NetRaker Suite: A Demonstration

Doug van Duyne, James A. Landay, Matthew Tarpy
NetRaker Corporation
1190 Mira Loma Way, Suite U
Sunnyvale, CA 94085 USA
+1 408 530 8900
{doug, landay, mjt}@netraker.com

ABSTRACT

This demonstration will show the application of a unique approach to collecting and analyzing usability data from the users of Web sites and software applications. The NetRaker Suite supports researchers in conducting usability research remotely, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, reducing administration overhead and overall project cost. It provides many different levels of interaction with a user base, including email invitations and Web page intercepts. Researchers can also participate in real-time screen sharing sessions with test participants, and view streaming videos of previous screen sharing sessions. In addition to these unique features, the suite of tools was designed by and for usability practitioners, offering an easy-to-use Web-based interface that supports the entire team collaborating on a Web site design. Its built-in research templates and online analysis tools makes the task of starting a new research project, as well as collecting and analyzing the resulting data, something that can be accomplished in hours rather than days or weeks.

Keywords
Usability testing, on-line usability, remote testing, customer experience management

A PLATFORM FOR USABILITY RESEARCH

The NetRaker Suite offers a new approach to collecting and analyzing usability data from the users of Web sites and desktop applications. It is unique from other commercial [1, 3, 6] and research [2, 4] usability test tools in that it is a collection of several related tools that can be used separately or in conjunction. Typical users of the NetRaker system include usability and market research specialists. Users of the resulting data include Web-site managers, usability specialists, marketing researchers, IT managers, and upper management.

Among the suite of tools are those for carrying out task-based usability tests, conducting marketing research, and delivering ongoing short surveys whose results can be compared over time with an Internet index, or with competitors. The NetRaker Suite includes all of these tools in a personalized, secure, Web accessible portal, called the Intelligence Center, where members of a usability team, their management partners, and clients can participate in constructing the research and viewing the results.

Web Site Research

The Web Site Research tool enables researchers to create online studies to quickly gather usability feedback as users interact with their Web site and desktop applications. Researchers can send research to participants, who complete the research at their leisure while the system automatically collects and organizes resulting data. This helps to alleviate cost and time issues inherent in traditional usability testing and it allows research with much larger sample sizes [5].

The Web Site Research tool provides six methods of participant acquisition, including Web site and Web page intercept for finding participants on a site or a particular page of a site, email solicitation to bring participants to a targeted site, and targeted link distribution.

The research tool supports 18 major question types (from open-ended comments to rating scales) to gather user feedback in the most appropriate format. In addition, the provided usability test templates gives the researcher a way to easily and quickly customize sets of questions and tasks that will help him or her get meaningful data as quickly as possible. For example, based on a profile of the type of content, tasks, and user population for a Web site, the system will suggest background and task questions appropriate for the proposed test. These question templates were designed by usability professionals to provide specific feedback regarding ease of performing tasks.

After a research participant has agreed to participate in a test, they follow a URL to the test page (hosted on the NetRaker site), are given instructions, an optional non-disclosure agreement (NDA), and survey questions. At the same time, they are able to browse and carry out tasks on a specified Web site in another browser window (see Figure 1). The participant’s task time, self-reported comments, and follow-up questions provide information on task completion and performance, as well as specific problems the participant faced on the site. This data is collected and presented in an automatically generated usability report.
NetRaker Experience Recorder
Researchers interested in direct observation of participants during the testing process can use the NetRaker Experience Recorder, which provides the researcher with the ability to observe the remote participant’s screen and interact with the participant in real time by use of a chat client. This allows the researcher to view and interact with the research participant as he or she proceeds through a scripted set of tasks and questions, as in standard laboratory-based tests. It also allows researchers to conduct remote usability tests on traditional desktop applications, in addition to Web sites. These capabilities have been lacking in previous tools.

Reporting
Researchers and their teams can view in-depth analysis of research results through special filtering tools, cross tabs, detailed raw data, percentages, totals, participant demographics, and respondents’ details. If further analysis is needed, the system can provide the researcher a tab-delimited text file for importation into the statistical program of the researcher’s choice.

NetRaker Index
The NetRaker Index gathers continuous feedback about a site by intercepting randomly chosen site visitors. The index reports provide day-to-day tracking of customer satisfaction ratings of site content, ease of use, performance, brand value, and overall satisfaction. It uses an innovative method of rotating questions to deliver statistical significance from traditionally low-response pop-up surveys. It measures the most relevant customer satisfaction variables determined from researching 125 of the top sites on the Web as determined by the Webby Awards 2000. It also provides comprehensive benchmarks to compare customer satisfaction of one site against another in its industry, or against the Internet as a whole.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS
Doug van Duyne is the President, CEO and co-founder of NetRaker Corporation. He is also founder and principal of Dune Design Group, a strategic digital product design and consulting firm. With 18 years of experience in software design at companies like GO Corporation and KidSoft, he has been an innovator in online shopping, e-commerce, and multimedia development. He has also developed Web site designs for companies including Intel, safeway.com, healthshop.com, cooking.com, and ejobs.com.

James Landay is the Chief Technical Officer of NetRaker. He is responsible for the overall design of the NetRaker Suite, and for new product development. He is also an Assistant Professor of Computer Science in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences Department of the University of California at Berkeley. His research there focuses on user interface design and evaluation tools.

Matthew Tarpy is the Product Designer for NetRaker. He has a number of years of experience in the field of product design and usability testing. Prior to joining NetRaker, Matthew was a product designer at Motorola where he worked on 1st and 2nd generation HR Web applications.

REFERENCES