

Summary Report - Portal Theme Test (Instructors)

Project: CourseCompass Portal Theme
Version: 0.1
Report Date: February 26, 2010
Test Date: February 24-26, 2010
Test Location: Indianapolis, IN
Prepared by: Stuart Ough / Enlie Wang
Phone Number: 317-428-3202 / 317-428-3228
Email: stuart.ough@pearson.com
enlie.wang@pearson.com

Methodology

Objective

The session focused on high-level interactions with static Portal theme concepts to test the intuitiveness of the information architecture, labels, interface elements, and functional features of the portlet designs.

Test Design

Instructor sessions were conducted by the LTG usability team (Enlie Wang & Stuart Ough) from Feb. 24 - 26, 2010 using remote testing methods. Each online session lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded using the Techsmith UserVue software.

The session recordings can be reviewed at: http://ux.pearsoned.com/research/usability/usability_studies/Portal%20Theme/index.html

Participants

Part A: Eight college instructors were recruited from contacts provided by CourseCompass product managers. One instructor was unable to attend their session, therefore seven sessions were completed in this study. Each instructor received a \$50 gift card for their time.

Major Findings

1. **Column Design:** Participants preferred two-column layout over the three-column layout
Recommendation: Use the 2-column layout
2. **Tab Design:** They liked the tabs (or top menu) in addition to the widgets. They did not want the menu in lieu of the widget; it was not a "must have" item.
Recommendation: It is okay to have both the menu and widget, however the menu could be dropped if time constraints exist to implement.

3. **Portlet Button (Magnifying Glass):** The "Magnifying Glass" button caused some confusion (Participants thought perhaps it would open a search, or increase the size of text.).
Recommendation: Do not use the magnifying glass icon. Consider a different icon for this button, or discuss using the portlet title to access the focus view.
4. **Tool Tips:** Mouse-over balloons are very helpful.
Recommendation: Use mouse-over balloons, apply to buttons and titles if they have a special feature. Tip text must be very concise.
5. **Portlet Button (Min/Max):** They would like to use the minimize/maximize button to collapse/expand a portlet; strong relation to browsers.
Recommendation: We suggest to use the minimize/maximize buttons in the portlet. Participants found comfort and consistency in this button with their existing browser experience.
6. **myPearson Logo:** They liked the "MyPearson" logo on the prototype, and thought it was better than the one on the live site. A few comments that it will mean little to the students.
Recommendation: Consider another round of study for the logo. Keep the logo consistent across the Pearson products.
7. **ID Badge:** Participants did not have a negative reaction to the icon design itself. One person suggested it was too big in comparison to the help and sign out icons. He preferred the consistency of the three icons in the current CourseCompass portal.
Recommendation: Conduct a rapid A/B design comparison study for the different badge design within the context of a site header design.
8. **Labels:** Need better label for the "MyPlaces" portlet, it was too broad and not descriptive enough.
Recommendation: Do not use the "MyPlaces" title. Consider a different term for this portlet - see figure 16 in the NSM Final Report for alternative options (http://ux.pearsoned.com/research/usability/usability_studies/NSM/Usability_Testing_Report%20-%20NSM_1hr_Sessions_final.pdf).
9. **Rearranging Portlets:** "Drag and drop" feature is very desirable. They were split between the hand or arrows icon.
Recommendation: Either icon works fine. For consistency with the current user experience, the 4-arrows design is suggested. We also suggest the icon appears when the mouse hovers over the portlet header (see iGoogle page for example).
10. **Current CourseCompass:** Terms used to describe the current CourseCompass design included: "Busy" (5), "Predictable", "Inviting", "Organized", "Unlabeled", "Eye-appealing". Note, the test account used had a number of active and non-active courses; when displayed this added a large amount of text to the page. In particular it was noted that Announcement area still displayed the course title for in-active courses.
11. **Announcement Level:** Participants expected the announcement to be "system level" and preferred "course level" announcements were contained within the course site.
Recommendation: Clearly group the announcements by system, or course, whether by the use of section headers (e.g., General Announcements, Course Announcements), or by coordinating font color/icon design for each announcement to show type.
12. **Activity Indicator:** One participant expected to see a new activity indicator for each class within the MyCourses portlet. For example, under the course title the system may display: Submissions - (10), New Messages - (2), New Announcements - (0).
Recommendation: Evaluate the feasibility of this feature.
13. **Back/Breadcrumb:** Most used the browser's "Back" button as the first method to return to the home, however once they found the breadcrumb they liked having the option (also good for deeper levels).
Recommendation: Continue to include the breadcrumb trail, but make it more visible to the participant. Consider making the font bigger or colored enclosure.
14. **Log In/Log Out:** While user's did not have a strong preference for "Log In" vs. "Sign In", or "Log Out" vs. "Sign Out" -- so long as the pairs were consistent within the product and across

products -- the majority chose Log In/Log Out.

Recommendation: Use a pair that is consistent within the Pearson products.

15. **Prototypes vs. Current:** Participants see the prototypes as an overall improvement over the live CourseCompass portal (avg. agreement rating of 5.43 out of 7)

16. **Number of Portlets:** Participants felt the page was getting too busy. They did not want to see unnecessary portlets on the portal page (i.e., most felt the My Pearson ID portlet was useless and should be removed).
Recommendation: Limit the number of portlets. Portlets to keep are: MyCourses, Announcements, MyCommunities, redesigned MyPlaces

17. **Portlet Rankings:** Participants were asked to rate the importance of each portlet features. The features ranked by importance are: (1) Edit, (2) Contextual Help, (3/4) Collapse/Expand or Delete/Restore (5)Move/Arrange
Recommendation: Consider these rankings when assigning implementation schedule and resources.

Ratings - Portlet Properties

Property	Edit	Move/Arrange	Collapse/ Expand	Contextual Help	Delete/Restore
User 1	10	5	5	9	9
User 2	10	7	10	10	5
User 3	7(*)	8	8	9	8
User 4	10	7	9	9	8
User 5	8	10	10	8	10
User 6	9	3	5	7	7
User 7(**)	10	10	10	10	10
Ave Rating:	9.5	7.14	8.14	8.86	8.14
Std Deviation:	0.76	2.36	2.10	0.99	1.64

(*) Depends on portlet, some will need editing while others will not.

(**) Felt any customization option is nice to have for those who want it.