

# Rocket Surgery Made Easy Chapters 9-12

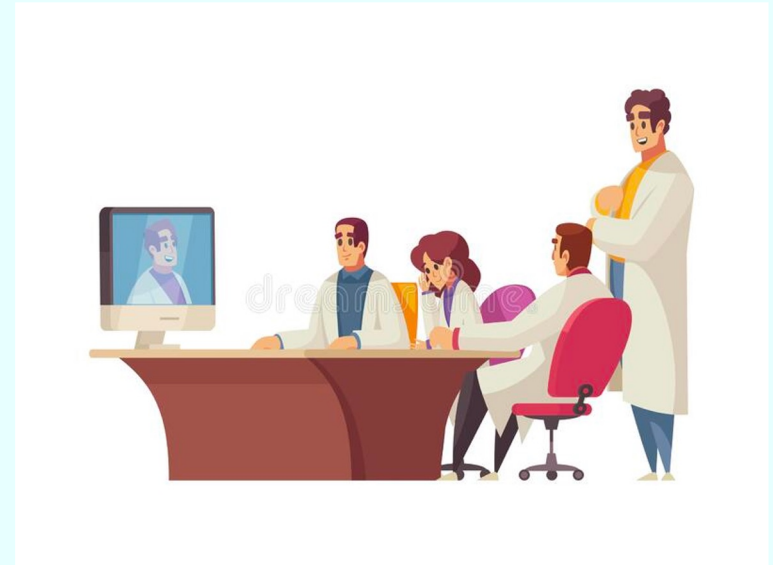
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# Making Usability Tests into a Sport!

# The importance of filling the room

- Seeing something makes it real!
  - People are skeptical
  - People aren't all the same – even users
  - Seeing things in person has more of a transformative effect.
- More people, more insight!
  - Encourage not just those with direct involvement. Product managers, marketing folk, bosses, etc should all be there.



# How to encourage people to attend

- Make it an easy day for people to come
- Advertise through save the dates
- Let people know this is an opportunity to have their problems heard
- Get executives to come (manipulate if necessary)
- **SNACKS!!!**



# The job of the observer

- Watch, learn, and take notes
- Write down the three biggest usability problems at the end of each session
- Give questions the facilitator can ask the participant
- Eat the snacks (duh)
- Attend the lunchtime debriefing session

## Instructions for Usability Test Observers

Thanks for coming to today's tests. Each of the three sessions will last about 50 minutes, with a ten-minute break in between.

To get as much as we can out of these tests, we need your help with a few things:

- **Take notes.** Please make notes about anything interesting you notice, particularly points where the user was confused or couldn't get the tasks done. We'll be comparing notes during the debriefing session at lunchtime today.
- **Make a list at the end of each session.** During the break between sessions, use the attached sheet to jot down the three most serious usability problems you noticed in that session.
- **Come to the debriefing. (Free lunch!)** If at all possible, we'd love to have you join us at \_\_\_\_\_ pm in room \_\_\_\_\_, where we'll compare notes and decide what usability problems we're going to fix in the next month.
- **If you think of a question you'd like to ask the participant, write it down.** Near the end of each session, we'll check to see if you have any questions.
- **Stay as long as you can.** We know you have other commitments, but there are only a few sessions, and each one will offer different lessons. Even if you start to lose interest, try to keep watching and listening—you never know when the participant will say something revealing. You can come and go if you need to, but please try to do it unobtrusively.
- **Try to avoid distracting others.** Following a test can require concentration. Try to limit your conversation to what you're observing. If you need to have another kind of discussion or answer a phone call, please step outside the room. Think of it as a movie theater: don't talk loud enough or long enough that the people around you can't follow the plot.

Thanks for your help!

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# The Observation Room

It's generally best to hold observers in a conference room. As the number of observers grow, your room can grow with it!

An observation room needs...

- A computer that can connect to the internet and share screen
- A large enough projector or monitor so that everyone can see and follow along
- A quality set of speakers
- The snacks!
- A speakerphone that can dial into the test room in case something goes wrong.
- A hall monitor that can watch over the observation room

# Some FAQs

- Wouldn't watching the testing hurt people's feelings?
  - Not usually a problem unless testing occurs too late in development.
- Should people be allowed to observe remotely?
  - Not if they're on the work site!
- Should observers share a room with the participants?
  - It's not recommended, especially for beginners
  - If it's necessary then observers need to follow some rules
    - Be quiet (speak only when spoken to)
    - Keep a straight face
    - Don't answer participant's questions
    - Don't influence the participant



# Debriefing and how to do it



# What are the goals of a debriefing session?

You'll want to get two things...

- A list of the worst usability problems encountered on your site
- A list of problems to solve before the next month's testing

## Who can attend a debriefing session? When should it happen?

- It should occur as soon as possible after the test
- Done over lunch with food provided.
- People who have attended at least one of the morning test sessions can come to the debrief
  - This helps ensure people come to the tests
  - Helps keep conversations focused on what people actually observed

# In what order should issues be dealt with?

Deal with the worst problems first.

- Every site has usability problems
- Every organization has limited resources to fix said problems
- There will always be more problems than there are resources to fix them
- Easier problems with more simple solutions can be distracting leaving the worse problems to be fixed still.

Therefore...

- You need to be dedicated to fixing the worst problems **FIRST**



## How do I know what the worst problem is

The beauty of usability tests is that it becomes pretty obvious which problems are really bad.

