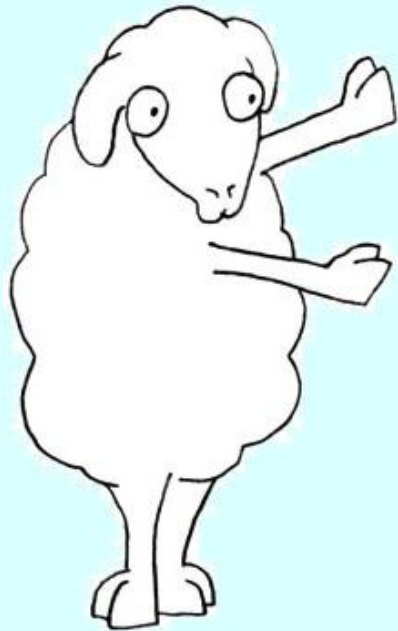
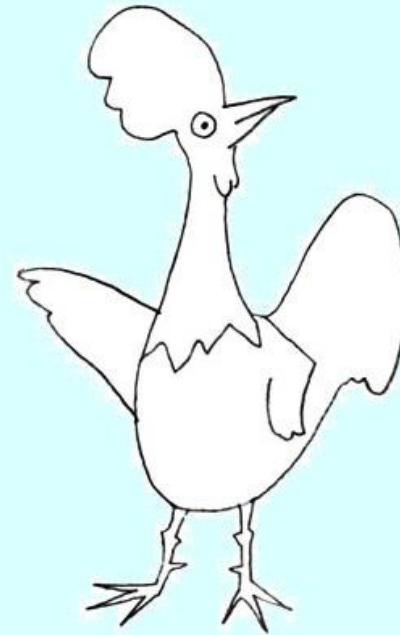


