TOOLKIT1

Understanding the End Users of Websites and User Needs

Tool kit 1: Understanding the End users of the Website and User needs

Websites will serve the purpose, if and only if it is in sync with the needs of the end user of the website. Hence, user needs are the first and most important area in the whole cycle of websites. But before understanding user needs, it is important to understand who the users of the website are going to be.

I.   Starting by identifying who are the End Users of the Website

- Identifying the users should be the starting point while designing a website.

- Then understand their requirements and needs so that the website is attuned to the user expectations. It also increases the probability of the user acceptance of the websites.

- Clear understanding of the context of use in which the websites are going to be used can help build better usability.

II.   Understanding User Needs

Users are diverse and their expectations are also of the same nature. An early understanding of their needs can help factor a lot of these in the design process of the website.

- User needs to have the highest place in the priority of website design.

- So trying to understand who they are, what they want, how they look for in the website and when they look for the information (at what periodicity) are considered essential factors to be kept in mind.

- Always get feedback from users .Getting this early on will make users feel that their inputs are valuable and that they have been listened to;

Oftentimes, there is a tendency to put what we want rather than what users want and this should be avoided.

A deeper understanding of user, their larger expectations and needs play an important role in the long term sustainability of websites. Two activities are recommended to be carried out as a part of this Toolkit.

Activity 1: Identifying the End Users who are going to be the Target Audience of the Website

Who are the end users of the website and why identifying them matters? If the end user or audience of the website is known, then the following can be made possible:

- If users are known, then we can interact with them to understand their needs
- With the information on how the target audience describes the type of services or information that they come to the site for, the website labelling can be matched to it.
- Knowing what type of information is often looked for will help to structure and prioritize the contents on the site and make the site relevant to them.
- What is not required by user must be removed from the website
- How their life is better thanks to your service, you know which end-benefits to communicate
- … and so on and so forth.
- Traditionally, defining end users involves determining their age, sex, geographic locations, and their needs.

1. Who are the users ?

    End Users of Government websites generally fall into the following categories:
    - Citizens who form the largest base of Government Websites
    - Business Community
    - Government
    - NGOs

    Further categorization is possible of the above categories. Say, citizens can further be categorised based on the following:
    - Age group
    - Gender
    - Internet Literacy
    - Differently-abled
    - Geographic Profile
    - Quality of Access to Internet
    - Language and Culture

    a. Work profile (Student community/Professionals/Labour Community)

2. Further classify them as :

    a. Farmers

    b. Students

    c. Job Seekers

    d. Skilled workers

    e. ……………..

3. What do they look for or what are their needs and expectations?

4. How they describe the information or service they want?

5. Then prioritize the end users in the following way:

● Primary: This set of users will be your site's main focus and site will be designed and optimized for this set.

● Secondary: Users who are important, but not critical.

Knowing the end users is important as the information can help guide the structure of the website and using the appropriate labeling for the menu

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Suggested Methodology for Activity 1:

Do a Brain Storming Session within the department. Try and include members from the constituent organizations of the Main department.

Activity 2: Understanding User Needs

From Activity 1, the end users are identified. The outcome of Activity 2 is gain deeper understanding of user needs and expectations. Direct and Telephonic Interviews with end users, Survey through questionnaires are methods to understand the user needs and information they look for from the website. While a strong preference should be given to the primary set of end users, it is important to select a cross section of users to get a reliable sampling.

How to do the research?

- Each Content manager in the department can identify groups of users in different categories.
- Elicit response on the needs through interviews and/or Questionnaires
- Write down the needs.
- Interviewing seven to ten users is usually sufficient to represent the majority of relevant user expectations.

(If it is not possible to conduct interviews and get user feedback, department should frame a questionnaire that can bring forth the characteristics and needs of the users.)

First, collect general information about each of your interviewees.

•Name • Role (e.g. citizen, business, student) •Geographic profile • Education• Type of computer the individual users to access information (desktop, laptop, mobile) • Type of Internet connection

Second, needs and expectations of users from the department website:

- What does the user want?
- What type of information does he/she seek?
- How does he/she look for the information?

If department already has a website, then the following questions may be additionally framed:

Which areas are most useful, often used and why?

What impression does the individual want to have upon exiting the site?

What does the individual user like about the existing site?

What frustrates the individual in the current site?

Is the content written in a way that the individual understands?

Create data sheets for your interview findings. Combine and make a consolidated sheet of all Content Managers findings.They build a common understanding of users' objectives.

Do the User research and write down the needs (User category wise)