

Ensuring Hive Active Heating is a joy to use... as well as look at

Centrica Connected Home leads the UK market for smart heating controls with its Hive Active Heating system that allows users to control their heating and hot water from the Hive app, the Hive thermostat or the Hive website

In 2015 the company launched its new thermostat (Hive 2) with the aim of turning what had always been a functional device into a more attractive design with improved usability. The new thermostat would offer all the functionality of the website and app including sophisticated 7-day programming and other advanced functions.

To ensure the system worked well and looked good, Centrica Connected Home commissioned new experience to conduct pre-launch usability testing on the thermostat, and then to gain user experience feedback on in-life usage of the full Hive Active Heating system including the website and app.



Lab-based usability testing of thermostat and user guide

In the lead-up to the launch of the new thermostat we conducted several iterative rounds of usability testing on prototypes of the device and its supporting user guide. The testing identified usability issues that could be fixed before launch.

User experience feedback on installation, early usage and self help



Centrica Connected Home wished to gain feedback on the experience of installation and first few weeks of use. The company wanted to understand what opportunities existed to enhance the product and self-help experience.

To answer this brief we proposed a diary study involving daily blogging. A small number of customers were recruited to blog about their experiences for up to 4 weeks. Each day we monitored the blog posts, provided encouragement and looked to clarify responses when necessary.

Towards the end of the study we fed participants specific tasks relating to functions they hadn't yet tried out. Using an online tool we were also able to view recordings of participants using the app with their voice over commentary reporting their think-aloud experience.

At the end of the study we had participants record and send from their smartphones brief videos summing-up their experience with the system. These videos proved to be rich in detail and provided powerful material for internal communications.



Improved customer experience and future development opportunities

The feedback from the blogs provided rich and human detail on features that were most appreciated as well as areas that could be improved or added, such as a heating boost function and searchable online support. Participants were also very good at highlighting unmet needs that suggested exciting future development opportunities such as voice control.

What Centrica Connected Home had to say about working with us

“Working with the new experience team was brilliant; they worked closely with us to understand our business ensuring we gained the insight we needed. Their research helped to bring the Hive customer experience to life; it gave us a greater understanding of how our customers felt about our products and what areas we needed to improve to ultimately make their experience with Hive better.” *Kirsty Wright, Customer Experience Manager, Connected Home*