



Usability Testing and Debriefing Best Practices

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USA.gov Content Team Leader

Co-Captain, GSA's First Fridays Testing Team



What We'll Cover Today

- First Fridays 101
- How to conduct a simple usability test and debriefing session
- How to identify the most serious usability problems participants encountered
- Tips for debriefing session success
- A case study on creating solutions that can be fixed in 30 days



Government Sites Tested

Travel.state.gov

FCC.gov

DOT.net

Weather.gov

Data.gov

Apps.gov/NOW

Pueblo.gsa.gov

OnGuardOnline.gov

HowTo.gov

ready.gov

IRS.gov/retirement

GSA CHRIS

USA.gov

NSF.gov

DOL.gov

m.gobiernoUSA.gov

DOI.gov

Advisory Council

on Historic Preservation

m.usa.gov

publications.USA.gov

USA.gov Search

medlineplus.gov (mobile)



First Fridays 101

- One Morning a Month!
- Choose a site
- 3 customer participants perform tasks with a facilitator
- Observers watch and take notes
- Lunch debrief and identify *three* serious problems + fixes
- Two page report and copy of test recordings
- Follow-up call on quick improvements



Do-It-Yourself Testing



- Better customer service for taxpayers & citizens
- More testing because “Anyone can do it”
- Expanded professional UX opportunities & facilities



- More inexperienced practitioners
- UX “magic” revealed
- More time spent coaching
- Fewer comprehensive tests & studies?



The Debrief: Step by Step

Part 1: Identify Problems

- Let people grab lunch before starting (working and eating is ok)
- Go over ground rules first
 - Aim for a one-hour meeting
 - Prep observers to offer top 3 observed problems - they don't have to be unique, we'll ask them for their top 3 across participants
 - Let observers know they have 1-2 minutes during debrief to share their top 3 - enlist timer person to help you
 - Facilitators don't offer top problems



The Debrief: Step by Step

Part 1: Identify Problems (...continued)

- Observation room manager opens a blank word doc and projects it for the room to see
- Each person identifies three usability problems
- Problems must be ones that you *observed* during the test
- Keep in mind that the largest usability problems are ones that interfere with top tasks, so a poor label is more important than an incorrect font



Solutions are addressed in Part 2 of the process



Identifying the Most Serious Usability Problems

- Stick to what you observed
- Focus ruthlessly on the most serious usability problems
- Does the problem interfere with a top task?
- Will a lot of people experience this problem?
- Will it cause a serious problem for the people who'll experience it, or is it just an inconvenience?



The Debrief: Step by Step

Part 2: Identify Solutions

- Focus only on the top 3 problems
- Only discuss what can be done to improve the problem in 30 days
- Estimate the number of hours and resources required to fix each issue
- Assign a person who will be responsible for the fix



First Fridays Final Report

Top Three Most Serious Problems & Quick Fixes for Weather.gov

	Problem	Solution
1.	Terminology / labels were confusing	Address navigation labels – make labels reflect content of the tab (move away from NWS speak, like “products,” into Plain Language) - Bradley, 20 hours
2.	Home button / page hierarchy inconsistent - Path home not clear.	Switch primary header to link back to home - Bradley, 3 hours
3.	Too much text	Simplify and break down text blocks via editing, graphics and bullets on landing pages (ex. Warnings by State page) - Curtis, 20 hours

Follow-up Meeting Scheduled: June 23 at 1 p.m. (tentative)

Top 10 Most Serious Problems Identified During Test

	Problem
1	Navigation of local/national information is difficult - content becomes jumbled and combined as you surf.
2	Maps didn't behave the way users expected them to function (zoom features/labeling/details).
3	Inability of users to navigate via nav bars & “cues” on how to navigate.
4.	Local warnings/forecasts by city and state are not available.
5.	Lack of consistent time zone displays on maps.
6.	Too many types of content.
7.	Too many colors in map for different weather types.
8.	Inconsistent application of sub-navigation screens (i.e. Water tab).

Other Problems or Suggestions (to problem #1 - “Terminology and labels confusing”) were:

- First address navigation labels, make labels reflect content of the tab (away from NWS speak into plain language) - Bradley, 20 hrs.
- Look at the search terms and pick out terms being used by users and replace “NWS” terms. Example - replace “climate”, etc. - Ron, 20 hrs.
- Climate look-up page – change word “product” to be more recognizable. Provide clear path to past weather - Curtis/Fiona, 1hr.
- Add top tasks functionality to the home page - Ron, 40 hrs.
- Develop card sort plan - Ron, 6 hrs.

