USABILITY STUDY PROPOSAL

PREPARED BY THE ABC CO. WEB RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT TEAM

INTRODUCTION

The following proposal has been prepared based on the identified need to understand our current site users. It is intended to outline the process necessary to gain insights into usability issues currently being encountered, observing the patterns and behaviors of our site users.

Usability can be defined as "when a product or service is truly usable, the user can do what he or she wants to do the way he or she expects to be able to do it, without hindrance, hesitation, or questions," according to Jeffrey Rubin and Dana Chrisnell in *Handbook of Usability Testing: How to Plan Design, and Conduct Effective Tests.* (p.4)

Currently, it appears, our customers are experiencing usability issues.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Peak sales season is quickly approaching, and a recent review of analytics shows that customers are leaving our site on page XYZ 80% of the time, as they add items to their shopping cart. At this time, we can only speculate as to why this is taking place.

The focus, needs and problems of the site need to be clearly defined, in order to allow for a redesign that will cater to the needs of our current customers, who appear to be encountering an issue, as demonstrated by the high exit rate.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that a usability evaluation take place to identify what is causing users to abandon the site on this page. The purpose of this qualitative testing type is to identify usability problems, while observing the users, so that they can be mended. Due to the short timeframe, as the peak season quickly approaches, it is important to note that testing can be accomplished with as few as five participants at a time. Recruitment should include an analysis of logged in users who have participated in this behavior.

While this usability testing approach is not a quantitative method, it does provide actionable insights. A return on investment can be realized if one issue is corrected from this research through increased usefulness, efficiency and satisfaction with the page. This can then be measured by analytics by a decrease in the exit rate.

Through an iterative, agile process, we will conduct testing in three weekly sprints. During each sprint the previous testing session's results will influence our design iterations, with the next testing group viewing the updated design and expanding upon any issues they encounter with the new iteration.

To quantify, why this qualitative approach will work, Jakob Nielsen of the Nielson Norman Group writes, "after the first study with five participants has found 85% of the usability problems, you will want to fix these problems in a redesigns." He goes on to claim that "the ultimate user experience is improved much more by 3 studies with 5 users each than by a single monster study with 15 users."

To reduce expenses and meet the goals of our timeline, practicing Nielsen's industry standard will allow us to maximize insight, while minimizing cost. Robert A. Virzi also notes in his article *Refining the test phase of Usability Evaluation: How Many Subjects is Enough?* that "80% of the usability problems are detected with four or five subjects, (b) additional subjects are less and less likely to reveal new information, and (c) the most severe usability problems are likely to have been detected in the first few subjects."

Therefore, over the course of the project's timeline (found on the following page) we will be able to gain enough insight and implement enough changes to reduce the percentage of site users leaving the site on XYZ page.

PROJECT GOAL

The primary goal of the project is identify why users are leaving the page and not completing purchases, in order to reduce the percentage of exits, which would impact peak sales season. The project will answer the following questions:

1. Who are the users involved in the cart abandonment?
2. What problems would users like to be solved?
3. How can we solve these problems through a redesign?

PROJECT ACTIVITIES: SCOPE

The following scope is designed to answer the questions identified in the project goal.

Recruitment will take place, identifying five participants for each week's testing sessions, in order to test the current design iteration. Additional analytics will be pulled to identify if the users contributing to the exit rate are existing or returning customers. If customers are logged in the IDs will be obtained and those customers will be invited to participate in the usability testing. Participants will be reminded that there is no right or wrong answer and they will be provided an incentive for their time.

Planning will include generating carefully worded tasks surrounding the issue encountered on XYZ page with the large exit rate. Incentives will be provided and will need to be prepared and collected in respect to participant waivers and tax documentation. Session time will need to be calculated based on the number of tasks and tested. Equipment will additionally need to be tested and a location reserved for testing and observation.

Testing will take place initially on the current website and with each sprint a new iteration, based on participant feedback and changes implemented from said feedback. Testing will be, in the form of individual testing sessions, with users being asked to perform key tasks. Results will be recorded and observation is welcome to the team and stakeholders. Usability testing is designed to identify what problems exist.

Debrief - After each testing the top observations from each participant will be shared. A collaborative meeting of stakeholders, development team and marketing team members will take place. The identification of issues based on priority will be completed through a rating system, with the commitment to fix them before the next round of testing through sprint assignments.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES TIMELINE

The following global timeline of activities is a fluid estimate and is subject to change, based on testing results, design iterations and unforeseen occurrences. The timeline will follow an agile process with sprint planning. There will be a total of three sprints with regards to usability testing during weeks 2-4.

		SPRINT WEEKS		
ACTIVITY WEEK	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
RECRUITMENT	X			
PLANNING	X	X	X	X
TESTING		X	X	X
REPORTING		X	X	X
DESIGN ITERATIONS		X	X	X

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

1. A weekly debriefing, summarizing the findings and recommendations of the usability testing sessions.
2. Overall recommendations based on the research for design iterations in each sprint.
3. Weekly design iteration changes.
4. A complete report and analysis.

COLLABORATORS

1. Development Team
2. Marketing Team
3. Executive Stakeholders
4. Users

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A project manager will be appointed to assist in meeting the outlined project goals according to the timeline. Files will be shared via Google Drive. The project assignments will be managed using a shared application to identify assignments for each sprint. The project manager will provide weekly updates to the team and executive stakeholders and will organize additional meetings to report on the project's progress.