NNIP Camp Day 3

Session: Dashboard User Testing

September 25 2024 10:15am

Leader: Katie Zager

Notes: Rob Pitingolo

Attendance: Katie Zager, Rob Pitingolo, Lily Perkins-High, Sarah Minster, Belal Hossain, Laura Lyons, Abla Elsergany, Stephanie Quesnelle, Tommy Pearce

Zager: So, do we all do user testing on our dashboards? What brings you to this session?

Pearce: We don’t test.

Christopher: Same

Lyons: I am curious can we say no to a dashboard?

Minster: NLC we do dashboard creation through Power BI.

Quesnelle: We do testing, then don’t. Maybe we can be more consistent.

Perkins-High: We do testing for some not others.

Zager: Are these still useful? Is it becoming redundant. For anyone who has done testing, what have you done and worked?

Quesnelle: Citizen User Testing - a database of 800 residents with demographics. We can invite them to sit at a computer and test out the thing. Can they complete tasks. For things like a website, we just ask people in the office for feedback.

Lyons: We have an advisory group. We don’t get much feedback, but some people are very vocal. The advisory group can opt in to specific testing.

Quesnelle: We haven’t done an in-person in years. It costs about $8,000 to run a full test.

Zager: Do you run into issues for people from other places?

Quesnelle: We only test the citizens of Detroit.

Tommy: The general public doesn’t use a dashboard. We should be more intentional about who is actually going to use it. We made one that fits on a piece of paper so you can just print it.

Pearce: CUT group is more for civic apps. There’s user testing for services to the community if they are building something. Also, user test your own tools.

Lyons: You know people were trying to print?

Pearce: A nursing association wanted to know the employment gap. They wanted to take a one-pager to a board and show that.

Christopher: What’s the point? We allow people to upload data.

Pitingolo: It’s a terminology problem?

Zager: Bob gave a presentation about what to do when someone asks for a dashboard. Is it KPIs? Impact? What tools? Who is going to maintain it? Nothing less fun than a rotting dashboard.

[Bob’s PPT: https://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/library/catalog/so-someone-just-asked-you-dashboard]

Pearce: History of dashboards book - online for free?

Minster: People don’t have time or interest in reading a full report. One page print out might be what they want.

Pearce: One answer to dashboards is more dashboards. Instead of 1 tableau with 50 tabs, there is 50 tableau.

Zager: Do you allow people to download the raw data?

Pearce: Depends.

Christopher: We don’t really have dashboards, we have maps.

Zager: We allow people to download just one indicator, but it breaks a lot for technical reasons.

Christopher: I think it’s important just to watch people. We saw someone use our website in a completely different way.

Pearce: We’re not going to build multiple versions to test against each other. We might show two screenshots side by side.

Elsergany: We received feedback and then we were ready to publish got more feedback. People said they don’t know what tract they live in. But our data is census tract level. To solve it we added a street layer.

Pearce: Adding an address search solved a lot of those problems. People don’t know their tract.

Lyons: Whose advice were you seeking?

Elsergany: We invited people who work on the issue to give feedback. They were knowledgeable about the indicators.

Pearce: A question we ask a lot is “what do you want to say” then we can try to fill in the blank.

Zager: How do you engage a comms team? We bring her in at the end. How do you involve them? What questions do you ask?

Minster: They might take a project management role.

Perkins-High: We usually work on things directly.

Pearce: It’s just two of us. We try to communicate with ourselves. It can be distracting.

Zager: We contracted out graphic design finally.

Christopher: Font issues were driving the developers mad.

Quesnelle: Useful to know who is the expert and who is the final decider. Expert can’t make everyone happy all the time.

Perkins-High: Comms team is good at making things aesthetic. There is also a perspective from the data team on presentation.

Quesnelle: Designer can find different ways to display data than what data people might think.

Pearce: We are lucky to have some design instincts.

Lyons: What besides Tableau and ArcGIS?

Zager: Power BI.

Minster: Everything has tradeoffs. Power BI has low barrier to entry. Much larger hurdle to get advanced. There are probably better tools for mapping. For text based dashboard Power BI is good.

[Unsure]: We use shiny. I am getting into Power BI.

Pearce: Boston is going good stuff with a website and data wrapper. Boston Indicators wealth hub.

Quesnelle: We went through and talked through orgs serving outside Detroit and showed them the Boston Indicators because it was simple and good. People didn’t trust us. The community wanted to input.

Zager: We use data wrapper. Flourish is another one I like.

Minster: I find Flourish easy to use.

Zager: We have been using Story Maps a lot more.

Lyons: We use them too, but people ask why. What are the strengths?

Zager: Advantages are for us than the final product. It’s easy for us to use and collaborate.

Pearce: We do a child wellbeing index. They cannot figure out how to communicate it. We used a Story Map to tell a story of one single family.

Minster: We are exploring using Story Map for an internal process. Internal documentation or selling us.

Pearce: Are people who asking for dashboards using it for decisions.

Quesnelle: They often don’t need a dashboard. A lot of clients want something to show their board of funders.

Pearce: People want to make a decision.

Zager: The issue of collective impact keeps coming up. I don’t know how to do this.

Lyons: What do they actually want and want to say.

Pitingolo: Dashboard about package pickup.

Lyons: Power outages.

Pearce: Community health dashboard.

Pitingolo: Weather is a dashboard

Pearce: Scoreboard is a dashboard.

Perkins-High: We say no to dashboards when we don’t have data.