

Training Human-Centred Design Approach for the Designers of New Services

Eija Kaasinen

VTT Information Technology, P.O.Box 1206

FIN-33101 Tampere, Finland

eija.kaasinen@vtt.fi

Anne Clarke

Loughborough University

The Elms, Elms Grove, Loughborough

Leics LE11 1RG, United Kingdom

annemclarke@compuserve.com

Human-centred design is based on active co-operation between different professionals: designers, experts of the application area, end users, visual designers, usability experts etc. In practise, however, the usability and user issues are often isolated to separate work packages in design projects and co-operation with the usability work packages and design and implementation parts of the project is not very close. The co-operation between different experts has better chances to succeed if all the participants know the basics and reasoning behind the usability design methods.

USINACTS is a horizontal project in EU's ACTS Research Programme. The main aim of USINACTS is to support other ACTS projects in usability issues. Based on our co-operation with several ACTS projects, we have produced usability training material to train project managers and designers in human-centred design.

Human-centred design approach is most effective if it is adopted in the projects from the very beginning. Project managers and designers need basic knowledge on the methods of human-centred design so that they will be able to plan projects, where the user point of view is taken into account from the very beginning and throughout the project.

Software engineering methodologies are often based on accurate user requirements, against which the results of the analysis, design and implementation phases are tested. Even if the importance of iterative design is acknowledged, the methodology does not include much support for this approach. The key issue in adopting human-centred design approach is to accept the fact that we cannot fix exact user requirements in the beginning of the project. That is why we have to refine the initial user requirements throughout the design process by illustrating the planned design decisions to the users and getting their feedback.

Our training material introduces the audience with different approaches to human-centred design. The audience learns how to identify what could be achieved by user involvement in their project. They get guidelines how to identify the aims of usability

design in their project and how to select the usability design approach according to the identified aims. We also discuss how to integrate human-centred design approach with their software engineering approach. The training material includes short case descriptions from ACTS projects to illustrate different approaches to human-centred design in practise.

We have produced key parts of the training material for piloting. We organised two pilot lectures to collect audience feedback of the design of the training material. After these lectures, the first pilot course was organised in December 1998. The audience of the pilot course consisted of project managers and designers from different projects. The feedback was very positive: the audience felt that they needed this kind of basic training to be able to better co-operate with usability experts and to be able to adopt human-centred approach in planning their new projects. The audience would have liked to hear even more examples from real projects. Learning by examples is the most effective way to learn how to implement the methods in practise.

Based on the feedback from the pilot course, we are developing the training material further. Our main task is to include more case studies from ACTS projects in the material. The case studies will illustrate the different ways in which human-centred design approach can be adopted. The case studies also illustrate how the different usability design methods work in practise.