Usability Workshop

This course provides instruction in recognizing the characteristics of effective user documentation. Content focuses on exploring usability issues for print documents, websites, and help systems. Participants practice applying usability testing principles through in-class exercises and assigned homework.

Who should take this course?

This course is designed for technical communicators who plan and develop technical information products such as user assistance materials, technical support, print and online documentation, and print and web-based informational materials. Participants will conduct a test to evaluate usability and report relevant results to demonstrate mastery of course objectives.

Course Objectives

• Define usability.
• Define the characteristics of a usable product or document.
• Determine usability goals for a specific product or document.
• Define the audience for a specific product or document.
• Determine an appropriate method for gathering data about a specific document or website.
• Conduct usability evaluation sessions for a Web site and for documentation.
• Report results from a usability evaluation session.

Course Details

• Length: 9 hours
• Classroom Type: Lecture
• Prerequisites: None

The above prerequisites are considered to be the basic skills and knowledge needed prior to taking this class. Instructors will assume your readiness for the class materials and will NOT use class time to discuss prerequisite materials.
Course Contents

Define usability.
- Examine various definitions of the concept of usability.
- Consider how these definitions apply to products, services, and documents you encounter in everyday life.
- Consider why usability is important.

Define the characteristics of a usable product or document.
- Examine examples of poor usability.
- Discuss where usability considerations fit into the product development cycle.
- Define usability as a part of a larger process, user-centered design.
- Consider attributes of organizations that practice user-centered design.

Determine usability goals for a specific product or document.
- Discuss how to measure usability.
- Define the components of a usability goal.
- Define the types of usability goals.
- Describe the process for setting usability goals.

Define the audience for a specific product or document.
- Determine who uses the product or document.
- Examine how and why they use it.
- Discuss setting usability goals for specific audiences.

Determine an appropriate method for gathering data about a specific document or website.
- Examine various methods of building usability into a document or website.
- Discuss methods of usability testing and how to choose an appropriate one.
Course Contents, continued

Conduct usability evaluation sessions for a Web site and for documentation.

- Create a usability test plan.
- Identify the audience and usability goals.
- Determine the appropriate method of testing.
- Conduct a usability test.
- Prioritize and report test results.

Report results from a usability evaluation session.

- Use appropriate methods to gather usability data for a document.
- Discuss how to use standards analysis and heuristics to test documentation for usability.