



Case Study

Community Legal Advice – Usability testing March 2008

The Brief

Community Legal Advice (CLA), part of the Legal Services Commission, recently relaunched its new website, which provides free, confidential and independent legal advice for residents of England and Wales. It is targeted at vulnerable groups eligible for legal aid with needs for legal services, and also a wide variety of other users. CLA wanted to find out more about users and why they visit the site, how usable and useful the site was, and to develop user personas to help site development and marketing activity.



facilitated by a WUP consultant to agree issues and appropriate actions. The testing sessions were recorded (audio recording and screen capture with tester picture-in-picture), allowing for analysis and to enable the client to watch the sessions at a later date and share with other stakeholders who were not able to attend the observed session.

How we responded to the brief

We recommended an online survey (to get a better understanding of user goals and to obtain profiling information), usability testing of the site with 6 representative users (to understand usability and usefulness), and persona development, informed by the outputs of the online survey and the usability testing.

In order to ensure buy in to the research outcomes, key internal CLA stakeholders were encouraged to actively observe users on the site in real time, and to be involved in a subsequent facilitated discussion, in order to gain a shared understanding of users and usability issues.

What we did

We set up an online survey on the CLA site and obtained nearly 300 responses: the survey asked respondents why they had come to the site, as well as a range of profiling questions. For the usability testing we recruited 6 testers. CLA staff watched 3 of these testers in real time through a one way mirror in our studios in Chippenham; eye tracking on the latest eye tracker – Tobii T60 – was used, allowing the observers to see where the testers were looking on the screen. The CLA participants were 'active' observers, writing issues on post-its as they occurred. Following the testing, a discussion was

With the outputs of the online survey and the usability testing, together with discussions with CLA staff, WUP then developed personas representing users eligible for legal aid, users not eligible for legal aid and advisers.

The outcomes

CLA felt they had a much clearer understanding of their users and their goals, and the usability issues with the site as a result of this research. A total of 38 usability issues were identified with the site, over half of which had a major or moderate impact on the user experience, which CLA is now addressing. WUP developed 3 personas that encapsulated the user goals to be supported on the site, and that are now being used by the web development team and content producers to ensure that the site is focused on user needs (www.clsdirect.org.uk, telephone helpline 0845 345 4 345).

"WUP's work gave us a clearer understanding of the people using our website and their experiences. We have exciting plans to develop and improve the site based on evidence rather than assumptions, which will help more people in England and Wales deal with their legal problems." Paul Drinkwater, Development Manager, Legal Services Commission

Timing

The project was conducted in March and April 2008.