

TEC 154 2014S, Class 16: Human Factors (1)

Overview

- Preliminaries.
 - Admin.
 - Questions.
- Activity: Scavenger hunt.
- Debriefing.
- Discussion questions.

Preliminaries

Admin

- Note takers (send me five main points): CC and PG.
- Readings/skimmings for this week
 - Wednesday: Norman 3-4 (90 pages)
 - Friday: Norman 5-6 (90 pages)
- Next Wednesday and Friday are the exam.
 - Sample exams distributed Wednesday.
 - Questions due Saturday.
 - Review session Monday.
- Extra credit:
 - Town hall meeting Tuesday at noon or 7pm
 - Royce Wolf concert Wednesday at noon

Activity: Scavenger hunt

In groups of three, look at things that exist "normally" in this room (so not what you've brought in). Identify at least two of each of the following:

- Especially good designs.
- Especially poor designs.
- Affordances.
- "Natural" signifiers.
- "Artificial" signifiers.

You should not use the computer as an example, but you can use other things on the computer stand.

Debriefing on Scavenger Hunt

Especially good designs.

- The stackable chairs are nice
 - Although it's not immediately clear what, other than experience, tells us that we can stack those chairs.
- Sliding whiteboards.
 - Lots of space.
 - Sliding (can cover up other things)
 - Signifiers?
 - Tracks - Natural
 - Metal thingys - Added
 - May not be good for students?

Especially poor designs.

- Floor outlet boxes.
 - Hard to figure out how to open
 - Break easily
 - Don't stay in place
 - Dangerous
 - Floor outlets are generally difficult
- Blinds
 - Don't work well
 - Do you pull one string or both strings or ...?

Affordances.

- The Elmo in the corner is flat, and therefore affords people piling junk on it.
- Tables: Put things on them.
- Coat hooks: Can hold things.
- Mugs afford holding (liquids or other things)

"Natural" signifiers.

"Artificial" signifiers.

- Instructions on the screen
- Lock sign on the door
- Black box on projector stand - Buttons are labeled
- Keyboard - Each key is labeled

Other things you noted.

- Thermostat
 - Button
 - Ethernet port
 - The joy of social construction - Higher numbers are hotter
- Light switches: Natural for some, unnatural for others

Discussion questions

Why are there (such) bad designs?

- Designers are isolated - Separated from context of their design.
- Engineers don't necessarily have usability as a design goal.
- Designers don't necessarily have usability as a design goal - sometimes it's just appearance.
- Designers and engineers aren't trained to think about how people use things.
 - And make bad assumptions.
- Additional constraints: E.g. cost
- Designers and engineers don't fully understand the problem.
- New designs may be difficult for people to understand, and, even if we understand people, it may be hard to understand how they'll react to it
- People don't complain about bad designs
- People don't make usability a high criterion when buying things

What is the relative fault when something goes wrong? (Designer vs. user)

Are the issues that Norman raises about the ways in which devices "misbehave" related to Joy's concerns?

Choose your own.

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