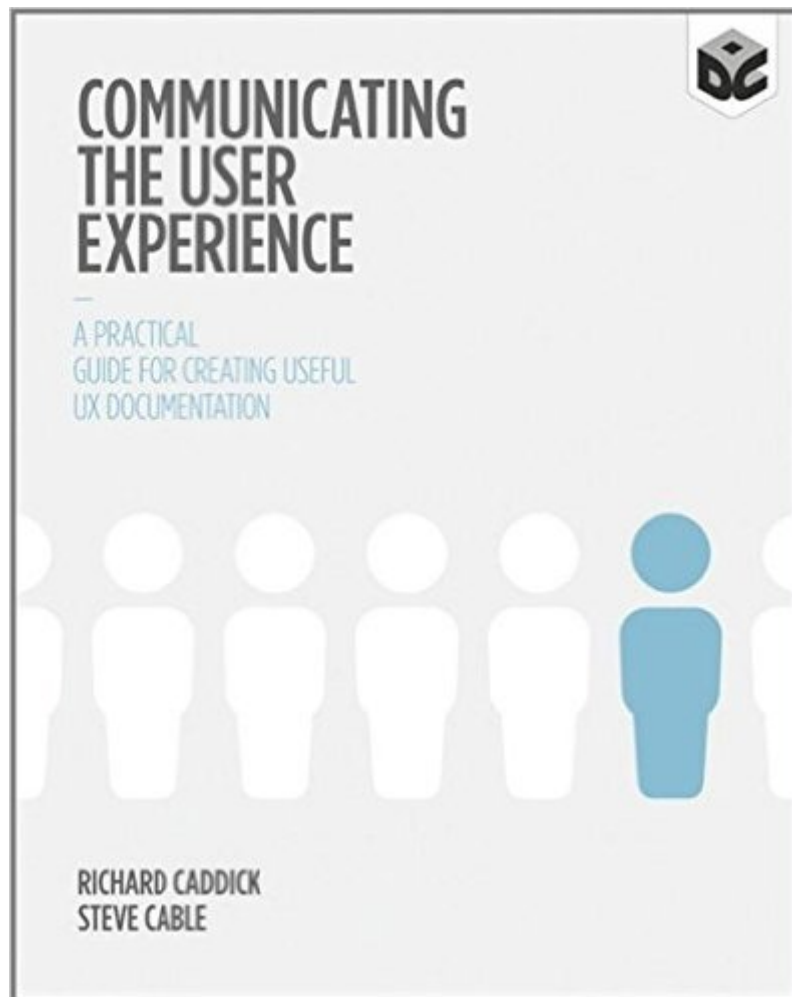


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Communicating The User Experience: A Practical Guide For Creating Useful UX Documentation



Synopsis

A clear and focused guide to creating useful user experience documentation As web sites and applications become richer and more complex, the user experience (UX) becomes critical to their success. This indispensable and full-color book provides practical guidance on this growing field and shares valuable UX advice that you can put into practice immediately on your own projects. The authors examine why UX is gaining so much interest from web designers, graduates, and career changers and looks at the new UX tools and ideas that can help you do your job better. In addition, you'll benefit from the unique insight the authors provide from their experiences of working with some of the world's best-known companies, learning how to take ideas from business requirements, user research, and documentation to create and develop your UX vision. Explains how to create documentation that clearly communicates the vision for the UX design and the blueprint for how it's going to be developed Provides practical guidance that you can put to work right away on their own projects Looks at the new UX tools and ideas that are born every day, aimed at helping you do your job better and more efficiently Covers a variety of topics including user journeys, task models, funnel diagrams, content audits, sitemaps, wireframes, interactive prototypes, and more Communicating the User Experience is an ideal resource for getting started with creating UX documentation.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Wiley; 1 edition (September 19, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1119971101

ISBN-13: 978-1119971108

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.7 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #413,897 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #202 in Â Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Technical #207 in Â Books > Computers & Technology > Graphics & Design > User Experience & Usability #523 in Â Books > Textbooks > Computer Science > Graphics & Visualization

Customer Reviews

I wasn't quite sure what to expect in getting this book. As an experienced UI person, there is the constant juggle of documentation versus development. You can work with developers in an Agile