There are two things to ask when figuring out a problems severity...

- Will lots of people experience this issue?
- Will it cause a serious problem for those who experience it, or is it just annoying?

Figuring out problem severity will always be a judgement call. The most difficult decisions are the ones that involve corner cases.

# How to run the debriefing meeting

The person who runs the tests should run the meetings...

1. Start by explaining how the meeting will go
2. Have everyone review their problems list and pick their own top 3 most important issues
3. Have everyone in the room read the problems they chose out loud
4. Write all of the issues down so everyone can see
5. When everyone has had their turn, look at the list and choose the top 10
6. Order the issues using your own judgement, but listen to good suggestions. Leave space in between them for solutions.
7. Work down the list and listen to the team's suggested solutions
8. Continue working until you've allotted all your resources

# How to run a successful meeting

- Write down guidelines before beginning
  - Stick to what's observed
  - Focus on the most serious issues
  - Objective is just for the month
- Let people know you're in charge
- Have a laptop that has recordings of the session
- Keep the session on track. Just focus on what's observed.
- Every contribution is valuable
- Don't skip any problems!

# A non-honkin' report

- Goal is to write an email to summarize this month's testing
  - No more than two minutes to read and 30 minutes to write
- It needs to cover...
  - What you tested
  - What tasks the participants did
  - The problems that need to be covered in the next month
  - Recordings/clips optional
  - Next test date

# Some more FAQs

- Are there more ways to run debriefings?
  - Merging observations and opinions has been around forever in the business world so there's plenty of ways to do it.
  - Main takeaway should be to focus on solving the serious issues first
- Can small issues like typos not get fixed because they're not the most important issue?
  - Of course not. You can keep your own list of issues to handle personally, but the purpose of a debriefing is to give resources to the most important ones.



The background features a light pink color with a large, darker pink abstract shape on the left side. In the top right corner, there is a light blue shape with a white border.

**Doing Less can  
Achieve More**

# Keep it super simple!

The goal of fixing the problems found in the usability test shouldn't be to eliminate the problem. Instead, make it better for the user right now.

- Fewer people will experience the problem
- Easier to implement
- Can be done in a few days
- Even with core problems, there's something small that can be done to give users a better experience
- Doesn't make the users have to wait for the redesign



# Tweak don't redesign

There are nine reasons why tweaking is better than redesigning

1. Tweaks cost less
2. Tweaks don't take as much work
3. There's less at stake with tweaks
4. Smaller changes bring faster results
5. Making big changes can break things
6. Big changes annoy everyone
7. Redesigns mean lots of changes at once and all of the risks that accompany them
8. Redesigns = more people in more meetings. Gross.

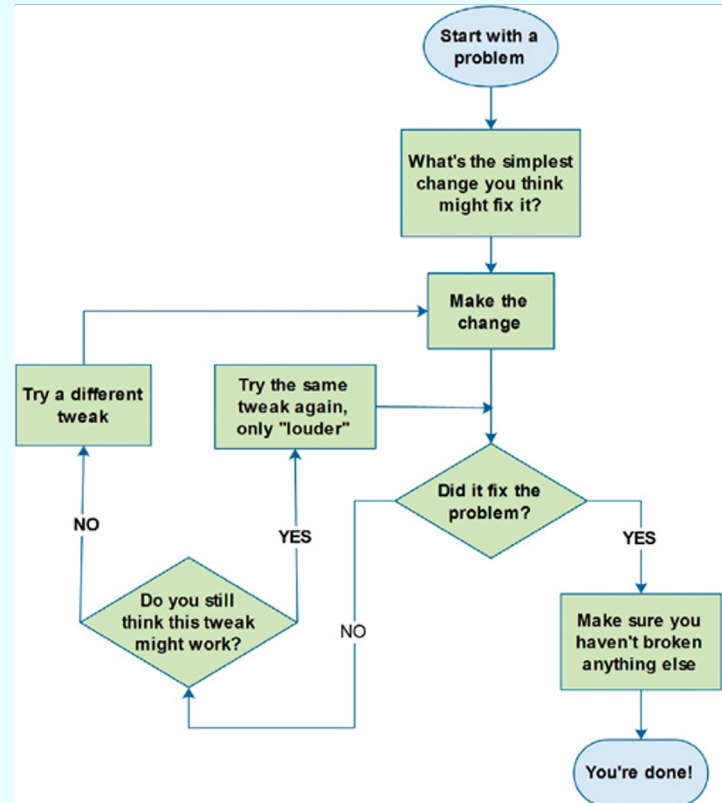
Taking something away instead of adding something can be a better way to fix usability problems.



# What even are tweaks?

A tweak is a small change made or modification that usually takes a few tries to get exactly right.

- Try simple tweaks first
- If that fails, try a more significant version of the same tweak
- If THAT doesn't work then try a new tweak
- Keep unintended consequences in mind and be vigilant.



# Frequently Found Problems

# Starting off wrong

The issue: Users starting off their usability test journey incorrectly

How to fix it:

- Orient the home page CLEARLY
  - Don't overcrowd the homepage
  - Ex: <https://cleveland.craigslist.org/>



# Can you take a hint?

The issue: Designers can use too subtle navigational clues that users on low resolution laptops may not be able to see.

The solution:


- If it needs to be noticed, make it stand out!
- This doesn't mean the bolded things need to be ugly.

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