The ABCs of Documentation Usability Testing

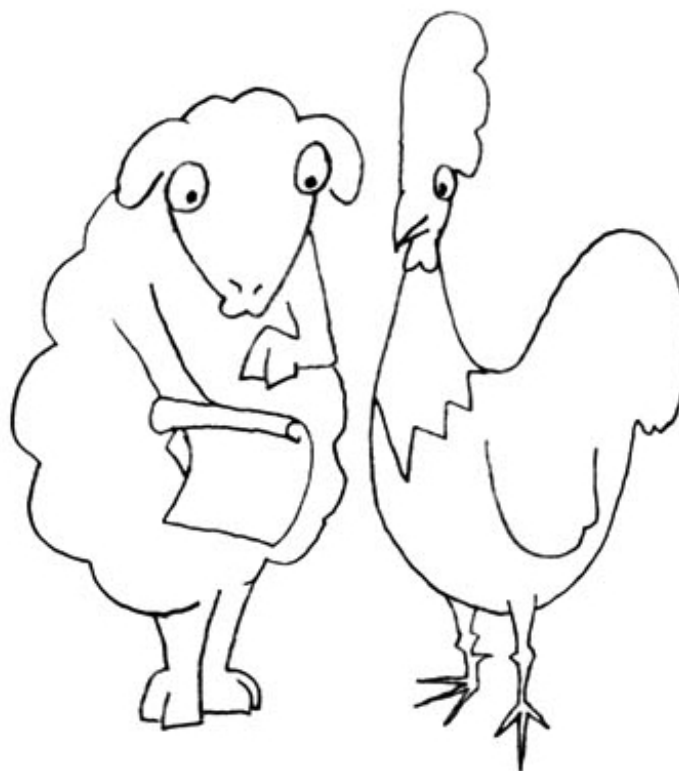


What you need
to know to get
started

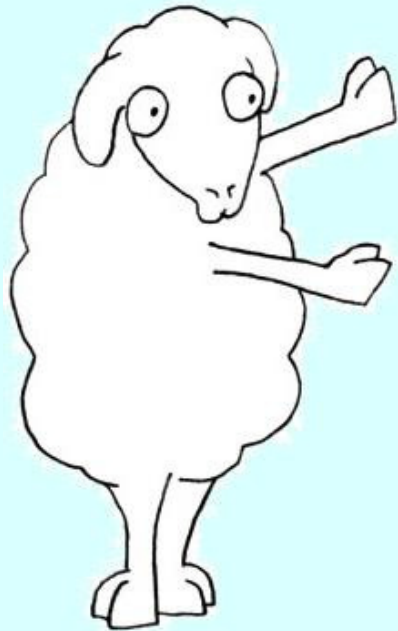


This Session

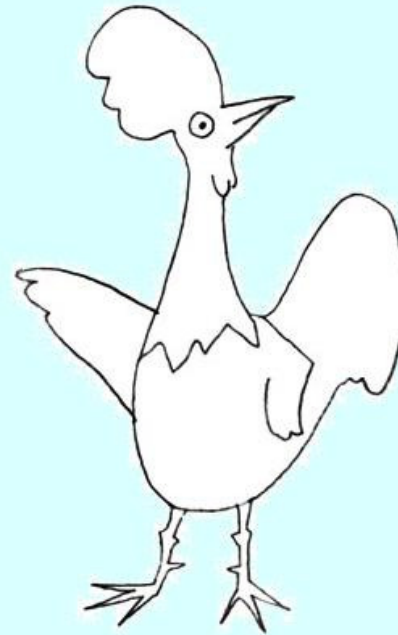
- Intro to terms and concepts
- Best practices
- Tools
- Multicultural issues
- Using results
- Q&A



Introduction



Let's talk terms,
concepts, and
myths!



What is usability testing?

- “A way to measure how well people can use a product for its intended purpose”
- Not QA testing
 - no faulty materials
 - meet specs
- Usability asks
 - design in terms of user (intuitive, etc.)
 - meet needs



VS.



Usability myths

- It's too expensive
- We don't have time
- We'll do it later
- Our engineers know what they are doing

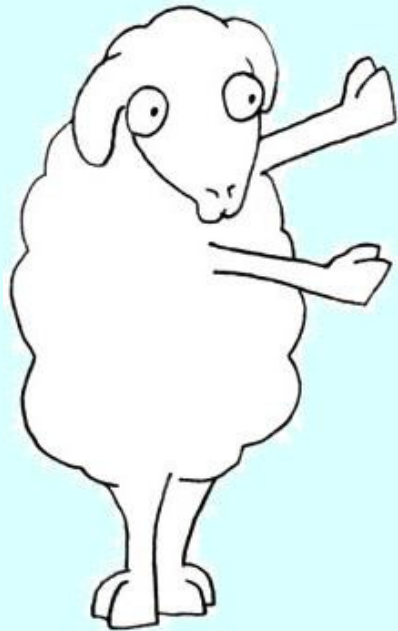


What is *documentation* usability testing?

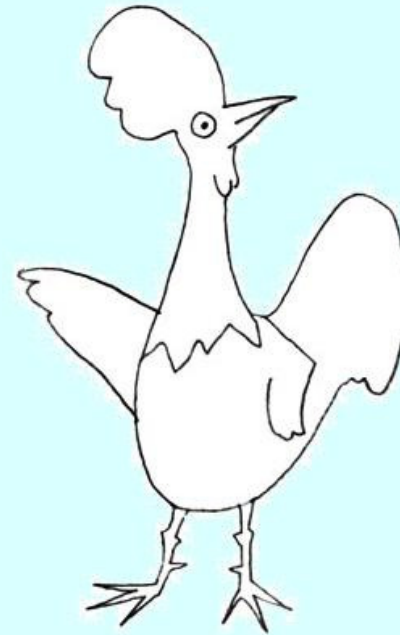
- Do users succeed with docs
 - can they navigate
 - can they find info
 - can they follow info
 - can they succeed
- Same myths, but...
 - even simpler
 - can occur later
 - independent of product QA budget



Best Practices



Learn the basic rules for effective documentation usability tests.



#1: Identify your audience.

