

Project Description Module

Study 2.5: Testing outcomes

METHOD

- Participants were shown a project description for 5 seconds. They then described their impressions of what they would be doing at the project.
- Each participant was shown a mix of 10 original or rewritten project descriptions.
- The criteria for participants in the first research group was that they have at least 20 project hours this year. The volume of projects that participants had completed varied widely, from several in the plus 100 range and several more in the 50-100 category. As well I recruited among a second group consisting of newly oriented volunteers.
- The findings with the initial 10 interviews were so clear that I did not research with the next group of 10, the newly oriented. (The Nielsen Norman Group recommends [5 participants](#) for usability testing). The project descriptions that were rewritten are time sensitive as they occur in late October to early January. About 75% of projects occurring during that time have been rewritten.

FINDINGS

- In the first interview, the participant was not sure of what she would be doing in **2 out of the 10 projects** she was shown. Both were original project descriptions. (Computer Basics, Therapeutic Horsemanship). The participant, a veteran volunteer, mentioned that she would probably google the community partner name and research it on her own. (Time-consuming as well as takes the user off our website).
- In subsequent interviews, I observed a clear **pattern of hesitancy and lack of detail** in the participant's descriptions of what they would be doing. For instance, "Its bingo, I guess with senior citizens.", or "not much description... just there's gonna be a dance and you're going to be there." My favorite was "I know what concrete is and I just don't know what it has to do with any gardening." (Gardening with Concrete Safaris at Jefferson Gardens).
- Several participants had volunteered on one of the projects they were viewing. This participant, a medical student, points out the discrepancy between the description and the experience. "I did this project! Yeah. I didn't know what it was about. **I didn't understand what sports adventure necessarily was. I didn't know what PS 188 M was...**but I liked it [he did the project, twice]. It was cool.... But at the same time, I felt like it [the description] should

describe a little bit more about... what's required.” [He felt that other volunteers were not prepared for the kid’s energy levels].

- In contrast, participants mostly understood more detail and responded more immediately after seeing the revised project descriptions. For instance, “I don’t really do ballroom dancing! [But] I’d be escorting them, dancing with them” or “Escorting senior citizens to bingo. Some of them will be in a wheelchair so you’ll be pushing them.”

- Some projects will always be difficult to describe. Projects that involve supporting people with disabilities as they participate in an activity such as running, or horseback riding are complicated to explain in short form. The Therapeutic Horsemanship description rewrite did a bit better in terms of comprehension, but a few participants were still confused.

MATERIALS

- Participants were shown one of two balanced groups of project descriptions, Test A or Test B.

- Participants responses on this spreadsheet (link deleted)

- Participants profiles (link deleted) including their age, volunteering patterns, and other quotes including why the volunteer and what devices they use.

- A few examples of project descriptions before and after:

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