Expert Review

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WHAT IS IT?

Expert reviews (also known as summative expert reviews) are techniques used for assessing and/or scoring the usability of applications by experts. There are many different ways of doing this; in this guide I'll discuss a couple of options.

WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

- Can be used to track changes in usability during development.
- A quick way to generate some comparison statements of your application versus a competitor.
- Reasonably inexpensive as you do not have to recruit users, instead you have 2-3 experts.

WHEN DO YOU NEED IT?

Generally these, as the name suggests, are performed on a delivered site/application. However, they can also be used in a formative fashion, checking the usability in particular as development progresses.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Expert Review (Nielsen, 1995)

The expert review is in its most common form an extension of Nielsen's heuristic evaluation. However, in addition to the heuristics, it goes on to assess the design against other recognised usability guidelines, principles of usability-related fields such as cognitive psychology and human-computer interaction.

As with a heuristic evaluation, it is common to do an overall review of the application. But it is also possible to only focus on smaller sections/elements or even particular tasks.

1. The expert reviews the application/feature or completes a task(s).
2. Using the prepared reporting template, see the *Want to Know More?* section below, they complete the sections, providing a score/rating and any supporting comments. Templates can vary but generally include the following sections:
   - Features and functionality
   - Homepage
   - Navigation
   - Search
   - Control and feedback
   - Forms
   - Errors
   - Content
   - Help
   - Performance
3. These findings are then combined to provide the overall evaluation results. Generally the findings are reported in a document or slide deck with supporting rationale for the rating. Although the point of the review is to find potential usability issues, it's always good to begin with the positives – which items work effectively and an explanation why. The remainder of the report focuses on the problems. These can be broken down by severity ranking, but it tends to be easy to read the report if it follows the task flow or by application features. Within these subsections list the issues, including a clear explanation, and each of these should be ranked by severity (high, medium or low).
4. One of main purposes of the report is to help organisations address the issues raised. It is therefore important that for each issue raised recommendations and, if possible, examples of best practice are provided.

An alternative, less in-depth, fast approach:

Quantifying the User Experience (Rubinoff, 2004)

Experts rate the application based on four independent elements: 1. branding, 2. functionality, 3. usability and 4. content.

This method provides a quick, objective (not dependent on the background/domain knowledge of the reviewer), visual representation of the application versus a previous version or competitor.

1. Create a series of statements for the four elements, e.g.
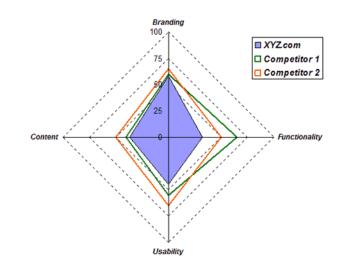   - The application prevents errors and helps users recover from them.
   - Overall the page weight is optimised for the main target audience.
   - The application helps visitors accomplish common tasks.
   - The site adheres to its own consistency and standards.
2. The expert assesses the application against the statements and scores accordingly. Although officially the method does not ask for an expert comment/reason for the score, it helps to document these and surface if necessary.
3. The total score is calculated for the four elements, and then averaged across the expert reviews.

EXAMPLE DOCUMENTATION

Quantifying the User Experience table of results

Quantifying the User Experience visualisation

Branding

Statement	Scale	Score
Statement 1	1 - 20	15
Statement 2	1 - 20	11
Statement 3	1 - 20	8
Statement 4	1 - 20	18
Statement 5	1 - 20	6
Branding TOTAL:		**58 of 100**

Functionality

Statement	Scale	Score
Statement 1	1 - 20	11
Statement 2	1 - 20	6
Statement 3	1 - 20	8
Statement 4	1 - 20	2
Statement 5	1 - 20	
Functionality TOTAL:		**32 of 100**

Usability

Statement	Scale	Score
Statement 1	1 - 20	4
Statement 2	1 - 20	10
Statement 3	1 - 20	18
Statement 4	1 - 20	7
Statement 5	1 - 20	6
Usability TOTAL:		**45 of 100**

Content

Statement	Scale	Score
Statement 1	1 - 20	7
Statement 2	1 - 20	9
Statement 3	1 - 20	3
Statement 4	1 - 20	10
Statement 5	1 - 20	8
Content TOTAL:		**37 of 100**

Rubinoff (2004)

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

More detail on Nielsen's expert review
https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ux-expert-reviews/

Expert review template
http://www.uxforthemasses.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Usability-review-template.xls

For more details on Robert Rubinoff's expert review
https://www.sitepoint.com/quantify-user-experience/