First Fridays Product Testing – Weather.gov – Jonathan Rubin



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Top Tasks Hard to Find

- Make top task “starting points” stand out
- Place top tasks at center or left and above the fold

Too Many Words

- Cut content by 50%
- Remove outdated content

Confusing Jargon

- Use common terms and customer language; avoid acronyms
- Put technical terms in parentheses

Irrelevant Search Results

- Make top task content appear at top of search returns
- Move search filters to left or top of screen

Navigation Ineffective

- List nav tabs or links from left to right, top to bottom, in order of use
- Re-write links



Tips for Debriefing Success

- The facilitator is impartial, but in control of the meeting
- Manage time, manage the flow of the session
- Constructive criticism only
- A good idea is a good idea, no matter who offers it
- Have the right people in the room
- Be sure to have buy-in from the people that have to do the work

Case Study: GSA InSite

GSA **InSite**

Search InSite

SEARCH

GSA InSite All InSites

GSA INSITE

AGENCY TOPICS

COLLABORATION

ORGANIZATION

OTHER INSITES

DIRECTORY

Quick Directory

Last:

First:

[Directory Advanced Look-Up >](#)
[Reverse Phone Look-Up >](#)
[Help Lines & Support >](#)

Tools

- [BookIT!](#) (room scheduling)
- [CHRIS](#) (personnel files)
- [E2](#) (travel reservations)
- [Employee Express](#) (payroll)
- [FEDdesk](#) (time & attendance)
- [GSA Advantage!](#) (supplies)

Resources

- [Calendars and Events](#)
- [Directives \(Orders\)](#)
- [Forms](#)
- [GSA job openings](#)
- [Training](#)

[More Tools & Resources >>](#)

Telework

How does your region measure up?

FIND OUT ON THE TELEWORK FORUM

ACRONYMS AND JARGON

Find out what GSA terms stand for.

Look Up:

[See complete list >](#)

SYNCHRONIZING: ADMINISTRATOR'S BLOG

De-Jargoning Government

In her latest video blog post, Administrator Martha Johnson highlights the Plain Writing Act of 2011 which directs agencies to commit to clear, plain language for many documents. Hear about the benefits of plain language, and join the conversation, on Martha's blog >



[Invite the Administrator to your event >](#)

LEADERSHIP IN A MINUTE

Conflict Resolution Made Simple

Solving office conflicts is easier than you may think. Aquilla Brock, vice president for the American Federation of Government Employees offers some options in this week's Leadership in a Minute.



[Video >](#)

AGENCY INITIATIVES: [1800 F Transformation](#) | [Sustainability](#) | [Telework](#) | [Google](#)

INSIDE THE AGENCY

Northeast and Caribbean Region Revamps Website

The region is the latest to adopt a new and improved look and feel for its public-facing home page, which will help reach customers and the public. [Story >](#)

And the honorable mention goes to ...GSA-HHS sustainability guidelines!

Federal agencywide food guidelines win praise after successful implementation at the Department of Health and Human Services headquarters. [Story >](#)

GSA's Feds Feed Families food drive triumphs

The GSA family proves it can give from the heart despite hard economic times and severe weather. [Story >](#)

Simple, low cost changes refresh public spaces; shape first impressions

In the past year, more than 50 federal spaces have changed dramatically, simply by reducing clutter, consolidating functions, unifying signage, and streamlining security. [Story >](#)

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GSA IN THE NEWS

A tour of the Akron Global Business Accelerator gave a U.S. official some insight on emerging businesses in Akron Friday.

10/14/11 Akron News Now

A tour of the Akron Global Business Accelerator gave a U.S. official some insight on emerging businesses in Akron Friday. [Full Story >](#)

Big Hole in White House Lawn Prompts Equally Big Questions

10/17/11 The New York Times

President Obama, who has been traveling the country urging Congress to pass his jobs bill so Americans can be put to work on infrastructure projects, need only look out a window in the West Wing to see one such project. [Full Story >](#)

Quantico to acquire first fully electric cars and truck

10/18/11 Inside NOVA

By the end of the month, Quantico Marine Corps base will have added the first fully electric truck to its motor pool fleet, and half a dozen electric cars are expected to be added by the year's end. [Full Story >](#)

[All Clips >](#)

GSA

Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies

Staff Directory

Last name:

GO

First name:

[Complete Directory >](#)

[Reverse Phone Look-Up >](#)

QUICK LINKS

- [Careers](#)
- [CHRIS](#)
- [E2 Travel](#)
- [Employee Express](#)
- [FEDdesk](#)
- [GSA Advantage!](#)
- [Health and Wellness](#)
- [Online University](#)
- [Pegasys](#)

EMPLOYEE RESOURCES

AGENCY TOPICS

HELP LINES

ORGANIZATION LINKS

OTHER INSITES

GSA **InSite**

GSA INSITE

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Telework





Building Capacity Across GSA - and Government

1. Fix problems
2. Train and mentor
3. Raise awareness



If you'd like to participate in First Fridays Product Testing, contact FirstFridays@gsa.gov.



Any questions?

Thanks!

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