

Case Study

Home Office – User Centred Design November 2004

The Brief

As part of a major web site redevelopment project, the Home Office wanted to develop a user-driven information architecture that met user goals and satisfied the business needs of the department.

The existing site was attempting to reach all of its audiences, including stakeholders, practitioners and the general public. Whilst there was a great deal of useful and relevant content, a lack of consistency in the site organisation and an organisationally focused information architecture made it difficult for users to achieve their goals.

How we responded to the brief

The project involved six main phases of work:

- Contextual research
- Usability testing and analyses of the site
- User research
- Determining site scope and goals
- Developing the information architecture
- Developing wire frame prototypes

What we did

WUP undertook all the user research in the redevelopment project and worked with Cognitive Applications (a new media production agency) to produce the information architecture and prototypes.

We undertook face-to-face and telephone research with 32 Home Office staff to understand their aims for the site and their



understanding of user goals. We undertook focus groups and paired depth interviews with 18 respondents to gain insights into their goals and how they sought information. The Home Office was particularly keen to get feedback from socially excluded users.

We facilitated a meeting of key managers to gain agreement about the user goals the site was to support.

We undertook card sorting research to develop a prototype information

architecture. This prototype was repeatedly tested through a number of iterations to produce the final information architecture.

This was then incorporated into a wire frame design for the site showing the key navigational elements for the home page, landing pages and content pages, which was also user tested.

The outcomes

The key outcome of the process was an architecture for the web site that addressed issues relevant to and of interest to users, was intuitive for target users, and which met the strategic needs of the Home Office and was bought into by a large number of Home Office stakeholders.

Timing

The project was conducted between June and November 2004.