## Exercise: Developing Usability Testing Scenario and Tasks

**Overview**

The purpose of this exercise is to help participants understand how to develop good usability testing scenarios and tasks.

**Objectives**

1. To identify the main goals typical users attempt to accomplish on a particular interface
2. To develop a good usability testing scenario that identifies the typical user and the goal the user is trying to accomplish
3. To develop three usability testing tasks that are realistic and actionable and that avoid giving away clues about how to perform the task

**Time**

Total: 75 minutes

Introduce exercise and break up into small groups (10 minutes). Work in small groups (45 minutes), then reconvene to report out and discuss (20 minutes).

**Activity Steps**

**Step 1: Develop a Usability Test Scenario**

Usability test scenarios set the stage for the usability tasks that you want your participants to conduct. The scenarios tell a short story of a specific user and what that user is trying to accomplish on the interface (website, mobile app, or other interface). These scenarios help the usability test participants put themselves into the shoes of the actual user and thus motivate them to engage with the interface.

Good usability testing scenarios answer these key questions:

* **Who is the user?** You can consider such characteristics as age, gender, literacy, language, job function, etc.
* **What goal is the user trying to accomplish?** Identify what the user wants and what the user would need to find on your interface in order to leave satisfied.

**Sample scenario for a mobile app to check medical eligibility criteria for contraceptive use:** A family planning provider is helping a client decide on an appropriate contraceptive method that fits her needs. Before the provider can give the client her chosen method, the provider has to check if the client is medically eligible to use that method.

**Sample scenario for a website hosting training resources on contraceptive methods:** You are a family planning trainer and are preparing a short refresher course for 15 community health workers on how to provide DMPA injectables. You need to gather the most up-to-date and evidence-based information on injectables for your presentation slides.

**Instructions:**

1. In your small groups, first decide which interface you want to focus on. It can be any website, mobile app, or interface of interest to you.
2. Then take a few minutes to describe a typical user of that interface.
3. Next, brainstorm what some of the main goals are of a typical user coming to that interface. You will want to focus your usability testing session on one of these key goals.
4. Finally, draft a short usability test scenario.

Participants can use the Exercise Worksheet at the end of this document to write down their answers.

**Step 2: Develop Three Usability Test Tasks**

The usability task is the action that you want the participant to take on the interface you are testing.

**Sample usability task for a mobile app to check medical eligibility criteria for contraceptive use:** A family planning client has heard good things about hormonal implants and wants to use this method. Her medical history reveals the following: She is 35 years old, has three children between the ages of 2 and 7, and has high blood pressure. As her family planning provider, you need to check whether she is medically eligible to use implants before you can provide the method to her. Use the WHO MEC app to check whether she is medically eligible to use implants.

**Sample usability task for a website hosting training resources on contraceptive methods:** As a family planning trainer, you need to create a presentation for community health workers giving an overview of injectable contraceptives and how they work. Find materials on this website to include in your presentation.

Good usability test tasks should:

1. **Be realistic.** Create tasks that a typical user would really try to do so that the usability test participant “owns” the task and you get the most useful information to help you improve your interface. Often that means that tasks should be somewhat broad, for example, asking a participant to find information on a topic rather than finding a specific document.
2. **Be actionable.** Make sure you ask participants to do certain actions, rather than asking them how they would do something—you will often get different information by observing participants as they *perform the action* than when they *describe their intended actions*. For example, a good task would say, “Go to this website and find information about pandemics,” not, “You want information about pandemics. Go to this website’s home page and tell me what you would click on next.”
3. **Avoid giving away clues about how to complete the task.** Try to avoid using terms in the task that are used on your interface that would bias the participant. For example, if the interface has a button that says “Sign up for our newsletter,” consider wording your task as “Find a way to received updates via email.” Also avoid describing preliminary steps that would give away information about how to use the interface. For example, avoid saying “Go to the website, sign in, and then look for X,” because the sign-in process may be a critical issue with the interface that might not emerge in the usability test if you give that information away.

**Instructions:**

* Develop three usability test tasks based on the scenario you developed above.

Participants can use the Exercise Worksheet at the end of this document to write down their answers.

**Step 3: Report out**

* Provide each group a few minutes to share their scenario and tasks. Then have the entire group discuss:
  + Do the scenarios identify who the user is and what goal the user is trying to accomplish? If not, how can they be improved?
  + Are the tasks realistic? Actionable? Do they give away critical information that would give the usability test participant clues about how to perform the tasks? How can the tasks be improved to ensure you get useful information from the usability test?

**Exercise Worksheet**

**Usability Test Scenario and Tasks**

**Interface:**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Typical User:**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**User Goals on the Interface:**

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**Usability Test Scenario:**

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**Usability Test Tasks:**

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