

⇒ Case Study

Environment Agency – Persona Development July 2006

The Brief

The Environment Agency had undertaken a review of their internet and intranet operations, which recommended that the Agency should gain a better understanding of the users of Environment Agency's web services, and these users' goals. Consequently, the Agency decided on a research programme to develop personas for both the internet and intranet sites. The Agency also wanted to develop an understanding throughout the organisation about how the personas were developed, and gain commitment to the personas and their use in future web services development.



objectives were to agree the priority user types and the user goals that the Agency would support on its sites. This discussion provided the framework for the subsequent persona development

- Persona development: then the personas were developed, detailing the persona's goals, priorities and constraints, some personal information, and how the internet or intranet would help them. Plus a suitable picture!

How we responded to the brief

WUP proposed a programme of user research to ensure evidence based personas, combined with workshops with Agency stakeholders to facilitate buy-in to the persona development.

What we did

WUP undertook:

- Internal Organisational Research: interviews with a range of people within the Agency to get their views on target users for both internet and intranet services, and also an analysis of web usage statistics
- Web Stakeholder Workshop: this involved key stakeholders from across the Agency who considered the internal research, to identify target user groups for the user research
- User Research: this was to gain a better understanding of users' needs, and how they wish to obtain information. Over 50 respondents from all over England and Wales were interviewed, representing the agreed user types for both internet and intranet
- 'Users and Goals' Workshop: the feedback and analysis from the user research was discussed at this workshop, which involved stakeholders from across the Agency. The

The outcomes

The project delivered three intranet personas and five internet personas which are being used on a daily basis by Environment Agency staff to guide site development and content production: if content doesn't fit the personas then it doesn't get used. The user evidence and the process also helped gain commitment to the personas as tools for the sites' development and started the process of developing a user centred culture within the organisation. The Environment Agency developed a range of materials to help encourage the use of personas, and the project recently won for the Environment Agency a gold 2007 international 'Intranet Innovation Award'. But the personas aren't standing still: the Agency is undertaking ongoing user research to update and refresh the personas to ensure they remain effective and relevant.

"We found the approach taken by WUP to be thorough and professional and the outcomes were practical and easy to use, written in a language that was relevant to Agency staff"
Simon Ashley - Internet Manager, Corporate Communications

Timing

The project was finished in July 2006, was undertaken over a 9 month period.