. They know the terminology and understand the context of the tasks that the software is designed to do.

We usually recommend that you identify people in your own network to participate in tests – rather than ask us to do it. This is because:

- You are ideally placed to find people who truly represent your target user base.
- Usability testing is a good opportunity to build a positive relationship with your customers.
- It keeps your costs down.

We can advise on the mix of skill levels and job roles that suits your goals from testing.

### How can usability testing help you?

#### Reduce support costs

Cut down the time you spend supporting users, by enabling them to help themselves.

#### Save money on maintenance

Reduce the need to write and maintain help and training materials, by making the UI work harder to support users.

#### Increase sales

Identify usability issues that prevent potential customers from "getting" your product and making full use of its features.

#### Make customers happy

Turn users into advocates by making your products more pleasurable to use.

**When to run usability tests** Usability testing can be done at any stage of the development process. In most cases, it is possible to run tests on wireframes, on partially implemented user interfaces, or on the finished product. Introducing testing early in the process by testing features before they're implemented can reduce development costs, when compared with the costs of rework to address usability issues discovered later in the development process or after release.

### The usability test environment

*Test Facilitator (usually at 3di office)*



*Web conference connection*



*User (in their own office or home)*

*Your software is installed on our test computer or accessed remotely. Screen-capture and audio-recording software creates a video of the test.*

*Test participant sees the screen on the test computer and controls its mouse and keyboard.*

## Running the tests

**Test locations** In most cases we can run the testing remotely, making it cost-effective for you and very easy to involve users from a broad geographical area. We either connect to your installation of your software or we install your software on our test computer, and then use video-conferencing to connect to the test participant.

**How long is a test?** Once we've got participants comfortable with the test environment, we usually try to have them spend no more than 30-35 minutes on the tasks.

**How many tests are needed?** A couple of tests will almost certainly begin to identify some of the areas that your users struggle with. However, to identify and prioritise the full set of usability issues and gain enough understanding to decide what should be done to address them we normally recommend a batch of 5 or 6 tests.

### What's it like to participate in a usability test?

Taking part in a usability test can be both stressful and rewarding. Part of our role is to put the participant at ease, which begins with talking them through how the test will work and making it really clear that we're testing the software – not the user!

When the participant is ready, we share the test-computer screen, mouse and keyboard with the them and give them the opportunity to get familiar with the environment.

During the test, we aim to let users interact with the software in a realistic way, so we try to avoid speaking or guiding them. However, when we need to find out more about a user's experience or expectations we do intervene to prompt them to explore a feature in more detail.

Overall, we find users enjoy taking part in the tests; they feel valued and are often keen to be involved in future product development too.

## Results and reports

**Test results** Videos of the usability tests enable you to see where the user moves their mouse and what they click on, and hear their expectations and responses to areas of your software. We can either supply full videos of each test or create "highlights" videos showing just the key issues or showing several users interacting with the same area of functionality.

We also provide the results of any surveys or questionnaires that we've run as part of the usability tests.

**When will results be ready?** We aim to give you online access to the video of a test on the same day as we run it – usually within an hour of completing the test. Timescales for other types of results and recommendations will depend on how we agree we're going to work together.

**Acting on usability-test results** You can look at the results of usability tests and decide for yourself what the key usability issues are and how to respond to them. Alternatively, we can provide a level of reporting and advice that suits your needs – from just summarising the main usability pain-points through to providing recommendations for improvements to address issues, or designing alternative implementations of features.

**What are the costs?** Preparing and running a batch of usability tests can take just a few days.

3di Software Usability offers a flexible testing service, so please get in touch to discuss what testing and reporting would be most suitable for you. After a short chat we'll be able to give you a realistic idea of budgets.

### Some of the results and reports you can select from...

- ▶ Video of every test, showing mouse movements, clicks and text input, along with audio commentary by the test participant
- ▶ Questionnaire/survey results
- ▶ Summary of usability pain-points
- ▶ "Highlights" videos focusing on test participant's activity around usability pain-points
- ▶ Recommendations and suggested fixes for addressing usability issues
- ▶ Recommendations for general user experience improvements
- ▶ Summary of areas where users need additional help or training materials