- Identify your users
 - what do they know
 - what is their tech background
 - where/how will they use the product
- Tap in-house resources
- Create personas
- Screen testers
 - remove value judgments
 - keep “rejects”

Survey

Name: _____

Number of years of experience with dairy management: _____

Number of years of experience with computers:

Have you worked with an automated milking system before? Y N

#2: Select scenarios.

- List of tasks
 - get away from features
 - consider work flow
 - brainstorm
 - use users' words
- Pick problematic tasks
 - high failure rate
 - hard to write
 - new
- Navigation
 - signposting
 - "find xxx" task



#3: Set up environment.

- Test area
 - quiet
 - well-lit
- Product
 - working prototype
 - better: full version
- People
 - facilitators
 - SMEs (on call)
- Time and budget
 - give-aways
 - food



#4: Adapt for media.

- Print
 - task: sample pages
 - navigation: mock-up
- Soft-copy, online Help, or Web-based
 - hardware/software match target
 - resolution, color, etc.
- Capture face, voice, actions



#4: Follow protocols.

- Brief testers
 - you're testing us, we're not testing you!
 - think out loud
- Don't interfere
- Facilitate when necessary
- Ask open questions
- Conduct exit interview

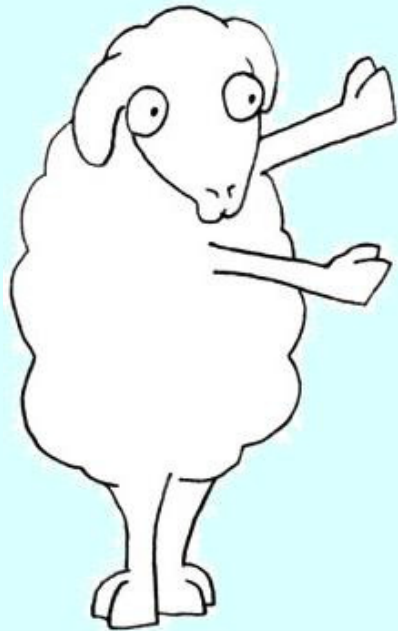


Exercise: conference program exit interview

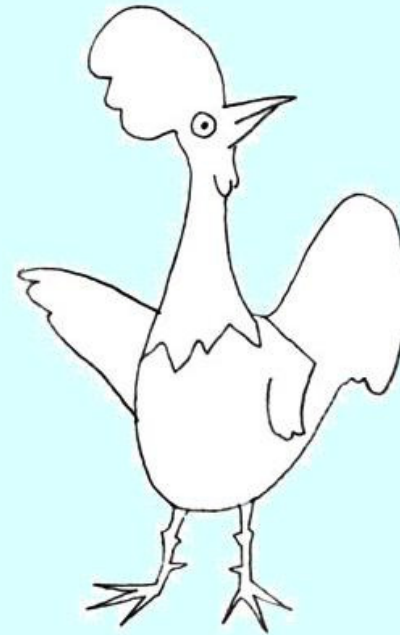
1. Pair up. One person is tester, one is facilitator.
2. Facilitator wants to get tester's comments and impressions about using the program to navigate and find this room.
3. Ask open questions.

(video samples)

