



Summative Usability Testing



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Define

Summative Usability Testing is conducted on fully developed software that is not in an active design process. The purpose is to evaluate the system and interfaces for usability, accessibility, findability, usefulness and credibility. It can also provide benchmark metrics against which testing on a redesign can be compared, measuring the success of a project's goals.

This style of testing can also give a degree of insight into a software's desirability and value to existing or potential users. This is most effectively accomplished with moderated tests, rather than unmoderated tests.

Summative usability testing is a more time intensive study, usually done by a designated researcher for that reason.

Conduct

When

Testing of this type is done on existing software to identify small and large problems with completing tasks, to pinpoint what's working well in a design, and as a means of establishing a benchmark that can be used for comparison in the future.

How

In order to format the test, the researcher must work with project stakeholders (business owners, product managers, and designers) to define clear research questions. From these questions tasks can be constructed that give insight on answers to the research questions.

Outcomes

The formal report for this style of usability testing is typically more comprehensive and detailed.

Quantitative Information

- Time on Task
- Error Rate
- Error Type
- Perceived success rate
- Actual success rate
- Perceived level of difficulty

Qualitative Information

- Feedback about pain points
- Feedback on points of delight
- Suggestions and ideas for improvement

This information drives researcher recommendations. The recommendations should be rated by a level of concern, then taken in context with project priorities, additional knowledge gaps, and available resources. Now, Design and Product Management can guide next steps and give business owners context when explaining the forward momentum of the project.

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