

# **SAMPLE Usability Test Plan:**

## **Acrobat Plug-In (Helper Application) Configuration**

*Rich Julius and Freda Salatino*

### ***The Issue***

PDF is often seen as an alternative format to HTML, and the Acrobat Reader is often viewed as competing with web browsers such as Navigator and IE. Adobe, however, recognizes the pre-eminence of the web browser as the primary content navigation “shell program” for Internet-based content delivery. Therefore, Acrobat cannot and must not compete, or be perceived to compete, with web browsers.

To overcome the marketing perception problem, Adobe is promoting Acrobat as an important adjunct to your web browser experience. Engineering has made it possible for Acrobat to work as a plug-in or “helper application” within a web browser, so that you never need to leave the browser main shell, thereby preserving context between the interface and the PDF documents.

The main problem is, users must install Acrobat in such a way that this feature is enabled. If users download the Acrobat installation program, quit their browser, and then install, this feature is enabled automatically. However, if the web browser is still running when Adobe installation begins, the Acrobat installer will not enable this feature. (This turns out to be a common occurrence, since Acrobat is usually downloaded from that very same web browser. Despite warnings on the Acrobat installer, many users fail to quit all applications before installing Acrobat.)

The issue is whether users can easily set up Reader to work within a web browser after it is “incorrectly” installed.

### ***The Audience***

The audience is everyday (non-technical) web users who install their own software. Demographic surveys (which do not include corporate users who are required to use the product<sup>1</sup>) indicate that:

- 80% of these users do not read manuals unless they are in trouble
- 50% will not generally use free software if the initial installation fails
- 75% use the Adobe Acrobat for Windows
- 55% use Netscape Navigator as their preferred browser
- 45% use Microsoft Internet Explorer as their preferred browser
- over 50% have used the web for self-service support

This demographic group is comfortable using the web, and over 50% have used the web for self-service support. By and large the web is the first choice of support medium, ahead of paper, online help, or online (CD-ROM) based documentation, which includes Acrobat PDF files.

---

<sup>1</sup> Users who are required to use a product will be more motivated to make it work. They also often have MIS support to get them properly configured.

## **The Test**

### **Part One**

The user is presented with a Windows-based computer connected to the Internet, with Netscape Navigator and Adobe Acrobat installed. Acrobat is not set up to be a “helper” application. The test subject is asked to view a PDF document hyperlinked within a web site. The test should record their reactions (confusion, disorientation, annoyance) to the document opening in a separate browser window. The test moderator will ask for their impressions at this point. This will establish a baseline as to the significance of the problem.

### **Part Two**

The user is asked to set up Navigator so that it displays the PDF content in the browser (not spawning an external viewer). If they cannot do this within two minutes (unaided), they will be directed to the web-based CustomerFirst Support center at <http://www.adobe.com/supportservice/custsupport/> to see if they can figure it out from the instructions there. Ultimately, we need to determine with what ease they can set up this browser configuration. Are they able to perform the task? Do they understand what they are doing? Do they get frustrated? Do they still like the product afterward?

## **Usability Goals**

The user should be able to find the answer to the problem posed in Part Two in less than two minutes. They should be able to solve the setup problem in under 1 minute. They should show no or relatively minor annoyance during the process. They should not be confused by the instructions. The instructions should be easy to find and they should be clear.

## **Test Script**

### **Part One**

Hi. Adobe thanks you for agreeing to take part in this test. Before we get started, would you like anything to drink?

We’ve asked you here so that we can see if our software meets the needs of typical web users. We are not testing you – we are asking you to test our software. There is no way that you can break the software as part of this test. There is no right or wrong way to go about the tasks we’re asking you to complete. What’s important here is how you decide to proceed, how easy it is for you to complete the tasks, and how you feel about the experience after you’re finished.

Your reactions to our software, and the strategies you use to solve the test problems, are really important to us. We’d like you to try to verbalize your reactions as you go, as much as possible. It may feel silly, but it will help us to see how users address items in our interface. Really – feel free to say things like “Okay, where is it?”

I’ll tell you when I will be unable to answer questions, and when I can answer questions again.

Are you ready to begin?

Okay.

Please turn to the computer screen in front of you. You see that it is open to a web site with several documents on it. ([http://www.dnai.com/~freda/pia/pia\\_cal.html](http://www.dnai.com/~freda/pia/pia_cal.html))

There are documents in both HTML and PDF on this web site. The ones we're interested in are the PDF documents. PDF documents are called out as "presentations." Can you find some PDF presentations on this page?

Please open one of the presentations.

Look over the screen that just displayed. Mouse around inside the document.

Do you think you would find it easy to read the material in this document?

*[It's okay to answer questions about making material easier to read; do not give explicit answers, only hints. Record all questions the subject asks, and your responses]*

Did you have any problems opening the document?

Do you like viewing documents in PDF format? Why/why not/Just give me your general impressions.

Okay, now please navigate back to the page you were on when you opened the document.

*[Check to see if the user realizes they need to move back to the original browser instance.]*

Did you realize that Adobe opened up in a separate browser window when you clicked on the document?

Do you like that? Why/why not/Just give me your general impressions.

Do you think it would be easier to work with PDF documents if they opened in the same browser window, or a different browser window? Why/why not/Just give me your general impressions.

This concludes the first part of the test. Now we'll move on to a different task.

**etc.**