Tools

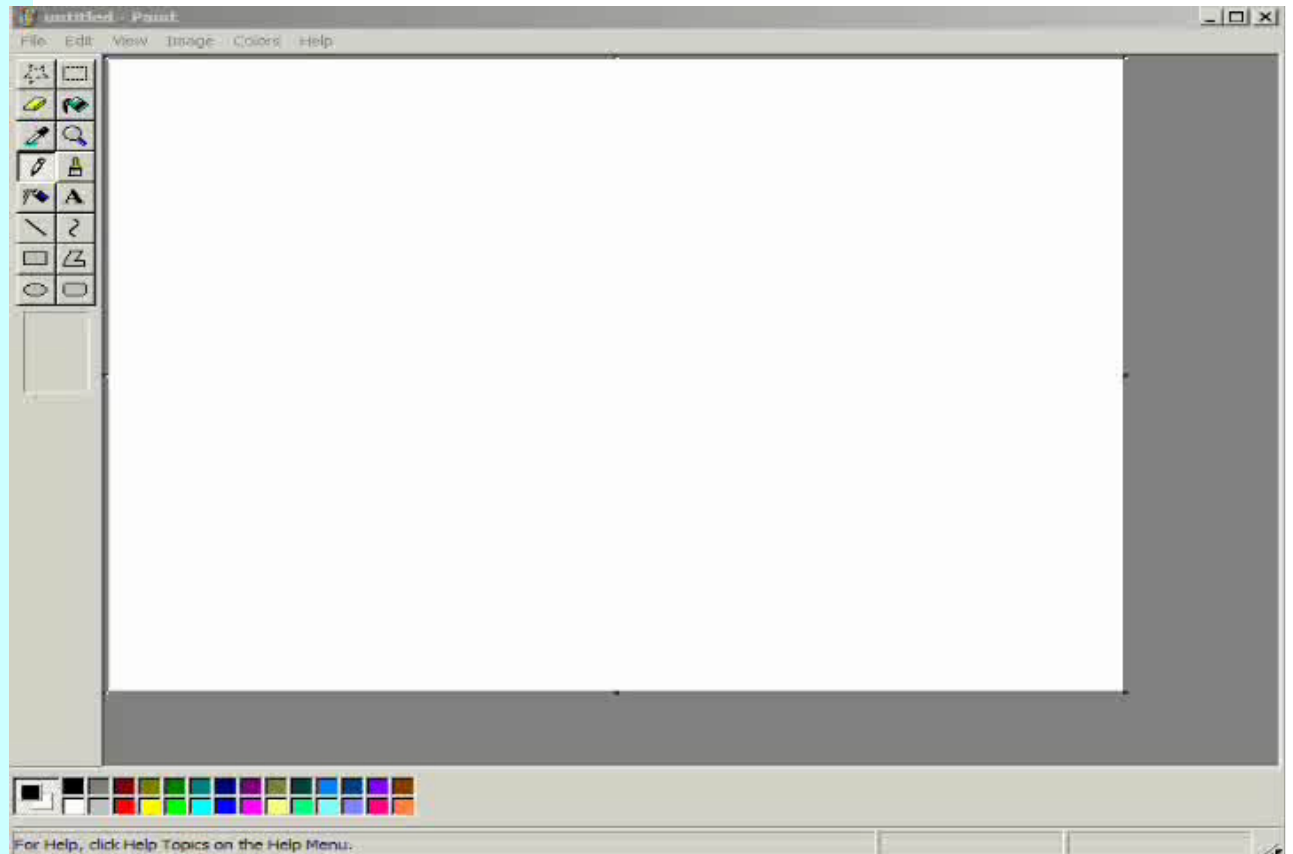


What's
available?

