

Using customer understanding to support adoption of handset features and services: a Hutchison 3G case study

Presented at Symbian SmartPhone conference 2005 by Michele Carter, Hutchison Whampoa; Simon Rubens, new experience limited

Introduction

Customers joining 3 are usually upgrading to vastly more sophisticated phones, typically describing them as being 'more like a PC'. We know from previous research that customers are very handset conscious and tend to be excited when they get their new phone. We also know that this interest and excitement can rapidly wane as the novelty wears off, and if customers do not adopt advanced features in the early days they are much less likely to in future. Sophisticated phones present a particular challenge to operators. On the one hand there can be a high cost of providing customer support to those who persevere with the most complex features like PC synchronisation. On the other hand, failure to encourage feature adoption may be a lost revenue opportunity for the operator.

The starting point for this project was a business case for developing a global multi-lingual user guide to replace separate handset guides in each market. But we also needed to ensure that a new design of user guide would encourage feature adoption among new customers, support self-help, and reduce the cost of providing customer support. With customers now on their fourth or fifth mobile phone we sensed that the 'old rules' had changed and we would need to gain a deep understanding of the 3G handset learning experience among our new customers. 3 chose to work with *new experience* a company that specialises in user experience research and design and has worked extensively in the mobile sector.

User experience research

User experience research differs from market research in that it focuses on exploring and understanding real customer behaviours and experiences. It is based on the premise that what people say they do is not always the same as what they actually do. It is a particularly effective approach for supporting design and innovation.

new experience recruited recently-joined 3 customers in the UK and Italy to represent a range of popular handsets. Three-hour research sessions combined the following

methodologies: mapping of handset learning experiences with cards representing different features; capturing customer stories of their learning experiences; task walk-throughs where customers attempted specific tasks like setting up email.

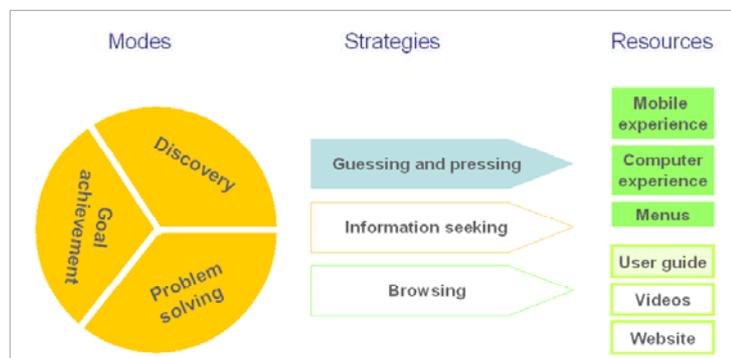


Analysis and modelling

Through analysis of the data *new experience* developed an experience model as a representation of the handset learning experience. An experience model is a tool for creating shared understanding and for supporting design and development decisions.

When people first get a phone they tend to operate in *goal achievement* mode; they have some specific aims to achieve like setting the date and time, adding contacts, making calls and sending texts. This involves *guessing and pressing* based on their previous mobile experience, the menus and sometimes their experience of using a PC. Unless they get stuck and frustrated people seem to quite enjoy working things out for themselves and sometimes inadvertently find out other things along the way.

People tend to enter *problem solving* mode when they run into a problem they can't puzzle out through guessing and pressing. Then they use *information seeking* to find the solution – usually by looking



in their user guide. In this mode their use of the guide is akin to a 'surgical strike' going into the guide to find what they want and then going out of it again.

Getting customers to engage in *discovery* mode is critical to the uptake of new added-value services. Operating in *discovery* mode involves much more than guessing and pressing. It's when customers want to discover the full capabilities of their new phone, many of which cannot be learned through guessing and pressing alone. It's a conscious activity that requires *browsing* of the user guide or other customer communications. Not all customers have the motivation to do this even though they have the desire to discover the capabilities of their new phone.

Conclusions and implications

Today's customers bring considerable experience of using mobiles and PCs to the handset learning experience enabling them to get quite far without assistance. They find it relatively easy to get up and running with the basics of calling, texting and sorting out contacts.

They are aware that their new phone offers exciting new features but they often have limited awareness of what these are. Customers prefer to learn by *guessing and pressing*. If new features are not readily apparent and accessible through the UI then customers are unlikely to discover them unless they browse the user guide.

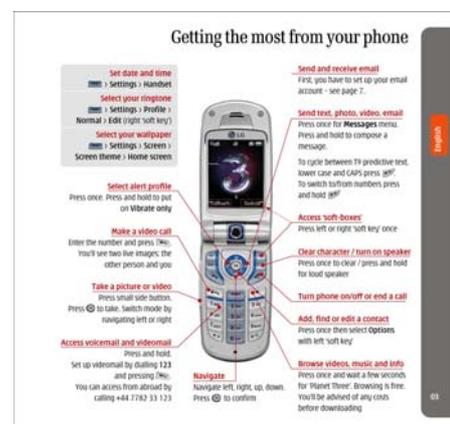
However user guides tend to start with basic handset operations and leave information about more interesting, advanced features until later. They also go into unnecessary detail around the basic operations. The result is an over-bulky guide that is off-putting and doesn't draw customers' attention to the new features.

Although customers are initially excited about discovering new features their time and motivation is limited and they may procrastinate *discovery*. As the days and weeks pass the chances of customers discovering new features reduces.

An added problem is that some advanced new features of handsets like email and PC synchronisation involve a complicated set up creating a further hurdle to adoption at which customers can fall.

The implications for manufacturers are to try and make all handset features easy to discover and learn through guessing and pressing and to avoid where possible the need for complex set up by the customer.

The implications for operators are to focus on helping customers learn about and discover the advanced features of their new handsets rather than go back over the basics. User guides and other communications need to make new features more apparent and accessible to customers. One of the ways the new user guide concept does this is by giving customers an immediate overview of their handset's capabilities.



It's worth remembering that for most customers interest and excitement in a new handset does not guarantee adoption of its advanced features.

About Hutchison Whampoa

HWL is one of the leading owners and operators of telecommunications, offering a wide range of related services in 16 countries. Operating under the 3 brand, HWL is leading the ongoing revolution in the 3G arena. HWL was one of the first operators in the world to introduce 3G services, enhancing people's lives with a vast range of multimedia mobile contents. HWL owns 3G licences in 10 markets: Australia, Austria, Denmark, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, and now has a customer base of more than 9.4 million.

www.hutchison-whampoa.com

About new experience

new experience is a London-based consultancy specialising in user experience research and design for mobile and financial services. We work with mobile networks and handset manufacturers to help them understand and improve user experience. Our work informs product and service innovation and the design of the UI. Our specialist skills include ethnographic in-context research, usability testing, information design and information architecture.

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