Interface Consistency
Communication 437

Users usually don’t want to experiment, they want to use.

Consistency

Interface Consistency

Faster and easier development
Better user experience
Doesn’t mean frozen design standards
Mental Model

“An explanation in someone’s thought process for how something works in the real world”
– http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_model

“The way a person believes a system works”
– The Design of Sites, p. 683

Mental Models in HCI

Explain system behavior
Predict system behavior

Mental Models

Match site’s models to user’s existing models
Apply models consistently
Stick to existing conventions

Mental Maps

• Conceptual models of how to get from here to there
• Should be transparent to the user

Broken or Inappropriate Models

Confuse users

![Image of a web page with error messages]

1. Click OK if you want to proceed with the operation, otherwise click Cancel.
2. Click OK if you need to perform a series of actions, otherwise click Cancel.
Home Page & The Big Picture

• What site is this? (where am I?)
• What can I do here? (what's here?)
• What do they have here? (where can I go?)

— Steve Krug, *Don’t Make Me Think*, p. 99

Functional Design

Where Am I? = BRAND

Where Can I Go? = NAV

What's Here? = CANVAS

Functional: Huffington Post

VOLCKER TO BIGGEST BANKS: BECOME SMALLER AND SAFER

Functional: Amazon

Kindle Thin and Lightweight

Functional: Web Designer
Where Am I?

• Necessary to indicate location and purpose of all pages because users can initially enter site at any page via many means.
• Map content to context (both internal & external) to enhance effective communication.

What’s Here?

• Answers the question “Ok, now I know where I am, what can I do and where can I go?”

Where Can I Go?

Topic Paths / Breadcrumbs
Context Aids Navigation

Colors, position, other visual devices

“Clear communication of a site’s structure will help develop a user’s mental model.”

– p.53 Jeffrey Veen
Standards = Stagnation?

The Evolution of Contexts

• Contexts can and do change
• Usually these changes are slow
• How can we drive well-reasoned evolution?

Lessons Learned

• Context is internal & external
• Contexts evolve (slowly)
• Evolution is a series of small steps