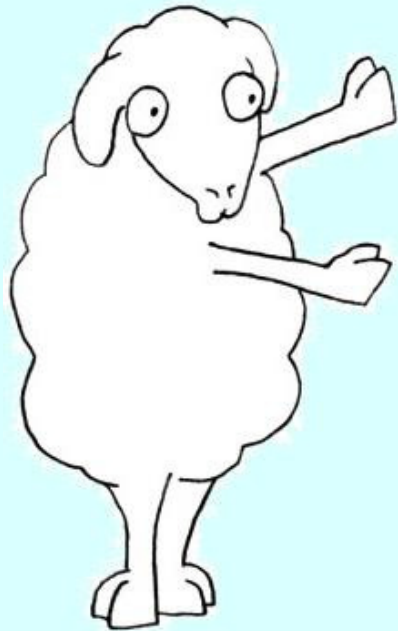


Options for every budget

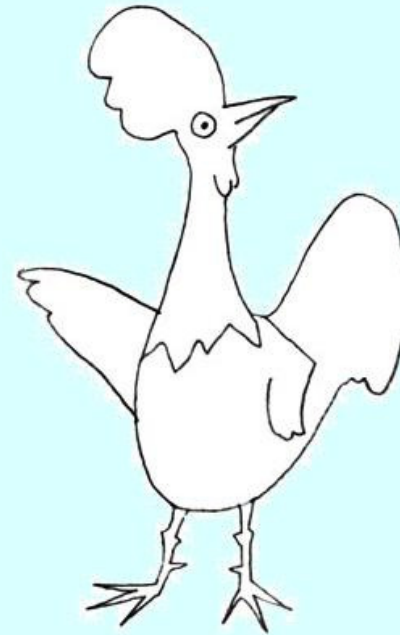
- Physical tasks
 - digital video
- Software tasks
 - capture mouse and screen actions
- Big tools
 - TechSmith: Morae, Camtasia Studio
 - Adobe Director (was Macromedia)
- Shareware
 - Screen2Video ActiveX
 - infallsoft
 - EZ Screen Recorder



Multicultural Issues

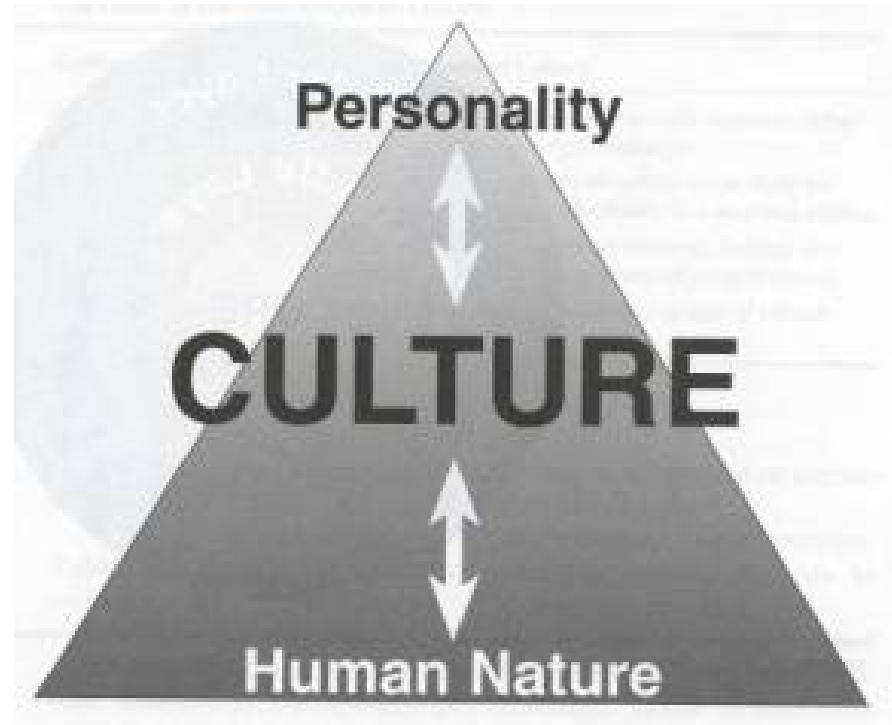


Be aware of
some major
potential pitfalls!

