

Proposal: One Summative Usability Test

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Purpose: *Propose One Summative Usability Test*

The purpose of this document is to propose ***one summative usability test*** be conducted and completed for company XYZ's website.

Goal: *Identify Usability Issues*

Our goal is to identify underlying usability issues users face while using our website so we can enhance the product before it goes live.

Timeframe: *Three Months*

The website needs to go live in time for the upcoming Super Bowl, which is scheduled for Feb. 5, 2017. Our usability testing would begin in November of this year, which gives us about three months to complete the work.

Budget: *Allows for 2 formative tests or 1 summative test*

Our budget allows for the user research team to conduct either two formative usability tests or one summative usability test. We've chosen to conduct one summative usability test.

Why Summative Usability Test?

- **What it is:** A summative usability test is defined as an evaluation of the "effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction of the complete product" (*Usability Body of Knowledge*), which is exactly what we're looking to evaluate for company XYZ.
- **Timing is right:** A summative usability test should be conducted after the "fundamental or high-level design or organization of the product has been established" (Rubin, p. 34).
- **Where we are:** We are in the "site build" stage of the development lifecycle (Fig. 1.0), which is an ideal time to conduct a summative usability test (Rubin, p. 34).
- **Objectives** (*Usability Body of Knowledge*) of a summative usability test include measuring:
 - Task completion
 - Time on task
 - Error rates
 - User satisfaction

... all of which we are seeking to measure for company XYZ's website before it goes live.



Fig. 1.0 — [source](#)

Why Not Formative Usability Tests?

- **What it is:** A formative usability test is used to “form the design of a product” (*Usability Body of Knowledge*). Furthermore, a formative usability test is used in “evaluating a product or service during development, often iteratively, with the goal of detecting and eliminating usability problems.”
- **It’s too late:** We’re already in the “*site build*” stage of the development lifecycle. A formative usability test needs to be conducted earlier in the cycle, during prototyping (Rubin, p. 28). Moreover, to be effective more than one formative test must be conducted as part of an iterative process.
- **Major drawback:** From *Usability Body of Knowledge*:

One important aspect of formative evaluation is that the audience for the observations and recommendations is the project team itself, used to immediately improve the design of the product or service and refine the development specifications.

- We are seeking to test **users from our target audience, and it’s too late to refine development specifications**, which is why a formative test is not ideal. We need real feedback, both qualitative and quantitative, from members of our target audience on our existing design. A summative, not formative, usability test will allow us to do such.

Next steps

We will conduct:

- One summative usability test starting in November to identify underlying usability issues on company XYZ’s website
- Results will be offered in time for changes to be made to the website’s design before it goes live in February, in time for the Super Bowl

References:

Rubin, Jeffrey. *Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan, Design, and Conduct Effective Tests*. New York: Wiley, 2008. Print.

"Usability Body of Knowledge." *Formative Evaluation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2016.

"Usability Body of Knowledge." *Summative Evaluation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2016.