environment on the fly, but what does QA test to? I was hoping this book addressed this new age question. It most certainly does not. But that is my mistake as this book does not suggest that will do that. Instead, I found a fairly basic book on UI, that deals with the earlier stages or more basic stages of UI development and how to document that. Imagine you are a consultant or a UI person looking into a new website or application, or reviewing an old site to resolve some issues. It is this level of early documentation this book is discussing: *Personas* Task Models*User Journeys*Content Requirements*Sitemaps*Wireframes*Usability Test Reports*Funnel Diagrams What I found surprising was the detailed instructions on how to create each of these items in various Software programs; mostly Omnigraffle or MS Powerpoint. There was some reference to Axure, MS Word and MS Excel as well, but they were in the minority. Nearly half of this book (158 pages versus 332 overall) concerned itself with detailed instructions for how to create this documentation in a very specific format. Since the Omnigraffle instructions were uniquely for an Apple system; 81 pages had instructions that I could not use. Having not had Axure available to me, another 15 were of no use either. A concern, I have with all this specificity for a format, was, that it may not fit all circumstances. I get that it may be graphically pleasing to present information in this format for various situations, but it is also highly limiting. If you are consulting, their customer may have unique requests. Also if this graphical technique of representing data, was used by a prior consultant, it makes it seem unimaginative or non-customized for the clients circumstances. Through the book, I did find sections that were repetitive, leading me to consider this a more basic text; however there were some great nuggets. As an example in the section on Content requirements they appropriately point out the usefulness of testing with 5 users 5 times versus 25 users at the end, this is a time honored Human Factors tenant. Additionally in the Wireframe section, I liked the use of shading to portray visual heat in a section to help with the hierarchy of information. This is a simple way to be sure your locations of information and graphics are doing what they are supposed to. In summary, this was a basic text on Human factors and User Experience documentation that will provide a framework and some sound guidance on how to design or redesign a site or application for a defined task. It also gives some very particular instructions on how to do this in a few very popular software programs.

* Some interesting ideas* Sometimes well presented, sometimes not* Not well written Before going into details, here is the impression that I got from these authors: "We are good at our jobs. We are going to tell you exactly how we do our jobs. Do your job exactly the way we do ours, and you will be good at your job too." I don't see this approach very often in technical documents, but I always

cringe when I do. I have a couple of problems with that approach. Besides the underlying assumption ("we are good at our jobs"), there is an even worse assumption that one size fits all. The assumption that the reader can apply these basic steps as a formula and reach the same results with any client is a scary assumption. Life simply doesn't work that way. In my experience, I can't necessarily apply the same techniques from one client to the next, let alone expect different individuals to apply the techniques the same way. My other problem with this one size fits all approach is that if it were actually true, then there really isn't anything unique about the individual designer--anybody can follow these simple steps and reach the same results--even a caveman could do it. And I hate to be so critical (and you can see from my other reviews that I'm normally not so critical), but the writing is really disappointing. A decent technical editor (or even diligent self-editing) should have caught some of the basic errors and helped polish the tone of the writing: "By using decreasing the size of each block, you can more accurately represent the number of visitors on each page." I make that same mistake all the time. I start a sentence and then the phone rings or someone walks into my cubicle and I get distracted. When I resume the sentence, I don't quite remember where my thought was going and I end up with stuff like "using decreasing". That's why you have to self-edit everything you write, and then if you're publishing it for sale, pay a good editor to try to punch holes in it. This book spends a lot of time with very specific "how to" or "click here" instructions with various tools. For example, the Wireframe chapter is 106 pages. Of those 106 pages, about 80 of them contain step by step procedures for creating wireframe diagrams in OmniGraffle, Axure, and PowerPoint. That's a lot of pages devoted to very specific instructions, which--if I follow them--will lead me to create wireframes that look exactly like the authors'. But what if I don't use those tools? What if I just use Visio or some other tool? Does that mean those pages are all wasted on me? And what if I have a different design style than the authors (or what if my client has different tastes & needs)? If I follow these specific "how to" steps, I'm going to end up with a final product that doesn't fit anyone's needs. I think it would have been a whole lot more useful to present more general concepts and fewer "click here" steps. Tell the reader all about what goes into a good wireframe, but don't tell me how to use the software tools to create the wireframes. I should be able to figure out the tools on my own. I found it very interesting that a book on user experience design left out such an obvious human factor: the reader's user experience. What exactly is the reader's experience in reading this book? If the purpose of this book were to turn a job over so that someone else could do the job identically and replace the author, then the book serves that purpose pretty well (writing notwithstanding). Otherwise, I don't find this approach to be the right way to teach the topics to the audience.

The book's format was done in a step style and reads easily with a few editing errors. It gives practical instruction. But it was pretty specific on the tools to create a lot of the documentation which is only of use if the company you work for actually has and supports them. I've been in User Experience for 12 years and am currently a Lead Information Architect. I do wireframes in Visio and there was nothing about Visio in that section of the book. When I was a contractor, I found such a variety in tools and documentation that I think it's more useful to learn about concepts for creating good documentation rather than steps in a specific tool.

I'm transitioning to a career in UX design and this book was invaluable. It was really nice to see what common deliverables actually look like as well as a detailed description of the elements in each deliverable and why they are important. This is an excellent, thorough book and I definitely recommend it to people new to the field. The downloads (e.g., Omnigraffle stencils and templates) are a great bonus!

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