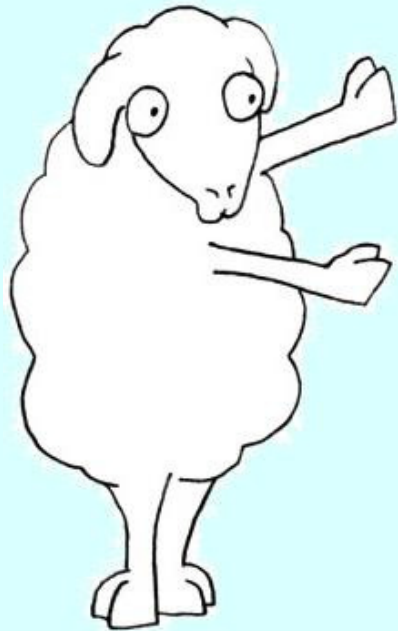


Culture affects participation

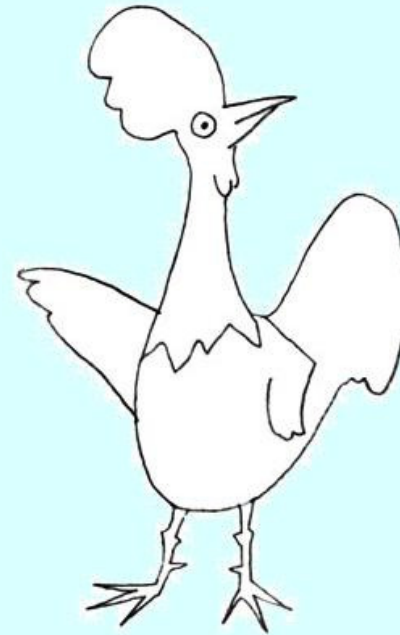
- Can't "insult" host
 - Bollywood
 - Our Competitors
- Can't make mistakes
 - Prepare Us for "Them"
- Can't ask questions
 - Parent/Child
- Language
 - Controlled English
 - graphics and icons



Using the Results



Documentation usability testing is only worthwhile if you do something with the results.

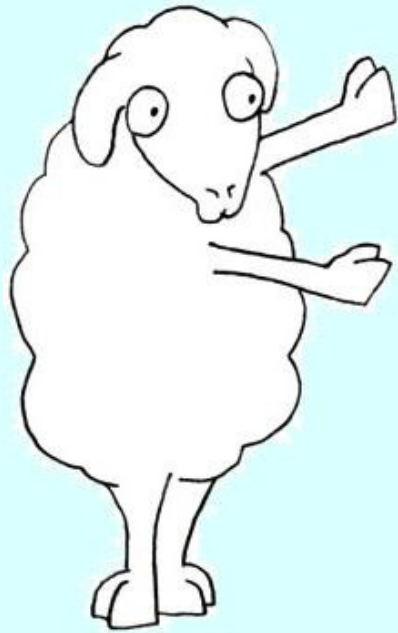


Create a report

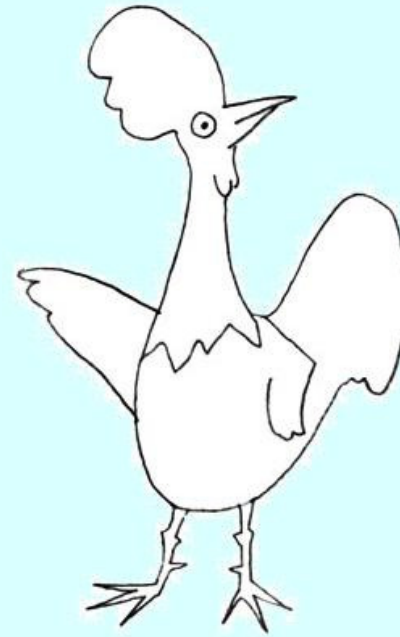
- Sort data
 - importance
 - simplicity of fix
 - matrix (best returns for lowest cost)
- Select key video
 - short and effective
 - multiple users
- Presentation rather than print report

Benefit \ Effort	Low	Medium	High
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change body font to improve readability. • Change paper stock to reduce reflection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doc “site map” to add to front of each element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add “show me” animation for all screen actions.
Medium		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review for Controlled English (shorten sentence length, simplify lexicon). • Pull icons into sidebar for all steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull icons into sidebar for all steps. • Create fake user for examples throughout.
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add page number to all xrefs. • Color blocks for PDF (extra navigation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add annotations to all graphics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major overhaul of index. • Add tutorial for setting up base floor pattern. • Change layout to allow side-by-side text and graphic throughout, adding graphic for each step.

Conclusion



You're all set!



How can you get started?

- Start small
- Get in-house allies
- Show initiative
- Monitor before and after results
- Join the Usability & User Experience SIG



Slow down—usability testing ahead!

In Other WORDS

- Technical communication projects
- Translation
- Training
- Publishing
- Bovine psychotherapy



Leah Guren

Director of Training

In Other WORDS

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